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Digital nomad and the future of work

An qualitative study which discuss challenges digital
nomads and organizations face and the future of work

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Abstract

The phenomenon of Digital Nomads (DN) is quickly becoming a rising trend within the knowledge workforce. Their idea is to work remotely and travel the world at the same time. In this thesis 8 semi-structured interviews with DNs were performed to answer the following research questions: (1) What kind of challenges do Digital Nomads face and how do they overcome them? (2) What can we learn from digital nomadism in relation to the future of work? Half of the participants were self-employed DN and the other half were employed by a company. Challenges they faced were divided into three perspectives: individual, work-related and global challenges. Their definition of a 'true' DN, their attitudes towards corporate work and experienced challenges are presented in the findings. By analyzing the findings, DN in relation to the future of work is discussed as well as challenges DN and corporates face together and suggestions on how to create a better collaboration between the two is presented.

Keywords: Digital Nomads, Digital Nomadism, Future of work, Remote work.

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I. Introduction

The aspiration to travel the world might be a dream for many of us. While working a traditional 9-5 job with a few weeks vacation a year, this aspiration may seem out of reach for many. But there is a new phenomenon on the rise, ‘digital nomad’ (hereafter DN) which references people working and traveling at the same time. Making that dream not appear unreachable anymore. According to Google Trends the word “Digital Nomad” has been on a steady rise worldwide for the last 5 years and has been increasing the last two years (Appendix 1). The phenomenon has gained recognition in news letters such as the Swedish newspaper Dagens Industri (Translated: Today's industry, DI). They recently published an article about how the covid-19 pandemic made people realize that it was possible to manage their work remotely, and a growing interest for doing so from abroad has been shown (Rydén, 2023). Countries such as Portugal, Estonia and the latest addition Spain have since before Jan 2023 started offering special visas to attract DN from non EU-countries. Giving them the opportunity of living in the country for at least 12 months with the possibility to extend the visa given they fit the requirements such as a set minimum monthly income.

The term *Digital Nomad* was first written about in a book by the same name 1997 by Makimoto and Manners, but it would not be recognized as a social phenomenon until 2016 (Müller, 2016). Although previous research within the Information Systems area is limited, Information researchers are well suitable to study this area given their focus on information, technology, work, and society (Nash et al. 2018; Richter & Ritcher, 2020.). The research that has been done discusses challenges DN faces on a personal level such as lack of self-discipline, lack of job identity, loneliness and technostress (Cook, 2020; Ritcher & Ritcher, 2020; Wang, et al. 2019). Likewise, it explores the challenges of a relationship between organizations and DNs, suggesting that without proper communications skills their collaboration is destined to fail (Kong et al. 2019; Frick & Marx, 2021). However, previous research is showing a gap within defining how DN is differentiating from other remote working groups. Another gap is found within the challenges faced by DN that are employed by a company as well as highlighting challenges they face in different levels and how they are connected such as: personal challenges, organizational challenges, technical challenges, global challenges. There are different work-related challenges in which the DN is responsible to solve and others where it is the organization responsibility. This study will also explore how DN and the future of work is connected.

The aim with this study is to explore the existing research gap and answer the following research questions: (1) *What kind of challenges do Digital Nomads face and how do they overcome them?* (2) *What can we learn from digital nomadism in relation to the future of work?*

In the first section of this thesis, related literature on the topic is presented. The second section is dedicated to the method of this study, presenting how the literature study was conducted and how the semi-structured interviews were performed. Thirdly the empirical findings of the interviews are presented and later in the fourth section discussed in relation to the related literature. Finally, the conclusion of this thesis is presented together with suggestions for future research such as continuing to explore the challenges DNs face on a global level.

2. Related literature

In this section of the related literature, four main requirements are found for the definition of a DN and other characteristics that are typical for an DN but not necessary. Later the relationship between corporets and DN is explored followed by predictions of how the future of work is looking. Finally the paradox of the DN lifestyle is presented.

2.1 The digital nomad

The word *nomad* we have heard before, it refers to people whose work or employment is not location-bound. The word *nomadism* is rather referred to the social level, meaning that people are in need to move to be able to perform their work depending on factors such as seasons and weather (NE.se, 2023). The word *digital nomad* was first referred to in 1997 by Makimoto and Manners in their book with the same name. Their prediction was that the future of work would have technology which enabled work to not be location bound. Instead this technology would offer to share video, pictures and documents in real time from one part of the world to another (Makimoto & Manners, 1997). Today, over 20 years later, their prediction can be confirmed. Their definition of a DN, a person who can manage all their work through different information and communication technology (ICT) and is not location bound (Makimoto & Manners, 1997), have developed further. Today researchers have started to define the phenomena of a DN with four main requirements; (1) their work is not location bound, (2) they can manage all their work through ICT, (3) they strive towards the feeling of ‘freedom’, and (4) traveling is an essential part of who they are (Cevtaeva & Denzi-Gulliet, 2021; Hannonen, 2020; Mancielli, 2020; Prester et al, 2020). Except for the requirements, another characteristic for DNs is that they tend to be highly skilled knowledge workers (Prester et al, 2020).

While previous research on the topic of Digital Nomadism tends to focus on people who have classic tech related jobs such as programmer, UX-designer, and SEO to give a few examples, there has been an increase in DNs in non-tech related jobs. Other industries like healthcare have started to offer online services and now have nurses and psychologists who can manage their jobs online through calls and video meetings, showing that the work industry is changing (Mancielli, 2020). While DNs can be employed by an organization, many of them are self-employed freelancers within their field of expertise (Prester et al, 2020). DNs are not alone with being a traveling workforce. Expats is a closely linked concept and is defined as someone who voluntarily and temporarily is migrating abroad for a specific reason, such as work, but with the purpose of returning to their home country (Koveshnikov et al. 2014). Workcation is another relatively new term created by combining the words work and vacation. It refers to different scenarios such as going on vacation and working or traveling on a work trip and then extending the stay at the destination for leisure. It is a rising trend among employees that may not be able to adapt to a DN lifestyle but still want to take advantage of the flexible work agreements and interrupt the regular workstyle (Matsushita, 2022). These concepts are closely interlinked (as presented below in figure 1) but still separate as an expat lacks the need of having a job that can be managed remotely and the ability to travel to multiple places. Likewise, workcation is a temporary state someone is in rather than a lifestyle which both digital nomadism and expats are. The main difference between trying out

a workcation or being an expat in relation to digital nomadism is that it is not as extreme as the DN lifestyle. An expat or someone doing a workcation is still trying something for a limited amount of time. Their work might not be fully remote and they are likely to be employed by a company (Koveshnikov et al. 2014; Matsushita, 2022) rather than self employed which DN tends to be. There are advantages of being employed by a company, such as a social network of colleagues, which DNs may not have to the same extent. Therefore it is important to highlight the difference between the different remote working groups and why DNs.

