8. Aminata Camara: Negotiating privilege, kinship and care in diasporic travel

Aminata Camara, now in her thirties, feels rooted and at home in Germany. Nevertheless, especially since she has had children of her own, it has been a wish of hers to engage in a continuous relationship with West Africa and to transmit her African origins (Guinean on her side and Ghanaian on her husband's) to the next generation. They finally made a family trip to Accra in 2016, when the kids were five and one.

Following that initial family visit, Aminata's idea now is to go every few years in order to tune in to life there and become accustomed to Ghana – to properly get to know the surroundings, everyday life, and potentially to build a house. More particularly, she wants to get to know her kin and for her family become members of the community. David Duval (2004) and Lauren Wagner (2008) both point out that a central motivation of 'return' visits or family visits can be to increase or normalise relations with transnational family. In his study on the meanings of return visits of Caribbean migrants in Toronto, Duval (2004) found that for many primomigrants 'full return' was not the desired ideal; it was more important to be able to potentially combine the best of both worlds and, if possible, to engage in a transnational life. That is even more the case for descendants of migrants for whom full return is not an option, as they were born and socialised in another country than that of their parents. In this chapter, I contend that the experience of diasporic travel is not only a way to reimagine what home and belonging mean but that it is also a ground for experiencing and facing one's own shifting social, cultural and economic positions.

In the previous chapter, I examined Lafia's roots travel, which was also a family visit.

Here, the main point of the visit is to meet family with whom Aminata has regular contact, although they have not yet seen each other in the flesh. Although Aminata lives with her family in Frankfurt, they are part of the family in Ghana, too, as Albert's mother lives there and regularly receives news from Ghana. Much like in Maya's case, diasporic relations are part of the family's everyday environment. Aminata travelled with her family to Ghana a few years ago. This was not roots travel in the first sense for Aminata, as her father is from Guinea. Rather, Ghana is the country of parental origin of both of Albert's parents. It was thus a trip to meet her

in-laws, a diasporic journey in the sense that it was her first experience of travel to West Africa since she had lived there as a child, and it was an initiation in travel for her children, too. One motivation was to establish family relations with distant kin, but there was more to the trip for Aminata. It was an important step towards her future goal of engaging in a transnational life between Germany and Ghana:

> When we go next time, we also want to take a look into how we could construct a future there – not in the sense of moving there or something, but how we could build our life there when Sofian is also a bit older; maybe not even next year, but when Sofian is five or six and both kids are able to really have a relation to it. (Interview, November 2018)

Aminata had mentioned the trip to Ghana on several occasions, but I asked her if at some point she wanted to tell me about it in more detail. She agreed, and one morning in November 2018 while I was in Lausanne and she in Frankfurt, we had a Skype chat where she told me about her family trip. Telling me about the trip was also a chance for her to reflect on the journey again and to indulge in reminiscence – an opportunity to reflect on her actions and reactions in unfamiliar surroundings, which made more sense to her now that some time had passed. Aminata is able to interpret her behaviour in past situations, demonstrating what Webb Keane has coined the ability to 'self-objectify' (2003, p. 236). She sees herself from a distance in time and place, and judges her actions and reactions analytically. Although the trip was more than two years ago, Aminata could remember many details vividly:

> We had actually wanted to travel to Ghana since forever – even before Sofian was born – simply because the grandmother of the children doesn't live in Germany, and Mia has never seen her grandma. So we had wanted to do it for a long time already, but there were concerns about health, so we said we want to do this when Mia is a bit older, and then Sofian came, so we said we cannot wait again that long, this is simply not possible. Therefore, we said we will just wait until he is one, because then he can be vaccinated. Then we decided to take grandpa [Albert's father] with us of course, because he hasn't been there either for, like, 100 years – I'm not sure, but I reckon 30 years or something. So we decided that, and fortunately we also had the financial means to do it, because [such a trip] is really expensive.

