

Digital Nomads

Opportunities and Challenges for the Future of Work in the Post-Covid Society

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Introduction

Digital nomadism has emerged as a new way of working and lifestyle in the 21st century (Hanonen, 2021). Individuals practicing digital nomadism form “a category of mobile professionals, who perform their work remotely from anywhere in the world, utilizing digital technologies” (Makimoto, 2013, p.40). Digital nomads are blending traveling with location independent work and flexible working hours. Besides being an expression of the future of work, this growing phenomenon has considerable socio-economic implications in the post-pandemic era.

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the interest in remote working and digital nomadism among young knowledge workers (Brynjolfsson, et al., 2020) and self-employed professionals. When offices closed during the enforced lock-down from 2020 to 2022, knowledge workers had to adapt to new digital ways of working. The lock-down enforced behavioral, technological and spatial adaptation (Razmerita et al., 2021). The pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation of organizations, which are aiming at a particular hybrid work arrangement. In the shadow of these developments, governments from several nations have turned their lenses to these work-travelers, who are now ambassadors of new ways of working (Aroles et al., 2021; Ehn et al., 2022). Furthermore, there are several structural factors that may further spur the number of digital nomads, during and after the Covid-19 crisis. First, there is an increased desire for autonomy and flexibility in balancing professional and private life among employees (Parker et al., 2020). In the U.S.A., a stronger position of knowledge workers as a result of scarcity on the labor market and the “great resignation” phenomenon has improved employees’ bargaining to live up to these desires (Thompson, 2021). Although data is limited, a similar mechanism may be possible in the EU (Bérubé et al., 2022). Second, improved digital infrastructures allow people to work remotely (even from rural areas), including fiber-optic internet, improved communication and collaboration software, and immersive technology such as virtual and augmented reality (Richter & Richter, 2020). Third, the advent of decentralized and democratized technologies, often based on blockchain architecture or Artificial Intelligence, enable new decentralized ventures and organizations (Tayenaka, 2020). Such organizations accommodate flexible work and nomadic lifestyles (Brown, 2020).

As a consequence, the number of digital nomads is increasing rapidly. Although there are no reliable statistics on the number of digital nomads in Europe, the number of U.S. citizens working as digital nomads increased from 7.3 million in 2019 to 15.5 million in 2021 (Nichols, 2022). An international survey among 4000 individuals that identify as digital nomads by the blog “A Brother Abroad” provides some basic demographic information related to age, education and professional background of these nomads (Grider, 2022). According to this survey, digital nomads seem to be young (60.4% are younger than 40 years old) and highly educated (70.4% have at least a bachelor’s degree), working in professions like marketing, IT, design, writing and e-commerce. The majority of respondents (83%) is self-employed, while 13% is working remotely for a company.

While more and more organizations (such as Spotify, AirBnB) have started to offer opportunities for their employees and freelancers to work remotely, this rapid upsurge poses several challenges. First, cross-border working has been dealt with over the last decades but still poses legal and social challenges and additional burdens (administratively as well as financially) on those who engage in such working situations. Second, the rapid increase in digital nomads may place additional pressure on individual countries as well as the EU as a whole to adapt their legal regulations with this change in working pattern. The (legal) ambition for countries and the EU should be to primarily coordinate the regulation of working environment and working conditions in addition to taxation and social insurances as these currently pose the largest inconveniences to employers and employees. Additionally, there should be an emphasis on informing employers and employees of current regulations as there is an evident lack of insight in the regulations and the effects of non-compliance.

The challenges of digital nomadism motivate organizations and policy-makers to develop new strategies to accommodate this trend (Everson et al., 2021). Current studies about digital nomadism are conceptual in nature, based on desk research and literature reviews (Richter & Richter, 2020; Shawkat et al., 2021). Often, these studies focus on the perspective of one stakeholder, e.g. only the digital nomads or the employers. This is problematic, because a challenge for one stakeholder might be an opportunity for the other stakeholder. Although the scope of the literature covered in this paper is global, the aim of this paper is to provide recommendations to European policy makers for adapted and relevant regulations, guidelines and implementation activities regarding the opportunities and challenges of digital nomadism. Specifically, this paper takes a multi-stakeholder, multidisciplinary and science-based perspective. The implications would inform the development of dedicated EU-based strategies and policies for digital nomadism that may provide a global example for implementation.

To do so, we provide an overview of the literature to contextualize and synthesize the phenomenon of digital nomadism. We discuss the concept and characterize the digital nomads phenomenon. Also, we present developments of digital nomadism regarding new working spaces and forms of organizing and highlight topics policymakers should consider in future research and innovation programs for scientifically-based contributions and solutions. After this review, we describe and report a qualitative study that highlights the individual narratives behind three critical digital nomad personas (digital nomad, employer and local government official) and compares how organizational, technological, legal and social challenges and opportunities play out differently for these personas.

Digital nomadism: an overview

Digital nomadism combines the ancient practice of moving periodically with the contemporary technology apparatus. It is a relatively recent phenomenon, which already has considerable socio-economic implications. Digital nomadism is tied to other socio-economic trends, such as casual work in the “Gig Economy” (Mancinelli, 2020), also referred to as platform work (Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2017). On the one side, digital nomadism may boost local economies (Hall et al., 2019). On the other side, it can also create tensions as it may trigger gentrification in local communities (Bozzi, 2020; Sigler & Wachsmuth, 2020).

Several factors explain the development of digital nomadism. First, our lives became increasingly digitized with the spread of the world wide web, personal technologies (such as mobile devices), and social media (Murero, 2022). Second, traveling worldwide has become cheaper, while an increased number of available destinations is evident. In contrast to our nomadic ancestors’ focus on survival, the 21st-century nomads blend tourism-traveling and work as a lifestyle (Hannonen, 2020; Kannisto, 2014; Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2018). Third, we witnessed an increased desire and practice of freelancing and independent working connected to globalism and neoliberalism (Gandini, 2016; Mancinelli, 2020). More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic required robust actions to deal with health and financial crises. Covid-19 measures accelerated digital transformation while restricting mobility.

Indeed, we dove into technology during the pandemic to work, leisure, and/or care. As a result, several predictions regarding the future of work point to the spread of remote/hybrid work (Lund et al., 2021). Organizations see an opportunity to reduce costs in offices, and employees search for convenient places to live, aiming for a better work-life and social balance (Vyas, 2022). In this context, digital nomadism hit the spotlight. Intriguingly, discussions around the “neo-nomads,” “global nomads,” “modern nomads,” or “new nomads” (Müller, 2016) are still diffuse, and most research available on the topic emerges from theoretical approaches. The increment of studies following empirical data is urgent; thus, governments can make more strategic decisions regarding the support of digital nomads in their area, considering different scenarios and their societal-economic-cultural effects.

