

Introduction

Affective Societies – key concepts

Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve

Affect and emotion have come to dominate discourse on social and political life at the beginning of the 21st century. In politics, the rise of populism and new styles of political contestation are frequently described with reference to their emotionalizing and affectively polarizing qualities. Surging religious conflicts across the globe are portrayed through an affective lens, highlighting the importance of anger, rage, offense, and indignation for prolonged conflict. Capitalist economies are increasingly understood as exploiting not only people's cognitive and bodily capacities, but also their feelings and emotions. Practices of social media often come with intensified displays of affect, frequently addressed adversely at individuals or groups in an openly hostile or even violent manner.

This current “emotional reflexivity” – the tendency to understand and portray the social world in terms of feelings and emotions – is not confined to public spheres and political debates, but has been preceded by a “turn to affect” within different academic disciplines. This is neither a historical coincidence, nor academia's talent for foretelling the future. Research in the social and behavioral sciences as well as in the humanities and cultural studies has long suggested that affect and emotion are so intricately and essentially human that they form the fundamental basis of being and sociality. As a consequence, these disciplines have continuously developed theories that account for the role of affect and emotion in social life, both in terms of general social and cultural theory and in terms of understanding their importance for historically and culturally distinct societies.

Affective Societies is the theme of an interdisciplinary research initiative that acknowledges and systematically extends these insights to study the affective and emotional dimensions of contemporary social and societal coexistence. It is based on a theoretical and diagnostic approach centered on a social-relational and situated understanding of affect and emotion. This perspective comes with a methodological orientation focusing on empirically grounded approaches. These approaches are capable of illuminating the affective dynamics of societal coexistence in their local specificities within different domains of life in contemporary societies. The present volume develops a

tableau of key concepts that are foundational to this outlook. It offers a framework for the study of affect and emotion across a spectrum of disciplines in the social sciences, cultural and media studies, and the humanities. The book thus aims at contributing to and further developing in a systematic and innovative fashion work belonging to the broader theoretical movement in the humanities and cultural studies variously called “affect studies” or the “turn to affect.” It will do so in a way that re-connects these recent strands of theorizing with long-standing work on emotion and affective phenomena undertaken in other disciplines, in particular the social sciences, that has mostly remained outside the spotlight of these currently much-discussed lines of inquiry.

In this introduction, we will outline the overall perspective of this research initiative and explain the rationale of the present volume. We begin by discussing its title: *Affective Societies*. We will expound upon *Affective Societies* as both a theoretical designator capable of orienting productive work in social and cultural theory and a diagnostic-analytical lens for coming to terms with a salient range of recent societal developments. Along the way, we sketch the main theoretical trends that inform the approach to affect and emotion essential to all of the chapters in this volume. These include a dynamic-relational and situated understanding of affective phenomena, a perspective on embodied yet mobile repertoires of emotion, practices of mediation, and performativity. They encompass the global circulation of symbols, forms, and styles within public spheres and realms of political debate that have witnessed substantial changes over the past decade. We then introduce our understanding of concepts as dynamic templates for analytical articulation. We conceive of concepts as generative schemas linking disciplinary perspectives and bridging theory with research. At the same time, concepts are rallying points for contestation and debate, epitomizing what is not yet understood, and thereby propelling research forward. Furthermore, we explain the logic that informs the four thematic parts of the volume and outline the generic format of the 29 chapters. We close with an outlook on pressing issues for future research.

***Affective Societies*: theoretical and diagnostic perspectives**

Human coexistence is profoundly a matter of affect and emotion. This is obvious for elementary forms of sociality unfolding in face-to-face interactions or close-knit communities. It is no less evident in the formation and makeup of larger-scale forms of social organization, with regard to questions of stratification and inequality, migration, integration, and social cohesion, institutional change and stability, belonging and identification, or conflict and conflict resolution. Political communication, for example, is an area of sustained, elaborate, wide-ranging, and often expertly performed emotionalization. Likewise, the creation

and circulation of cultural ideals of coexistence, forms of belonging, or ways of being a person or a citizen are thoroughly affective and often tied to specific emotions. Somewhat less obvious – at least by conventional standards of social and political theory – is the involvement of affect and emotion in the strategies of governance employed by state actors to secure allegiance and elicit conformity among its constituents. Here too, a perspective focusing on affect and emotion will reveal a range of important insights. For instance, it will bring to light strategies directed at the cultivation, regimentation, and discursive elaboration of sentiments, affective styles, and emotion repertoires, for instance, those pertaining to aspects of belonging and collective identity or to modes of compliance with the demands of prevailing political and economic powers. Governing subjects necessarily involves governing their hearts. Or, at any rate, it involves sustained and far-reaching attempts to do so, which are often met with resistance and may have profound unintended consequences, which are usually themselves matters of intensive affect.

Affect and emotion are also highly prevalent in those social structures and social situations in which inequalities and power relations bound to race, class, and gender are rampant. While these categories and their intersections have been investigated by various disciplines with regard to social, economic, and political standing and in view of identities and identity politics, their affective constitution has by and large received only scarce attention. Race, class, and gender, unlike many other forms of social differentiation, inherently involve affective processes of othering that go hand in hand with relational modes of address, distinction, and valuation. Memorably analyzed by Frantz Fanon (1952/2008) in the case of race, such historically grounded markers of human difference are established and sustained for the most part by way of antagonistic affective relations (→ *affects of racialization*). Such processes of categorical marking are inherently affective, that is, they involve potentialities for action which can manifest as (subtle or not so subtle) affective dispositions or as outright emotions, such as resentment, shame, fear, pride, and the like. In view of widespread xenophobia and the continued prevalence of structural discrimination and institutional racism, Fanon's searing analytic of the affective and corporeal workings of racialization is certainly ripe for an emphatic revival.

Considering these involvements and intricacies, the long-standing assumption in social theory of a dichotomous opposition between affectivity and rationality turns out to be grossly inadequate. While it may still be reasonable to describe aspects of the formation of modern societies and nation states and their various agencies and institutions as processes of rationalization, the assumption that there is a corresponding de-emphasizing of affectivity is profoundly misguided. In research on affective phenomena, the dichotomy of emotion and reason has long given way to views that stress their entanglement and mutual co-dependence. Affectivity is indispensable for assessments of relevance, for the formation of value and valuation, and for keeping social

practices focused on what issues are of concern and what is at stake. Without affectivity, nothing resembling real-life evaluation and decision-making would be possible at either the individual or the collective level.

