



## Bushfalling at All Cost: The Economy of Migratory Knowledge in Anglophone Cameroon<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Despite high financial costs, deportations and many frustrated departure attempts, young Anglophone Cameroonians maintain high aspirations for migration. In this article, I lay out the social rationalities of aspiring migrants, as well as the economic, symbolic and informational context of their emigration decisions. On the basis of three case studies, I analyze how information on emigration is controlled, processed, and evaluated. While discourses within migration policy often posit that aspiring migrants are naïve and uninformed, I demonstrate how migration choices and strategies are developed under circumstances more complex than can be grasped by the simplistic alternative between being informed or not informed about migratory risks. Rather than to consider flows of information, I argue what matters is whether or not information is trusted and how it is interpreted. By looking at the costs and gains of migration from the standpoint of aspiring migrants, this article shifts the focus towards migration dynamics at the point of departure.

### Keywords

migration, Cameroon, information, migratory risks, migratory choices

### Résumé

Malgré le coût financier élevé, les expulsions, et les nombreuses tentatives de départ frustrées, les jeunes Camerounais anglophones continuent à avoir de hautes aspirations de migration. Dans cet article, je présente les rationalités sociales des aspirants à la migration, mais aussi le contexte économique, symbolique et informationnel de leurs décisions d'émigrer. Sur base de trois études de cas, j'analyse comment l'information sur l'émigration est contrôlée, traitée, et évaluée. Alors que les discours de la politique de migration considèrent souvent les aspirants migrants comme naïfs et non-informés, je démontre comment les choix et les stratégies de migration se développent dans des circonstances bien plus complexes, qui ne peuvent être résumées à l'alternative simpliste entre le fait d'être informé des risques de la migration, ou pas. Au lieu d'étudier les flux

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d'informations, j'affirme l'importance de la fiabilité des informations ainsi que de la manière dont l'information soit interprétée. En analysant les coûts et les gains de la migration, du point de vue des aspirants migrants, cet article déplace l'attention vers les dynamiques migratoires à leur point de départ.

#### Mots-clés

migration, Cameroun, information, risques migratoires, choix migratoires

During an entire year, 25 year old Delphine refused to take her salary because she wanted to save it to be able to travel to Europe or the US.<sup>2</sup> She was determined to top up these savings with money she received from boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, and family members. She wanted to study in either South Africa or Europe. In the midst of the transcription of yet another interview on the hardships, struggles, and sufferings of undocumented migrant woman whom I had interviewed in Europe, my research assistant Delphine jumped up, laughed, and proclaimed: 'Je veux go à tout prix!'<sup>3</sup> In her exclamation, she made reference to a Cameroonian film of the title 'Paris à tout prix' (Paris at all cost) that came out in 2008. The film portrays the risks and potential downfalls of migration, such as unwanted sex work, money swindlers, failure, and deportation. After watching the film, Delphine just shrugged her shoulders. She viewed the negative stories of the films as the individual 'bad luck' of the protagonists – and thus not the effect of restrictive migration regimes. Delphine was more ambitious and determined than that. Her motto was: 'Bushfalling at all cost!'

The topic of out-migration is imminently present in Cameroon and referred to by the term 'bushfalling.' 'Bushfalling' is the act of going out to the 'wilder-ness' (bush) to hunt down meat (money) and bring back home the trophies. 'To fall bush' implies trying against all odds to leave the country to go (i.e. fall) and earn money to send back to the family in Cameroon. 'Bush' is the term used to describe 'white man country' – largely understood as the 'West' (Nyamjoh and Page 2002). A person who has successfully traveled or migrated is called a 'bushfaller.'<sup>4</sup>

My research assistant Delphine was determined to fall bush. In our research, we repeatedly came across migration brokers that failed to send out their

<sup>2</sup> I came to employ Delphine as my research assistant right from the beginning of my pilot study in September 2007.

<sup>3</sup> As Delphine was referring to a French film, she mixed the title of the film 'Paris à tout prix' with both Pidgin and French.

<sup>4</sup> To make reading easier, I will in the following use the terms 'bush' and 'bushfalling' without single quotation marks.

clients and families who had invested money in vain into the bushfalling projects of their children. Yet, Delphine would not change her mind about bushfalling at all cost. Half way through fieldwork, one of the informants whose bushfalling trajectory Delphine had been transcribing was deported back to Cameroon. Delphine saw first hand how impossible Manuella's life had become in Cameroon after deportation. Although they became friends, Delphine did not trust, believe, or take seriously Manuella's advice. Why should the bad luck of others discourage her? Whatever the odds, she wanted 'to see bush' with her own eyes. She was going to go at any cost and in any way. If others had been unlucky, she would work hard on getting bush right. She was going to have success and bush was the only means and place to get there.

Delphine is not an isolated case of extreme fixation on bush. The level of enthusiasm about the possibilities of bushfalling is high in Cameroon in general and in Anglophone Cameroon in particular. When my research assistant and I conducted a quantitative survey on migration aspirations amongst 100 respondents in different neighborhoods of Buea (South West Province, Cameroon),<sup>5</sup> 80 respondents said that they would like to fall bush and 29 had actually tried in concrete ways to go abroad.<sup>6</sup> Having internalized that no future is possible in Cameroon, leaving the country has become a prized escape route for many frustrated young Cameroonians (Lado 2005). Above all, young Cameroonians – not yet married and of both genders – are eager to try and make their life outside of the country. Financially very weak families might hesitate more to invest their money in a bushfalling project, whilst socially more privileged Cameroonians have more means at their disposal to fall bush with fewer risks and at lower costs.<sup>7</sup>

In this article I ask why in the face of stories of hardship in bush, duping, frustrated migration attempts, and deportation many young Cameroonians remain resilient in their pursuit of success through migration. In trying to

<sup>5</sup> In May 2008, I conducted a quantitative survey with 100 respondents. The survey included 50 male and 50 female respondents and covered three neighborhoods with respectively different socio-demographic characteristics.

<sup>6</sup> Amongst those who wanted to fall bush, there were also people wanting simply to go abroad for holiday and study projects. Attempts to travel out of the country spanned from applying for admission with foreign universities abroad to engaging in conversations with family members abroad whether they could 'bring them over.'

