
Migration and mobility after the pandemic

Interview with Alan Gamlen

Inês Vidigal

Iscte, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa
Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia (CIES-Iscte), Lisboa, Portugal

OEm Conversations With 22

april 2021

Alan Gamlen is an expert on human migration. He is Associate Professor of Geography at Monash University in Melbourne, and a Research Associate at Oxford University's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society. He has held previous appointments at Stanford University, Germany's Max Planck Society, and the Japan Centre for Area Studies. He is a former Director of the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre. Alan is the author of *Human Geopolitics: States, Emigrants and the Rise of Diaspora Institutions* (Oxford University Press, 2019), winner of the Distinguished Book Award for Best Book on Ethnicity and Migration, from the International Studies Association. He holds a Doctorate in Geography from the University of Oxford, where he studied as a New Zealand Top Achiever Scholar.

Keywords Migration, mobility, pandemic, diaspora, policies.

Título Migrações e mobilidade após a pandemia

Alan Gamlen é um especialista em migrações. É Professor Associado de Geografia na Universidade de Monash, em Melbourne, e Investigador Associado no Centro de Migração, Política e Sociedade da Universidade de Oxford. Já ocupou cargos anteriores na Universidade de Stanford, no instituto Max Planck, na Alemanha, e no Centro Japonês de Estudos Regionais. Foi diretor do Centro de Investigação sobre População e Migração da Austrália. Alan Gamlen é autor de *Human Geopolitics: States, Emigrants and the Rise of Diaspora Institutions* (Oxford University Press, 2019), livro vencedor do Distinguished Book Award for Best Book on Ethnicity and Migration, da International Studies Association. É doutorado em Geografia pela Universidade de Oxford, onde estudou como bolseiro Top Achiever da Nova Zelândia.

Palavras-chave Migrações, mobilidade, pandemia, diáspora, políticas.

Public disclosure authorized

The OEm encourages dissemination of its work. You can copy, download or print this content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from this publication in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgement of OEm as source is given.

Observatório da Emigração

Av. das Forças Armadas, ISCTE-IUL, 1649-026 Lisboa, Portugal

Tel. (CIES-IUL): + 351 210464018

E-mail: observatorioemigracao@iscte.pt

www.observatoriodaemigracao.pt

Observatório da Emigração (ahead OEm) – We would like to know a little bit more about how you gained interest in the subject of migrations: did it start while you were studying? Did it come later during your research work? Could you tell us a little more about it?

Alan Gamlen (ahead AG) – Sure. Well first of all Inês, thank you very much for the invitation. I'm really looking forward to meeting everybody at the conference later on, and thanks for getting in touch about this interview and the really interesting questions. How did I get into migration? I knew I wanted to do a PhD after I finished my undergraduate degree, but I was still looking for a research topic. I recognized that migration was one of the great issues of our age and had lots of different dimensions that I could sink my teeth into. It wasn't just the economic dimension, or the political, or the sociological, or anthropological dimension, it had all of these dimensions and many more, so I felt like this was really a topic that could sustain a multi-year research agenda. I think I was also very drawn to that topic because of my own background as a multiple migrant. I was born to New Zealander parents who had an English, Scottish and Māori background – Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand – but I was born in Canada because my parents were over there when my dad was a mathematics professor in North America. So I was born a migrant, and then I grew up back home in New Zealand, but of course I always had the Canadian thing as well, and then at the time that I was formulating my PhD topic, I was living in Japan. There's nothing like living in a really different culture from your own to activate your own ethnicity and make you think about issues of migration. So, it was then that I started deeply thinking about these things. When I was a graduate student in Japan on a scholarship. I was also working as an editor for the Japanese National Museum of Ethnology, and one of the series that I was editing was called "Population Movement in the Modern World", where I was exposed to a lot of migration thinkers and theorists. And my own graduate research project was increasingly gravitating towards themes of migration and transnationalism – although I was an ethnomusicologist at that time, so I was thinking about issues of migration, transnationalism and ethnic identity as they were expressed in music. Those things all came together really, and that's what launched me on the migration path.

OEm – It's a very interesting path you've taken. Your lecture with the Emigration Observatory focuses on post-pandemic migration and mobility. How do you think the world will work?