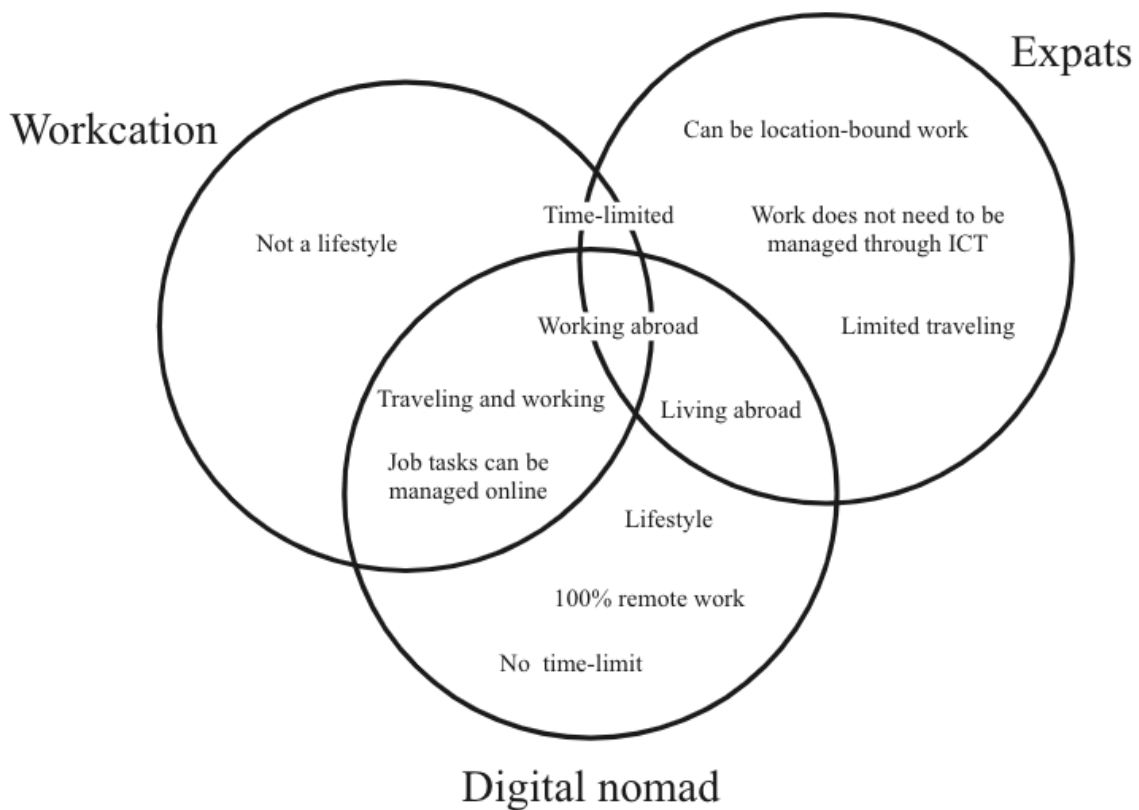


Figure 1. Shows how workcation, expats and DN intersect. As you can see workcation and DN are more related than DN and expats even though they are strongly connected.

2.2 Critique towards the lifestyle of digital nomads

Pejorative terms like “Digital Bro-mad” or “Digital Gonad” have been used to describe a stereotype of tourists and DNs (Cook, 2020). The stereotype refers to someone from a developed country traveling to developing countries. A “Bro-mad” rather focuses on partying and surfing and does not interfere with the local community or local population (Thomson, 2018). Another critique towards DNs is that their salary tends to be based on western standards while they live in low-income countries. This phenomenon is called geo-arbitrage (Frick & Marx, 2021). But rather than assuming this is a way of taking advantage of other countries, it has been suggested to be an economic coping strategy (Thomson, 2018). There is suggested to be a ‘grey zone’ between DNs and their host country when it comes to taxes, often DNs visit countries on a tourist visa and work towards other countries. While they might not contribute to their host country by paying taxes, they are still

consuming goods and renting co-working spaces that are contributing to the country's economy (Wang, et al., 2019).

2.3 Digital nomads and corporates

There is currently a 'war for knowledge workers' between companies forcing organizations to adapt towards the new workstyles to remain an attractive workplace. During the same time, the relationship between corporations and DNs has shown to suffer substantial differences which causes them to fail. It is a mixture of differences in values, structures and a mismatch in expectations is defined as the main cause of the failure (Kong et al. 2019; Frick & Marx, 2021). Trust and transparency was valued highly among both corporates and DNs. Still DNs are fighting the stigma of the corporate being unable to monitor the work by the remote worker equals to the stigma of the worker slacking. By prioritizing good communication between all parties the risk of mismatch in expectations from one another was reduced (Kong et al. 2019). While remote work tends to challenge the structure of work, the structure is also highly valued by both DNs and corporations to reduce risk of stress (Frick & Marx. 2021). There are challenges in DNs being adapted into a business model, but there are also possibilities in improving exciting operating processes and enriching the company culture. Digital Nomadism can also improve and develop existing business models by digital consulting for example (Frick & Marx, 2021).

2.4 Future of work

The traditional way of work has since the industrial revolution been the "factory paradigm", the "9-5" archetype. This has been the norm for all types of workers, even knowledge workers who "get paid for thinking" (Wang et al. 2020). Mumford (2000) argued that there was a shift happening within organizational structures and models and presented the two scenarios of the 'wired world' and 'built to last'. In the 'wired world' scenario companies are shifting their structure from a hierarchy towards a network structure. Highly skilled self-employed individuals can sell their skills through temporary contracts, come together online and work together on projects. For this to be successful a high level of trust and communication between both parties is needed. The second scenario presented is the 'built to last', in this scenario organizations are collecting and valuing knowledge and development and aim to keep employees who possess it (Mumford, 2000). Another shift happening within the work industry was presented by Winter et al (2014) of work that is no longer limited to within the four walls of the organization, within the organizational 'container'. The reason behind this is the technological advances emerging that can be accessed outside the organization boundaries. An example of this are multiple platforms and ecosystems, such as Google Drive and Apples ecosystem which was the start to BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) policy multiple organizations have adapted to (Winter et al. 2014).

Digital nomadism is often praised for its sense of freedom and liberation from the classic "9-5 workstyle" (Cevtaeva & Denzi-Gulliet, 2021; Mancielli, 2020; Ritcher & Ritcher, 2020). While this freedom is used for traveling it is also linked to having the flexibility to finish tasks earlier and be done for the day rather than being forced to obey the factory paradigm (Wang, et al., 2019). Their high demand for freedom has made them become defined as a new neo liberal order of work life (Mancielli, 2020., Wang et al, 2020) suitable for the description of the 'wired world' scenario

(Mumford, 2000). When the covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020 it can be identified as the real paradigm that forced organizations into digital transformation (Wang, 2020). While DNs started to disrupt business models, they can rather be seen as opportunists to new possibilities of working (Mancinelli, 2020) adapting to the ‘wired world’ scenario (Mumford, 2000).

2.5 The paradox of digital nomadism

While DNs aim, sense and search for freedom is one of their main driving factors (Cevtaeva & Denzi-Gulliet, 2021., Hannonen, 2020., Mancinelli, 2020., Prester et al, 2020), their search for freedom might be their biggest issue as well. It is the paradox of the DN lifestyle (Cook, 2020). While traveling, it is common for DNs to be in different time zones than their colleges or employer (Mancinelli, 2020), this forces DNs adapt to the others time zones and work irregular hours such as very early mornings or late nights to pursue their lifestyle (Cook, 2020., Ritcher & Ritcher, 2020). Likewise, for the ‘wired-world’ scenario type of employment is lacking in both job stability and social support which can be a causing factor of (work-related) stress meanwhile ‘built to last’ offers what ‘wired world’ lacks (Mumford, 2000).

Having a high sense of self-discipline has been shown to be a crucial factor in the success of the DN lifestyle to reduce the risk technostress (Cook, 2020). DNs who traveled with others had it easier to maintain self-discipline towards work and had an overall better balance between work and free time. The DNs who traveled with others could find support from each other to stay focused while working as well as logging off when they finished work. Those who traveled solo would rank their self-discipline as low and as a result work more to overcompensate for it. They also had more difficulties going offline. However, research has shown that their own perception misaligned with the result (Cook, 2020., Frick & Marx, 2021).

To mitigate the risk of DNs getting overwhelmed by work and/or lacking a work identity, it was important for them to maintain structure within their work life. While for the ‘normal’ worker, structure in work can be supported by attending the office or, if you are a DN, attending a coworking space (Prester et al., 2019). Coworking spaces can also offer social support from others that are in the same business. The lack of social support and loneliness among DNs has also shown to have a strong impact on their ability to successfully pursue their lifestyle. It has even been suggested that lack of social support might be one of the causing factors to quit the lifestyle (Frick & Marx, 2021). While DNs strives for freedom, this causes the very paradox of Digital Nomadism as it is in constant need of adapting the work for others, reducing the freedom and flexibility they search and value so highly.