<sup>7</sup> Inspired by a radio show, I included a question in the above mentioned quantitative survey asking what respondents would do if they were given CFA2.5 million. It was striking to note how in the poorer and less-privileged neighborhood of Buea the rate of people who wanted to use the money to build a house or buy a plot of land was much higher than the rate of people who wanted to fall bush.

explain strong beliefs in bushfalling at all cost, I develop the notion of 'the economy of migratory knowledge.' With this term, I refer to cultural and societal factors that structure flows of information and influence constructions of meaning. I suggest conceiving of these processes of meaning making as an economy not in the narrow economic sense, but as a system of symbolic transactions within which information is handled, created, devaluated, exchanged, transformed, and dismissed.

I go here beyond classical usages of Thompson's conceptual apparatus within which social and cultural factors mitigate otherwise rational transactions (1963), but take the rational as a predominantly social construction. Only an intimate understanding of how the costs of migration are understood and experienced in Cameroon can help us uncover the rationality that leads people in Cameroon to choose bush at all cost. I will focus in particular on flows and interpretations of information, evaluations of costs and gains, as well as on the role of sexual dynamics within conditions of departure. All of these aspects shape how young Cameroonians come to form decisions about emigration.

By choosing this focus, this article demonstrates how migration choices and strategies are developed under circumstances more complex than being informed or not informed about obstacles and downsides of migration.<sup>8</sup> Trust in information, as well as their respective interpretations are crucial to explaining contemporary perceptions and practices of emigration in Anglophone Cameroon. Together, flows of information and processes of meaning making, form part of a symbolic system of socially inscribed moralities.<sup>9</sup>

The data that I draw on stems from 14 months of fieldwork conducted between 2008 and 2009 in Buea, in the South West Province in Anglophone Cameroon. Buea and the South West Province, in general, have seen massive flows of immigrants during the last 100 years (Konings 1993, 1995, 1996; Ardener 1996). Most of my informants and their families considered themselves strangers in the place they lived and maintained ambiguous relationships with the predominantly Francophone state of Cameroon that came into existence in 1960.<sup>10</sup> As one of the two provincial capitals of Anglophone Cameroon, Buea currently owes its youthful and urban character to the university constructed there in the early 1990s. Although all informants with whom I worked remained

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<sup>8</sup>) While Fischer, Martin, and Straubhaar, for example, mention that people process information differently, they have very little to say about how and why different interpretations occur (1997: 65).

<sup>9</sup>) I wish to thank the editors of *African Diaspora* for having pointed out this distinction to me.

<sup>10</sup>) Aspirations for migration follow slightly different logics in Francophone Cameroon (Pelican 2010).

tied to their villages of origin either in the South or North West Province, this study is largely one of young people's attitudes and levels of knowledge within an urban setting.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence, this study covers migration attitudes across different ethnic groups in Anglophone Cameroon, but above all amongst the lower-middle class.<sup>12</sup>

Because of my initial interest in local perceptions of trafficking, I chose to work both predominantly with women and in a country of origin that at the beginning of my research was of importance to some anti-trafficking NGOs in both the Netherlands and in France. Women can mobilize sexual relationships with men for the purpose of migration in ways that are not available to Cameroonian men in Cameroon. Indeed, to leave the country by means of marrying is a women-specific emigration strategy in Cameroon. For men in Cameroon, marriage to Cameroonian women in bush does not constitute a means of emigration because they are expected to pay bridewealth. The geographical position of men in Cameroon does, in most cases, not enable them to pay bridewealth and the additional travel costs to bush. Hence, it is mostly Cameroonian men in bush that bring over Cameroonian women for marriage.

Once they have left the country, female and male bushfallers are also constructed to spend their gains from bush in different ways. Bushfalling thus unfolds in slightly different manners for men and women. Nonetheless, my research showed that families are willing to mobilize considerable sums of money for both their daughters and sons to go to bush. This paper does not predominantly aim at comparing men and women per se, as structural conditions (both legal and economic) exclude – even if in different ways – both men and women from ambitions of mobility.<sup>13</sup> Regulation can differ by gender, but be nonetheless exclusionary or disabling in its overall effects for both aspiring migrants of both genders.

In this article, I set out to explain my approach to migration choices and connected evaluations of migratory risks. The main part of the article will focus on three case studies. At the time of the research, Delphine had not yet gone out, Pamela had repeatedly failed to go out and Manuella had freshly been

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<sup>11</sup> For identity formations of bushfallers, see Nyamnjo 2011: 707.

<sup>12</sup> All interviews and conversations were conducted in Pidgin, the lingua franca of Anglophone Cameroon.

<sup>13</sup> Fleischer has pointed to a gendered difference between the pre-migrational marital behavior of men and women. According to her research, Cameroonian men are able to migrate alone even after they are married, while married women face more difficulties in leaving the country without their husbands (2009: 238). Yet, just as women, men nevertheless prefer to fall bush when they do not have a family in Cameroon.

deported from Switzerland back to Cameroon.<sup>14</sup> Before analyzing these three cases in regard to how information on emigration is controlled, processed, and evaluated, I will first unpack the terminology of bushfalling and its relation to the economy of migratory knowledge.

### **Bushfalling and Migration at Its Point of Departure**

Much research on transcontinental migration is conducted from the perspective of 'the migrant-receiving nation state' that looks at immigrants as 'outsiders coming in, presumably to stay' (De Genova 2002: 421). This article instead privileges the study of migration from the perspective of individual migrants, migrant families, and the region/country from which they come. Following Desmond, I weigh risks using the lens of values and belief systems of aspiring migrants and their family members within their social environment (2007: 267). Here emic terminology is key to understanding how aspiring migrants come to understand and deal with the 'structural frames of opportunities and barriers' (Carling 2002: 26) within which they seek to realize their ambitions of mobility.

'Bushfalling' is a very new expression and only started being used in the 1990s. A person who has traveled to bush has to hustle, which means that he or she will accept any kind of work to be able to make money.<sup>15</sup> After having hustled, bushfallers are expected to return home and share their hunting trophies. Most bushfalling in Cameroon takes place via the airport and not overland. The most attractive destinations are Europe and the US (Pelican et al. 2008). My research also shows that many bushfallers actually end up in China or Dubai.<sup>16</sup> While China and Dubai are less desirable destination countries for aspiring bushfallers, the notion of bush includes any place where money can be earned.<sup>17</sup>

Whilst bushfallers are greatly admired, to call somebody a 'bushman' is an insult. It designates the person as 'primitive' and 'backward.' It is hence

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<sup>14</sup>) All original names have been replaced with fictive names.

