Thor Kroeske
S4534638
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Home to those who are never home
Digital nomads and their relation and perception of home

Abstract

Digital nomads are people who work and experience leisure, through travel, at the same time. They use third spaces and an online environment in order to work location independent. Furthermore, digital nomads don't have a permanent residence or home. Already existing research doesn't focus on why and how digital nomads can experience a feeling of home when they don't have a permanent residence. This thesis tries to close that gap through qualitative data analysis, achieved through conducting semi structured in-depth interviews. With these interviews it is shown that digital nomads can feel more at home, because they can establish a virtual connection with friends and family, via video calls. Furthermore, communities and fellow like-minded people are important in this feeling of home, together with the presence of the right facilities, the involvement in local activities and party because of the ownership of a residence. This thesis helps future digital nomads to be able to feel more at home, at a faster rate.

1. Introduction

     1.1 Structure of the thesis

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1.2 Background

In recent years, with the ever more digitalizing world, a new form of tourism was created. Being connected to the world wide web has never been easier and more and more places get access to internet (Murphy et al., 2015). This new form of tourism is called digital nomadism. Digital nomads are people who work location independent, in third spaces, to be able to work and experience leisure through travel at the same time (Reichenberger, 2017; Olga, 2022; Chevtaeva and Guillet, 2021). Due to the COVID-pandemic more and more people got to experience remote working. This was used as a steppingstone for many, as this gave the opportunity to get used to remote working and being able to travel again, after the pandemic, whilst doing so (Almeida et al. 2019). The idea of being a digital nomad is very holistic, meaning that it is to be believed that this lifestyle offers up the most professional, spatial and personal freedom (Reichenberger, 2019). This is achieved by a great balance between work and leisure, which is being experienced through travel and constantly being in a new and challenging environment by digital nomads (Reichenberger, 2019; Chevtaeva and Guillet, 2021).

1.3 Research problem

However, there are some drawbacks to this kind of lifestyle, that are often overlooked. One of these drawbacks is that most of the more popular digital nomad location are far away from original home location. In a research conducted by Van Rijswijk (2023), online post on social media platforms where analyzed in order to figure out the most populous digital nomad locations. In this research, analyzing more than one million posts, it became clear that in the top 36, where countries are in if they have over 10.000 posts, 23 countries were located outside of Europe or North America (Van Rijswijk, 2023). These two continents generally are the two continents where most digital nomads originate from, as found by Statista Research Department (2023). With 48% originating from the USA and more than 90% originating from either Europe or North America (Statista, 2023).

As a digital nomad you will not see the family that you have in the original location of home, for a long time. The number one reason digital nomads quit being a digital nomad is from missing home and their family (A Brother Abroad, 2022). It is interesting to look how digital nomads deal with not having this feeling of home, from their own home, when they are abroad. Additionally, how and in what form digital nomads are attached to their original home. Furthermore, looking at the place attachment that digital nomads have in their new places of residence is interesting, and what they seek in new places in other to develop a feeling of home. How do they get a feeling of home in places where they don't have a permanent residence, or do they simply not need this feeling of home?

This thesis will try and find answers to these types of questions, as there hasn't being research on this topic yet, a so-called research gap. With the results of this research digital nomads can be helped by learning from these results in other to find a feeling home in a foreign country or help to find this feeling of home faster. Additionally beginning digital nomads can be educated on where to look out for when beginning their digital nomad journey. This research, for example, can help new digital nomads in how to deal with loneliness based of the experiences of other digital nomads.

1.4 Research questions

To confront this research problem, a main research question is formulated. The main question that will be researched is defined as the following: What kind of place attachment do digital nomads have in relation to their original home and their new temporary homes?

To help and some this main research question five sub-questions are formulated that to help and solve the main research question.

Sub-question 1: To what extend do friends and family help digital nomads in getting a feeling of home in a different country?

Sub-question 2: To what extend does the ownership of residence, or at least some sort of own residence, in the country of digital nomading, help digital nomads in getting a feeling of home in a different country?

Sub-question 3: To what extend does the stability of a country help digital nomads in getting a feeling of home in a different country?

Sub-question 4: To what extend do facilities help digital nomads in getting a feeling of home in a different country?

Sub-question 5: To what extend do the local activities and amenities help digital nomads in getting a feeling of home

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Defining digital nomads

In order to conduct research about the phenomenon of digital nomads is it first important to define the concept properly, because there are various different definitions for the concept of digital nomads. Reichenberger (2017) in her article called "Digital nomads – a quest for holistic freedom and leisure" tried to define this term. Digital nomads are most often described as young professionals, who conduct their work in an online environment (Reichenberger, 2017; Beaumont, 2019).

The term digital nomad is then described using four different levels of commitment to travel. Where:

- Level 0 defines digital nomads only as working in an online environment.
- Level 1 defines digital nomads as people also being able to work in different places and not in one and only office.
- Level 2 extents that even further and combining travel in their work.
- Level 3 is extending this to combining travel and work to the extend where the digital nomads don't have a permanent residence (Reichenberger, 2017).

As this research aims to answer questions related to digital nomads being away from their original homes for longer periods of time, this research uses the third level of Reichenberger (2017) as the definition for the digital nomads. Beaumont (2019) uses the same definition in her research when researching digital nomads in Lisbon.

2.2 Concept of feeling of home

Another concept to be used is the concept of home (feeling). This is crucial to understand in order to fully research this research question. Feng and Breitung (2017) defined this concept and what is used for people to get this feeling of home. Findings include that feeling of home

is not based on nostalgic principles like childhood anymore but rather based on where your family lives but more importantly on where your friends live (Feng and Breitung, 2017). Communities play another important factor in not feeling lonely and isolated, by finding likeminded travelers, digital nomads can easier find new friends. The digital nomad lifestyle can also be a bit dividing among friends and family in the original home location, because they do not relate at all to the lifestyle choices made by a digital nomad to leave them behind (Thompson, 2018).

It is also important to note that this feeling of home cannot be created immediately but that it needs time to fully develop and that a spatial distance between a place can create a sense of social alienation (Bergstén & Keskitalo, 2018). Not being able to visit a place often enough creates a spatial and an emotionally distance between you and the place. It is therefore important to regularly visit that place in order to counteract this physically and emotional distance (Bergstén & Keskitalo, 2018). Or it could be that by a prolonged delaying of these regular visits that the emotional connection deteriorates in its entirely. However, within this age of interconnectivity it is becoming more and more easy to be able to be virtually present in a location, this is already being used by digital nomads to see their families and friends virtually (Thompson, 2018). This might be a tool to counteract this social alienation and not feel emotionally distant to your original home when in a different country.

Another finding is that people feel more at home if they are in the possession of their own residence, or at least to an extend where people have their own place (Feng and Breitung, 2017).

2.3 Concept of place

Space and place is an important division to make in the concept of home and feeling of home. Space is the physical character of a geographic location, like a house for example when talking about home. Place is the psychical bond people have with that geographic location (Lewicka, 2008). Place attachment is another concept that is important to understand in this research. Place attachment is the feeling people have with a place. Place identity plays an important role in this. Place identity is used by psychologists to describe features of a person, based on a place, and not the place itself (Proshansky, 1978). The identity of a place is most often experienced different per person. There are some factors that can shape an identity of a place for a person, such as the amount of stability a certain place gives to that person (Lewicka, 2008). Another factor is the involvement in local activities of people (Lewicka, 2008). Westerholt et al. (2022) described a third factor that is linked to place identity. This third factor is the facilities that a place has, will greatly shape the perception of the person to that place, and thus shaping the place identity (Westerholt et al., 2022)

2.4 Conceptual model

In Figure 1 below the conceptual model is constructed. It is divided in the two main concept that relate to place attachment and that are introduced in part 2.2 and 2.3. Feeling of home is split up in three different subdivisions, friends, ownership of residence and family. These divisions are made based on the findings that Freng and Breitung (2017) made. The concept of place identity is also divided in three different subdivisions, stability, facilities and local activities. These division are made based on the findings in part 2.3.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of place attachment of digital nomads.
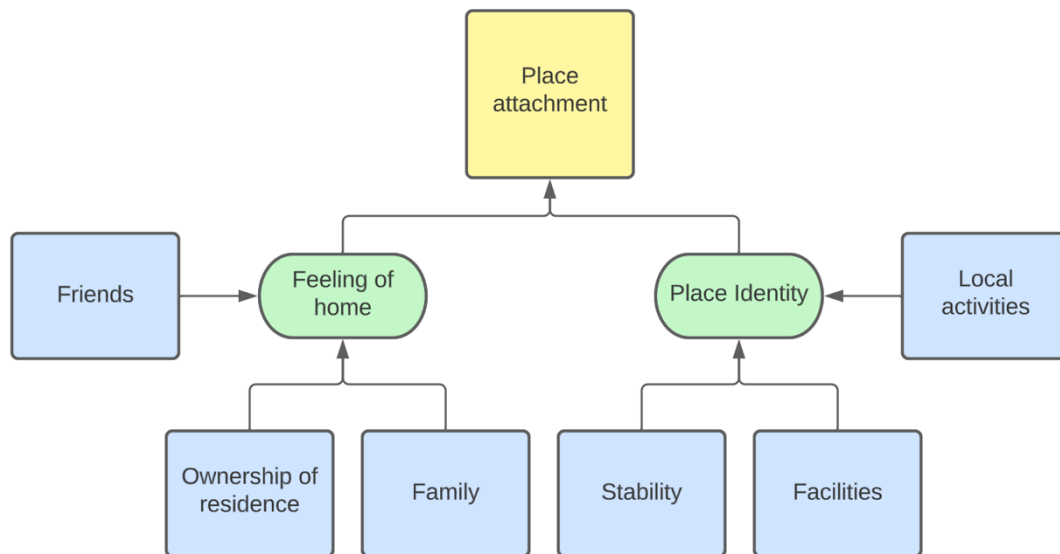
Source: Created by author (2023)

2.5 Expectations

The expectations based on the research question: 'What kind of place attachment do digital nomads have in relation to their original home and their new temporary homes?' is the following. Digital nomads are able to feel at home because of communities. The digital nomad community is growing and growing and being able to experience this together make them feel more at home. Another factor that might be important is that some digital nomads don't work alone, but with a partner or close friends. This could also be important for feeling at home.

