

How can one sustain a sense of home on the road?

A study on the digital nomads'
sense of home



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Abstract

Innovations in technology and transportation led to the emergence of the ‘digital nomad’ phenomenon. With increased mobility and location independence this new lifestyle allows individuals to simultaneously work and travel, leaving their home behind. This paper looks at the factors influencing digital nomads' sense of home in Tenerife. It aims to provide an understanding on their perception of home by proposing the following research question: *‘How has the meaning of home changed for digital nomads before and after engaging in the nomadic lifestyle (currently living in Tenerife)?’* In total, seven qualitative interviews were conducted online or via phone and manually analyzed based on both deductive and inductive codes. The findings indicate that digital nomads’ sense of home is influenced by several factors, including frequent contact with family members, attributes of the physical environment and safety. Moreover, a shift is observed from a traditional understanding of home rooted in a physical location, to more intangible constructs such as finding home in the present and in established routines. However, prior to the digital nomad lifestyle most interviewees engaged in frequent relocation outside their country of origin, challenging the reflections of former perception of home.

Avenues for future research are proposed to explore the effect of complex relocation history on the perception of home compared to digital nomads who were bound to one place and became highly mobile only after their new lifestyle. This article is relevant for social geographers interested in home making or individuals in an attempt to establish a home in an unfamiliar environment.

Key words: digital nomad, sense of home, mobility, Tenerife, lifestyle, mobility, home

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In recent years, the exponential increase in technological innovations made ‘the time-space compression - the effective shrinking of the globe’ more apparent than before (de Loryn, 2022, p. 108). These modern technologies such as fast internet connection and innovations in transportation allows employees to work efficiently on their laptop without being bound to a specific place or office (Endrissat & Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2021; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Consequently, enabling new ways of working with higher mobility and location independence, leading to the emergence of the ‘digital nomad’ phenomenon.

This newly arising lifestyle gives both virtual and physical mobility, flexibility, and autonomy to employees, providing opportunity for constant travel. Raising the question of what one might consider their ‘home,’ along with how home can be defined when the traditional perception of it being bound to a place is left behind. After the Covid-19 pandemic, new possibilities of remote working created a growing interest in the digital nomad phenomenon among the academic community. However, most research is done in comparison to the emergence and functions of coworking places (Chevtaeva Denizci-Guillet,2021; Nash et al., 2020), with little focus on the perception of home and experiences of being away from home in connection with highly mobile individuals. Thus, it is an increasingly popular and relevant topic for social geographers interested in residential relocation and home making or ordinary people from international students to expats who try to establish a home in a yet unfamiliar environment.

A popular hotspot for digital nomads is Tenerife, the largest island of the Canary Islands, located in the Atlantic Ocean. Next to the necessities of a digital nomad lifestyle, such as reliable internet connection, coliving and working places, the cost of living is lower than in most European and North American countries. Moreover, it offers a wide variety of leisure activities and diverse nature (Dodard, 2022) accommodated with mild and sunny climate, attracting the digital nomad community.

1.2 Research problem

The aim of this research is to get an understanding of digital nomads’ experience of the sense of home in comparison to their previous lifestyle in their country of origin. Questioning the degree to which geographical location plays a role in a feeling of home. To achieve a better insight into the perception of home, the following research question is developed:

'How has the meaning of home changed for digital nomads before and after engaging in the nomadic lifestyle (currently living in Tenerife)?' By reflecting on their past and present living experiences, a better understanding of home is created.

To understand the underlying concepts of the research question the sub questions are stated as the following:

1. How do digital nomads define 'sense of home'?
2. What factors contribute to digital nomads' sense of home?
3. How does being a digital nomad change the perception of home?

This thesis is followed by a critical review of existing academic literature, which serves as a basis for the theoretical framework leading to the conceptual model depicting the factors influencing digital nomads' sense of home. The third section includes the methodology, which was applied to answer the research question. Moreover, it contains ethical considerations relevant to the qualitative research method. In the fourth section, the results are presented following the order of the sub-questions. Subsequently, in the discussion the main research question is answered. Lastly, the conclusions provide recommendations for future research derived from the limitations of the thesis.