<sup>15</sup>) Both men and women can hustle. In Pidgin, the word to hustle often refers to work done in bush. For the usage of the word hustling in Nigeria, see (Chernoff 2003).

<sup>16</sup>) Within the above mentioned quantitative survey among 100 respondents that I conducted in May 2008, the most popular destinations for bushfalling were the US followed by Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Scandinavian countries, South Africa, Belgium, France, other African countries, Canada, Spain, and China.

<sup>17</sup>) In this sense, bush refers predominantly, but not exclusively to countries in 'the West.'

surprising to note that the big dream of nearly everybody in Cameroon is talked about in terms of 'bushfalling.' Literally speaking, 'to go bush' means to go hunting or to go to the farm, to work there, to sweat, and then to bring back food to eat. People who 'fall bush' go to Europe to work there, to find money for survival and to send back that money for their family members. It is the essence of food and money that joins the two seemingly contradictory meanings of 'bush' as in the wild hinterlands and 'bush' as in 'white man country' or the 'West' (Nyamnjoh and Page 2002). Both are a source of livelihood and both are places of productivity.<sup>18</sup>

It is in the last two decades that the desire for out-migration on the part of Cameroonian youths has become rampant. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, policies related to the structural adjustment program drastically changed the economic situation. Salaries and profit margins are low in Cameroon and civil servants are mostly paid little. Publicly employed teachers working at secondary schools, for example, earn on average between CFA 60,000 and 100,000 (90 to 150 Euros).<sup>19</sup> Hence many young Cameroonians believe today that the best place to work these days is in bush.

Bushfalling is a form of mobility that explicitly requires the migrant to return to his place of departure to share the money or goods that have been hunted down in the wilderness. Mobility in the Anglophone Cameroonian context in this sense is a means to become responsible. Remaining within borders by contrast is an act of escaping social obligations (De Bruijn, Van Dijk, and Foeken 2001). In the following section, I will draw on the case of Delphine to trace how access routes to bush are envisaged and discussed in Anglophone Cameroon. Her story represents a typical example of how information on migratory pathways flows and is processed. In my analysis, I will exclusively focus on what becomes visible from the perspective of a society of departure.

### **Deciding to Emigrate in Anglophone Cameroon**

Delphine was the first in her family (and one of the very few in the neighborhood in which she grew up) to graduate from university. She is from a modest family. Both her parents are illiterate and complement the pension of the father through working the soil. In the 50s, her parents had moved from the

<sup>18</sup>) Roitman notes that to 'work the bush' is also to work unregulated markets (2005: 26).

<sup>19</sup>) Seraphin estimated in 2000 an average monthly income between CFA30,000 (45 Euro) and 80,000 (120 Euros) (2000: 101).

North West Province to 'work money' on the plantations at the coast.<sup>20</sup> Due to tensions between North and South Westerners, Delphine's mother had been forced to give some of the land she was farming to feed and educate her children to South Westerners who claimed that it was theirs. Delphine's father had also lost a plot of land to a group of South Westerners that claimed it had not been rightfully purchased.

Bush is today's version of what was then migration towards plantations at the coast. While migration as a means of integration into the money economy is part of the family history of all North Westerners in Buea, actual exposure rates to what it takes to get and be in bush are low. This is largely due to high levels of secrecy within the economy of migratory knowledge.

*The Imminence of Departure: Secrecy, Jealousy, and Witchcraft*

Secrecy in the preparation to leave for bush prevents embarrassment and gossip in cases when travel projects come to an unexpected halt. Furthermore, secrecy is crucial as it prevents witchcraft attacks and thus increases the chances of actually being able to make it out. In Cameroon, witchcraft is often said to cause the failure of migration. Because migration is related to success, jealous people can seek to prevent the success of others through witchcraft attacks.<sup>21</sup> Through secrecy aspiring migrants can prevent the jealousy of others and thus render migration safer.<sup>22</sup>

Those who aspire to become bushfallers are exceedingly vulnerable in the face of what they experience as arbitrary migration policies (De Rosny 2002). Despite high aspiration for migration (Carling 2002:10), levels of capability to realize such ambition are strikingly low for many young Anglophone Cameroonians. In my survey, only five out of 100 respondents had actually been able to travel to bush. In relation to bushfalling, the experience of having tried, but failed to travel out is extremely common. Many young Africans today hence experience their place in the world as having been abjected (Ferguson 1999: 236; Piot 2010: 77 & 94). It is in large part because of the ensuing volatility of

<sup>20</sup> To *work money* is an expression in Pidgin that I have chosen to keep, as it reflects well the idea that prior to migration, her parents have worked the soil.

<sup>21</sup> The 'notion of effortless gain at the expense or even consumption of others is echoed in various witchcraft beliefs and feeds into cultural imaginings of migration' (Apter 1999). Urban migrants can, for example, be suspected by members of rural communities of origin to have used occult forces to enrich themselves (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998).

<sup>22</sup> During fieldwork, I found both Anglophone Cameroonians from the North and from the South West Province adhering to the idea that secrecy made migration safer.



migration projects that migration failures are so dominantly explained in terms of witchcraft.

I was often told stories about mysterious disasters happening to people on their way to the airport. Delphine told me, for example, the story of a girl from her quarter who, after many failed migration attempts, sought out the spiritual protection and prayer of her pastor and finally received her visa. On the day that she was meant to leave, something strange happened in Cameroon so that no airplanes could come in or out. The girl's flight got delayed and she was only able to leave a few days later. People afterwards said that if the girl had left on that particular day, she would have died. A witch had been waiting for her at the airport on that day.

Given that also the extended family is seen as a possible source of jealous and occult dangers (Geschiere 1997), even close friends and family members will often only be informed a few days before the departure date. As a consequence, the departure of people for bush always seems imminent. Anybody can be suspected at any time of secretly preparing to travel out. A standard greeting is: 'What are you so busy with? Are you chasing down your papers?'

#### *Changing Level: Scholarships, Marriage and Brokers*

In her own view, Delphine's choices after graduation were either bushfalling or marriage. When applying for MA programs abroad, she believed that she was going to need a migration broker – even were she granted admission to a university in Europe. Doki men are migration brokers specialized in the production of the papers needed for emigration (Alpes 2011: 34-106). Delphine explained to me that it took special powers to be granted the privilege of being granted a visa. Although I encouraged Delphine to apply for scholarships, she considered scholarships a highly unlikely route towards bush. Instead of researching the scholarship institutions I wrote down for her, Delphine often came back with stories of men from international dating websites.

