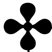

Chapter 6
“The Right-Wing Attacks Our Mosques and Our Muslim Brothers Do Not Consider Us to Be Real Muslims!”

The (Anti-)Politics of Breathing Hearts

> *Unpolitisch sein heißt politisch sein, ohne es zu merken!*
> (Being nonpolitical is to be political, without noticing it!)
> —Attributed to Rosa Luxemburg (1879–1919)

> Politics “from below”: Politics of man [and woman], not of the apparatus. Politics growing from the heart.
> —Václav Havel[1]

In the autumn of 2015, a group of nomadic Sufis gathered in Khidr’s apartment. It was a small gathering, five of us seated in a circle that included Khidr, Abdullah, Sophia, Idris, and me. We discussed possibilities for engaging with the material world and navigating perpetual crises while walking the Sufi path. Khidr suddenly asked: “What if you knew that in one week, I would be dead? What would be the last question you would ask me now?”

My mind, for reasons unexplainable to me, went completely blank, perhaps because of the shock at the possibility of considering a dear friend and teacher leaving our world permanently. I quietly said, “I don’t know!” Idris was the next person to respond. He said he would ask, “What shall I do?” Everybody laughed, including Idris himself, at the apparent absurdity of the question. Khidr’s long-term companion and collaborator Abdullah asked, “Why not?” to which Idris did not answer. We were curious about what Sophia thought.

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Figure 6.1. "God loves you; it does not matter which one [which God]." Joachim's T-shirt makes a statement at the Inayati Order universal worship ceremony in a Protestant church of Kreuzberg, 4 May 2014. © Nasima Selim.

She said she would ask Khidr, "Were you happy?" Watching the apparent perplexity on our faces in reaction to Sophia's question, Khidr laughed and told us what he had asked his teacher in a similar circumstance: "How could I be more effective in transmitting the *baraka*?" His teacher answered him back, "The answer is simple. You must put it in the intention."

Such an intention to be effective in the material world requires the (political) practice of stepping away from supremacist ideas of "we are the best." Khidr explained,

> There is the truth, but how could (that) truth be the best? Like what Rumi said, "The lamps are different, but the light is the same." . . . The idea of the Divine, and I can call it Allah or Khuda or whatever. That is, for me, a reality. I see him, it, her, whatever, genderless. It is a friend. It is in me, outside of me. And I have a lovely relationship with it.

On that evening, Khidr framed the question and answer as a teaching moment to explain what is known in Sufi parlance as "die

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before you die," detachment from the material world while acting and engaging with it as a constant process of "breathing in (the Divine) and breathing out" (fieldnote, 12 November 2015).

"God loves you* . . . *it does not matter which one [God]!" Joachim was wearing a slogan on his T-shirt at the Petriplatz peace protest. In the aftermath of an escalating Israel-Palestine conflict in 2014, he joined a demonstration with several members from the Inayat-Khan-inspired Sufi-Movement and Inayati Order (Inayatiyya) networks. They read out a peace prayer composed by Hazrat Inayat Khan. Joachim's T-shirt displayed the symbols of the Abrahamic traditions: the Cross of Christianity, the Star of David of the Jewish religion, and the Crescent Moon and Star of Islam (figure 6.1). Joining a protest or demonstration for peace is not necessarily a remarkable political action and neither is it always effective in creating change. Yet people gather to demonstrate in Berlin. At times religion/spirituality (or the reference to it) plays a role in demonstrations conceived by Sufis as political acts.

When I met Joachim, he said, "I have remained true to my mystical direction." As a *cherag* (leader of the prayer) in the local Inayati Order (Inayatiyya), Joachim organizes the "universal worship" (*Universeller Gottesdienst*) every month. There, he recites and contemplates with his friends the verses from the sacred books of major world religions. Joachim is concerned with the (anti-)politics of peace. Sufis and other postsecular subjects keep practicing their prayers, whether for healing or peace. Organizing universal worship in a society torn by interreligious conflicts could be considered a courageous act, a profoundly political action. Bringing together diverse traditions in Berlin's laissez-faire religious/spiritual landscape—are they examples of life-affirming political action or only emblematic of rampant cultural appropriation?[2] What kinds of politics are made possible with postsecular Sufi practice? This chapter addresses these questions bringing contemporary Sufi practice in dialogue with various notions of politics and political action.

How Do Breathing Hearts Talk Back to Power?

"The nonpolitical image of Sufism is illusory" (Ernst 2003, 108). There is no univocal Sufi approach to politics. Sufis have engaged themselves in sustaining an ethical vision of Islam across its global

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history (Milani 2018; Green 2012; Heck 2009, 2007b). Sufi practices are not without political consequences under the shadow of nationalism, literalist and reformist religion, and secularist hegemony. Instead of preaching postsecular Sufi practice as an example of life-affirming political action or dismissing it as cultural appropriation, the more important question is: How does Sufism talk back to power?

"Wherever people gather together, it [the body politic of people] is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily, and not forever" (Arendt [1958] 1998, 199). Sufis, with their breathing hearts, gather to form local collectives, like other seekers of alternatives to the dominant arrangements. Contemporary Sufis in Berlin imagine a non-anthropomorphic Real Being beyond human norms and orientations, an entity that "begets not; nor was begotten" (Qur'an 112:3). What kinds of power can be generated with Sufism with such imaginations, and what kinds of politics?

Sufis in Berlin gather to pray for the afflicted (healing ritual), to repeat and resonate their breaths with the ninety-nine names of Allah (dhikr), to whirl around one's axis toward the heart (*sema*), to embody the prophets, saints, and Sufis (Dances of Universal Peace and walks), to allow Sufi sounds to work on the body (music-and-movement therapy) and to listen to inspired utterances (*sohbet*), cultivating attention. In mobilizing the subtle and material bodies, Sufism provides techniques for transforming a self-centered ego (*nafs*). Polishing the breathing, metaphysical heart (*qalb*), Sufism teaches one to expand the capacity to feel compassion and learn to feel and inhabit the Elsewhere (Selim 2020a; chapters 3 and 5).

The Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi-Center Berlin enacted a vision of communal hospitality in opening their space to marginalized communities, including the homeless, people with severe mental health conditions, refugees, and new migrants of Color. Their persistent efforts to foster German-Turkish relations in a "parallel society" engendering joint leadership (with white Germans and Turkish-German members of Color on the board of its association) and organization of diverse activities at the center, illustrated a coming together of "the Germans" and those who are perceived as the "non-German others." The leaders of the transnational network are known for expressing monarchist (neo-Ottoman) sympathies, conservative gender norms, and conversion efforts (Stjernholm 2015, 2009; Bax 2014; Böttcher 2011; Schleßmann 2003; Yavuz 1998). Irrespective of an affinity

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toward past monarchies, there are lessons to learn about charity, conviviality, and sharing of community resources from the sustained hospitality they express toward marginalized others.

Yet, the Haqqani-Naqshbandi discourse keeps repeating that they are "not political."[3] On the one hand, their expressed vision of benevolent monarchy creates a visceral discomfort in those who believe in the ultimate value of liberal democracy. On the other hand, the antipolitics of their peace work and community engagements foster interreligious relations in the city. These acts talk back to the powers exerted by German nationalism, dominant secularism, and anti-Muslim racism, as well as the anti-Sufi literalist, prescriptive formations within Islam.