Digital nomads also probably satisfy their needs to see family by being able to have a digital connection with them via videocalls.

In relation to the fact that the ownership of a residence positively influences the feeling of home, it is plausible that also a temporary ownership of a place, like an Airbnb, can contribute to the feeling of home. As this can also be seen as the ownership of your own place for just a month, for example.

3. Methodology

3.1 Operationalization

In order to answer the research question, it is necessary to operationalize the concepts and try and answer the sub questions. Because this research is mainly focused on how people feel and what they feel in context to certain places it has been chosen to do qualitative research. This has been done through semi structured in-depth interviews, to let the interviewee answer

freely but still have certain questions to guide the interview (Punch, 2014). An interview guide (appendix 7.1) has been set up in order to smoothly conduct the interviews.

3.2 Interview guide

To attract the right people for the interviews, certain requirements have to be met. The first requirement is that the interviewee has to be digital nomad for more than a year. This is chosen to do so because it is generally believed that becoming a digital nomad takes around 3-6 months (Quora, 2018; Gaynor, 2022). By setting this threshold to one year it can be certain that the digital nomad that is interviewed has lived the full digital nomad experience. The second requirement is that the interviewee has to have experienced being a digital nomad in another continent than their home continent. This has been chosen to do so because in this way it is, almost, certain that a digital nomad is fairly distanced from their original home and thus cannot return that quickly and is committed to the digital nomading lifestyle.

In the interview guide the questions for the interviews are stated. The interview guide is set up in the following way. There are two main topics, questions related to the feeling of home and questions related to place identity. These main topics are surrounded by opening and closing questions. As stated before, it is set up to be a semi structured in-depth interview, this does imply that not all questions stated in the interview guide will be asked during the interviews. Also, additional questions that may come to mind during the interview can also be asked.

To access the full interview guide, see Appendix 7.1.

The acquiring of interviewees has been done through direct messaging on Instagram and through blogpost on Facebooks and in various digital nomad forums.

3.3 Limitations of the data collection

Whilst collecting the data some limitations occurred and the quality of the data can be improved. Firstly, it was hard to acquire suitable candidates that fit the right requirements. Even when the requirements were met, the rate at which people answer were low. In total over 140 Instagram direct messages have been send with only twelve reactions, of which only four were available for an interview. Furthermore, five Facebook groups have been used with combined followers of 400.000, which resulted in one reaction, which wasn't available for an interview. On top of that, two blogs and one reddit page was used which resulted in zero reactions. Therefor the quantity of the data is not great.

Those four people contacted via Instagram, who were available for an interview, ended up as the four respondents used in this thesis, as can be seen in paragraph 4.

Another limitation is that two of the respondents couldn't give the interview in their mother language, which could have let to less genuine reactions due to a language barrier. On top of that all four respondents where female and between the age of 28 and 32. This could lead to skewed answer because there is a lack of variety in the respondents' characteristics.

3.4 Data analysis scheme

In this research, the processing of the qualitative data, collected through the in-depth interviews, has been done with the use of deductive code trees. This means that the interviews were transcribed and indexed based on the codes through the analysis software Atlas.ti. The

codes used for code scheme are derived from the concepts found in the theoretical framework. This method is called thematic coding (Punch, 2014).

For the code schemes that were used to perform the qualitative analysis, see Appendix 7.2
For the transcriptions of the interviews, see Appendix 7.3

3.5 Research ethics

For this research the academic integrity and the ethics of the interviewees are most important. To ensure that the research ethics are met, the principle of the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018) are followed. These imply:

Honesty: Referring interpreting and researching data without bias and accurately.

Scrupulousness: Referring to using the scientific methods with care.

Transparency: Referring to clearly showing the research steps taken.

Independence: Referring to taking an impartial stance in the research methods and steps taken.

Responsibility: Referring to the acknowledgement of the impacts of this research.

Furthermore, as mentioned, the interviewee must be informed about the intents of the interview and that the interviewees will be entirely anonymous throughout the research. The interviewees are informed before the interview about the purpose, risks, and benefits. The interviewees are also informed about the recording of the interview and the storing of the data in the databank of the University of Groningen for up to five years, due to Dutch regulation. The participants that participated in this research all gave verbal consent on these matters before the interview, therefore no consent form was used.

4. Results

4.1 Interviewee descriptives

In total for this research four interviews have been conducted. In Table 1 below, the general descriptives of the interviewees are mentioned. The interviews where around 30 minutes long and conducted via the online platform named Google Meets.

Some notable things that can be noticed in Table 1 are the following. As said earlier the interviewees were all female, with an age range between 28 and 32. Two out of the four digital nomads were from Europe, the other two from the USA and India. Three out of the four interviewees are currently digital nomading. Interviewee #1, who isn't currently digital nomading, is just taking a one-month digital nomad break, to see some family. Three out of the four interviewees are employed, either self-employed or under contract, in the content making sector. This descriptives are all in line with the theoretical framework of digital nomads being young professional who work in an online environment (Reichenberger 2017; Beaumont; 2019).

All four digital nomads which were interviewed have experiences with being a digital nomad in another continent, then their home continent and also experienced being a digital nomad for over a year, which were the two requirements of the interviewees.

Table 1: Descriptives of interviewees

Interviewee	Age	Nationality	Gender	Current place	Job	Experiences
#1	30	American	Female	USA	Human resource management	North, Central and South America, Europe
#2	32	Italian	Female	The Philippines	Marketing, advertising, content writer.	Southeast Asia
#3	28	Croatian	Female	Panama	Video editor and content creator	Central America, Europe, Southeast Asia
#4	30	Indian	Female	Singapore	Social media content creator	Europe, (Southeast) Asia

Source: Created by author (2023)

4.2 Results relating to friends, family and communities

As stated before in the theoretical framework, friend and family tend to play an important role in the feeling of home. Freng and Breitung (2017) stated that friends are the primarily source of feeling of home. Interviewee #1 who travels together with her partner, which is where she gets most of her company from, answers this on the question of how she develops a feeling of home in a foreign country.

> 'So, we don't, uhm, often get that feeling I guess. I think, uhm, one of the things that we, uhm, wish we have more of that we don't really have is the friendships, because we move so frequently, we don't really have friendships, uhm, long term friendships.'

So clearly the friends and relationship are important into feeling at home. Which is also the main thing that she missed from her digital nomading lifestyle:

> 'I think I miss the relationships, that we have, cause it is just us two, so it can get lonely. (…) But I would say primarily the relationships and friendships cause then you're stuck with the same person 24 hours a day'

One of the main concerns, following the theoretical framework, is that digital nomads create a sense of social alienation with their original home and thus their family and friends, because they are not visiting that place regularly. A prolonged delay in visiting that place can even lead to a complete physical and emotional disconnection (Bergstén & Keskitalo, 2018) However, it was argued, that in this stage of interconnectivity, within the digital era, that people could be virtually present in that location with the use of video calls. In this way digital nomads could counteract this physical and emotional alienation by seeing their friends

and family virtually (Thompson, 2019). This was, clearly, supported by the answer from the interviewees. Interviewee #2 said this about this topic:

> 'So I'm always in contact with my family, you know, doing video calls and WhatsApp.'

And interviewee #3 said this about this topic:

> '…but I would say I miss my friends and family a bit, but it is so easy these days to connect with them, like online, I facetime a lot with my mum, and then text pretty often with my friends and other family so, it is you know easier to keep in contact. (…) So yeah being able to see them really helps with feeling close to them.'

It is clear from both interviews that being able to contact their friends and family so easily, via an online connection like FaceTime or WhatsApp video calls, helps in feeling less isolated from their original home. This is thus in line with the theory, that digital nomads can feel less of a physical and emotional disconnection by seeing their friends and family virtually (Bergstén & Keskitalo, 2018; Thompson, 2019).

However, one thing that is interesting and was noticed during the interviews, is that this can also work counterintuitively. This is because by keeping close contact with your friend and family, you also see, very easily, what they are doing and what you are missing out on, by not being there. This is a new founding, which wasn't discovered in the theoretical framework, but also important to understand, because this can unintentionally lead to loneliness and homesickness, which is the most common thing on why digital nomads stop being a digital nomad (A Brother Abroad, 2023). Interviewee #1 said the following about this topic.

