M: Lets just begin with about you telling me when did you migrate to Australia

J: Right, I am actually still on the process of doing it but, I am actually – migrate, as in move here? – okay well, I actually moved here on 2016 February. So I got a PhD scholarship so I moved here to start my PhD and then one of the reason why I came here is because my boyfriend is actually here so that’s why I was trying to get a position here instead of back in my home town in Hong Kong. But..umm..ofcourse and another part of it is my research is more planned environment and I think in Australia I can get better opportunities than in Hong kong, because HK is a big city and they don’t really care about environment as much.

M: So environmental studies, or like the specific area of study you mean?

J: Yes – the specific study – that – in that area – in that research are in HK is not that much attention as in here in Australia.

M: Okay – so motivations I mean you’ve basically covered that that’s the sort of motivation behind your migration, your boyfriend was here. And is your boyfriend studying here as well?

J: He was studying here but like.. he was already a citizen here.

M: Okay – What are some of the factors that you considered while making that decision that yes I’m going to move.

J: aa. what are the factors … ummm

M: Like – some, any points that you were considering at the time, were you considering other options, or was a fairly straightforward decision for you

J: I think it was really straight forward. I have been thinking about it for a long time because I was with my boyfriend for 3 years and for that three years we are basically physically separated from eachother. Umm. And yea in terms of research I always think that HK is not a place for doing research and I really like doing research particularly in science, so.. that’s why I think its quite straight forward if I want to move to Australia and also ofcourse here in Australia, they have pretty good living environment as well as welfare which is one of those factors that I consider it would be a nice place to live in.

M: Are you finding it up to your expectations?

J: It does – its pretty good.

M: Awesome – Tell me about your.. ummm we discussed youre from HK but your ethnic background, sort of, have you always been in HK?

J: Yes - I have always lived in HK except that I went to Australia for 1 year for a student exchange program when I was doing my bachelor degree so that was 2000 and …it was a long time ago… it was 2011.

M: Right, so did that factor in when you were making that decision, that you had already been here before and..

J: Yea – totally. I actually ..like the second time I came here when it was 2016, I don’t feel as stressful. The whole experience is very easy to get into the society because partially because my boyfriend is already know everything and he can introduce me with everything. Umm. On the other side its just that one year of experience .. I kind of understand how the system works, like, where should I park my car, how do I drive, or like..like..tiny little things.. like where to go for my grocery… Its like very tiny little thing that give me a bit of introduction on the first time so next second time its get easy. Yeah coz you already had been here and seen things so you were actually quite prepared to navigate the space

M: Great – whats your professional background. I mean youre doing this PhD now but what sort of background did you have before this.. umm.. and your general.. sort of.. broad professional field.

J: Right, I study in Bachelor of Biology and then I got into a Master in Plant Biology in a specification on molecular biotechnology so it’s a very specific field I would say, it is a very narrow field in science.

M: And so you’ve been working in that field back in HK before, or…

J: Umm.. not working, just studying.

M: Alright, great.

M: How long did you plan your migration before you moved here?

J: aa.. as in moving permanently, or as a student?

M: On your first move.. umm..how long did you plan or consider that, and then also tell me about how long have you been considering PR?

J: aa.. okay.. how long have I been considering that? I actually have quite a long time for considering that because when Im in the process for searching for PhD study, that was the time when I was finishing my Master , so I am already kind of like mentally prepared to find a PhD somewhere in Australia – I don’t care where, umm. So its not really that difficlut and even after I got the scholarship, and then I have like a half year, before I actually move here. So, for that half year I have plenty of time to slowly gather all documents and mentally really prepare to, you know, I am leaving HK. Its plenty of buffer time that I think would be helpful rather than you know, I decide, I am going now and then the next day I’m going.

M: So what are some of the specific things that you thought about in your plan?