"Everything that you do becomes part of yourself," Sufi dancer Claire said with the lightness of not belonging to a definitive tradition (interview with the author, 24 April 2013). The lightness of not belonging is another feature of postsecular subjectivity, signaling a nomadic wariness of the fixation on identity in resistance to domaining. Such resistance is not necessarily an inability to cultivate/deepen sensibilities in a particular tradition, although the dangers of cultural appropriation and whitewashing are potentially lurking in these moves. In Berlin, not all Muslims belong to the literalist/prescriptive enactments of Islam. Not all Sufis identify themselves as Muslims. Not all those who practice Sufi techniques even call themselves Sufis. The Sufi Islam practiced by the Haqqani-Naqshbandi, is this *really* Islam? If not restricted to the Islamic tradition (the Inayatis draw from multiple traditions), are they *really* Sufis? Tümata-Berlin's juxtaposition of Sufi *sema* and music-and-movement therapy, are they *really* medicine? These questions can be better addressed with the notion of ontological politics, as the *politics of what*.

Ontological Politics of Sufism in Germany

"Politics are not just about what governments say, or states do" (Mittermaier 2011, 237). Writing about Sufi-Islamic dream practices in contemporary Egypt, Mittermaier emphasized that a "serious engagement with other imaginations, rather, is itself a political act" (2011, 20). Mittermaier invoked Hannah Arendt in that politics are about the everyday practices of individuals, resulting in actions with

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short and long-term political predicaments, in a domain that lies beyond labor and work (Arendt [1958] 1998, 7).

Sufi practice in Berlin is neither labor nor work in that sense but action that enacts the possibility of the otherwise,[4] talking back to some of the power arrangements in a society that claims to be diverse and pluralistic. The options between the different versions of Sufism (Islamic, universalist, therapeutic, and nomadic) might clash in some places while depending on each other in other spaces as an interlaced phenomenon. They are not performed out of spontaneous, individual choice but in dialogue with existing traditions of religiosity and secularity. Destabilizing a foundational focus on human actors, ontological politics focuses on how political actors may be implicated in how they are *enacted*.

Ontological politics, in this regard, enable us to ask, "*where* such options might be situated and *what* was at stake when a decision between alternative performances was made" (Mol 1999, 74). "Articulating alternative metaphysical commitments and doing things differently" is about "doing another sort of politics—ontological politics where we discuss if and how we might make explicit our metaphysical commitments and so interrupt and create possibilities for considering re-rendering our worlds" (Verran 2007, 36). Ontopolitics is not diagnostic of a problem but resonates with the hermeneutics of (affective) pedagogy, insisting on the cultivation of abilities to learn from situated practices. Attending to ontopolitics also brings to mind German media debates about Sufism and its ontology.

"Why Is Sufism Not At All So Peaceful?" The Problem of Fixing Ontologies

In the summer of 2016, one of the widely distributed German newspapers, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*), published a short article on Sufism. The author used a handful of historical examples to argue "why Sufism is not at all so peaceful" (*Warum Sufismus gar nicht so friedlich ist*) (Weidner 2016). A few days later, a fiery response appeared in another major German newspaper, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*).[5] In the latter, the author argued why "Sufism is the biggest enemy of Islamic extremism" (*Sufismus: Der größte Feind des islamischen Extremismus*) (Trojanow 2016).[6]

The German media landscape is involved in a divisive fight for Sufism's ontology around a question this book also asks: What is Su-

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fism? But the three positions (Weidner's, Trojanow's, and mine) generate different answers: Stefan Weidner and Ilija Trojanow went in opposite directions, and yet both presented Sufism as "Islamic Mysticism," a definition they fixed, either in past militancy (Weidner) or in a timeless peaceful presence (Trojanow). Weidner focused on nineteenth-century anti-colonial resistance in Algeria as an example of the non-peaceful ontology of Sufism. He referred to the history of clashes between Salafism and Sufism in Muslim-majority societies. He questioned the motives of "Westerners" interested in practicing Sufism, wondering whether these interests were about consumerist lifestyle changes.

Weidner reprimanded well-known German-speaking authors—Peter Handke, Navid Kermani, Christoph Peters, and Ilija Trojanow—for their explicit sympathy with Sufism. In response to Weidner's article in the *SZ*, Trojanow focused on a radically different depiction of Islamic mysticism in the *FAZ*. He pointed out the political significance of Weidner's postulates with "the intellectual weapon of humor," a witty rendition of Mullah Nasreddin/Nasruddin. In his retelling of the widely traveled story, Nasreddin was questioned about his religious dogma, and he responded with scathing humor, "That depends . . . on which heretics are currently in power!" (Trojanow 2016). Trojanow considered Weidner's comments politically dangerous since Sufis faced increasing violence from anti-Sufi radical Islamists globally, and the Sufi spirit of inquiry in Muslim-majority societies was going through a difficult period. Trojanow proposed Sufism as one of the best ways to ensure *peaceful coexistence* in the Islamic world, where, according to him, secularization was not going to take place anytime soon.

As much as I am irked by Weidner's reductive analysis of the vast assemblage that hangs together in the name of Sufism, I do not fully agree with Trojanow, who argued that Sufism would invariably lead to peaceful coexistence. The lessons from my fieldwork and engagements with the histories of Sufi/Islamic tradition make me assert another, anthropologically informed perspective. The answer to the question of what Sufism is will always depend on the kind of Sufism and how that kind of Sufism is practiced, when, and where. In practice, Sufism becomes a religion, medicine, performance art, or politics (or all that), leading to variable consequences under variable circumstances.[7]

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The Sufis (in Berlin and elsewhere) do their ontological and existential politics often as anti-political politics (therapeutic and peace-oriented), at times at odds with democratic, liberal capitalism due to their monarchist agenda (Haqqani-Naqshbandi). At other times, Sufis are at odds with secularist biomedical hegemony because of their therapeutic politics centered around complementary, alternative medicine, and religious/spiritual healing (Inayati and Tümata-Berlin). Contemporary Sufism often yields an explicit anti-political discourse when interlocutors emphasize being "not political," deepening a spiritual versus political dichotomy.

In the medieval period of the Common Era, *tasawwuf* emerged as a movement in Islamicate societies in opposition to the literalist Sunni statist regulation of Islam, supported and persecuted in turns, depending upon the sympathy or antipathy of the monarchist regimes. Sufism is historically situated within the Islamic tradition. In its global history, Sufism shifted its directions to the so-called left, the right, and the center of conventional politics, depending on "which heretics . . . [were] currently in power" (as Mullah Nasreddin might say, Trojanow 2016), the human actors who embodied the politics of their times and places (Milani 2018; Mercier-Dalphond 2017; Muedini 2015a, 2015b; Heck 2009, 2007b).

In the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonialized Muslim world, Sufi Muslims were involved in a range of anti-colonial political movements (Muedini 2015a).[8] A common trope about Sufi politics in regions such as the South Asian subcontinent, scarred by the communal tension between Muslims and other religions, is that Sufism promotes "communal harmony" (Banu 1991, 215). Throughout history, practitioners of Sufism were involved in promoting political visions of social justice in Islam and did not always shy away from violence (Milani 2018; Muedini 2015a; Heck 2007b). A strict dichotomy between peaceful, experiential, mystic Sufis versus militant, conservative Sufis is historically untenable.