> '… I think sometimes I see that they're doing, uhm, like going to events or going out, uhm, and meeting up with friends and I wish I could be there as well.'

And interviewee #2 said this about this topic.

> 'Of course, I feel like I'm losing special events like the birthday sometimes or Christmas. But I'm okay with that. I'm used to it.'

It is also important to note that these both interviewees who talked about this topic, are also content with the fact that they are using out on these types of events. Like interviewee #2 clearly says in the quote stated above. Interviewee #1 also said this right after the previous quote, which perfectly outlines the duality in missing home, but also being content with not being there at certain moments.

> 'But I also think that some of the experiences being outside of the US and being somebody from the US I feel grateful to not be in the US sometimes. Uhm, so, you know, it's both I'm thinking, oh, thank goodness, I'm not there to see that or to be around that or for these changes, law changes.'

Another aspect to keep in mind when talking about digital nomads and there feeling of home, are the digital nomad communities. Like said in the theoretical framework, digital nomad communities can greatly help digital nomads in not feeling lonelily and isolated by finding like-minded people (Thompson, 2019). This is also one of the main expectations from this thesis, that communities help digital nomads at feeling at home. This expectation is backup by the answers from the interviewees. Interviewee #4 answered this on a question about if digital nomad communities are important for her while being a digital nomad.

> 'Absolutely. I think, uhm, it's very important to just stick with the right kind of people. And I do, I take my steps, uhm, a lot to build communities as well through the way.'

She elaborated even further on digital nomad communities, and this being a key to find some digital nomad friends who can provide with some meaningful conversations, which was important to her in not feeling lonely.

> 'I kind of missed out on meaningful conversations with people and that's why I felt like I, I probably needed a friend around. (…) I think just the meet up app or nomad list or thing or, you know, living in coworking spaces or living in co living spaces made me come back to the people who I would be interested in. (…) And, uhm, that just makes traveling a little, little more seamless and a little less lonely as well.'

Interviewee #3 mentioned basically the same thing when also asked about the importance of digital nomad communities to her, when digital nomading.

> 'Yea they are super important, it is a great way to meet new people really fast. It really helps that you really feel that you are part of something bigger, with more people, so it also really helps against loneliness.'

Interviewee #2 also elaborated on this and mentioned this when asked about if see felt a feeling of home when digital nomading. It has to be noted here that Interviewee #2 only digital nomads on this one island of Siargao, so it is easier to build a community, but still an interesting finding nonetheless.

> 'Yes, definitely. Yes. Here in Siargao. Because I kind of, I kind of have a family right now with friends that are here living here for months as well. So I feel like Siargao is home, (…) 'So it's just this nice feeling of community that you can have here. That feels like okay, I can feel home. I'm not I'm not alone.'

This really shows the importance of communities on the way other digital nomads feel at home. Interviewee #2 even mentioned that this is her home, and both interviewee #3 and #4 mentioned that these communities help in combating loneliness. This is in perfect alignment with the findings in the theoretical framework, where digital nomad communities can help digital nomad feel less lonely because they are surrounded by like-minded people (Thompson, 2019).

It also has to be noted that Interviewee #1 didn't feel like this at all and mentioned that digital nomad communities didn't help her find genuine relationships. She explains:

> 'I think it can sometimes be difficult um and genuine form genuine relationships beyond like, ok, I heard your travel story. Ok. You've heard my travel story. We both said the same thing a million times. I think that's the one thing that uhm when meeting people, it's maybe one of the difficult parts of forming genuine relationships. It's, that's at least my experience.'

However, this different feeling can be explained by her being the only interviewee who traveled, consistently, together with someone else, in this case her partner. But also, that she is the only one that mentioned that she didn't really use digital nomad communities regularly, and only really used it once.

4.3 Results relating to ownership of residence

In the theoretical framework it became clear that an ownership of residence, or at least some sort of own residence, can help people develop a feeling of home (Feng and Breitung, 2017). This is, in context to digital nomads, a little bit difficult to measure because they tend to travel around all the time. This also translated to the interviews. Interviewee #1, who rents an Airbnb for a month when digital nomads, said this about her housing situation when asked about feeling of home, which is countering the argument what was made here.

> 'Uhm I think a big part of it is getting out of the house. I feel like once when you are consistently staying at home for us, it just feels like time is dragging on and it's, you're not getting the full experience of the area.'

Also, interviewee #4 actually felt more at home when renting a hostel, or other co-living spaces, because of the connectiveness with other people. This, of course, goes straight against the points made by Feng and Breitung (2017), where people feel more at home when having their own place. It is to be noted though, that she does rent an own room in these type of housing types.

However, it is also important to note that Interviewee #2 who felt the most at home, because she said:

> 'So I feel like Siargao is home (…)'

, is also the only interviewee who rents her apartment long-term, so technically has her own residence. This is an interesting relationship, where the only interviewee who rents long term, also feel the most at home. She said about her housing situation the following.

> 'I'm rent, I'm renting an apartment long term.'

4.4 Results relating to the stability of a country

In the theoretical framework it was stated that the sense of place of someone is influenced at home much stability the place gives to that person (Lewicka, 2008). However, in the

interviews this was mixed up with the political stability of a country, where someone was digital nomading. This is inherently different than the stability it gives a person. Therefor it is chosen to not use the results of this.

One interesting thing to note, however, is that this did in fact affect the place making decision as Interviewee #3 answered on the question whether it is important that a country is politically stable.

> 'Yea so that's something that I tend to keep in mind, because I don't wanna be alone in a foreign country where like a civil war breaks out or something. So I tend to do a lot of research about the place itself and if it's good I go.'

4.5 Results relating to facilities

Another thing that was important for the sense of place of someone was the number of facilities a place has. The amount and type of facilities will shape someone's place perception (Westerholt et al., 2022). This also influences the place making decision. This was apparent in the answers of the interviewees. Interviewee #3 mentioned this when asked about what is important when looking for a new digital nomading spot.

> 'Yea, I just make sure that it is a digital nomad spot, like if it is already in use by other digital nomads, and if the digital nomad facilities are there like the internet cafes and the coworking spaces.'

Interviewee #2 also mentioned this when asked about the digital nomad facilities in her place.

> 'Yeah, I would say that they are improving a lot. As I was saying before, there are more and more places where you can work from, but they are really impressive because they are really fast. (…) It was completely impossible to work online. (…) Now it's much better.'

So these two answers makes it clear that the right facilities, and the quality of those facilities, are important for digital nomads when it comes to the identity of a place and the place making decision.

4.6 Results relating to local activities and culture

In the theoretical framework it also became apparent that the involvement in local activities can improve people's identity of a place (Lewicka, 2008). This became really clear in the interviews, where all interviewees mentioned that the involvement in local activities, local culture and with the local people, really helped with the identity of a place and thus the feeling of home digital nomads have in that place. Interviewee #4 said this when asked about how important the involvement in local activities and local culture is for her.

> 'I think it's super important. I just create a lot of content around local cultures and experiences as well. It's, it's one of the most integral parts of my travel to uh delve into local cultures.'

And Interviewee #3 mentioned this when asked the same question.

'Uhm, yea, so being able to get out of the digital nomad, like work, behind my laptop, and get involved with the local culture is really what makes this lifestyle great. I really like being around the locals and eating their food and going on typical local activities, like hikes, scuba diving, surfing, so I think that's really great to do, (…)'

She even elaborates further when asked about if this improves are feeling of home of that place.

'Yea I think so, it is always easier to feel at home, I feel like, when you get to know the people around you and how they think about certain things. And being active in their activities, also with different nomads, helps with that so that's always really nice.'

These quotes really capture the theory of Lewicka (2008), that the involvement in local activities and culture helps in feeling more at home. One thing to mention is that the main thing why this is the case is because of the involvement with people around you, when you do those activities, as also mention by Interviewee #3 in the quote above. Interviewee #2 also mentioned the same thing.

'But you can, yeah, you can do many, many activities here. I don't know for me, the feeling of being at home is just like the really nice people you can share your moments with every time like people are always so open to share moments.'

This an interesting finding to take away from this point, that it is not only just the involvement in the activities itself, like stated by Lewicka (2008). But also, maybe more importantly, the involvement you have with other people, locals or other digital nomad, once you do such activities that are important in the sense of place and thus the feeling of home.

5 Conclusions
    5.1 Conclusion
This thesis focused on the feeling, relation and perception of home of digital nomads. Digital nomads are people who work and experience leisure through travel. Digital nomads make use of third spaces and work in an online environment, to be able to work location independent (Reichenberger, 2017; Olga, 2022; Chevtaeva and Guillet, 2021). Digital nomads can have various definitions. In this thesis the third definitions stated by Reichenberger (2017) was used, which defines digital nomads as people who combine travel and work to the extend where they don't have a permanent residence.

A theoretical framework was set up to assess the most important concepts that are related to the feeling, relation and perception of home of digital nomads. Two important divisions have been made herby: Feeling of home and place identity. The main concepts that relate to feeling of home are friends and family and ownership of residence. The main concepts that relate to place identity are facilities, stability, and local activities.