2. Theoretical framework

For this research, it is crucial to differentiate between tourists and digital nomads, to have a clearer understanding of the differences that might occur between the established conceptual model (Figure 3) and the empirical findings. The reason for this is that some academic papers used in the framework were built around tourists and their sense of being away from home.

Reichenberger (2018) defines digital nomads as mobile transnational online workers, living a location independent lifestyle combining leisure and work. An important detail of this is that traveling is not part of their job requirement, but voluntarily chosen by individuals (Nash et al., 2020). One could argue that digital nomads are part time tourists, as they also engage in leisure activities, spend capital and in some cases do not have permanent residence in the visited country. On the other hand, one major difference between the two is that digital nomads primarily visit these places while working, which could influence their overall experience and perception of home in the chosen destination. In the scope of this thesis, Tenerife is the selected context.

2.1 Mobility and Technology

Higher mobility and information technology allow individuals to pursue new ways of working by blurring spatiotemporal boundaries creating greater autonomy in working conditions (Endrissat & Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2021; Hensellek & Puchala, 2021). The new circumstances open the possibility to travel to exotic places while working, leaving behind the stable point of reference one can return to (Urry, 2002). That might be one's family house or a long-term rental apartment. Nonetheless, based on Reichenberger's (2018) classification system of digital nomads, the complete absence of a permanent home may only be applicable to a subgroup of level 3 individuals who are on a constant move. One level below stand the people who keep their home base and travel temporarily for a designated period, and finally, individuals on level 1 stay in their original home environment without exploiting their spatial freedom.

This thesis is researching digital nomads whose lifestyles (spatial mobility/housing situation) can be classified as level 2 and 3, as described above. A change is expected in their perception of home after engaging in a nomadic lifestyle for at least a year. From this perspective the meaning of home is shifted from a physical site to a concept directed towards interpersonal relationships (White & White, 2007).

In this modern world being away from your loved ones does not have to mean missing important family events or meaningful conversations. Through technology, it is possible to maintain connections with geographically remote relatives and friends and engage in social interactions while physically being away in another country or even continent (de Loryn, 2022; White & White, 2007). Hence, keeping connections with one's origins can foster digital nomads' sense of home, by talking via phone or social media. Furthermore, it can create a sense of togetherness at a safe distance, without the negative influence of social pressure and expectations from family members (de Loryn, 2022).

2.2 Sense of home

For a better understanding of digital nomads' perception of home, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Figure 1) is applied as a contextual background. The bottom two levels of the pyramid represent the basic needs of humans (physiological and safety) and only upon their satisfaction it is possible to fulfill higher psychological needs including intimate relationships and friends. Therefore, when interviewees indicate a change in their perception of home, a shift from physical site to interpersonal relationships, it must be acknowledged that it occurs in places where their fundamental necessities such as security, safety, food, water, warmth, and rest are adequately met.

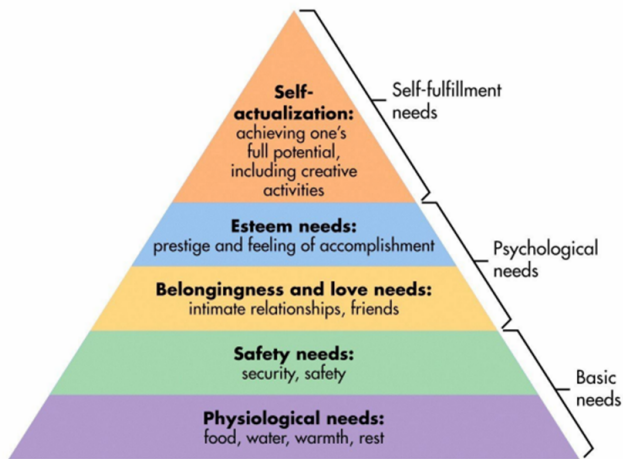


Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (McLeod, 2007)

White and White (2007) describes the concept of home as a 'symbolic or actual place from which people venture and to which they return' (p. 90). As mentioned in the work of de Loryn (2022) it might be a house, a place or places spread across the world. On the other hand, when moving away from a fixed geographical location, it can be a lived experience, meaningful objects or even a person (de Loryn, 2022; Buckle, 2017; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011).