Delphine knew people who had succeeded in getting to bush with the help of a migration broker. She also knew female friends of hers who had succeeded in getting to bush with the help of a 'cyber mass', that is, a husband found on the Internet. Yet, scholarships were a relatively unknown access route to bush to her. Hence, it did not seem a reliable or trustworthy means of making it to bush. Scholarships were for others and something only I as a 'white man' could believe in. Being a foreigner and newcomer to Cameroon, I do not think she trusted me to know what it really takes to fall bush. To browse dating sites, instead, was a more ordinary procedure to her.

A year of arguing over bushfalling at all cost finally came to an end when Delphine actually – against all odds – did win a scholarship for a Master's program in Europe. A former teacher of hers had forwarded her the information for the application. When Delphine found out about having won the scholarship, she exclaimed in joy how her social position in society had been transformed: 'My level now is a different level.' She declared that she now no longer had time for those Internet dating websites – or even men in general. She now no longer needed either to get what she wanted. She was eligible for a visa.

Prior to her scholarship, Delphine had insisted on wanting to migrate with the help of a migration broker or through the channel of marriage because she felt excluded from other means of emigration. Through the scholarship, she was now elevated to the level of those privileged few, mostly upper class Cameroonians who have a chance to be granted a visa.

### *Uncertainty and Trust in Information*

When the visa had not come available on the first promised date, Delphine got nervous. Whether for externally funded studies or otherwise, Delphine experienced her journey to bush as highly uncertain. Secrecy remained of the essence even for the scholarship route of falling bush. Delphine only confided in her immediate family and others who had been to bush before. Beyond that, Delphine kept her bush preparations a secret, and by extension I had to do so as well.

It was awkward to have to keep a secret from close informants that had shared many intimate stories with us. Not until Delphine arrived in Sweden could I finally speak openly again. I explained to neighbors and informants that Delphine had won a scholarship. Yet, despite my efforts to explain, what I was saying did not have the same weight as what everybody had been seeing. For the past year, Delphine and I had been side by side every day. Now Delphine had disappeared and people knew that I was about to leave soon after.<sup>23</sup> It was clear that I must have been instrumental in aiding Delphine's departure. The rumor in Delphine's neighborhood was that the 'white lady' had brought her over.

Delphine had disappeared and because her departure had been a secret, few people beyond her immediate family actually knew how and why she had

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<sup>23</sup>) Foreigners do not need to keep their departure a secret. Instead, I was advised by my assistant and host mother to keep further arrivals a secret so that I would be assured a safe arrival – undisturbed by demands or unnecessarily high social expectations.

been able to go. While Delphine's brothers and sisters knew she had received a scholarship, her mother simply knew that a *njangi* group had decided to give money to her daughter. In Cameroon, *njangi* groups are weekly savings groups. The word scholarship does not exist in Pidgin.

Even though Delphine had now been able to fall bush with the help of a scholarship, the system of information flows and meaning making in her place of departure did not change. And even the information that she had as a new bushfaller for aspiring migrants in Cameroon was in its turn no longer trustworthy. As another informant put it: 'White man country is paradise on earth. [...] If anybody says white man country is not good, that person is a witch.' Thus, although Delphine's social status had increased with her travel project, she was no longer a trustworthy source of information because she might only be saying negative things about life in Europe so as to avoid the success of others. Even when information on migration circulates, it is thus not always trusted or considered to be relevant.

### The Risks and Gains of Emigration

People's beliefs in the possibilities of bush at all cost are not merely based on whether or not information flows. Even when directly exposed to the downsides of trying to go out against all odds, the rationalities of how information about migration are interpreted and evaluated do not change. As I learned about her previous failed emigration attempts (including being sent back from Cairo airport on her way to Cyprus), Pamela was preparing to leave again – this time for Ukraine. Even though she already had failed five times in her bushfalling attempts, the fundamental belief in the potential of bush remained unshattered – above all for her parents. Money had been lost in prior attempts. Yet, her parents insisted and again gave money to a migration broker.<sup>24</sup>

In order to understand the phenomenon of bush at all cost, one needs to consider how the risks of bushfalling are actually experienced. Interpretations of the risks and gains of emigration need to be considered within the overall life stories of aspiring migrants, as well as in relation to entire family trajectories. I will draw here on Pamela's case study to analyze repercussions of persistent failure to go out.

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<sup>24</sup> The migration broker in question here was the director of an NGO. It is very common for Cameroonians to give money to migration brokers in exchange for either simply visas or entire travel programs. For more on migration brokerage in Cameroon, see Alpes 2011.

*Surviving Others in a Routinized State of Crisis*

Despite her law degree, 32-year old Pamela has been technically unemployed ever since graduation. Paid employment is but a distant dream for large parts of newly graduated youths in Cameroon. For the last few years, Pamela has had to put up with working 'for free,' i.e. without a salary, at a lawyer's firm in Douala.<sup>25</sup> Despite her skills and qualifications, Pamela's main financial support came from her sexual entanglements that for her as a woman resulted also in sources of revenue. Pamela was able to complement the money from her 'sugar daddies' with occasional consultancies from the law firm, innovative trading schemes with scrap metal, and small investments into land. As a woman, Pamela told me she was often asked by potential employers to have sex with them first: 'Phone calls at 7pm asking you to come to the office.' Unable at the age of 32 to make use of her law degree, Pamela strongly desired to go and work in bush.

Pamela is Anglophone, but also fluent in French. Financially and socially speaking, Pamela's family had enough financial resources to aspire to fall bush, but not enough to have a chance to be granted a visa at an embassy. Prior to their redundancy, Pamela's parents used to work for the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) in Tole in the South West Province (Konings 1993). Originally from the North West Province, her mother has twice migrated in her life in search of 'greener pastures.'<sup>26</sup>

In the light of the radical uncertainty that currently characterizes much of everyday life in Cameroon, Pamela's father wanted to provide security for his wife and daughters. After his retirement, he registered his two stores under the name of his wife and his eldest daughter. Yet, he feared that the inhabitants of his village of origin in the North West Province and above all the paternal great uncles of Pamela would not accept this arrangement.<sup>27</sup> They had insulted him because he had been 'wasting' his money on his female children. He hence feared that upon his death his property would be seized from his wife and daughters. In this light, it was important for Pamela's father to invest his money in the bushfalling project of his daughter.

