

“Home Office is The Here and Now”
Digital Nomad Visa Systems and Remote Work-Focused Leisure Policies

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Abstract

To attract highly qualified remote workers to their cities and countries, governments have implemented mechanisms for the stay of digital nomads, thereby promoting local economic development. To manage the entry and stay of this professional class in these regions, future residents are required to obtain special visas for digital nomads. However, the guidelines and regulations for these visas are not clearly established, and the policy frameworks that apply have not been studied extensively. Thus, this paper explores how countries develop policies to attract digital nomads, support business development and position themselves as ideal territories for these knowledge workers. The study uses an interpretative policy analysis approach to examine and comprehend the purpose behind leisure policies and digital nomad visa systems from 24 countries that have introduced them over the past decade. Findings reveal that digital nomadic visas are framed as an engagement experience with the destination and its leisure facilities. Also, facilitating these policies are government strategies to promote a business environment and strengthen a high-level entrepreneurial ecosystem. The primary research contribution has been to outline the relevant policy mechanisms that support the attraction of highly skilled mobile workers to a specific area or region and debate their intended efficiency.

Keywords: Digital nomad, leisure policy, visa systems, remote work, work-life balance.

1 Introduction

The nature of work is changing, and the possibility of doing it from anywhere is gaining more strength every day. The popularization and use of mobile devices, the Internet and digital technologies facilitate being permanently connected (Lee et al., 2019). The possibilities this offers are increasing, and this has consolidated new creative and innovative ways (Florida, 2019), especially for digital nomads. The digital nomad's office may be located anywhere in the world, and all that is needed to work remotely is a laptop and a reliable internet connection (Hannonen, 2020; Müller, 2016).

Digital nomadism an emerging concept and in the process of attaining theoretical precision (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Hannonen, 2020; Hermann & Paris, 2020). Makimoto and Manners (1997) pioneered this concept in the 1990s. They envisioned individual who could work from anywhere while discovering new locales, for in the end, "...wanderlust is part of the human psyche" (p. 2). For Müller (2016), the digital nomad is a social figure that combines the performance of a job with the exhibition of a lifestyle characterized by flexibility and mobility. Maintaining a balance between psychological needs, productivity, and travel is part of the digital nomad's identity (Dal Fiore et al., 2014; Orel, 2021a), rendering the selection of the next destination a central element of the nomadic life.

Aspects such as leisure opportunities, climate, cultural diversity, and cost of living help determine the choice of destination by the digital nomad (Ehn et al., 2022), who, in addition to seeking a temporary worksite, prioritizes well-being and feelings of freedom (Orel, 2019). There is no single typology of the digital nomad; on the contrary, it is a profile that, supported by technology and digital media, establishes its own culture based upon the evolution of traditional work structures (Aroles et al., 2020). "Digital nomads form a specific type of location-independent workers who voluntarily adopt ongoing and global mobility" (Aroles et al., 2022, p. 5).

Another fundamental characteristic of the digital nomad is his or her willingness to travel internationally; this type of professional will plan temporary stays in specific destinations that allow him or her to fulfil professional and personal objectives (Hannonen, 2020). Such places have to create enriching and attractive experiences for the worker, so the positive reputation and the image of the environment are especially valued when planning their itinerary (Anholt, 2010; Govers, 2018). Despite the flexibility that characterizes the digital nomad, "the pandemic has altered attitudes in ways that support a shift to remote practices (...) COVID-19 has pushed the boundaries and norms of how often and what impact remote office has on work environments" (Voll et al., 2022, p. 1). Previous studies (e.g. De Almeida et al., 2021; Vogl & Akhavan, 2022) have noted that during the pandemic and when travel was possible, nomadic destinations saw an opportunity to attract mobile workers, and invite them to apply for a special visa, as was the case in Barbados -with the "12-months Barbados Welcome Stamp- or Georgia -Georgia Digital Nomad Visa- (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021). The possibility of combining work and leisure, and avoiding social isolation in stressful conditions, favored a growing interest on the part of governments and the hospitality industry in offering attractive packages for the digital nomad community (Madsen, 2022; Voll et al., 2022). The latter also helped boost the local economy and businesses, and accelerated nomadic practices to grow during and after the crisis (Mariotti et al., 2021; Mayerhoffer, 2021). For Foley et al. (2022, p. 6), "the visa schemes represent a rebranding of each country's sun, sea, and sand tourism product into one of a haven relatively safe from COVID-19 with a

digital landscape to support overseas professionals working as digital nomads". Managing this type of visa not only represents a range of possibilities for the worker, but also for the place as such. Opportunities in the tourism sector, services, and investments, etc. are considered in the policy interventions as strategies for the development and growth of the destination.

