4. Family affairs – an intergenerational approach to diaspora

> 'For my children it is different, they were born here, they always tell me that.'
> *Lamine Camara, father of Aminata, on political discussions with his children*

> 'My parents always told me there is nothing wrong with you, there is something wrong with them.[…] Anyways I was always happy to have my father as a role-model.'
> *Maya on the importance of her parents and especially her father for growing up as a person of African descent in Germany*

In the previous chapter, generation mattered in the way that people of the same generation create a 'generational conscience' (Assaf 2017) and in terms of how a feeling of a generation is produced by shared memories of growing up in the same city and using the same spaces. It focused on capturing the feeling of a generation, taking Aminata, Maya and Lafia's life in Frankfurt as a key point of departure to explore how time and place influence the practice and understanding of selfhood and how race, gender and class matter. But it also showed how people who belong to the same generation can have very different experiences and practices, as Lafia's experiences of growing up revealed. In this chapter, generation matters in terms of intergenerational relations within a family. A generational lens highlights how age, historical and geographical context can influence how migrants and the second generation – the children of migrants – relate to a country of origin throughout their lives. In the present study, we are considering women born and/or socialised in Germany and their parent/s who migrated to Germany in the 1970s mostly as students from a variety of West African countries. Generation here is looked at more in terms of intrafamily relations, but also taking into account historically grounded experiences.

The meanings of social and genealogical generation have to be seen as interconnected. It is also because Lamine Camara lived through different times and events in Guinea and Germany that he perceives of himself differently than his daughter, Aminata. Lamine Camara, who arrived in Germany in the 1970s, will be presented in more detail in this chapter. I am interested in examining how the meaning of diaspora shifts across generations and how it can be disentangled from a country of origin and evolve from centred towards more decentred diasporic practices of belonging.

I will discuss the historical circumstances under which Lamine Camara grew up in Guinea – the earliest days of a decolonised republic – and came to Germany, in the direct aftermath of the 1968 revolution. This historical context is important in order to understand Lamine Camara's political engagement as highly educated member of the Guinean diaspora living in Germany. This story will then be complemented with Aminata's process of becoming 'politically Black' in her twenties and getting involved in Black and African diaspora movements. I will follow the process and the events that led her to be involved in anti-racism campaigning and with Black political organisations and how that shift also led to her wanting to deal more with her Guinean and West African heritage with her own family as an adult. I argue that Aminata's encounter with Black activism and Black and feminist literature has led to a 're-storying of self', to take up a term coined by feminist scholar Lekkie Hopkins (2001, p. 1), which describes transformative processes for women through the encounter with feminist scholarship. It led Aminata to rethink her past and future in relation to Black and feminist themes.

The interview with Lamine Camara took place in August 2018 in Frankfurt. As most of the empirical material I use to illustrate the lives of Aminata and her father Lamine Camara stems from biographical interviews, the events and experiences narrated have to be seen not as objective truths but as reinterpretations of events.

Lamine Camara – Aminata's father

Lamine Camara was born in Conakry in Guinea just four years before independence from French colonial rule. He was enrolled at school in 1958, the year Guinea became independent, a turbulent time in which the country had to renegotiate its position on the global stage. As it was the first country to achieve independence from France, something that France opposed, the new Guinean state had a difficult start. After Guinea's independence and the pronouncement of the first Guinean Republic in 1958, single-party rule was quickly installed by the PDG (Party démocratique de Guinée) under Sékou Touré, which lasted until his sudden death in 1984 (Camara 2014). The need for single-party rule was justified as a means of integrating

multi-ethnic populations and in terms of a decolonial rhetoric of the national unity of Guineans in opposition to the former coloniser, which opposed independence and imposed many economic sanctions and froze Guinean assets. Guinea broke off diplomatic relations with France from 1965 to 1975. And it was in 1975, after relations were restored, that Lamine Camara went to France, from where he continued to Germany.

From the late 1960s, the PDG party swiftly radicalised. The regime feared being overthrown (and there were indeed attempts to do so) and imprisoned those it considered political opponents. Sékou Touré's conception of power became more and more violent and justified as 'revolutionary violence' the establishment of 'People's absolute power' (Camara 2014, p. 135). Lamine Camara went to school under single-party rule and later to university, where he began to study Economics. In 1975, after his first year, he decided to leave for Europe, as he felt the socialist regime had turned into a dictatorship:

> The regime was closed; you were not allowed to leave the country; it was dangerous! The conditions were like in the GDR; it was like a prison. If you could get fake papers, you could get out. […] So many pupils and students left back then.
> Immigration was mainly pupils and students, those who were a bit more wealthy could go to Europe. Back then, not like today, there was no visa between West Africa and France. The visa came later. You just needed to get a plane ticket, or there was the ship as well, between Dakar, Abidjan and Marseille. […] And then when I was in France, I didn't want to study in France, under no circumstances. I wanted to study in a country where I had to learn a new language. That was either in England or Germany.