<sup>25</sup> Even as an Anglophone in Francophone Douala, Pamela felt discriminated against as a North Westerner at the firm that was run by and dominated by Banyangis from the South West Province.

<sup>26</sup> Originally born in Banso, Pamela's mother moved to Ndu where she married and found work at the CDC plantations. In the 1980s, she moved with her husband to the CDC tea plantations in Tole in the South West Province.

<sup>27</sup> These uncles are the brothers of Pamela's father's mother.

He and his wife strongly believed that bushfalling was the only avenue that could allow Pamella's younger brothers, sisters, and cousins to be able to go to university. Due to the death of two of Pamella's aunts, Pamella's mother was in charge of the education of eight biological and adopted children. At the village level Pamella's mother was an educated woman (i.e. she has the training to sell medication in the village) and it was hence her strong desire that the level of education of her children should not drop. 'Look at the children,' Pamella's mother told me, 'Nobody is really in a position to 'survive' the others.'

Pamella's mother needed her most educated daughter to begin to take charge of the remaining dependents. In this sense, Pamella needed to be sent out not despite, but because of the financial burden for the education of the younger ones. Pamella's parents chose Pamella to 'survive the others' as the eldest, most educated and most responsible of their children. Parents in Anglophone Cameroon generally tend to choose their most reliable, hardworking, and loyal children for bushfalling projects. In the case of Pamella, her parents' desire for bushfalling at one point exceeded her own desire. However, the initial bushfalling attempts had been launched on her and not on her parents' initiative.

The costs and gains of bushfalling have to be viewed within the context of the dynamics in places of departure. Access to bush by even just one family member can signify a source of protection from other risks and costs of life. Pamella's parents justified the investment of an entire pension scheme into the bushfalling project of one family member because they considered that bushfalling – like no other investment project – held the potential to generate future gains that could ensure the education and future projects of other family members. Families are willing to sponsor even repeated bushfalling attempts because emigration is perceived as one of the few strategies that can truly make a difference to the family. Bushfalling has become an attempt for Cameroonians to access greater social security.

The risks and costs of bushfalling are furthermore considered legitimate because of the expected high gains. Delphine and Pamella both agreed. Their parents could raise money for bushfalling, but not for business. 'In Cameroon you work, but you don't see your money. In bush you see the money that you work for.' Complaints about harsh and arbitrary taxation, for example, are common. As a popular Anglophone radio journalist called Awilllo sings and many believe: 'Country don spoil' – the country has rotten away to the point of waste.

In Cameroon, leaving for bush at all cost is considered an access route to success in a context in which everyday life has come to be defined by a routinized

state of crisis (Mbembe and Roitman 1995). While not everyone is certain to succeed in leaving the country and making it, the difficulties of the everyday in Cameroon are certain. Given that immobility constitutes the baseline uncertainty of everyday life, migration, despite its uncertainties, is seen as an opportunity. If migration involves sacrifices and investments, then those sacrifices and investments need to be compared to the chances for success and failure available in the context in which aspiring migrants make their choices.

### *Openings, Lines, and Connections*

Within the many months of fieldwork, information on legal frameworks or procedures was hardly ever a point of discussion. Instead, access to bush was figured in terms of 'openings,' 'lines,' and 'connections.' To travel is understood as overcoming 'closure.' Young Anglophone Cameroonians experience their life as being closed off from the world and hence travelling requires the search for openings. Even if one has found an 'opening' or a 'line,' these can close at any time. Given the risky nature of bushfalling and the ever-looming possibility of failure and closure, aspiring migrants need to 'rush' whenever they find out or hear about an opening. If one delays too much, the 'opening' can close again. The threat of failure is thus deeply ingrained in language referring to migration and travel.

Despite five prior failures in which they had lost according to Pamela's estimation about CFA 4 million (roughly 6,000 Euros), Pamela's parents again decided to give money to a migration broker. The money came from prior savings, small-scale trade with Nigeria and also from a compensation payment for their early forced redundancy from the CCDC plantations. Pamela's mother added her own money through farming, as well as through running a small pharmacy in the village.

After having handed over CFA 500,000 to Mr. James (roughly 660 Euros), a year of complications, delays, and empty promises followed. Pamela's parents had met Mr. James through a family friend of theirs. Mr. James is a self-made man who only completed his A-level exams after having worked for a couple of years for a road construction company. He later joined an international NGO, started offering support with visa applications, university admissions, and other kinds of 'paper work' in his neighborhood and then finally founded his own NGO in support of 'community development.' His NGO provided career counseling, community assistance, and travel support.

Pamella was growing increasingly skeptical of the capacities of Mr. James and despite her initial enthusiasm for bush hesitated as to whether or not to go

along with his ever-changing (and failing) programs. Despite Pamela's skepticism, her parents' faith in bushfalling remained unquestionable. They trusted Mr. James' power to make bush a reality. They had heard from people in her quarter that Mr. James had successfully sent people abroad. They wanted the same success that others had had for their own daughter. 'People are going. This is my own bad luck? Or is it his own luck?' She 'saw' success and interpreted her own failure as 'bad luck.'

As bushfalling is the pursuit against all odds of an opening in a context of closure, success is considered a question of luck and the connections of migration brokers are ever more crucial. Prior failure renders the need for a broker all the more necessary. Brokers have special powers, as well as connections that they use for their clients. Given that access to bush is understood as a matter of connections, information on immigration procedures has no value for potential bushfallers. For my informants, what mattered for access to bush was speed, power, and connections.

Mr. James, the migration broker to whom Pamela's parents had given money, was in their eyes a 'big man.' His elegant sense of dressing, his multiple mobile phones, and his physically corpulent stature were all sure signs of wealth and status. His office was filled with signs that demonstrated his connections to bush: foreign university posters, airline posters, foreign university prospectuses, photos of amongst others, me.<sup>28</sup> In Buea, Mr. James was widely respected for his power and authority. Except for me and my research assistant Delphine, nobody actually knew that he had never been to bush. To Pamela's parents, his mere convincing portrayal of being connected to bush was worth more than their daughter's degree in law.