J: Specific things.. umm..not sure what you mean by

M: Like for example, what kind of plans did you make in the time that you had

J: I think mostly, I was just dealing with the visas .. that’s just to gather all my documents and then to graduate my Master degree, But in terms of like, actually packing, I don’t think I have actually done much on that aspect. I only deal with the packing on the very last bit of the time so I think for the most part of the time… from I know Im going to Australia to the actually moving, I spent most of the time just mentally preparing that Im going, and Im trying to finish off whatever I have left in HK.. like all the work and all the other stuff like that.. umm..but like physically actually preparing for the, you know, moving all my stuff, or packing, stuff like that – I only take like a week I think.

M: How did you learn about the migration options that were available to you? Was it your own research or did you have support from other people as well.

J: Umm. I think I just do my research on the internet because I think most of my peers.. they don’t really want to leave HK

M: Oh really,

J: Yea..

M: So whys that?

J: HK is pretty nice place – if youre not minding,.. like if you don’t mind about all the people, all the stress, I mean it’s a very fun place to stay in. I guess… and most people I know.. they have family back in HK .. they don’t really have an obligation thinking that they want to go. So that’s why.

M: What kind of research did you conduct?

J: I mostly was just searching for PhD .. supervisors, like seeing if their (how do you call it) their specialty, their expertise, like is matching with what I want. That’s basically that.

M: Did you consider like plan B’s like, any options outside of Australia for Phd or was this the only option?

J: Okay – so maybe I would have considered other kind of career choices within Australia but not a ophd somewhere else because its just easier for by boyfriend to be just staying heer because he has a engineer degree here and so kind of like, is physically, bounded to be here.

M: Coz, you, I guess were working towards eliminating that long distance relationship that you were in, and..

J: Yeah..kind of like.. if Im going somewhere else, then he has to move as well and.. so it doesn’t make sense for me.

M: Okay, and great – that’s amazing. Tell me about the role of your family in your move

J: They’re very supportive. They don’t want to move themselves but they are like oh yeah you should go, and explore, and find out, and that… but I don’t think they have much information, like you know, physically, not physically, .. I don’t know, like literally they would not know what documents you should prepare and other stuff, like, they don’t know it. But then they mentallty they are very supportive on my decision to move, which is great, so I wouldn’t have that burden of thinking oh what about my family if I am moving.. that kind of thing.. so its very good. Yeah, they kind of like, they already know my boyfriend and so they feel more comfortable knowing that I will have someome here that will support me when I first move here. It wouldn’t be as easy if I don’t know anyone here, then I just suddenly want to do a phd here. That would be more difficult I guess.

M: Right so – can you tell me a little bit about your boyfriend? Where did you meet – did you meet him Australia before when your first came or..

J: Yeah I met him in Australia when I first came here and yeah weve been together since then.

M: Okay great. So in terms of friends and other community, I mean we discussed that your boyfriend was here already but did you have any other friends or a broader community that like, that were here before you moved? And also did that affect your decision at all?

J: Umm. Well. I know a couple of people here already during the time when I first came here. But they are in Adelaide and at the time I actually got a position here in Sydney, which is like, they are quite far away from where I am. So, they are not really of much help to be honest. But yeah, I didn’t really consider that much because I have a lot of friends in HK but then I was thinking about that it is easy nowadays to keep in contact like with whatspp and all those FB groups and all those stuff. I don’t think, that even now, after moving here for 3 years, I don’t think im quite separated from them, like, although I will miss some of their gatherings but yeah, its still fine, like I can still talk to them and stuff like that so..I didn’t think that was a factor that I was considering.

M: Okay but what about now that you have moved? Do you find that yourself engaging.. like do you have lots of friends here now, or broader community..

J: Yes, so I got to meet some more friends, mostly through my phd program that I can get to know other people within the institute. That was really good because it’s a really broad community.. there are locals here, and there are also a number of international students so yeah, they are quite supportive.

M: Great – so umm.. and how long did your initial visa process take?

J: Umm.. you mean getting the Phd? I think the Phd offer was pretty fast. Like, a month, because I applied for it and then within a month I got an interview and then my supervisor basically tell me yeah I would like you to join us, like, an hour after the interview. It was like, realy quick. So yeah, it was pretty, pretty good. Umm.. but then after that it was like half a year of gap because I have to finish off my master first. Umm but then after I finish my master, it was like 2 weeks of waiting on a student visa to get here, which is not that long. Like 2 weeks is not that long. Everything is like online, like through the internet and I don’t really need to talk to anyone physically.