3. Method

When finding a suitable research approach for this study, an interpretive approach within the qualitative research area was chosen. This allows for an emic perspective, to provide insights of the DNs perception of challenges they may face and how it affects them. When adapting to this approach, it is the participants' perception, thoughts and experiences that is in the focus. When exploring new topics and/or trying to understand complex issues qualitative research is considered the most suitable since it allows for the participants to provide their understanding and experiences of ‘what’, ‘how’, and ‘why’-questions (Hennik, et al. 2020).

3.1 Data collection

The data collection was conducted into two parts. First a literature overview was conducted and would be used as a base for the interview guide. Later the semi-structured interviews were conducted, and after the first two interviews the interview guide was reviewed and edited to fit the study better. Finally relevant previous literature on the topic was revisited to add on the findings of the interviews.

3.2 Literature overview

To collect and gather related previous research on the topic of DNs, a literature overview was performed inspired by Webster and Watson (2002). The keywords “Digital Nomad” and “Information Systems” were first used to search previous literature. Later I added the following keywords in different combinations: Hybrid Work, Remote Workers, Digital work, Digital culture, Digital transformation, Digital mindset, Workcation, Expats, Future of work. I started off by searching for the two first keywords on Google Scholar to receive an overview of what could be found on the topic. I later used Halmstad University Library’s own website to access research that was behind the paywall. The previous research had been done within different fields, both informatics, tourism and sociology. To narrow it down further I lastly researched the basket of eight with the seven associated conferences on Scopus. This was done to review what research had been done on the topic of DNs especially within the informatic field. A total of eight articles and conference papers were found on Scopus and are all presented under ‘2. Related literature’. Through this process I paid extra attention into what the authors suggested for further research as well as defining what type of existing research gap was present. As mentioned in the introduction, the field of informatics is well suited to research DNs since it is connected to information, technology, work and society (Nash et al. 2018; Richter, S., Richter A. 2020).

3.3 Interviews

To gather empirical data, semi-structured interviews were performed. By doing semi-structured interviews I am allowing myself to add follow up questions if I discover a potential theme, need clarification, or if a participant is talking about something new. Each question was formulated to be open as suggested by Frejes and Thornberg (2019) when conducting semi-structured interviews. This allows the participant to formulate their own answer and reduce the risk of them being influenced by anyone else and let them explain the answer more than a simple yes or no. For the interview guide, see appendix 2.

DNs rely on technology and internet connection to manage their work. Online communities have also been shown to have a big impact for their social needs and support in the DN lifestyle (Cook, 2020., Manicelli, 2020). Social media platforms like Facebook and Reddit offer groups and sub-reddits dedicated towards DNs. In these online communities they can ask each other questions and share experiences. Reddit’s biggest sub-reddit for DNs did not allow for any form of survey or interviews, therefore I did not approach anyone through reddit. Through Facebook I identified three groups that were fully dedicated to offering support to DNs and aspiring DNs. I also approached one group that was dedicated to Swedes traveling to a known ‘hotspot’ for DNs.

In table 1 (as seen below) the four facebook groups I joined to search for participants are presented. The amount of members in each group, what the focus of the group was, whether it was accessible without having to actively join the group (private or public), and finally if my post was accepted or not.

Members of the group	Focus of the group	Public or private	Accepted post:
7000 <	For swedes interested in the DN lifestyle. Discussions about it, advice and work.	Private	Yes
107 000 <	For anyone interested in Digital Nomadism. Questions, tips and occasional memes.	Public	No response
15 000 <	For Swedes visiting a known DN hotspot.	Private	Yes
160 000 <	For DNs to share experiences and ask questions.	Private	-
20 000 <	For DNs traveling within Europe.	Private	-

Table 1. Groups I reached out to find participants for the interviews.

I applied to join, and was accepted into three out of four groups under which time the data collection took place, from Jan 2023 - mid Apr 2023. After the acceptance, I read through the rules of each group and scrolled through some posts to make sure the group would be suitable to approach potential participants. When I published a post within each group I stated who I was, what university and major I was enrolled in, that I was writing my thesis about DNs, and that I was looking for participants for my study. I highlighted how limited previous research on the topic of DNs within the field of information systems had been and I argued that DNs is a workforce that should not be dismissed. I also stated that they would be given a copy of my thesis once it was finished. I received four private messages from DNs who wanted to participate.

In one of the groups my post was still pending to be published passed the end of the data collection. The fourth group I was accepted into the last week of writing, meaning that due to the time limit I was unable to reach out to DN through that group.

Additionally I reached out to a total of 16 DNs that had been featured in an article on a blog dedicated towards DNs in Sweden. The articles had been published between 2019 - 2023, meaning that there was a chance that some of them might have changed their careers since they were featured. These DNs had their websites and social media linked in the articles which I used to contact them through email or direct messages on social media. I wrote them an email similar to the Facebook posts stating who I was, what I was doing and why. Each email was a bit personalized to increase the probability of them replying. Out of 16, six got back willing to do an interview, two of them stopped replying and four of them did the interview. Three got back stating that they no longer

were DNs, one got back to me passed the data collection period and the rest did not respond despite follow-up messages a week later.

Since traveling is an essential part in being a DN, almost every participant was in a different country or city from one another. Therefore, it was necessary to perform the interview online through zoom, google meets and whatsapp to not limit this study. The first two interviews were conducted as pilot interviews allowing me to make changes to the interview guide for a better fit. When 8 interviews had been conducted, I started to reach the saturation point. This corresponds to the saturation point, of when “no new insights is provided”, usually occurring within 7-12 participants, when the participants can be considered to be a relatively homogenous group (Guest et al. 2013., Hennink et al. 2020). To confirm this I should have performed one or two more interviews, however because of the accessibility difficulties I was unable to do this. More of this under 3.5. As it can be seen in table 1, DNs is a hard group to reach.

3.3.1 Selection of participants

Each of the participants fulfilled the four requirements of the definition of a DN (Cevtaeva & Denzi-Gulliet, 2021; Hannonen, 2020; Mancielli, 2020; Prester et al, 2020) as presented under ‘2.1 Definition of a digital nomad’. Even though three of the participants were hesitant to define themselves as a DN, other people in their vicinity had defined them as DN. As presented in table 2, half of the participants were employed by a company, two were self-employed working with multiple clients and projects, two of them were self-employed but had been working with the same company for a long term (marked with a ‘*’ in the table below). All of the participants held Swedish citizenship.

No	Interview length: Min:sec	Age	Type of employment	Current location	Been a DN approximately since :
1	27:19	42	Self-employed	Thailand	2012
2	43:14	41	Company	Finland	2018
3	32:24	61	Self-employed	Sweden	2021
4	46:49	49	Self-employed*	Spain	2006
5	90:36	42	Self-employed	Chile	2015
6	30:31	52	Company	France	2013
7	44:47	49	Self-employed*	Kenya	2022
8	43:11	43	Self-employed	Sweden	2013

Table 2. Total time of interviews: 5h, 58min and 51sec.

3.4 Data analysis

A thematic analysis (TA) approach was chosen since it is systematically identifying and organizing while it also offers an insight into patterns across the dataset. It was inspired by Braun and Clack's (2006) description of six steps of how to perform a TA.

First, I familiarize myself with the data. This was approached by taking notes while doing the interviews, re-listening to the recorded interviews, transcribing them, and finally re-reading. During the whole process I was taking notes that were a mixture of connections to previous research, other participants' similar answers, and potential themes.

Secondly, I read through the transcripts starting to generate the initial codes. The coding was a mixture of direct quotes related to the topic of my research question as well as interpretations of what the participants were referring to. When all the interviews had been coded I transferred all of the data to the online platform Miro. There I used the function of 'stickers' and gave each participant a unique color, then I transferred their quotes onto 'their sticker'. This was created to track each participant's data in the search for themes.

Third, when all the codes were transferred onto Miro started to search for themes by identifying similarities between codes in different interviews and paired them into groups. Then I revisited the groups to identify if it could be a theme, multiple themes or subthemes.