Accordingly, current theorizing on affect and emotion, especially (but not only) in fields such as cultural affect theory, philosophy and sociology of emotion, as well as cultural anthropology, favors a more elaborate and realistic picture of how contemporary forms of social organization, social collectives, and their many forms of governance and coordination operate, and of how they have emerged historically. Likewise, this more recent research enables scholars to better understand how the development of these social formations and agencies has been crucially involved in the genesis and subsequent modulation, disciplining, and governing of the classical “human subject” of Western modernity. By turning toward the affective and emotional dimensions of sociality, social theory catches up with state-of-the-art scholarship on emotion and affect. This work neither assumes a dichotomous opposition between affectivity and rationality, nor does it consider affect to be a private, inner, exclusively “subjective” affair. Instead, it foregrounds the situatedness of affect and emotion and emphasizes the dynamic relationality of affective processes in their embodied and embedded specificity and with regard to their efficaciousness as forceful relations in various local and trans-local contexts. Here, affective, cognitive, and volitional elements are inextricably entangled. As such dynamic compartments, affects and emotions are indispensable driving forces in the constitution of practices, forms of life, institutions, groups, and social collectives. The title *Affective Societies* and the chapters comprising this key concepts volume take up several significant lines of work on affect and emotion with the aim of investigating the affective and emotional dimensions of social coexistence in contemporary societies.

A social theory perspective

Affective Societies is primarily a theoretical denominator of the systematic multi-faceted involvement of affect and emotion among the processes that enable, create, sustain – but also threaten or disrupt – human social and societal life. As an orientating concept, it covers the entire spectrum of social theorizing, combining elements of both general *social theory* and diagnostic *theories of societies*. This useful distinction, however, is more prominent in the German academic context and less widely used in the Anglophone world. In Anglophone contexts, the term “social theory” is commonly used to denote both general theories of the social (*Sozialtheorie*) and theories of historically specific societal formations or societies, often uniting diagnostic, critical, and normative dimensions (*Gesellschaftstheorie*). Yet these distinct types of theory are interconnected in that any social theory is developed within the specific social and historical context within which the researcher is embedded. In addition, any theory of society relies on concepts of social theory and corresponding

“middle range” theories (cf. Lindemann, 2009, who draws on Georg Simmel’s distinction of these types of theory).

In terms of social theory, *Affective Societies* addresses foundational problems and questions generally pertaining to *the social* as recurring in different disciplinary contexts, such as anthropology, philosophy, sociology, or cultural studies. From this perspective, affect is suggested as an essential social theoretical concept, much like other prominent concepts in existing social theory, for instance, agency, reciprocity, interaction, communication, or intention. Affect is hence not merely an add-on to these more established notions, but a foundational dimension of interpersonal relationality itself – it is the central dynamic force of social connectedness, ranging from face-to-face encounters to various interactive dynamics between individuals and collectives as well as inter- and intra-group relations. The latter examples, in particular, already permeate the borders of what is known as “middle range” theories in some disciplinary contexts (Merton, 1968), which take particular empirical social phenomena under scrutiny, such as racism, economic exchange, or social mobility. Theories of ritual interaction are a good example of a middle range theory, in particular because affect and emotion have traditionally played a central role therein. Durkheim (1912/1995) was interested in how solidarity can be maintained amongst group members and suggested that rituals and collective effervescence (which can be understood as a form of affective resonance) tie group members to one another and to the group’s shared values. Collins (2004) later extended this theory to include the concept of emotional energy as an outcome of ritual interaction. Theories like these are usually informed by or are extensions of specific social theories and, as becomes evident in the many examples in this volume, can provide novel understandings of both micro- and macro-level social phenomena as fundamentally rooted in affect and emotion. These include family relations, health-care, audiences, literature and the arts, communities, political parties, organizations, or social institutions such as the law, religion, or mass media.

A diagnostic angle

Aside from this emphasis on social theory and corresponding “middle range” theories of and empirical research on concrete social phenomena, *Affective Societies* also bears a diagnostic and critical angle as it is found in many theories of societies. These theories circumscribe specific and historically situated larger societal formations, in most instances societies in modern (Western) nation states. They usually rely on specific assumptions and concepts of social theory and, more often than not, integrate and synthesize arrays of “middle range” theory and research on phenomena that scholars deem idiomatic and important for a specific (type of) society. Examples would include theories of the post-industrial (or knowledge) society (e.g., Bell, 1973), of modern capitalist society (e.g., Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007), of the risk society (Beck,

1992), or of the information and network society (e.g., Castells, 2010) (see Schimank & Volkmann, 2007, for a broader assessment).

With regard to contemporary societies, there seems to be something novel and urgent going on when it comes to manifestations of affect in public discourse, as part of political communications, in mediatized social interactions, and in more overarching attempts at managing, controlling, and governing affect and emotion. In the economy, for example, a neoliberal ideology increasingly addresses – and exploits – people’s emotions and seeks to establish forms of affective governance that aim at maximizing corporate revenue. The infamous Facebook experiment in 2012 that manipulated users’ newsfeeds according to their affective implications, pertinent cultural programs that emphasize happiness, well-being, and emotional intelligence, and on- and offline assessments of users’ emotional states for the purposes of targeted and personalized advertising are but some of the developments we have in mind. Another example is a series of recent political events and developments that have signaled a sea change in public communication and global politics. New forms of social media activism bring politically pressing issues onto the public agenda and mobilize attention and involvement rapidly and with unprecedented reach. Political parties and protest movements emerge and rally around salient issues as a result of novel forms of mediatized interaction in a decentralized landscape of communications. In general, there is a heightened sense of – or one might say even hunger for – spontaneous, informal, highly sensuous modes of affective associations, resulting in transient collectives or affective communities (→ *affective communities*). At the same time, one cannot fail to notice the widespread emergence, public appeal, and sustained success of right-wing populist parties across Europe and the world, and their reliance on highly affective modes of communication. This accompanies a substantially altered political climate, evidenced by the increasingly divisive nature of political debate and practices in the context of the so-called European “refugee crisis” since 2015. Other landmark events in this regard are the successful Brexit campaign of 2016 with its polarizing debates, the shameless recourse to fake news, the election and subsequent public displays of “twitter president” Donald Trump, or more generally the emergence of and support for illiberal and anti-democratic regimes and dictators across Europe and the world. Concomitantly, rumors, smear campaigns, and conspiracy theories are in high demand – it seems that what “feels true” increasingly wins the day over knowledge claims grounded in evidence, including those brought forth by acclaimed experts or members of the intellectual establishment. No less significant are the rampant forms of trolling, countless instances of hate speech, or the strategic circulation of misinformation online (as well as offline) that have begun to profoundly affect the social life and political culture of many societies around the globe.

