M: When did you first migrate to Australia?

A: I first arrived on the 31st of Feb 2013. For Studies. So when I was deciding to do my Masters I was between thinking of going to the UK or to Australia, and Australia was an option because one of the researchers that I was working with in Mexico, he was from the UK. He was working on this project on the sustainable use of water and I was telling him that I wanted to do the Master and I was thinking to go to the UK and Australia. And mostly, I was more inclined to the UK actually. But then he said, you know hes been to Australia actually its better to go to Australia. Again, location wise, it might be different but consider that the quality of life. So, for me, that life quality of life bit convinced me more for Australia. And I also was with my partner at the time who was also thinking to do his PhD in Australia. So my decision to come to Australia was, yea, I would say, it was studies – but it was also influenced in a way, by my partner, and yeah – the researcher.

M: Your ethnic background?

A: Mexican

M: Work? In professional field?

A: Yes – it is. My bachelor was in communication. I started to work with this national program within the area of culinary culture and that’s when I decided to shift to sustainability and environment. Yeah, I did my masters and it was a little bit difficult to change coming from background of communication. I’m working at the moment in a consultancy and I’m a sustainability consultant. So I work with, umm, ESG issues – its environmental, social and governance issues and at the moment we are working with umm, on this modern slavery issue.

M: How long did you consider/plan your move.

A: Well, I always knew that I wanted to do my Masters somewhere else. Like from secondary school, I always knew that I wanted to do my masters in another country. When I was working there I think it took me about, probably about a year, the planning and all that. I mean since the moment I thought, okay Australia its going to be, yeah about a year. Probably a little bit less. Probably less. But yeah, thinking about it and talking with my family and all that took about a year.

M: Why overseas?

A: I think it was because of my dad. So, my dad – he did his PhD in the UK. So, I think I always wanted to do postgraduate studies somewhere else. Also, I wanted to have the international experience of studying somewhere else. And I always was very inclined to travel.

M: Okay – tell me about family.

A: So, I will say that my family – core family is my mom, my dad, and my brother. So, for them it was obviously, you know, it was a bit sad. It was like, can’t you study in Mexico? But they were very supportive, and they knew that it was something that I… they always knew that it was something that I wanted to travel – and live somewhere else and they were very supportive in that area.

I need to talk a lot with them and I think technology helps a lot to make things easier. Especially when I was, well, when I first arrived to Australia, I was deciding to go – I mean deciding which university I wanted to go… I didn’t know I was actually going to do it or not. But at the end my mom was.. you know.. talking with her on the phone all the time, helped a lot to decide things.

M: Did you know that you were going to live here?

A: I think I was… deep deep inside, I knew that I wanted to give it a try to stay here.

M: Family/friends/community?

A: Well, my partner. He was going to start his PhD so he was here 3 months before me.

M: And which types of visa options did you consider?

A: No it was Tourist visa. The initial plan was that I was just going to be on the tourist visa for 6 months while deciding which university I was going to go to, get used to life in Australia, and practicing English and all that. That look longer than I expected so I ended up with a 1year tourist visa. In Mexico we don’t have that working holiday. Some countries have it but we don’t have that so yeah. Well, at least not that I know. So, yeah it was Tourist visa for a year and then I had the student visa, and then after I finished, I had the postgraduate visa, and then I was on a bridging visa and then the residence.

M: Factors that help make decision in one year?

A: I was considering prices – big issue! And yea, the studies – plan and structure. So I started the Master in Melbourne and I did 1 year in Monash and then I realised I didn’t like it. I didn’t like it because I thought that it was too much money for the kind of education, I thought it was very poor education for the amount of money I was paying. Not saying that all of the courses – no. That particular Master had a lot of people that moved out. They just went to different universities. Yeah, and again in other places it was absolutely great. Maybe it was just that particular Master. I don’t know. Because yeah, my generation, people I started with, there were 4 people, they moved to Melbourne uni and from the generation before, there were 3 people at Melbourne uni. I was actually thinking about going to Melbourne uni as well. But then, I decided to go to Canberra to ANU partly because, well, my partner was in Canberra. He was doing his PhD there all the time. But it was not the motivation. It was also because ANU was going to be the only university that was going to transfer my credits. Otherwise, if I went to Melb uni, I would have to do an extra semester or something like that and I was like, umm, I don’t want to pay anymore. So that’s why I went to Canberra.

M: Activities on the tourist visa

A: I was travelling. I was studying English. I was doing this English course in ANU.

M: How long did the visa process take?