M: Can you tell me how you consider yourself to be a skilled migrant?

J: Umm, I think I am in science, a very specific field of science, which is important to the society in general because it is about the plants, its about the future of agriculture or forestry or environment so I feel that is very important thing. But at the same time the reason why I get the Phd here is that because they haven’t find a suitable candidate locally. Otherwise they could have find someone here locally. So I think I am just filling up a niche here that is not filled up. That is why I feel like I have the skills to come here that someone else here in Australia doesn’t have. So that’s why I think Im skilled.

M: Yeah, but, I mean and in terms of your future plans now to migrate or to get PR, is there provision for what you are doing in terms of how the skills system works here. Have you looked into that?..

J: I have actually looked into the skill list. I think its called the skilled migrants list or something like that. I think agricultural scientist is definitely up there because they need that I think.

M: Okay, now we will get into the mapping part: Lets just start with visa categories, so from the point of initial arrival to your current status, are you on the same visa?

J: I am on different visa now. Okay – let me see how I ... okay I can say ‘Julia moving to Australia’, and then I would divide it by stage. So stage 1, so, this was in Adelaide. So this is just a temporary one year thing but then during the time what information I have gathered for going to exchange is, first of all, I go to university- my home university

M: So did they have, like a program running at the home university for exchange?

J: Yes, and then I just basically think Australia is a god destination so I think the home university.. they provide a list of different universities in different countries. So I kind of think that Australia is a good place to go. And I think the second factor, like, I mean that is pre-departural of this trip but then..umm.. actually I didn’t consider much.. I didn’t even think that was a permanent thing back then. But then I met my boyfriend, so.. this how it basically give me an idea of moving to long term. So then, I think stage 2 would be when I actually moved here as a PhD student in WSU. So that one was only 1 year and this one is for 3, no 4 years. The consideration is pretty clear. The consideration will be that my bf is here and then also it’s a very good place for career for a scientist and also I considered that it is a very good diversity place – cultural diversity, I think that they have a better acceptance, I think in terms of you know, migrants. In HK its not as many migrants as here.. umm.. also because my bf is not HK people and its easier if I am here with my boyfriend. Like if my bf come to HK then its more of a cultural shock for him. So I think, these are the major considerations I was having. I actually just look for the positions that were available. I just look for whatever is available and I didn’t really contact anyone here beforehand.

M: Where did you learn about the possibility of.. did you know from your uni days that you could do this.. how did you know that you could..

J: Just look for this kind of .. oh, okay.. umm.. I don’t know.. with research community, I think generally we know that, you know, its everywhere in the world.. umm.. I didn’t really specifically ask anyone. I just look up those university website. I didn’t know what do you call them.. like recruitment for just PhD scholarship. Like online website for PhD positions worldwide. That’s what I was looking for. And I actually did look for job available, for example, on other job search engine, like seek.com or stuff like that. But then ofcourse, at the end I got a position in Phd so this is the final thing that I got. When I get the position it was 2015, but when I actually move here on 2016.

M: So all of this time you were in a long distance relationship with your partner?

J: Yes, so.. I stayed there in Adelaide for one year until 2012 and then I move back to HK and during the time I just visit Australia like once or twice a year, yeah.

M: Tell me about any commercial services you used?

J: I think I was a poor student. I didn’t look up all of the options.. and I trust myself as a PhD student or a potential PhD student. I kind of think everything is already online. I can just follow whatever the direction over there. And the good think about moving from HK from over there because HK was a British colony so all the documents is already in English or in Chinese, so I don’t really need a translation. I think... umm... yes, about that, I actually got an education agent in HK, but then the whole reason of it is just because so many of the documents they need here, they need certified but then.. they basically.. what the service they provided me is the certification because in HK we don’t really have a service thing, that I need anything certified. So when I go to .. like.. here in Australia you can find a (what is that) JP or chemist? But then in HK when I go for a chemist or a bank and ask them for that they were like… I don’t know what you are talking about.