All of these examples, many of which are addressed by ongoing research in the *Affective Societies* Center, suggest that a range of social, cultural, and political

phenomena that are characteristic of the present state of social coexistence in mobile and networked worlds revolve around affect and emotion. “Affective societies” in this respect functions as a sensitizing concept apt to direct focused attention to the increasing *intensification* and *reflexivity* of affective modes of interaction and communication that can be witnessed in the frantic and fragmented realms of what was formerly known as the “public sphere.” In times of social media and individualized media practices, the orientating fiction of a single common realm of public debate governed by agreed-upon rational norms of communication and grounded in at least the semblance of a moral consensus no longer seems tenable. Instead, its place has been taken by a fragmented landscape in which a plethora of local or identity-focused in-groups, parties, small-scale communities, or factions rally around symbols, styles, or ideals, often in ways that are highly affective (cf. Papacharissi, 2015). Within these emerging practices and their mediatized spaces, affective modes of address have assumed center stage, often to the detriment of most other forms and styles of interaction. It is as of now unclear, however, what specific forms of sociality and what modes of political participation will consolidate and prove consequential in this thoroughly reformatted and vigorously contested public landscape. Some of the few existing attempts at describing the specifically affective and emotional “modern condition” (Dennis H. Wrong) may provide valuable orientation and inspiration in developing the diagnostic potential of *Affective Societies* (e.g., Illouz, 2007; Furedi, 1997; Mishra, 2017; Lordon, 2013).

Beyond the relevance of affect and emotion for general social theory, *Affective Societies* thus also designates a historical formation of a specific kind: societies whose modes of operation and means of integration increasingly involve systematic efforts to mobilize and strategically deploy affect and emotion in a highly intensified and often one-sided manner. This calls for focused attention to new and intensified ways in which affective modes of communication take on an increasing salience both in mediatized public discourse, and for the actors and agencies that aspire to take advantage of these developments, for instance, by devising focused campaigns for emotionalizing debates or creating or intensifying a narrow range of collective sentiments (such as fear of or hatred against migrants, anger at the government, or distrust of elites).

As a directive for research, this diagnostic angle of the title *Affective Societies* calls for a refined sensibility for what is truly substantive and specific to contemporary societies. While it is important to keep attempts at social and political diagnosis grounded in careful scholarship on historical developments, empirically grounded “middle range” theories, and reference to existing theories of societies, it is likewise key to cultivate a sense for what is (historically) peculiar and unique to present-day social and cultural life. This diagnostic sense for what is new should include an educated audacity, a daringness to undertake imaginative larger-scale assessments of present developments under conditions of incomplete knowledge. Strategies of interpretive extrapolation

and dramatization could play a role in bringing notable developments into clearer focus and rendering salient aspects that might otherwise escape attention. A central aim of our work is to equip scholars and researchers with conceptual and methodological tools that are up to this task. The affect- and emotion-theoretic concepts sketched in this volume are potential building blocks for an endeavor of this kind.

Connection and contestation: the role of concepts in research

Challenges of a research program

Taken together, the theoretical and the diagnostic understanding of our title has provided the rationale of the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) *Affective Societies* at Freie Universität Berlin. The premise of this interdisciplinary initiative is that a dynamic-relational account of affect and emotion can guide a heterogeneous cluster of research perspectives that all study aspects of the affective and emotional underpinnings of contemporary societal coexistence. In particular, emphasis is placed on the affective dynamics of transnational migration, on processes of societal transformation due to increased mobility, on changing emotion repertoires in a rapidly transformed global media landscape, and on various forms of collectivization and emerging communities, for instance, in politics, as part of social movements, in local or social media communities, in the arts, or in entertainment. This includes focusing on sources of inequality and stratification, intergroup conflict, and processes of social exclusion and disintegration within contemporary societies. Disciplines contributing to the Center range from social and cultural anthropology, sociology, theater and performance studies, literature, communication, media and film studies to art history and philosophy – a unique combination of fields that may well be unprecedented within affect and emotion research.

The initiative as well as this volume are thus highly interdisciplinary in nature and bring together theory and research from various areas of the social sciences, cultural studies, and the humanities. A major challenge for an endeavor of this kind is to devise a conceptual repertoire that is firmly anchored in its subject matter while versatile enough to find application across such a range of disciplines. We envision that these carefully crafted concepts work as bridges between fields as they link distinct theoretical concerns, facilitate the transfer of insights, ignite novel questions and methods, and sensitize theorists and researchers to the intricacies of different domains of study. In the day-to-day work of the Center, a number of focal concepts have instigated collaboration, inspiring the search for connections as well as critical debate. Projects from different disciplines, with different aims and, at times, widely diverging methodological repertoires find common ground by focusing jointly on a set of focal concepts. A key advantage of singling out concepts – instead

of more encompassing formulations of “theory” – is that they are capable of providing a shared understanding in the face of significant differences in research perspectives, and even where there may be disagreement and critical disputes concerning specific issues pertaining to a given subject matter.

Because concepts, as we understand them, are primarily means to provide, focus and frame *access* to salient objects and phenomena of social and cultural reality, their productive role is best illustrated by way of examples from the work of our initiative. We briefly outline two areas of interest. The first concerns social collectives; the second concerns what we call emotion repertoires.

Several of the Center’s projects tackle the question of how social collectives are formed and how they become more integrated and sustained under present-day conditions and with regard to affective modes of interaction. Nevertheless, the ways in which these undertakings approach their common theme differ markedly. They range from ethnographic field work in religious communities and participant observation of political movements, new forms of affect-aware discourse analysis, and the employment of video and audio recordings in the study of audience emotions to the in-depth study of theater performances or the minute analysis of film sequences and their recurring audiovisual patterns and dynamic forms in the sense of a genre-specific poetics of affect. While vastly different in terms of materials, methods, and disciplinary orientation, these separate projects coalesce around several guiding concepts. These include a newly introduced notion of *social collectives* that emphasizes dynamics of collectivization based on affective relations and shared self-understandings (→ *social collectives*) and a specifically affect-theoretic understanding of communities and forms of commonality, in part based on episodes of high-intensity relational affect (→ *affective communities*). These concepts are, moreover, closely linked to an understanding of the political that refers to formative relations of power and the dynamics between social cohesion and social disintegration while drawing on the integrative potentials of aesthetic forms and shared imaginaries (→ *political affect*; → *poetics of affect*; → *Midān moments*; → *affective citizenship*). All these concepts work as dynamic connectors of different scholarly orientations. Their partial openness invites productive elaboration in different domains.