Fourth, I reviewed the potential themes by analyzing them in relation to the empirical data set as well as the previous codes. This was done to quality check the themes and make sure that each theme captured relevant insights. During this step I identified the following differences: a difference between the participants' own perceptions of 'what defined a DN'. Those participants that did not define themselves as a DN discussed their age being the obstacle for defining themselves as a DN. While those who did define as a DN did not mention age at all while discussing digital nomadism and definitions. All of the participants were between 41 - 61 years old. Another difference was noticed when trying to organize the challenges DN and corporate faces. Often those challenges would intersect and be defined as organizational challenges and then be divided into two subcategories such as: work-related challenges the organization is responsible for solving, for example offering the right technological solutions suited for work and DNs. The other would be work-related challenges the DNs were responsible for, such as creating a structure around their work.

Fifth, and lastly as a final step I defined and named the themes. In total 3 themes and 11 sub-themes were defined and named:

Theme	Sub-themes
The Digital Nomad	Who is the Digital Nomad? Escaping the rat race The search for freedom

Digital Nomads and Corperates	Future of work Attitudes towards corporate work Everyday work life Organizational challenges
Challenges for Digital Nomads	Work-related challenges Technical challenges Global challenges Individual challenges

Table 3. Themes and sub-themes.

To provide an example of this, in figure 2 there are four quotes presented by four participants. The code was then categorized into the subtheme of *work-related challenges* and *personal challenges* which are connected under the main theme of *Challenges for Digital Nomads*.

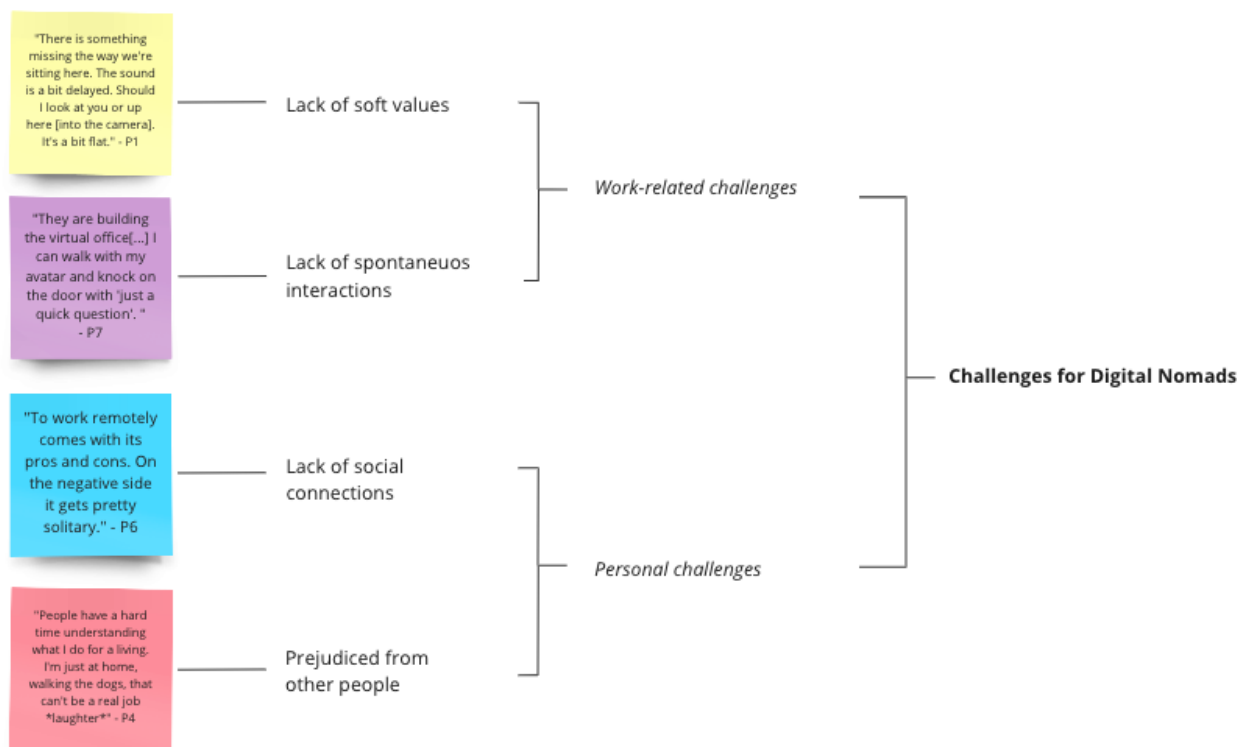


Figure 2. Example of how code became themes and sub-themes.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This study follows the Swedish Research Councils Ethical Guidelines (2017). That means that the study is based on the participants voluntary participation. The participants were informed about what the study is about, how the data would be handled, that they had the right to be and would be anonymous throughout the study, and that they had the right to not answer questions or quit the study whenever they wanted (vr.se, 2017). This information was given to the participants before the interview started and they all confirmed that they approved of being recorded. To make sure that the participants could remain anonymous, they were coded in numbers (1- 8). Any name or places mentioned have been switched to preserve the participants anonymity.

3.6 Method discussion

All of the interviews were conducted in Swedish, transcribed in Swedish and later the quotes used under '4. Empirical Findings' were translated to English. This was done very carefully to not lose the participants' own words in translation. As mentioned in 3.3 the saturation point was reached at 8 interviews, to confirm this I aimed to conduct an additional 1 - 2 interview(s). However, I was unable to do that due to difficulties in reaching potential participants. DNs are a hard group to reach, out of the posts in the social media groups I only received participants through one of them. Out of four groups I waited past the data collection period for acceptance into one group and likewise one of my posts is still passed deadline awaiting approval to be published. Other social media platforms, such as the subreddit for DNs, did not allow for surveys or requests for interviews. I also reached out to new DNs as well as previous contacted DNs who had not responded without success.

The respondents that participated in this study are all from Sweden, therefore there likely would appear some cultural differences if this study were to be conducted on DNs from other countries.

4. Empirical findings

Under this section the empirical findings of the three main themes defined under the TA are presented. (1) The "true" digital nomad, which presents the participants' definition of a DN, their search for freedom, family time and escaping the rat race. (2) The love-hate relationship between DN and corporate, exemplifies DNs attitudes towards 'office work vs remote work', as well as prejudice, loneliness and Covid-19. Under the third and last theme (3) Challenges for digital nomads (and corporations) the socio-technical arrangements at work exemplified in the technology, organizational culture, laws and regulations as well as uncertainty regarding work conditions of remote work.

4.1 Theme: The "true" digital nomad

While all participants were defined as DNs, most of them had pursued the lifestyle before they had heard of the term "digital nomad". Three of the participants did not define themselves as 'true digital nomads'. In their case it was other people who had defined and referred to them as DNs. The perception of what a DN is and who is considered to be one was divided into two categories by the participants: their own perception and the 'stereotype'. All answers of what defines a DN were very cohesive, containing 'work that can be managed through digital tools online'. They differentiated a DN from other remote working groups by the urge of movement and traveling. Overall, the criteria for being considered a DN were broadly discussed and not too specific in terms of how long someone has to travel to be considered a DN. However, some participants discussed what was needed to be considered a 'true' DN while others would discuss the 'true' DN as the stereotype of a DN. P7 was one who did not consider themselves to be a true DN since they had children and had a temporary base in Kenya where they stayed for a longer period of time.

The true digital nomads tend to be young and they have nothing that holds them back, they are yet to buy their first home or nestle with kids. – P7

P3 had a hard time relating to DN and would describe themselves as a DN 'light'. This was related to the fact that the first time they had heard the term, it was related to the extreme forms. This extreme form of not having a permanent home and constantly traveling was not their aim.

