M: When did you first arrive to Australia?

Cl: The very first time to Australia – it was in 2000. That was a working holiday visa. I was here for maybe 10 or 10.5 months.

M: Is that when you decided you wanted to come back?

Cl: I don’t think in that time, no. I really loved every minute of being in Australia and the travel experience. But going. I would say when I left, I didn’t know how much I love it. So I left Australia – I didn’t have much experience of travel, and I didn’t have much comparison. So, I left Australia, I lived in many other countries so I felt like I really would love to live here.

M: Motivations for visit first time and later?

Cl: So the first time, I would say, it was an intuitive thing. I was working. When I was 16, I really wanted to go travelling. But I was in – you know the school system, you have to study till your 18-19, and my mother convinced me that its better to finish school and then go travelling. But then by the time I finished school, I sort of forgot about it. I completely forgot about it. I was totally in this mindset of oh, I need to do something with my life, like a career or… and so I ended up working first and then I met 2 people, who had, they were much older. And they ended up telling me about their travel experiences and it totally clicked, and I just knew that I had to go to Australia. It’s not just they told me about Australia. Actually one was Canadian and he came to Europe when he was young and the other one had a brother in Australia. But, he was more talking about I should go out and see the world instead of thinking of my career. For me these were significant people. So that was the first time and yeah, people keep asking me why Australia and it was just a 100% clear to me. There was no doubt about it. Yeah, there was just no doubt about it.

The second time was when for me it crystallised. So, that’s many years later. I had a career. I studied, I had a career at the university where I come from. And then I felt like a bit of a dissatisfaction. And I went to a coach, a life coach who I had a couple of sessions with, and it came out that I want to do some things, I wanted to do a PhD. I love intellectual work. I love intellectual academic environment, but I was in the management at the time, not the research part of it. And the second was I wanted to go back to Australia and the third was I wanted to do research in India. And then I just applied for a position in Australia as well as in the UK. UK because of my research interest in India and it worked out here in Sydney.

My professional background. So, I studied Bachelor of Anthropology and Psychology and Tourism slash Geography. This led me to work at University, like the project manager for the president. One of the universities back home. I had various jobs during my studies as well. It’s quite a common thing to work and study, and yeah, so. Surely, what – I mean part of what gained me the position here in Australia was my experience in management as Project manager. It’s like a professional management.

On the WHV – both. I was doing both. But, everything was cheaper. I came with some money in my pocket but my plan was to stay 3 months because I couldn’t imagine I could stay longer away from my family. Laughs. So, I came here, and you know the big difference was – so one thing was like there were many more Irish and British people backpacking. So it wasn’t much Italian, French. I don’t even know if they could have this working holiday thing at the time. But yeah, so in terms of professional life, you know, I was just working, “working” as, you know, just a bit of cleaning, or like housekeeping, at the reception. Some houses would give out free food so I would give out free food to the backpackers and that would gain me a free night. So, everything was way cheaper than now. So the only job that would make me the money was as a waitress in Rushcutters bay. In Sydney I came to stay for 3 months to have this job.

M: What type of work currently?

Cl: In my professional field – I work as a university tutor in social science.

M: How long did you consider/plan migration both times?

Cl: So, the first one – I was say from plan to execution was maybe 3 months. That’s only a rough estimate. Im not sure if that’s correct information but I believe to remember that the WHV for Germans just came out around that time because in 2000 was the Olympics. And I remember that I thought that I was really lucky that we have this visa. So, yeah, that was the first. The second I would say was a much longer start. I mean, where would I start. I would say that from applying for the Phd, I would say a year earlier maybe.

M: Migration options?

Cl: I mean for me, how to say this. My aim wasn’t migrating. I mean, I wanted to move to Australia – yes. No there weren’t other options – I wanted to come to Australia. I mean I didn’t come on the study visa. I first came on the tourist visa.

M: The second time?