Forging kinship in Ghana – the importance of trust and care

Aminata is affiliated to her Ghanaian kin through her husband and her children. For her children in particular, she wants this extended family link with Ghana to be long lasting, because she wants the kids to have a connection to West Africa. The

Ghanaian family members, especially Albert's mum, started to be a part of her life when she met Albert, and more importantly when they had children together. I asked her at the end of the interview if she also wanted to go back to Guinea one day, as this was where her father was from and where she had lived a few years as a child. Aminata said that she did, but also remarked that it was more complicated to go to Guinea than to Ghana. There were several reasons for this, but particularly because the relations to the family in Ghana were already there, stable and durable; she felt it was easier to establish that filiation than for Guinea – all her close family was in Germany. Aminata used these four weeks of travel to create bonds and links with Albert's family in Ghana, to get the feeling of being part of a family there. Aminata and her family spent a lot of time in Albert's mother's house where they stayed, and there were visits from close kin (uncles and aunts, cousins) as well as more distant relatives (people from the same village of origin of the mother, who were considered distant kin). Aminata spent much time with her mother-in-law, helping in the household, for example, and the rest of the time was about hanging out together at the house and getting acquainted with the people who came by and becoming accustomed to the rhythm of life. Kinship relations are not just there through genealogy or filiation – they have to be created in practice by sharing one another's existence, becoming part of each other's lives, as Marshall Sahlins writes in *What kinship is (and is not)* (2011a, 2011b). With the idea of 'mutuality of being', Sahlins describes the circumstances under which members would consider each other close kin: It usually includes sharing a certain everyday existence, taking care of each other, being in contact regularly – hence, being in mutual relations of care and communication. This also reflects how kinship is made socially in the case of the Zumbagua people in Ecuador, who were studied by Mary Weismantel (1995): It is through nurturing practices, repetition and time that someone becomes a parent – it is about giving and receiving care.

Substances that can be shared for a kinship tie to be created – instead of blood, semen or milk – can also be food, money and even simply time.

For Aminata and her husband's family in Ghana, the diasporic kinship relations exist in the form of a range of exchanges – especially the exchange of information in the form of telephone calls with Albert's mother. In Ghana, Aminata did not simply feel part of the family right from the start; she did not know most people at first. Trust was something that developed over those four weeks in Ghana. When it came to trusting other people with her children, especially her younger one, kinship was put to the test.

When analysing the process of making kinship, Sahlins uses 'being' and 'existence' interchangeably in his concept of 'mutuality of being/existence'. In her attempt to interpret Sahlins' mutuality of being as a model for explaining diasporic kinship, Trémon (forthcoming) proposes framing mutuality of being and mutuality of existence as distinct entities. She suggests that 'mutuality of being' refers to be-

ing part of the same lineage and that 'mutuality of existence' instead presupposes the sharing of a certain everyday life with each other, of being actively involved in one another's lives. The latter is usually possible for close kin. And close kin can be two things: kin that might be distant in lineage but close geographically, or kin that are close in lineage but geographically distant. Between close kin, a community of existence, a sharing of a certain everyday life, is possible. With distant kin, both distant in terms of lineage and geographically, there can be a mutuality of being, a belonging to a group of kinship, but without the involvement in one another's lives. Working with that distinction allows us to understand Aminata's relationships to her distant kin in Ghana. Before going to Ghana, a mutuality of being existed – they were related and acknowledged that kinship relation in their lives – but there was no mutuality of existence. Aminata was not much included in their everyday lives, nor they in hers (except for Albert's mother, with whom they were already in close contact). Aminata had to get to know the family members to get a feeling for whom she could trust. Trust is key to building a relationship as family members.