Lamine Camara is aware that it would be more complicated for him today, now that you need a visa, which can be very tricky to get – especially if you do not have a job in the country you want to go to. He arrived in France at the age of 21 and stayed at a friend's place in Strasbourg. From there he applied for study scholarships in Germany and England. West Germany and the United Kingdom had been the first states to officially recognise Guinea in 1958. West Germany did so in part because it felt under pressure to do so before Guinea turned to East Germany. By 1959, the Guinean government had begun to talk with East Germany about the provision of scholarships for Guinean students to study in the GDR. West Germany reacted quickly and offered a scholarship programme of its own.[1] The historian Mohamed Saliou Ca-

1 The period of difficult relations between Guinea and France was used by the GDR to increase their influence in Guinea, but the FRG was quick in reacting, increasing financial aid, technical and educational cooperation. After rumours that Guinea had sent an ambassador to the GDR, the FRG removed its own ambassador from Guinea. But soon afterwards, when Guinea

mara calls the relations of Guinea with the two German states a *ménage à trois* (2014, p. 203). Guinea was among the first countries to have bilateral agreements with Germany for student scholarship programmes as well as workers' programmes.

Lamine Camara applied at a student foundation that framed its scholarship programmes in terms of humanitarian aid; its aim was to help students who had escaped from communist countries. While people from Guinea were accepted as students and political refugees in West Germany, others applied for scholarships in the GDR, too. There, they were received as fellow socialists, receiving an education they should use as leaders of their socialist homelands.

In writing about Aminata's father, I want to stress the cosmopolitan openness inherent to his narrative. Although the difficulties he faced in his birth country were a motivation to leave, there is much more to it than that: a wish to discover the world, to learn a new language, to experience different cultures all spurred him on and in the end brought him to Frankfurt. He was able to move and to migrate to Europe because he belonged to a wealthier class in Guinea. As he says in the quote above, back in the 1970s it was mostly students who left – or those who could afford it. The movement of highly educated people is seldom emphasised in 'South-to-North' migration studies, where the focus is often on economic hardship as main motivator to migrate. But the emigration of Lamine Camara was not catalysed by economic hardship; he left in order to continue higher education and to be able to engage politically.

After applying for scholarships in Germany and the United Kingdom, Lamine Camara got his first positive answer from a student foundation in Bonn, West Germany, and therefore decided to go there and not to England. The answer from England came much later, after he was already in Germany. In 1976, his life in Germany started with an intensive language course in Marburg, where he lived with a host family, of whom he has fond memories, and soon he went to Frankfurt to study economics. He lived there in a student residence, which is where he met his future wife, Sabine. She was studying to become a teacher of German and English. After one year of intensive preparation, he began his studies and was among the first on his course to graduate.

Already interested in politics in Guinea, Lamine Camara got to know the spirit of the 1968 generation in Frankfurt. When he came to Germany the battle was ongoing between the state and the RAF (*Rote Armee Fraktion*) urban guerrilla group. The group had been formed against the backdrop of the 1968 rebellions against an authoritarian state and education system, which still included former Nazis in their ranks, as well as against authoritarian parents (Trunius 2007). The revolts that started in 1968

announced that it had not in fact sent an ambassador to the GDR, diplomatic relations between Guinea and the FRG were normalised. This event in 1958 is known as the Guinea Crisis (Blumenau 2011, Kilian 2001).

led to big liberal changes in the state apparatus and the education system in the 1970s (Borneman 1992). The protest movement started at the universities, the point of departure for Lamine Camara.

> Silvia: And the Uni then, was it still what you call today 'the '68'? Did you feel something of that?
> Lamine C: When I was at the University in the 1970s, the generation of 1968 was still there. Many were still at the Uni. […] I don't know if you know the story, but the terrorists from the RAF, some of them were with us at the University in Frankfurt. There was a famous terrorist, Jan-Carl Raspe, he was at the Uni. I am from that generation […]. We were all young at the time, in our early twenties.
> Silvia: That's pretty young. I am sure that must have been a turbulent time then?
> Lamine Camara: Sure, sure, Frankfurt was left. The lefties were all here. Frankfurt was a left-wing city. Joschka Fischer [Green Party politician], they were all here. The Uni was very left. And when I came to Germany, there was only one metro line, U1.