Sufi politics in a Muslim-majority society differ from that in a Muslim-minority society (Germany) fraught with anti-Muslim racism. Framing the politics of Sufi practice also depends on the politics of knowledge-making, the kind of scholarship one chooses to adopt, and the questions with which one guides the object of inquiry. The double hermeneutics of pedagogy inherent in dual apprenticeship (learning from two traditions) and affective pedagogy (learning from

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the senses and emotions) are neither nonpolitical nor transhistorical (Selim 2020a).[9] With this approach, the politics of breathing, wayfaring hearts can bring together anthropology's sensuous, affective, existential, and ontological traditions with the (possibility of) life-affirming politics of Sufi practice.

Those who practice Sufism may proceed in radically opposed directions: working toward progressive peace or violent militancy; liberal democracy or a return to monarchy; preaching restrictive gender (and sexuality) norms or inclusive participation and female leadership; the strict enforcement of literal interpretations of Islamic law or opening the avenues for exploring creative possibilities in-between. In the presence of the sheer diversity of ethnographic evidence,[10] labeling Sufism as either militant (Weidner) or peaceful (Trojanow) is to foreclose its ontology as an unchangeable phenomenon.

The example of the (German) media struggle for Sufism's ontology invites the question: what can anthropology contribute to this contested public domain? Anthropologists are equipped to explore the ontological possibilities of a phenomenon (here Sufism) by tracking it in practice. An ontological exploration (the question of what is) synergizes with anthropology's epistemological goals (the question of how we know each other) not by claiming Sufism as inherently peaceful (Trojanow) or militant (Weidner), but by being aware that Sufis (and others) can engage Sufism as one among many possible solutions to the deployment of radical and brutal Islamism and anti-Muslim racism perpetuated by conservative and far-right forces (in Germany).

The 2016 media portrayal of Sufism is symptomatic of the condition of "liquid fear" against "terrors of the global" (Bauman 2006) as much as it is emblematic of anti-Muslim racism in Germany, where Sufism is often perceived and portrayed as "good Islam." Liquid fear is "the name we [liquid moderns] give to our *uncertainty*: to our *ignorance* of the threat and of what is to be *done*—what can or can't be—to stop it in its tracks—or to fight it back if stopping it is beyond our power" (2006, 2). In the shared milieu of proliferating liquid fear, it is necessary to open diverse paths of inquiry, rather than fixing ontologies with a polemical argument about what a phenomenon (Sufism) is or is not. Sufi interlocutors mobilize diverse ontologies in their engagements facing liquid fear, whether such fear manifested against the terrors of the global (radical Islamism) or Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism in a Muslim-minority society.

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The Conundrums of Being a Sufi Muslim in Germany

"It is easier to be a Sufi than a Muslim," Abu Bakr said with a saddened smile. "My basic experience has been that!" I stared at him expecting to hear more, and said, "You told me once that Sufis were attacked from both sides, the right-wing and other Muslims" (see Introduction). I asked him if he still felt this way, more than a year after our first conversation at the Sufi center in Neukölln. It was 2014 and my second year of fieldwork. Abu Bakr nodded affirmatively and said he was tired of the divisive fight among Muslims about what (true) Islam is. With visible discomfort, he changed the direction of our discussion. In a second conversation, he detailed the paradox of being a Sufi Muslim in German society.

"The media talks about it [Sufism] nicely . . . Rumi and the whirling dervishes!"[11] Abu Bakr said with a sense of irony. According to him, Sufism is not just a way of the heart, but "Sufism is the *heart* of Islam." He understood (Sufi) Islam as disciplining the self-centered ego ("ego-training"), adhering to the Islamic regulations, and ethical practices (*adab*) as well participating in the supererogatory practices of dhikr, *sema*, and *sohbet*. Discussion of his breathing, wayfaring path soon turned to a discussion of fear. Abu Bakr framed the (radical Islamist) terrorists and the war-waging presidents (e.g., George Bush) of "the West" as people "without faith" (*Ungläubige*). He argued that understanding the connection between (Western) militarism and (Islamic) fundamentalism helps drive out fear from the hearts of common people. According to him, fundamentalism was not an integral part of Islam, and (Western) militarism was not Christian. In his narrative, everyday life was filled with fear of the other from both sides: "Muslims also have a fear of the Christians . . . Our sheikh says, 'Do not make things difficult!' . . . For a long time, we had no permission to grow a long beard . . . He [sheikh] has a small beard . . . In Europe, people are afraid [of the long beard]" (interview with the author, 13 July 2014).

The public (media) representation poses Sufis in a bright light while Muslims become suspects. What Abu Bakr also referred to is the kind of fear that is "liquid" in nature, proliferating with the ebb and flow in multiple directions in a milieu that nurtures that fear while others resist and offer counter-narratives that configure these liquid fears (Bauman 2006). The (liquid) fear of radical Islamist ter-

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ror is conflated with and fueled as a fear of Islam (hence the need to resist) propagated by the populist and right-wing nationalists and structural anti-Muslim racism in Germany and the rest of Europe (Jünemann 2017).

Abu Bakr's comments describe the conundrum of being a Sufi Muslim in German society. He paradoxically praised and criticized the media for a favorable portrayal of Sufism. In an earlier encounter, he focused on the precarious position of a Sufi Muslim, poised between his Muslim brothers who think [Sufis] are not "real Muslims" and the German right-wing attacking the mosques (conversation, spring 2013; Introduction). Abu Bakr's dilemmas and German media discourses exemplify the struggle around the ontology of Sufism. These ontological politics of breathing hearts revolve around the anti-political politics of peace and therapeutic politics.

The Anti-political Politics of Peace and Therapeutic Politics

In June 2014, news of the victorious march of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) into Mosul made headlines in German media. The news dominated everyday discussions in Berlin. A few weeks later, in the aftermath of an escalating Israel-Palestine conflict, a pro-Palestine demonstration took place in Berlin, with more than a thousand people marching against the Israeli military intervention. At around the same time, pro-Israel demonstrations took place in the same neighborhood.

During such heated local/global moments, the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sheikh Eşref Efendi often chose to address the issue of violence in his evening *sohbet*. It was the month of Ramadan, and he looked exhausted. After a collective breathing practice (dhikr), the sheikh spoke to the audience invoking a popular hadith:

> If you see injustice, fight with your hands. If that is not possible, protest with your mouth. If even that is not possible, then feel it in your heart and protest injustice. The two angels are sitting on both sides of your shoulders and are writing down everything. Do not forget to be human. Where is the true human being? (fieldnote, 25 July 2014)

The sheikh promoted a politic of peace incumbent upon him in a time of Islamist terror. The predicament of Muslims in German

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society, whether Sufi or not, is that they must always explicitly articulate statements of nonviolence as if an explicit politic of peace is the requirement for their right to exist.

