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For an entire year, my 25-year-old research assistant Delphine refused to take her salary because she wanted to save it up to be able to travel. She was determined to add to her salary money she received from boyfriends, ex-boyfriends and family members in order to travel out of the country. She wanted to study in either South Africa or Europe. Based on what she had heard from others abroad, she planned to study and hustle. Hustling in Cameroon means to try and be ready to do any kind of work.

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 ‘wilderness’ (bush) to hunt down meat (money) and bring the trophies back home. A bushfaller is expected to ‘hustle’ – which means that he or she will accept any kind of work so as to be able to ‘work money’. Bush is the term used to describe ‘white man kontri’ – largely understood as the ‘West’ (Nyamjoh and Page 2002). Any place where there is money can be called ‘bush’. The most popular places to fall bush are Europe and the U.S. However, under certain circumstances, it is also possible to gain status and success in places like South Africa, Dubai or China.

To achieve the goal of studying and hustling in bush, Delphine was willing to give money to a migration broker. In the midst of the transcription of yet another interview on the hardships, struggles and sufferings of an undocumented migrant woman whom I had interviewed in Europe, Delphine jumped up, laughed and proclaimed: ‘Je veux go à tout prix!’ In her exclamation, she made reference to a Cameroonian film entitled ‘Paris à tout prix’ 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, viewing these issues as the ‘bad luck’ of the protagonists. Delphine was ambitious and determined: ‘Bush a tout prix!’ 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.

In our research, Delphine and I repeatedly came across migration brokers who failed to send out their clients and families who had invested money in vain into the bushfalling projects of their children. Yet, Delphine would not change her mind about wanting to go to bush. 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. Although they became friends, Delphine did not trust, believe or take Manuella’s advice seriously. Whatever the odds, she wanted to see bush with her own eyes.

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. Eighty percent of all respondents in a survey that I conducted said that they would like to fall bush and twenty-nine percent had actually tried in concrete ways to go abroad (see graph 1). Above all, young Cameroonians – not yet married and of both genders – are eager to try to make their lives outside the country. Most bushfalling in Cameroon takes place via the airport and not overland.

**Graph 1  Wanting to and trying to fall bush**

- 83% Respondents without bushfalling motivation
- 17% Respondents with bushfalling motivation who have not attempted to travel
- 29% Respondents with bushfalling motivation who have attempted to travel
- 20% Respondents who have unsuccessfully tried to fall bush
- 8% Respondents who have been able to attain visa

*Source: Quantitative survey conducted in May 2008 amongst 100 respondents in different neighbourhoods in Buea, South West Cameroon*
Although families are willing to mobilize considerable sums of money for both their daughters and sons to go to bush,⁹ the gap between desire and capacity to travel abroad is vast. In my survey, only five percent of all respondents had actually been able to travel to bush. In relation to bushfalling, the experience of having tried, but failing to travel out is extremely common. Cameroonians perceive the world as closed off. Possibilities for air travel out are referred to as lines, openings and programmes. To understand the eagerness of Delphine and others wanting to fall bush at all cost, the gap between aspiration and capability needs to be taken into account.¹⁰ Many young Africans today experience their place in the world as having been abjected (Ferguson 1999: 236; Piot 2010: 77 & 94).¹¹ Central to this particular sense of exclusion is not the cost of migration, but the absence of visas (Rosny 2002).

This chapter seeks to contribute to the discussion on how people come to evaluate scopes of possibilities for themselves both in Cameroon and abroad. It will do so by tracing the emergence of the phenomenon of bushfalling, as well as by analysing flows of information and their respective evaluation. Why do young Cameroonians persist in pursuing success in emigration? Why was the ‘information’ of the film and my research not relevant or trustworthy for Delphine? Through focusing in particular on flows of information and their respective evaluation as trustworthy or not, this book chapter seeks to contribute towards the discussion on questions of visibility and migratory expectations. In the introduction of this volume, Schielke and Graw evoke the image of migrants’ houses in their home villages. In my chapter, I set out to explain why and how migrants’ hardship abroad and cases of failure cannot become visible in a place of departure, such as Anglophone Cameroon.