Contextualizing the emergence of digital nomadism

The possibility of working from anywhere, especially through the development of communication systems and devices, has been part of a futurist idealism since the mid-1960s. Science fiction played a key role in conceiving digital nomadism. Writers devoted considerable attention to offering a vision of how our lives could change with the opportunities presented by digital devices and their connections (Schlagwein, 2018b). Even before the first computer was set up, the emergence of processors sparked individuals’ imagination and enthusiasm. At the time, all services regarding communications or traveling were expensive and scarce. Hence, we can imagine the excitement around the science-fiction writer Arthur Clarke broadcast in 1964. He enthusiastically spoke about the possibilities of having instant communication with people from different points of the globe. He also saw market opportunities by exemplifying that such advancements would allow businesses to be run from paradisiac destinations.

The promises around the creation of the first computer in Engineering departments of universities engaged futurists such as Clarke but also spread to different academic realms. Marshall McLuhan was an important theorist approaching the socioeconomic impact of technological developments (Schlagwein, 2018b). In 1964, McLuhan coined the term ‘global village’ to describe the phenomenon emerging from access to different cultures and mindsets through increased electronic connections. In between the academic and business realms, Alvin Toffler’s writings about post-industrial society were highly influential in management literature and practice. ‘The third wave’, (Toffler, 1980), addressed the deep changes evolving with the internet. For instance, he describes the blur between production and consumption with the term “prosumer” and claims that information would become the most valuable asset of an organization.

Remote work was an important movement on the road to digital nomadism. The term entered the management vocabulary in 1981, when Robert Noyce, Intel’s co-founder, highlighted that technologies were getting cheaper, therefore, applicable to the workplace. Such a wave results not only from the development of smaller computers (Macintosh) but also from perspectives such as telecommuting (Nilles, 1994). The first digital nomad is accounted to be the journalist Steven Roberts, who, in 1983, biked across the USA while working and registered his adventure in the book ‘Computing across America’. The 1990s represent a significant prompt to nomadism as we know it nowadays. The launch of the internet browser with the world wide web (www), Windows95, and wi-fi allowed the first digitalization of ‘gigs’ with the emergence of the freelance movement. The spur and thrill around these events inspired Makimoto & Manners (1997), who are considered digital nomadism coiners.

The years 2000 hold the growth of several seeds from precedent decades. Internet speed increased while costs were reduced. The decade is also the cradle of social media networks. Orkut, Flickr, and Facebook, among others, are important vectors to the spread of the digital nomad mindset, while the first cloud services and mobile devices popularized home offices (Schlagwein, 2018a). Generally, third spaces (Oldenburg, 1989), such as coworking spaces and internet cafes, became widespread among independent workers and freelancers. Finally, with the development of concepts such as creative and cultural industries, tourism has become the main source of economic growth for several countries (OECD, 2014).

The brief contextualization shows that digital nomadism is an interdisciplinary topic attached to technological advances, policies for economic development, and new forms and working and organizing. In the next section, we will shortly present definitions of the phenomenon based on academic research.

What is digital nomadism?

A well-accepted and grounded definition of digital nomadism is still missing in the literature. Two reasons may be pointed to this. First, only a few studies are empirical and consider data elaborated from practice. Second, the constant changes on the three main drivers of the phenomenon (technology, economy, and culture) impose several challenges on conceptualizing it. We provide a short overview of four definitions available in the literature.

1. Šímová (2022) identified three main research nodes related to digital nomadism based on a literature review. One is focused on the everyday life of the digital nomad, and approaches where they work (e.g., coworking spaces), how they organize work through 'gigs', and their use of mobile technology to accomplish tasks. The second considers aspects of the nomadic lifestyle, such as the location-independence, 'free spirit'. The third refers to efforts on differentiating, while acknowledging interdependence, with the digital and remote work phenomena.
2. Wang et al. (2018) challenged the current dichotomy work and leisure featuring digital nomadism. To achieve the goal, they present three distinct theoretical frames. The first is related to digital nomadism as an economic activity. In this perspective, digital nomads' work is digital work, which means understanding factors and modes related to production. It is recognized that most of the activities performed by digital nomads include aspects of consumption. Therefore, research interested in the phenomena should consider the productive dimension of this type of work and how the production process is transformed. They also consider digital nomadism as a cultural phenomenon, regarding individual's self-actualization and the life-hacking subculture. Finally, the authors consider digital nomadism as a technology-enabled form of working and organizing, thus, applicable to understanding emergent work configurations, such as living labs or even coworking spaces.
3. Reichenberger (2018), differently from others, focused on progressive levels of digital nomadism. The author argues that individuals moving to different corners of a country must also be considered in an intended definition of the phenomenon. Starting level 0, which is the essential condition to one to be regarded as a digital nomad, defines that location independence shall be achieved by conducting work in an online environment. To be qualified on level 1, the worker shall not have any fixed workspace, while in level 2, the worker must also have the possibility to work and travel simultaneously. Finally, on level 3, previous criteria must be attained "to the extent that no permanent residence exists" (Reichenberger, 2018, p. 371).
4. The final concept we will incorporate in this overview was elaborated by Schlagwein (2018a, p.1): "Digital nomadism refers to professionals using a range of information systems (IS) and information technology (IT) tools to perform work digitally over the Internet so to enable a lifestyle of perpetual traveling and expat living".

Although the definitions share some similarities, and Schlagwein (2018a) presents a straightforward conceptualization, they are complementary and introduce important elements to be considered by policymakers and practitioners. Moreover, several research avenues are open based on the existing literature, especially those aiming for longitudinal empirical data. In the following, based on Schlagwein's (2018a) general clarification of who are the digital nomads, we will explore in more detail the recognized face of digital nomads.

Who are the digital nomads?

Generally, digital nomads are individuals performing digital work, whose practices are organized around mobile technology. Also, they share the willingness to travel and learn about different cultures while belonging to a mind-like community (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021; Schlagwein, 2018a). Most digital nomads are self-employed or independent workers (Müller, 2016, p. 345). In 2022, more than half of the identified nomads were running their own business, while around 35% were associated with freelancing and 'gig' work (Statista, 2023a).