Since the 1960s, Frankfurt has been a hub for Transatlantic student links, and there were relations with organisations like the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) in Berkeley and San Francisco, important centres of the student protests and supporters of the Civil Rights movement (Klimke & Scharloth 2016, Klimke 2011).

Frankfurt was also a centre for international students, and it was in the nearby city of Göttingen, a student town, where the AASU (Afro-Asian Student Union) had been founded by Jamaican and Indian students in 1956. With the presence of international students and workers from the Global South, new African diaspora networks emerged, working on issues within and outside Germany and forming diverse pan-African coalitions (DHM 2016). But Lamine did not have much contact with other African students besides the few Guinean ones. There were a few Africans at the University, but most were from East Africa, and he did not hang out with them. Instead, he had his small Guinean group:

> Lamine Camara: I remember we were – how many Guineans at the Uni? Maybe four or five.
> Silvia: And they all knew each other?
> Lamine Camara: Yes, sure. We were together, had our group in the *Mensa* [refectory]. That's for sure, as usual. You look for your fellow citizens [*Landsleute*] everywhere.

When it comes to Lamine Camara's political engagement, he was less interested in pan-African political movements and instead very active in Guinean diaspora politics. As many Guineans left the country, a Guinean diaspora politics quickly developed in Europe after independence in 1958. By 1984, the number of Guinean exiles

was estimated to be over two million. And many of those were well-educated professionals and students. As it was impossible to operate in the country, many members of the political opposition in Guinea – who usually belonged to upper social and economic milieus – fled to other countries. Guinea has a long history of active political opposition among the diaspora (Camara 2014); Lamine Camara became part of the opposition as soon as he went to France. To this day, his efforts are directed towards achieving political change in Guinea.

After moving abroad, Lamine first joined the RGE (*Regroupement des Guinéens de l'étranger*). The RGE was an organisation that fought against the dictatorship of Sékou Touré and had sections operating on all continents. Later on, Lamine became a member of the Guinean party UFDG (*Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée*) the main opposition party. Founded in the early 2000s, ithas many members living outside of Guinea and its candidate almost won the 2010 election. However, Lamine Camara has recently left the party. In January 2020, Aminata told me that her father had officially announced his resignation from the UFDG because of a disagreement. He felt the party was trying to attract voters along ethnic lines, and he did not agree with those tactics. He always believed that this was one of the big problems of Guinean politics. 'We will see what he is up to next', she told me, laughing.

> Silvia: How did you become active in Guinean politics?
> Lamine Camara: I have always been active, ever since I was a young man. Since the dictatorship in Guinea we had our political movement in France in the opposition. […] There was a student organisation of Guineans abroad. The office was in Paris, and I was also a member. […] Today that doesn't exist anymore but there are different political parties, my party is in the opposition, and maybe we win the next time in 2020. […] I am on the executive board and therefore I travel a lot in Europe. Recently I was in Berlin, our party in Guinea is part of the global liberal network. In Germany there is a federation, a section in Hessen, Cologne, Dortmund, Berlin and in Munich.

Since more Guineans have come to Germany since the 1990s (in 2018 there was a total of 17,000 Guinean nationals living in Germany) today there are also more Guinean political organisations in German cities, as Lamine indicates above. 'We have good chances of winning the next elections with our opposition candidate,' he explained. Using the 'we' in the sentence shows how involved he feels in the political development of his birth country. Lamine Camara's party is also part of Liberal International, the world federation of liberal democratic political parties, which is why he travels to the international liberal congresses to network. He always travels as a member of a Guinean political party but is nonetheless involved in transnational political networks, and is in contact with liberal parties around the world. So, although his engagement can be seen as centred and directed towards Guinea, the political

work itself takes place on a global scale. He knows what is going on politically in Germany, France and elsewhere in the world.

Going back to Guinea with his family

Since his move to Germany, there has been one moment in Lamine Camara's life when he felt ready and keen to go back to Guinea. He had been thinking about going back to live but for a long time it had not been practicable due to the insecure political situation. But at the end of the 1980s, a window opened for political change, and the family moved to Guinea in 1989. Lamine Camara went first, Sabine and Aminata followed:

> I came back from Colombia, did an internship for one year in an NGO, and while doing that internship I decided to go into the private sector in Guinea, I opened a business in Guinea, and Sabine and Aminatajoined me later. Aminatawent to French school and then we stayed there until 1993.