Several of the center’s other research endeavors find common ground in a performative understanding of consolidated emotion repertoires (→ *emotion repertoires*). These projects likewise diverge significantly in their aims and orientations, for example, between actor-centric approaches and approaches that focus on the collective or institutional level and processes of mediation. The latter understand emotion repertoires not primarily as individually embodied, enactive and expressive capacities or dispositions, but rather as repositories of affective forms and modes of expression implemented in and regulated by social domains, subcultures or organizations. Here, emotion repertoires are dynamic, mobile, and prone to travel, transform, and hybridize. At first glance, this stands in tension with the actor-centric approach that stresses the stability and resistance to change of embodied repertoires acquired at early

stages of enculturation (→ *attachment*; → *Gefühlsbildung*). However, when these two contrasting perspectives on the modus operandi and the levels of implementation of emotion repertoires are conjoined, a productive angle for research ensues. New questions become pressing, such as those pertaining to the relationship of individual embodiment and the mediation and circulation of repertoires. Specifically, how might emotional expressions be stabilized into dynamic yet embodied forms capable of circulation and apt to instigate corporeal reenactment by differently socialized individuals at different times or places (→ *Pathosformel*)? “Emotion repertoire” and its conceptual surroundings are thus exemplary for the way we envision concepts working in affect and emotion research: not as homogeneous constructs with a fixed meaning, but as partially open and unfinished formations that inspire efforts to elaborate on, embellish, and concretely situate them. As we have seen, the “life” of a concept within interdisciplinary scholarship may encompass disputes about a certain dimension of its meaning or about a theoretical orientation more broadly. In the case at hand, this is evidenced by disagreements about the degree and robustness of the bodily “grounding” of emotion repertoires and thus the question of the relative stability and intransigence of such repertoires versus their malleability, fluidity, and capacity to circulate and hybridize.

The idea of the present volume on the key concepts of *Affective Societies* has grown out of this productive employment of concepts as devices that “travel” between disciplines, research domains, and methodological orientations. As we have seen, this may crucially include focused clashes between their respective outlooks – conflicts and quarrels that drive research forward.

Working concepts: theory and research

It will be helpful to briefly elaborate the understanding of concepts we draw on. Concepts are primarily means to enable controlled and focused access to objects and phenomena. This qualified realist orientation is the starting point of our understanding. To prevent a futile debate about representational accuracy or about “realist” versus “instrumentalist” understandings of research, we will not argue for it here. Importantly, however, concepts function as connectors between fields and as rallying points for the convergence of perspectives, but also as matters of contestation and debate. In such cases of dispute, what a concept does is help “contain” disagreement by providing a common – if tentative and shifting – frame of reference for diverging perspectives. Accordingly, points of conflict – and concomitant open questions or unresolved issues – may be identified with precision against a background of shared understanding, even across disciplinary boundaries. Often, what happens is that a conflict about certain components of a concept will inspire the forming of novel concepts, ideally in ways that render the initial problematic more tractable. Thus, when all goes well, such conflicts advance understanding by informing and driving conceptual development (cf. Slaby, Mühlhoff, & Wüschner, 2019).

Obviously, then, concepts are crucial to interdisciplinary work. They operate as hinges between distinct fields, they can bridge theory with methodology, and they are specifically prone to “travel” through different subject areas, informing and inspiring specific elaborations in these respective fields, while taking up and incorporating new elements in turn. With this, our understanding of working concepts aligns with Mieke Bal’s (2002) influential approach to “traveling concepts,” put forth specifically as a methodological orientation for the interdisciplinary humanities and cultural studies. Besides a rigorous orientation to accessing objects of research “on their own terms” (Bal, 2002, p. 8), and underscoring the power of concepts to “organize a group of phenomena, define the relevant questions to be addressed to them, and determine the meanings that can be given to observations regarding the phenomena” (Bal, 2002, p. 31), Bal emphasizes the generative nature of traveling concepts. This echoes the philosophical approach to concepts of Deleuze and Guattari (1994) as well as Isabelle Stengers’ innovative discussion of concepts in the natural sciences (Stengers & Schlanger, 1991). Bal’s own case studies feature concepts that work as dynamic templates for the further articulation and refinement of existing notions, but especially illustrate the development of new domain-inherent concepts derived from a specific conceptual source in response to concrete problems. She discusses the example of “performativity,” a concept that has left significant imprints on an enormously wide swath of fields and disciplines, each time with a different emphasis. Less attended to in recent scholarship is the man who helped initiate the performativity trend, sociologist Erving Goffman. His bold conceptual move was the transposition of an entire cluster of concepts from the domain of theater to social life at large, resulting in a creatively formulated account of situated social interaction in terms of social roles, performances of self, ostentative public displays and stagings, and the intricate arrangement of interactional settings (Goffman, 1956, 1967; see Knoblauch, 2009, for discussion). This provided, in effect, a “new and effective organization of the phenomena” of micro-social interactivity (Bal, 2002, p. 31). A comparable conceptual move, albeit in a different contexts and sourced from a rather different domain, happens in the present volume, when Rainer Mühlhoff transposes the technical concept of resonance from classical mechanics (especially from the physics of dynamic oscillators) to the realm of affective relationality. Mühlhoff thereby provides a new way to spell out a relational understanding of affect in detail. Since physical resonance is a case of dynamic coupling irreducible to the mere addition of separately individuated entities, this engenders an understanding of affect as profoundly and irreducibly relational (\rightarrow *affective resonance*). The significant ramifications of this proposal are evident in several of the chapters in this volume.

As these examples show, concepts also inform the theoretical sensibilities and perceptual habits of researchers. They help shape viewpoints and angles on complex subject matters and research domains (*sensitizing concepts*, Blumer, 1954), and they can specifically “sharpen the senses,” in particular when a

new conceptual articulation breaks with established habits of sorting and judging matters, offering novel modes of cognitive access to reality and thus accompanied by newly configured capacities for recognition and judgment on the part of researchers (cf. Slaby, Mühlhoff, & Wüschner, 2019). When successful, this may help initiate entire research programs, and inspire further conceptual development down the road, as the echoes of Goffman's work in later articulations of the performativity paradigm illustrate (e.g., Butler, 1993).