M: Did they charge for certification?

J: No they haven’t. But I think what they do, like, later I found out is that the university will pay them back for providing that service actually. For accommodation, my boyfriend is already here so I just, he helped with a way to do it. Lets say he hasn’t actually physically helped me because he was still living in Adelaide then but then he would told me all the source on where I can find help or how I can find accommodation – stuff like that. But actually how I got accommodation is actually through flatmates.com.

M: So when you moved here, your bf was still in Adelaide? How was that? It was still long distance.

J: But shorter [laughs]. At least its in the same country. For him its easier because of his profession. Its easy to move inter-city, like, in between the different cities within Australia. But if Im asking him to move to another country, its more difficult for him to find a, I don’t know, they have different kind of certifications for different regulations for different engineers and stuff like that. So its more difficult for him if I am asking him like, hey move to HK. So, moving inter-city for him is more just, you know, he has to resign from his job and then look for a new job here.

M: in term of your migration status now, are you considering PR?

J: I am on a process of getting PR. I am, well, orginally I was thinking I wanted to get the skilled migrant, but with that one, I have to kind of wait for graduation – for PhD first. So I wanted to skip ahead so that’s why we actually applied for the partner visa instead. So, the 820 – which is the temporary partner visa – I am currently on that. Stage 3: I think I applied for it last year – that’s partner visa. The consideration I have is more about the career, because as a student, as a PhD student, you know we have that awkward period of time where we submit our thesis and then we have to wait certain months without any support until they declare – oh yeah, you can graduate now. So, I don’t want to have no job during that period of time. But then with the student visa we have this restriction that we can only work for 20 hours per week, which is really little. So I want to skip ahead and if I can get a partner visa, at least as a bridging visa, I can still work, like FT, instead of just having that temporary thing. So its more, just career – I want to jump ahead on the process so I can start working.

M: Wait time?

J: I think it was from Feb to Dec. So now Im currently on the temporary partner visa. And then there is a second stage, so I have to wait now until my second stage. But I think the application is way more complex on this stage rather than that stage because I have to get so many different kinds of document to support but with that one I can go back and say, you know, the waiting time is one week or 2 weeks, sorry. If I’m saying like actually applying for the visa until I get it.

M: Commercial services in this process?

J: I didn’t. But then I think information source – I think I get most of the information, I think its quite clear in the government website. Home affairs. Its quite clear what they want us to do. And then I also hav to get some from some online forum. You know there are some online forums that talk about how to get migration and how to prepare documents and I think this is one of my most major source on how to prepare.

M: Technology

J: I think they are very important for me. For the stage one, especially during the time I didn’t know my bf, so it was so much more difficult to find all the information and I don’t think many people around me, during the time have go through that kind of process. So during that time it actually played a very important role for me to find all the information and .. but then.. back then its not as easily accessible, I don’t know, only 10 years, not 10, 8 years ago but it was much more difficult to get access to those information back then but then when I get to become student, like, all the other stages – I think they are really a lot of information available online. Basically just search for migration to Ausralia or something like that and they just come up. Yeah, its very important for me. Basically its my major source. I dont have any one in my family, in my friends that are going through that.

M: So any points of interest in the map?