Qualitative data from structured in-depth interviews, based on the concepts mentioned above. was used in order to answer the main research question which is: What kind of place

attachment do digital nomads have in relation to their original home and their new temporary homes? Or in other words how can digital nomads experience the feeling of home when they are not at their original home.

The main findings in this thesis have been stated in the results. To conclude these are the main findings. First of all, the contact with family and friends is an important thing regarding the feeling of home of that digital nomads have. It was speculated that the absence of regular visits of the original home would lead to physical and emotional alienation (Bergstén & Keskitalo, 2018). However due to this current age of interconnectivity a virtual connection would be enough to counter this (Thompson, 2019). This was indeed the case when looking at the interviewees. The second finding is that communities play an important role in the ability of digital nomads to feel at home. The third finding is that the ownership of residence also plays a role in the feeling of home, because the interviewee who rented their home for the longest had the biggest feeling of home. The fourth and fifth findings were that facilities and especially the involvement in local activities and local culture, were important in the sense of place of digital nomads. This was mainly the case because of the connectiveness with other people when participating in such activities.

Overall to answer the main question digital nomads have such a relation to their original homes that a virtual connection via, for example, FaceTime, is enough to not experience social or physical alienation to their original home. On the other hand, digital nomads can feel at home abroad, because of multiple factors. The biggest factor are communities and the connectiveness with other like-minded people.

This thesis also has its limitations. The biggest limitation is the low number of interviewees, this is the case because of troubles in the process of acquiring interviewees, with very few respondents. Another limiting factor is the fact that the interviewees that were acquired, were only female, this can cause a disturbance in the data collected. On the other hand, this research was indented to fill the research gap on how digital nomads can feel at home, even though they are on the other side of the globe. This research has provided evidence for this and can be used by future digital nomads in order to feel more at home, quicker. Future research can build on this evidence and maybe research this topic in a larger scale. Another idea for future research is to expand on some of the individual factors on why digital nomads feel at home, such as communities or the virtual connection with family.

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7. Appendix
    7.1 Interview guide

Opening Questions:

- Are you familiar with the term digital nomad?
- Do you define yourself as a digital nomad? Why and why not?
- How did you start being a digital nomad, why did you choose to do so?
- Do you work as a digital nomad alone, or do you work and travel with someone (partner for example)?

Questions related to feeling of home

- What does the concept of 'home' mean to you as a digital nomad?
- Do you miss your original home, when working abroad as a digital nomad?
- Do you have a feeling of home, in a different country?
- How do you develop this feeling of home?
- How important is having a physical residence in creating a feeling of home to you?
- How important is having a permanent physical residence in creating a feeling of home to you?
- How does family/friends impact the feeling of home to you?
- Do you keep contact with family/friends when abroad? Does this help in having a feeling of home?
- Does the making of new friends abroad make having a feeling of home easier?

Questions related to place identity

- What shapes the identity of a place for you? (Feeling of a place)
- How do you choose a new digital nomad spot, what things are important?
- In what sense is the stability of a place important to you?
- In what sense is the number of facilities of a place important to you?
- In what sense is the involvement in local activities (and the accessibility of this) of a place important to you?
- How does the physical character of a location affect the feeling of place to you?
- How important are digital nomad communities for you?

Closing questions

- Is there anything else you want to add from your experiences as being a digital nomad?

7.2 Data Analysis Scheme
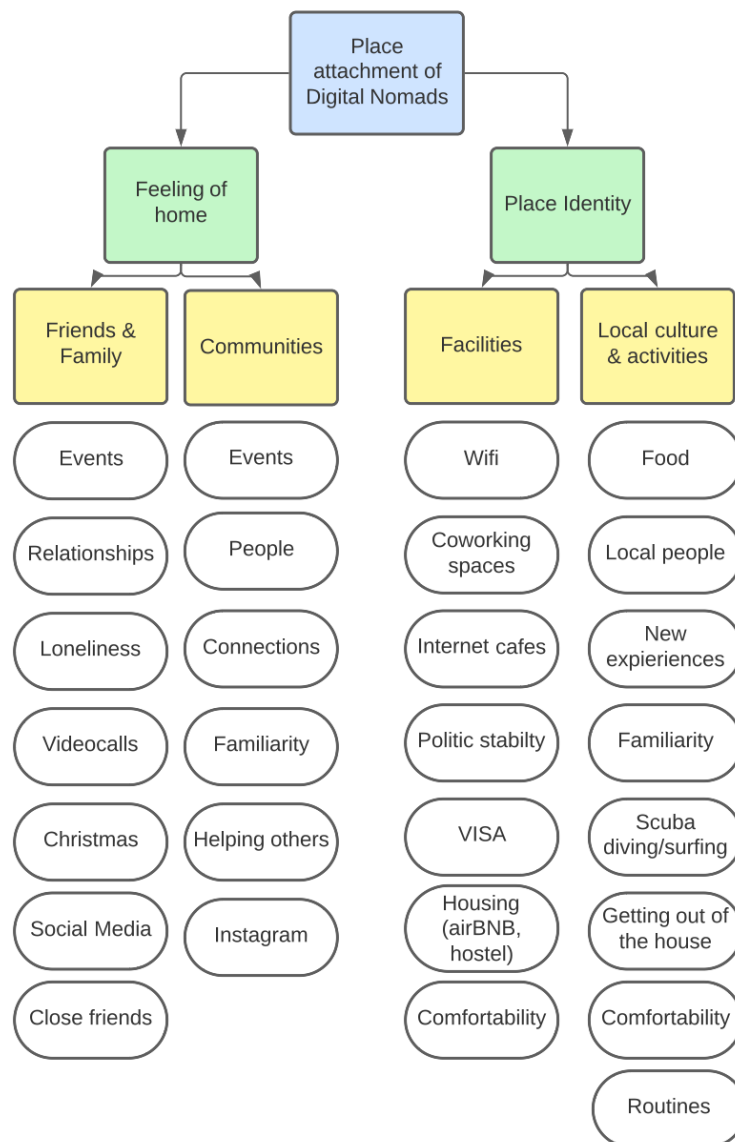
7.3 Transcriptions of the interviews

I: Interviewer
R: Respondent

Interview 1:

I: So can you just quickly introduce yourself, like your age, your nationality, your current place etc?

R: Sure, I am 30 years old, I am from the US, I was, uhm, born and raised in Los Angeles and then eventually relocated to Seattle before starting to live the digital nomad lifestyle and i have been doing that for about 1,5 years. Uhm, as far as my base goes, uhm, i dont necessarily have one base. Every month my partner and I move to a different country. So we are moving pretty frequently, uhm, right now i am back in de US to see family and, euh, to attend some events but i am headed back abroad in the end of, uhm, June.

I: Okay perfect. So my thesis is about the relationship between digital nomads and their home, because digital nomads tend to travel arround a lot. So what does the concept of home mean to you as a digital nomad?

R: Uhm, you mean home like pricewise?

I: No just home, the feeling of home?

R: Ah, got it. So I think. So one thing we have talked a little bit about, my partner and i when we travel together, is that a place start to feel more like home once we are getting to the very end of that one month. So we feel like it is finally starting to feel that way and then we kind of leave. So we dont, uhm, often get that feeling i guess. I think, uhm, one of the things that we, uhm, wish we have more of that we dont really have is the friendships, cause we move so frequently we dont really have friendships, uhm, long term friendships. Uhm, you know we see people, we meet them and maybe once or twice more, if that, so that type of relationships. But i think our, we have more at our homebase here. But I think that, when it comes to getting a place feel more like home that we are traveling to, uhm, i think just familiarizing ourselves with the area, having activities to do that we enjoy doing in our freetime. I think that makes it feel more like home, versus somewhere that might feel maybe more like a vacation or somewhere that you know we are ready to move on from.

I: Okay so do you have any experiences in another continent like Europe or Asia?

R: Yea so when we first started, uhm, and we, uhm, first started in the very end of December 2021, we started in the Caribbean and than from the Caribbean we went to Central America and then South America, uhm, and that was over, probably, five and a half or so months, uhm, we then came back to the US for two months and then, uhm, in August of 2022 we left to Europe so we were in Europe for 9 months and then in those nine months we also went to Egypt, in Africa, for one month. So that kind of the, our locations.

I: Okay thank you, so when you are abroad do you miss your original home in the USA?

R: I think i miss the relationships, that we have, cause it is just us two, so it can get lonely. So i would say that I would also just miss my things, cause you are just living out of a suitcase, so, uhm, I have to minimize the things a bring with me. But, uhm, i would say that are probably the biggest things that i would miss. But i would say primarily the relationships and friendships cause then you're stuck with the same person 24 hours a day, but also not only traveling together but working from home together and don't know anyone else. Um, so those I think could be difficult.

I: So you talked a little bit about developing this feeling of home in a different country you know, what specifically do you do to develop this?