In her family, Pamela was the person with the highest level of education. When her parents insisted on wanting her to fall bush, however, she was not in a position to disappoint her parents. With a BA in law, she gave in and started to learn how to braid hair. That is one of the skills for bush that is the most recommended by and amongst wannabe-bushfallers in Cameroon. Whether documented or not, for bushfallers abroad the braiding of hair is a relatively easy source of revenue. As a flexible job that requires little in terms of infrastructure, a bushfaller within this profession can potentially make more money than a university graduate in Cameroon. This example illustrates why these

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<sup>28</sup>) While my association with his office certainly helped his authority in public perception, Pamela's mother was fully aware of my role as a researcher and not collaborator of Mr. James. Once she asked me to encourage Pamela to go to bush and I gently denied, explaining my own reservations, doubts, and questions.

days in Cameroon bushfalling is perceived as a better avenue for success than education. In today's Cameroon, university graduates struggle greatly to make their degree of value within the job market and connections are often more important for employment than qualifications. As another informant told me while still in bush:

I have seen my age mates, they were in university and I would have loved to be in that position. But I thank God, I'm a bushfaller though (she laughs loud – ha, ha, ha). I'm a bushfaller though. I'm more than them somehow. I still thank God for that.

Before the 1990s, people that had managed to travel out of the country were referred to as 'been to'.<sup>29</sup> To become a 'been to' was associated with educational achievements, while bushfalling is associated with adventure and self-enrichment (Pelican 2009: 232). The emergence of bushfalling as a new term also represents a shift in understanding of cultures of success. Ever since the late 1990s when the terminology of bushfalling first emerged, bush itself has come to define more and more the very notion of success. When a person with no education goes to bush and then comes back, for example, his 'level' and status will be higher than that of a person who has spent the last ten years studying and learning in Cameroon.

In a context of massive unemployment, the perceived worth of education has been deteriorating. Instead connections have become ever more crucial for access to both social status and bush. What distinguished those Cameroonians who were more skeptical about bushfalling at all cost from others was not so much the level of financial revenues, social position, and level of education, but the degree to which they were already connected with people and institutions in bush. It is connections rather than education that make bushfalling at all cost less desirable, and travel and migration projects through other channels more attainable.

### *Failures that Create Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*

After over a year of delays and complications, Mr. James finally came up with what looked like a successful 'program' for Ukraine. Yet, his connections failed again. A week after her departure for Kiev, Pamela was back in Douala.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The 'been-to' are the old elites which went abroad prior to and after independence to return and to build the country. Most became civil servants (Martin 2005: 11).

<sup>30</sup> The agent of Mr. James had booked the flight into the military airport of Kiev. Here it was easy for immigration to notice Pamela. The Ukrainian visa (issued in Paris) was cancelled and the Italian residence permit (with which Pamela was to travel to Norway) was never of any use.



When I went to visit Pamella in Douala just after her return, I found her inside a cyber cafe. She was researching study possibilities in bush. 'I still want to go. I still envy people who are out there. [...] I believe that if I go out, it will be better for me.'

The shame itself of having been sent back generated energy for her continued pursuit of bush at all cost. I witnessed how she was dodging phone calls from people who had heard about her failed departure attempt after all. Trying again to fall bush was a way for Pamella to escape negative gossip. Because of her absence, she had lost her 'job' at the Chamber. Whilst certainly unpaid, this post had nevertheless provided openings for small consultancies and an important social cover for not being suspected of purely living off the money of men.

Pamella's latest failure to leave the country had slightly altered her attitude, but not her fundamental belief in the potential of bush. She regretted not having succeeded in persuading her parents to mobilize money for tuition fees abroad – instead of for the different lines of various brokers. She also told me that she would stay in Cameroon if she could find a steady job for CFA150,000 (230 Euros) a month. Pamella had lowered her expectations. Before this failure her ambitions had been higher.

In some ways, it was not despite, but because her prior failures that Pamella needed to keep pursuing her luck in bushfalling. Her bushfalling attempts had delayed her potential marriage and expected childbirth.<sup>31</sup> The fact that she was not married was caused by her bushfalling dreams, but now this fact was in itself a push factor that obliged her to persist in that direction. At the age of 32, she had almost reached the stage where it would be difficult for her to marry in Cameroon. As Delphine commented on another informant of ours who after her deportation had spent so many years trying without success to go out again: 'Only a white man could still agree to marry her.'

Prior failure had rendered the promise of bush a self-fulfilling prophecy. With time, pathways towards social respectability in Cameroon, such as marriage and childbirth, were less and less available. As traveling out implies, by definition, risk, however, failure to travel out is internal to the concept of bushfalling. Bushfalling encapsulates the very notion of success and hence failure to go out simply calls for greater perseverance.

<sup>31</sup> Goheen describes a trend for women in the Grassfields to choose to stay single, rather than to marry, because the burden of having to supply most of the necessities of life to a husband is perceived as too high (Goheen 1996: 180 and 185). Even if marriage is ever less desirable in the current context where men find it ever more difficult to mobilize the money for the bridewealth, childbirth nevertheless remains an important mark for the social status of a woman.

## The Sexual Economy of Mobility

When still in bush, Manuella started making arrangements for a 'paper wedding,' i.e. a wedding exclusively for the purpose of attaining a residence permit. Before the marriage could go through, she was picked up by the police at her officially registered asylum home in Switzerland and sent back to Cameroon. The day after her deportation, Manuella was back at the immigration office to process a new passport for her next attempt to leave the country. Despite her deportation, Manuella's cousin was begging her to help set up a profile for her on an Internet dating website.

Motivations for migration, as well as attitudes towards risk and sexuality as a means for mobility (whether social or geographical) need to be considered within the wider (sexual) economy of Cameroon. Both the economic and sexual economy in contemporary Cameroon create conditions of departure that can go a long way to explaining people's apparent nonchalance towards the risks implied in wanting to travel out at all cost. I will also demonstrate how migratory choices and attitudes are based on interpretations of pieces of information that are internal to the context of departure.

### *Wanting to 'Work Money'*

Just as Pamella did, Manuella also worked 'for free' before falling bush. Forced into a marriage arrangement in her early teens, Manuella had run away from her home village in the North West Province to her elder brothers in Buea in the South West Province. Manuella's parents were farmers in their village of origin in the North West Province and her elder brothers were small-scale businessmen in Buea, Douala, and Yaoundé. Smart, but with only the leaving certificate of a primary school, Manuella proudly told me that she paid for her professional training in Buea 'herself.' A boyfriend of hers had volunteered to 'sponsor' her. When later working without pay in a hotel in Douala, she could only survive because a client of the hotel had decided to rent an apartment for her, pay for her medical visits, and give her a monthly allowance. It was her savings from the money of this man that enabled her to pay the first part of the fee for the broker who was to take her to bush.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The broker was given the money a few years before I ever met Manuella and her family. I was retrospectively told that the fee had been something between CFA1.7 and 2.7 million (2,600-4,100 Euros).