The pool accident – kinship put to the test in an existential crisis

During our conversation, Aminata told me about an incident that had made her question the whole travel endeavour. After a week in Accra during which time they met people from the neighbourhood and spent a lot of time in the house with the family, they wanted to have a day at a swimming pool, to relax there with the kids. Unfortunately, as Aminata explained, her one-year-old son Sofian had an accident:

> Kadadje, Albert's cousin, is very tall but he is actually quite young, and Sofian was in the water with them, and Albert just wanted to swim one small lap and gave him Sofian, and Sofian made a move, and Kadadje can't swim, he could stand, the water was not deep, but somehow he just… let him go. Sofian sank like a cork, and I jumped into the water – with my shoes on, clothes, bag, everything – and got him out. Everything happened within seconds, so Albert didn't hear how I screamed, so I jumped in and took the child out [she takes a deep breath]. That was so horrible, it was sooo terrible, and for a week or so you could do nothing with me, because I was so afraid. […] And suddenly everything was super strenuous, because suddenly I feared for the death of my son, every second I feared for my child. […] And I also just realised, I am such a '*krasse*' [emphasising something stiff and tense] potato [*Kartoffel*, a word denoting something stereotypically German] that I am really not able to relax, I am just not able to, and I mean that makes me a typical German. At least that is how I defined it, because, I mean, what's a life there? Life doesn't count for much there, every day someone is talking about a person who died of Malaria, that is the standard. Death is an everyday occurrence.

So, Aminata's mood went from euphoria to 'I somehow have to make it through two more weeks.' After the incident with Sofian, she was suspicious; she needed time to feel safe for her children again, to build trust. Although she says it in an ironic way, well aware that she is playing with stereotypes, the remark that after that moment she realised how German she was is nonetheless interesting, because it reveals how she constructs an understanding of herself. She reflects on the importance of socialisation for forming the self, especially in terms of emotions.

Aminata is trying to make sense of her reactions and emotions but is left with a feeling of unease. In the moment of the accident, her agency slips away; she has no control over the situation. She would not have had control over the situation anywhere, but the fact of it happening in unfamiliar and, for her, rather unsafe surroundings made things worse. Describing the situation in retrospect, Aminata looks at herself with the eyes of someone else, and as she tells me, it reminds her of the negative stereotype of the *Kartoffel* (potato)– a German who is not able to relax.

Although the accident would have been stressful anywhere and for every parent, because it happens in Ghana among her husband's family, where she does not know the rules and is doing her best to blend in, she projects on herself this German stereotype of the 'potato'. She feels she somehow overreacted, too, because of the unfamiliar environment and the unknown people who – in this instant of emergency and crisis – were not able to calm her down. She did not know them well enough to trust them. Another preoccupation was the unfamiliar health system and the different health risks that they faced in Ghana: fear of Malaria, fear of being far from good healthcare or a healthcare system one knows and trusts, become crucial in such a moment. In these instances of stress and fear, I believe that Aminata experiences a form of 'displacement' – a feeling of being out of place. Displacement as defined by anthropologist Georgina Ramsay (2019) is a feeling of existentially losing control of one's life. In this case, because she does not know how to navigate an unknown situation and suddenly senses that she is not able to determine her and her children's future, Aminata experiences just such a phenomenon:

> I define displacement here as an existential experience of contested temporal being, in which a person cannot reconcile the contemporary circumstances of their life with their aspirations for, and sense of, the future. That is, displacement is a fundamental disruption to the teleology of life: an experience, whether acute or chronic, that pulls a person out of the illusory comfort of a life with stability and into a reality of a future that is not only uncertain, but which is determined by forces that are outside of their direct control. (Ramsay 2019, p. 4)

In Aminata's case, the external forces outside of her control are geopolitical constellations which cause inequality, for example in terms of healthcare, and, on a personal level, the fact that she had placed her son in the care of a cousin of Albert's whom

she had not known for very long. Although she might well not be in control should such an accident happen in Frankfurt either, the healthcare system is good and the health risks are smaller in Germany; in those familiar surroundings, she would know straight away where to go or whom to call. It is easier to keep up the sense of control and stability over one's life in those circumstances.