The data that I draw on were generated during 13 months of fieldwork in 2008 and 2009 in Buea in the South West Province in Anglophone Cameroon. All interviews and conversations were conducted in Pidgin, the lingua franca of Anglophone Cameroon. Buea owes its size and dynamic character to the university that was constructed there in the early 1990s. As a university town, Buea is densely populated with young people – which is one of the main reasons I chose to conduct my study there. Buea is furthermore interesting as a key city in Anglophone Cameroon. Past patterns of labour migration mean that most of my informants are considered as ‘foreigners’ in Buea. Finally, it is interesting to examine the migration expectations of Anglophone Cameroonians who often entertain an ambivalent relationship with the mainly Francophone state (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003).

As attitudes towards migratory risks need to be considered from the standpoint of risks in everyday life within the context of departure, this chapter will start by
outlining the historical and geographical emergence of bushfalling in Anglophone Cameroon. In his work on involuntary immobility, Jørgen Carling takes into account not simply people’s aspirations, but also their respective ability to emigrate (2002). So as to understand the migratory expectations and attitudes of Delphine and others, I suggest we need to consider not just people’s ambitions of mobility, but also the hurdles and obstacles that render geographic mobility so difficult. It is also the hurdles and obstacles to (legal) migration that feed into the emergence of bushfalling.

In this chapter, I furthermore propose that, in order to explain both people’s aspirations and their ability to travel, we need to consider what I term as the economy of migratory knowledge. With the economy of migratory knowledge, I refer to cultural and societal factors that structure flows of information and influence the construction of meaning within this sphere. Migration choices and strategies are developed under circumstances more complex than being informed or not informed about obstacles and downsides of migration. Instead I propose to examine trust in information. An in-depth understanding of how information on migration flows and is validated also puts into questions the deployment of ever greater financial resources into prevention and sensitisation campaigns that try to convince aspiring migrants to merely stay at home.

The making of bushfalling

So as to understand migratory expectations, I suggest we need to consider not just people’s ambitions of mobility, but also the hurdles and obstacles that render geographic mobility so difficult. In an age of supposed ‘globalisation’, the movement of large parts of the world population remains remarkably restricted. Whilst the free flow of capital and commodities is often celebrated, little attention is given to the (un)free circulation of labour (and thus people) (Malkki 2002, 352; Kearney 1986). It is also the hurdles and obstacles to (legal) migration that feed into the making of migration expectations. In particular, it is the structural difficulty of migration that here has given birth to the emergence of migration in Cameroon under the term of ‘bushfalling’.

‘Bushfalling’ is a very new expression and only started being used in the 1990s. 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 programme drastically changed the economic
situation in Cameroon. As a consequence, salaries and profit margins are low in Cameroon. Civil servants are often paid little. Publicly employed teachers working at secondary schools, for example, earn on average between 60,000 and 100,000 CFA (90 to 150 Euros). A person who has been to bush has in many ways a higher social status than somebody who has a high level of education. Given the work prospects in Cameroon, many young Cameroonians firmly believe that the best place to work one’s money these days is in bush.

The language in which Cameroonians talk about the world of travelling and migrating is revealing of the sense of exclusion in which ambitions of mobility have to be formulated. A priori the world is perceived as closed off and thus a possibility to travel out is referred to as a ‘line’ or an ‘opening.’ Given the a priori impossibility of mobility, it takes a ‘programme’ to be able to aspire to even try to leave the country. The word ‘migration’ is very rarely used. Rather people talk about wanting to ‘travel’ out. In other words, both this choice of word and the symbolism of bushfalling do not imply the idea of wanting to leave the country to ‘settle’ and permanently live elsewhere.

Originally, the bush refers to the rural hinterlands. In contrast to the term bushfaller, to call somebody a ‘bushman’ is an insult. It designates the person as ‘primitive’ and ‘backward.’ It is hence surprising to note that the big dream of migration of is talked about in terms of ‘bushfalling’. In fact, ‘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, to send back that money for their family members to eat. It is the essence of food and money that joins the two seemingly contradictory meanings of ‘bush’ as in farm and ‘bush’ as in ‘white man kontri’ or the ‘West’ (Nyamnjoh and Page 2002). Both are a source of livelihood. Both are places of productivity.