Undocumented in Germanophone Switzerland, Manuella then tried to get papers through marriage. Amongst others she used the Internet to seek out boyfriends: 'If you start to find someone, you end up sleeping with this man, sleeping with that man, sleeping with that man because you think they will give you papers.' Courtship, sexuality, and marriage were hence repeatedly important for Manuella's social and geographical mobility. Just as other informants, Manuella drew a sharp distinction between sex in exchange for papers and sex in exchange for money. Sex for money is prostitution. Whilst paid sex work can be a temptation, it is morally unacceptable. By contrast, courtship in relation to papers is a more socially permissible practice.<sup>33</sup>

The widespread willingness to have sex or marry for bush needs to be considered within a context of courtship practices and conceptions of marriage in contemporary Cameroon. Currently, many men in Cameroon can no longer expect to marry and establish a family since they have no capital or credit to offer a bridewealth. Women have to wait as men cannot always afford marriage (Seraphin 2000: 197; Roitman 2005: 95). In her analysis, Johnson-Hanks suggests that 'Cameroonian women seek internet-mediated marriages not only as a sign of the new, but also as a means of attaining long-standing, 'traditional' elements of marriage that the economic crisis has made increasingly unattainable' (2007: 642). Marriage to a white husband (and by extension any man who is in a position to provide access to papers) becomes a replacement for bridewealth. The sexual economy of Cameroon can hence motivate emigration, as well as generate socially acceptable access routes for success in migration.

During fieldwork, the lyrics of a very popular song connected sexuality to social and geographical mobility. Picking up on important themes in Pamela's and Manuella's life and migration trajectories, the refrain of the song ran: 'Njomboss@yahoo.fr.' 'Njomboss' is a slang expression in Pidgin and refers to a boyfriend or man with power, status, and money. Elderly men who serve as financially well-positioned boyfriends are often also called 'mboma,' which literally means python. In the song, the heroine of the song leaves the hard life of the village in search of life in the town. Having planted vegetables in the farm without ever having had any return, she decides to put her photo on the Internet. After clear visual allusions to sex work, the music video ends with images of how the heroine gets married to an elderly white man. The heroine of the song explains how she accepted the danger of getting a man with a snake that

<sup>33</sup> As pointed out by Nyamnjoh and Page (2002: 623-34) and Lesdain (1999: 43-33), social perceptions of inter-racial courtship remain nonetheless ambivalent.

could rob the eggs from her womb and leave her infertile. She was prepared to pay the price.

To understand the pursuit of young women to go to bush at all cost their attitudes towards cyber marriages and sexuality need to be considered within a continuum of local economies of sexuality and mobility. What might seem like unusual risk taking or extraordinary sacrifice might just be the pursuit of old goals by new means. The music video happily ends with an allusion to the many mixed children with which the heroine and her white husband were blessed.

### *Bad Luck, Family Pressures, and the Power of Connections*

Scholars of migration studies have documented how the need to take care of the family constitutes an important motivating factor in migration decisions (Stark and Bloom 1985; Massey et al. 2005: 21-22; and for the case of Cameroon, see Fleischer 2007: 434-437; Fleischer 2008; Pelican and Tatah 2009: 239-241). However, in Cameroon I often witnessed how young Cameroonians were trying to fall bush at all cost as a means to also escape family pressures and expectations. After Manuella's deportation, for example, life in Cameroon had become untenable for her. Although her elder brothers knew about the forced nature of her return and did not levy any demands on her, her position in relation to her wider family and other people in her village of origin was exceedingly difficult. The only solution Manuella saw for her life was to seek out bush anew.

At first, Manuella continued to process the paper marriage that she had started to arrange when in bush. Now that she was no longer in bush, however, the matter was more complicated and she eventually gave up on this pathway. Without financial revenues and increasingly at the end of the savings that she had been able to accumulate during her time as an asylum seeker, Manuella grew more desperate, but eventually found a way out of her impasse. She entered into an engagement with a former boyfriend of hers.

During Manuella's presence in bush, her mother in the village had been worried that her daughter had not yet married and given birth. Manuella's fiancé was from her home village in the North West Province, and lived and worked in the US. This choice satisfied both her family who had been expecting her to marry and above all give birth; but it also offered a new 'way' out of the country. While waiting for the American visa to slowly be processed, Manuella moved in with her father in law who lived in Abuja, Nigeria. For her general

acquaintances and wider family members, her absence from Cameroon could only mean one thing: Manuella was back in bush. In the eyes of most people, she had never stopped being a bushfaller.

Yet, even before her bushfaller wedding, Manuella had been able to keep the reason and nature of her forced return a secret. When asked, she told people that she was planning to get married. Only close family members knew about the reason for her return. People in Manuella's surroundings continued to consider her a bushfaller and admired her for her worldly air. Friends of mine, for example, would immediately notice on collective nightly outings that she truly was a 'woman of the world.'

Because of the shame that is attached to deportation in general, it was exceptional, but nonetheless symptomatic of high levels of enthusiasm for bushfalling at all cost that Manuella managed to upkeep her status as a bushfaller despite her deportation. Her close family members assisted Manuella with her secret so as to keep the appearance of having a bushfaller amongst their midst.<sup>34</sup> Manuella had also built up a small savings account in Cameroon while still in bush and these savings allowed her to give out some money and gifts during bigger family meetings. She herself was able to upkeep the level of a bushfaller in her new life in Cameroon by drawing on the money that she was receiving from a new boyfriend. Because of her worldly air, it had been easy for her to find a man who was able to help her maintain her social status.

Despite Manuella's deportation, her elder brothers continued with their own bushfalling projects. Both of them considered that Manuella had merely been unlucky to have been sent back before she could go through with her paper wedding in Switzerland. Deportation is not a source of discouragement in Cameroon because it is disguised, silenced, and relegated to the sphere of 'bad luck' or the person's own fault. Deportation is furthermore not always considered total failure because of the status that a mere connection to bush can provide. Even with respect to her brothers and sister in law – who knew about her deportation – Manuella had gained in status. They might have stable jobs, houses, and children – yet, they had never been to bush. Only Manuella had seen the world. Even though she said that her dreams had not come true, Manuella told me that she is now more than her brother. 'I've changed, my level has changed. I'm a completely different person and I'm on a different

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<sup>34</sup> As Pelican and Tatah note, to have a child or sibling in bush adds to the prestige of the family (2009: 220). Hence family members can have a vested interest in letting their deported siblings or children get away with the bushfaller myth.

level right now.' Now, Manuella told me, she felt that what she said during family reunions had weight.