By positing the idea of 'a sense of temporal displacement' (2019, p. 1), Ramsay wishes to untie the tight knot that limits studies of displacement to refugees and migrants and to propose that it can be felt and experienced by everyone – for instance, everyone can feel displaced by the effects of global capitalism and neoliberal restructuring. She argues for a framework that includes migrants and non-migrants alike in 'shared rhythms of displacement' (2019, p. 1). I contend that this is how Aminata felt in the moment of the incident and in days that followed. The feeling of displacement coincides with a feeling of losing control, which is more likely to occur in places or instances which are unknown and unfamiliar or with people one does not trust. In Aminata's case, it happened during a holiday in an unfamiliar country. She told me that after the incident she had the intense desire to go back to Frankfurt, a place she knows how to navigate – that she is familiar with:

> It was not possible for me to engage with the country normally anymore, I felt more like: 'Okay, now I will just hold on and make it through the next two weeks.' That was the state of mind, of course alternating with – what a relief that the Grandpa ['*Opa*'] was there who also had an eye on Sofian, and always made sure that he was fine. And, of course, everyone wanted him to be safe, but I was just totally traumatised, I called my mother and cried because I thought you know...

Another way of framing this incident and Aminata's reaction is in terms of Jarrett Zigon's concept of a 'moral breakdown', a time of crisis when a person is forced to think about a way to go back to a status quo in order to alleviate crisis:

> I suggest an anthropology of moralities should be limited to what I have called moral breakdowns. That is, it should be limited to those social and personal moments when persons or groups of persons are forced to step-away from their unreflective everydayness and think-through, figure out, work on themselves and respond to certain ethical dilemmas, troubles or problems. These moral breakdowns are characterised by an ethical demand placed on the person or persons experiencing the breakdown, and this demand requires that they find a way or ways to 'Keep Going!' and return to the everydayness of the unreflective moral dispositions. (2007, p. 140)

The ethical demand for Aminata was to not go back to Germany in that moment and to not shut the door on her and her children getting to know the country and their relatives. It was a question of accepting that such an accident could happen, while

not holding the surroundings or the cousin fully responsible. She had to find a way to 'keep going', as Zigon suggests, to quickly find a compromise. For Aminata this 'keeping going' meant making it through the weeks in Ghana by insisting more on her own schedule and boundaries and not always following the rules and habits of her host family. This entailed keeping the nuclear family together constantly, not being apart for an extended period. After the pool incident, Aminata chose where she wanted to go with the children, which turned out to be places where wealthier people went, both Ghanaians and expats:

> After a while it was okay again, we adapted to the situation, and of course I was happy, we also went to the pool again one week later, a pool that I chose this time, I said 'Ok now listen, I gotta play the privilege card here, we go to the 5-star hotel' […] And so we did that and that was super cool for Mia and the kids, because we could really relax there, and only Manji came with us, so we kind of took our time off there, so to say; we sat and relaxed, nothing was dangerous, he [Sofian] could just walk around, be free, like he knew from back home.

Today, Aminata can see that first pool incident with some distance, but you can feel in her voice when she recounts it that this must have been a very scary and difficult moment for her, where she feared for the life of her child. At the time of our interview, two years had passed, but the memory was still quite fresh. Aminata is fully aware that she used her privileged socioeconomic situation to get through the crisis, but feels it was the necessary step for her family to be safe. The accident happened after only a week, when being in Ghana was still all rather new. It was by spending more time together with relatives that she slowly began to trust people again.

Soon after the incident at the pool, it was time to prepare for a trip to Kumasi. Albert's mother is from a village close to Kumasi, a city in the Ashanti region to the north of Accra. As Albert's grandmother had died not long ago, the village decided to wait for Albert and his family to organise the funeral, so that Albert could be there, too. The family in Accra suggested that, as Sofian was still very small and Albert's father was not in good enough health to travel to such a remote place, that Albert go to the village and attend the funeral on his own for a few days, while Aminata, the kids and the grandfather stayed in Accra. But Aminata contested that situation vehemently.

> Silvia: Ok, why did they suggest that Albert go there alone?
> Aminata: Because they said, 'No, it is not really a place for Sofian', because Sofian was already well known to the family [laughing]… because he is such a handful ['*Pfundskerlchen*'] everyone knew Sofian's a mega active kid, you got to watch out for him. But after a while, I and also Sofian started to gain trust in the people. There was another uncle who always had him in his arms, and I saw, okay, he really has an eye on Sofian, where I can say I'm going away for a little while, to

> go outside or go to do my hair and Sofian is safe. After a while I had that feeling, but I needed to get that feeling first – I mean, I didn't know these people, right?