When I first came across the word Digital nomad it was in a very extreme form. People who didn't have a permanent home and who only traveled with their computer. This is nothing I strive for. – P3

Those participants who discussed the stereotype of a DN would talk about someone who traveled to other countries but only countries that could provide the structure supporting a DN, such as good internet connection and English speaking. This perception was discussed by some participants as the DN would remain in their own 'bubble', participant 5 phrased it like following:

Traditionally, a digital nomad for me is a person who searches for centers across the world that are structured for you to work as a digital nomad. [...] There are internetcafés, good wifi, menus in english, and housing. There are other people like you so you can have a whole network of other digital nomads. [...] There is almost access to the same food and beverages everywhere independent of where you are in the world. – P5

The participants' own urge to become a DN was strongly linked to their search for freedom. It was the strongest occurring word used to describe what urged them to become a DN as well as what they appreciated most about the DN lifestyle. This urge for freedom was explained as being independent and having flexibility within their work- and personal life. Within their work life it was linked to them aspiring to gain control over their work hours rather than their work task. The freedom of where and when to work allowed them to travel to different places and explore new places and cultures. To want to travel and be in a 'movement' was the second strongest factor that made them wanting to become DN, the urge to explore new things. Their way of travel was usually to stay at one place for a longer period of time rather than traveling to a different town every week. By staying longer, they had the chance to create a stable environment and structure around themselves for when they were working.

To travel week to week, or day to day, I'm not interested in that anymore. But to stay longer in an environment I enjoy is important for me to preserve my quality of life. – P1

Except for the traveling aspect of digital nomadism, an interesting finding was that they used this flexibility and freedom to spend more time with their family. P4 used this freedom and flexibility to visit their daughter, this could be done without having a negative impact on their job while as for their partner who did not have a flexible job could not.

The best part is the freedom [...] Last month I stayed in Sweden for 3 weeks [to visit their daughter]. I can do that spontaneously without having to ask for permission for time off and such. – P4

P5 had an example of a family member in Sweden needing assistance. The rest of the family was occupied with jobs that would not offer much flexibility and therefore could not help out as much as was needed. Because of the life that P5 had created for themselves they could do a drastic change in where they were while working. This made it possible for them to make a sudden change of plans and travel to Sweden to support their family.

When my father got ill and needed support for 6-8 weeks, I was in South America and said “Yes, no problem. I can return to Sweden and live there for 8 weeks to help you dad”. It’s a bit ironic that I, who live so far away, could support my family more because of the lifestyle I have.
– P5

Except for having more time to spend with their family, this search for freedom follows up with a need of interrupting everyday life. Both breaking free from the norm of ‘how life should look like’ and escaping the rat race was described by the participants. P7 expressed that they tried the DN lifestyle as a result of realization of their children becoming older and wanting to have a family adventure together before the children were moving out. This was supported by them feeling tired of how their life looked and wanting to take a break from the rat race.

We have three kids and all this with driving them to practice and the stress with one thing or another. [...] Our twins are soon graduating high school and then we don’t know, they might move out? We wanted to have a family adventure. – P7

P2 spoke about trying everyday life somewhere else and would still try to live similarly abroad in a sense that they still tried to stick to routines like exercise. Even if the days were filled with work, the evenings and weekends would offer exploration. In a sense P2 would be more active after work when abroad and could spend time doing what they liked.

I really like traveling and you still have the evenings and weekends to gain new experiences and explore things. I also like to try the “everyday life” somewhere else. – P2

4.2 Theme: The love-hate relationship between digital nomads and corporates

The respondents' attitude towards organizations was divided. All of the respondents had been employed by an organization at some point in their career and half of them were currently employed by a company and had been for a minimum of 1,5 years. Participant 4 had been forced to become a freelancer after they had moved abroad but is now hired from the same company as before. Participant 7 had always been freelancing and it was the type of ‘employment’ they advocated at their company. The other half were all self-employed and worked more in a project-form and had multiple jobs, but before they became DN's they had all tried working in a corporate environment and had mixed feelings about it. Mostly it was the feeling of lost control. P3 tried working for a company 50% for around 3,5 years and came to the realization that they probably had been freelancing for too long to enjoy it. The experience of working within an organization gave them

new insights and ideas for their own company but felt the loss of control in not being allowed to manage their time after tasks were completed.

*8am – 5pm with an hour lunch around 12 – 1pm and that was **despite how many tasks you actually had. You were supposed to stay there til 5pm every day.** – P3*

Their experienced differences between a regular workday before and after they became a DN was divided. The DNs that were employed by a company did not experience much of a difference in their work tasks compared to when they used to work at the office, the only real difference was in where they were and that meetings had to be moved from a conference room to an online platform such as Teams. P2 even stated that they worked more seriously from abroad to be a good example of how remote work can be done for their company.

*If I'm working from abroad, it's kind of the same thing. **I do the same things except for not heading into the office. Of course, if I need to attend meetings, I do that through [Microsoft] Teams.** – P2*

*There really isn't a difference. **The only difference is that here it's 25C, if I look outside I see palm trees and I'm dressed in a T-shirt while in Stockholm it's -10C and outside a snowstorm.** – P7*

However, some did experience a lack of social connections when their social connections from work were moved into a digital platform. There was not only a loss of small talk and relationship building but also a loss of seeing other people.

It comes with the pros and cons of working remotely, it is rather solitary on the negative aspect. – P6

As for the self-employed DNs, they had much more varied days and stated that 'no day is alike'. An important thing to note about the self-employed group of DNs is that they were enrolled in multiple projects or had multiple jobs/companies. This could explain why their workdays differed more compared to the other DNs. P5 gave an example of how their last week had been and how it had been and compared it to another previous week.

*I was traveling with my friends to show them the area and **at the same time I'm meeting my business partners and talking to them, so it's kind of a business development [...]** We had meetings all day with sellers and investors and the day before and after I sat at a hotel working with different clients around the world. Then we went to a conference for investors [...]. – P5*

The lack of social exchange was something the self-employed DN did not bring up as an issue for them. While they were aware that it could be an issue for others they had tried co-working or looked through different forums for DN to find a social environment suitable for them. P1 was noticing a change in the attitude from organizations to collaborate with DN which they stated as something positive as it could offer more social exchange.

*It's pretty nice to see that there is an opportunity to work for a company, that **I can do that and have a nice community. Just because you're a Digital Nomad doesn't mean you wish to be alone.***
– P1

The DN community is built upon social connections through internet forums and coworking spaces. Over half of the respondents had tried or thought of trying coworking and had split opinions about it. P2 tried renting a coworking spot the first time they worked abroad to show their employer that they were serious about it. However, due to an unpleasant experience they only did it once.

It was a rather boring experience since I worked during the evenings and I was all alone in this enormous room, there weren't any other people at all during the evenings. – P2

While none of them did it on the regular, it was something they all had thought about and looked into. Especially in the beginning of adapting to their DN lifestyle. Mostly it was used as a way to keep interrupting the 'everyday life', even when traveling abroad. It was mostly done out of a social aspect, even though it is independent work it was nice to see and meet others in the same position.

*When I started as a Digital Nomad I tried a few coworking spots.[...] **I think it's nice, not only is it a new environment but you can go grab a coffee and talk to others, it doesn't have to be about work-related stuff, just a chat.*** – P4

In an attempt to break the solitary job environment, P6 had looked into joining a coworking place and had found one place interesting. Then when other factors were added to the equation, they had decided that it was not worth it due to the long commute time. P6 company had offered to pay for the rent of the coworking space when they had discussed it. Showing great support from the employer to the employee.

***If there would have been a place closer, I'm sure I would have been there a couple of days of the week.** [...] When I told them [the company] that I was thinking of joining a cowork they would have taken the cost if I would have wanted to join.* – P6

This leads over to what the future of work is offering for both DNs but also for other forms of employment. While the attitude towards remote work has been changed by the pandemic. The pandemic has also caused businesses to re-organizing their business models. DNs have noticed a lot of offices offering more remote and/or hybrid work options between the home and the office. Except for corporates being more open towards a hybrid workplace, most participants could agree that there has been a change in the attitude towards them as a workforce. The previous challenges of working remotely had mostly been others' perception of them not doing their work. As explained some 'took a remote day' while only being available on the phone but not doing anything else.