The conundrums of Sufi Muslims show how anti-Muslim racism in German society and the dominance of literalist and reformist Sunni Islam's rejection of Sufism may push Sufi Muslims to the margins. On one hand, white German Sufis and non-Muslim Sufis do not share the deadly predicament of structural anti-Muslim racism with their Black Muslim and Muslim of Color counterparts. On the other hand, non-Muslim Sufis are often perceived as pseudo-Sufis and, along with their white German companions, are especially prone to "predatory (cultural) appropriation" (Furlanetto and Shahi 2020, 174). The importance of understanding Sufism as being Islamic, whether one identifies as Muslim or not, is a critical step toward avoiding (cultural) appropriation.

Sufi healing practices are also vulnerable to criticism in the secularist imagination in Germany. Despite sustained, widespread interest in alternative healing practices in German therapeutic cultural history (Heyll 2006; Jütte 1996), the canon of secularist biomedicine and the public/private health insurance authorities of the German state marginalize alternative healing. Alternative healing practices are ridiculed as "magical thinking" (*magisches Denken*) or "esoteric ideas" in contrast to the assumed superiority of evidence-based medicine (Danzinger and Egger 2013, 4–5; Grüter 2010; Harder 2007). The therapeutic politics of Sufi healing talk back to these discourses of secularist, biomedical hegemony.

Therapeutic politics (Stein 2011, 188) engenders the possibility of resistance within the wider therapeutic culture;[12] Berlin is a case in point. Tümata-Berlin and its local leader, Raphael, were keen on popularizing the music-and-movement therapy combining sounds drawn from Central Asian Shamanism, Turkish Sufism, and the Turkish/Arabic tradition of pentatonic *makam* music (chapter 1, 5). Ayşe articulated Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufism as spiritual psychiatry, juxtaposing the religious and the therapeutic in her quest for healing with many others who came to Sufi-Center Berlin, among them many with a history of mental illness and substance abuse (chapter 2). Renate's pathway to healing included a pragmatic concoction of biomedicine, complementary and alternative medicine, and Inayati healing practices (chapter 2). Claire spoke of the healing arts from

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the living archive of Sufi techniques (chapter 2). All three Sufi networks and nomadic Sufis draw resources from available repertoires to conflate the religious and the therapeutic (Selim 2020a; 2015a, 2015b; chapters 2–5).

In the critical discourses/practices regarding advanced capitalist and late modern societies, there is a habitual critique that such therapeutic culture is narcissistic, borne out of "therapeutic individualism" and the flourishing "technologies of the self (hood)" (Stein 2011, 188). A popular argument is that alternative medicine and healing practices have depoliticized society and diminished the hitherto strong political culture to transform oppressive structures (2011, 188). The notion of therapeutic politics moves this discussion beyond an easy dichotomy of therapeutic individualism versus political collectivism. Contrary to a secularist imagination, such therapeutic cultures politicize identities, generate critiques of social inequalities, and address power imbalances (2011, 191). Life-affirming politics are also made possible by therapeutic cultures calling "for the 'breaking of silence,' and for the proliferation of talk about that which was unspeakable" (2011, 191).[13] If postsecular Sufi subjects are allowed to speak, their critiques, practices, existential quests, and anti-political politics transgress the silence imposed by the prescriptive traditions of religion, secularism, and nationalism.

Articulating healing with resources drawn from different kinds of Sufism pushes the inherent, secularist logic of biomedicine toward the otherwise. The postsecular city of Berlin connects the spaces of Sufi healing and other secularized techniques of family resemblance (for example, Yoga, Vipassana, and Qigong—in all of which breathing occupies a central place, including Sufi practice). Sufi practices—in terms of the techniques of transformation, alternative healing practices, and the human subjects implicated in these practices—circulate in and out of the religious and therapeutic marketplaces. But their mobilities and modes of exchange cannot be reduced to the logic of a market of religions (Zinser 1997) or the economic model of a religious-therapeutic marketplace. Sufis inhabit the breathing hearts aiming to "breathe well" in the context of anti-Muslim racism, not simply and only as consumers. Limiting the understanding of Sufism to a product of contemporary market forces, whether regulated or unregulated, is to fall for economic determinism (Stark and Finke 2000).

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The financial exchange is a relatively delimited dimension of the enactments of Sufism. Intentional Sufi communities of practice thrive with "non-market forms of sociality" (Palmer 2011, 569). The market metaphor here refers not only to exclusively financial relations but to the wider supply and demand structures within a neoliberal economy. I do not claim that the supply-demand structure is absent in Sufi-Berlin. Paid workshops by Sufi teachers and collective self-organization of community events collecting donations take place side by side. Sufi networks are open to newcomers (tourists, visitors, consumers) from time to time, but long-term and committed teacher-student relationships are key to becoming a Sufi.

The therapeutic politics of Sufi interlocutors inhabit an in-between place, enabling them to not only be producers and consumers in the religious, therapeutic marketplaces, but something else. Their practices are part of a gift economy where voluntary exchange of breath, words, sounds, movements, prayers, and conversations takes place in the context of teaching and learning. In Sufi seminars, the attending public pay in return for pedagogic instructions (e.g., Inayati healing seminars, Tümata-Berlin music therapy seminars, and *sema* ceremonies). At regular meetings of these communities, donations of money, time, and labor are expected from participants. Financial exchanges are tacitly or explicitly obligatory in fostering and sustaining social relations (Mauss [1925] 2016), but profit-making is not their central concern.

In contrast to money, the question of power embodied in charismatic authority is central. Although ultimate power belongs to Allah, Sufi breather-wayfarers aspire to incorporate Allah's attributes as humble actors. The Sufi teachers embody and exert the authorized power of sacred leadership. They assert pedagogic and therapeutic power by invoking genealogies (*silsila*) and retelling stories about past authority figures and by exercising their performative skills of participating in the R/real (chapter 1, 5). Such power is co-constituted by students pledging allegiance to the lineage in various degrees by negotiating commitments or nomadic navigation. In the case of nomadic Sufis, the power of the techniques may take precedence over human authority.

The political economy of Sufism is not my main object of inquiry in this book. My work explores the ontological and existential, sensuous, and affective dimensions of Sufism in the context of

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anti-Muslim racism in Germany. Ontological and anti-political politics matter more in Sufi-Berlin than the logic of the market economy. Disillusionment with conventional politics in terms of parliamentary elections and resistance to the hegemonic governmental power may lead to anti-political statements, such as, "I am not political." Anti-political politics is neither utopian nor an absolute disillusionment with (formal) politics.[14] As a concept, it opens a space to understand the declared-not-political (yet political) engagements of Sufi actors.

The Anti-political Politics of Inayati Sufism

In Sufi-Berlin, explicit references and affiliations to conventional, formalized politics were avoided, often with common utterances, such as "I know it is not my path to become a politician" (Murshida Ganga) or "We are not political" (Abu Bakr). These remarks mirror other interlocutors who said "I am not religious" or "Sufism is not a religion" (Renate). The politics of Sufism are not only about mobilizing ontologies, peace, or therapeutics but also about the unintended effects of actions not evidently, officially politics, if politics is linked to the state, the government, and policy reforms. The explicit articulations of such politics have to do with the practical morality of "anti-political politics" (Havel [1984] 1992, 269): "[P]olitics not as the technology of power and manipulation, of cybernetic rule over humans or as the art of the utilitarian, but politics as one of the ways of seeking and achieving meaningful lives, of protecting them and serving them."