Traveling concepts may be promising, but using them without reflection also has considerable pitfalls. Concepts that are meaningful and instructive to theoretical or empirical analysis in one disciplinary context may obfuscate careful and precise analysis and rather lead away from producing meaningful insights in others. This is especially the case when it is not actual concepts that travel, but merely terminology, labels, or metaphors that are halfheartedly adopted in another disciplinary context. Concepts such as “swarm” and “herding” might serve as examples here. As biological concepts describing specific kinds of animal behavior, they have successively made their way into the social sciences and are widely used to denote phenomena of mass behavior, for instance, in finance or collective decision-making. By being too quick or imprecise in employing concepts which have traveled, however, researchers might lose sight of alternative mechanisms or explanations underlying the phenomenon of interest or extend the concept in ways that renders it close to meaningless (sometimes referred to as “concept stretching,” cf. Sartori, 1970). Early in the “turn to affect,” similarly problematic maneuvers were made with regard to concepts from neuroscience and developmental psychology, as putative scientific findings and their conceptual articulation were adopted into cultural theory in an uncritical fashion (Brian Massumi's invocation of the “missing half-second” between neural impulse and conscious decision in the experimental work of neuropsychologist Benjamin Libet is exemplary in this regard; see Massumi, 1995). Such near-indiscriminate “poaching” of concepts, while sometimes productive as an initial impulse engendering novel articulations, often causes confusion on both sides. Used as catchwords, these terms misrepresent the complexity and contested nature of the scientific domains of their origin, elide the high degree of craft that comes with their adequate use, and create mere semblances of understanding in the target domain (see Papoulias & Callard, 2010). Accordingly, the practice of conceptual articulation requires critical vigilance with regard to such unfounded and under-developed transpositions – “semantic detoxification” is needed from time to time, to use a term employed by philosopher of science Mark Wilson (2006, pp. 516–518) in a related context. Other philosophers currently even call for encompassing ameliorative projects designed to battle “representational complacency” (Cappelen, 2018). Besides a constructive approach to developing and refining concepts, the chapters in this book thus also have the task of critically increasing precision and, where necessary, dismissing certain conceptual options as inadequate.

Importantly, concepts also essentially bridge theory and research in a twofold way, in particular when it comes to the acquisition and analysis of empirical data. Concept formation can proceed in an inductive fashion, wherein concepts are developed from examples and observations of empirical reality. In the social sciences, there is an abundant literature on the various techniques of data-driven concept formation (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2008). However, concepts are also widely used in more deductive ways, where a description of a concept is already known, which is then used to make sense of empirical observations. In the case of the latter, many works have discussed the criteria that useful concepts should fulfill, such as resonance, consistency, or fecundity, to name but a few (e.g., Gerring, 2012). This is not the place to delve into these methodological intricacies in detail. Rather, we are more concerned in this volume with assembling concepts that form a common *conceptual field*, in the sense that the different concepts are meaningfully related to one another and thereby facilitate relations to observable phenomena in the empirical world. This distantly resembles what Max Weber (1922/1988) suggested with regards to the formation of concepts in social science, namely that fruitful efforts are less concerned with establishing “factual relations” between empirically observable phenomena (in the sense of “neutral objectivity”), but rather between the problems that are of paramount interest to researchers. This does not mean, however, that “problems of interest to researchers” do not correspond to meaningful configurations of social reality. Well-made concepts embody and concretize this very correspondence.

Having said this, some words on the broader methodological approach of the *Affective Societies* research perspective might be instructive. Given its strongly interdisciplinary approach spanning research on affect and emotion in the humanities, cultural studies, and the social sciences, there is no unified set of methods or analytical techniques that would do justice to the broad variety of research questions that are pertinent in the different disciplines. However, the overall perspective is characterized by a common methodological orientation that implies an inductive and interpretative-hermeneutic approach to research. Because this approach is specifically geared toward an empirically grounded development of concepts and hypotheses, it differs notably from deductive approaches aimed at testing theories and hypotheses. Most of the concepts presented in this volume can therefore be understood as outcomes of this inductive and interpretative research process, whereas others have been put to use as explorative or sensitizing concepts. However, more often than not, the overall research process proceeds in a circular fashion in that concepts that have been derived from examples and observations of empirical reality are used as sensitizing concepts in a different context. Based on this methodological orientation, researchers in the *Affective Societies* initiative use and further develop a variety of established methods to study affect and emotion in different contexts, including the analysis of qualitative interviews, the photo-voice technique, the analysis of images, films, and videos,

and phenomenological analyses, as well as ethnographic, literary, and theater studies approaches to performativity. All these approaches and tools are presented and discussed in detail in what is, in effect, the “sister volume” to the present book, appearing simultaneously in this Routledge book series: *Analyzing Affective Societies*, edited by Antje Kahl (2019).

As an evolving field of interrelated notions, then, a set of working concepts gives shape to a research perspective as it carves out a domain of phenomena and opens up routes to access them in a systematic fashion, often giving rise to surprising cross-references. Moreover, concepts, while dynamic and open-textured, also function as repositories of the past, as their genealogies embody previous stages of understanding and states of research, including paths no longer taken but still instructive in hindsight. Our work with and “on” concepts in this volume will accordingly include historical perspectives, where earlier stages of conceptual articulation with regard to affect and emotion will be illuminated and brought into contact with contemporary work.

Against this background, the present volume will chart a comprehensive set of concepts elucidating affect, emotion, and affective relationality from different interlocking angles, anchored in the idea that “affect” primarily refers to dynamic processes *between* actors and *in* collectives, whereas individual affective states, emotions, and affective dispositions are derivative. This founding idea – *affective relationality*, in short – is a key principle driving conceptual development. Accordingly, a number of chapters in this volume will elaborate varieties and local specificities of such dynamic relations, as well as their formative effects. They are also informed by several other principles, including, but not limited to the idea of a complex discursive and *socio-material constructivism* with regard to emotions and emotion categories (→ *emotion*, *emotion concepts*; → *emotion repertoires*) and an elaborate understanding of *mediation* that links a basic dimension of affective and emotional embodiment with several registers of dynamic forms as well as with advanced techniques and practices of mediation (→ *affective economy*; → *Pathosformel*; → *poetics of affect*; → *(p)reenactment*; → *affective publics*). Furthermore, in such affective and emotional *practices*, elements from established praxeological accounts and notions of performativity are put to use specifically in the context of affect-based practices (→ *affective practice*; → *affective witnessing*; → *writing affect*). Drawing from, but not identical to, the idea of affective relationality, the specific capacity of affect and emotion to instigate and help enact processes of *collectivization* is emphasized in several chapters. At the same time, chapters focusing on these processes also display an awareness of the heterogeneity, precariousness and fragility of transient, affect-driven collectives (→ *affective communities*; → *audience emotions*; → *Midān moments*; → *social collectives*). The encompassing conceptual tableau that emerges thus concretizes the relationship between affectivity and the formation of communities, social and political movements, and individual and collective repertoires of emotion and their wide-ranging circulation through spaces of contemporary media.