Ever since the early 1990s when the terminology of ‘bushfalling’ first emerged, ‘bush’ itself has come to define more and more the very notion of success. The status of a bushfaller (somebody who has travelled out) is so very high precisely because he or she has been able to overcome this exclusion.

The imminence of departure: secrecy, jealousy and bad luck

Delphine was the first in her family (and one of the very few in her compound) to graduate from university. She is from a modest family. Both her parents are illiterate and augment the father’s pension by working the soil. In the fifties, they moved...
from the North West Province to ‘work money’ on the plantations at the coast. In the South West Province today, families from the North West Province are looked on as ‘strangers’. Due to tensions between North and South Westerners, Delphine’s mother was 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 also lost a plot of land to a group of South Westerners who 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 are low. I will demonstrate how information on migration pathways does or does not flow, as well as how it is received and interpreted. While enthusiasm for migration is predominantly discussed in terms of lack of information about realities in Europe, at stake is whether and how information is trusted as credible. I will demonstrate how decisions to migrate are based not on knowledge, but on interpretations of knowledge.

Every time my landlady was absent for more than one day, my neighbour would jokingly ask whether she had fallen bush. Despite endless repetition of the joke, her question never failed to entertain the people in our compound. ‘Where have you been all this time? I haven’t seen you in ages. As if you had left for bush!’ I often overheard such conversations and was once in shock myself when I could no longer contact an informant of mine. None of her telephone numbers worked and her house was deserted. Now that Mamie Comfort had left, I remembered the times she had confidently shared with me that she might try to rejoin her brother in the U.S. A few weeks later, I discovered that her visa for the U.S. had been denied, yet, I had learned a lesson. Preparations for international journeys are largely well-guarded secrets.

As pointed out earlier, few actually make it to bush. Many travel attempts falter. Thus secrecy is paramount to avoid embarrassment and gossip in cases when travel projects come to an unexpected halt. Secrecy in the preparation for leaving for bush is furthermore crucial as it 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. Secrecy can prevent the jealousy of others and thus render migration safe.

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 aeroplanes could come in or out. The girl's flight got delayed and she was able to leave only 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.

Fears of jealousy and witchcraft mean that only secret emigration trajectories are safe emigration trajectories. Given that also the extended family is seen as a possible source of jealousy 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?’

Yet, even when negative news about bushfalling does circulate, information can be interpreted in ways that do not change dominant views and contemporary understandings of migration. Those who have succeeded in getting to bush and proceed to talk negatively about bush are said to speak to prevent the success of others. Their warnings about bush are considered to be the fruits of jealousy. As another informant called Florence put it ‘*White man kontri* is paradise on earth. […] If anybody says *white man kontri* is not good, that person is a witch.’

Lines and openings: in search of scholarships, cyber massas and doki men

Delphine’s choices after graduation were either bushfalling or marriage. So she started applying for MA programmes abroad. Even were she granted admission with a university in Europe, she was going to need a *doki* man. Doki men are migration brokers specialized in the production of the papers needed for emigration. ‘After all,’ Delphine explained to me, ‘not everyone can get a visa.’ She meant that it took special powers to be granted this privilege. I encouraged Delphine to apply for scholarships. For her, scholarships were a highly unlikely route to 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 doki man. She also knew people 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 to her a relatively unknown access route to bush to her. Thus, it did not seem a reliable or trustworthy means of making it to bush. Scholarships were for others and something only I 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 programme 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 that she was now on a different level: ‘My level now na 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.

When the visa had not become available on the first promised date, Delphine became nervous. Whether for externally funded studies or otherwise, Delphine’s path to bush was marked by fear and anxiety. Secrecy remained of the essence even for the scholarship route of falling bush. Delphine only confided only 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. Delphine traveled back and forth to the Embassy. Yet, when close informants of ours asked how Delphine was, I had to say that she was around and that things were as ever.23

It was awkward to have to keep a secret from close informants who had shared many intimate stories with us.24 Not until Delphine arrived in Sweden could I finally speak openly again. I explained to neighbours and informants that Delphine had won a scholarship. Yet, despite my explanations, a doubt always remained in people’s minds. 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.25 It was clear that I must have been instrumental in aiding Delphine’s departure. The rumour in Delphine’s neighbourhood 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 been able
to go: ‘Delphine has left for the white world.’26 That is the part of her migration trajectory that has become visible in her quarter. 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.