"Where do I put my energy? I know it is not my path to become a politician," Murshida Ganga said, with her characteristic bright smile, in response to my question, "what about politics?" We were sitting at her home in north Berlin, sipping herbal tea. She rightly sensed a certain irritation and urgency in my voice and replied calmly:

> For me, it is a question of energy. Where do I put my energy? I know it is not my path to become a politician. I can see the whole world and everything that is going on. It is like a theater. It is happening in the world, and there are many levels of consciousness. I sympathize, and I embrace all this. In my seminars, we always include prayers of peace. To Ukraine. To Syria. Sending peace and love. Whatever that does, I do not know! (interview with the author, 2 May 2014)

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In hindsight, my question emerged from the hermeneutics of suspicion I shared with scholars critical of anti-political statements. There are, however, many alternatives to think and practice resistance against the late modern consumer capital, exceeding the secularist narrative or its counter-figure in the literalist, reformist religious calls to return to the origin.

However, the Sufi techniques of transformation (breathing, among others) do not, by default, lead to the critical politics of resistance unless these politics are cultivated as structural, collective mobilizations for "breathing well." The ontological and anti-political politics of contemporary Sufi practice must come together in solidarity around the common causes that affect their non-Sufi counterparts. Sufi action is not only about feeling and inhabiting the Elsewhere but also about serving the practical reason in the here and now, mobilized as peace prayer, healing action, and refugee support work.

Peace Prayer, Healing Action, and Refugee Support Work

In 2015, Germany went through the so-called refugee crisis when the arrival of refugee newcomers, primarily from Syria and the Middle East, but also from Central Europe and Africa, reached a peak (BAMF 2015). More than six hundred refugees were getting themselves registered daily in Berlin (Schönball 2015). The refugee newcomers faced considerable challenges due to the rigid, discriminating German laws and administration. While an astonishing number of *Willkommensinitiativen* (welcome initiatives) were springing to life in support of them, the right-wing and conservative forces reinvigorated anti-Muslim racism in Germany (like post-9/11 United States), accusing Muslims of not integrating into "German culture," placing refugee Muslims at the center of public blame for the repeated ISIS-inspired attacks in Western Europe (2015–2017).[15]

Soon afterward, in the wake of the brutal terrorist attack in Paris (November 2015), the Inayati networks were engaging in collective healing prayers. I received an email from Murshida Rabeya who had sent a request to all *murids* (students). She wrote that we were all affected by the "refugee crisis" as much as what happened in Paris. She invited everyone to daily prayer for peace at noon, irrespective of geographical region and time zone, to recite and breathe with an

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intention of peace (email, 15 November 2015). Around that time, I got involved in the newly formed *Engaged Anthropology Collective* at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Freie Universität Berlin. Among various initiatives that included ethnographic research by the university students,[16] our collective initiated a series of conversations with Syrian and Iraqi refugees living in the local camps.

I sent emails to the Sufi networks with an invitation to collaborate in terms of supporting the newcomer refugees. Tümata-Berlin members have been involved in refugee support work individually. As a group, they immediately responded with enthusiasm to the idea of organizing a welcoming concert. Together with the Sufi musicians and their teacher the late Rahmi Oruç Güvenç (who happened to be visiting Berlin at that time), a few anthropologist colleagues, newcomer refugees, and activists took part in an engaged intervention in the form of a concert that resulted in an experimental collaboration and writing (Selim et al. 2018). This event was a spin-off of ideas emerging from discussions in the newly formed collective at the Institute and the Sufi networks, an instance of rapprochement between engaged Sufism and public anthropology. While the collaborative article focused on sustained engagement in the aftermath of the event, the next section will describe the event that inspired our subsequent collaboration.

Affective Politics, Engaged Sufism, and Public Anthropology

"How do emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others" (Ahmed 2004, 117)? Affective politics in the "refugee crisis" hinged on the mobilization of emotions in the everydayness of racism and the resurgence of white supremacist narratives.[17] In the affective politics of fear (Ahmed [2004] 2014) in Europe, emotions like love and hate are both constituted of the fear associated with the "figures of the asylum seeker and the international terrorist" (Ahmed 2004, 119). Emotions do not reside within or outside but circulate between "bodies and signs" (2004, 119) with narratives of love and hate. What about the (counter-)affect of politicized compassion that mobilizes solidarity with the otherwise feared figures of the (Muslim) refugee in a society fraught with anti-Muslim

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racism? What about the affective politics that accommodates the life-affirming possibilities while fully acknowledging that emotions are always mixed and ambivalent?[18]

Love does not necessarily reside within or outside of an individual body. It is not always negative or life-affirming in its formation. Love and other emotions can be cultivated and engaged in the diverse forms of politics, and not only in the emotional rhetoric of populist and right-wing nationalist formations against the figure of the refugee. They can be distributed along the other sides of the spectrum of cultivated emotions and structured sentiments in solidarity with the refugee newcomers. Affective politics become the life-affirming labor of sensuous, affective pedagogy and engagement, mobilizing love/compassion as one trajectory of engaging the politics of breathing, wayfaring hearts.

In contemporary Sufi practice, the term *engagement* "points to that necessary but dangerous moment when love goes public" (Shaikh and Kugle 2006, 10). "When spiritual values cultivated in private . . . demand expression in wider fields of life," sociopolitical engagement becomes crucial (2006, 10). *Engaged Sufism* owes its genealogy to a plethora of traditions of engaged spirituality (Falk 2001), such as the Christian liberation theologies and engaged Buddhism (Luzbetak 1988; Queen 2013, 2000). Contemporary Sufi authors who argue for this term (engaged Sufism) talk back to materialistic (secularist) modernity, anti-Sufi Muslims, and anti-Muslim racism (Hammer 2006). A quest for knowledge and longing for love inspire the impulse of engaged Sufism to "know what to love and what love asks of us" (2006, 36).[19]

How did Berliner Sufis engage amid the so-called refugee crisis in 2015? Like many other Berliners, the Sufi networks, for example, collected money and things to deposit in LaGeSo (Landesamt für Gesundheit und Soziales),[20] the central administrative unit for health and social support, in the Wedding district of North Berlin. And long before the 2015 "crisis," the Haqqani-Naqshbandi network was active in refugee support work. They collected funds to assist war-torn Syria and organized food and shelter for newcomers.[21] Refugees and new migrants of Color frequently gathered at the *dergah*. In the Inayati and Tümata-Berlin networks, I got acquainted with a few spirited individuals (Andrea and Minar, for example) who were also actively involved in the welcoming initiatives. Later I came to

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know that many Inayati members participated in welcoming initiatives (conversation with Murshida Rabeya, 28 February 2018). Murshida Ganga, for example, had been involved with an initiative for the East European refugees after the Bosnian war.

The "refugee crisis" in Berlin challenged me to rethink the conventional notion of the field beyond ethnography, as a field of sociopolitical engagement. Sufi breather-wayfarers helped to organize and participate in a collaborative event as part of the audience. It was a messy attempt to bring together the diverse ways of living and doing Sufism and public anthropology in times of social crises.