R: Uhm I think a big part of it is getting out of the house. I feel like once when you are consistently staying at home for us, it just feels like time is dragging on and it's, you're not getting the full experience of the area. So whether that be free walking tours, we do free walking tours like pit based tours, um, in every city that we go to. So that's really nice and it helps us get to know some people. Um, and then also just getting outside even if it's going on a walk and, you know, seeing the neighborhood, um, or figuring out what other things there are to do nearby. Um, and kind of trying to treat it like a city you would regularly be living in, you know, what, what do you usually do when you're back home? Maybe go out to eat with your friends or go out walking downtown, you know, depending where you are. Uhm, so try to do some of those things. I think that sometimes helps.

I: Perfect. You mentioned that you, meet other people when abroad and these people also help with the feeling of home?

R: Uhm, yes and no, I mean, I think what comes to mind is there has been in the last year and a half, you know, there's been one time where we met a couple that was also, uhm, traveling for a few months. Uhm, and so it was nice to be able to see them multiple times and actually have those friendships there because they were, they happened to be there pretty much the same exact month dates that we were and we met the very first or second day we were there. But I think a lot of the others, other relationships are people, you're, you know, you meet and it's, you know, after an hour and a half or, you know, after the walking tour, for example, it's OK, goodbye. And you know, you're off to do, you know your thing and they're off to their next city. I think one of the things that has been nice though is uhm meeting people while traveling and then seeing them again in another country. So, for example, we met somebody on a white water rafting tour in Guatemala and then we just met up with them in Croatia earlier this week. So we just came back to the US. Yes, Saturday. So that was really nice. Uhm, same with, you know, we met someone else in um uh in the whitewater rafting that was in Ecuador, but the other one was in Guatemala and then we just met them in Egypt earlier this year. So that was really nice. Uhm And then just connecting with also people that maybe you haven't seen in a long time but, you know, in their home country. So maybe you're just having to stop by and, um, or traveling through that country and meeting up with them. So that's been nice.

I: Do you keep in contact with your family or friends from home when you're abroad?

R: Yes, I would say, I don't necessarily have like phone calls mainly texting. So, um, I probably will like, text my dad multiple times a week and then my mom probably every other week and then some friends, I would say a couple of times a week we would, uhm, like message back and forth but not necessarily phone calls.

I: Do these messages also, help you in missing home less?

R: Um, I guess. Yes and no, I think sometimes I see that they're doing, uhm, like going to events or going out, uhm, and meeting up with friends and I wish I could be there as well. But I also think that some of the experiences being outside of the US and being somebody from the US I feel grateful to not be in the US sometimes. Uhm, so, you know, it's both I'm thinking, oh, thank goodness, I'm not there to see that or to be around that or for these changes, law changes. But, uhm, other things like actually having the friendships, uhm, and not being able to, you know, missing out on life events. I think that's the part.

I: So how do you choose a new digital nomad location?

R: Yeah. So I think just um depends on what we're interested in. So it's a combination of two, what we're interested in. So for example, when we started at the beginning, we were in the Caribbean because we both like to scuba dive a lot. So we picked locations that were known for scuba diving. Uhm just like Egypt, we were um in a small scuba diving town on the coast. So I think some of it has to do with activities um like in the winter, we also picked a place because we wanted to go skiing. So we were in a tiny, tiny skiing village. Uhm but other thing, other things too are, for example, we have to keep in mind the Schengen regulations, you know, rules of travel 90 days in the Schengen and 90 days out. So that kind of impacts, you know, where we were going as well when we were in Europe, for example. So, visa reasons, activity reasons. Uhm and then I think just um all the countries were, I think, yeah, I would say activity in general because we like to do a lot of um outdoor activities. So there's like hiking or rafting or skiing or, you know, scuba diving I think that's a, that plays a big impact, uh big role as to why we choose a place

I: And is the local culture of the place also important?

R: I would say yes and no, I think a big part of it is uhm a lot of the countries that we've been to, it's been learning about the local culture once we're there, not necessarily knowing a lot about it. I would

say that maybe uhm like safety plays a plays a role. So maybe there's certain countries that are known for um being less safe if you're from a certain country or maybe if you're a certain religion or gender or have certain lifestyle choices that might not be a country that we might choose to go to. Uhm but that's, I would say that's not something that we've really talked about as much as probably the others.

I: And how does the physical character of location affect the feeling of that place? Like how like the amenities that are there? How easy it is to get like a temporary home?

R: Yeah, yeah. So I would say that um overall it has been pretty easy to find accommodation. So we use airbnb, we stay for an entire month because it's typically cheaper. And then also uhm we do also both work full time for American companies. So financially it's been fine for us as far as, you know, having the, you know, various options. So that's been all right. Uhm, I would say that, yeah, that's not been a big issue. I think maybe one of the things that we do talk about, especially after spending time in Europe is just um access to public transportation and what, what is available. So that's one thing we've, we experienced that we really like and then, so we'll talk about it as far as picking future places, you know, like, oh, we really like the public transportation in France, you know, is there something else that's potentially similar? Uhmm for example.

I: Okay and there's one thing I forgot to ask you what, what is your job like in what field are you employed?

R: Yeah, sure. So I'm a senior HR manager. I am uhm at the company I work at, I'm the sole person in the HR department. So I oversee all things. I'm at a small startup. It's probably about 30 sorry, 40 to 45 people. And we are in the Blockchain infrastructure space. So it's in the web three Blockchain infrastructure. It's probably in the way.

I: I also read a lot about digital nomad communities. And how important are they for you?

R: Yeah, I would say we, we only did it once uh when we were in Egypt and in, at the town Dahab, we did have, they had like a digital nomad to meet up and we went to that but that's really the only time we've, we've done that, uhm, we don't use those communities often, I would say, but probably something we should start doing more of.

I: Okay. Yeah, because I've read that they can also help with feeling less less missing of home.

R: So that's, I think, yeah, I think, I think the other thing too is just one of the things that we noticed is that when you are so when you are meeting people who are also digital nomads, I think that we kind of just get tired of telling the same exact story 100 times. So you tell everyone that, oh, you're traveling. Ok. Well, you're traveling. Ok. You know, it's the same thing every single time. So saying that every single time and then trying to find out similarities beyond that, I think it can sometimes be difficult um and genuine form genuine relationships beyond like, ok, I heard your travel story. Ok. You've heard my travel story. We both said the same thing a million times. I think that's the one thing that uhm when meeting people, it's maybe one of the difficult parts of forming genuine relationships. It's, that's at least my experience.

Interview 2

I: So let's get to the first question. Yeah so can you just quickly introduce yourself, like your age, nationality, current place and previous experiences?

R: So yeah, uhm, I am 32 years old and I come from Italy. But I have been living in Barcelona for nine years already. Even starting from 2017, I started traveling back and forth to Asia. So in 2017, was actually my first experience as a digital nomad, as a freelancer. Even if it was a really, I was a really

super beginner, I didn't really know how to manage clients and work as a freelancer, I was just trying what I really didn't know what I was doing. So it was like, because I was working in content marketing, I study, University studying marketing and advertising. And then I have always been working in marketing and travel industry, but always as an employee, and then I started to specialize in content marketing, by myself. So I started learning online doing courses online classes online. So in 2017, I wanted to, I decided to quit my job in Barcelona and travel a bit around Asia. So that's why I thought I was, when I tried to work as a freelancer and find my clients and work as a content writer. So that was my first experience. I stayed in Asia for almost eight months. And then I decided to go back to Europe, I work again as an employee, actually, but keep learning and try to understand how I could work as a freelancer full time. And then I came back in Asia here in 2019. I was working for a travel agency, so I was actually doing something different. But I also kept, kept working as a content writer. And now while the pandemic came, I lost my job in Manila. I came back to Europe and I came back here in the Philippines in November 2022. It's and it's one I start working 100% like full time as a freelancer. And it's what I'm doing now. And I work as a content writer from Siargao, I'm on the southern island.

I: Okay, cool. So, do you work as a digital nomad alone? Or do you work and travel with someone else?

R: No, I just came here alone. I mean, I had a few friends here and on the island already, because it's not my first time on the island since I came here. Since 2017, but as a like, a digital nomad, when I came here, I was alone with no friends. And then here I met other people because you're in Siargao, there is a nice community that is growing up of digital nomads or people that are working, there are some freelancer, so they have their own clients. And there are also people that work as an employee, but remotely. So for companies in Europe or us, and they're working remotely from here, so it's a mix between freelancer and employee that are working remotely.

I: And has that experience been difficult for you like being away from your original home and not being able to see your family?

R: Um, not for me, actually, because I have been living abroad for almost nine years. Of course, Barcelona is much closer. I mean, it's closer than Philippines Italy, of course, but I'm pretty used about that. So I'm always in contact with my family, you know, doing video calls and WhatsApp. Of course, I feel like I'm losing special events like the birthday sometimes or Christmas. But I'm okay with that. I'm used to it. It's I guess it's more difficult for my parents than for me.

I: Yeah. So do you have a feeling of home when you are in the Philippines?
R: Yes, definitely. Yes. Here in Siargao. Because I kind of, I kind of have a family right now with friends that are here living here for months as well. So I feel like Siargao is home, like Barcelona and like, Italy in the city where I come from, but it's I can I would say like, Sairgao is my home too.

I: Okay, that's really nice. Yeah. Do you have permanent resident in the Philippines?