To summarize, it can be perceived in many different ways, filled with underlying meanings and emotions connected to it. Hence, during this research interviewees will not be given a predetermined definition of home to allow the development of free interpretations.

In the following section four factors will be discussed, influencing the 'sense of home' of digital nomads, and possibly changing their perception of home. The factors are as follows: social relationships, sense of community, housing situation, and stability.

2.2.1 Social Relationships and Sense of Community

Digital nomads leaving everything behind to engage in a mobile lifestyle, and become physically distant from their friends and family, may result in feelings of loneliness especially when traveling alone (Thompson, 2019). Nevertheless, staying connected with loved ones or being part of a community can be beneficial in establishing a sense of home on the road. A study conducted by White and White (2007) found a positive association between frequent contact with loved ones and the feeling of being simultaneously at home while being geographically distant from one another. In terms of physical presence, traveling with someone as friends or romantically can add to the feeling of home with a focus on newly created positive emotions (de Loryn, 2022). Arguably, from this perspective the sense of home is shifted from a physical site to a concept directed towards interpersonal relationships (White & White, 2007).

Although there are many online communities for digital nomads to join, such as on Facebook or by following a blog, when staying in one place for longer, connecting locally with like-minded people can tackle the feelings of isolation (Hensellek & Puchala, 2021). As the longer one stays at a place the more likely they are to establish an emotional connection with the location and be more embedded in the community. Moreover, it helps to establish situational awareness, which increases the likelihood of feeling part of a community, which under a temporary location may not be triggered (Guan et al., 2022).

2.2.3 Dwelling and stability

Traditionally, the idea of having/owning a house or apartment and feeling at home goes hand in hand without a doubt. However, for digital nomads classified as level 3, the stability created by a permanent residence is absent. Hence, as an alternative to physical location, White and White (2007) found that home can be seen primarily in the context of relationships one maintains with friends, family, or romantic partner. Despite this, home is associated with stability and comfort and is a foundation for individuals to interpret their experiences during their time away from home (Guan et al., 2022). The basis for interpretation is expected to be applicable during the interviews with level 2 digital nomads.

2.3 Conceptual model

The conceptual model portrays how the digital nomad lifestyle could potentially influence the sense of home, changing the perception of it from the traditional views being connected to a physical location and materials. Figure 3 shows the concepts of mobility and technology directed toward the umbrella term of sense of home. In addition to being the main enablers of digital nomad lifestyle, they are viewed as factors influencing the change in the perception of home. Under the sense of home there are four concepts, namely social relationships, sense of community, dwelling and stability. These were selected based on academic literature as mentioned beforehand.