Cl: The second time and then I, coz I already quit my job. I put everything in one cart. I said to myself if they don’t like me, I have to change my life. Not going to stay where I am now. So, I quit my job anyway and I decided to come to Australia anyway and get the tourist visa. And I was travelling in Western Australia for like, 3 months I think and then I heard that they accepted my application and that they also fund my studies. Coz that was my primary… if they don’t fund my studies then I am not gonna put money down for it. And that was like a long process - to actually get the position and to get money for the position – that was my condition from my side. I’m gonna pay for the studies.

My PhD project was like – I came up with the entire thing. And so I was determined to find the person to supervise it. That’s why I also applied to the UK. And yeah, in a way, ofcourse I checked out different options but that was all done before I put in the applications. I only put in the applications where I knew the supervisor wants to supervise me and support my application coz theres no point of doing this if theres no one there who wants me.

M: What about the UK?

Cl: [Laughs] – So that was 3 universities in the UK. So, one person actually came back a year later. I don’t know what happens with my emails there. So this person actually became my examiner. So, still this connection was quite important. But, anyway, by the time I was like, it’s a bit late [laughs]. Thanks for accepting but… And the other one, well, the reply was a bit vague. It was like, along the lines, I would have to do first a Masters and then they would accept me as a PhD student and I said no way, like, I am not gonna do a Masters degree especially when they dont fund it. Like, they said that they would fund my PhD research but they would not fund my Masters. That wasn’t an option.

M: Family? Did they play a role?

Cl: It was my decision.

M: Any family/friends/community?

Cl: No I had no family, friends or community so that didn’t affect my decision.

M: How long did your visa process take?

Cl: I mean I always thought it was relatively quick. I cant say, umm, maybe a month, maybe a few weeks, yeah.

M: How do you consider yourself to be a skilled migrant?

Cl: Well, umm, I think I have so many skills. Ofcourse, they are CV skills as I call them. But there are – now theres a new set of skills, the visa skills. And ofcourse I have many other skills that are not, you know, that are not on a CV or, you know, like everyone’s life skills.

M: Mapping

Cl: I think I actually don’t have to draw this in a time-line. So, umm, I would say, yeah, I had this working holiday, umm, so processing times – I would say 1 month because fun fact – no internet at the time. You know, you have to send it as a paper application. So, no internet application and you had to send your passport in for the visa. 1999-2000, yeah. Not entirely sure. I mean I remember I came in October. I arrive in October 2000 so it was actually 2000, maybe March. So working holiday – okay and then we are talking 2012. So that was a Tourist visa. I cant tell you the time, I cant remember. That was all done via internet, online application. That was 6 months and then I think there was not any bridging visa. Then I had the study visa.

M: Was it onshore?

Cl: I think so, yes because I came back. So that was oct to maybe feb, I was on the tourist visa. But in January, I went back home. I had to sort some life stuff but yeah im pretty sure I came back on the tourist visa and then I applied the study visa onshore and then I had the study visa for a couple of years. I mean I had this – what was the name of this – I had the extension so that was 1 year. Feb 2017, so it would be Feb 2018. And then I had a. Theres something about September. So the longest processing time was the 485. All these study visas, that was in a couple of weeks. But the 485, I think that was like 3 months or so. No sorry, I forgot one visa. Now I know why September. So I submitted September 2017 and when you submit, you have to apply for another visa, and that was the visa that I had. But did I then have the bridging visa? So I extended – that was feb 2017. I think it was 4 years and then I extended but I didn’t need the entire year because I submitted in September and then Im not sure what happened in Sept. I think I might have applied for 485 but then it puts me like, 1.5 years before I get it and that can’t be correct. I had something else in there. Or, I still was on that 1 year extension. Anyway the 485 was the longest – the longest and the most complicated – for me personally.