R: No, no. I'm resident in Barcelona in Spain still. I'm here as a tourist. So I just renew my visa as a tourist. The important thing to know is if you want to stay here as a tourist and work from here, it's really important that you're going to say like your, your money, the money you get is not from Filipina company. So the money you get should be from foreigner clients. So for me, I work for Spanish and Italian clients. So I'm, I'm legal I mean, it's okay because I had the tourist visa but I work for, for clients from Europe because if you want to work for Filipino clients, you need to have the working visa. But if you're a digital nomad and you work for clients from Europe or any other country, but Philippines is okay, so I just renew my visa tourist visa

I: How is your housing situation in the Philippines?

R:Yeah, yeah, I'm rent, I'm renting an apartment long term. So it's not it's not Airbnb is just like I I found this apartment using there are many Facebook groups where you can find like, information that local, local, local people post so you can find long term apartment because if you use Airbnb, could be okay for maybe a few weeks, but if you want to stay long term is going to be much more expensive. But you can find places from local people that they rent you the apartment.

I: And how did you decide on the Philippines and not any other country?

R: Uhm, because the first time I came here in Asia in 2017, I travel a bit around Southeast Asia visiting different country but Philippines was the country that I loved the most probably because I also did volunteering experience. So I was more our, like closer to local people. And the experience I did was really nice. The people are super nice. So that's why I kind of fell in love with the country. And I decided to come back. And the other thing is, they speak English really good. And also the culture is more similar to Europe and Spanish, I would say because maybe they are catabolic. So there is I feel like there is more connection comparing with Malaysia or Thailand that the culture is really different

I: And it's the connection and culture from Europe from your original country like Spain and Italy also important in creating a feeling of home there for you?

R: Yeah, I would say so. Yeah. Yeah, I feel like there are more I don't know like people I feel like there are similar, more similar comparing with someone from Thailand for example. Of course it's I mean, they also have their own culture and there are many things that are completely different from Europe. But still I can feel more connection with the people here comparing with like other countries.

I: And is this your only digital nomads experience? Did you also digital nomad in other places before?
R: I mean, in Asia when I traveled what was it already six years ago? Yeah, I travel I work from from Bali. I work in Thailand in Chiang Mai, but just for a few for maybe one week or 10 days. And then I last year I was for one month I worked for one month from Fuerteventura and Canaria Canary Island.

I: Okay. But how did you try to find these nomad spot,s these new spots and what was important for you when choosing a new spot?

R: Siargao was my first option when I decided to come back here because it's the island I love the most the Philippines I like the atmosphere I like surfing so I really like it's the atmosphere here is super chill is not like other island for example Palawan or Baraka that is more touristic place so you really feel that you're a tourist and I work for, I work for one week in Citeaor (?) with a friend before coming here in Siagao. It's a super small island, but they, they have a cafe, two bars with a good Wi Fi so you can work from there. But I didn't want to live, to live there. I wanted to come here because I have already friends here. So I just wanted to come here back. And also because before coming, I was looking for places to work from here in Siargao or looking for some information about digital nomads. And I found this guy who is living here in Siargao is building a co working so yeah, it's gonna be private is going to be ready at the end of this year. And so he has an IG profile and I started talking to him and he start saying yeah, there is a small digital nomad community here that we are trying to, like, involve more and more people. So that's why I was like, okay, when it would be to Siargao where you would be the first one I would probably meet to talk about that. And actually, yeah, it's spot now of my group of friends. And we always do every week, we do dinner with all the digital nomads. So yeah, yeah, there is a nice, nice community. So that's why it was a mix of I really like Siargao. I have already friends here and I I felt that compared with other islands Siargao was more prepared or interested to be a good spot for digital nomads. Naturally in the last few months, there are so many new places where you can work from and also many places that have these new starting connections. So it's good like you can work properly not everywhere but, but the island I felt like it's I feel like it's always doing more than more to be a good spot for digital nomads.

I: And the new digital nomads that come into the island, how do they find the place like through communities or just by random?

R: I think it's, it's a mix. I feel like some people just look for places where they can work from in the Philippines. And they start looking using Instagram or Facebook as I did because there are also digital nomads groups on Facebook. So probably people were looking for information. And some others. I guess they are just coming to the Philippines traveling, maybe long term. And then they found Siargao, they decided to stay because there are many people that just come to the Philippines for maybe two weeks and then they decided to stay more. Of course if it's possible. I mean, there are some people they just have two weeks vacation so they can just stay two weeks and then go back home. But people that are traveling around Asia, maybe they come here they liked the place like the atmosphere the community and they stay more instead of going to the next destination they were supposed to go so I think it's a mix like people are looking for places for digital nomads year before. So they do they do our research and somehow others have just discovered the place when they are already here.

I: And you mentioned scuba diving, etc. Do these local activities. Do they help you feel more at home?

R: When you're in Siagro, it's more surfing than scuba diving.

I:O yeah surfing, sorry that's what i meant.

R: Yeah, I like surfing, but I'm also really like a beach person, I can stay hours at the beach. But you can, yeah, you can do many, many activities here. I don't know for me, the feeling of being at home is just like the really nice people you can share your moments with every time like people are always so open to share moments. That could be dinner could be a walk, it could be our Highland open tour. So it's just this nice feeling of community that you can have here. That feels like okay, I can feel home. I'm not I'm not alone.

I: And does this physical character of a place like the beach? And like how it looks also affect your feeling of the place?

R: Yeah, I mean, for me, it's, I have been living all my life in a place close to the beach. So it's something that I really need to feel home. Because Barcelona of course has a beach and in Italy. I mean, my city is not, it doesn't have the beach closer, but in 20 minute by car you can be at the beach. So having the beach here and living the island life definitely makes me feel better. And more relaxed, and also more productive because I feel good. So I'm more inspired than for that the job I do. Also, because I'm writing and I need inspiration. Sometimes. It helps.

I: Okay cool, little bit of a more different question. Is the the Philippines politically stable right now?

R: Yeah, for now, I would say. Yeah. For now. I would say it's quite stable. Yeah.

I: And is it also important for you that it is a politically stable country?

R: Yeah, I would say so. I mean, I guess that as a foreigner, it doesn't really affect you too much. It's more for Filipino, probably, because as a foreigner, I mean, if you're a tourist visa, if you have a tourist visa, the politics doesn't really affect you too much or could maybe be affected. Work for the immigration, if something can change, but for now, nothing changed will be probably if the government is not stable enough would be more appropriate for the Filipinos for work and everything for the economy. But as a foreigners, I don't think you will be too much affected.

I: Okay and are there like enough facilities to be able to do digital nomadism on the islands?

R: Yeah, I would say that they are improving a lot. As I was saying before, there are more and more places where you can work from, but they are really impressive because they are really fast. Maybe I would say almost every week there is some new place, or maybe an old place that they are renewing

somehow and they have Wi Fi because if I think about three years ago, when I was here, I just stay here for one month. It was completely impossible to work online. There is no I mean, you could have Wi Fi in some hostel and resorts but was really really poor like you couldn't work online. Now it's much better. There are many resorts that have a common area where you can work from even if you're not a guest. Many bars and restaurants also. There is this I mean, this guy is building a co working there is another small co working already on that they open two weeks ago, there is a hostel that has a small co working inside. So you can if you're a guest you have the co working for free. I mean like included in your rent. If not, you can just go and pay the co working to like works in. So yeah, I will say there are many places and good facilities. Of course it's not because many people compare the Philippines with Bali or Thailand like Chiang Mai and they say, oh, no, Philippines is not good to work. Because, of course, it's not the same level of Bali. But Bali was a place for digital nomads already probably 10 years ago. So Philippines still have a like job to do work to do, you know, but they are improving a lot and comparing with, literally with three years ago. It's much better. So I'm actually kind of worried that at some point Siargao will be like Bali, and I don't want to because it's too crowded.

I: Yeah, I can imagine. Yeah. Do you also work with digital nomad communities yourself?

R: Uhm, I mean, I tried to grow up this community on Instagram, because I would like to organize in the future maybe events here on on on Siargao, that could be also just activities to share with other digital nomads, or maybe do some workshops. And I'm actually thinking about do something with the guy who was building the co working also. So yeah, I will try to keep and create my community. But I mean, it was, I don't want to say like mine, it's just like help other people and if we can collaborate together would be, would be perfect. I just, I started my IG profile. At the beginning, the idea was just create IG profile for Italian people. Because from Italy, everyone was saying I know Philippine is not good. Don't go to the Philippines, you cannot work from there. And it was like I have been there, I live here you can work from here. So I thought, Okay, I want to open this IG profile, and try to share as much as I can to prove that you can work from here. And then when I was here, I thought now maybe it's better to do it in English, because other people also for other people also can be use useful to get information about where to go to the Philippines. So that's why I created the IG account. And if I can grow, the profile and the community and organize events will be will be nice.

I: Okay, thank you very much. That was all the questions I wanted to ask you. So do you have anything else you want to add from your experience of being a digital nomad?

R: Ah, I don't know is that like, I feel the most important thing is to share experience with other digital nomads, just gonna say like experiment. Because they're they're, I feel like there are many people that are scared, but they just want to be sure that of course, the Wi Fi connection, for example, is super important. So of course, it's what you need one hundred percent to work. But just to give a chance to different places and try and move around if you can and share with other people experience because you can also learn really a lot from other people here. When I came here meeting other people has been super nice and it's like why didn't I do that before. So yeah.