Aminata is aware that her wish to go to the village was not rational but driven by emotion. Thinking in retrospect about insisting on going to the village with her family, she believes that rationally it would have been better to stay in Accra with health facilities close by, yet emotionally the most important thing was to stay together as a nuclear family. As long as everything was fine it was easy to feel part of the family and to feel safe. In a situation of crisis, these relations were put to the test. It was only when Aminata saw that there were relatives who took good care of her son that she started to be more relaxed again.

In the end, the whole family went to the village together, which again was full of beautiful and challenging moments. They arrived in Kumasi by bus; a taxi driver came to get them, and the ride with him was so nice. Aminata remembers what a good feeling she had and how they were all in such good spirits, passing through new landscapes she had never seen, listening to music throughout the ride, while the driver chatted with them the whole time and told them many stories about the place. Albert's family was a bit reluctant to let them stay in the village, because they thought it would not fulfil their European standards, and suggested a hostel instead:

> Aminata: After visiting that hostel, we went into the village and met yet another million relatives […]. And then we also said, hey, this village is so much nicer than that hostel, are you kidding us? And so they showed us a little hut, more like a little house made of concrete, and there was also electricity and a small stove, a small supermarket nearby. […] So then we finally said, 'Great we can stay here.' And then it really was such a wonderful evening, and great day, I still have some photos showing how great it was, especially the kids. Oh my god the kids were so lovely and immediately took in Mia as part of their crew.

The community in that Accra neighbourhood all originate from the same village: the hairdresser, the tailor, everyone. Aminata and her family were also able to meet these people in the village, as they all came together for the funeral event. She was very pleased to get to know so many people, and they were always very well received. The women from the village went with her to get her suitable clothes for the funeral and always made sure that her family was taken care of. Unfortunately, during the second night, Sofian got really sick, and they had to leave quickly in the morning. Sofian was already a bit better when they left the village, and the thought of returning to Accra, a place that Aminata now was familiar with, was very pleasing for her. 'It was a bit like coming home', she remarked. After getting back to Accra, Aminata said that

> somehow this also welded us closer together, in that we went through this adventure together [as a nuclear family], and I was also like, 'Am I totally stupid that I did not hear what the others said?' No, it was no place to go for me with a one-year-old child. Full stop. What was I even thinking, to do that with a toddler? Other Ghanaian mothers would probably have the balls to do it, but not me. You don't have the nerve, my dear.

Many situations made Aminata realise that, although she cultivates her West African identity in Germany, she is not used to life in Ghana. And the life she led as a young child in Guinea was far from the reality she got to know in Ghana too: 'How privileged my childhood was in Guinea', Aminata reflected at the end of the interview. In Guinea she remembers she had a privileged expat life, and her father came from a wealthy urban socioeconomic milieu; he also helped to financially support a lot of his family there. In general, the experiences she had in mind from life in Guinea are connected to a wealthier lifestyle – they had a driver, were friends with other privileged expats or wealthier Guineans, and went to fancy pools. In Ghana, she learnt about a very different life, in a neighbourhood where everyone comes from the same village, living in a household with many different people, together with those who cannot afford a privileged life. So, not only was all this a new experience for Aminata because she did not know Ghana but also because she was socialised in a different socioeconomic milieu than that of her in-laws.

Acting respectable – caring and gendered division of labour

Throughout Aminata's travels, her caring duties as a mother were very much in the foreground. A lot of it was about buying and preparing food, adapting to the cooking styles and rhythm of the family in Accra, watching out for her children and organising a programme of activities for them. The caring duties did not stop at her children: Caring for her mother-in-law who had been ill for some time was also a matter of concern. For all these duties, Aminata tried to do her best to be a good member of this Ghanaian family. Respectability was important during her trip to see her family in many ways; achieving respectability in the eyes of her Ghanaian peers, especially women, was something Aminata strove for. Achieving respectability in that context meant being a good woman, wife, mother and daughter-in-law by fulfilling her care duties. It was a matter of showing that she was the same as the other women in her function as wife and mother, demonstrating that she was not that different after all. This was important in her building of social relations – as revealed in the fact that Aminata was able to bond with the women hairdressers of her neighbourhood, something she told me of with joy.