In March 2022, 52% of the self-identified digital nomads traveling worldwide were nationals from the U.S.A, while 8% were citizens from the U.K. (Statista, 2023b). The U.S.A is also pointed as the main destination of digital nomads, followed by Thailand and Spain (Statista, 2023a). According to the FlexJobs (2022) survey, around 53% of the workers head to North America, while 18% choose Western Europe and 13% stay in Asia. Regarding the cities, the survey shows that the preferred ones are London, Bangkok and New York City (FlexJobs, 2022).

Among the reasons to become a digital nomad are the possibility of location independence to live, and focus on good livelihood (Macgilchrist et al., 2020; Hannonen, 2020). While selecting the location where to travel, digital nomads consider safety as the most significant component, followed by the costs of living and fast, accessible internet connection (Statista, 2023a). Therefore, beyond the search for travel adventure or the desire to escape from traditional forms of employment and production system (Nash et al., 2018), nomads search for destinations offering reliable infrastructures to perform digital work (Evyn et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2019).

Although digital nomads are usually associated with Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) or Generation (Gen) Z (born in 1997 or after) (Müller, 2016), statistics show that age may not be the best qualifier to understand who they are. For instance, according to a survey of the portal FlexJobs (2022), 27% identify as Millennials or Gen Z, 41% identify as Gen X (born between 1965 and 1980), and 32% identify as baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) or the silent generation (born between 1928 and 1945). Further research to understand the motivations and demographics around these mobile professionals' behaviors and impact are required to better customize policies and regulations aiming at local development.

Methods

The data used for this paper consists of both primary and secondary data. First, we conducted a literature review and desk research on the topic of digital nomads. Second, we conducted a "personas" study to further investigate the challenges and opportunities of digital nomadism. Personas are a qualitative method focusing on representations of stakeholders and are especially useful for creating strategies to communicate with different stakeholders (Nielsen, 2019; Nielsen & Hansen, 2014). We followed Jensen et al.'s (2021) five steps for a personas study.

First, we determined the purposes for using the personas. In our study on digital nomads, we aim to understand how different stakeholders are involved and impacted by such a new way of working. This is why we consider three different personas: a digital nomad, a local government official and an organization manager employing digital nomads.

The second step refers to collecting data through interviews, observations, surveys or focus groups. We organized a workshop which brought together ten academic and three policy experts in different aspects of digital nomadism, ranging from personal technologies to the consequences of digital nomadism for emotionally intensive work. Before and during the workshop, we interviewed three stakeholders representing a persona: a digital nomad, an employer, and a local government official about their experiences with digital nomadism. The interviews took about 50 minutes per person (this includes time before and during the workshop). We asked them the following questions:

- Could you please briefly introduce yourself?

- How and why did you get involved in digital nomadism?
- What are, in your experience, the benefits and opportunities of digital nomadism?
- What are, in your experience, challenges and threats of digital nomadism?
- How could research and/or regulation on digital nomadism help you?

Afterwards, our workshop participants asked follow-up questions to clarify the perspective and challenges of each interviewee. After the interviews, the 13 experts were split into three groups. These groups rotated every 25 minutes to discuss a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis of the three personas earlier introduced by the interviewees. Participants wrote their observations and questions on post-its and stuck them on the persona poster. The process was iterative: participants built on the notes of the previous group of participants. This resulted in dilemmas related to the SWOT categories, research questions and policy challenges for each persona. The three SWOT analyses and persona interviews were used to create a cross-persona analysis, comparing and contrasting the interests and experiences of the personas on each theme. We foresee that other personas (e.g. EU policy maker or intermediary offering digital services to digital nomads) could be added in the future.

The third and fourth steps for the personas study are interdependent and refers to analyzing the data focusing on demographic or behavioral characteristics to identify different segments or specifications of stakeholders. In this study, we consider different characteristics of the three different personas. For instance, although most of the digital nomads are independent workers, we also consider remote workers, working for one specific company with a more stable contract that allows them to work from anywhere. The analysis of the interviews was inductive and interpretive, highlighting themes and quotes that were characteristic of the persona. This resulted in the three anonymized and stylized persona interviews.

The final step refers to creating and comparing the persona profiles. It is important to highlight that when using personas, “the focus area as a lens to highlight relevant attitudes and the specific context associated with these” (Nielsen, 2019, p. 8). The cross-persona analysis followed a two-step approach. First, we used the expert opinions regarding the opportunities and challenges expressed in the workshop to identify themes that are common for all three personas. Second, these themes were validated in a follow-up meeting, during which the interests of the three personas were compared on each theme.

Persona profiles

In this section we describe personas of a typical digital nomad, an employer dealing with digital nomads, and a local policy-officer aiming to attract digital nomads. The personas are based on interviews and desk research.

Sophia, Digital Nomad

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Nationality | U.S.A. citizen |
| Age | 32 |
| Profession | Psychiatric nurse |
| Employment status | Self-employed |
| Digital nomad | Since May 2021 |
| Current location | A Greek Island |



How it all started. Sophia has been a digital nomad since May 2021. But why did she decide to take on this lifestyle? In 2016, she opened her own private practice in psychiatric nursing, seeing clients typically in their 20s and 30s with various psychiatric issues. In the first wave of

the Covid-19 crisis, she had to take a break from her practice and help in the frontline of the pandemic. Afterwards, she came back to her own practice, but due to the pandemic she had to work remotely via videoconferencing. She realized that working remotely as a psychiatric nurse was emotionally exhausting: “emotionally intense work via a computer screen is draining energy”. Hence, she felt that she had to restore her work-life balance. The pandemic, however, limited her options to blow off steam. When a good friend decided to become a digital nomad in South-East Asia, Sophia’s desire to combine her work with traveling grew. Although she found remote work emotionally intense, she also realized that new healthcare insurance policies allowed self-employed practitioners to work remotely. This would offer her the (temporary) opportunity to work from different locations, as long as her clients remained in her area in the U.S.A. Desire and opportunity converged and triggered Sophia to reflect on her lifestyle and to take action. She decided to pack her bags and become a digital nomad: “Once I found this out, it was a catalyst to make the change. I closed things off..., took a few months to stop seeing my clients, and left.”