Closure and the limits of credible information

Eleven months after Delphine’s arrival in bush, she sent me an e-mail telling me about a phone conversation with an old friend in Cameroon. This friend had just come back from Nigeria to Cameroon. He had wanted to go to Spain overland via Libya with four male friends. In answer to Delphine’s question whether they had not heard how people were dying on that route to Europe, he replied ‘Some have died, some have succeeded. No risk, no money. We wanted to try our own luck.’

Delphine never considered reaching Europe by the overland route. Even my informants who were the most eager to go and fall bush tended to acknowledge the physical dangers associated with this route. The only people I came across during fieldwork who had attempted this route were men. In principle Delphine’s shocked reaction was not connected to her new geographical position in Sweden. She shouted at her friend and told him never to try to fall bush in this way again. Delphine now began to talk to her friend about the dangers of bushfalling in terms of papers (residence and work permits) and issues of legality.

During our period of doing fieldwork, Delphine had persistently waved away the relevance of any negative aspect she was told about bush, as well as anything she would hear about legal frameworks of migration control. Delphine and many other young Cameroonianians consider that it takes luck and/or a connection to be able to overcome closure and travel to bush. In this mental worldview, legality cannot explain the respective success or failure of migrants. As a consequence, Delphine’s new narrative of how difficult it is to get papers in Europe did not fall on fertile ground with her friend. Delphine told me that her friend responded to her warnings about illegality in bush in these terms:

How about those who have documents? How did they manage to get theirs? The ways that those who have succeeded – we would have also used the same ways to succeed. Because we were very prepared for anything. We are men and men are smart.
In e-mail to me, Delphine complained that her friend was unlikely to change his opinion about bushfalling at all cost. None of her explanations about the difficulties experienced by Cameroonians in bush, she complained to me, ‘mean [t] anything’ to him. For the first time in over two years of ongoing discussions between the two of us on bushfalling, I found her expressing fear, as well as a sense of concern that bushfalling could also have negative consequences:

I am so afraid because I know that they will not give up and they will only try again. My fear is what may happen to them if they even succeed to cross Morocco. How will they manage? Oh my God!

The passionate advocate of migration at all cost had turned – largely due to her stay in bush – into a person warning people not to go. She had ardently defended bushfalling as a precious dream and important ambition. Yet, in this e-mail from Sweden, she talked about bushfalling as an ‘illness’ that needed a ‘cure’. This is a radical shift in Delphine’s migratory expectations.

Yet, her new attitude was in line with a discourse I had already encountered with a small group of elite students in Yaoundé organising into an NGO that was largely sponsored by the Swiss Embassy to fight ‘illegal migration’.27 As young students of a much more privileged class background than Delphine, the NGO staff had themselves a better chance of being granted a visa at the embassy. What distinguished the members of this NGO from Delphine was not their 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 can lower migratory expectations and that can make migration projects through other channels more attainable.

By fully appreciating the shift in ‘level’ and status that comes with having had and having access to the international level we can grasp why Delphine’s new views migratory risks would not speak to and be relevant to her friends in Cameroon. Upon receiving an MA degree, Delphine was in a position to sign up for a second MA degree in order to prolong her residence permit. With only a university admission letter, her friends in Cameroon by contrast would have only had a small chance of being granted a visa. If Delphine was changing her views on bushfalling, it was also because she now had other means of achieving social and geographical mobility.

After a two page e-mail describing her horror and despair at the Cameroonian madness of wanting to fall bush at all cost, Delphine added in a short note that she was preparing to send money home for Christmas, but also to buy phone credit so that she could call and greet friends and family in Cameroon. She sent home 175,000
CFA (almost 300 Euros), equal to a good monthly salary of a well-positioned person in Cameroon. The money was able to take care of the school fees for her younger brothers and sisters, which must have been a considerable relief to her aging parents who receive 10,000 CFA – roughly fifteen Euros – every three months from their pension. They work as farmers to be able to pay for the rest of their expenses.28

Both the financial gifts and the phone calls demonstrated to everyone in Cameroon the power of bush. Before falling bush, Delphine would not have had the capability to pay the school fees of her family members. Now that she was in bush she had the power. Through being in bush, Delphine was on a different ‘level’. All those connected to her through kinship ties or friendship benefited from the occasional money streams or even just the added prestige of receiving phone calls from a bushfaller.