Despite the interest in nomadic practices in the countries that promote them, one of the shortcomings of the literature has been that it has not explored how the promotion of visas is carried out, and how institutional actors intervene in their implementation framework. In addition, positioning nomadic destinations as part of certain territories' social, economic, and tourism development strategy is a way to strengthen place branding, which has not been sufficiently developed in previous research. Visa systems for digital nomads are part of some government agendas, and have increased in recent years, especially with the popularization of new forms of work and leisure, the advance of digital infrastructure, and the limitations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Foley et al., 2022; Orel, 2019, 2021a; Voll et al., 2022)

This paper discusses how countries establish policies to attract digital nomads, support business development, and position themselves as ideal territories for this group of knowledge workers. The following literature review section first discusses theoretical approaches to a location's image and how it can be transformed to host new work practices and communities. The messaging around a physical site is fundamental for the digital nomad; it informs their decision-making about where to settle, and their concept of the near future. The empirical section will compare the working and living conditions these countries have decided to offer prospective digital nomads. With that, the paper discussed how the digital nomad's lifestyle could be both desirable and contradictory in its quest for balance and well-being (Bozzi, 2020). Its aspirational component will also be addressed. At the end of the theoretical section, we briefly explore interpretive policy analysis as the methodological approach of this study.

2 Literature Review

The Perspective of a Nomadic Place

According to Willment (2020, p. 403), "the 'place' element helps to constitute this performance of working as a viable frontstage behavior." Cities worldwide (e.g. Bangkok, Barcelona, Berlin, Lisbon, Prague, etc.) have renovated their hospitality industry and infrastructures to facilitate the temporary transit of digital nomads, attract foreign workers, and position the territory's identity (Capdevila, 2015; Orel, 2019). From a more general level, but also within cities, there are spaces conceived and designed for digital nomadism, such as coworking spaces (Chevtava & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Orel, 2019). The digital nomad seeks a high-level spatial and aesthetic experience that allows them to be more creative and productive (Liegl, 2014), during their imaginary 'work-ation.'

Spaces and infrastructures are essential to digital nomads' practices (Cook, 2020; Nash et al., 2021), and weigh heavily upon the choice of a destination (Govers, 2018; Kaefer, 2021). For Lewis (2021), digital nomads represent a niche market in the branding of a location. The design of strategies to attract this demographic to specific tourist destinations has strengthened the image of new hubs for digital nomads. The aim is to connect users with the local community and offer highly efficient services (e.g., airports,

high-speed internet, health insurance, etc.), within a memorable travel, cultural, and wellness experience.

The physical environment is part of the digital nomad's habitat, not only in terms of a travel destination but also in terms of collaborative infrastructures, such as coworking spaces (Capdevila, 2015; McGrath, 2018; Orel, 2019) or co-living spaces (Thompson, 2019; von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020a). These spaces facilitate the activity of digital nomads by inserting them into a community where knowledge and experience are exchanged. The dedicated space intends to offer the digital nomad flexibility and facilities to meet their professional and personal needs. These places are holistically conceived as "sanctuaries to work" (Kuzheleva-Sagan & Nosova, 2015); accordingly, "digital nomads select locations in which their demographic privileges are maximized, along with their hedonistic pleasures" (Thompson, 2019, p. 33).

One factor that digital nomads must consider is safety; the security conditions of the location generally, as well as those of the specific facilities they will use, are essential in evaluating a possible stay. Living in another place entails the management of permits and visas that can be challenging to obtain, often becoming a "meta-work" that must be managed before deciding upon the journey (Aroles et al., 2022; Bozzi, 2020). The situation may be more manageable for those workers with stronger passports or multiple citizenships, allowing for greater mobility, but may prove problematic for those who must manage migration documentation and have restrictions on where they can visit globally (Aroles et al., 2022; Smercina, 2019). This situation does not necessarily have to be a problem, as other countries have already introduced new visas that benefit the digital nomad (e.g., Barbados, Estonia, Georgia, etc.) and offer competitive guarantees when choosing a destination (Hermann & Paris, 2020).

For example, policymakers in Croatia have recognized digital nomads as an essential target group, relaxing the temporary resident status rules for those who wish to stay longer than the three months allowed on their visas. Consequently, digital nomads have made Croatia one of the most popular destinations for remote work (Hornstein Tomić et al., 2021). In countries such as Colombia, Indonesia, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, and Thailand, digital nomads can arrange to extend their stays, in contrast with other countries such as Brazil, France, Iceland, and New Zealand, which do not allow for these deadlines to be extended (Kelly et al., 2021). With this, these countries are trying to regulate and formalize the immigration status to be able to work for limited time stays, and not to use tourist visas to work, which is not legal. Extended residency may also be attractive, as is the case in Barbados or Bermuda (Hermann & Paris, 2020). Other aspects, such as the lifestyle preferences of each worker, and costs associated with visa or tax payments (Hannonen, 2020), may also be considered when applying to one country or another.