The perks of being a digital nomad. Currently, Sophia lives on a paradisiac Greek island. Since her clients are located in the U.S.A., she relaxes during the day and works during the evening and night. Given the lower costs in Greece, she works much less than she used to do in the U.S.A.: about 40-50% of the original work week. This extra leisure time allows her to “employ more selfcare, like meditation and journaling, or going for a swim, hiking and connecting with nature”. She experiences that this self-care helps her to keep up with her emotionally intense work, because she is “able to be more present with my clients, as I am in a better head space”. Thus, she indicates that her digital nomad lifestyle helps to reduce feelings of stress and burn-out.

The challenges of being a digital nomad. Sophia realizes that her lifestyle is not available to all professions. In the past, she was employed by hospitals, seeing clients from marginal groups (e.g., dealing with poverty, violence or former detention) that relied on Medicare or Medicaid.¹ The type of clients and their health insurance policy would not work with remote work. Hence, many employers probably need to switch their profession and employment status to enable a digital nomad lifestyle. While being a digital nomad, you should be really aware and proficient with all regulations.

Second, digital nomadism comes with practical hindrances. The different time zones require Sophia to adjust her rhythm: “my body needs to work at odd hours”. Also, she has to plan her work and other activities meticulously, as planning conflicts may slip in easily due to the time zones. Furthermore, she has been struggling with finding reliable access to wireless internet at some remote locations.

Last, Sophia feels “definitely more isolated” as she misses a social network of colleagues and interdisciplinary partners that collaborate in the care of her clients. She indicates that “in the United States...I worked very collaboratively...with all sorts of services, an interdisciplinary way of working, always interacting with other practices and services. I miss that model of working.” Although she uses the phone or videoconferencing to meet with her clients’ other collaboration partners or family members when needed, she misses the informal “opportunity to chat with colleagues throughout the day” which is an important source of support for emotionally intense work.

Sophia has several ways to deal with this missing “watercooler” social network. First, she joined online peer supervision with a group of therapists that also work remotely. They meet every week and discuss professional cases, as well as sharing experiences of how life is a digital nomad. These peer supervision meetings have been very “grounding” for Sophia.

¹ In the U.S.A., Medicare is federal health insurance for anyone age 65 and older, or with certain conditions. Medicaid, instead, is a federal and state program that provides health coverage for citizens with limited income.

Second, she realizes that remote work does not fit a high risk (e.g., very vulnerable) client population, because risk assessment is more difficult due to reduced non-verbal communication (e.g., body language), and it is “sometimes a bit more scary when clients have suicidal thoughts”. Although she acknowledges that she could not do more for vulnerable patients if she were working in the U.S.A., she felt that “there is something with distance” when working with higher risk groups. Hence, she had to adjust her client population: “the population I work now is lower risk, what makes it possible to work abroad”

Marc, Employer

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Nationality | Dutch |
| Age | 41 |
| Profession | People manager |
| Organization | IT consultancy and implementation |
| Digital nomads | Employed since 2021 |
| Locations | Spain, Scandinavia and Dubai |



How it all started. Marc works at a Dutch Information Technologies (IT) company, specialized in developing and implementing software for automating business processes using workflow and Customer Relationship Management systems. He has over 13 years of experience in various roles in the IT industry, from developer to his current position as a people manager. People managers typically supervise about 20 employees and have monthly contacts with them about H.R. and performance. Marc has no experience as a digital nomad himself, but he did work with many international employees from software vendors. He encountered the concept of digital nomad for the first time when a friend started traveling in Brazil while working in 2010. His friend kept sharing his experiences as a digital nomad.

Digital nomads were only recently put on the agenda of the company’s management: “our current policy is that we do not search for digital nomads, but we encounter situations where people are working for us in The Netherlands, and want to start working as digital nomads”. The number of cases is quite limited at the moment, but recently Marc saw an increase in desire among young IT talent to work abroad. On one hand, current employees have more and more the wish to work from different locations: “Someone told us: I want to work from Southern Europe now. I like to work for your company, but from another location. We came to a solution, but we (realized, red.) that we did not have a policy for it”. On the other hand, Marc increasingly meets job candidates that inquire about working remotely: “And now I am currently talking to a candidate. He wants to live in Scandinavia.”

Until now, Marc’s company tried to arrange all practical matters for each individual case. However, the management is at a point that they have to decide on a digital nomads policy: “Actually we discussed this (digital nomadism, red.) recently, and this interview triggers me: we have to think more about it and how shall we deal with it?” A fundamental question remains whether they want to work with digital nomads in the longer term.

The perks of employing digital nomads. Driven by the competitive labor market in IT, offering opportunities to work as a digital nomad would help to attract and retain talent. Marc saw, for example, an employee leaving due to limited opportunities: “Also (I saw, red.) a person that wants to have more freedom and wants to work abroad. The desire to become a digital nomad was bigger than staying with us.” Ultimately, Marc considers a digital nomadic lifestyle a good thing for young employees, as long as it would fit with their companies’ working

environment. Digital nomadism provides young talent with more opportunities to develop themselves, as well as flexibility in their work-life balance. In this way, Marc compares digital nomads with the earlier trend of working as a freelancer or midlancer among employees.

The challenges of employing digital nomads. Marc indicates that there are many challenges of digital nomadism for an employer. First, IT consultancy and implementation require close contact with the customer. This does not mean that employees need to be at the customers' premises every day, but at least part of the week. Hence, Marc asks employees with a digital nomad wish to first discuss their ambitions with the customers of their project, and plan offline visits to remain in contact.

Second, Marc is worried about how engaged digital nomads are and remain with the company: "if you work from a different location, and we noticed that also with remote working in Corona time, people become out of touch and less engaged with the company and its family feeling". Hence, digital nomads may be less influenced by and contribute to the organizational culture. To alleviate this concern, his company wants to stay in close contact by frequently talking to employees abroad. These talks are not only about performance and progress, but also about "to see if their situation works out". Marc indicates that if they have the feeling that they are losing contact with an employee abroad, that they would increase the frequency and invite the employee to visit the company's office.

Third, security and privacy issues remain an issue, particularly in their work as IT consultants. The company has the responsibility that employees abroad work in line with the security and privacy guidelines of the customer. This is a very complex responsibility, because "each client has their own guidelines", and the sensitivity of the data varies. Working from abroad, hence, can be a risk factor in some cases. Marc's company checks the security and privacy requirements with the client and whether they agree with a remote location of the IT consultant. Afterwards, Marc's company discusses, based on the input from the client, if they would take the risk.