By performing the ritual of calling from bush during Christmas, Delphine elevated the social status of those whom she called. Any connection to bush has its worth – particularly when migration is possible because of connections and not because of information and knowledge on procedures. As a bushfaller, Delphine can now raise the status of her family both financially and through the additional prestige of making international connection visible and apparent through phone calls.

When Delphine became a bushfaller – that is, when she was in Sweden – her attitudes towards bushfalling at all cost changed. Over the phone, she talked to her friends for the first time about the difficulties of living and working ‘illegally’. Delphine knew, however, that she had only a small chance of being taken seriously. Her new position in bush meant that she was no longer a trustworthy source of information on bush. Successful bushfallers might want to prevent the success of others and thus spread information that was not to be trusted. Those Cameroonians still hoping to travel out of Cameroon consider the complaints and stories from bushfallers about the difficult realities in bush as mere signs of wickedness.

Conclusion

Bushfalling constitutes a particular form of contemporary mobility. Tensions between what people want and what is possible have created a situation in which any kind of desire for emigration (whether for studies or for work) has to be sought out against all odds. Migratory risks are internal to the concept of bushfalling and need to be considered in the context of conceptions of risk in contemporary Cameroon. At the same time, bushfalling has started to encapsulate the very notion of success.
itself. In Cameroon, the desire to fall bush at all cost is largely considered to be a sign of ambition and the determination to be successful in life. Giving up on wanting to go to bush is like giving up on the pursuit of success, wealth and hope itself.

Looking at the case study of Delphine, I have suggested that a close analysis of the economy of migratory knowledge helps to explain the feverish pursuit of emigration against all odds in important ways. Values and norms in Anglophone Cameroon impede information from flowing freely. 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.

Jealousy, fear of witchcraft and the consequent imperative for secrecy can help to explain high degrees of optimism among young Cameroonians of certain classes about the transformative potential of bushfalling. Aspiring migrants have to fear the jealousy of people in Cameroon who might want to stop their travel projects. Jealous acquaintances can engage in witchcraft to prevent the success of others. Failure of travel projects is thus often explained through and blamed on witchcraft.

Fears of jealousy, witchcraft and failure also mean that aspiring bushfallers must keep their travel projects secret when trying to leave the country. The circle of people allowed to know about a departure project can be very selective. Within the moral economy of departure in Cameroon, it is not information, but secrecy, that can render migration safe. It is secrecy that protects aspiring migrants from the jealousy of others and thus from witchcraft.

The economy of migratory knowledge is not a mere question of ’mis’-information. The pursuit of these ambitions of mobility is marked not so much by mere ignorance or naïveté, but by a particular kind of interpretation of the reality of migration, including notions of risk and success. One should ask, not what people know or do not know before departure, but how they come to trust and interpret the information that they do have.

References


**Notes**

1. This chapter is based on fieldwork done from September 2007 to January 2009. A more elaborate version of this paper can be consulted under “Bushfalling at all cost – the economy of migratory knowledge”, *African Diaspora*, (forthcoming 2012). Both pieces form part of my Ph.D. project entitled *Bushfalling: How young Cameroonians dare to migrate* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2011).

2. In order to save money Delphine first kept it a secret that 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.

3. For the use of the word hustling in Nigeria see (Chernoff 2003).

4. Cameroonian in bush might capture the at times excessive pressure for remittances and gifts through references to specific forms of witchcraft, i.e. nyongo (Nyamnjoh 2005; Jua 2003). Yet, those still in Cameroon are extremely eager to be the ones that go out for their family to ‘hustle’ and ‘work moni’ in bush.

5. As Delphine was referring herself to this Francophone film, she mixed the title of the film ‘Paris a tout prix’ with both Pidgin and French. Linguistically, contemporary Cameroon is divided into an Anglophone and a Francophone part. In every day life, people in the Anglophone part of Cameroon speak Pidgin, rather than English.