The sudden death of Sékou Touré in 1984 put an end to the PDG's single-party rule and a short transition period commenced, during which the CMRN (*Comité militaire pour le redressement national*) was in charge. Until 1984, very few of the two million people who had left since 1958 had ever returned to Guinea. Although Touré issued a decree encouraging Guineans in the diaspora to return and unite with their families as early as 1977, assuring them that they had nothing to fear, only a very small portion of people in the diaspora took him at his word. It was only after 1984 that some exiles took the chance, among them Lamine. Camara explains the atmosphere at the time after President Touré's death:

> Overall, a sense of relief and hope was slowly evolving among the intellectual elites, some of whom saw in the ongoing open-doors policies a key to economic recovery and meaningful reconnection with the Western world. (2014, p. 232)

Part of the CMRN's agenda was the encouragement of free enterprise as well as structural and monetary reforms (also such imposed by the SAP [structural adjustment programme]), and neoliberal reforms were therefore implemented in the former socialist state. Unfortunately, a few years after its instalment, the new CMRN regime entered into 'ethnically based power struggles' (Camara 2014, p. 268). Initially, this was a power struggle between the two leading military figures, Colonel Conté and Colonel Traoré, each of whom accused the other of favouring people from their own ethnic group (Susu or Mandenka). This led to a failed coup led by Traoré after which Lansana Conté took control of the state, backed by an alliance of Susu (his ethnic group) forces. The Second Republic was declared at the end of 1985, and Lansana Conté's government also presented many reforms that were supposed to

strengthen economic enterprise. It was around that time that Lamine Camara prepared to relocate to Conakry with his wife and daughter with the idea of becoming a businessman. But returning was not a widespread trend. On the contrary, many Guineans left the country after 1985, increasingly for economic reasons.

The security situation deteriorated in Guinea, especially due to the cross-border effects of the civil wars in the neighbouring countries Liberia (1989–97) and Sierra Leone (1991–2001), including the circulation of illegal arms and drugs and growing corruption among security forces in the early 1990s (Camara 2014). Nevertheless, Aminata's memories of her time in Guinea as a child include nothing of these dark aspects of life in Guinea. On the contrary, she felt they were living a proper expat life there with all the privileges attached to it. Her memories are very positive and all focus on leading an upper-class life with a house, a chauffeur and a swimming pool around which she played. For her father, however, living in Guinea with his family became increasingly difficult. As the political and security situation in the country deteriorated, Lamine and Sabine decided to go back to Frankfurt after four years, and Lamine Camara never tried to relocate permanently to Guinea again. He has close links in the country, though, especially through his engagement in diaspora politics. Back in Germany in 1993, he got work as an employee at a big tech company. In 1996 his second child was born, Aminata's brother. The parents divorced a few years later, but are still in contact today. Lamine Camara would not consider moving somewhere else today, 'My whole family is here', including his grandchildren. One wish of his would be to go to Guinea with his children, now that they are adults, and even to rent a flat there via an online platform.

Lamine Camara has engaged in politics on multiple levels, which range from national to international networks centred on Guinea, to more wide-ranging and decentred activities as a member of the Liberal International. Already politically engaged when he left Guinea in the 1970s, he was involved in student politics at the University in Frankfurt, while also being married to a woman, Aminata's mother, who was active in German left-wing politics. Aminata's political activities have had a different focus, drawing on the political ideals of both her father and her mother. Her geographical focus is Germany and thematically it is the fight against racism and solidarity among People of Colour and African descent that drive her diasporic political practice.

Forging a Black political consciousness and a West African identity

Although American cultural production remains an important reference for her, Aminata's interest has shifted increasingly to Black German political movements and (West) African cultural and political production since her mid-twenties. In her teenage and young adult years, she had fully indulged in the GI world and the Black

American culture it made available, and this was where she started to define her African descent, her Blackness in a positive way. After finishing school, her interests shifted and things began to be more serious, as she asked what she would do in the future. Aminata's twenties were a time when many important things happened in her life, on all levels. She needed a year after school to figure out what she wanted to do next, and for some time she worked in a bar, did an internship at a hotel and only after that did she find a degree programme that seemed to really suit her – French, Culture and Economics. This was in Mannheim and so she began to commute on a weekly basis from Frankfurt. She made really good friends in her student city and moved into a shared flat with them. But she never lost touch with Frankfurt, where Albert lived, with whom she entered into a relationship and was later to marry. He was the father of her children, and she became pregnant towards the end of her degree programme. Aminata completed her studies by the time her first child was one. She then quickly found her first job in a PR agency.