AG – It's a hard one, predicting how the world will work in the future. Well, I'll just grab out my crystal ball. Because of a working paper that I wrote last year, when the pandemic got serious, I've been getting this question quite a lot recently. The first thing I always say is that it is very difficult to make predictions about what human beings are going to do, and particularly about what societies are going to do, because human beings change their minds, and so the future depends on decisions that we haven't made yet. As soon as I form a theory about what you're

going to do, you can change your mind and do something different in order to beat my theory. That's the health warning with predictions. But I would say that the clues to where I see things going, a lot of them, are in that paper. And my basic hunch is that we're going to see a sustained period of slower, reduced migration, where countries focus a bit more on digesting previous waves of migration and focus on creating some sort of cohesive national society for a while. That is part of a broader handbrake that's being put on globalization that comes not just out of the pandemic, but out of the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2009, and to some extent, the so-called refugee crisis of 2015. We have seen a real reassessment, particularly amongst populist authoritarian politicians, about globalization and who really wins from it. Those political forces have become more prominent and they are going to exercise some constraints in the coming years on how migratory the world is. That doesn't mean the slowdown is forever: we've seen waxing and waning of migration many times in the past, in migration booms and migration busts. But this is more than just a blip, this is a structural change and it's going to take a long time to recover from and bounce back to what it was – if it ever does. There is going to be a new normal. A case in point is the Australian Government. The Australian Treasury has baseline population projections for all its budgeting and planning, and is saying that annual net overseas migration is not going to rebound to the level of the 2019 planning target for the next 10 years at least, if it ever does. It might not ever get back to the 2019 level, in their view. So I think this is not just a blip.

OEm – The issues raised by the pandemic are not only at the level of mobility, but also at the level of employment and unemployment created by it, and the consequent perception that countries will have of their needs for foreign labour and the rights they are willing to give to that labour force. Do you think that the perception of countries regarding their needs for foreign workers will change in the post-pandemic period? Will migration restrictions increase?

AG – The short answer is probably yes for a while. I think there are a number of things driving that, and we have already started to see it. One is automation: the pandemic has forced an acceleration of automation that was already happening in many areas of employment. For example, in healthcare all sorts of unskilled jobs are now being automated. Many of those unskilled jobs were being done by migrants before, and so those migrants won't necessarily be needed to do those automated jobs in the future. And the automation trend is broader than unskilled work: there's increasing automation through AI, for example, in areas like accountancy and paralegal work. Automation has been greatly accelerated by this pandemic and that will lead to a reduction of demand for migrant labour. Another major factor is unemployment because of the overall shrinking of the economy. We haven't seen anything like this since the Great Depression. We are talking about many trillions of dollars. What looked like immense

stimulus amount in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis of 2001-09 is now dwarfed by the stimulus from governments to address the economic impact of the pandemic. When the US Government talked about injecting \$830 billion into the economy in 2009 to try and reassure the markets that there was liquidity, it seemed like an immense sum of money in response to what was seen as a cataclysmic event. But looking back in light of what is happening now, \$830 billion is very small amount in comparison to the trillions of dollars we're seeing now spent in response to the pandemic – it's equivalent to only around 6% of the almost \$12.9 trillion the US Government has committed to addressing the pandemic, \$7 trillion of which has already spent – and this is only the US Government. So the pandemic has caused a massive financial cataclysm many orders of magnitude greater than the Global Financial Crisis which was already a catastrophe of historic proportions. The resulting contraction of the economy, the loss of whole sectors in the economy and firms going under, is going to lead to a reduction in demand for labour - in other words, unemployment. When there's high unemployment, there's less political justification for allowing higher migration rates. And so that's the third element that we're seeing: a populist turn against immigration, people bringing out old tropes about migrants stealing jobs, which is obviously problematic and not true, or lazing around on benefits - also an untrue stereotype. But we're seeing those fears come out in force again. So I think the short answer, as I said, is yes.

OEm – So as a geographer, how do you see the impact that the pandemic can have on the cities? Will immobility reshape cities?