*I know that people **at my office use to have a 'remote day' and then they are taking the day off** [...] but were available on the phone during office hours.* – P2

Although they have noticed that the stigma of people ‘not working’ while working remotely is starting to change since the pandemic. Before the pandemic could receive comments that hinted of them slacking which resulted in them needing to prove themselves. This change in attitude they assume can be linked to that others tried working remotely during the pandemic and receive a better understanding of those who did it full time.

*[...] Well people hardly believed I even worked *laughter* because how can I work and at the same time just be in Thailand for months and then somewhere else?[...] But I feel like after the pandemic, maybe it has become a little bit better. – P4*

Multiple participants claimed that the covid-19 pandemic has been the paradigm shift of people and organizations perception of what it means to work remotely. As P5 phrased it:

Well the pandemic, Covid-19, these last two years has certainly made us jump 20 years forward in 2 years. Because out of a sudden no one can say that ‘it doesn’t work’ because it did work for 2 years, it has been proven. – P5 [on working remotely]

4.3 Theme: Challenges for digital nomads (and corporates)

This theme has four main sub-themes, challenges that they face that are linked to; individual, work-related, technical, and global. The challenges are connected to socio-technical arrangements between the DN and corporations. There are challenges of creating the feeling of being included in a team, creating a teamspirit, loyal employees, and having the technical tools to support remote work but also reducing the resistance towards letting the employees work remotely. When discussing what they thought corporations would need to allow/have/hire DNs in their workplace. The challenges of building an organizational culture were brought up.

If I were to represent my company we feel that the challenges lie in the company culture. How do we create cohesion? How do we make everyone feel included in our workplace when you’re not at the office? and I can assume that 99% of other companies are discussing these questions too. – P2

Participant 7 who had a leadership position at the company worked a lot with culture and teambuilding. This was done by having team meetings that extended over different teams within their organization. They also had an activity every other week through Slack where they had a 15 minute meeting together with a randomly selected employee from a different department, sometimes in another country. This offered a rare insight to the company and also into how different departments managed their job. While some of these meetings were mandatory since they also contained relevant work information, others, like the slack matchmaking, were voluntary. Except for the formally arranged meetings, P7 had created a personal whatsapp group which were dedicated to more informal messages such as birthday congratulations and memes.

I am pretty good at sending spontaneous slack messages saying “Hi, How are you?” if we haven’t spoken in a while. It’s just small stuff. I might not build on the company culture but I am building

a team culture that is ‘Robins team’. And I believe in the cliché that ‘people don’t leave companies, they leave leaders’. – P7

Participant 7 was not the only one who had planned informal meetings. During the pandemic it was a lot of companies who offered informal meetings for employees. It was done to create a social environment and strengthen the team spirit. Since the pandemic these meetings still occur especially in organizations that still have employees working remotely.

We have these meetings that are more about keeping in touch and teambuilding than a formal meeting. Kind of a coffee break through Teams. – P6

To create an organizational culture as well as creating team spirit when adapting DNs into one's business it is important to have technology that allows and supports digital work. Slack, Notion, Microsoft Teams and Google Drive were examples mentioned on technology that supports the team online. These software allowed for collaborative work in documents and easy access for employees within the company as well as an easy access to meetings and informal chats. As for participant 4, Slack was the software they felt like was built for the digital team and was very suitable for their way of working. However, there was an issue of their colleagues at the office not seeing the point of using Slack since they were offered the social exchange between one another because they are in the same physical room.

*Slack suits me very well because the way I see it, Slack is very much built for the digital team.[...] **Slack is my coffee break and my meeting room. Slack is so much for me and I don’t feel it’s the same for my colleagues. – P4***

New technology to promote informal meetings and to create a more personal environment digitally, such as virtual offices, were mentioned by two of the participants who were very positive towards the idea and almost certain that this was the next step in the direction for remote work. None of them had been using VR-tools but were familiar with companies who offered VR solutions and expressed an urge to try it. Both of them spoke about the lack of soft values within the digital work atmosphere.

There is something missing the way we're sitting here. The sound is a bit delayed. Should I look at you or up here [into the camera]. It's a bit flat. [...] With the virtual world it will be more of a “Let’s meet, welcome into my office!” where I can create the environment that I have been missing. It will be that little extra – P1

Their expectation is that it will bring back soft values and informal conversations. By creating the virtual office and creating one's own avatar it will be possible to have small talk by the coffee machine or walk by another department to ask a question instead of writing an email, giving back the small social informal interactions they are lacking.

[...] which means that I can take my little avatar and walk over to the HR-department and ‘knock on the door’ with ‘just a quick question’. – P7

While there is a lot of technology that allows for remote work, other challenges can occur. The collaboration might work great but there might be an issue with systems in use. Something that is hard to influence. Participant 5 had an incident where the company she was hired by had a system that did not fit their organization. While their work went according to plan, the organization's system where everything had to be documented took unnecessary extra time.

*I had to tell my client with the head of the company that **she had to pay me extra because I had to use their system.** [...] it is pretty ironic that it was their systems that were the issue. - P5*

While they all experience that the attitude towards DNs and remote work in general has been improved since the pandemic. There has been a rising concern in whether companies are adapting to the hybrid-work model or limiting the possibilities for remote work especially for working from abroad. One of the participants experienced that their company lacked the knowledge of how to handle 'remote work policies' and therefore avoided the topic. This uncertainty made it easier to actively prevent workers from working remotely abroad than having to touch upon the topic. The participant heard arguments of potential tax issues being the reasons for not being allowed to work abroad. While this might be an issue outside of the EU, there should not be an issue unless the workers are away for more than 6 months.

I think it's the biggest issue right now that companies think it's hard because it's a bit uncertain, and then it is easier to say no and limit the possibility. [...] They often blame it on being a tax issue, but there is no tax issue unless you're abroad for more than 6 months. At least not within the EU. - P2

If you want to work abroad in another country within the EU, there are different papers to apply for to make sure that things like the insurance is covered. When they had contacted Försäkringskassan (Swedish Insurance Fund) about wanting to apply for working abroad remotely they had to fill out documents of where they were going and for how long making spontaneous changes difficult since they in that case would need to redo the application from scratch. The first time they applied for it, it had gone pretty smoothly but the second time they had still been waiting for a result after four months. The first time they had called to ask about how to apply for this document however, the uncertainty and lack of knowledge was shown again.

I don't personally like the "Okey, you can work remotely just don't tell anyone"-attitude. It was actually what the insurance said to me when I called them the first time. That "I Don't have to tell anyone". That was a great proposal from an authority, but I think that describes it. Everyone actually accepts it, everyone does, but it's not really by the rules. Personally I don't like it because it creates uncertainty for everyone. Everything is fine until something happens. It's like no one really cares. - P2.

That leads over into one of the biggest challenges all DNs mentioned. The laws and regulations surrounding work, employment, school and visiting. There are different laws for visas in every country, a constant battle of knowing where and how to file their taxes and for those who are DNs

and have children, school duty is another challenge they face. There was a feeling of the world moving faster than the laws and regulations can adapt to. Participant 4 had previously had their own company but did not enjoy it, but in order to move abroad they were forced into having their own company once again.

I think it is way better to be employed and with everything that includes. [...] But to live in the south of Europe I had to be registered here since we live here permanently. So then I had to start my own company, and now I am a freelancer against my will. – P4

For participant 5 who had one company registered in South America and two other companies registered in Australia while working with clients all over the world had to put much time into administration for their companies. In a dream scenario there would be a solution to this, an accountant who knows how to handle the taxes for each of the countries. Currently, it is very complicated for participant 5 to file taxes and while they felt like their issue is more of a ‘first world problem’ it is still necessary to highlight.

If there would be some sort of solution of where I could enter all the information of taxes and insurance and such, and someone else could handle that for me - That would be ideal. Because it is so incredibly complicated. [...] Not having to put so much time on all the administration, it would be my dream solution. – P5

Narrowing down the challenges and studying what type of issues they faced on a personal level. Loneliness, prejudice, technostress and culture chocks and were discussed. Loneliness as mentioned above in 4.2 is a work related problem but it also affects the DN on a personal level. When joining a coworking space is not possible, the lack of social interactions still creates suffering for the DN.