Fourth, keeping up with labor legislation from different countries is a daunting task for a small to medium sized company. First, tax and social security legislation vary among countries. For example, the employee in Spain needs to register locally for taxes after living and working for more than six months in Spain. Marc believes that employees have the main responsibility to correctly arrange taxes and social security when the legislation becomes more complex: "In general, we like to arrange things, but if it gets too complex we put the responsibility to that person". The issue is that small to medium sized companies may not have the legal expertise and capacities to deal with an increase in digital nomads among their employees. Currently, it takes a lot of time for the limited capacity of legal expertise to check all local regulations. And, in the case of Marc's company, legal expertise focuses on arranging conditions (e.g. visa) for inbound employees from e.g. Romania and India. Another legal challenge is taking care of a healthy working environment for digital nomads: "we have a responsibility to offer them a safe working place, and we give them instruction from that". Still, it is difficult to monitor such conditions when employees work abroad, and for example to check whether they really detach themselves from work. Marc is unsure whether and how his company could deal with such legal responsibilities in the future, or whether a midlance or freelance construction would better work for digital nomads: "What could happen is that a digital nomad stays employed with us, or that we have a payroll company, a freelance construction or a midlance construction to deal with the things we discussed before (the legal challenges, red.)."

Raquel, Investment & Innovation Officer

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Nationality | Spanish |
| Age | 54 |
| Profession | Investment & innovation officer |
| Organization | Municipality and innovation hub |
| Location | Spanish touristic city |
| Digital nomads | Various countries (EU and non-EU) |



How it all started. Raquel works for a public company that aims to attract talent, start-ups and investments to her Spanish city. The vision is to create a large technology and innovation hub that helps to diversify the local economy. This is important because the city traditionally relies on tourism.

The Covid-19 pandemic was a difficult time for the city, because tourists stayed away due to a local lockdown and travel restrictions. The city officials realized that they should diversify their local economy and identified digital nomads as an opportunity to attract a new stream of visitors to the city: “We see that many people come here, want to live here and work from here”. Hence, the city launched a project to attract digital nomads. This project provides all kinds of services to digital nomads, helps digital nomads to integrate with the local community, and creates a local community among digital nomads. Currently, Raquel estimates that one thousand digital nomads come and leave the city every month.

Services are tailored to the specific situation of a digital nomad. It includes, for example, taxation, integration into the community, housing, legal assistance, information about events and local associations, school system, healthcare, etc. The project has an office that can help digital nomads with their questions.

The perks of hosting digital nomads. According to Raquel, digital nomads help to diversify the economy during times that the tourist sector is hindered (e.g., pandemic or winter time). The city actively aims to “create business around digital nomads.” For example, hotels usually close or partly close (e.g., their swimming pool) during winter. They can stay open year round when they accommodate digital nomads and serve as co-working spaces. Additionally, restaurants may stay open between lunch and dinner to function as meeting and working places for digital nomads. Hence, digital nomads may create an additional revenue stream for the local city: “they are working, they are discovering the city, they are buying stuff, spending money.” Still, this is an ongoing transformation for the tourist industry, because apartments, hotels and restaurants need to adapt their services and technologies (e.g., high-speed broadband internet) to the new needs of digital nomads.

Also, attracting digital nomads also means attracting new talent and their employers to the city. As Raquel puts it: “So now, we have a strategy to attract talent to the city. It is also a way to bring corporations, as we have examples where companies discovered that they had a critical number of nomads here, and so they decided to open a branch here...”. In this way, the city hopes that digital nomads help to build a local innovation hub with high-tech start-ups and corporations.

The benefits of attracting digital nomads go beyond the economy. Raquel explains that digital nomads also diversify the visitors and their influence on the city. Digital nomads typically stay longer in their accommodations than tourists, and may be better integrated into the local community. In this way, they might be better neighbors than tourists on average: “. If you are living in a building with several apartments, you prefer a digital nomad as a neighbor over a

tourist that is making noise, and coming and going every week or even every three days.” Many tourist cities are used to international inhabitants, making it easier to integrate digital nomads.

The challenges of hosting digital nomads. As a local city official, Raquel deals with several challenges related to digital nomads. First, the city does not have adequate instruments to measure the number of digital nomads, making it an elusive phenomenon for the city. As Raquel puts it: “We don’t have the figure, we don’t know how many people go to the city. They don’t have to register as a digital nomad. They just come here and start working. This is one of the problems: we cannot measure the market.” Currently, the city depends on estimates based on the number of long-stay (> 15 days) reservations at hotels and AirBnB, as well as information from the digital nomad community. This is a critical problem for the city, as they need an accurate measure to provide services and properly integrate the digital nomads into the local community. The city would like to convince digital nomads to become teleworkers, and stay for a longer time.

Legislation, and related paperwork, is an important concern for the city. Taxation and social security legislation highly varies with the country of origin of the digital nomads. It first of all creates an important barrier for citizens that want to become a digital nomad, but also is complicated for the host city that wants to provide clear advice: “We don’t have an expertise on that, we need lawyers, we need administration for that, everything is new and we really have to put information in a concrete website or don’t know where. For me this is a big big challenge.” Raquel sees ample opportunities for a digital nomad strategy on European level, as well as clear reference processes for digital nomads entering the city: “we really have to account if you are moving to a different location and need to know the rules in advance. I have to go to the police to identify them, and then what do I have to do?” A related issue is the fragmented landscape on visas required for digital nomads, specifically for the U.K. and the U.S.A. Visas for digital nomads are emerging, also in Spain, but developments have been slow and differ between EU member states. Currently, tourists just “come and work from here and don’t say they are working from here.” Typically, the U.K. has been an important source of tourists and workers, but Brexit has made digital nomadism more difficult for their citizens.

Last, an upsurge of digital nomads may increase local prices, e.g. of house rentals, also for the original, local community. Digital nomads, and talent employed by new corporations, may have higher salaries than the average inhabitant to spend on rents, creating a divide between local inhabitants and digital nomads: “we are thinking what happens in the future when people come to our city with higher salaries that we have here, so the market is really going up and produce a gap between local people with standard salaries and people working for the IT sector, that have more money to spend and more possibilities to pay rent.”

Cross-persona analysis

The narratives of the different personas sparkle similarities regarding key topics involving their practices, while differing deeply on how they deal and face challenges and benefits. We identified five themes connecting the three personas: motivation, control *versus* flexibility, legislation, identity and culture, and occupational health and safety. In the following, we discuss each one emphasizing similarities and differences.