The feminist sociologist Beverley Skeggs, in her book *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable* (1997), describes the efforts of working-class women in the United Kingdom to be respectable and act respectably according to the diverse pressures they face from society and the stereotypes projected upon them. Yet respectability is a matter of concern for women in other social and economic circumstances, too. It just expresses itself a bit differently, and the pressures the women face vary. I asked Aminata how she was received by the people she met. She had told me in a previous conversation that when her mother had lived in Guinea with her father she was not well received by the female in-laws. But Aminata had very different experiences regarding her welcome – she was received very well and always treated nicely: 'Sister Aminata, sister Aminata!' they would call her. During our conversation, she stressed that one of the reasons she thought that people were always so caring and nice was that they could see that Aminata carried out her own care duties properly: 'They saw that I took care of my own children […] I was basically spending all day caring for my children, preparing their food; I didn't let myself be served all day, I had my stuff to do, including laundry etc.' Aminata felt that this was a good basis to form solidarity among the women of the neighbourhood: They could see that she was different in many aspects, but she was also a mother who cared for her children just like them. That formed a solid basis for identification and understanding. The moments she spent with the women hairdressers in the neighbourhood, for instance, were of particular significance, as she felt she was able to connect with them through shared womanhood, although differences in status and nationality were still present. It was during her moments at the hairdresser that Aminata could chat about topics such as what it was really like to be a wife or a mother in Ghana. What it is like to be a woman there, questions about clothes, music or hairstyles – these were all topics of conversation.

But the status paradox mattered as well. Many of the questions the hairdressers had were related to how they might come to Germany and how to find success there. Aminata was conflicted. She did not want to crush their dreams and hopes, yet she also knew that for them, in their socioeconomic situations, there was no easy way to come to Germany. After returning herself, she even stayed in touch with some of them, but after a while the contact petered out.

Aminata was confronted with very material differences and immaterial desires that for some in this world are unreachable, such as travelling to Europe. For some people in this world it is just a mouse click away, while for others it is almost impossible due to structural barriers.

Community

Another key element of care was the issue of giving money to relatives, which carries with it many questions: Who is a relative, how much should each one get, how often,

what is too much, what is too little, when is it enough? There were many expectations on Aminata and Albert in this area. In Germany, they earn enough to maintain their family and lifestyle, but no more. In Ghana, relatives expected them to have a lot of money – and to be fair, by comparison they do. In Ghana they are the rich European relatives, who have to give to everyone a bit; and they feel obliged to do it, too. Aminata feels that this is a 'moral obligation' stemming from global inequity:

> Aminata: Treats here and there, and Albert – I mean he loves that and for the kids, a Coke here a Fanta there and 'Get me that but you can keep the rest.' Our toys, and everything, we rationed everything; we specifically did that, because there were always new people coming. Someone gave us that advice beforehand, who was that again?...
> Yes there was someone who said, 'You better make small portions, and don't give everything out at once.' Therefore, we always had enough for everyone. But that was also expected […]. My father had warned us about that too and had said 'I go there with a 20 (euro note). Point blank.'
> Silvia: Well it's difficult, when do you say now that's enough?
> Aminata: Well, I mean my father is himself an African who made things possible by his own efforts. But we were only born here [Germany] by coincidence; this is where the European privilege comes into play; we were just born here by chance; we did not have to struggle somewhere else to have what we have now, so it is not done with 20 euros. Then it is not morally reprehensible from my point of view for me to say 'No, I don't have more, because I also have to struggle [at home].' We did not take any money back home, we spent everything we had, that's it… And it was a lot, it was a lot a lot, but that's the way it was.