I don't have any good method actually. One has to meet other people that work like me I guess. It's on my to do list to feel better 2023. – P6 [on how to feel less lonely].

The prejudiced, being as mentioned in example above under 4.2 as well, that they ‘did not actually work’ and also into lack of support and resistance from others in pursuing the DN lifestyle is another issue DNs can face that affects them on a personal level. This lack of support and resistance was discouraging for participant 5, but they had a few who supported them to try it which was enough for them to try it.

It was an incredible resistance in the beginning [...] “You will ruin your entire career, no one will want to work with you. All these 15 years you’ve been working, they will be lost”[...] but I had some that believe in me, and that was enough. – P5

Technostress was identified as another challenge multiple DNs would face. Both the stress of their ICT not working properly as well as their need for internet connection to manage their work. This was managed through bringing back-up laptops as well as choosing their next travel destination or stay after acceptable internet connections. Most of the participants could to some extent prepare to

be without the internet for a limited time by downloading documents to work offline. But neither of them could manage their work completely without a connection. The technostress was also triggered by working from a different timezone than other clients.

In the beginning [of being a DN] I tried to adjust and adapt to everyone everywhere and it got extremely stressful. [...] But that is something I've learned over time, to dare to be offline and not reachable. – P1

Neither of the participants had a real issue with procrastination. Although they admitted to facing temptations, such as skiing in powder snow, they all claimed to be able to stay focused when needed. It was discussed whether procrastination could be an issue for others wanting to try the DN lifestyle. Since the participants themselves did not have an issue with it, if needed they could reschedule their day. They believed their previous experience of working and personality could be the reason they stayed focused.

Where I work is on me, so what may appear as a challenge is if I really need to finish something but the sun is shining we got new snow and such things [...] But then again, I'm very good at staying disciplined when I need to. – P8

One of the participants mentioned culture shocks as something that can be a challenge, especially when someone is new to the DN lifestyle. Small things that would not be an issue in an office, such as printing and signing a document can take days to manage abroad. Being unprepared for these changes can create frustration while in reality, it is simply more of a culture shock occurring.

It can be such a frustration when you're living in different places that things don't work like they do at home. Especially if you're new to digital nomadism. I'm so used to things not working, I'm so used to not knowing and always having to ask [for help]. – P5

While there were three prominent themes throughout the empirical dataset. There was a discussion with one of the participants that focused around social sustainability. Since this was only found in one interview it should be considered with some reservation. The discussion was about geo-arbitrage resulting in gentrification of an area and driving away the local population. DNs who have a western salary standard and then travel to 'cheap' countries tend to lack the acknowledgement that the 'cheap town' they are staying at is not 'cheap' in terms of the country's own currency. When those places become popular among DN, the pricing of accommodation and food rises and slowly the locals are forced away by the DNs.

Sometimes when a bunch of digital nomads enter a place very fast, they tend to come from a country with a western salary and travel to a developing country. And everyone needs a place to live. Of course everyone wants their share so the rental prices of housing increases and then the locals can't afford housing anymore. They can't afford to buy produce and products because suddenly the market has changed. It's a classic problem that always existed in different ways but now it's happening faster than before. [...] The question isn't how do we make it easier for us to

[to be digital nomads] but rather, since we're so privileged to be able to do what we do, what do we do for the places we're at? – P5

5. Discussion

Previous research stated six main challenges DN face with their lifestyle being the prejudices and stigma of not 'actually' working, (techno)stress, loneliness and a lack of structure, work identity, self discipline (Cook, 2020., Frick & Marx, 2021, Kong, et al. 2019., Ritcher & Ritcher, 2020). These challenges were all topics mentioned by the participants, however they were presented on a personal and/or corporate level. The empirical findings of this thesis indicates the challenges DNs face can be categorized into four layers; (1) the individual challenges, such as creating a structure and work identity, (2) work-related challenges of working conditions, (3) technical challenges, meaning having the right technological solutions to support their work and (4) global challenges which includes laws and regulations. In this section the challenges will be discussed in terms of what implications it has to the future of work and digital nomadism followed by what corporates can do in order to support a remote working environment for people like DNs.

5.1 Digital Nomads and the future

The definition four requirements needed to be fulfilled for definition of a DN; (1) Not having a locationbound work, (2) work that is manageable through ICT, (3) high value of freedom and (4) a strong aspiration to travel (Cevtaeva & Denzi-Gulliet, 2021., Hannonen, 2020., Mancielli, 2020., Prester et al, 2020). These were all requirements the participants fulfilled. However, the topic of 'age' is never mentioned as a requirement but rather adds to the stereotype that a DN needs to be a young adult perceived by some of the participants. Likewise, the high value of freedom was misinterpreted as a need to live in a suitcase without a family or permanent home/base to stay yet again adding to the stereotype of a DN. To make it easier to define as a DN, it could be suggested to add different layers to the digital nomadism. While the 'extreme' version of a DN still exists, there are also people who by having the DN lifestyle can spend more time with their family. By changing the conversation the DNs could gain more recognition for their independent work and professionalism in general rather than being recognized for extreme living conditions.

If we would discuss DN and the future of work, the professionalism behind DN has taken turns by the stigma of remote workers 'not actually working' (Kong et al. 2019) which the participants had experienced. However, they had all noticed a change in the attitude towards them since the pandemic of Covid-19. Likewise, they stated that they all 'worked their hours' like they would have done at an office job. This shifting in attitude towards DNs can be shown within the work environment as a paradigm shift supported by the pandemic but also by the technological advantages that makes it possible to leave the organizational containers as discussed by Winter et al (2014). While DN still can be seen as a more extreme case of a change in the future of work, they should not be dismissed as studying them can create a base for how to handle and support remote work in general.

Further discussing the stereotype of the DN it also comes with critique towards the lifestyle such as geo-arbitrage and 'digital bro-mad' (Cook, 2020., Frick & Marx 2021). While one

participant touched upon the subject stating “*The question isn’t how do we make it easier for us to [to be digital nomads] but rather, since we’re so privileged to be able to do what we do, what do we do for the places we’re at?*” This is an area to be further explored to not exploit developing countries and out-compete the locals.

Among the challenges discussed by previous researchers such as lacking work-identity, structure, self discipline and suffering from (techno)stress, prejudice and loneliness (Cook, 2020., Frick & Marx, 2021, Kong, et al. 2019., Ritcher & Ritcher, 2020) the issue DN faces on a higher level such as legal challenges of how to pay their taxes and how to apply for insurance have stayed largely uncovered. Future research could address this area and provide useful insights about these issues on the higher level.

5.2 How corporations can support digital nomads

The stigma remote workers are facing of ‘slacking’ (Kong, et al. 2019) being an issue rather affects all workforces that have the opportunity to work remotely, not only DN. The findings indicate that there is a shift happening towards the attitude of remote working due to the pandemic of covid-19 which forced many organizations into the digital transformation and allowing remote work. For this shift in the attitude to continue one participant highlighted the importance of providing accessible information of laws and regulation and reducing the level of uncertainty corporates may have towards remote work. The value of trust and transparency was highlighted and needed to prevent a mismatch in expectations between the DN and organization (Kong, et al. 2019) this is needed to continue the shift in the attitude towards remote work. According to the findings, the participants did the same amount of work as previously, the only difference was when and where they did it. One of the participants who was employed by a company did it even more seriously when they were abroad to act as an example to their employer in hope to change the company’s attitude. The aftermath of the pandemic should continue to change and possibly remove the stigma of people not working when they do it remotely unless something unpredicted happens.