AG – It is already reshaping cities. For example in major cities we're seeing some non-temporary reductions in usage of public transport: as people work from home they need to commute into the city center less often. Even in countries that bounce back and open up after a lockdown, the commuting patterns are often 20% less than they were prior to lockdown. If the lockdown halts say 90% of commuting, and then it bounces back up to 80% of what it was before, it looks like a massive recovery – but that's still 20% less than it was at the start, which is really a huge drop. And that has a flow-on effect for things like commercial real estate in the cities, particularly in the center of the city. It seems a great time to buy an apartment in the center of a major city and probably will be for five years or so before the system starts to recover. Meanwhile, property prices are running hot in the peri-urban areas around major cities, because when people are working from home they want more lifestyle amenities. They look at their lockdown life and say: "Why am I doing this? Why am I living in a tiny apartment in the middle of a city? I want a bigger block of land. I want to work from home, I want my kids to be around me. I want to watch them playing in the in the yard while I'm working from home." This is already is reshaping cities quite rapidly and I think some of these trends are going to be lasting. It might not be as radical as some people initially thought. There were predictions of a

40% drop in the housing market in the middle of last year; it looks like that might not happen because governments have stepped into the breach with low interest rates and other incentives to keep the property market bouyant. But there is a big shift going on in cities, and not everything about urban life will snap back to what it was in December 2019 just because we achieve herd immunity. The genie can't be put in the bottle.

OEm – You have been talking a little bit about this next question but maybe we can go a little bit deeper. With the increase speeches from the extreme right all over Europe and the large migratory flow (including refugees and asylum seekers) that has hit the European continent due to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, several North African countries, etc. and all the negative reaction that these arrivals have had, do you think we might be seeing a rise in anti-immigration sentiment? Not to mention the Brexit campaign and Donald Trump's campaign which were supported on the issues of restricting immigration in those countries.

AG – Initially I would have said yes. At the time of writing that working paper I was joining a chorus of people who were concerned about that. And it does remain a concern in many places – for example in the USA there are rising concerns about anti-Asian discrimination, which was stoked by Trump's talk of the 'China virus' and expressed in recent mass shootings. But elsewhere we've actually seen remarkable resilience in a lot of places in terms of positive attitudes towards migration – which is surprising, interesting and heartening. For example here in Australia where I'm living, there's a big annual survey of social cohesion, a really excellent survey conducted by the Scanlon Foundation – a charitable trust – which recently found that there was not a lot of change in people's attitudes towards migration since the pandemic, and that a good deal of any change that did occur was in a positive direction towards migration. So there's that. And then on the other hand we're definitely seeing some very concerning anti-immigrant and anti-diversity trends in authoritarian countries, the number of which is growing, as I said before. One hypothesis would be that we will see a growing divergence between the liberal democracies on one side, who generally are pro-migration, and may hold on to those attitudes despite the pandemic. Many of those will make it through the pandemic quicker, by the way, because they tend to be the developed countries, which can spend more money fixing the problems. So that's one side. And then on the other side, the authoritarian places, which are often both more anti-immigrant and less developed, will take longer to recover from the pandemic and so negative affects of the pandemic on attitudes to immigrants might persist longer. But that's just a hypothesis: we will need to wait and see. Martin Wolf says the big difference in the response to the pandemic will probably be between effective and ineffective governments, regardless of whether they are authoritarian or democratic. Building on that, it seems likely that governments which manage the pandemic fallout better will have less reason

for ethnic divisions which can arise when folks are down on their luck and looking for scape-goats. Like I said, my general hunch is that we are going to see a sustained period of general slowing in international migration and a greater focus among national migration policy makers on digesting previous waves of migration, rather than ingesting more migrants for a while. But again, we'll have to wait and see. Whether or not that's a good thing, it's a completely different question. There are enormous risks with closing up, with creating a gated globe in place of globalization. But nonetheless that's my hunch about what we might be seeing.

OEm – We are already in 2021, more than a year living with covid-19. What do you think are the most important questions for which we still have no answers on the future of migrations?

AG – There are a few of them. I guess the biggest one is: Will people start moving again once we have herd immunity? And there's a lot of sub-questions regarding that. One is: Will the pressures of forced migration increase after the pandemic dies down? And the answer is: Probably yes, at least sporadically, because the economic impacts of the pandemic are going to become a development crisis. It started as a public health crisis and it's going to become a development crisis because the developed world is maybe just six to nine months away from herd immunity – probably by the end of this year the developed world will be finished – but in the developing world it's another scenario altogether, since most developing countries haven't even really started to get their doses of vaccines. That's going to have a massive impact on their economic development, and the division between rich and poor is going to remain high and probably grow as a result. So there will probably be increasing numbers of people fleeing underdevelopment in the next few years – or fleeing from conflicts resulting from that underdevelopment, or from humanitarian situations that have been made worse by the poverty being inflicted by the pandemic, or from discrimination resulting from that poverty, and so on. The developed world is going to get through quicker than the developing world, and so the divide will grow. Will the pressures of forced migration increase as a result? Probably for a time, perhaps sporadically. There will be some volatility for a while. Another sub-question of “Will people start moving again?” is: Will skilled workers want to move again? As they've got more choices about it than force migrants, I think the answer is probably yes eventually, but there might be a substantial short to mid-term reduction as a result of both remote working patterns and risk aversity among would-be high-skilled migrants. I think there's going to be a considerable amount of reduced desire among potential skilled migrants to move at such a turbulent moment of history, and they're also probably going to be restricted by cuts in – for example – corporate travel budgets for, at the voluntary high-skilled mobility end of the migration spectrum. If you're a firm you're saying, “okay do I really send some expatriate workers to country X and pay them a huge amount over there, travel fees and everything because I absolutely