In this section we follow how Aminata's interest in Black political activism was sparked in her early twenties, as she was studying French literature and became acquainted with texts that deciphered categories such as race and gender as socially constructed (for example Simone de Beauvoir); back then she had already been interested in books from African (diasporic) writers (especially Francophone ones like Maryse Condé). She began to reflect more on topics such as sexism and racism, and also on her personal experiences as Afrodescendant woman in Germany and how experiences of racism and sexism had been a constant companion in her life. This process of deep reflection initiated through the encounter with feminist scholarship has been described in the literature as 'political and individual transformation' (Cornell 1993), 'a quasi-religious conversion' (Morley 1993, p. 122) and by Lessie Hopkins as an experience that leads to the 're-storying of the self' (2001): 'I prefer to use the term re-storying, for its emphasis on the conscious process of integrating new material to reflect on the same evidence, the same material, the same fabric of a life, anew' (p. 1). Indeed, it was writings by feminist authors as well as the discovery of Black German political blogs on the internet that gave her the intellectual tools to make sense of her own experiences of being racialised/othered in Germany, as Aminata recalls:

> It was only right before I was pregnant, that is when I discovered everything, when I was 24: Black Germans, ISD (Initiative for Black people in Germany), Noah Sow (musician, writer and activist, published the book 'Germany black and white' in 2008). […] and there was *Krauselocke* (a natural Afro hair blog), with Esther she made the first blog, also inspired by the USA, and addressed the thing that I also was victim of: I also used Relaxer (chemical hair products to straighten curly hair) for so many years, on YouTube you find a lot of American bloggers, I watched them all. I soaked them all in. I totally dived into it.

Becoming aware of anti-racist organisations and of writer-activists such as Noah Sow, a woman only slightly older than Aminata, created points of identification for her. In the last part of the quote from Aminata above, she talks about the link between race and gender in relation to her African hair texture. Here too, it was both African American and Afro-German bloggers and authors who gave her the tools and empowerment to deal differently with her hair, to be more caring towards it. Although Aminata often had braids in school and high school, she also often straightened her hair with relaxer. And looking back at this practice gives her the chills. Chemical relaxer is a product used to straighten curly hair, but it burns your skin. Nevertheless, for a long time it was simply normal for her and many others. Through the blog *Krauselocke*, she began to think politics and Black beauty ideals together and how wearing your hair naturally was an emancipatory act and an act of self-care for Afrodescendant women.[2]

In our third interview, Aminata expanded on how she began to forge a Black political identity for herself in her mid-twenties, and especially on the whole virtual world of Blackness. Aminata described her final year at university, when she was 26, as her 'hot phase' of political engagement against racism. A key event in her life happened that she could not have anticipated: It was after an unpleasant encounter with a politician from the Green Party, whom she confronted about a racist poster, that she discovered the virtual world of Black activists in Germany.[3] A regional Green Party section had published an election poster showing a naked black female body from the waist down with a pair of white hands clasping the buttocks. The slogan on the poster said 'The only reason to choose/vote black' (the colour of the conservative Christian Democratic Party in Germany is black, and the message was directed against them. The German word 'wählen' can be translated as bith chosing and voting). Aminata, who was not the only person to perceive this poster as racist against Afrodescendant people, standing in a long history of sexualising and objectifying the black body, saw a publicity stand for the Green Party in the street and decided to talk to the person at the stand. She complained about the poster, and the middle-aged white man did not take her critique seriously and told her to not be sensitive about it, adding that the poster was not meant to be racist at all – it was just a joke. Aminata was very disappointed with that reaction from a party that presented itself as anti-racist and anti-sexist. The man made Aminata feel as if she was the problem, as if racism did not really exist in the context of the poster and was more in her head than anywhere else – that she was exaggerating.

2 Krauselocke can be translated as 'frizzy hair'. The blog is at https://esthersiesta.com/krauselocke/ (accessed 22 May 2020).

3 For the discussion around the poster, see the position paper of the anti-racist Black German organisation 'Der Braune Mob' here: https://blog.derbraunemob.info/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/BKarte_Erklaerg_GruenNRW.pdf (accessed 22 May 2020).