Attitudes towards the relative success and failure of bushfalling need to be seen in a context where any point of opening, connection, or presence of 'bush' in one's life or within the family can be a source of enormous pride, status, and even a sense of security. Bushfallers can generate further connections and openings that can enable others to migrate, as well. Bush is not only an important source of money supply, but also a source of value beyond actual presence in bush. Even undocumented (or at times deported) migrants can make a difference in their family. When still in bush, Manuella was frustrated at being without papers and without work. Yet, she was nevertheless aware of her important role for her family:

I think they used to sit somewhere and say my aunt is in Switzerland. It gives some kind of... you know, people look at you somehow different when you have somebody abroad. I think it gives somebody some courage or... I don't know. It's different, it is not the same as somebody who doesn't have anybody in bush.

By at times deliberately showing off their material wealth, bushfallers are also implicated in the high expectations that are exerted onto them by family networks and wider society. Many bushfallers have to delay their return or visit to Cameroon because they have not been able to generate enough money to be able to live up to the financial expectations of their families in Cameroon. Bushfallers in bush can feel threatened by their relatives through witchcraft attacks and at times joke about their self-enslavement to work for the latter's enrichment without consideration for their own personal well-being. While those who have already reached bush might use the language of 'nyongo' to capture the at times excessive pressure for remittances and gifts (Nyamnjoh 2005; Jua 2003),<sup>35</sup> those still in Cameroon are extremely eager to be the ones that go out for their family to 'hustle' and 'work money' in bush.

Possibilities to 'work money' are different in Cameroon and in bush. Yet, the family also plays an interesting double role for bushfalling dynamics. While bushfallers can save up money over some stretches of time, money earned in Cameroon is at times not 'visible' because it needs to be immediately distributed to family members. My research assistant Delphine, for example, lied to her family about the money that she was earning with me so as to be able to build up savings.<sup>36</sup> Bushfallers in bush are under high pressures, but because of

<sup>35</sup> In this popular form of witchcraft, its victims have to work as zombies to make money.

<sup>36</sup> Wanting to save up her salary for bush meant that Delphine needed protection from the demands and needs within her family. In order to save money, Delphine first kept it a secret that

the physical distance maintain some margin for maneuver to decide to whom and how to give money. The need to take care of family demands is a pull factor important for people's motivations to go to bush and yet these demands also push people out of the country.

## Conclusion

The phenomenon of bushfalling is a symptom of the tensions that have arisen from people's aspirations for mobility at times of heightened migration control. For many young Cameroonians, any kind of desire for emigration (whether for study or for work) has to be sought out against all odds. At the same time, bushfalling has currently come to encapsulate the very notion of success itself. Giving up on wanting to go to bush is like giving up on the pursuit of success, wealth, and hope itself.

Looking at the cases of Delphine, Manuella, and Pamella, I have demonstrated that a close analysis of the economy of migratory knowledge helps to explain the feverish pursuit of emigration against all odds in important ways. The financial and sexual economy of Cameroon form the context in which the pursuit of bushfalling at all cost takes place. The ways in which sexuality, for example, can play a part for aspiring female bushfallers quite logically forms a continuum with the ways in which sexuality and mobility (both social and geographical) are linked to one another in Cameroon. At the same time, flows and interpretations of information are also key to explaining how young Cameroonians come to understand the costs and gains of bushfalling.

I drew on the case of Delphine to demonstrate how aspiring migrants have to fear the jealousy of people in Cameroon who might want to prevent their travel projects through witchcraft attacks. Fears of jealousy, witchcraft, and failure mean that aspiring bushfallers must keep their travel projects secret when trying to leave the country. The circle of people that is allowed to know about a departure project is selective. The economy of migratory knowledge in Anglophone Cameroon hence hinders information from flowing freely. In Anglophone Cameroon, it is not information, but secrecy that renders migration safe.

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she was working for me and later pretended that her salary was about a third of what it actually was. This way she was under less pressure from her siblings and her wider family to make financial contributions.

Yet, the economy of migratory knowledge in Anglophone Cameroon is not merely characterized by a lack of information flows either. If negative news or simply contradictory pieces of information reach Cameroon, these are either not recognized as valid information or interpreted in ways that do not question the concept of bushfalling itself. In my analysis of the case of Pamela I demonstrated how the potential costs of bushfalling are lower if the meaning of a failed investment is contextualized within the routinized state of crisis in Cameroon today. Furthermore, the notion of having to try one's 'luck' in trying to become a migrant is so deeply ingrained within the local perceptions of migration that even the direct experience of failure to go out does not call bushfalling at all cost into question. To 'follow a line' takes per definition perseverance. As a consequence, failure to travel out does not challenge faith in bush at all cost. Instead the consequences of failure heighten the urgency for success in bushfalling at all cost. In this sense, failure can render the promise of bush a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Even trajectories of deportations do not diminish faith in bushfalling at all cost. Information on whether or not a person has been deported is carefully managed, but even those who know will not be discouraged from going at all cost to bush. Successful narratives are genuine bushfalling narratives; the others are just 'bad luck.' Deportation is hence simply the 'bad luck' of that specific person. Drawing on the case of Manuella, I demonstrated how, in a context of closure, any opening or connection to bush is in itself a source of pride and status. To have a family member in bush means to have a 'connection' to the outside world. Money is hence easily mobilized within family networks to have access to international connections.

The study of migration decisions in terms of economies of migratory knowledge offers the advantage of complicating further the context within which aspiring migrants and their family members make migratory choices. Building on the work of scholars within the field of the new economics of labour migration (Stark and Bloom 1985), the concept of the economy of migratory knowledge helps to surpass simplistic presuppositions about the availability and nature of information. Through the case studies of this article, we have seen that migration choices and emigration strategies crucially depend on whether and how information is interpreted and trusted. This article has thus demonstrated how the pursuit of migratory ambitions is not so much marked by mere ignorance or naïveté, but by a particular kind of interpretation of the reality of migration, including notions of risk and success. Deeper insights into the economies of migratory knowledge in different locations of departure would clearly call into question presuppositions within migration policy in Europe



that presuppose that migration (or even trafficking) can be stopped by simply providing information about realities in Europe.

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