need to have somebody in country?" In the financial wake of the pandemic that is probably going to be an easy cost to cut. Another question is: Will firms need labor migrants again? I think here the answer is also yes, but again, probably with substantial reductions in demand as a result of high native unemployment and accelerated automation. And then final sub-question from "Will people start moving, once again, when we have herd immunity?" is: Will the authorities actually allow migration again? Clearly yes but probably again with a substantial reduction, due to the general spread of authoritarianism and populism, which are quite anti-globalist and anti-immigration in orientation. There are just a lot more governments out there now who are willing to be anti-migration and anti-diversity, and that's probably going to operate as a handbrake on the openness of migration policies for a few years.

OEm – Moving on from covid-19, I read that you are developing a project, with Dr Chris Kutarna from Oxford University, on "Post-truth migration politics" with the aim of mapping out recent moral panics about migration and diversity, and showing how they relate to long-term changes in the geography of politics in liberal democracies, and in geopolitical rivalries between democratic and authoritarian regions of the world.

What can you tell us about this project? Can you share some conclusions already?

AG – You've clearly done your research; I wish I'd done mine. To be perfectly honest, the project's been a bit on the back burner since Chris has been stuck in London and I'm stuck down here in Melbourne, but we'll come back to it. These are big issues; they're not going away. The kind of things we're interested in are the changing politics of migration and particularly how the traditional leftwing to rightwing political spectrum has been transformed so that these labels, left and right, really don't make much sense anymore. The big division is within political parties now, and we're interested in how that relates to that changing political landscape concerning migration. How does that relate to changing rules about public discourse? For example, playing the race card used to be really off limits in liberal democracies until not that long ago. But it's very much back on the table now, at least since Brexit and Trump. It has gone mainstream: it's no longer taboo to play the race card, to articulate racist, anti-immigrant sentiment in mainstream politics. Why has that happened? What's that got to do with, for example, the emergence of a totally new concept of public sphere with online media, social media and the no-holds-barred kind of no-facts-required nature of that discourse? Those are kinds of questions we're interested in.

OEm – You have devoted some of your research work to Diaspora-related issues, but the concept of the Diaspora continues to evolve, and so does the way of counting the number of people who constitute a Diaspora. So, I think the first question is, what is Diaspora for you? How would you define it?

AG – Good question. I tend to think of diaspora as a dispersed imagined community with links to a professed place of origin, and that's pretty close to a definition that Steven Vertovec – who has been a mentor, colleague and friend for many years – once put forward, and actually criticized as too general. Of course, I think the most important thing is that in any particular study I'm doing, I'll give a more specific definition and that will be linked to the data that I'm using and the questions I'm asking. But I don't see much point in taking a theoretical stance that lists specific characteristics, like tick boxes, that let you decide whether you are a diaspora or you are not a diaspora. When I say that, I've been very influenced by Robin Cohen – who has also been a mentor and friend for many years – but I tend to see the approach that he took in his very famous and influential book “Global Diasporas: an introduction” as partially flawed for that reason. Why? Because my definition of the diaspora is one thing, but another thing is the definitions of ‘diaspora’ that are being used by all the people who are running around calling themselves diasporas. And I don't see a lot of point in trying to put myself in the position of judging whether or not they're right or wrong in using that label. I'm much more interested in trying to interpret and explain what they mean when they say they're part of a diaspora, and why they are doing that. I think that is much closer to Rogers Brubaker's approach when he says that diaspora is a ‘stance’ or ‘claim’ about identity and membership. Using the label diaspora is a way of mobilizing a particular group identity, sort of galvanizing a team if you like, by putting a ring around a group of people and giving them a label. And we should always be asking what someone gets out of it when they're the person trying to draw that ring and trying to use that label. For example, governments are increasingly defining diasporas in their own images, and the interesting thing about that is not so much ‘are these really diasporas’, but why are governments doing this all of a sudden? What do they want out of out of the diaspora? So that's my approach to it. Theoretically I take a broad post-positive perspective and then in specific empirical studies, it's a question of research strategy rather than theory *per se*.