Motivation

There are several reasons for workers to adopt a nomadic lifestyle. First, they are motivated by the autonomy and flexibility that comes with digital nomadism. Particularly, they can decide how, where and for how long to work. Second, in line with previous research (Macgilchrist et al., 2020; Hannonen, 2020), digital nomads aim to balance work-leisure experiences and improve personal wellbeing. For example, one wants to be able to combine work with exploring

the community and nature of the remote location. Last, digital nomads may strive for geographical arbitrage. The lower costs of living at a remote location may allow digital nomads to reduce the number of work hours for the same standard of living or may help them to save money.

Interestingly, employers may accommodate a digital nomadic lifestyle to attract and retain talents that are scarce in their sector. Opportunities to work as a digital nomad are considered as a labor condition that may increase employee satisfaction. Additionally, hiring digital nomads as freelancers may increase the pool of talent for temporary projects, and may also foster cultural diversity among the workforce. Hence, digital nomadism is seen as a topic close to the human resources management function of the organization. There might be tension between the digital nomad's desire for autonomy, and the employer's motivation to retain talent. Retaining talent requires socialization and commitment to the organizations and its culture, which may decrease autonomy.

Last, the local government officials hosting the digital nomads see them as an opportunity to diversify the local economy, increasing income from consumption and nomad-centered services (e.g., family services or co-working spaces), and enrich their local communities with international knowledge workers. They hope that the presence of digital nomads may attract innovative companies, e.g., start-ups or branches of large high-tech companies. They hope that digital nomads become long-term inhabitants of their city as they integrate in the local community. However, this may differ from the typical desire of digital nomads to change their location regularly. So, local government officials may want to convert digital nomads into remote workers. Also, the higher purchasing power of digital nomads may increase local prices (e.g. housing), gentrifying neighborhoods and creating tensions with the local community.

Control vs flexibility

While increased individual flexibility is a key component of the digital nomad ideal, the professionalization of digital nomadism through employers and governments could work against this flexibility. Digital technology can simultaneously be a driver of (individual) flexibility and (institutional) control, especially if it is used to enforce certain policies through employers or policy-makers.

Digital nomads are avid users of digital technologies. First, digital nomads use social media for professional purposes, such as communication, building and retaining their professional network and finding new jobs or projects. However, an extensive use of social media may jeopardize privacy, and perhaps also data protection in relation to their job or client. Second, digital nomads are known as first-adopters of videoconferencing technologies that allow them to work remotely. While this technology may give a sense of freedom to digital nomads, they still need to conform to the time zone, frequency and rules of meetings. Since they are a minority, they need to adapt.

Employers may want to use digital technologies to increase control over the work of digital nomads. First, they fear that digital nomads may not adapt and conform to the organization's culture in the same way as local employees. Second, employers fear that digital nomadism comes with technological risks. For example, how to ensure a safe and secure data management when digital nomads work from various workplaces? (e.g., hotel lobbies, internet cafes, and co-working spaces). Last, employers may want to have information about the work process, increasing the need to surveil digital nomads' work activities. For example, do they work the agreed number of hours?

Local government officials need to find a balance between providing digital nomads enough flexibility to make their country, region, or city an attractive destination for digital nomads and their employers, while also keeping track of who the digital nomads and their needs are. Currently, registration and official statistics about digital nomads are often lacking in local communities. A reason might be a tension between digital nomads staying casual and unregistered, due to their desire for flexibility, while officials would like to identify and register nomads.

Legal basis

First, digital nomadism creates an additional administrative burden for both employed and self-employed individuals when compared to someone who is only living and working in one country. Second, there is additional compliance burden for nomads linked to legal regulation of working environment, taxes, social insurance, visa/working permits, and contractual obligations at both national and supranational levels for self-employed. Digital nomads run the risk of being subject to (1) overlapping legal regulation alternatively (2) “falling between the chairs” and not being covered in any of the jurisdictions involved (host state or working state). For instance, paying taxes or social insurance in two or several countries or not having access to social insurance due to the involvement of several systems in different countries. Problems such as these are common in cross-border working situations and digital nomadism applies an additional layer of complexity.

Employers face the same compliance burden linked to legal regulation of working environment, taxes, social insurance, and contractual obligations at both national and supranational levels for self-employed. It is very important that they take legal compliance seriously as the costs associated with non-compliance are steep. The employer who has employed digital nomads from a variety of jurisdictions risks high costs associated with compliance (administrative costs of overseeing compliance) and possibly non-compliance (fees and charges for not being compliant). Still a variation between EU Member States of how they regulate these legal areas. This adds additional complexity and burden to the parties involved. The EU has managed to coordinate some of these areas for employers, most prominently those linked to the working environment and social insurances, but there are still gaps and mismatches that have severe implications and especially so for the employers who are ultimately responsible for legal compliance. The EU is actively working on improving the conditions for cross-border working and the new phenomenon of digital nomadism should be placed high on the agenda.

Local government officials may wish to attract digital nomads for several reasons. From a financial perspective, additional revenue streams can be associated with increased consumption (VAT), income taxes, and social insurance fees of these digital nomads. But as in the case of any situation involving cross-border working there are the core issues of: (1) the digital nomad tax planning and avoiding taxes in the host country (country offering the digital nomad workspace), and (2) the source country from which the digital nomad receives his/her income. This naturally varies depending on whether the digital nomad is self-employed or an employee. Additionally, the host country will need to consider how digital nomads impact governmental spending costs associated with, for instance, health care, local transport network, and digital infrastructure. Do the potential revenue streams stemming from taxes (if the digital nomads are indeed taxed in their jurisdiction) cover these costs?

Identity and culture

On a cultural and identity level, digital nomads tend to feel as if they are in a permanent state of liminality, belonging to neither “here nor there” (Jarrahi & Sawyer, 2017). Usually, they do not feel they belong in the local culture, even if one of their goals as nomads is to learn about specific cultural traits of a community (Thompson, 2021). Alternatively, locals are “embedded” in their culture and lifestyles and may criticize the increased number of temporary inhabitants. As a result, digital Nomads often immerse themselves in the digital nomad community, meeting at different co-working spaces and going to the same places to unwind (Thompson, 2019; Rainoldi, et al., 2022). The paradox is that even though digital nomads thrive on a lifestyle of freedom without barriers of a fixed place to live and work, they also yearn for a sense of belonging. Nomads lack deep personal relationships with friends and family, and building new friendships can be challenging, as digital nomads are constantly “on-the-move” (Miguel, et al, 2023). Moreover, the borders between work and play are continually blurred. For instance, independent workers often overwork to combat financial insecurity, as they never know when the next job will arrive (Jarrahi & Sawyer, 2017; Mimoun & Bardhi, 2022).