Coming Together in Refugee Support Work: Tümata Concert at Refugio

Refugio, a local welcome initiative (supported in part by the Protestant city mission), hosted the event. On the appointed day, Tümata-Berlin members arrived early and decorated the stage. We waited for the refugee newcomers to arrive in significant numbers. The Refugio representative addressed the crowd with pledges of welcome. Mahmud, a photographer, cook, translator, and Syrian refugee, shared stories from his journey.

"Do not ask me where I come from. Ask me where I am going!" During the event, I retold a story attributed to Nasruddin, considered to be a trickster Sufi figure.[22] The logic of dual apprenticeship enabled me to provide a taste (*dhawq*) of Sufism, with performative storytelling, while adding a critical note about Sufism (object of inquiry) to make the anthropological tradition public and engaged:

> For those of you who have not heard anything about Sufism, let me offer you a very short summary of a global practice that dates back more than a thousand years. Sufism is usually defined as Islamic mysticism or Islamic spirituality. But many Sufis argue that it is not necessary to be a Muslim to practice Sufism. They prefer to call it a way of the (breathing) heart. There are many Sufi techniques. Storytelling and music are just two of them that you will be experiencing today. (excerpt from public talk, 31 October 2015)

Writing a minuscule version of a diverse, global tradition is always difficult. Delivering a public talk to a mixed audience has other difficulties. The conundrum of translating my talk from English to German and Arabic added up to a long list of challenges, both

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epistemological and linguistic. It was a tight-rope balancing act of being both a Sufi student (*murid*) and a doctoral student of urban anthropology.

After the story and the speeches by the Refugio representative and Mahmud, Tümata-Berlin began their public performance. They played musical pieces in Turkish, Arabic, and Dari. At one point, the audience was invited to perform by making (what they perceived to be) animal sounds and enacting/imitating any animal. Immediately the rattling of drums and the sounds of the human voice mingled in a sonic cacophony. On the left side, Gertrud was playing the drum with light taps. She happily mimicked the sheepish *baa* in regular sequence. From the other side of the stage came the bovine *moo*. The late Oruç Güvenç, the founder of Tümata, rang the cowbell from time to time. The audience responded with laughter, joining the Sufi musicians with an orchestra of human and para-human sounds. The cacophony continued for a few minutes before it stopped. The ringing of the cowbell from an imagined time/place in Central Asia faded into the distance. We returned to the hall, back to Berlin.

On this occasion, Tümata-Berlin also performed several rounds of dhikr with the public (figure 6.2). The crowd followed their invitation to breathe differently and recite the names of Allah. Not only Sufis but also the non-Sufis in the audience joined the collective breathing, rocking their bodies from front to back, reciting and resonating with the musicians. Hafiz and Zafar (chapters 1 and 3) were also at the event. They began to whirl in the space between the stage and the public. Gertrud and a young man from the Haqqani-Naqshbandi center joined them. It was an unplanned, spontaneous *sema*.

What was the political relevance of such solidarity action? "Was this *really* refugee support work?" Fellow anthropologists challenged the organizers and me to be explicit about our motivations, the ethical implications, and the practical use of such welcome concerts. Ontological politics was again at play in these challenges. What makes the coming together of Sufi musicians, anthropologists, refugees, and refugee activists refugee support work? What turns such forms of refugee support work into political action?

Affective politics cannot be disentangled from affective pedagogy. If one considers the Tümata-Berlin event to be a "form of experiential pedagogy,"[23] it will not sit easily with the secularist assumption of aesthetic, spiritual practice being ineffective. Neither will it gain

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Figure 6.2. Tümata-Berlin with the late Oruç Güvenç playing Sufi-designated music at the concert in Refugio, 31 October 2015. © Nasima Selim.

approval from the conservational articulation of what Sufism is supposed to be, and what the Sufis should be doing in times of social crisis. One cannot expect that a singular event would create waves of change as far as the plight of refugee newcomers is concerned, yet the politics of the otherwise extends a hopeful "social aesthetics" (Highmore 2010, 135). The same event could also be read as cultural appropriation and/or the mobilization of postsecular politics, depending upon who is interpreting and from which vantage point, implicating what.

Mobilizing Postsecular Politics

Postsecular politics offers both negative and life-affirming possibilities. The analytical choice is to differentiate between "which kind of politics and which kind of religion" (Sigurdson 2010, 33). Postsecular politics of religious/spiritual plurality may de/stabilize a nationalist identity as the primary identification point for citizens, and either resist or intensify the divisive identity politics within Islam. The question is: what did the Sufi music concert for the refugees/

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newcomers in the city communicate? Was it a politicized event so far as it reached its limit in expanding the "communicative pedagogy" (2010, 33) of the "multicultural" music, stories, languages, and the kind of people it brought together?

In some ways, the event did not achieve its goal of bringing refugee newcomers to the event in large numbers. "Only a few refugees came . . . I think certain points in the preparation could be worked out, such as the location or the design of the announcement or the theme," Minar, a young *oud* player and Tümata-Berlin member, wrote to me a few days later. "[But] just by recognizing that, the concert was a success. The effects [among the audience] of our music encourage us in this work. However, personally, I can still learn a lot as a beginner (whether musically, textually, or in terms of presentation technique)" (email, 8 November 2015). Despite his multiple tasks of playing *oud* and translating Güvenç's talk from Turkish to English on the stage, Minar managed to tap into the mood of the audience. He noticed how the mood changed slowly from vague interest to intense involvement: "The mood lightened up. I especially remember the affirming whispering when we announced the song that the women sang at the Prophet's (peace be upon him) arrival in Medina. Afterward, some people spontaneously joined the *sema* when we changed from the pentatonic melody to other tones" (email, 8 November 2015).

Minar and Tümata-Berlin members involved most of the audience with the gradual intensification of a collective mood. They invited the audience to participate in the Sufi practices of breathing and resonating with Allah (dhikr), whirling their bodies collectively (*sema*). The not-immediately-recognized-as-Sufi gesture of imitating animal sounds emphasized that their "caravan" was composed of humans and nonhumans. Drawn from the Central Asian Shamanic repertoire, these animal sounds mingled with the drumming, rattling, jingling, and varied tones of the human voice to enact a caravan on the way.

Following the late Oruç Güvenç's biographical and spiritual lineage, the Tümata network is invested in bringing together Turkish Sufi music and Central Asian Shamanic music. The Allah-infused Sufi sounds from the Turkish tradition and the Shamanic sounds from parts of Central Asia enacted a postsecular imagination that could not be traced back to a singular time, place, people, or prac-

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tice. According to Tümata's internal logic, their repertoire belongs to older traditions newly discovered and represented.

"Could it be that some people were intimidated by the religious elements of the event?" Johanna, a fellow anthropologist, was curious about the impressions of the public. "There was a cross and an altar saying, *Danke* (Thank you)" she said. "There were Sufi musicians. There was bowing. There was Allah in the songs!" Johanna and her Colombian friends loved the gathering, "The unobtrusive way of joining people in what was a very spiritual act of dancing, playing music, being together. Was this too much for some [secular Germans]?" (email, 2 November 2015). Johanna was surprised that some of our white German peers tended to classify religion as a strictly separated realm from other domains, such as politics.