OEm – And perhaps an even more complicated question is, how to measure it? What are the best methods for quantifying the diaspora?

AG – That relates to the previous question. There are lots of ways. So, if you take that broad definition of diaspora as a dispersed imagined community with links to a professed place of origin, you're interested in measuring a few different things. One is you're interested in measuring the extent to which people imagine themselves as part of a community, so we can meas-

ure things like their self-selected ethnic identification, which is often captured by censuses, particularly in immigrant receiving countries. Or if we don't have that data, as a proxy we can sometimes use their birthplace. Another thing we want to measure if we're interested in our diaspora definition is the actual links that people have to this professed place of origin, and then we can start to measure things like whether or not they have sent money to a place, whether or not they invested there, if they have bank accounts there, whether they speak the language or follow the religion of a particular place, if they have lots of friends and family there, and so on. A lot of those things used to be only accessible, when I started researching this topic, if you did your own questionnaire survey, and went out and asked people what their connections were. But now the world has really changed in terms of the amount of data available with social media and mobile data. There's this mass of data out there that can really accurately measure that type of stuff. We all hear too much about how many friends we've got, where they are, how much they like us and so on, on our social media accounts. And of course at the same time, a lot of these types of indicators are used in increasingly sophisticated ways by governments to measure things like tax residency. They're trying to measure national obligations in an increasingly sophisticated way using linked administrative data, where individual census records are linked with everything from tax returns to passport swipes and so forth, in an attempt to get data on everybody and everything. Your Big Brother is still watching you wherever you are in the world. The upside of that dystopian situation is that there is all this data now that we can use to measure transnational connections, which we didn't have before, and that makes studying diaspora particularly interesting today.

OEm – In the article "States of belonging: How conceptions of national membership guide state diaspora engagement" you use three different dimensions of national membership—economic, ethnic and civic—to analyse how these three concepts shape the emergence of formal institutions of government diaspora in migrants' home states. What conclusions have you reached? Do different conceptual approaches have any influence on how governments see and interact with their diasporas?

AG – Yes, they do. What we found was that whether or not governments formed an office for the diaspora, depended on and was shaped by how they defined the diaspora. What we expected from the theory was that if a country defined its diaspora in economic terms, if they thought that the diaspora is going to be useful for its remittances, its investments, its skills and so on, they would be more likely to form a government diaspora office. That was the theory that we were testing. But we found that the data didn't match the expectation, which was interesting. We found that countries who thought of their diaspora as members of the nation state, regardless of whether those migrants were rich or poor, were also more likely, in some

situations, to establish a formal government diaspora office. It's not just an economic thing, it's more complex than that.

OEm – In the chapter "The rise of diaspora institutions" of the book "Diasporas Reimagined: Spaces, Practices and Belonging", you suggest that the convergence of so many countries on similar diaspora policy models demonstrates how the actions of states are shaped by global norms. Could you develop on this idea a little further?

AG – Sure. That's an idea that I developed in detail in a book that I published in 2019 called "Human Geopolitics", and it's the central argument of the book. What the book argues is that governments around the world are forming offices dedicated to the diaspora because they're being coached to do so by international organizations and consultants. Why are the international organizations and the consultants doing that coaching? Because they want to strengthen the policy connections between migration policy and development policy. Why do they want to do that? It's because they think that's the basis for establishing a more coherent and capable global regime for migration, one more like the global regime we have for trade and finance in the form of the IMF and the WTO. In fact we have seen that gradually happen. We've seen that the UN, initiated UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has created a number of state-led organizations like the Global Forum on Migration and Development which have very proactively and successfully emphasized that migration is a development issue and should be part of the Sustainable Development Goals, and there should be a Global Compact on Migration and a lead UN migration agency, all based on the idea that cooperating over migration can be a win-win-win for countries of origin, countries of destination, migrants themselves. By making that case, particular people in the international community have said, "Okay, there's a case for cooperation over migration. This can be a win-win-win, so we need to cooperate to realize the wins, and we – the international organizations and consultants – want the job of coordinating the cooperation efforts". That's what they want out of it. One of the main ways that they have made the argument that migration is a win-win-win is by saying, "Look, even if you've lost your diaspora, you can still win from your diaspora because of diaspora engagement. What we need to do is create a diaspora institution, a government office for the diaspora". And then you'll get remittances, investments, skills and technology transfers and all sorts of benefits from your diaspora to compensate for 'brain drain'. And hey presto, you've turned migration into development. So the argument of the book is that the IOs and consultants have coached governments to 'engage the diaspora' because it helps them build the case for a global migration regime in which they see a leading role for themselves. A lot of this is good work but it is not without risks of what I call 'human geopolitics', where governments compete for population rather than territory, which is often a precursor to territorial geopolitics and conflict.