Format of the chapters

All chapters are similarly formatted, except for differences in style and disciplinary habits. The texts combine the manner of a glossary entry with a concise review article. Working concepts will be defined, historically and systematically elucidated, and related to ongoing research by way of examples and case studies. Entries will be non-authoritative in the sense that “work on the concept” is ongoing, so that novel directions and expansions but also debate, criticism, and revisions are inspired. Readers will be both informed and enabled to proceed with further elaborations of their own. The entries stand alone, yet significant interrelations will be highlighted in the form of easily discernible (→ *cross-references*). With these parameters, we hope that the book might be read as a unified conceptual exploration of a research field, approaching the style of a team-authored monograph. At the same time, chapters will be separately usable as glossary-style explications of key notions. That is why each chapter begins with a concise elucidation of the concept in question.

The main body of most of the chapters will comprise four subsections offering roughly the following perspectives on a given concept: (1) a brief historical orientation with gestures to neighboring concepts; (2) a detailed systematic explication of the concept at issue; (3) illustrations of the concept in action, ideally drawn from current research practice; (4) an outlook with an orientation toward open questions, further directions, and/or critical contestations. Wherever possible, entries are developed from the perspective of concrete, case-based affect and emotion research in all disciplines contributing to the CRC *Affective Societies*. We have encouraged the contributors to relate either to their own research or to extant research from their own or neighboring disciplines. Most chapters have been written by current members of the CRC *Affective Societies*. In addition, for some of the chapters, we have recruited expert researchers with a track record in innovative work on affect and emotion. During the editing process, we have put a premium on ensuring that all entries are stylistically sufficiently similar. At the same time, we have encouraged strong authorial voices and intellectual independence, which makes for variation in both style and content.

Thematic parts

It should be clear, given our understanding of the nature of concepts and their role in research, that our volume is not merely offering explanations of a range of technical terms. We do not aspire to a classical “keywords” format, nor do we aim at devising a theoretical dictionary or scholarly lexicon. This is why we have arranged the concept entries thematically, not alphabetically. With this choice of format, we do justice to the insight that concepts, while separately intelligible and operative, usually coalesce into interrelated

conceptual fields. We decided to sort the concepts into four thematic sections, roughly indicating a movement from “foundational” to “applied,” from “ontological” to “political,” and from “micro-relational” to “collective.”

We open the volume with a section on basic affect- and emotion-theoretic concepts (Part I: “Affect and emotion: charting the landscape”). This section is headlined by the entries on \rightarrow *affect* and \rightarrow *emotion*, and followed by entries on several other basic categories of affective phenomena, such as \rightarrow *feeling*, \rightarrow *attachment*, \rightarrow *atmosphere*, and \rightarrow *sentiment*. Part II is entitled “Elaborating affect,” comprising chapters that demonstrate our general allegiance to, but also some critical reservations about, the so-called “turn to affect” and cultural affect studies more broadly. Part III is entitled “Resonances and repertoires.” Here, emphasis is placed on processes of mediation, circulation, and on the radiating and resonating capacities of bodies that are affectively “in touch” with one another and with their surroundings. Finally, Part IV: “Collectives and contestations” brings together chapters focusing on the collectivizing dynamics of affect and emotion and especially on the political dimensions or ramifications of affect and emotion at the present juncture. In the following, we outline the central conceptual and theoretical ideas informing the four parts and briefly highlight some points of convergence as well as critical fault lines.

Part I: affect and emotion: charting the landscape

Obviously, there is a wealth of proposals on conceptualizing affective phenomena. As has often been noted, it is hopeless to assume that a single conceptual perspective – let alone something as short and reductive as a conventional “definition” – could cover the domain of affectivity exhaustively and find universal acceptance. The best way forward is therefore the detailed development of a specific approach that is capable of providing a focused outlook on a broad enough segment of affective phenomena, combining a solid footing in theory with a flexible heuristic apt for wide-ranging application. Such a conceptual outlook is well advised to begin from a discussion of metaphysical or ontological options, and obviously requires a robust awareness of the relevant segments of intellectual history. Following an influential trajectory of work in cultural affect theory, we begin from a present-day appropriation of the dynamic substance monism of early enlightenment philosopher Benedict de Spinoza, especially its concomitant metaphysical approach to affect (Spinoza, 1667/1985). The first chapter in Part I, entitled “affect” (\rightarrow *affect*), accordingly undertakes a focused reconstruction of Spinoza’s approach, viewed mostly through the lens of Deleuze’s (1968/1990) interpretation and in line with recent feminist readings of Spinoza’s works (e.g., Gatens, 2009). While many contemporary approaches to affect merely pay lip-service to Spinozism, we aspire to undertake a more thorough reconstruction. This perspective centers on an account of affect as efficacious

relations between evolving entities in formative settings. It can be read as both a basic understanding of power and an encompassing ontogenetic approach, as it focuses on processes of formation and transformation, not on finished products. The transition to contemporary approaches in affect studies becomes clearer by way of a detailed explanation of some of the basic principles and conceptual tendencies in Spinoza's approach, notably his notion of *potentia* (a kind of micro-power inherent in all entities), and his distinction between the terms *affectio* and *affectus*. In light of this reconstruction, we believe that several contested ideas from recent affect studies literature become more tractable and lose their apparent strangeness. For instance, the contention that affect pertains to bodies or entities of all kinds, not merely to what commonly counts as "sentient creatures," is a direct result of Spinoza's dynamic substance monism and his initial definition of *affectus*. Likewise, the emphasis on incessant processuality and transformative dynamics that many proponents of affect studies countenance will seem less excessive on these ontological grounds. Accordingly, the chapter is structured such that it leads from discussions of Spinoza's core tenets on affect to several current perspectives in affect studies and to the various conceptual and methodological options prevalent in this field.

One effect of this comprehensive elucidation of affect is that both the contrast with and the similarities to a prevailing understanding of "emotion" become accessible. Already, Spinoza's notion of *affectus* was much closer to vernacular concepts of emotion than many affect theory radicals would like to admit. However, we chose to keep a clear separation between the concepts of affect and emotion in play. The second chapter in this part (→ *emotion, emotion concept*) offers a broadly constructivist approach to emotions and their socio-culturally specific conceptualization, aligning with major strands of interdisciplinary emotion theory in the 20th century. Concomitantly, the first part of the volume collects chapters on other key classes of affective phenomena, such as feeling, attachment, sentiment, and atmosphere, and it provides a developmental perspective on the "formation of feeling" grounded in a particular research perspective from the *Affective Societies* project (→ *Gefühlsbildung*). By charting such a broad spectrum of phenomena and their developmental formation both in childhood and during adult life, chapters in the first part broaden the theoretical and terminological scope of most current work in affect theory. This enlarges the repertoire of methodological and analytical options. To give just one example, the concept of sentiment complements the focus on relatively short-term, situational affective dynamics by emphasizing the sustained, longer-term habituation and regimentation of affective orientations as part of cultural and political programs developed with the aim of ensuring conformity with prevalent modes of governance. A perspective on "sentiment," moreover, offers powerful analytical tools for the normative branches of social theory as it helps to assess and study in detail the historical formation and transformation of normative orders (→ *sentiment*).