A: The Tourist visa took like a month. The student visa less than a month. Very quick actually. I also had to leave – I originally asked for a 6-month tourist visa and they gave me a tourist visa for one year with the condition of leaving Australia after 6 months. So, I had to – yeah, after 6 months I went to NZ – travelled a little bit and came back. I’m not sure if I had to leave Australia to apply for the student visa. I can’t remember. I’m not sure. Oh no, I did apply from outside.

M: Skills?

A: Well work experience and the theory in education. So, I think those 2 factors. Well, the education I had from Mexico, the work experience I had from Mexico and then the education I had here. Those things gave me the skills on paper to get the job in the area I wanted.

Work in Mexico – it was all bits and pieces but the one that I was using for PR purposes was I was in a consultancy that worked in the implementation of a national program for the national commission of water in Mexico and the aim of the program was to teach farmers in different areas – was to give them entrepreneurial skills. The long-term purpose of that was to make sustainable use of water in agriculture and the means to do that was giving them the entrepreneurial skills.

M: Mapping

A: So first it was – yeah, the tourist visa. Then, student visa, and yeah. So that was – I had this for 1 year (2013). I got this – so I first arrived to Australia on Dec 2013 – and then I got this on the 9th of December. Again, I got in December – because I was going to start in January – the study. The postgrad work visa – I got that in 2016 – And this one I got in 2018. Postgrad work visa - I got it for 2 years. So I finished my studies in 2016. So I got this in 2017. So during the Postgrad visa, applied for PR, didn’t have to finish it. There was actually something in Canberra at that moment – a particular skill that they needed in Project management. And I was a bit afraid of applying under this position. I was like I don’t know if I have all the information, not feeling very secure about it. My ex was like, just apply, this is the moment for applying because there won’t be another opportunity and a friend – a friend from Mexico is married with a girl who was working at the department of immigration and she was also recommending – you know, this is going to be changing every 6 months. So, it’s either apply now, or it would be an opportunity lost.

M: Commercial services

A: So there’s this place that is called Latin Australia education and it’s a free service for people in Latin countries. Of course they get a fee for every student they send in Australian universities. So, yeah they helped me with all the initial bits for applying for the tourist visa to the stduejnt visa – they helped me with all that. They even helped me when I was looking for an internship. So, I think this one was extremely useful for me. After finishing Masters, I was already with the Residence and I was getting a hard time to get a job in my area because its mostly all in communication and I wanted to leave that field. I wanted to go into environmental sustainability, and I was looking for an internship that would give me an entrance to help me with that. So, this Latin Australia education helped me with that. So, they helped me with tourist visa, with the student visa. With the postgraduate visa, I got a service from the lawyer from the university. They have lawyers and they don’t give you.. they don’t give you… umm they’re just a guide. So they help you and they helped with the residence as well. So I mostly used these 2. Didn’t have to pay for any of these services. The only moment when I paid was when I went to a lawyer and it was for a specific question, but it was a very very specific set of questions. It was while applying for the residence, and before submitting the documents and all that because the lawyers from the university were guiding in the process but they don’t make any formal recommendations. So I just had a question, or couple of questions about checking papers, checking everything was right. So, I went with this lawyer – I paid $300.

M: Other services

A: Yes – document translation services – that I used one of the… for the Tourist visa, I did that in Mexico. For the student visa, I already had this from Mexico so didn’t need this. So student visa I needed the IELTS, Translation services. Postgraduate visa – I needed the IELTS again, police check (hmm did I need a police check for student visa? Question mark) – I had to do it in Mexico and in Australia. I had to do actually the IELTS – I did the IELTS 2 times for the student visa because I didn’t get the score. So, yes 3 times in total. Yeah, for the residence I didn’t have to do anything. Yeah, for the student visa I had to do the IELTS. When I transferred to ANU, they told me that they could, they didn’t, I didn’t need to do an IELTS again because you were already studying a year in Australia so that can count as IELTS. For the bridging visa – the bridging visa they just gave when I applied so that’s just automatic. Translation every time – yeah, because there were different things. For the student visa, it was, of course it was education and all the universities in Mexico. For the residence, I had to do the translation of the birth certificates, of the things that I didn’t have to do for the student, and for the Postgraduate I had to do the translation. There was something that I had to do that was different. It was just that one thing maybe. Umm but yeah, for the residence I had to translate a crazy amount of documents, even emails. At one point the guy who was translating was like, aah, you again! The translation for the residence was with someone from NAATI, umm yeah, and that was in Canberra. Skill assessment – oh yea right, skill. For the postgraduate visa, I just had to show that I had finished an Australian qualification, and they give it to you for the same amount of time that you had the student visa. Umm and it’s just for postgraduate studies so it’s just Master and PhD.