Interview 3

R: Perfect!. So let's go straight to the first question. So can you just quickly introduce yourself, like your age, your nationality, your job and your digital nomading experiences.

I: Yeah, so my name is … I am 28 years old, born and raised in Croatia and I've been living as a digital nomad for the, uhm, past two years or so. I started at the end of the covid period because, uhm, i felt like i had to, uhm, see more of the world because i had been living in my apartment for almost 3 years then. So I just felt like I was, uhm, trapped and needed more freedom so I decided to try and become a digital nomad. Also because i already traveled a lot when i finished highschool and i liked that a lot so yeah that's how it started. And now I couldn't go back to that apartment I feel like haha.

R: Wow, that's nice. And what do you do for a living? What is your job?

I: O yeah, sorry, I work as a freelance video editor for many different companies. Which is really great because it is a really flexible job which, uhm, really ties well with the whole digital nomad lifestyle, of traveling around, doing fun activities and meeting new people, you know. So it is really the perfect job. Before this I worked for a single company, I had a contract, and you wouldn't get as much flexibility, that you, uhm, kinda need to do this type of lifestyle. So I ended up in the same place for way too long and it got boring, because I needed to succeed in my deadlines and it was stressful, because well you are also still in a foreign, like unknown country so it is difficult. So switching to a freelance job was really relieving for me and, uhm, also really advisable. Uhm, and then, uhm, I also run a digital nomad community online, on Instagram, Facebook and Youtube, which is becoming quite big. I run that community all by my self, so that's, uhm, also where quite some time of mine is going. Uhm, it is a digital nomad community for online creative, uhm, like artist, such as video editors, photo editors and all type of jobs similar to that, so that we can help each other out with our similar struggles, which is really helpful.

I: Wow, amazing, so when you digital nomad do you travel alone, or do you travel with a partner for example?

R: Yeah, so mostly I travel alone, I don't have a partner unfortunately. But, uhm, yeah sometimes I travel together with a old colleague, and good friend from the first job, when I started they started as well so we traveled quite some time together in the beginning and now that I quit their I travel alone more often. But when we are in the same area we still like uhm, meet up and travel together for like 2 to 3 weeks and then we split up again so yeah.

I: Okay, and do you miss your home back in Croatia when you are abroad?

R: Well, yes and no. I visit it like once a year in the holiday season, around Christmas. So that's great. And I think I mainly miss the like events, but i just cannot afford the fly back and fourth to Croatia all the time, so that's a bit sad. But overall I would say I don't really miss it that much. I kinda, uhm, like being alone and exploring the world on my own, but I would say I miss my friends and family a bit but it is so easy these days to connect with them, like online, I facetime a lot with my mum, and then text pretty often with my friends and other family so, it is you know easier to keep in contact.

I: Okay perfect, and does this connection with you family help with feeling more at home, eventough they are not there?

R: Yes, definitely, it is really helpful and nice that you can just see your close friends and family, even if you are on the other side of the globe. And I think it is also important for them, especially for my mum that see can see my, and that I am healthy you know. So yeah being able to see them really helps with feeling close to them.

I: Okay interesting, and can you, do you develop a feeling of home when you are abroad?

R: Yeah, I would say so, I guess. I mean it is of course difficult when you don't have a place to stay that is your own, but, uhm, it is made easier by the amazing people, fellow digital nomads, and just travelers or backpackers in general, everyone is in the same situation, like, uhm, alone in a different country so you go and find each other pretty easy. But it is pretty difficult to build like a long term friendship, because everyone moves so quickly. But sometimes I travel with someone I meet for like 2 weeks so that always helps, and then like I said I have that one colleague that I also travel with so it is somewhat doable. Uhm, like yeah, I also think that home, yea like home, has, uhm, developed for me when i started digital nomading, it is not about my, uhm home, like physical home but more about being able to feel comfortable in a foreign place, if that makes sense.

R: Yea it does

I: So its more about a feeling of comfort and seeking familiarity and of course the people arround me that make me feel at home.

R: That's interesting, you mention that people help with feeling at home, but what are other things that play a role in this?

I: Yea so the people are super important, when you are not surrounded by the right people, like for example people that don't really want to talk or don't have the same mindset as you it gets more difficult. But I think another factor that is super important is getting to know the different environment. Like I said familiarity is important, I try to establish a routine that brings a sense of familiarity to my daily life. Whether it's finding a favorite café or exploring the local markets, these small routines help me feel connected to the place and more at home, I guess. Another thing that i forgot to mention is that the people of my community also really help finding this familiarity. Like when you meet someone in real life, that is already part of your own community then there is already some type of connection, you know.

I: Yea makes sense, one thing i forgot to ask you is where you currently are, and what your previous places of digital nomading were?

R: That's fine, so, uhm, currently I am in Panama. I am doing a kind of road trip through central and south america. So I started at the beginning of the year in Mexico, and I am slowly making my way down. I am currently in Panama, also been to Cuba and Jamaica, and I am planning to go to Colombia, Venezuela, Peru and just that part of South America next. And previous year I have been in Southeast Asia, like the typical digital nomading spots, like Thailand, Bali, Singapore, The Phillipines and so on. And before that I did some parts of Europe, like the Balkan and the Mediterranean. But, uhm, I have to say that it is different in Europe than in Southeast Asia and in Central America, where I am now. Cause the digital nomading communities, in my experiences are way bigger in Southeast Asia, especially in Bali and Thailand of course, so the digital nomad infrastructure is way better, like the internet cafes, the co working spaces everything is there and in Europe and Central America it is much more scares, maybe it is better now in Europe cause it already been 2 years since i have been there. But, uhm, I would say that Southeast Asia is definitely the place to go.

I: Interesting, that ties in perfectly with my next question, where do you look for, what things are important when looking for a new digital nomading spot?

R: Yea, i just make sure that it is a digital nomad spot, like if it is already in use by other digital nomads, and if the digital nomad facilities are there like the internet cafes and the coworking spaces. So that way I also know for sure, because it is already in use by other digital nomads, that the wifi connection is good and stable, which is of course essential for being a digital nomad. But I think I am not too picky when it comes to a new spot, like if I don't like a particular spot, because of the people or because of the wifi or anything, I just move on to the next spot. And if it is a great spot I tend to stay a little bit longer so yeah.

I: Okay, and how do the looks, the physical characters of a location affect your decision making in that?

R: Uhm, I don't really know. I guess if a place just looks good, but all the countries where i have been have good looking places so it is not that difficult. I don't really look for anything specific, like the beach or mountains or woods, I don't really care.

I: Okay, and how does the stability of a place, like if a place is like politically stable, affect your decision making?

R: Yea so that's something that I tend to keep in mind, because I don't wanna be alone in a foreign country where like a civil war breaks out or something. So I tend to do a lot of research about the place

itself and if it's good I go. But generally the popular digital nomading location it is easier to find out whether or not a place is stable. And also something to keep in mind is the availability of VISA for a place, cause you dont wanna get stuck because you don't have the right VISA. So I do care about that.

I: Okay great, and how does the local culture and your involvement in the local culture and activities affect your vision, like sense of a place?

R: Uhm, yea, so being able to get out of the digital nomad, like work, behind my laptop, and get involved with the local culture is really what makes this lifestyle great. I really like being around the locals and eating their food and going on typical local activities, like hikes, scuba diving, surfing, so I think that's really great to do, and also what keeps me motivated to continue because there are so many different cultures that I haven't explored yet.

I: That's great, and does this also help, the involvement with the locals and their culture, with your feeling of home?

R: Yea i think so, it is always easier to feel at home, I feel like, when you get to know the people around you and how they think about certain things. And being active in their activities, also with different nomads, helps with that so that's always really nice. Like going on a hike, is a super tough and hard experience so you connect really fast that way, which is really nice. And these type of activities also, are really important for other digital nomads, or beginning digital nomads, because this is really the exciting part of digital nomading, but traveling in general as well, and that's why I also make a lot of content around that to grow our community. I also post the real digital nomad stuff, don't worry, haha, but the content of scuba diving, hiking, the views that's the content that does the best for our community.

I: Amazing, and you mention your community a lot, but how important, just in general, is your community and even other communities for you as a digital nomad?

R: Yea they are super important, it is a great way to meet new people really fast. It really helps that you really feel that you are part of something bigger, with more people, so it also really helps against loneliness. And just I try with my community to help new nomads to find their way easier in a foreign country, by connecting people from my own community, which is really great helping others and I get a lot of positive replies on that, so that's really nice. And of course I also use other communities myself, to help myself find other people more easier, and to look for new great digital nomad spots. So these communities are just really helpful in a lot of different things.

I: Great, amazing so these where basically all my questions, thanks, do you have anything else to add from your experience as a digital nomad?

R: O wow, uhm, I mean, I think that being a digital nomad really thought me some valuable lessons and that you can just experience immense freedom around the world, whilst working. So I would advise anyone in their 20s to experience this experience for at least half a year, because it is just amazing, you meet so many great people, you see so much from the world it is truly an amazing experience, so yea just give it a try. I think that's all.