M: Commercial services

Cl: So I can say, first time I really paid a migration agent for information is.. so one was in my early study visa. So, that was these guys. I paid a $100 and it was shit information. Laughs. No – don’t use this guys. They were really shit. Then commercial actually just came for me again relatively recently when it came to my 485. So I had one consultation, lets say post phd. So at that time I was really sure that the 485 is the best option or not and the second consultation was relatively recent one. It was post 485 because it was about, okay, how do I actually come to PR and that is, I can say is 2018-2019. So I had my IELTS language test on Feb 2018. That’s for the 485. Then I had.. the other IELTS test was in 2011-2012… 2012? I did 2 IELTS. That’s the language. I didn’t do a skills assessment yet. I mean, yeah, So I called them up to find out how to do it, Yes, I will have to. Oh yes, Medical – yes that cost me a lot of money for the 485. Police check, yeah. I mean that was one of the things where I felt a like intimidated. So that’s why I went to a migration agent. So, that’s medical, police checks, passport photos!! Laughs,. Yeah of course, the health insurance. Although personally, I would have the health insurance anyway. So, what else, I had to get an X-ray because I said I was in India so I had to get an X-ray. I think they check if you have TB.

M: Tell me about technology.

Cl: That is a good question. I like it. Technology. So well, okay lets start from the information on the website of the ministry of migration, Department of migration. So, I find that is one of the most important sources because, you know, its valid for things. I find a lot of websites are out there but their information is not up to date. For me the landing page was always the department website. Personally, I found it actually quite useful for like, you know, this is the documents you need. I mean, at the end of the day that’s all you want to know, okay so.. I found it relatively easy. What I didn’t find easy was to find out what is my visa I should apply for yeah?. So in terms of once I know which visa I need, then it’s easy to look up what I need to apply for the visa. Okay, so If I don’t know, what is my resource? I would say, like, the newsletters. I actually did read a lot of these newsletters from this site [Acacia]. That’s the only thing that I was happy to get, for my 100 bucks that I paid. Laughs. Skype to migration agent. They are in Sydney but that’s just convenient. But, you know what, I actually found this consultant through Facebook. So, that means that I posted, umm, On Facebook, I said can anyone recommend me someone. Yes, and that was a good recommendation.

M: Social connections?

Cl: Yeah, so very important. Okay, umm, so who is there. So when it comes to all this study visa stuff, I would say my peers. For me it was like a very very important resource. So ones who went through the process, like, a year older in the process, they have a lot of insights. I also had – so my landlord was a migration agent but he always tried to make me pay for it and I paid so much rent that I never wanted to go to him, like, officially. But he would, Like you know, when he had a good day I’d say… I guess when he had a good day, he felt like… I guess Im a good tenant and I tried to make his life easy. Sometimes, he could feel, I guess, sometimes it came to him to understand that I’m trying to make his life easy, not complaining bla, bla, bla, and then in return he would give me a little bit advice. But that’s, I think that was, when it came to the extension of the 1 year. Umm. Well, umm, when I think about the first time I did this working holiday, I pretty much did this on my own, when I think about. That was all like, phone calls to the Department in Germany. I would just call these guys up, and be like okay how do I do this. Yeah, and then so, I posted this question for recommending someone and I think why I took on the recommendation of this person – I studied with someone back in Germany who’s sister is basically here and she recommended this agent. And, yeah, I felt like it’s a trusted source. And when it comes to. So, it would really make a difference because when it was the study visa it was mostly the PhD peers. I would also say that the university was really useless. I’m saying this because they need to change their thinking about their position; They want to make money, but like International students is for Australia. It’s not specifically for this university. So, university students are a source of income, but they try to withdraw from any responsibility regarding like, helping with migration process. So, and I think its not clear that its sometimes about very simple information that they can provide. I should probably put this on here. So, these were the sources that were good. But let’s also think about those that were lacking or not good. So, university’s graduate school. They are, don’t get me wrong, they are helpful in the framework they work in, but they cannot go beyond. They miss a little bit of a cross perspective sometimes. It’s a delicate topic which I understand. I am aware of this. I also understand that, yeah, I understand it’s a delicate topic. But the university needs to make a decision at some point. I mean, you are model for your students and you can’t stand up for them? So, what is it that you’re teaching to you students? You want employees? There’s no successful employees if you don’t stand up for your values. In the process, there’s always this question, is there a better way? So, I mean, in a way, I’m quite often lonely in this process because, I think social interaction is very important and I get a lot of information from that so it also makes me dependant on it, in a way, like… that’s why this consultant, the second one, is really good because she thinks beyong with me and I feel like, less dependant on the social network. Yes, I do pay money, but I also feel like. It’s a balanced thing – its like oh okay I never heard about this pathway. Its also because, people are not necessarily hiding. Its just like, umm, It’s a different thing. You pay for a consultation and a person really takes time compared to… yeah, let me relate to my question – is there a better way? I relate that to why I pay for it. Is there a better way for skilled migration? I feel like for me, personally, when it came to the study visa extension, everything was relatively smooth. Also the 485 was relatively easy because I could prove that I had the PhD. But then now when it comes to the skilled migration, I feel like, I need. So I actually have colleagues. So, we are moving on to colleagues who help me with this. It’s a little bit, like I said, like, suddenly, I know I have skills but how do I put these skills into this visa system – into the set if skills set by the visa. I am very practical about it. Im like, Okay so this is what they want to see me so what from all these skills I have, whether that’s like, in a certain training, or in a certain job – How does that translate into what their idea of what skill is. How do I translate that? Its exhausting and I also find it a bit ridiculous, but I have to overcome that, overcome my ego and just be practical and say, yeah whatever.