Part II: elaborating affect

The second part of the volume further elaborates the conceptual register of relational affect. In this part, our authors' allegiance with prevailing currents of cultural affect theory (e.g., Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) is most evident, yet the chapters give their own constructive and innovative twists to established articulations of affect-related phenomena. They focus on the way relational affect coalesces into local → *affective arrangements*, how it enfolds into comparatively stable → *affective dispositions*, how it gets enacted, further shaped, and reflexively thematized within → *affective practices*, and how its circulation through discourse and media gives rise to → *affective economies*. Exemplary affective practices such as → *writing affect* and → *affective witnessing* are introduced and discussed with regard to their contemporary cultural and political relevance. A comprehensive critical perspective on the → *affects of racialization* rounds out this part of the book. This chapter links work on affect in a descriptive as well as normative key with anthropological work on the ongoing affective ramifications of settler colonialism and current instances of environmental racism, and with recent perspectives from critical race theory.

Considered collectively, the chapters in this part showcase the strengths of and fascination with the turn to affect, while consolidating several theoretical and diagnostic perspectives and pushing the field forward in multiple directions. Some of the chapters consciously break with cherished positions of the early wave of affect-related work in the 1990s by placing emphasis on the close entanglement and mutual dynamic formation of affect and language (→ *writing affect*), or by developing a notion of affective disposition that focuses on the relative bodily permanence and differential reenactment of recurring patterns of affective relationality (→ *affective disposition*). Again, however, the chapters collected in Part II will not offer a single perspective, but encompass contrasting options, also with regard to implications for research methodology. For instance, the chapter on affective practice comes with a strong mandate to "follow the actors" and pay attention to these actors' own reflexive understanding of the affective dimension of their practices, including specific terms and concepts employed by actors *in situ* (→ *affective practice*). By contrast, the chapter entitled "Affective arrangement" proposes a somewhat more impersonal approach to the situated settings, material contexts and dynamic frameworks in which relational affect unfolds locally and trans-locally. Actors do remain in the picture, but only as contributing elements in larger dynamic formations of heterogeneous components that often exceed the scope of what human individuals or collectives consciously grasp and reflect upon (→ *affective arrangement*). While not entirely incompatible, the respective concepts of affective practice and affective arrangement emphasize contrasting aspects of the situated manifestation of relational affect and thus inspire different analytical perspectives and methodologies. Distinct from both these approaches is the concept of affective

economy, as it is centered on the role of mediation and media practices in forming the manifestation of affect and in establishing a global circulation of affective forms, styles, and symbols (→ *affective economy*). While this chapter comes with a provocative – and surely contestable – ontological thesis on the general economic character of mediatized affect, it also offers an innovative methodology for studying the globally shared symbolic, aesthetic, and imaginative undercurrents of contemporary affective societies.

Part III: resonances and repertoires

The third part of the volume focuses specifically on forms, repertoires, and registries of affect and emotion and on their dynamic stabilization as parts of specific material and nonmaterial contexts. The two preceding parts emphasize the fluidity and volatility of affect and elaborate on domains of social and cultural life in which this fluidity becomes tamed. Affect is thereby elaborated rather than constrained into specific forms that are very loosely coupled to specific and more enduring cultural phenomena. The concepts in Part III take this idea one step further by proposing perspectives on and understandings of affect as more closely intertwined with cultural forms and formations, both material and immaterial. Entries here focus, to varying degrees, on the notions of resonances and repertoires to illustrate this intertwining. Both of these notions can be understood as poles of a continuum along which affect becomes stabilized, channeled, labeled, and governed. Affective resonance, in this sense, is introduced as a type of relational dynamics of affecting and being affected, characterized as a process of the reciprocal modulation between interactants (→ *affective resonance*). Resonance dynamics are seen as intensive or force-like phenomenal qualities with a strong emphasis on face-to-face interaction in dyads and small groups rather than in larger and more latent social formations. On the other end of the continuum, emotion repertoires refer to the individual and collective agentic powers to adapt felt experiences in socially and culturally appropriate ways (→ *emotion repertoires*). Emotion repertoires are specific forms of more general cultural repertoires that individuals learn and internalize as skills, resources, knowledge, action, practices, and so forth, to meaningfully respond to a given social situation. They enable individuals and collectives to enact emotions in ways that are broadly deemed compatible with and intelligible to prevailing forms of cultural categorizations, interpretations, imaginations, and evaluations. Emotion repertoires thus exhibit a certain durability and resistance to change, although more in the sense of intransigence rather than fixation or stability.

Both notions aptly illustrate the potential of concepts that travel between disciplines and contexts. The concepts in Part III tackle issues that pertain to the intertwining of affect and cultural forms and practices. The concept of (p)reenactment, for example, draws on more established understandings of artistic practices of reenactment as the repetitions of past events within

literature, media, art, and theater (\rightarrow (*p*)reenactment). It draws attention specifically to the affective qualities of reenactment while at the same time emphasizing their future-oriented dimension. The concept thus promotes an understanding of the affective dynamics that evolve between the poles of memory/history and visions of the future. The notion thereby bridges analytical perspectives on the affects of actual, situated artistic practice and culturally condensed meanings of past events. In a similar vein, the concept *Pathosformel*, which goes back to art historian Aby Warburg, serves to describe affect as being formalized historically, with reference to primal bodily affects such as ecstasy or pain, in objects of art (\rightarrow *Pathosformel*). The concept thus serves to reflect the idea that affect can be intimately tied to cultural objects, not in purely static and inert ways, but rather as expressions of the changing interference between stored (formalized) affect and its various forms of historically contingent cultural dissemination.