J: I remember there was one that was called Australianforum or something like that.. Australiaforum?... This one, and then during this time when I was looking for accommodation… so like flatmates.com which give me idea of where I can get accommodation. Skype with boyfriend or whatsapp. During the time, after my exchange and before I got PhD, so one factor, because my bf is here so I want to find a job here. But the other factor why I really want to leave HK is because this event happened – it’s a political movement called umbrella movement. So, what happened is that most of the HK youngsters trying to get a real democracy system to choose their – we call chief executive, but basically, the mayor of HK. We didn’t get a very fair system for doing that. Umm but that is one of the thing that get me really disappointed with HK. So, I guess that can go into it as a political reason. This is getting me very frustrated with the political climate in HK. Like the govt can do anything because at the end the movement, I mean, during this time of the movement they are a lot of youngsters that go for protests and they just sit on the road for ages, I think that go on for months. But then at the end the govt actually didn’t do anything. They just clear the site. It actually poliriased the entire society in HK. So the people, they probably think that it would be better for HK if we stay with China rule but then with the youngsters,l they started getting this idea of getting independence from China, stuff like that. So that is one of the idea that I feel that I am really disappointed with what is happening in HK. So, for – its kind of going into the idea that I already have that I want to move but then it actually strengthened it. It made me feel like I really need to move. I think to me, it’s not like a sudden change for me during this period of time. I think its more just gradually when I move here, and I’ve been living here for 3 years, and during the time when I’m going back to HK, I don’t feel as much of a connection over there as being here because I have my new friend circle and new society, so I don’t know, I feel more connected here nowadays than back in HK. It’s like a slowly growing, sort of, idea of moving.

M: Any regulatory aspects, any significant govt requirements that you had to fulfil?

J: One of the major challenge here is to get the police check in HK. That was a bit more difficult because I think for most countries they do it online. Ive heard that other countries you know, they just click click click, like online, and then pay for it, and that’s it. But in HK you have to get a Fingerprint first. I think I can write police check in HK. And then so, the difficult part is that it want me to get the finger printing and then also they only accept paper application. So they don’t have an online system. So, yeah its very confusing because HK is a big city and everything but then, it can be vert backward at times – paper application. The challenge is that the finger printing is not that easy because you don’t do it at home. They want me to go a police station locally and do that. But then normally in Australia they don’t ever do that kind of service for normal people. So, I called up the police station and they only … umm.. one thing. They don’t normally do it, They only allow you to do it locally in the police station that is closest to your suburb. So Im living in Quakers hill so they only want me to go to that one police station. You cant even get to parramatta or any other station. You only have to go to the really local local suburb. So the PS doesn’t normally do it. And then when I call them up, like I called them several times but then they were saying oh, if they have someone that’s retained in their, like, I don’t know, they have someone that’s retained in their room then they cant access the system to do that. So, I don’t know, maybe there are a lot of criminals around. Everytime when I called them up they were like, Oh we have someone in the room – sorry. So that too me, you know, really long time to do that. Like a month – to just to get a fingerprint. And then after that, because they only accept paper applications, they also charge me money. So, to do the payment is also quite difficult because they want cheque, you know paper cheque, which is very ancient. You know we don’t use that. So I think with all these things, The major thing I can say is Technology – they are not up to date on technology. That’s why its making it very difficult. Its very rare, but there are some people migrating from HK, they are experiencing exactly the same thing (forum). The other thing would be difficult because it’s a partner visa – you have to gather all the evidence that you’ve been together. This very, I mean its everywhere, like, you know flight tickets that we are travelling together, we are living together, we have a shared accoungt, but then all those tiny tiny little things and you have to gather them all in one folder or one file. Its quite time consuming I would say. Its not difficult but its just like I just feel like the whole process is a lot of time waste on it. I understand why but its quite frustrating that you are wasting so much time on that.

M: Current immi policies – do you have thoughts?

J: Umm. I actually think its very frustrating that they have many things that they want to check up but at the same time I understand why they do it. So tbh Im quite happy with them being so tedious that they make people actually go through everything because they want to make sure that people actually migrating are the people that they want. I think in general that is good for the society. I complain about it but at the same time I think it is – yeah they should do that.

M: Community services?

J: I actually have a friend that recently go through the partner visa application. So I get most of the information and support from them. But generally, I don’t talk about me migrating to other people. I just think it’s a, its not a topic that I usually come up with. It’s a bit awkward if I start talking… ha…im moving here, it’s a bit awkward for me.

M: Deciding between skill/partner visa option.