M: Why PR?

Cl: Yea this decision. For me the decision was made when I first arrived on my tourist visa. I wanted to live here.

M: How does the decision to migrate affect Family/community/relationships?

Cl: Yeah, it’s a bit massive. Because my family is back where I come from. They don’t travel. They say they don’t like flying, and I think why…that’s the exact reason why I between my first arrival and my second arrival as well here, because it was the process of saying okay I have to make a decision for my family or for myself. And I made this decision for myself.

M: Immigration policies?

Cl: Yes, I would say maybe, because a skill came on the list. Yeah, that fits my profile quite easily. I believe so.

M: Challenges?

Cl: Yeah so. It is for me the skills assessment. It’s the latest thing in my. The skills assessment process because theres certain features that define this skill, or this profession and I know I have the skill. I actually worked in this profession for many years. I also have experience beyond that – the defined way. But, it comes down to what the university will certify in terms of working hours and wage. So, that has a double catch because we all know we work more than we actually put on paper. So, that’s one catch and the other catch is, you know, laughs, Its not that im not willing to work more, its how much you get. Yeah, so it’s a process. Im currently in this process. Let me come back to why this first consultation was shit because at the time I was thinking… I was a bit one dimensional. I was okay, I came to Australia to do this PhD… I do this study thing and you know, that’s fine. I do have the awareness of how this migration stuff works. For me it was about living here and I didn’t have the awareness this entire like, skilled migration, politics and all that, yeah. I was naïve and arrogant at the same time, like, why wouldn’t you give me a visa, and so this person was giving me advice. Good advice would have been to say, looking at my CV you can apply for PR right now with this set of skills because this job is on the list and everything is about this list. Your whole life centres around this list. That would have been a good advice and so what happened. I was doing my PhD doing this study thing not having the awareness that I actually, sort of, lose. Of course, I don’t lose, but on paper I sort of lose the experience that I had working for several years in a relatively good position and at the university in Germany. Maybe I should have said, how can I get PR. I was just asking for migration advice and this person; just gave dumb advice I already knew.

M: Have you provided migration advice?

Cl: Yes – my PhD peers because I was helped so much and its really little things. How do I apply for police check, what do I do. It’s just these little directions;. Yeah, if there’s, of course I would also say, well what I’m saying is from 2 years ago or 1 year ago. Maybe theres someone who’s more up to date. Yes, I would always help or advise or even when it comes to things like, do you know any migration agent…

M: Future plans?