A secularist analytical approach restricts religion to a separate domain while excluding it from anthropological ways of knowing (Fountain 2013). But anthropology can also play a role in interrogating the separation between the religious and the secular (Lambek 2013; Milbank 2006). Such an approach and role for anthropology was challenged and re-negotiated by organizing the event with Sufi musicians. Reproducing the secular-religious dichotomy while locating the religious as a definable object of study, anthropology can be, and is often, positioned on the secular side of this distinction (Fountain 2013). Although (old and) new approaches challenge this dichotomy and the secularist standpoint of anthropology, this disciplinary heritage continues to impact anthropological scholarship.[24]

The distinction between the religious and the secular was complicated by the collaborative approach in the event's aftermath. Other than doing anthropology in a separate religious space, this event led to a multiplication of roles and solidarity actions (Selim et al. 2018). My fieldwork transitioned from the sites of documenting Sufi practice to engaged Sufism. The Tümata-Berlin concert became a parallel site[25] of anthropological engagement with an epistemic partnership among anthropologists, Sufi musicians, refugee activists, and refugee newcomers. The event conjured an assemblage of Sufi practice, refugee support work, and public anthropology. And I asked myself: Why should there be a separation between the field of ethnographic documentation and sociopolitical engagement in the first place?[26]

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Concluding Remarks

In writing this book, I was often plagued by the political relevance of my work. Colleagues and friends have questioned my hesitation to emphasize Sufism as always-already Islamic mysticism. Fellow scholars criticized my insistence on exploring other dimensions beyond Sufism's political economy. In this chapter, I addressed some of these concerns, articulating the kinds of politics that emerged from practice: ontological, anti-political, therapeutic, and life-affirming affective politics.

As much as we live in a milieu of liquid fear and anti-Muslim racism in German society, humans as liturgical animals are capable of living and co-creating healing communities even in a place fraught with such tensions. The politics of breathing, wayfaring hearts mobilize resistance and solidarity in creating a world of possibilities, not only in crisis and response but in a healing mode, invoking a non-anthropomorphic entity if and when necessary.

For my Sufi interlocutors in contemporary Berlin, the business of life goes on. Sufism does not promise a permanent respite from the problems of living and existential struggles. It may lead to the possibility of living otherwise. It may not. The German media debate (Weidner versus Trojanow) speaks to the local Sufi discourses, and similar discourses circulate in the global media. In the discussion on Sufism in "the West," the phenomena of sponsored Sufism, whitewashing, and cultural appropriation are the elements of broader, ontological politics that any student of Sufism and/or anthropology must be aware of. Without such awareness, the politics of breathing hearts remain uninformed, unbridled, and uncritical optimism. What is required from the scholars studying Sufism in its multiple enactments is an attunement to such politics, not only but also inhabiting clear positions in the discussion of Sufism beyond orientalism and fundamentalism (Ernst 2003).

Beyond questions of ontology, whether Sufism is peaceful or militant, we must be aware of the more conventional politics of state-sponsoring and modes of appropriating Sufism, and the questions they confront us with (Muedini 2015b; Ernst 2003, 1997). National elites might support or criticize Sufism out of governance interests, as they might promote, marginalize, or disregard other for-

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mations. Privileged white non-Muslims might (culturally) appropriate Sufism, stripping its historical and hermeneutic grounding in the Islamic tradition.

The political danger of the possibilities of a not-so-Islamic Sufism is that it appropriates what rightfully belongs to the Islamic tradition, albeit practiced and learned by Muslims and non-Muslims. The readers must not assume that Sufi practices open the (however limited) conditions of possibility, and Islam does not. Such an assumption will deepen the dichotomy of "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim" (Mamdani 2002, 766), implying that Sufi Muslims are good and other Muslims are bad (Safi 2011).[27] If Sufi practice at times seems not to mobilize a Muslim identity or a religious discourse, matters could get even worse. One might then argue that Sufism is good, and Islam is bad.

Why should (ontological) political possibilities force the scholars of Sufism to be conservational (invested in conserving what is assumed to be disappearing) about the diverse manifestations of Sufism by fixing its ontology always-already in the past, ignoring its contemporary formations? There are definite political pitfalls in discussing Sufism in terms of (non-)Islamic ontologies. But adopting the conservational politics of fixing Sufism's ontology as only (Islamic) mysticism is not the solution. The lessons I embodied as a dual apprentice during fieldwork and ongoing engagements have taught me something else.

The point is not to argue about what Sufism is or is not, but what it can become. The ontological, anti-political, and therapeutic politics, formulated as the politics of breathing hearts, offer the imperative to take a stand, situate oneself, and engage in the hermeneutics of (affective) pedagogy. Such politics encourages the argument that Sufism, like any other phenomenon, becomes what it is, only in practice. My task in this book was to tell a version of Sufi-Berlin in the company of anthropological methods, engaging with the Sufi breather-wayfarers, to trace their desire lines, the lines of transmission, to participate (and describe) the transformative techniques, healing practices, and the reflection of political possibilities of "breathing well." In the next, concluding chapter, I re-iterate the interventions *Breathing Hearts* makes, drawing on the lessons and limitations of this work, and mapping the unchartered terrains for future inquiry.

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Notes

1. Havel ([1984] 1992, 271).
2. Michel de Certeau (1984) argued how (cultural) appropriation is part and parcel of everyday life, where ordinary people appropriate objects, ideas, and institutions without adequately knowing about their situated trajectories. In white supremacist societies, such unknowing is often symbolic of white ignorance and a blatant refusal of the dominant white majority to educate themselves about non-Western traditions and that of the marginalized BIPOC communities. Attribution of "cultural appropriation" is often criticized in the mainstream media of Germany as divisive identity politics, but such criticisms (of identity politics) end up in an oversimplification of cultural appropriation (Distelhorst 2021; Franzen 2020). See Hans Peter Hahn (2011, 2012) for a discussion of recent debates about cultural appropriation in terms of unequal power relations, transformation processes, and the re/definition of traditions. See Noah Sow (2011) for a more critical approach and examples in the German context.
3. Ludwig Schleßmann (2003, 131) described the Haqqani-Naqshbandi members defining themselves as "nonpolitical."
4. Amira Mittermaier (2014) extended Elizabeth Povinelli's notion of "the otherwise" (2014) in understanding the ethics of giving in a Sufi *khidma* (literally meaning "service," a space near a Sufi shrine that provides guests with a place to rest, serving food and tea) in contemporary Egypt. She argues that such acts of immediacy invite the anthropology of "the otherwise" although the *khidma* is disinterested in the social, political, or economic change in the longer term (Mittermaier 2014, 54–56).
5. An estimated 75 percent of the population in Germany still read daily newspapers (Pürer and Raabe 2007, 314).
6. Another prestigious newspaper, *Zeit*, also published a guest article titled "Sufism: The Strongest Weapon of Islam Is Love" (*Sufismus: Die stärkste Waffe des Islam ist die Liebe*) (Rizwi 2017), receiving 147 comments from avid readers.
7. Ethnographers must be cautious about supporting the claims made by their interlocutors. A recent example is the controversy around the Sufi-designated Fethullah Gülen movement that brought Sufism and Islamism together in its promotion of religious education and missionary activities in Germany and Tanzania (Wagenseil 2016; Dohrn 2014). See S. J. Thomas Michel (2005) for an earlier discussion of the Gülen movement's contested relationship with Sufism.
8. In the nineteenth century, Sufi networks were involved in military resistance against European colonial powers, for example, during the colonial period on the Indian subcontinent against the British, in North Africa against the French, and in North Caucasus against the Russian colonial powers. And when post-colonial states tried to force secularization, Sufi networks participated in rebellions, for example, against the early Turkish Republic and pre-1982 Syria (Heck 2009; Muedini 2015a).