After that encounter she felt really bad about the whole situation and began to look for support. After talking to a few people about it, Aminata was advised to contact the ISD by a friend who was knew a few of its members. When Aminata contacted the ISD online and told them about the case and her experience with the Green politician, she received a lot of support, virtually and in person by Black activists as well as her friends. In the end there were a few letters written and the poster – which had been criticised by others too – was taken down. But for Aminata, this outcome is not really what counts in retrospect. It was through that experience that she got to know the possibilities and structures of support for People of Colour and Afrodescendant people in particular.

The practice of playing down a racist or sexist offense is well known to anyone who has ever complained about such an issue. It makes it impossible for an offended person to speak of discrimination, as the existence of such an offense is not even acknowledged. If racism does not exist, then no one can be a victim of racism. Aminata tries to remember the time of the incident:

> Aminata: I had the encounter with this unpleasant Green Party politician […] what was going on politically? Why? I am not sure… Ah yes, there was Oury Jalloh,[4] there was a lot going on, and then I discovered the blog 'Der Braune Mob' and then the poster from the Green Party in Bavaria. […] But through that came the contact to ISD and I received so much support – it just has to be said – there were many people who supported me […] You were also involved. Digital politisation (*Politisierung im Netz*).
> Silvia: And Facebook.
> Aminata: Yes, it was the early days of Facebook. Sure, that was also all through Facebook, which means suddenly I knew so many, today I still know so many Black people through Facebook, in my timeline about 90 per cent, it is really a lot, I know so many from there that I don't really know but somehow we know each other.

The development of a Black political identity is also part of the process of negotiating a racialised identity in Germany, where racism and racialisation is an everyday reality for most people of African descent. For Aminata, the discovery of Noah Sow's anti-racism blog 'The Brown Mob' (*Der braune Mob*), which discussed experiences of anti-Black racism, and other blogs, websites and individuals helped her develop a political position as a Black person in Germany. Marleen de Witte (2019) describes a similar politicisation process for young adults of African descent in the Netherlands.

4 Oury Jalloh (a man who died 2005 in a prison cell (it burnt down) and who was there without any proof of criminal activity) – this case gave rise to big demonstrations against racism and police brutality in Germany, and goes on; last year there were still demonstrations commemorating his death.

There is growing identification with Black and anti-racist social struggles among young people of Ghanaian-Dutch descent; people who have been confronted with negative stereotypes about Africa and Africans since they were small children (for example, targeting the Zwarte Piet (Black Pete) caricature. These experiences, as de Witte notes, 'stimulate an emerging black consciousness among them' (2019, p. 619); a group identity emerges based on shared experiences of discrimination. And with the digitalisation of information, this community consciousness can develop over large distances as well.

Towards identifying as West African

In her twenties and thirties Aminata went through many life-changing processes. She finished her studies, she became increasingly involved with Black and anti-racist politics in Germany, she began to wear her hair naturally, and most importantly she founded her own family and had a child with Albert. And it was especially as a result of having her own family that Aminata felt she wanted to be more connected to her Guinean or West African heritage. Today, she is reading up on the history of Guinea in the form of biographies of important and controversial political leaders such as Alpha Condé. Although the has not been back to Guinea since her childhood, her connection to West Africa has been strengthening since she has had children of her own. Together with her family, she made her first trip to Ghana a few years ago, when her son was one and her daughter four years old. They travelled to visit her husband's mother and extended stepfamily. This experience was of particular importance for her as she went to West Africa for the first time as an adult and mother (an experience of diasporic travel I describe in Chapter 8).

Aside from travelling, Aminata also tries to integrate West African culture more into her daily life in Frankfurt through food (she and her husband cook Ghanaian dishes regularly) and by organising cultural events. For instance, with some former colleagues she co-organised the first Afro-fashion fair in Frankfurt, and she is in the organising team of the annual Afrika-Fest music event, where she focuses on trying to catch the interest of younger people. She is also friends with one of her Guinean uncles and his wife. Her musical taste, in particular, has a West African character, as she keeps up to date with the music industry in Congo, Nigeria, Ghana and French-speaking West Africa, too. Of course, her husband is the biggest West African influence in her life, as he is Ghanaian-German, his father lives next door, and Albert's mother lives in Accra, which makes telephone calls with Ghana an everyday occurrence. By building a relationship and founding a family with Albert, Aminata has been able to foster her links with her West African heritage.