Cl: So feels like, yeah when I look at this maps, it feels like, I could have done this PR already and for some reason I’m doing alllllll this stuff. I feel like I’m doing a big turn. So, at the moment, I’m waiting, So I wanna get my… I identified the visa with the help of one of my peers – it’s the skill actually. that I wanna apply for… and I need to get my skills assessed. For that I contacted Vetassess. So various documents ofcourse – My key document, lets just the key ones, not silly ones where you have to show that you did the PhD and all – that’s fine. But, key document would be – okay so I called up Vetassess. For me the question was do they assess the skills or do they assess that I have this title, and they said it’s the skills. I need to show that I have the skills. They said the title doesn’t matter. So the key document would be, demonstrate skills So on the website which says so like, x, y, z skills to show. So Im very practical in my approach so Im like tick tick, yes I have this, no don’t have this. So when I say, I don’t have this, can I maybe show it? Is there something that I am not thinking about that can be shown. So my place, is about ‘University lecturer’ and they have stuff like, you know, sparks class discussion. Of course I’m doing that. Of course, Im holding seminars, I’m attending workshops. So, my key document is – at the university is called ‘statement on service’. On Friday I sent to my employer everything I did at the university and its various jobs. I did for 1 year I did advising for students at all levels, on various questions. Then of course, tutoring. Then of course, there’s a catch to it. The catch is that – so I did PhD research – but they want to see, and I’m not sure how to show that. So, they’re saying a PhD is not a research position that counts for the skill of university lecturers but to say that you’re a university lecturer you need to show that you are doing research. So how can I bring that? So, I need to see how to do that. I think its quite interesting to say that I have a degree which is called Doctor of Philosophy but that’s not a research, like doesn’t demonstrate research skills. So, that’s what I mean by.. you know, needing to understand their understanding of how they see it. I mean at the moment, one thing was, I was paid to help writing for an award application so I will bring this in. I will bring in that yeah I am writing publications from my own research. I’m peer reviewing in journals. So, I tried to get the documentation that I’m doing that. So, what it is is really to, out of, sort of, its like a puzzle. I need to bring in for them, my, sort of, puzzled life as a university lecturer – bring it together and be like - this is what I’m doing. I’m also going to bring in my, I really have management position from the president’s office for 3 years in Germany so its not, I’m not a 25 year old PhD student or something, nothing against 25 yo. But like, I have a whole set of skills that goes beyond this lecturing position.

M: Migration elsewhere?

Cl: Yes – I get on a daily basis, I get Canada on my screen. They are trying to get me. I don’t know why but on my Facebook it comes up every day. I would rather consider India because its my research site. I would consider, it would be India or like Singapore for me.

M: Future plans?

Cl: Honestly I’m at a stage where I’m about making money too. I want a more settled life. I had a very vibrant, colourful life. Maybe family – like, creating my own family, like, home and yeah.

M: How do you feel?

Cl: It’s funny I always felt like, it was like a straight-forward process and now I can see like, you know, sometimes you have to do these lucratic things. But now I feel like it was actually quite a mess. I think I wasn’t aware how crucial that was – [referring to Acacia]. It wasn’t just misinformation. This person was actually mis-guiding me a couple of years ago. But I think I wish I had consulted someone who had the awareness to say hey, are you actually aware that you could already apply for PR. Although, I have to say, to be fair I would’ve lost my scholarship as an international student. So I would have to wait for 3 years to not lose my scholarship. I had to remain an international student. I mean I just want to add that I never really considered myself a migrant which might sound a bit silly because I feel like I belong here. When someone asks me like, why Australia? It’s really a very intuitive thing and it really feels like, yeah, in a way, I feel like yeah I’m in the right place in the right time. This is why I am very focused and determined to stay because for me it’s like, no question. I think for me it would be a shock if it doesn’t work out.