Part IV: collectives and contestations

Further extending the importance of cultural forms and practices, Part IV makes explicit the social and political relevance of relational affect. Understanding *Affective Societies* means coming to terms with how affect is the force or intensity that interrelates the various bodies of the social, from actors in face-to-face interaction to groups with competing interests and the media through which many of these relations are made possible and public. The chapters in Part IV explicate how affect and emotion contribute to the formation, preservation, or disruption of various social formations, such as communities, institutions, or nation states. They also shed light onto how affect and emotion are themselves subjected to and channeled by these formations, as in the case of the affects of citizenship or feelings of communal belonging. The perspectives outlined in these chapters are thus multi-paradigmatic in that they emphasize different facets and conceptions of the social, from physical co-presence and ritual gatherings to networks and institutions and their normative and political dimensions. Previous scholarship in the social sciences, following the tradition of Ferdinand Tönnies' (1887/2005) distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society), has usually relegated affect and emotion to the domains of families and close-knit communities. This part clearly shows that societies and their central institutions are similarly made up of an affective fabric that is essential to various forms of governance, civic engagement, solidarity, and cooperation. The tight interlocking of affective phenomena and social formations reflects the view that both are co-constitutive: affect and emotion are integral to any form of sociality, and relational affect is social at its very core. For example, "social collectives" is not just an umbrella term for various social formations, but instead refers to a multiplicity of actors who are situationally affected by and affect one another while self-categorizing as part of this multiplicity (\rightarrow *social collectives*).

From this standpoint, the chapters in this part develop both social theoretical concepts pinpointing the contested and collective nature of the social and concepts and theories of mid-range phenomena that are essential to larger societal formations. For example, the social theoretical concept of belonging accounts for actors' affective and pre-reflexive attachments to places, languages, or material objects, thus sidestepping the notion of cultural identity, which would usually include the idea of a categorical identification with particular values or social collectives (→ *belonging*). It also emphasizes the sense of being accepted as part of a community, while also avoiding the notion of collective identity, which is often understood as emphasizing sameness. Belonging hence reflects one's sensing of relational affect as a form of attachment to social and cultural formations. In a related account, the concept of orders of feeling foregrounds those discursive orders that leave marks on individual and collective appraisals of feelings, thus shaping socially, culturally, and politically proscribed feeling and display rules (→ *orders of feeling*). Orders of feeling are germane to societies, places, social groups, and communities and impinge on subjective experiences vis-à-vis institutionalized social and political hierarchies. Regarding mid-range social phenomena, the concept of affective communities draws attention to processes producing a temporal solidarization between affecting and affected social bodies (→ *affective communities*). Instead of understanding social formations as outcomes of pre-established rules, norms, and structures, the concept of affective communities stresses the importance of sensual infrastructures of social encounters and of modes of affective exchange that make up the fabric of the formation and transformation of the social. Affective publics is a concept further developed in this part that renders affect central to the understanding of publics as relational, processual, and performative arenas (→ *affective publics*) in which politically contested issues of social coexistence are debated. The concept also does justice to the various critiques of normative understandings of a single unitary public, accounting for the fragmented and networked character of publics and the diversified modes of public communication they entail.

Outlook: the politics of Affective Societies

Since the advent of the turn to affect in the mid-1990s, much was made of the putative political potentials of a notion of pre-categorical dynamic and relational affect. Authors wrote about the event-like intensity of affect as a force capable of tearing apart gridlocked discursive and practical formations. Affect was thus seen as an instigator of cultural and political change, catalyzing processes of becoming; a progressive political force unlike any other (e.g., Connolly, 2002; Massumi, 2002). While critics were quick – and often correct – to point out the one-sided and unwarranted positive assessment of affect in politics that these early articulations invoked (e.g., Hemmings, 2005), a thorough and balanced discussion of the political ramifications of the relational affect perspective has yet

to take place (see Protevi, 2009, for a promising start). In view of recent surges of right-wing political parties and movements in many Western countries that often rely heavily on affective forms of mobilization, and considering their expressed longing for radical disruption and uprising against what is perceived as a globalized, multi-cultural status quo, it can seem that the political “promise of affect” has changed sides from left to (far) right. This makes a sound and detailed understanding of the many dimensions of political affect all the more urgent. Here lies a major challenge for contemporary studies of affect and emotion in the social sciences, cultural studies, and the humanities – and it is here where a research endeavor such as *Affective Societies* has the potential to make a significant and timely contribution.

Many of the chapters in this volume speak to the political dimensions of affect and emotion in what we hope amounts to a careful probing of the emancipatory potentials vis-à-vis the risks and downsides of affect and emotion in politics. What these chapters jointly bring about, first and foremost, is a much-needed broadening of perspective. Various processes and techniques of governance that involve affect are discussed, both in their productive and their exploitative capacities (→ *immersion, immersive power*; → *sentiment*). Multiple forms and dimensions of collectivization come in view – as empowering means to foster solidarity, but also with regard to inherent tendencies toward closure and exclusion (→ *social collectives*; → *affective communities*). Moreover, a premium is put on new developments in political communication and recent transformations of the public sphere (→ *affective publics*), including new subversive practices enabled by new media and interactive technologies (→ *affective witnessing*; → *Midān moments*). In a different key, the more subtle aesthetic dimensions of commonality and collective imaginaries are analyzed with precision thanks to refined affect theoretical concepts (→ *Pathosformel*; → *poetics of affect*), and likewise the circulation and profound temporal logic of affective formations (→ *affective economy*; → *(p)reenactment*). Backed by these perspectives on specific dimensions of the political significance and efficacy of affect and emotion, other contributions are in a good position to tackle contemporary regimes of affective politics, such as the pervasive policing of cultural modes of belonging and national identities (→ *affective citizenship*; → *belonging*), or to ask more foundational questions with regard to the theoretical nexus between affect and politics. For instance, it will be asked how an elementary striving for freedom that many associate with the ultimate “point” of the political (e.g., Arendt, 1961) might be construed in a way that is profoundly social – cognizant of the constitutive relationality that links all individuals with one another and to their material and natural surroundings (→ *political affect*).

In light of these various elaborations on the political dimension of *Affective Societies*, we are convinced that the present volume will advance this segment of affect theory considerably and steer well clear of earlier one-sided and uncritical perspectives. However, we do not over-estimate this achievement. In view of the recent surges of xenophobia, right- and left-wing populism

and extremism, unabashed outbursts and shameless public displays of group- and identity-focused enmity, resentment or hatred, it is vital for affect and emotion experts to stay on top of these developments. A willingness to engage with surprising, unexpected aspects of this trend is needed, including a readiness to confront – and rigorously analyze – the ugly downsides of political affectivity. The present volume provides the conceptual foundations for work of this kind. The tools are here – it is now time to put them to good use in future work on the exhilarating affective dynamics of contemporary social and political life.

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