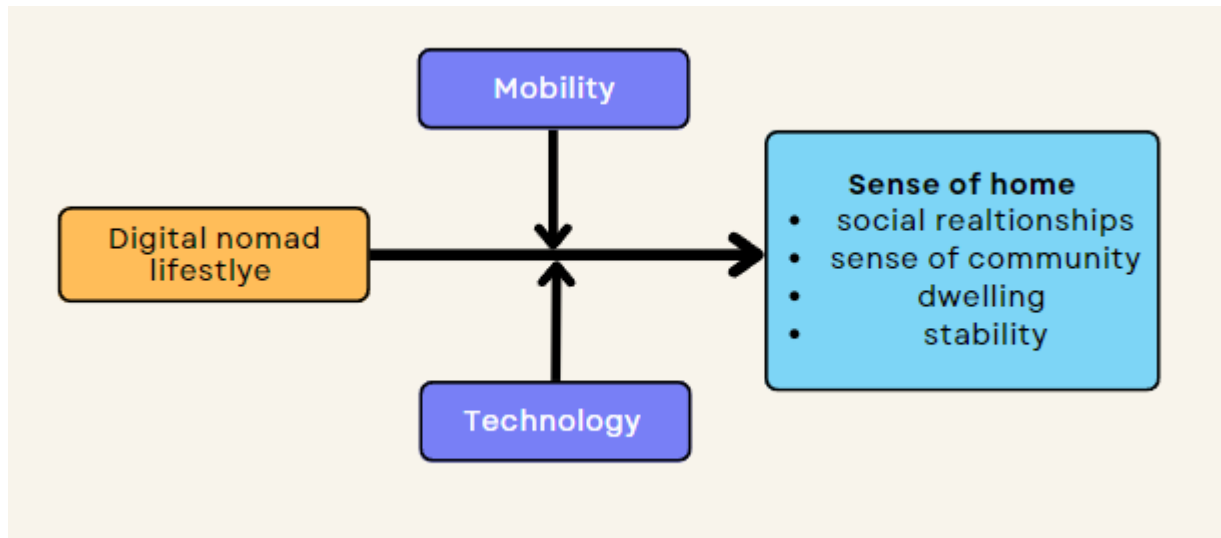


Figure 3: Conceptual model of ‘sense of home’ in relation to digital nomad lifestyle

Based on the subsequent research question: *‘How has the meaning of home changed for digital nomads before and after engaging in the nomadic lifestyle (currently living in Tenerife)?’* the expectations are as follows.

First, the new lifestyle of digital nomads, involving frequent relocation, will require them to rethink their concept of home. Adapting a new definition that can be sustained throughout their journeys may also be beneficial when coping with loneliness. Secondly, social relationships and sense of community are expected to remain key factors by creating a feeling of security in one’s everyday life. Finally, if not the house itself, the housing situation will probably still be mentioned by digital nomads as it can influence emotional well-being.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection

As the study is focused on the digital nomad population, the criterion for the sample is determined based on Reichenberger’s (2018) three level distinction of the concept. For this research digital nomads falling into the category of level 2 and 3 were included. Meaning that people use the possibility to simultaneously work and travel (2) and to the degree that they are without permanent residents (3). Furthermore, to participate, interviewees must have spent at least a year abroad (away from their country of origin). This timespan is viewed as adequate to experience being a digital nomad and the sense of being away from home.

After the set criterion, volunteer and judgmental sampling method was used to avoid sampling bias and ensure a representative sample (Burt et al., 2009).

To recruit participants, a post was shared by the researcher on Facebook and in relevant Facebook groups such as *'Digital Nomads Community Tenerife'* and for a faster, more efficient process, private messages were sent in request for an interview. Relying on the response of volunteers willing to partake in an interview, seven people were recruited. For the convenience and request of participants three interviews were held via phone and four in a video conference. The conversations took between 25 and 35 minutes varying on the amount of shared information.

According to Kendall (2008) the purpose of a qualitative interview is the 'exploration of meaning' (p.133). This instrument allows the researcher to recognize general trends, patterns, and outliers, which are considered in the analysis process. Making room for the participants to reflect on their experiences, regarding 'sense of home', shows an insight in the underlying factors and perspectives affecting individual cases.

In this research the primary data collection instrument is semi structured interviews (see Appendix 1). This instrument allows the conversation to unfold naturally and offers the researcher to discover new concepts apart from those included in the conceptual framework. However, the predetermined questions help to guide the conversation and when interviewees get sidetracked it may bring the conversation back to the topic of research (Longhurst, 2003). As for the qualitative data analysis (Figure 2), a code tree (see Appendix 2) was created preliminary based on deductive concepts from previous studies, nonetheless inductive codes were added when new patterns were recognized through the analysis. The novel inductive codes connected to sense of home are the following: routine, personal freedom and time spent at a location.