M: Financial services

A: Yes – that was actually for the Tourist visa as well. It was just showing bank account for the tourist visa. And for the student visa, I was paying it myself, and my dad because I didn’t want the scholarship to go back to Mexico. And if I got the scholarship, I would have got that from a city that is very high leves of violence at the moment. So I didn’t wanna go particularly to that city. So I talked with my parents and they were like it might just be better to… we’ll just pay it and you can pay it back to me later. So, anyway, for the student visa we used financial services and it was, how do you say that, It was not a bank but it was when you make the transfer from Mexico to Australia and the moment when the dollar is the best rate, that’s when they send the money. Depending on the amount of money you transfer, the fee is a percentage. I don’t know… like 5-10%. That was for paying the fees. So, showing that you had sufficient funds, yeah, I needed that for tourist and student but for paying the fees for Master I had to use that. We didn’t want to use banks because they – its just too expensive and the cheapest option, that I learnt from a friend, was to use this. This transfer service. Oh the health and all that. I don’t think I had to do it for the Tourist visa. Let me see how much I can remember. The IELTS is $300-$350. Yeah, Ill have to check.

M: Challenges?

A: The skills assessment because I wanted to.. so I had the translation and I ask a friend in Mexico to back up the information I was giving. Well, I was working with him when I was in Mexico. So for skills assessment, like, it was not Science or anything – it was experience in Project Management, he had to write, yes I worked with her, this is was we were doing, bla bla bla.. and that was yeah, I think the skills assessment was particularly challenging to prove and translate all that and to get the people from you know, years ago, when you worked in something, you know years ago to help you with all these requirements. Yeah, that was.. And yeah, the IELTS that I didn’t have the first time. I think with the IELTS it is so frustrating so be sitting there for 4 hours and after fist hour I was like, ahh, and then not meeting all the points for the student visa, its like, ahh, ill have to do it again. But yeah, the IELTS was more a mental thing. The skills assessment was time consuming, hassle.

I took classes for IELTS in Mexico. So I took classes for the IELTS when I was applying for the student visa but I took that in Mexico so it didn’t help a lot, really. [The English classes on tourist visa] – it was from ANU. It was.. to be honest… it was mostly for.. sort of, to do something. Not to be.. to feel like I was gonna be here for 6 months and not do anything. If you don’t pass the IELTS, you have to do it. But I wanted to do the IELTS. The English classes were not with that purpose. If that was for that purpose, then I think I would have done it differently. But yea, those were more like casual sort of.

M: Technology

A: So, this is going to be online research which of course, I think this was for everything. I don’t have social media, so I didn’t use that. Applications, all that etc. Mostly it was online research and this .. the Latin Australian education. Google searches, Department of Immigration. For the Tourist visa, I did stuff online and because these guys helped me – the Latin Australian, they helped me, I didn’t do much online for that.

Forums – there was a Mexican forum, something that is tailored to Mexican people so that was for the residence. And student visa, not really.

So, WhatsApp and skype for chatting with my family. I used telegram for a while but not a lot of people use it so not anymore. Telegram was better before. WhatsApp now is encrypted by telegram before, it was, the safest option. You know to avoid; in case you were hacked and all that, you know, your conversations. Not that I have a reason for these issues but… laughs. My conversations will be like, chatting about food all the time. So yeah, WhatsApp, skype, Facetime.

M: Social connections

A: So before coming here, I knew my boyfriend at the time. Then, before tourist visa… well… after the tourist visa I started to have this group of friends who were in the English class and after the student visa, that’s when I started. Like, the friends before arriving, was mainly like my ex’s group of friends. So, it was mostly like his friends and his group. He met some people through like meetups, and they became good friends, and like, we also became good friends. Oh, Meetups is technology. I think for these 2 visas I was relying on this (the latin Australian group) because they were helpful, and it was free. And I just really found it extremely useful. Like it was very easy to, like, very holistic sort of thing. I didn’t have to do much. After that, for the post-graduate and the residence, that’s when I started relying on the social – heavily because when I was in Canberra, I was .. the group of friends that I had were also going through the residence process as well and there was lot of knowledge that was not a part of online research or something like. When I was telling you about the wife of this friend who was working in the dept of immigration, who was saying like, okay this is the moment for you to apply, double check this, not from a professional perspective but from a, like, friend-ish perspective. It was like ‘I know something. I won’t tell you what it is but I recommend you to do this at this moment.’ Also, I was babysitting at the time and the people that I met during … the clients and all that, were a part of the Mexican community, well, Latin community and they were extremely supportive for everything. So, when I was applying for the residence and the postgraduate visa, they were sharing experiences they had which was helpful.