During the holidays, they were able to uphold expectations, the financial ones in particular, but as Aminata explains, towards the end they felt they had come to their financial limits. Structural injustices are being addressed here on a personal level, and that is not without conflict. Aminata also thinks about moral obligations, contrasting her experiences with those of her father, who came to Germany from Guinea in the 1970s and had to struggle to make it to Europe and to earn a decent living. He has the right to limit his financial donations, she feels, because he did not have the same privileges that she has today. Aminata was just 'lucky' to have been born in Germany, she felt she owed something for that. And giving back to her in-laws was a way to fulfil these moral debts which stem from living in an unfair world.

Albert is almost viewed as a primomigrant by his mother's home community; he was born in Germany, both his parents are Ghanaian, and his mother returned to Ghana. His link to Ghana is therefore strong. Although he has not travelled there often, he is in regular contact with his mother, and the expectations towards him among his family and peers in Ghana are high. They see him as an important provider for the whole community. Valerio Simoni has observed comparable family

obligations, in this case for international Cuban migrants living in Spain when they return to visit Cuba. Some people postpone their travel indefinitely, because they feel they cannot afford to bring enough back:

> Having to bring money and presents might weigh so much on some of my interlocutors that some of them postpone their return trip to infinity, saying that even if they have the money to buy a flight ticket they would not want to go there 'empty handed'. (Simoni, 2019)

This phenomenon of financial pressure upon those making return visits depends on two factors, one of which appears to be somewhat underrepresented in research. First, this pressure on migrants to send or bring back money exists because of significant geopolitical inequalities that the 'returnee' or diasporic visitor has to juggle – living in a country that affords a higher income (but also high living costs) and visiting a country with low incomes and salaries where they have family obligations. The second factor is the socioeconomic status of their family in the country of origin: If they belong to the working or lower middle class, it is likely that the migrant will be seen more as a 'community project' – their migration is likely to have been aided by the family, partly with the aim of improving the material conditions of those 'left behind'. If the migrant is from an upper class milieu, even if in a country where incomes are usually smaller compared to, for example, European countries, it is likely that they will not be expected to contribute financially to the same extent. The latter was the case for Lafia in Senegal, whose family is part of an upper middle class with fewer financial needs. Bringing presents or even monetary gifts was not expected from Lafia when she travelled to Senegal – very different from the situation with Aminata's in-laws in Ghana. Lafia's relatives have far fewer expectations towards her than Albert's family do towards him and his family, because Lafia is not considered as close kin. There could be two reasons for this: First, Lafia's family seems to be upper middle class and thus in no need of financial support; whereas Albert's family, although middle class but less bourgeois, has more needs, because they are less wealthy and they support many people from the mother's village, including those beyond direct kinship ties. Another reason is that Albert is far more present in the life of his mother and family in Ghana and they therefore include him more in decisions and have expectations of him. For Lafia, this inclusion in a wider kin network was only initiated after she had visited for the first time. It was only since she went that she had WhatsApp contacts, for instance, and that she began to be perceived as kin who could also help in supporting community projects – but this is still much more distant: The presents seem to be more like a symbolic gesture and not existential support, as in the case of Aminata's in-laws.

Albert helps his mother on a monthly basis. Thus, Albert holds a crucial place in the family constellation – perceived as a transnational migrant, he is seen as a

provider for the Ghanaian community, even if he already belongs to the second generation, a descendant of migrants and not a primomigrant. The need to fulfil these financial obligations is also linked to Albert and Aminata's wish to be an active part of their Ghanaian family, and in Aminata's case it is also driven by the desire to connect to her own West African origins through involvement in her in-laws' lives. By being a part of a Ghanaian family, she is able to embody the composite personality that she wishes to be and to combine being German and being West African.

