

PART II: DIASPORIC TRAVEL

Germany has shaped by various African diaspora movements since the 1880s. Part I explored the histories and conditions of African migration to Germany. The trajectories of Aminata, her friends and her father showed how time and place matter for forging racialised and classed identities and how diaspora is practised across generations. Part I examined the emergence of different generational consciousnesses and how the perception of race, class and belonging can differ not only within a family but also among people of the same age. It showed the importance that both local place and the digital world play in the construction of multicentred Afrodiasporic identities. In Part II, the focus is on travel in the making of diasporic identities. It will shift away from the local and national scales to highlight the importance of transnational relations, especially transnational family relations. Although many reference points today exist that allow one to construct a positive sense of one's own African heritage as European, or German,¹ the practice of travelling to connect and experience African heritage remains important, as Germany still affords few possibilities in that regard. Travelling offers the chance to engage with a place and its people with all one's senses and feelings. This lived experience of travelling helps to embody an identity, to make it part of one's bodily memories.

In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, we follow the 'Diasporic Travels' of Maya, Lafia and Aminata, which I place in the context of their life stories. I examine how my interlocutors use their travel experiences to connect with a (sometimes unknown) family history and how the travel experience also fuels their self-perceptions as Germans of African descent. We will reconnect with Maya and follow her from Paris to London and Nigeria, where she lived in 2018/19. But why Nigeria if her father is from Sierra Leone? Then, we will also meet Lafia again and will get to know about her first journey to her father's homeland of Senegal. Why did it take her more than thirty years to get there? And last but not least, we will continue to follow Aminata as she travels to Ghana, now that she has founded a family of her own and is in her mid-thirties.

1 For example, via digital media such as *Okay Africa* or the German YouTube channel *Ah Nice*, which Maya showed me. *Ah Nice* is the creation of a young Afrodescendant German from North Rhine Westphalia and can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSo09hEzbzWL3lMO2KXD_NA (accessed 8 September 2020).

Thus, her wish to connect with a West African heritage materialises and opens up new ways of understanding herself and her Ghanaian kin.

In this part I ask: What is the role of travelling in the construction of diasporic identities? What are the women searching for through their travels, what do they find, and finally, what limits are reached through these travels?

First, I will introduce Maya in Chapter 6. We will follow Maya's life and travels and, in particular, how the journeys she made at first in Europe and later in Nigeria contributed to her coming of age as a Black and Afrodescendant person. Since Maya's father's family moved away when she was 17 (she stayed in Frankfurt), Maya was trying to find ways to reunite more often with her family and to nurture her 'African side'. Travelling has been one way to do that. Then we will join Lafia in Chapter 7. In contrast to Maya, Lafia grew up more with her German mother and was rather distant from her Senegalese origins while growing up. She made her first trip to Senegal a few years ago, in her early thirties. Aminata's Guinean heritage has always been a normal part of her life, and Guinea was neither strange nor foreign. Yet she had not lived there since childhood and had not had much contact with her West African origins since her teens, and it grew in importance once she was an adult, and especially since she had children of her own. As her husband is German-Ghanaian, they travelled to Ghana as a family, which was her first time in West Africa as an adult woman and more importantly as a mother. This journey will be explored in Chapter 8. Maya's case introduces us to the possibility of travel as 'imagined returns to the homeland through memory, cultural rediscovery, and longing', as Levitt and Waters (2006, p. 24) describe it with regard to transnational practices of members of the second generation in the USA. In Lafia's case, I demonstrate how dealing with a country of parental origin – and roots travel as part of that – is closely related to one's personal life-course and relationship to one's parents. I analyse Aminata's case in Ghana using the concept of the 'status paradox': She experienced a change of socioeconomic and cultural positions during the trip that she subsequently reflects upon. The status paradox has been defined, among others, by Boris Nieswand (2012), who investigates the shift of social and economic positions that transnational Ghanaian migrants experience in the countries they emigrate to and in their places of origin and how they handle this contradiction. In Aminata's case, the status paradox plays out in a different way and has an effect on how she negotiates family and care during the trip itself. For all three women, dealing with their West African origins is part of the process of coming of age as a German of African descent; dealing with family history is seen as a way to become a 'real adult'.