6. This number also includes people who want to go to bush for holidays or studies. Not all of these respondents wanted to go to bush to work or stay.

7. These emigration attempts stretched from applying for admission with foreign universities abroad to engaging in conversations with family members abroad about whether they could ‘bring them over’.

8. Fleischer has pointed to a gendered difference between the pre-migrational marital behaviour 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 (2012). Yet, just like women, men nevertheless prefer to fall bush when they do not have a family in Cameroon.

9. In a survey conducted in the 1990s, Seraphin established that more than half of the people
questioned in Douala would like to migrate or at least travel out of the country. Most who
would like to emigrate are young, of a higher level of education and are not yet heading a

10 Carling has equally argued for the importance of an understanding of involuntary immobility
for the study of migration (2002: 5).

11 Ferguson has defined the state of abjection as the act of ‘being thrown aside, expelled, or
discarded’ (1999: 236). In this sense, abjection is different from mere exclusion.

12 Those who have already reached bush might capture the at times excessive pressure for remit-
tances and gifts through references to specific forms of witchcraft, i.e. nyango (Nyamnjoh
2005; Jua 2003). Yet, those still in Cameroon are extremely eager to be the ones that go out
for their family to ‘hustle’ and ‘work moni’ in bush.

13 Migrants in the 1970’s and 80’s, for example, were referred to as ‘been to’s’. For usages of the
term ‘been to’ in Ghana, see (Martin 2005).

14 Roitman notes that to ‘work the bush’ is to work unregulated markets (Roitman 2005, 26).

15 Having Ngie, Ngoro and Pidgin as their main three languages, neither parent speaks English.

16 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 had worked the soil. Delphine’s parents were not
the only case in which mobility was closely related to a further integration into the money
economy.

17 While Fischer, Martin and Straubhaar, for example, mention that people process information
differently, they have very little so say about how and why different interpretations occur

18 For other discussions of migration choices see (Carling 2002 & Barak 2005).

19 Original: ‘How you loss so? A don stay for see you like se you go na bush!’

20 The ‘notion of effortless gain at the expense or even consumption of others is echoed in vari-
ous 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 & Nyamnjoh 2000).

21 Original: ‘Ha you over busy so? You de follow na doki?’ To go to bush above all means follow-
ing up on one’s papers. These papers can be attained in any manner, both through official
procedures, as well as through financial motivations.

22 Embassy requirements for visas are restrictive and in 1995 consolate officers considered they
had to reduce the quota of granted visa demands by 50 percent (Rosy 2002).

23 Original: ‘I dey.’

24 From among our closest informants, Delphine decided to tell only Manuealla about her
scholarship. She would have confided in Pamella, too, but an occasion did not present itself
before her departure.
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. For them, this secrecy was an extra guarantee of my safety.

Original: ‘Delphine don go white man kontri.’

For public treatments of the theme of bushfalling in Cameroon that also include negative aspects of the phenomenon see (Ngwa & Ngwa 2006; Nganghi 2006). From Dust to Snow is an edited volume that gathers mainly the voices of Cameroonian students abroad. As such, the edited volume is not at all a reflection of the views and attitudes of Cameroonian still in Cameroon. Billet Retour was written by a Francophone student migrant in Russia who overstayed his visa after his studies and was after a period of imprisonment repatriated back to Cameroon. Another example that includes a more critical stance on migration is the academic volume edited by the Cameroonian scholar Pondi. After a conversation with Professor Pondi, my research assistant disqualified his arguments as representing a typical ajebotar perspective. By ajebotar, Delphine referred to Professor Pondi’s privileged socio-economic position in Cameroon (see also glossary). Whereas Delphine and other informants were reasoning on an individual or family level, Pondi was concerned in his argument on bushfalling with development on the African continent as whole. His main reference was the nation state or the African continent.

At the national level, the average monthly salary that stems from the exercise of the principal working activity is 26,800 CFA. In the public sector, the average monthly salary in public administration is 124,300 CFA. In the formal private sector, the average monthly salary is 103,600 CFA. These data stem from a report on employment and the informal sector (‘Enquête sure l’emploi et le secteur informel (EESI)) by the Institut national de la statistique (INS) (Evina 2009: 37).