OEm – And in the article "The emigration state and the modern geopolitical imagination" you map and distinguish the various mechanisms that states have for interacting with their diaspora by dividing them into two categories, the "diaspora building" and the "diaspora integration". Could you tell us a little more about this distinction between mechanisms and the different ways in which States use them?

AG – Sure. It's was a long time ago now. It's been well over a decade since I wrote the paper and when I look back to it, a lot of my thinking is changed, developed, moved on, and hopefully improved. But what I was trying to do was to map out what mechanisms that exist within governments and are dedicated to the diaspora, to emigrants and their descendants living beyond the shores of the nation-state. I wanted to map out that whole part of the state, and I was really trying to create a typology of those sorts of mechanisms. That's what I was reaching towards – and bear in mind, this was published in the first or second year of my PhD, I think, so hopefully I've moved on. But on the side of diaspora building, I was thinking that all these mechanisms within states that try to deliberately galvanize a sense of community amongst people who are living abroad – whether they're about identity building with marketing or other initiatives that are symbolic or administrative – they are about setting up an infrastructure for a community, and that infrastructure mobilizes and makes the community real. That's what I had in mind with diaspora building mechanisms. Then there's diaspora integration mechanisms. What I had in mind are all the things that governments do to formally make these people citizens, not just give them a sense of identity, but to extend some sort of formal membership rights and obligations towards them. At the time I was thinking very much in terms of the work of people like Robert C. Smith, who worked on diasporic public spheres, and people like David Fitzgerald – who at the time was I think a PhD student and had written an excellent master's on this topic and who is now a full professor at UC San Diego - on extraterritorial citizenship and on how membership comes in different 'thicknesses'. Rather than thinking of citizenship as an on-off status that you either have or you don't have, it's more like this constellation of identities, rights and obligations that you have. This bundle is sometimes little and sometimes big. Put another way this membership status comes in different thicknesses, and my idea of diaspora building and diaspora integration was that these different sorts of government mechanism contribute to or generate membership of different thicknesses. The diaspora building mechanisms generate a relatively thin ideational, identity-based form of membership, whereas the diaspora integration mechanisms create a much thicker, more legally substantive membership status.

OEm – In this same article you propose the term “Emigration state” to describe the relationship of the state with emigration. How would you then define the "emigration state" and how does it relate to the diaspora?

AG – Yes at the time I was using the term "Emigration state" in two senses. One was to refer to all the mechanisms of the state that dealt with emigration and emigrants, deliberately or otherwise. We often hear a similar way of using that kind of terminology when people talk about ‘the welfare state’, for example in a sentence like ‘the decline of the welfare state in Britain’. In this sense they're not really talking a wider ideal of the state, they're talking about specific government programs that have been pared down, like publicly funded health, education, income support, and so forth. They are referring to these very specific mechanisms of the state when they talk about ‘the welfare state’. That was one sense in which I was thinking about ‘the emigration state’: I was using it as to refer to just these specific state policies, programs, institutions and practices. But then there was a wider sense of ‘the emigration state’ that I was thinking about, which was to suggest that somehow the existence of these mechanisms had become the central purpose of some states. In political science and international relations people talk about the Garrison State – in capital letters - in which the central purpose of the state was security, and then the Welfare State in which the central purpose of the state was the wellbeing of the population. When they talk this way, they are not just talking about specific state mechanisms, they are talking about the higher purpose of the state. What James Hollifield argues is that in recent decades we’ve seen the emergence of a Migration State, where the central higher purpose of state is managing migration. Part of what I was trying to do by talking about ‘the Emigration State’ was to identify a particular type of Migration State, which I think I only partially achieved that at that time. I think in some ways Gerasimos Tsourapas and Fiona Adamson did a better job a couple of years ago by putting a tidy label on part of this phenomenon, when they published an article on the *International Migration Review* which was called “The Migration State in the Global South”. I wish I could have thought of the concise of title in 2008, but I couldn't! There was another reason that didn't quite fit though: part of the point I was making in the 2008 article about the Emigration State was that diaspora engagement wasn't just something that was confined to the developing world. Interestingly, it was being found in many developed countries too. I was particularly interested in New Zealand at that time, where I'm from. But I went along to seminars with people from Ireland, where the World Bank was coaching them to generate a diaspora strategy. The Institute for Public Policy Research, the lead think tank under New Labour in the UK – which was in government at the time that I was writing that paper – they were also talking about the British diaspora and engaging the British diaspora. There were people who are writing to me about how to engage the Australian diaspora, and there was a formal Senate Committee of Inquiry on this in Australia. There were people writing to me from think tanks in Canada talking about the Ca-