Maya's situation is similar to Albert's to a certain extent. As her father moved back to Sierra Leone a few years ago, she and her brother (who still lives in the USA) are important transnational links. After moving to Nigeria towards the end of 2018, Maya went to Sierra Leone in spring 2019 for a vacation and was very impressed and happy. Maya did not want to go there for much longer than a week as there would have been family responsibilities and business she would have had to become involved in if she stayed longer. By only staying for ten days, Maya could say it was just a holiday and enjoy meeting the family and spending some time together. This is another good thing about staying in Nigeria for her; it is close but not where the family actually is. She can thus stay out of things a bit better, although she is in contact with her father weekly via phone. Like Albert, Maya is not a transnational migrant herself. Yet as she has close kin there, she is also perceived as an important part of the family and stays up to date with the everyday life of her father, grandmother, half-siblings and stepmother (her father divorced in the USA and remarried in Sierra Leone). Hence, due to the fact that her father, who was the primomigrant, has returned to Sierra Leone, Maya, a second-generation descendant born in Germany, becomes an important transnational link, as does Albert. This phenomenon has not yet received much attention in migration studies about the second generation. Usually, the challenge of meeting family obligations, especially financial ones like remittances, but other care duties as well, is only presumed an issue for the primomigrant. But what happens when the primomigrant returns, or moves elsewhere and their descendants stay put? This places the second generation in another transnational family constellation.

Living with differences in a transnational family

Anthropologist and migration scholar Constance de Gourcy (2017) explains how migration or mobility can become a resource which offers a possibility of recentring what home and belonging mean. It becomes an opportunity to experience life and living differently, even if just for a short while – and a chance to experience oneself differently. Thus, for Aminata's family, the trip to Ghana was a first step towards imagining a transnational life between Accra and Frankfurt. It was also intended to strengthen ties between kin and demonstrate a certain commitment to their Ghanaian family.

During their holidays in Ghana, it was not always easy to juggle multiple care responsibilities, and the trip was full of challenging moments for Aminata, in which she had to redefine herself and her limits, especially her limits regarding care and kinship. In Ghana, Aminata experiences a different socioeconomic status; in terms of racial identity, her skin colour and African descent matter differently there, where she and her family are perceived as *Obrunis* (foreigners or whites) but at the same time also as part of the family and community. Meanwhile, back in Germany they are racialised persons and read as non-white. In Germany they see themselves as middle class and not wealthy, whereas in Ghana this German middle-class status makes them upper class with economic and social access to a wealthy expat or wealthy Ghanaian lifestyle, as also mentioned in Maya's case in Chapter 6. This experience of geopolitical privilege is common to anyone who travels from a wealthy to a poorer country, but it plays out differently when one has family relations in that economically poorer country – there are other obligations and responsibilities for diasporic travellers. In Aminata's case, I consider this as a form of 'status paradox' that the likes of Boris Nieswand (2012) and Valerio Simoni (2019) describe for migrants and tourists: being in different countries with very different socioeconomic circumstances and having a life in both means that a person will face a paradox. In line with Nieswand's thinking, it is the paradox of being a Ghanaian migrant who in the destination country is considered to be unskilled (i.e. unable to find a job appropriate for their qualifications) while at the same time gaining status in their place of origin and facing new responsibilities there. Neither Aminata nor Albert are primomigrants, but they also face a status paradox as members of the second generation, which creates different burdens – financially and morally. Ideas of morality manifest not only through feelings of guilt and acknowledgement of privilege compared to her Ghanaian kin, but also in the form of giving considerable monetary gifts to many – gifts that will tighten links with the community in Ghana. The concept of 'status paradox' helps make sense of Aminata's experiences of socioeconomic and cultural difference in Ghana and the (inner) conflicts that result. Although the gifts of money weigh on them, they try to fulfil such demands, because they feel that the economic situation of the Ghanaian extended family is worse than their own. When I asked her if they would do certain things differently when they travelled there again, Aminata began by saying 'Well, we'd probably take less money.' But she contradicted herself in the next sentence: 'No that's not true, we'd probably always take all the money we have; if we have less, they will get less, if we have more they will get more. […] It's not the same as in Germany, like a present that you get as an extra; it really fills a void. And everyone has to fill a void.' This is how the status paradox plays out; it is a constant re-evaluation of economic possibilities and kinship ties that take place in a transnational and economically unequal setting.