Employers may be reluctant to hire digital nomads because they are perceived as 'constantly on vacation'. Such a stereotypical view can pose problems to employers or contractors if the nomad is self-employed. Employers are also wary of the legalities and fiscal confusion, which creates even more barriers to hiring a digital nomad. Employers often feel that physical and geographical distance is a barrier. Even with remote working, it does not matter "how remote" the worker is as long as digital technology is adequate. Time zones are taken into consideration when needed. Employers, like Marc's persona, have been "forced" to think about hiring digital nomads, as some employees expressed the wish to become one. Even though it seems to work, Marc's firm must constantly develop and adapt policies for digital nomads. Hence, he is still unsure whether the company will "normalize" hiring digital nomads.

Local government officials are challenged to identify, keep track of, and support nomads' adaptation to the community. Beyond emitting visas or taxes, they must consider the cultural hybridization resulting from the interaction between locals and nomads. The changing cultural landscape of a community can result in conflicts among individuals, and to avoid them, local governments should create programs aiming to connect both sides. Additionally, they must consider creating policies to support the local community, avoiding gentrification and other forms of exclusion due to the increased cost of living.

Occupational health and safety

Ensuring occupational health and safety is a key consideration for digital nomads. Supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of digital nomads in the helping professions (such as counseling, psychotherapy, psychiatry and social work) is a particular challenge, since these professions involve significant emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983). Employee performance, wellbeing and resilience are associated with the availability, quality of social support at work (Nielsen et al., 2016). Within the helping professions, teams have been recognized as providing a 'secure base' for professionals, supporting resilience and competence (Biggart et al., 2017). Spontaneous interactions between co-workers can help employees to manage the emotional demands of their work (Korczynski, 2003).

Providing a secure base for the individual digital nomad presents challenges as well as opportunities. On one hand, virtual collaboration offers opportunities for instant communication with colleagues. On the other hand, digital nomadism may create a sense of isolation impacting on the wellbeing and mental health of workers. For instance, digital nomads like Sophia*, may feel isolated from their colleagues and lack the informal 'opportunity to chat with colleagues throughout the day'. When working away from their co-workers, employees may 'second guess' themselves when it comes to contacting a colleague for support or a debrief following a difficult client interaction (Cook et al., 2020). So, while digital nomadism presents benefits for wellbeing in the short-term, the effects of isolation may be cumulative – workers may experience a build-up of stress over time without ad hoc opportunities for discussion.

While creating online spaces for supervision may prove useful, it is also important to consider how informal and ad hoc support can be accessed. A key aspect of the work-related secure base is 'sensitivity'; when working together, colleagues may observe instances when a colleague seems to be struggling, and proactively offer support (Biggart et al., 2017). Digital nomads may therefore need to think creatively about how this sensitivity to the needs of colleagues can be maintained when working online. This could include the creation of 'virtual water cooler meetings', 'morning check-ins' or other 'agendaless' meetings as part of their daily routine.

For employers, supporting the digital nomad's wellbeing represents challenges. Where digital nomads have a prior in-person relationship with their employer or colleagues, these supportive relationships may continue to thrive online. However, onboarding and induction may be more difficult to manage in the context of new relationships, requiring careful planning and integration. Recent research on remote workers suggests that employers need to pay particular attention to the support needs of new starters and less-experienced workers who may experience stress and burnout without the support and vicarious learning opportunities afforded by working in-person with experienced professionals (Cook and Carder, 2023).

Employers therefore need to consider introducing coordinate support programmes for more junior workers, including mentoring with more experienced professionals.

Local government officials may play an important role in the occupational health and safety of digital nomads. Persona Raquel explained that they started a program to facilitate the working environment of digital nomads, ranging from co-working spaces for groups of digital nomads in (otherwise) empty hotels to creating online and offline networks between digital nomads, as well as the local community. As local governments are more and more in contact with the digital nomads' employers and clients, they can further coordinate arrangements and activities to mitigate risks related to mental health and wellbeing. An example was team outings where local employees meet their digital nomad counterparts.

Discussion and Implications

A growing number of professionals are considering remote work and digital nomadism as a new way of working. Digital nomadism is an attractive option for young talents - opened to the desires and needs of the employees. An overview of the key themes and findings covered during the workshop and cross-personal analysis are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Summary of findings from the cross-persona analysis

| Themes | Digital nomad | Employer / client | Local government official |
|------------------------|---|--|--|
| Motivation | <p>Compensating for emotional intensive work.</p> <p>Work-life balance and lifestyle.</p> <p>Flexibility in work arrangements.</p> <p>Financial arbitrage, e.g. working less for the same living standards.</p> | <p>Attract and retain talent.</p> <p>Employee satisfaction.</p> <p>Saving money</p> | <p>Attract (high-tech) talent and corporations.</p> <p>Additional source of income to tourism. New jobs for services catered to digital nomads (e.g. co-working spaces).</p> <p>More income due to spending of digital nomads beyond taxation.</p> |
| Control vs flexibility | <p>Not well connected with the other employees but more with the clients.</p> <p>Remote working guidelines or contract with the employer.</p> | <p>Adapt policies to accommodate remote working guidelines, for example client data needs to be secured.</p> <p>Trusting that digital nomads do their job.</p> <p>Managerial control (surveillance) vs privacy of employees.</p> | <p>Creating policies to foster or enforce registration of digital nomads, while also providing sufficient freedom to switch places.</p> <p>Co-working spaces</p> |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Legal basis | Administrative burden when self-employed. Do all employment benefits (e.g. social security) apply? Where do you register? | Social security and taxation issues. Different regulations across the EU. New type of contracts | Social security and taxation issues. Where do you register? Different regulations (e.g. visas) across the EU. |
| Identity and culture | Cultural identity and professional identity. How to connect with other employees? Does it feel lonely at some point in time? What is the role of online communities and connective technologies? | Adjust HR policies (e.g. on-boarding) to digital nomads. How to integrate the digital nomads in companies? How does it affect culture and identity? On-boarding issues | How to integrate the digital nomads in your local community and culture? The role of co-working spaces. |
| Occupational health and safety | Quality of life and other short-term benefits. Other issues, accidents, technostress, fatigue, mental health. | Who is responsible for occupational health and safety requirements (e.g. ergonomics, health insurance) of digital nomads? Specific arrangements and responsibilities for employees vs free-/midlancer. | Facilitating occupational health and safety, e.g. via co-working spaces or family services. |

As outlined in table 1, a number of questions can be further addressed at individual (employee level), organizational or local governmental levels. This white paper identifies five core themes related to the digital nomads phenomenon: *motivation, control versus flexibility, legal basis, identity and culture and occupational health and safety*. These themes can be further researched in relation with regulations and policies, further contextualizing the themes with empirical evidence from European countries. Regulations and policies may support or hamper the development of such a phenomenon on a large scale in Europe. Digital nomads are an emergent phenomenon opening new research avenues beyond the case studies presented in the current white paper.