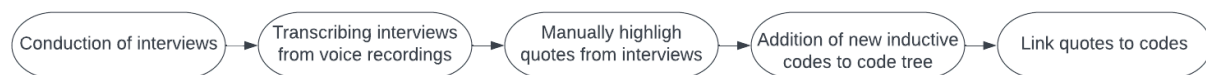


Figure 2: Data analysis scheme

3.2 Limitations and Research Ethics

During the data collection and the interpretation of the data, the tendency of interviewees to reflect on the past with a positive bias was taken into consideration. Moreover, asking spontaneous follow up questions was a challenge during three interviews as for the participants' request it was held via phone as opposed to google meet, thus the non-verbal cues were unseen by the researcher.

In the context of research ethics, prior to the start, interviewees were informed about their right to withdrawal at any point during the research process. In addition, they were asked for verbal consent to voice record the conversation, with the intention of latter verbatim transcription.

This research is conducted independently, without conflict of interest and adheres to GDPR Regulation stipulated by the European Union (Regulation, 2016). Moreover, the collected data is handled with integrity and confidentiality, thus participants' names remain anonymous.

4. Results

The primary objective of the data collection was to obtain an overview of digital nomads' definition and sense of home with the factors influencing it, centered around the question whether their perception of home has changed after becoming part of this new lifestyle. As indicated in Table 1, all seven participants met the requirement of living abroad as digital nomad for more than a year, with the most experienced interviewee (I7) embracing this lifestyle since 2015. It is of importance that apart from one participant who is from Chile, everyone is originally from Europe. This homogeneity is regarded as advantageous as it has the potential to create a shared background with similar experiences.

Moreover, four people indicated their ownership of a house or apartment, however as of the digital nomad lifestyle most of them employ it as a resource for passive income while traveling rather than utilizing it as primary residence. Nevertheless, it provides a stable point of reference and for level 2 digital nomads a place to go from and return to.

Interviews	Gender	Age	Nationality	Relationship status	Occupation	Digital nomad since	Living situation	Interview date
Interview 1	Male	29	Polish	Single	Software engineer	2018	Renting an apartment	24/03/2023
Interview 2	Male	≈40	Lithuanian	Complicated	Consultancy	2022	Renting an apartment	25/03/2023
Interview 3	Male	33	Romanian	Married	Marketing agency	2019	Owner of an apartment (Romania)	28/03/2023
Interview 4	Male	34	Romanian	Single	IT	2020	Owner of a house (Romania)	03/05/2023
Interview 5	Female	36	Chilean	Single	Life coach	2021	Owner of a house (Tenerife)	16/05/2023
Interview 6	Female	35	Lithuanian	Single	Life coach	2020	Renting a room	17/05/2023
Interview 7	Male	36	Dutch	Married	Entrepreneur	2015	Owner of houses (Tenerife, NL)	17/05/2023

Table 1: Characteristics of participants

4.1 Defining sense of home

To answer the main research question '*How has the meaning of home changed for digital nomads before and after engaging in the nomadic lifestyle (currently living in Tenerife)?*,' it was crucial to ask participants to define and describe what home means to them. This was purposefully one of the first questions, to make sure that the answer is not influenced by the researcher's perception or theoretical framework. Accordingly, the mentioned concepts related to locations, feelings, or social relations were independently formulated.

Based on the answers the definition of home can be divided into two categories. Home as something tangible and intangible.

First, regarding home as something tangible, two individuals (I1, I3) explicitly indicated that their home is a physical location connected to a house in their country of origin. Family played a vital role for both, with one referring to their spouse and the other one to their parental home and family. Regardless of this difference, home for them was a safe and familiar place, where they could return after a journey or go in case of emergency. Moreover, the familiar feeling associated with the location meant that there is nothing new or surprising, which is the reason for stability. As Interviewee 1 stated:

'Me not having a family of my own or a girlfriend. I don't consider any of the places I've been home. Home is my home town.' (Interview 1)

On the other hand, when examining home as something intangible, it is rooted in a feeling, routine, or state of mind. Before further elaboration, it is important to refer to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, to emphasize that participants' basic needs are assumed fulfilled. Consequently, even if interviewees indicate the ability to quickly adapt to an unfamiliar environment it does not imply their willingness or aspiration to live anywhere in the world. Even so when their sense of home is rooted in a feeling or state of mind.