M: How is it affecting family?

A: My dad has his nostalgic moments, of, ahh you should come back. And I’m like (smiles) no. But my mom, actually, the other day. My mom has said several times that she’s happy that I’m here because she feels safer and I don’t know, like, the other day there was a robbery close to my house or something and there was a kidnapper, something bla bla bla and my mother has said, you know, these are the times I feel more relaxed that you’re safe there and you don’t have the same dangers as in Mexico. So, living is aside. I mean the distance and all that is hard, but I think they’re okay.

M: Regulatory aspects / Challenges

A: Besides the skills assessment? Well, talking about health. So, it was just something on my health that I had to double check and it didn’t have. Let’s say, it was not that it was challenging but I just had to extra double check for applying, you know, the residence. And yea, it was just, I think it was the only thing that was on my mind. It was just internal, like, I was just extremely stressed about certain things, as in, what if there was something not in my knowledge, super stressed like, do I need to do more things, do I need to do more checks, and I was just, particularly stressed about that for the postgraduate and the residence. And the stupid IELTS that I had to do twice.

M: Are you keeping on top of current immigration policies?

A: I want to say yes. They have affected my migration. My general – one of the points that I have is that Australia relies a lot on immigration of course but the economical dependence they have on Education facilitates for immigrants to come and do studies. Im gonna leave the quality of education and accepting everyone aside – but it makes very quick things, at least in my opinion, for students. I also think that they are double checking certain visa’s like the 475 when it comes to you know, cases of, they need to make sure that there are no human rights violated. So, I think of course that’s a good thing. In 2017 or 2018 when they were going to change the requirements for residence and for the citizenship. That was, of course it came out of the blue and I was going through the process of the residence and I think I submitted the application like a week before that or something like that. So, the good thing was that I was sort of relaxed that I put that EOI before that happened, and then I was doing the residence I was affected by all these changes that they were doing. I was wondering how this is going to affect me. That’s one of the reasons why I went to the lawyer – how is this going to be affecting me... just double checking that it is going to be fine. It didn’t affect me because they didn’t do any changes at the end. So, I was doing the process when they announced and I was like, ah, this is going to affect me. But because I had the EOI before, it didn’t affect me and then at the end they didn’t change anything. For the citizenship, if, well, I guess all those changes affect in how the pressure you feel to do things now. So for the citizenship, my pressure was, like I need to do this NOW before they change the requirements to be 4 years as a resident. Other than that, no, I wasn’t affected.

M: Challenges

A: Absolutely. I think until I got the residence I was stressed all the time… all the time and its like when you’re relaxing for a moment but at the back of your head youre thinking, ‘I should be doing something’. It is like, the migration process for me was, I felt like I never had settlement. I feel like I was constantly pursuing something and that instability, it was, like I was stressed about I don’t know whats going to happen, and then at one point, it was okay I’ve been enough in Australia and if I don’t get the residence, I don’t think that I can go back home and get used to that lifestyle again. So, yes, it was very challenging all the time because even when you’re a student your thinking about, I knew that I wanted to apply for the residence, so it was like a long time of carrying the stress.

M: Examples of migration advice

A: Well, so well, friends wife. But also for using the NAATI – the translation services, specific people were recommended by the social groups. Like, this guy might be able to do it faster or this girl is particularly good for translating this. Its kind of ironic because they are all certified and they should all be able to do it but anyways… A friend was saying apply for your driving license and things that prove that you are a part of community and that you’re making your life in Australia, that you’re integrating yourself. So, those kind of things were part of the recommendations. Also, well the lawyers, he was recommended by somebody. There were several lawyers, of course, but in the case of this Latin group, lot of those people went to this guy. There were some people who went with other people but apparently they didn’t have a good experience and that’s the knowledge that they also shared – so like, go to this lawyer because he’s good at this. Also, one of the lawyers from the university, umm there were 2 lawyers. One of them was helping my ex with some of his documents as well but the girl who was a friend of a friend, a close friend of mine. So there was also that, like she would go the extra mile, like you know as in, everything was part of a professional but it was also like, okay I wont tell you this but as a friend of a friend I will tell you, you know.. do this, this is better or don’t do that..I think that it was all generally good advice. Especially going with the lawyer that I went because if I had gone with a different one – I was in a very vulnerable point. I think that any advice the lawyer would have given me at the time, I would have taken. And that lawyer would have said okay do this and Ill charge you for this this this – I would have said yes okay. And going with this person was like okay, I said that you’re recommended by all these people. So yeah, It was like, there was no need for adding pressure of ‘you need to pay for extra things’. So yeah. He just happens to be married with a woman who is in that community group. So, then again, he has a lot of experience with Mexicans and all that but also there were other people who had bad experiences with other people.