As a digital nomad, a flexible work-life balance and lower costs of living are important drivers for digital nomads. While short term benefits are in line with previous research related to work-life reconciliation (Müller, 2016), balance of work and leisure (Simová, 2022; Reichenberg, 2018), further research is needed to explore the long term effects of such work style and lifestyle on career development but also cultural and societal effects. Both employers and governments are interested in accommodating digital nomads to attract and retain talent which can be valuable for both organizations and local communities where they will be integrated. Given the differences in motivations between stakeholders, the EU may initiate programs to discuss local development while meeting specific expectations. For instance, local governments can support companies in hiring nomads for a short period. Also, companies and locals can create upskilling projects to integrate nomads into the community while nomads can share specific knowledge with employees.

Many organizations offer new types of contracts that accommodate an increasing demand for remote and flexible work arrangements that will require development of remote work guidelines and new forms of management practices including new forms of control. These flexible working arrangements will rely primarily on digital technology and require new adaptations in terms of security of data and (management) control. Recent research related to remote work refers to both intensification and extensification of work but also associated hacking mechanisms (Bloom and Śliwa 2022; Hassard and Morris 2022; Kelliher and Anderson 2010; Pérez-Zapata et al., 2016) that could be further investigated in relation with digital nomadism. Further research could investigate the emergent role of AI in shaping new ways of working that could be further discussed in relation with potential role in monitoring, providing feedback, delegation of tasks or other.

Managerial control may include different forms of control through the use of digital technologies and digital data that could be subject to regulations and in line with GDPR regulations in the EU. Furthermore, in the post-pandemic context companies like Spotify have introduced new policies in relation to their working mode. Thus, the employees will be able to work from wherever they want (at home, in a cafe or in the office) or move to another country. More specifically, this tension between flexibility and control through digital technologies overlaps with other ways of working and ongoing discussions, such as the right to disconnect (EurWORK, 2021) or platform work regulation (Council of the EU, 2022), algorithm management (EurWORK, 2022; Wood, 2021). In these cases, the recommendation refers to creating best practices and guidelines to balance control and flexibility. The main issue with digital nomads for local governments is the need for more information regarding the entrance and mobility of digital nomads within the local community or the EU member state.

On the one hand, the flexibility to move among destinations is the main feature of digital nomadism. On the other hand, since nomads tend to stay longer than regular tourists in a location or explore destinations which are less popular among tourists, they also have a more intense impact on that community. Here, the paradox of flexibility/control is evident. Ideally, the integration between countries and the EU system regarding visas (EU entrance) could help local authorities understand the behaviors of companies and nomads regarding working practices. Additionally, local governments could become a 'bridge' (a facilitator) between companies and nomads by providing online platforms to share information regarding cultural traits and general labor legislation.

The legal framework related to immigration, taxation and social securities can help or constitute a roadblock for digital nomads working from anywhere in the world. The most urgent roadblock for digital nomads who are not EU nationals, such as U.K. citizens, is the immigration process. Currently, national visas, which are direct or can fit digital nomads' mobility require similar conditions: a specific proven income, health insurances, and clean criminal background. Currently, nomads are mainly independent workers, paying fees and the required documents for the visa application. Ultimately, even remote workers with a fixed job are responsible by filling the application and showing the required proofs, which means that they pay for the application themselves or negotiate with their contractors the reimbursement.

Digital work will likely have an impact on the organizational culture but also on the identity of its employees. When organizations have too many employees working offsite could create a "lonely office". As emphasized in earlier work by (Rockmann and Pratt, 2015), an empty office can impact onsite employees' behaviors and organizational culture and even further reduce employees' onsite engagement. Digital onboarding may also be problematic in particular for the younger employees. Future research may also study the potential role of *workations* (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Pecsek, 2018), during which regular employees or clients connect with the digital nomads of their team or organization. This theme may connect the managerial perspective of control to digital nomadism. Local governments have similar cultural challenges: how to embed digital nomads in the local communities? The EU may create networking programs focused on knowledge sharing practices, not only regarding work skills, but local traditions and cultural heritage. Such activities would support nomads on overcoming isolation, and its implication on mental health and wellbeing. Although nomads usually assure that traveling allows them to improve the balance between work and

leisure, moving constantly can generate weak ties among individuals. Networking events and the installation of specific points of contact, such as coworking spaces, can increase the transferability of information, collaboration in new projects, and improve wellbeing.

Occupational health and safety is an important element for sustaining knowledge work practices for digital nomads. Digital nomadism is associated with flexibility of work and well-being but long-term effects of isolation and digital work should be further investigated in relation with digital culture, resilience, technostress, fatigue or mental health. Particular attention can be paid to digital nomads' family situation (e.g. spouse and children).

Conclusions and future work

Digital nomads is a growing phenomenon that has been accelerated by the enforced remote work triggered during the Covid 19 pandemic. Digital nomads and remote work are related phenomena. They also have distinctive features that need to be further investigated and characterized. They are important trends that are associated with the future of work. Certain European countries (e.g. Portugal and Spain) have already integrated special types of visas that fosters the development of digital nomads communities. This phenomenon reflects the continuously changing nature of work and it is related to developments of new technologies, new forms of digital work and in particular AI that requires further research work. Future research work needs to further investigate:

- Motivations, type of jobs and demographics around these mobile professionals' behaviors to better customize policies and regulations aiming at local development
- Role of digital nomads in the development of local communities
- The role of online communities in fostering knowledge flows and how this influences the decisions of digital nomads
- Long-term effects of digital nomadism on career development but also cultural and societal effects
- Digital nomads communities and ways of working and living, including spouse and children
- Role of AI in shaping new ways of working and its potential role in monitoring, providing feedback, delegation of tasks
- Organizational and managerial perspectives of integrating digital nomads

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