Interviewees 5,6 and 7 stated that home is where they are (in the present), and it comes from within. From this point of view, time and location is less significant in developing a sense of home. Through the reflections of Interviewee 5, it is clearly visible that her feeling of home is not dependent on the apartment she owns in Tenerife.

'And even though I said, I have a base, home for me is where I am.' (Interview 5)

Furthermore, she indicated that time spent at a location does not correlate with her sense of home, and is more rooted in her emotional state. Contrary to the findings of Guan et al. (2022), who found that spending time in a place strongly correlates with feeling at home.

‘Thinking of that experience of eight years in one place that never felt home and maybe because I was not entirely happy there.’ (Interview 5)

Raising the question of the difference between going on a holiday and living as a digital nomad in a foreign country, besides having to work? Although there is only a thin line between a holiday and their everyday life, a clear approach has been provided. Three interviewees (I1, I5, I6) explained that on a holiday they refrain from establishing a routine as it is temporary and they don’t have any obligations related to work. On the other hand, in their everyday life there is a routine creating a boundary separating a holiday spot from home. For instance, the everyday structure includes going to the gym, attending dance classes, shopping at the local market, or having a daily cup of coffee on the terrace. As noted by Interviewee 6:

‘(...) simple things like going to the gym and minding my grocery store and then I feel home inside.’ (Interview 6)

One factor that is relevant for the three people who find home in the present regardless of their location, is their complex relocation history prior to the digital nomad lifestyle. As they moved away from their country of origin as adolescents and continued living abroad as young adults. Hence, they had to adapt to new circumstances and cope with the challenges of relocation, eventually establishing their own terms of making themselves feel at home.

‘I always say I was a nomad before being digital.’ (Interview 5)

4.2 Factors influencing sense of home

While five people described their sense of home as detached from a specific place, the physical environment still plays a significant role in the construction of a sense of home. As all participants lived in Tenerife, the following factors are derived from their generic and location specific experiences, to answer the sub question: *What factors contribute to digital nomads’ sense of home?*

In the context of Tenerife, the most mentioned factors in relation to their sense of home were physical environment (weather, nature) and feeling of belonging through connections with locals and the digital nomad community. The physical attributes of Tenerife such as warm weather throughout the year, combined with the presence of mountains and the Atlantic Ocean creates a relaxing atmosphere, influencing people to engage in outdoor activities, and facilitating their adaptation to the local way of life. Consequently, fostering a sense of belonging among digital nomads and feelings of safety in the village-like environment.

On the other hand, Interviewee 1 experienced connections with digital nomads as superficial and preferred to engage with locals, as he found those friendships more meaningful.

‘And that is something that I have missed all the time. Having connections with people, and actually getting to know them.’ (Interview 1)

From a generic perspective, the factors mentioned can be categorized under social relationships, dwelling and stability as indicated in the conceptual model. Accordingly, under social relationships connections with family members, friends and romantic partners were explored.

Looking at the frequency of keeping in touch with family members, five interviewees indicated that they call their parents or siblings at least once a week, usually during the weekend. Furthermore, Interviewee 1 and 5 implied that texting them everyday is a tradition and valuable part of their routine and is not regarded as a burden. Next to keeping close contact online, Interviewee 6 pointed out that the flexibility around her job as a life coach allows her to visit family for a longer period (2 months).

Overall, looking back at the research cohort, the majority of the interviewees were not in a romantic relationship and two of them were married. This can be an explanation for the frequent contact with family and finding home within themselves either based on an emotional state or in daily routines. On the contrary, married participants highlighted the role of their partner in connection to their sense of home. For example, Interviewee 7 made a remark that even though he finds his home in the present, he always travels with family (wife, kid, and Au Pair) and together make a place as their home.