M: Multiple migration options?

A: Yes, I was considering the partner visa when I was in the postgraduate. So one of the things that I was considering was that if I didn’t get the residence, and this was suggested by my ex. He was still on the student visa for his PhD. So, he said okay of the residence doesn’t happen or if there’s an issue, the partner visa is an option. I can be with the student visa and then post-graduate visa of his. Yeah, that was the other possibility. I didn’t want that possibility but of course I considered it. In the case that I didn’t get the residence, I thought okay, that might be an option. I didn’t want to depend on someone. Things can go wrong or they can go well but I didn’t want, like I wanted to be with someone because I wanted to be with someone. Not because of migration status. There’s a layer of that. What if I want to break up but I’d have to be with him to maintain my migration status.

M: Next steps?

A: I applied for citizenship 2 weeks ago and that’s it. Family don’t have interest in coming here at all. Visiting yea. I don’t think my dad – because he thinks hes too old. My mom def wants to come. When my brother wanted to do his Masters, he was considering Sydney. At the end he decided not. I thought, not about sponsoring him, but I thought it might be easier to help you with anything you need. But at the end he decided to go somewhere else but hes thinking about coming maybe and do a short course, like 3 months, in something he’s interested in.

M: Have you given advice?

A: I have but because this is being recorded and you know that its fined by law if you give migration advice and if you’re not a lawyer. So yes, I have given advice to my brother and several friends. Like a lot of friends. Particularly a group friends who are looking for immigration. There are several friends who are going through the process in Canberra and because I got it they are asking me, and every time that something happens in a positive way, they let me know. Also friends who are studying and thinking about applying for a different visa (it might not be residence) but other visas.

M: Would you move elsewhere?

A: Absolutely. No I love Australia. I wanna stay here all my life (sarcastic laugh). If the opportunity comes up then I would definitely consider because I think there are lots of , not better, but different opportunities to learn from different places. Australia still gives me.. because its an Island, I feel that things are very contained and that sense of feeling like, you know like an Ostrich, having your head in the ground. Sometimes I am dealing with these kinds of people and it feels quite restraining at times. I actually think I would love to go to NZ for a year. I would also maybe like to go to somewhere in Europe. I was thinking about maybe a PhD in Finland or something but yeah, it depends. But yes, somewhere in Europe. Not to live all the time but to have that experience of working there. For a change.

M: Life plans?

A: I know that I should be thinking about that and bla bla bla to maybe have that stability. But Im not actually interested at all in looking for that right now. I don’t want to buy a house right now because first I don’t have the money. But, even if I had the money I would buy it as an investment but I don’t because I know that I don’t wanna stay for a long time in Sydney and I don’t know if Im gonna stay in Australia or something. I didn’t look into that. The citizenship would be important because the passport gives you the opportunity to go to other places. The Mexican passport doesn’t give you that opportunity for a lot of places and what I want to do is not just travel for the sake of travel. I want to do certain work in my field. It’s more like a career thing and I think there’s more opportunity with an Australian passport. You can also have the opportunity with a Mexican passport, but you would have to do extra work.

M: Reasons for move between cities

A: Canberra was for my ex-boyfriend – well love. Melbourne was education. It was my decision so I was like you suck it up. Like it would be sad – you will be sad, I will be sad but we will be sad together. This was like, I think I had the bridging visa for 3 months. They gave me the residence after 3 months of applying. Yeah, it was really lucky as well. Sydney was for job. I applied for the internship through them (LA) and I also wanted to move out of Canberra. Like Canberra was great and I had a great time there, but it was like a bubble. Australia already feels like a bubble and it was a bubble within the bubble. So, I was like, yeah I need to move. I moved here for the internship, but I was going to Canberra a lot over the weekends and all that, so I wasn’t that much in Sydney really. Yeah I started living in Sydney properly when I started to work this job in September. All this will be worth it to get the citizenship to get the passport to be able to leave. All this so I can leave. laughs.

M: Thoughts on the map

A: It looks like a lot. I was also thinking of that when I was applying for the citizenship. The amount of money spent in everything is just, it’s crazy. I could have had 3 houses by now. But as I said, it feels like part of your life journey has been filling forms and paying things to fill more forms. That’s what I was feeling like when I was applying for these visas and the map. It’s not challenging but the amount of time it takes.