nadian diaspora, and how to engage the Canadian diaspora. So, in one sense 'the migration state in the global South' was a close fit to the diaspora engagement dynamics I was interested in. But I was also trying, in my own slightly unsophisticated way, to allude to the fact that it was also much broader than this.

OEm – Still in this article, but also in others, you speak about the political participation of emigrants and diasporas, but that's a topic that divides many people. There is no consensus. Do you have any position on whether emigrants should have the right to vote or not? Do you think that this right to vote of the emigrant communities strengthens the link with the country of origin?

AG – It's a really good question. I guess my normative position follows that of Rainer Bauböck pretty closely, which is that the extent to which you have citizenship rights is a matter of the stake you hold, the extent to which you're a stakeholder in a society. There are certainly circumstances under which you can live abroad in the diaspora and be a stakeholder in the origin country. There are different ways of conceiving stakeholder-ship, whether it's a question of your interests being affected or whether your fundamental identity is somehow affected by the fortunes of your origin country, and so forth. I think there is no one blanket situation that covers all countries or all individuals from anyone country. There was a famous case that Rainer Bauböck cites, the Nottebohm decision, which was about a dual citizen who the court needed to rule on whether or not he was a citizen of a country. They determined that he was a citizen in the place where he held 'genuine connections', and when Rainer Bauböck talks about stakeholder citizenship, I think he's picking up on that notion of genuine connections. We might not be able to specify in advance exactly what connections count as genuine, what specific forms of identities or activities, but it's these types of connections that we should look for when we consider whether or not a person is a stakeholder and therefore entitled to citizenship rights like the right to vote. Whether or not their rights – in the diaspora – should be exactly the same as citizens who are directly affected by the laws of the country is a slightly different question. I tend to think that there's some justification for differential levels of rights and obligations between people who live in the territory and are subject to the jurisdiction, and people who live abroad. Such a distinction is emerging in places like India, which offers either a Person of Indian Origin card or an Overseas Citizenship of India. These are two distinctive statuses. Again, this goes back to this idea of different thicknesses of membership: the thickness of membership generated by living in a legal jurisdiction is a major factor to consider when allocating rights. A point that I often make, which I made in a paper in 2015, is that a lot of the theoretical worry about external voting has really happened in an empirical vacuum. In reality it hardly ever happens that too many people vote from abroad and swamp the elections. It's just extremely rare. The normative political debate is rather fixated on this potential

problem, but the actual electoral impact of overseas votes is typically very small, and in some sense, that makes the normative political questions about them smaller as well.

OEm – Focusing a little more on the case of New Zealand, emigration is a central theme of political campaigns and a core issue during governance, just as the vote of emigrants has sometimes influenced election results or coalition agreements. What characterises New Zealand emigration? What makes them leave? There is a notion that New Zealand has a rather high rate of emigration, especially among the most qualified, is this true?