‘When I travel one month or couple of months in a camper, then that is my home. So home is where i live.’ (Interview 7)

Although he is a house owner in Tenerife and Utrecht, he did not state his attachment to the houses and regarded it as a source of passive income. Compared to people who do not own a house, finding stability is a challenge. As the youngest participant highlighted, switching between Airbnbs and hostels every week was not ideal and affected his productivity at work. Thus, he rented an apartment in Tenerife for longer to seek stability and create a comfortable atmosphere of his own.

‘(...) I found that moving so much, I did not enjoy it, I wanted to stay in one place for a while.’ (Interview 1)

This sentiment was shared with Interviewee 4, who found that the possibility of staying in one place for longer, without being concerned about moving to a new place felt secure and made it easier to establish a home.

To conclude, irrespective of whether digital nomads define home in terms of tangibility or intangibility, the sense of home is connected by the overarching themes of security and connections with loved ones.

4.3 Change of perception

When talking about change in the perception of home, the reference point is a physical location manifested in a house. Through the participants, three trends are discovered. For the two interviewees whose definition of home is rooted in a physical location, home as that place became more important, as they realized while they were there, they took it for granted. Moreover, both indicated that they appreciate spending time alone while they are away from home as it can get hectic with their families around.

In the case of Interviewee 2, his fundamental perspective of the home remained the same. Although he sold his property in Latvia to pursue a digital nomad lifestyle, he established a similar routine to what he had before in his country of origin. He developed a system at the new location by actively engaging with the local environment through activities such as going to the market and signing up to dance classes to meet the local community. Through this gradual integration and daily routine, he could call Tenerife his home.

‘A similar routine that I set up in my home country Latvia before (...) So basically home for me is a system, as long as I establish a system (...) I call it home.’ (Interview 2)

Although three of the interviewees identified home as location independent in the present moment, this perception did not arise solely due to the digital nomad lifestyle. These individuals had already lived in cities outside of their country of origin, inclining them to rethink their views of home with less connection to a physical location. Nevertheless, the new lifestyle did add a layer to their experiences, making it easier to adapt quickly to new environments. With this feeling and time it became easier for them to adapt to the new location. From a traditional point of view, this transition can be interpreted as a shift from the concept of home rooted in a physical location to one that can be revoked at places where the basic needs are fulfilled, and positive emotions are raised.

‘(...) maybe my own concept of home is just different to a normal person because I grew up on the move you know.’ (Interview 5)

‘Trying to explore other opportunities and see what else is out there, so being digital nomad totally shifted how I feel about the places.’ (Interview 6)

While the feeling of home can be sustained on the road the surrounding environment remains significant for the feeling to foster. This was exemplified by an interviewee from Romania who emphasized the effect of relocation to Tenerife altering his perspective on home. Due to location specific factors like warm weather people spend more time outside which makes the material aspects of a house less significant. This approach differs from what he was used to in his home country (Romania) where private property is esteemed a greater value.

‘It [house itself] does not matter because everything happens outside the room, the house.’ (Interview 4)

5. Discussion

Being a digital nomad means seeing friends and family less often and being away not just from their country of origin but also their home. However, it is possible to maintain a sense of home while traveling and adapt to the unfamiliar environment. Participants achieved this by becoming embedded in the local community by connecting with locals as well as other digital nomads, through events, hikes or by going to the market. Furthermore, maintaining a routine was deemed as essential to feel at home and additionally helps divide their residence from accommodation during vacation.

The notion of a sense of home originating from within and found in the present, aligns with the findings of de Loryn (2022), who concluded that home can be a place where one happens to be. However, after further inquiry, this notion of home is in fact dependent on the surrounding environment even if not on the house itself. Referring to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (McLeod, 2007), the feeling of home rooted in something intangible is possible to maintain in places where basic needs are met.