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9. As an illustrative example, Matthijs Van den Bos (2002) argued that Sufi teachers were often subservient to the political establishment in Iran from the later Qajar era to the Islamic Republic. He criticized the phenomenological approach for being nonpolitical and transhistorical.
10. Fait Muedini (2015b) detailed the divergent politics among Sufi-inspired groups and governmental politics of supporting Sufism to stay in power. Paulo Pinto's work (2010, 2004) also provides a nuanced discussion on the spectrum of socially engaged Sufism and the production of the public sphere in pre-civil war Syria. For historical precedence of Sufi militancy, see Manuela Ceballos (2014). See Milad Milani (2018) for a recent discussion of Sufi political thought.
11. Islamic studies scholars also share this sentiment. *Sufis genießen hier einen guten Ruf!* (Sufis here enjoy a good reputation!) Riem Spielhaus, an Islamic studies scholar, expressed this opinion in an interview (Wierth 2009).
12. Therapeutic culture refers to the "intensification and proliferation of [psycho-]therapeutic ways of thinking [and practice]" that characterize contemporary societies in "the West" (Swan 2010, 3).
13. Since the 1970s and 1980s, movements like the socialist patient-collective (*Das sozialistische Patientenkollektiv*) have been an integral part of the political and therapeutic subcultures in Germany (Huber 1987). Explicitly politicized, such self-organized patient collectives inhabit the same therapeutic culture spectrum as the explicitly anti-political healing communities. A persistent focus on healing does not necessarily diminish the political cultures of a society but produces diverse kinds of politics and political action.
14. Václav Havel (1936–2011), the Czech dissident writer and politician, articulated the notion of *hope without optimism*: "It is not the conviction that things will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out" (Havel 1991, 181). See Patrick Deneen (1999) for a discussion of the politics of hope with Havel's reference to the "elsewhere" as the source of hope, both secular and transcendental.
15. Scholars have discussed opposing and ambivalent public emotions in the *welcome culture* (feelings of compassion) and "xenophobic" attitudes (feelings of fear) (Jünemann 2017). Anti-Muslim racism is a historical and structural phenomenon in German society, and thereby, it is not a matter of harboring "xenophobic" or "compassionate" sentiments alone. See Aleksandra Lewicki and Yasemin Shooman (2020), who discussed the structural roots of anti-Muslim racism in post-unification Germany. See also Yasemin Shooman (2014) and Iman Attia (2009, 2007) for a detailed historical discussion of anti-Muslim racism in Germany.
16. See Dilger et al. (2017) for a (self-) critical account of the structural limitations and ethical, and practical challenges of ethnographic research about refugee newcomers in emergency shelters.
17. See Claus Leggewie's (2015) discussion on the rise of populism in German politics in terms of the politics of feelings, challenging the dichotomy of

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rationality and emotionality in politics. See Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) for an earlier discussion of the politics of emotion.

18. See Mary Holmes (2012) for a discussion of the emotional reflexivity in the feminist political process, where she analyzed the narratives of tolerance and love.
19. Muslim Feminists in the German context have argued for an Islamic "ethics of *rahma*" (radical compassion) (Naqshband 2022, 54) that stands in solidarity with the ethics of radical love proposed by Black feminists (see hooks 2000). Unlike secularist white feminists, Islamic feminism argues for the radical possibilities in feminist *ijtihad* (critical thinking) and *tafsir* (interpretation) from within the Islamic tradition (Sirri 2017; Kynsilehto 2008). The proposed ethics of *rahma* includes Islamic principles of reciprocity and care, radical softness/love, equality, justice, and inclusion (Naqshband 2022, 54–55). It resonates with the politically engaged Sufi ethics of love (Hammer 2006; Shaikh and Kugle 2006). The Islamic ethics of *rahma* in German decolonial scholarship can extend the preceding discussions on how the so-called mystical orientation and social responsibility could be brought together in contemporary Sufi practice (Wagner 2009, 133; Hemmati 2009, 65).
20. LaGeSo was where the refugee newcomers had to undergo an initial health check-up and registration.
21. In 2017, the center supported local refugees with food and community participation and collected donations for a soup kitchen led by Sheikh Ibrahim in war-torn Damascus. Displaying a short video on its website, the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi-Center urged the Sufi Muslims to fulfill their Islamic duty of charity, in the forms of *fitre* (one-time donation from everyone with income, fifteen Euros for Germany in 2017) and *zekat* (2.5 percent or 1/40 of one year's savings) for the people stranded in Syria, who are in dire need (Sufi-Zentrum Rabbaniyya 2017). Since 2008, the SZR has collaborated with the local non-governmental initiative, *die Offene Tür* (the Open Door), to organize and celebrate festivals with Muslim and Christian refugees (Feride, interview with the author, 2 February 2018).
22. Nasruddin/Nasreddin Hodja/Hoca (also known as Mullah Nasruddin) lived and died in the thirteenth century (Lesmana 2014; Gurkas 2012). The popular perception of Nasruddin is that of an "oriental" man with a big turban sitting on his donkey, telling jokes. In Sufi-Berlin, Nasruddin is respected as a teacher of paradox. Nasruddin tales were frequently cited and narrated by the Berlin Sufis, for example, during the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat Summer School (2013) and a storytelling event by the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sheikh Hassan Dyck at the *Werkstatt der Kulturen* in Neukölln (2014).
23. Minar later added that "the concert was a teaching situation for the performing musicians/students. In this way, Oruç Güvenç taught on multiple levels" (email, 16 September 2017). He also informed me that Tümata-Berlin collaborated with a local church in Munich to perform in a welcoming concert for refugee newcomers in the following summer of 2016 (conversation, 3 February 2018).

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24. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard (1960) criticized the personal (anti-)faith of his colleagues who believed that "religious faith is a total illusion, a curious phenomenon soon to become extinct" (1960, 110). This inherent secularist position is still a dominant mode in anthropology.
25. Hadi Nicholas Deeb and George E. Marcus encouraged anthropologists to bring the field of documentation and engagement together, arguing that the juxtaposition of documentation and engagement in the field enacts "a mutual shift in stance from researcher–subject to epistemic partnership" (2011, 51).
26. Tim Ingold (2014) distinguished between the documenting function (ethnography) and the encounters with the world and corresponding with it (anthropology). The broader tasks of anthropology expand beyond ethnographic documentation to include political engagement, teaching and learning, writing fiction, and making art, among others.
27. I thank Fait Muedini for helping me articulate this point (email, 11 September 2017).

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