AG – It is true. Health warning though, or rather full disclosure: I'm a New Zealander living abroad, so my perspective on these questions is always going to be biased. But I think the consensus is that there are both cultural and economic reasons for emigration. There have been times in the past when politicians have tried to make the case that there are political drivers of emigration. It has never really quite stuck: it's a pretty good place to live and that's regardless of who the government is. It's a very liberal-democratic place, some would say a social-democratic place; it's small but there's not a lot of reasons to leave it in terms of political repression. It's pretty good. Definitely there's racism. There is considerable discrimination against, for example, Māori, the indigenous people – and that is a factor in Māori moving abroad, particularly to Australia. But let's look at it in proportion: the proportion of Māori in the population of New Zealand is, my figures aren't up to date, but something like 15% or 16%, and the proportion of Māori within the population of New Zealanders living in Australia is more like 10%, in that ballpark. So it does not seem to be the case that Māori are emigrating in disproportionately high numbers relative to their share of the New Zealand population – in fact the opposite seems true: they seem less likely to emigrate than other New Zealand citizens. So political drivers of emigration are not really so much of an issue in New Zealand, but there are cultural reasons. New Zealand was part of the former British Empire, and it is part of the Commonwealth. There are quite a few people like me around New Zealand, who are part Māori, have grown up in New Zealand, are dual citizens with other former British colonies like Canada or Australia, have spent a number of years on 'overseas experience' in the UK, and so on. Many of us have all these cultural connections as part of the Commonwealth and the former British Empire, and these connections are particularly important to us because of our relative geographic smallness and isolation. I have colleagues in Oxford working on what they called the 'Lusophone diaspora', which I'm sure you can relate to because these are generally people living in countries of the former Portuguese Empire, and they often feel like maybe it would be easy for them to go and live in another country where Portuguese is the language. A large share of migration occurs within groups of countries that share a language or a religion or a legal history. In New Zealand there is also a cultural expectation that you need to get overseas experience by traveling the world and making your fortune beyond this small island at the

bottom of the world – it's kind of like 'you're never a prophet in your own land', you've got to make it abroad before you make it at home, sometimes. That's a kind of cultural rite of passage in New Zealand, like a modern-day equivalent of the 'Grand Tour' of the European continent that aristocratic youths did in pre-modern times. More recently, there are increasingly economic reasons for emigration. Again, we were previously part of the core group of white British colonies, and Britain took all of our exports at really good prices. As a result, New Zealand was one of the wealthiest places in the world, near the top of the OECD. But then in 1973 Britain decided that its empire was more of a cost than a benefit in terms of trade; they cut the apron strings by severing those preferential trading agreements with Commonwealth countries like New Zealand, and they joined the European Economic Community and put their eggs in the European basket economically speaking. The Commonwealth countries had to reforge their economic, cultural and political identities as a result. For New Zealand that meant it was a bit like having our limbs cut off: we suddenly didn't have this massive part of our economy anymore, we lost our biggest export market. And this resulted in declining in terms of living standards relative to the OECD for quite some time: wages and working conditions declined relative to Australia, the UK and the USA, and so more people started emigrating to these countries. Also, because New Zealand is definitely part of the global economy despite its remoteness, there's an upper tier in any New Zealand career where you need global experience, global careers are particularly important in lots of developed countries now including New Zealand – so CV-building is part of the economic drive to emigrate as well, not just cultural rites of passage or seeking better wages and working conditions.

OEm – Is there a topic or question I haven't asked that you would like to talk about?

AG – No you did great - sorry, I went on it at great length! Your questions have been very interesting to think about. Thank you, and I look forward to the conference!

OEm – Thank you very much for the interview and availability.

[Interview via Zoom, on February 25th, 2021, edited for publication on March 2021.]



Observatório da Emigração

The Emigration Observatory is an independent research and technical structure integrated in the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology of Iscte, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, where it has its headquarters. It operates on the basis of a partnership between the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology of Iscte, the Centre for Geographical Studies of the University of Lisbon, the Institute of Sociology of the University of Porto and the Centre for Research in Economic and Organisational Sociology of the University of Lisbon. It has a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Series	OEm Conversations With, 22
Title	Migration and mobility after the pandemic: interview with Alan Gamlen
Author	Inês Vidigal
Editor	Observatório da Emigração, CIES, Iscte, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa
Date	April 2021
ISSN	2183-4385
DOI	10.15847/CIESOEMCW222021
URI	http://hdl.handle.net/10071/22445

Cite as Vidigal, Inês (2021), Migration and mobility after the pandemic: interview with Alan Gamlen", *OEm Conversations With, 22*, Observatório da Emigração, CIES, Iscte, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.
DOI: 10.15847/CIESOEMCW222021

www.observatorioemigracao.pt

cies _ iscte
Centro de Investigação
e Estudos de Sociologia