As many digital nomads lack a stable reference point, their sense of home is shifted from a geographical site to a more intangible construct, intertwined in relationships with others and themselves. This notion is also supported by White & White (2007) in their research on tourists and the sense of away home. Additionally, for individuals who do not possess a house, maintaining connections with pre-existing social networks fosters the feeling of security even in the absence of a romantic relationship. In contrast, those who own a property perceive their house as a source of passive income while traveling, as well as a place to go and return to, thereby creating stability. However, no indication of emotional attachment to the house was mentioned.

When digital nomads’ perception of home is compared to the traditional views rooted in a house or physical location, there is a notable disparity. However, as most interviewees resided in

different countries and engaged in frequent relocation, their perception of home has also changed prior to the digital nomad lifestyle. Thus, the thesis is unable to provide a clear understanding of participants' 'before,' as the point of comparison is part of a complex history of residential relocation.

To answer the main research question *'How has the meaning of home changed for digital nomads before and after engaging in the nomadic lifestyle (currently living in Tenerife)?'*

The findings address that the feeling of home became less embedded in a house due to frequent relocation, however the surrounding environment and frequent contact with family members play an important role when establishing a feeling of belonging, comfort, and safety.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Limitations

When conducting research in English with non-native speakers, the language barrier could negatively affect the depth and accuracy of collected data, hindering the ability to reflect the participants' thoughts and feelings.

Moreover, as mentioned before, the majority of the participants moved away from their country of origin as adolescents and continued living abroad as young adults. This was highlighted by a participant saying she was a nomad before becoming digital, pointing out that her lifestyle differed from the usual, prior to becoming a digital nomad. Consequently, in some cases, the analysis of the prior perception of sense of home was unfeasible as it was not rooted in the expected conventional views.

6.2 Recommendations for future research

For future research, it is recommended to examine relocation history prior to the adaptation of digital nomad lifestyle. In this respect, it might be interesting to see the effect of complex relocation history on the perception of home compared to digital nomads who were bound to one place and became highly mobile only after their newly adopted lifestyle.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview guide

My name is Csenge i'm a student at the University of Groningen, researching how the concept of home changed after living abroad for more than a year as a digital nomad. I am interested to see what people consider as home and the underlying factors influencing where one might feel at home or consider as one.

When agreed the information will be used in my bachelor thesis. However, participating in this interview is anonymous, which means that I will change your name. If it is okay with you, the interview will be recorded so that I can analyze it later and give my full attention to you during it. The interview will take approximately half an hour depending on the extent of shared information.

Do you agree with the interview being recorded? If yes, do you have any questions before we get started?

Opening questions:

Please introduce yourself.

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What do you do for a living?

4. When did you become part of the digital nomad lifestyle?
5. Are you traveling alone? Are you in a relationship?
6. How often do you travel from place to place?
7. How much time do you spend at your permanent residence?

Key questions:

8. What does home mean to you?

- What are the first things you associate with the word?
- Where do you feel at home at the moment?

9. What is your housing situation at the moment?

- How did you live before you started traveling?
- Are you an owner or do you live in a rental?
- Did you live alone? With family/partner?
- You mentioned that... can you give me an example?

10. Why did you decide to become a digital nomad? What attracted you?

11. Why did you choose Tenerife as your destination?

12. How does being a digital nomad contributed/changed your perception of home?

- Was there something that had a big influence on you?
- If you would compare how you thought about home before and after becoming a digital nomad, what would be the biggest difference?

13. What does being at home mean to you?

- What do you consider as your home at the moment?
- Depending on their answer, ask them to elaborate on one aspect...

14. What factors contribute to your sense of home?

- Are you part of any community in Tenerife?
- What makes you feel at home in the present day?
- How do you stay connected with family members? And how often?
- How do you find stability in your life?

Closing questions:

Thank you again for your time and participation!

1. Do you have any questions or something to add?

Appendix 2

Code tree for data analysis