As of (techno)stress and loneliness among DN it was assumed to be caused by a lack of structure, job identity and self-discipline (Cook, 2020., Frick & Marx, 2021). The empirical findings of this thesis did not align that so was the case though. (Techno)stress and lack of structure could be identified in the beginning of some DN career, this was solved by them using their own skills of planning a ‘normal workday’ to suit different time zones and such. Previous research fails to mention previous work-experience of those DN that suffer from lack of structure, job identity and self-discipline (Cook, 2020., Frick & Marx, 2021). Those DN who participated in this study had all been working at a traditional 9 - 5 job. Their previous work experience could be assumed to have given them time to create a job identity as well as given them the knowledge of how to structure a workday and therefore the findings did not indicate that they were lacking structure or job-identity. To maintain self-discipline and reduce loneliness it was suggested that DN who could find social support from others, such as family and friends suffered less (Cook, 2020., Frick & Marx, 2021). While most of the participants traveled with family and partners this could agree with earlier findings within the field of research. However, most of them claimed not facing an issue of staying disciplined with the reason that they had already worked like this for a long period of time. The

feeling of loneliness was an issue among some of the participants. The issue of loneliness could be argued to not only be the DNs responsibility to solve. While self-employed DN, working on different projects might be more responsible to actively create a social environment for themselves. Corporations are responsible to use technology which supports the digital team as well as creating social events for their remote workers. Without offering technology that enhances and promotes the digital team, organizations are at risk of losing the 'war of knowledge' Mumford (2000) discussed about. When adapting suitable technology the remote workers can be more included, supporting both the work conditions for employees, DNs and the organization.

6. Conclusion

For this thesis, the aim is to answer the following research questions: *What kind of challenges do Digital Nomads face and how do they overcome them? What can we learn from digital nomadism in relation to the future of work?* Previous literature shows a research gap in the lack of challenges DN that are employed by an organization may face as well as on what levels the challenges DN face are distributed such as individual, technical, work-related and global. As a growing knowledge workforce, DN should not be dismissed as it is challenging current work-norms and can be considered an extreme version of the remote workforce outside the organizational container. By the empirical findings from the semi-structured interviews with DNs, the stereotype of a DN being a young adult should be revisited as it hindered participants from recognizing themselves as a 'true' DN. It can also be concluded that some of the work-related challenges DN face, such as having the right ICT and feeling a sense of belonging, are connected to work-related challenges corporations face when it comes to their organizational culture. Organizations that have, or want to have, remote workers need to encourage and promote technology that allows and supports digital teams within their company. By promoting the technology and valuing trust, transparency and communication these challenges will be easier to overcome, allowing for more seamless collaborations between the organization and the DN. While DN still can be considered as an extreme response to ICTs development, when work is moving outside the organizational container their expertise on remote work can be used as a foundation to develop better solutions for remote work in general.

6.2 Future research

For future research this study could be conducted with DNs from other cultures/countries to validate the finding of this study. Two additional suggestions for future research would be to explore the global challenges that DNs face more in depth as this was something they all mentioned as the most complex challenge they faced. Lastly, a suggestion would be to study the corporate attitudes towards allowing their employees to try the DN lifestyle and see if it is possible to create a framework to do so.

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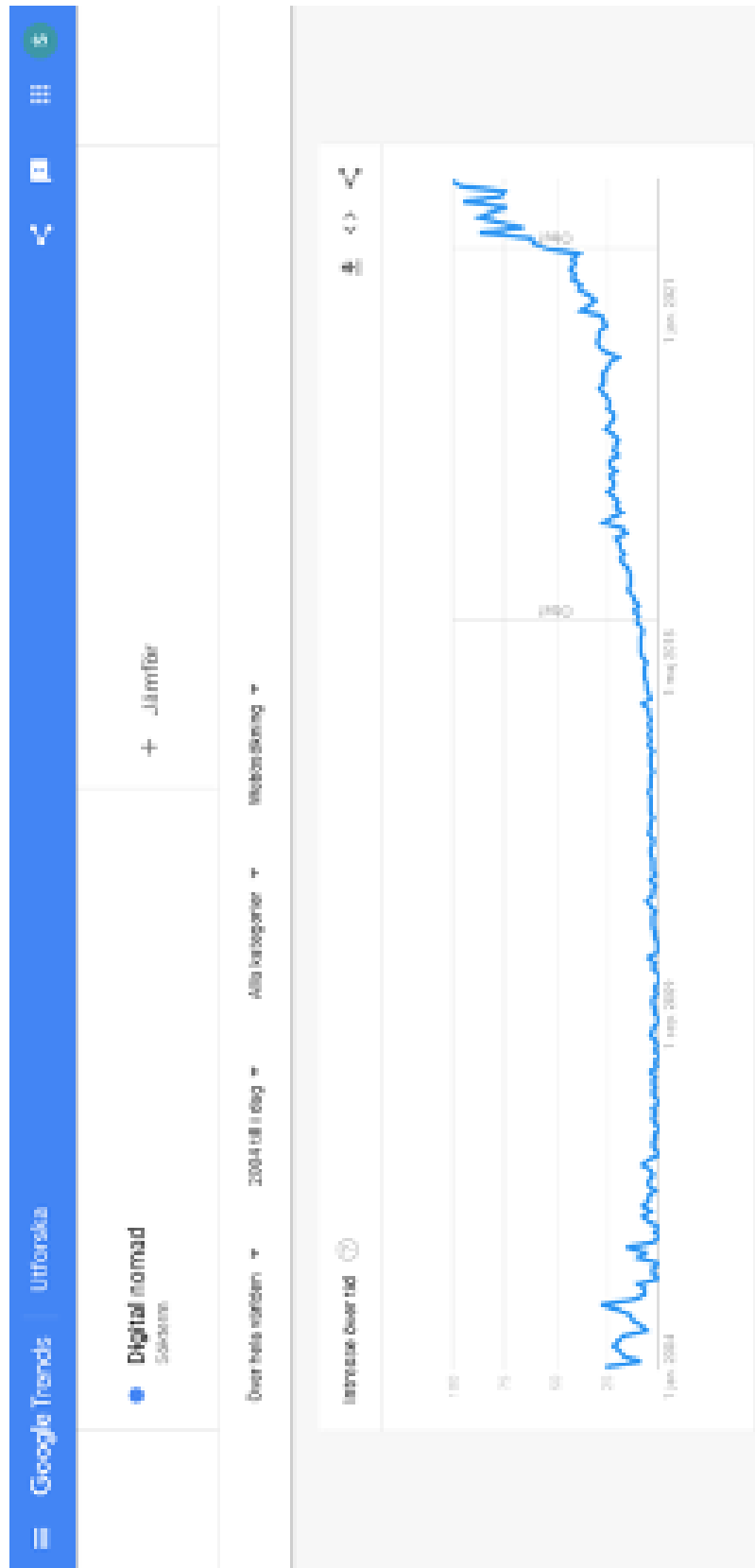
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Appendix I



Appendix 2

Start:

Explanation of the Swedish Research Councils Ethical guidelines. This includes information what the study is about, aim and research question. That they have the right to be anonymous and to stop their participation of the study at any time, likewise if they afterwards regret participating they have the right to be removed from the study. They were informed of how the data will be handle and who will have access to it.

Aim/RQ: Explore what challenges Digital Nomads face and how they may overcome them. What can we learn from digital nomadism?

Ask if it is OK to record their interview for transcription later.

- If yes, start recording.
-
- Name? (Will be coded to a number)
- Age
- For how long have they been working as a digital nomad?
-
- What are you currently working with?

- How did you first hear about digital nomads?
 - What is a digital nomad according to you?
 - How does that differ from other groups working remotely?
- What made you decide to become a digital nomad?

- What does a typical workday look like for you?
 - Do you work alone or with others? Both clients or digital nomads etc.
 - How to you stay disciplined?
- What would you say is the best thing about being a digital nomad?
 - What do you feel could be improved?
- What challenges do you face as a digital nomad?
 - How are they compared to previous jobs you have had?

- What digital tools do you use on a daily basis?
 - What features do you use in X.
 - Do they differ depending on where you are working? (from abroad vs Sweden?)
 - Do you experience any issues with X?

Finishing questions:

- Is there anything that comes to mind when you hear my research question/aim?
- Is there anything more you would like to add?