Aminata's development and reflexions on Afrodiasporic identity coincide with a broader generational shift. Today in Germany, and in Europe more widely, there is a growing transnational popular culture: The influence from African countries has

increased and organisations in the diaspora are increasingly Afrocentric in terms of dance, fashion, music or literature.

Through the influence of Afrodiasporic and African websites (e.g. Strolling[5] or An African City[6]), French fashion labels like Paris-based Maison Chateau Rouge[7] bloggers of African descent referring to their Afro-European identities, and print and social media such as OkayAfrica[8] young people of African descent in Germany and elsewhere have begun to look more towards the African continent for inspiration instead of the USA. The internet plays an important part in promoting the music and literature of people of African descent worldwide. Aminata uses Instagram a lot and is often inspired by bloggers of African descent in France, USA, Germany or the UK. Yet her practice is also directed towards Guinea (intellectually) and Ghana (practically). By engaging seriously with these countries, she also hopes to acquire the tools she will need to transmit that knowledge and inculcate a certain pride in being of African descent in her children.

This shift towards a more African-informed diaspora identity is not only a personal development for Aminata, but is linked to a broader development among a global middle class, and Aminata is well aware of that, as it is reflected to her in her Instagram feed on a daily basis and she performs it on digital platforms as well. One reason why this new Afro-centred focus is developing for young people of African descent and others in Europe and across the world is because a generation of digital natives has come of age; it is a generation that was born and grew up in European societies who come from families where the parents migrated from very diverse African or Caribbean countries – but still keep up links to their places of origin. This makes it easier for their children and grandchildren to keep in contact regularly with the countries of their parents' or grandparents' birth, partly also thanks to today's digital technology.

Aminata and the other participants turned increasingly towards their Guinean, Senegalese or more broadly West African origins as adults or gave their children African names; for them, these cultural practices are part of the parcel of coming of age as person of African descent. These practices are aspects of what Herbert Gans called 'symbolic ethnicity' (1979), a rediscovery of the more symbolic elements of a culture of origin, taking up of specific ethnic markers only for special occasions to

5 For a description of the web series Strolling see: https://www.imdb.com/name/nm6554077/. Unfortunately, the creator of the series, Cecile Emeke, chose to delete all the videos as an artistic choice (accessed 14 January 2020).

6 An African city Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/user/AnAfricanCity – the West African counterpart to Sex and the City (accessed 14 January 2020).

7 Maison Chateau Rouge webpage: https://www.maison-chateaurouge.com/home (accessed 14 January 2020).

8 Okay Africa webpage: https://www.okayafrica.com/ (accessed 14 January 2020).

underline a personal identity – but they are more than that in the case of Afrodiasporic identities. They are what Paul Gilroy calls a 'bulwark against the corrosive effects of racism' (1993, p. 193), turning a racialised or ethnicised stigma into something positive and articulating it in a search for origins. Gilroy (1993) explains how, since the 1980s in the United Kingdom, there has been a renaissance of a 'pro-traditional' side in the African diaspora movements, where one can observe the (re)invention of African traditions: People take on African names, wear African garments or celebrate Afrodiasporic feasts (like Kwanzaa, a week of celebrations invented by the Black Power movement in the USA in the 1960s, celebrating African heritage). These practices related to 'symbolic ethnicity' do not have to be interpreted as political – they can also be seen as a wish to deal more with family history and cultural origins in general – but in the cases of the women I work with, they do also contain a political element. Much like the study of second-generation Italian Senegalese youth by Riccio and Uberti (2013), the political movements that Aminata is part of are promoting '[…] youths' multiple and situational identities […] Their priority remains the fight against discrimination' (p. 236). Although some of my participants would stress a diasporic affinity for national identities (Guinean-German or Senegalese-German) or a West African identity, and would sometimes stress their differences from, for example, East African cultural practices (Frankfurt has large Ethiopian and Eritrean communities, which arrived since the 1990s, mostly as political refugees), they also embrace an identity politics of global Blackness, which unites all people of African descent in Germany, and acknowledge that they all endure the same racialising practices. Thus while they identify as Guinean-German or Sierra Leonean-German through their parents and the cultural practices they learned the young adults, they also identify with Blackness as common signifier of occupying a racialised position in German society and European societies at large. Showing solidarity and identifying with all Black people is a political practice and emphasising being Guinean-German or Sierra-Leonian German is more important in terms of cultural practices and identifying with family (history).

Father and daughter: Two practices of diaspora?