J: I think it’s faster than the skilled migrant scheme, but I think at the end it doesn’t end up really saving a lot of time. Partner – he think we should do it soon as possible because with the skilled migration scheme I have to wait for the actual graduation. So that’s why we think that this probably is faster. So he think it would be great if we do it asap because with the skilled migration scheme, although I know agricultural scientist is up therte, who knows, they might change it next year. So its easier and more straight forward if I just go through the partner visa.

M: Next steps?

J: Ha! I haven’t really think about it because I have two (no idea). Mostly its because its not happening yet. So I applied last year on feb and so I cant do anything on the system until feb next year. Until Feb 2020. They will ask for more documentation on how your relationship is going on. I think nowadays, most of the stuff is already online, They send us email buying flight tixm, buying something else – they always send you a receipt. So its easy to go back. I just domnt want to think about it at the moment. Oh another I want to put out there. I don’t think I can, I don’t know where to put on the map but I think, its – ofcourse it’s a logical reason that I want to do the partner visa first because it is faster than the skilled migrant. But then at the same time I feel I am going through this process which is general for everyone including non-skilled migrants. So I feel like, yeah I could have done it in a faster way but then at the same time, I feel its not appreciating what I have to offer. I feel I can actually contribute so much more to the society but then going through the process I feel im just a general person. They don’t care about me PhD they don’t care about my publications. But then if IU go through the skilled migration scheme, then they would definitely look into that things. Its not really, I mean, at the end Im going through the same result but then…

M: Are you planning to sponsor any family?

J: That would be really really long term because im not even a PR yet. For my parents, I definitely have thought about it but they are not really keen on doing that because they have their connections and family and everything in HK and they don’t really speak English as well as I do. But I don’t think its very difficult to bring them to Australia because its, partially, because my mum has a very good career in a flight company. So shs working in the airlines so she gets discounted tickets which is – she onlyu need to pay 10% of original price to come here or go back so I think to me in my mind, its not that difficult for them to visit even if they want and they can have their own life in HK which they enjoy so its fine. I think my mom and dad have little biut of worry for my brother who is going to graduate from uni in Hk. They really want to actually go out and see the world rather than limiting his vision in Hk. But I mean iuts upto my brother, I mean it would be great if he can move here and then I can acyually help him with all this processes. If he ever consider coming here that would be great and I really miss the family connection here – that would be great.

M: Are your providing migration advice to anybody? Have people come to you?

J: They haven’t come to me. I just provide unsolicited advice. Well, I have my friends because Im a phd studene, I have like my cohort of students that’s arriving the same time and are finishing at the same time and many of them are considering to stay. So, I just – because I look at all these other options when I decided im going through partner visa so I kin d of give them advice – there are all these options that you can consider if you want to stay. I did give them some ideas because I really want them to stay because I have some friends around me.

M: Considered elsewhere?

J: I have thought about it. I actually went to Europe for a month last Feb. So, during this time I was visiting some of the collaborator on my research and then they did mention that they have a position available and that I can consider if I want to come and they are quite happy iof I am on board with it. But then I like my life in Australia and I am not the kind who is moving a lot so I think its quite tiring to change the lifestyle once your settled. And then also all those countries that I mean, I went to Europe, so they don’t really speak English as easily as in Australia. So, I think culturally its too much of difference, so I don’t want to move. I have considered the situation of my own career. I also want to say in Australia the postdoc is paying quite well compared to – so the salary is not as good as Australia. Also culture wise, I have thought of language barrier is one of the major considerations over there. Also, a major part of it is if its accessible to Asian food. In parra for eg there are a lot of choices.

M: Future plans?

J: Umm.. maybe I’m just thinking about career at the moment bevause I don’t have a kid at the moment. Maybe in the long term buying a house. (don’t want to put in the map)

M: Most significant things on the map

J: Choice for migrating here – this will be major one. Getting a phd here is also very major thing, and then which I actually really enjoy because I have a very good support here as a phd student here and I have a very good supervisor that actually give me a very good idea of what I want for my career.

M: How is the mapping activity make you feel?

J: I actually never thought that I have think about all this stuff when I was moving here but then mapping it made me realise there is a lot of stuff I have considered or go through in moving here, its interesting. Its like looking at my life map for last several years.