Interview 4

I: So first of all, can you just quickly introduce yourself like your age, your nationality, your current place and your previous digital nomad experiences?

R: All right. So, uh my name is … I'm 30 now. I just turned 30 a few months back and uh previously uh to the life that I'm living right now, I was an investment banker and a lot of people told me that you should become an investment banker because you earn a lot of money. But, well, uh with all of that

five years of experience into investment banking, it made me realize that money came in, but there was no work-life balance and I couldn't travel as much. So it, it kind of just let me stuck in a loop of things when COVID hit. And then I realized that my company was forced to go remote. And that's when they told me that, oh, you can work from anywhere. So I said great. Then I shifted to the mountains of India and I started working from there remotely and I think it was like a beta testing project for me where, um, it eventually gave me, uh, a validation that it's possible to live this lifestyle. And that's when I switched to becoming a digital nomaf full time. I also quit my job in my bank. And, um, it's been great so far. It's been, um, over living in, over nine plus countries, also in Europe and I'm currently in Singapore. Uh, I've traveled to 30 plus cities in India. Um I took up a paragliding certification and uh picked up other few adventure spots as well. So I think I'm balancing it way better now and I'm happier. So. Yeah.

I: Wow. Amazing. So, do you work as a digital nomad alone or do you work and travel with someone else like a partner or something?

R: Yeah. So I am married. Uh Although my partner is not a digital nomad and uh he does work full time um at a classic office. Uh However, uh we travel as and when we can together, but it's mostly just by myself when I, you know, I travel for longer terms and then he would come and join me here and there.

I: Okay. So is it difficult not seeing your um partner for long times when you're traveling?

R: It is uh I think it, it was easier at the start because um I was just used to traveling by myself for a very long time and it felt like it's just an extension of that but maybe after, uh, I mean, yeah, after my wedding I got, you know, thing, we got closer and then, uh, it, it, it does get difficult but I just, we just see it in a way that we both kind of want to live different lives and we respect that about each other. It's also our career choices and we're working on making the shift together. But till that time I think we're fine. Yeah.

I: Okay, so, do you also miss your original home in India when you were working abroad?

R: Uh, no, not so much. I've been, um, you know, by myself, uh since like 13, 14 years now I shifted out of home when I was 17. So it's been quite a while that I've, you know, gone back and lived with my parents or lived back home. I do miss India just as a country and just the people, the food. Uh, but I do, I do like living uh as an expat or a digital nomad abroad as well because I like the experience and embracing the culture along with it. Um, whenever I missed home then I would just go back, meet my parents or then I would call them here. So it works fine. You know.

I: And so in the new countries, do you develop a feeling of home?

R: Hm. That's a good question. Yes, I do actually. And, uh I think that's very important, that's a very important aspect of traveling that you, you have to have some kind of a familiar feeling when you're shifting countries so often and when you're traveling so often that you need to stick by to either some kind of a routine or you need to speak to the right kind of people and get in like, you know, indulge into communities that, that feel like home. So I try and, you know, get to places or connect with people. I think people make a lot of difference, the right kind of people to just feel like home. And um I think it's also a kind of a routine that I establish for myself in new places or the things that I that I like kind of carry with myself just to feel a little more familiar because it can get uncomfortable when you're traveling so much and you know, you, you're changing so often, you're changing surroundings so often. Uh So I take my steps to feel at home and also it's just embracing culture and talking to people, helps me fit in into the space way better.

I: So how's uh living situation in a different country? Like do you rent an airbnb or something?

R: Um No, uh not so much. I, I try and stay in uh co living or hostels mostly because it's usually not very high on budget. And um I would either take a private room in a hostel or a co living space because um it just seems way better than an airbnb to like, meet the right kind of people and also meet fellow digital nomads. I feel like um I don't know, I've never really tried airbnb so much. Um Just a couple of times here and there. They've been good for me, but I feel they're way more secluded and uh the community feeling of the community aspect is probably not as much compared to like things or so I prefer that.

R: Yeah. So you mentioned communities a lot. Are they important to you when you Digital Nomad?

I: Absolutely. I think, uhm, it's very important to just stick with the right kind of people. And I do, I take my steps, uhm, a lot to build communities as well through the way. That's something that I am working on. Um and just provide, I mean, I think just meet people from this different domains. It just feel like when people live with you and you know, that that's why there is this concept of nomad villages coming up where people stick together for a longer period of time. Uh because it's important to like, I think I faced this a lot when I was traveling too fast was that I would, I kind of missed out on meaningful conversations with people and that's why I felt like I, I probably needed a friend around or like or somebody with, with a, with a meaningful conversation and to find those right kind of conversations and people, uhm, it, it like, I think just the meet up app or nomad list or thing or, you know, living in coworking spaces or living in co living spaces made me come back to the people who I would be interested in. So, it, it's a good, um, it's a good probity that you're going to find good people and you're gonna find people of your, of your interest in these spaces. And, uh, that just makes traveling a little, little more seamless and a little less lonely as well.

R: Yeah. So, do you also make, like, real friends, through this way?

I: Oh, yeah, I've made a lot of friends to the way and in fact, like, I've, I've, um, so I am in Singapore right now and, uh, I've been here for quite some time. Uh, it's been on and off over an year in Singapore and all of my friends in here are through social media and I'm really thankful that I under, like, I kind of underestimated the power of social media before, but I found such great people and they've stuck around. Um, they, they make me feel like home here and, uh, it's wonderful to just like, yeah, what, what the internet can, like, you know, bring to you. So it's great.

I: Yeah. Um, so, um, when choosing a new digital spot, like in a different country, what are the things to focus on what are important to choose this new location.

R: Uh I would say wifi um culture uh cost of living and um and the weather. Yeah, I think these like, I, I wouldn't go to something which is super hot. Uh It's not my thing. I know a lot of digital minds want to be in tropical regions but it's just something that I, I don't, I, I don't like something which is super hot.

I: OK. Um So what uh specifically do you search in the culture type of aspect? Like a, a different culture or a culture that is close to your own culture?

R: Oh No, I'd, I'd be very happy if I'm, I'm in an extremely varied cultural environment. So it's, it's, it just um makes me more curious as a person and uh i it gets difficult sometimes with like language barrier and, you know, understanding the food, but I think that's the part of it and then you say yes to a lot of other things. So I think uh the more varied it is from my own culture. It's the way better it is because uh it just feels like it's, it's a way more grounding experience that way because you learn so much, you know, with the people around you.

I: So uh in what sense is the stability of a place important to you? Like um uh politically?

R: Um what do you mean by stability of a place?

I: Like if it, if it's like a politically stable, like

R: Yeah. I mean, uh, so I've thought about it. I mean, um, uh, honestly I haven't really been to places which are not, I mean, yeah, which are instable. Um, and I've, I've thought about, like, you know, like, I, I just, as an Indian, I probably can't really spend a lot of time in Pakistan. Uh, but I've considered Iran and uh you know, other Middle Eastern countries that, that were unstable initially but then are doing better now. And Iran is just a country that is also promoting a lot of tourism and it's like coming out of coming out of that zone just, just as a country. So I think it's, it's not too bad. Um but I also uh would be slightly careful maybe just so that I don't uh I don't end up in bad visa situations. It's just that. So uh you don't know, I haven't really been uh to these places but I, I don't mind exploring. I mean, I, I, I don't know, I don't think I have a very strong opinion on it as of now.

R: Yeah. And how are the, how is your involvement in the local activities of the place important to you when, when and picking a new place?

I: I think it's super important. I just create a lot of content around local cultures and experiences as well. It's, it's one of the most integral parts of my travel to uh delve into local cultures. I talk about it a lot and it's, it's uh yeah, I think, I think that's what, what makes my travels richer just talking to more locals um eating food with them, understanding where the history goes by. Why did they, why do they do a particular kind of thing? And then eventually by all of that learning and unlearning also in the process, I also try and create content around it. So it's, it's one of the most important things.

R: Great. And you mentioned the weather but one thing that's important to you. Um So how is the physical character of a, of a location uh important to you? How does it, how does the looks of a place uh impact your decision making?

I: Actually, I don't know how much would it, the look of a place really is to like, change my, you know, thing because I, I have a rough idea of like few countries. But uh every ever since I actually, uh you know, got into nomadic, like, uh you know, when people research about planning their itinerary or their travel, they usually look up to like videos and youtube blogs and Instagram and tiktok maybe. But I stopped doing that completely. So I just felt like when I was traveling earlier, I used to look at, I used to watch so many youtube blogs that it kind of stereotyped the place for me. And I, I wasn't surprised when I was there so I stopped watching them completely. And all I did was, I mean, all I do now is I read about it and I don't think I've seen a lot of content on things apart from like India is like India is my own country. So I kind of, I, I can visualize what, what, what would a place look like. But then there's, for example, Greenland or uh you know, parts of Europe that I haven't been to. And I would not want to watch a lot of vlogs around it because I don't want to see it before I go and it's OK if I don't know much about it and I would just figure it out when I'm there. So I would rather read more and uh honestly, like the, well, the way the place looks doesn't matter to me as much. Um Good.

R: That's great. Um So these were basically all my questions. Um So do you have anything else uh that you want to add from your experience as being a digital nomad?

I: Uh no not really.