Involvement in transnational or diasporic activities matter not only with regard to family history and genealogy. Lamine Camara, who grew up in Guinea and came to Germany in the 1970s as a student and with the official status of a political refugee, and Aminata, who grew up in Germany in the 1980s and spent a few years of her childhood in Guinea as a German expat, made for very different experiences of what it meant to be Afrodescendant in Germany. The importance of age can be seen in how Aminata had different understandings and practices of diasporic identity while growing up, which have grown closer to her father's understanding now that she has a family of her own. The comparison of political practice between Aminata and her

father allows us not only to draw out differences but also similarities between them and shows how both practise diasporic belonging through political engagement and awareness.

Aminata learns from her father: about politics, life in Guinea and about being politically active in general; and Lamine Camara learns from his daughter: about new coalitions between people of African descent and People of Colour or about being politically active in ways other than being in a traditional political party. They are from different generations, but that does not mean that they live separate lives; their life perceptions influence each other. The generations learn from each other 'post-figuratively' (younger learn from older) as well as 'prefiguratively' (older learn from younger), to take up the models that Margaret Mead (1970) described. The models of generational learning have to be thought of as functioning together.

While Aminata's father's political work is centred on Guinea and bringing Guineans together in the diaspora, Aminata has a different practice of diaspora, which goes beyond national alliances – it relates to people of African descent living in Germany or Europe more broadly. That is because she feels rooted in Germany while occupying a racialised subject position that connects her to people of African descent and creates a shared political identification as Black – Black German or Black European for instance. But it is also due to new media and communication channels, such as Instagram, which offer novel forms of identification for a generation of Afrodiasporic youth. The weakening of ties with a country of origin that can happen for subsequent generations of descendants of migrants allows for new diasporic practices to emerge. They go in multiple directions and are not only attached to a homeland, as the example of Aminata's multicentred diasporic activities demonstrates. Trémon (2017) has shown in the case of Tahitians of Chinese descent that, rather than being limited to China, diasporic networks extend today to Canada, the USA and New Zealand, especially for later generations of descendants. The ties are not cut; they are being redirected. Yet Trémon frames the practices of first and subsequent generations differently than centred and decentred: She speaks of a passage from migratory transnationalism (for the first generation) to a diasporic transnationalism (for generations of descendants of migrants). According to Brubaker (2005), to speak of diaspora requires a practice that be sustained over time and across more than one generation, and hence as a sociological category one could not speak of diasporic practices originating from the first generation.

Aminata and her father grew up under very different historical and geographical circumstances. Their political identities were shaped by different events in their lives. Besides the different influences on the political engagement of father and daughter, there are many levels of connection, too. Both in a way practice a *centred* and a *decentred* vision of diaspora, being focused on the relation with one country in particular while also connecting transversally: In Germany, Aminata is implicated in anti-racist political movements (e.g. Black politics in Germany) and globally

she connects to Afrodescendant people through digital networks that promote, for instance, Afrocentrism in literature, music, fashion and lifestyle. Her practice of diaspora is both decentred and centred – decentred because her anti-racist work involves everyone who is racialised in Germany and her influences stem from Afrodescendant people worldwide, and centred because she is dealing more with her specific Guinean heritage, too. But Lamine Camara's practice of diaspora is also both centred and decentred – centred because his engagement is directed towards Guinea, and is decentred because he also works on the level of supranational party politics, attends meetings of the Liberal International and forges alliances that go beyond the national.

For Aminata and her peers, politics plays an important role in their understanding of their relation to parental origins. The personal development of Afrodescendant people in the generation born in Germany in the 1980s is attached to a global phenomenon of Black and Afro-centred cultural and political movements formed by people of African descent everywhere in the world, who produce nostalgia and imaginaries of connection with the African continent and are responsible for sparking interest in the search for African roots. In this way, Aminata is part of an 'imagined generation' (Eckstein 2006 p. 214) of Afrodescendant people worldwide, today connected to each other in the digital sphere, a generation that shares imaginaries via digital dissemination. Anti-racist politics, Black and Afrodescendant identities, and the search for one's own African origins are interconnected. Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001), Vivian Louie (2006) and Robert Smith (2006) have all posited that the experience of racial discrimination can increase attachment to a country of origin. Smith gives the example of Mexican Americans claiming a superiority deriving from their Mexican-ness as a reaction to racial discrimination. I believe this can be the case for many primomigrants, but it has to be reframed for the second generation. In Aminata's case, her racialised subject position led first to an involvement in Black networks in Germany, and only subsequently to increased involvement with the country of parental origin.