The Search for Leisure-Work Balance

For the digital nomad, it is essential to know how to manage work and leisure; both occur in parallel and are inseparable (Thompson, 2019). For Kuzheleva & Nosova (2015), the practices and narratives framed in digital nomadism represent a cultural phenomenon whose central discourse depends upon mobility and connectivity, and in which digital nomads are both mobile remote workers and ongoing travellers (Hannonen, 2020; Hermann & Paris, 2020). In this sense, digital nomads are building an aspirational lifestyle, which can become very complex because it dilutes the boundaries of personal

and professional life (Willment, 2020). The two are merged and sometimes blurred (Prester et al., 2019; Richter & Richter, 2020). Digital nomads present themselves as a new class, with independence and autonomy (Bonneau & Aroles, 2021).

Previous research (Stumpf et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2019) has shown that the digital nomad lifestyle is attractive within new work trends, and accentuates narratives of freelance culture (Richter & Richter, 2020), as a contemporary symbol of "...perpetual traveling and expat living" (Schlagwein, 2018, p. 1). Narratives around the digital nomad reinforce values such as well-being and the pursuit of quality of life and personal growth (Prester et al., 2019), even though previous literature has devoted little attention to the latent potential for isolation, loneliness, and rootlessness (Thompson, 2019; von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020a; Wang et al., 2019).

While the digital nomad is always striving to balance work and leisure, this relation also represents one of the most significant challenges in understanding this lifestyle (Orel, 2019; Stumpf et al., 2022). In a previous study in Thailand, Luise (2022) concluded that the digital nomad does not assume this lifestyle as permanent but as a concrete stage in professional and personal life. This finding contrasts with mythologized visions of the digital nomad, which propagate "eternal traveller" discourses, and hinder a concrete definition of the phenomenon (Bonneau & Aroles, 2021).

On the Policy Perspective

Some countries have supported leisure policies for the development and practices of digital nomadism, seeing this movement as an opportunity for globalization and diversification of work. In the last decade, the popularization of this trend has been steadily rising, particularly in Europe and Asia (Hannonen, 2020; Orel, 2019; Prester et al., 2019), but also in other places where digital technology and infrastructure have impacted the organizational dynamics of work (Müller, 2016; Nash et al., 2018). It seems likely that facilitating the worker's stay at the destination has been one of the most effective ways to consolidate an identity for the digital nomad and the destination itself (Richter & Richter, 2020; Thompson, 2019).

For Kelly and Arelano (2021), the implementation of visas is one of the most important steps to ensure the permanence of workers. "Nomadism was now an industry, no longer an alternative to the tourism industry" (Richards, 2015, p. 342), and this has generated interest on the part of private enterprise, public officials, and organizations related to tourism and leisure (Müller, 2016). As noted above, concerning visa systems, governments have tried to lengthen the stays of digital nomads in their respective countries, seeking to rebrand these locations as destinations for remote work and not relying upon traditional tourist visas for this purpose. This approach seeks to enhance the growth of tourism and the resulting economic benefit for the host country (Wang et al., 2019), as experienced by some programs such as Estonia's e-Residence in 2014. Similarly, Thailand's efforts to establish a work-leisure infrastructure (Orel, 2021a), and Bali's branding as an "exotic paradise" have recognized the need for the development and design of policies to support digital nomadism (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021).

In recent years, Latin American countries such as Colombia have advanced in these practices. In 2020, through the *Entrepreneurship Law 2069*, the government grants visas for digital nomads under a special regime, thus enhancing two large entrepreneurial

ecosystems in Bogota and Medellin (Thompson, 2019). With all this, government intervention has been sought to facilitate issuing these visas to highly qualified people, demonstrating high income and working conditions (Ehn et al., 2022).

Although the literature makes constant reference to nomadic destinations and differing narratives around the digital nomad lifestyle (Prester et al., 2019; Stumpf et al., 2022), as well as their social practices (Müller, 2016; Orel, 2019; Thompson, 2019), even, in the wake of COVID-19 (De Almeida et al., 2021; Hermann & Paris, 2020), we have seen scant exploration of two fundamental aspects: the policy framework that encompasses these initiatives, and the actors involved in the construction of these discourses. Although these ideas present conceptual similarities, they also allude to peculiar characteristics, such as how they are conditioned to the place itself, the target audience to which they are addressed, and the institutional actor's vision of the digital nomad. This begs the question: how are digital nomad visa systems constructed through policy interventions? In response, this study utilizes an interpretive policy analysis to review the policy mechanisms introduced by 24 countries that attract highly skilled mobile workers to their countries.

Methodological framework

Context

This paper's methodological approach is grounded in the fundamentals of qualitative research. We have come to understand policy frameworks for digital nomadism and the meanings related, disseminated, and communicated through the lifestyle of this new worker. Likewise, comprehending how destinations manage their access to territories and the requirements imposed upon digital nomads enable us to categorize their experiences in new and different ways (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This process also helps us identify common problems and various approaches to achieving policy objectives (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). The latter involves "...dealing with symbolic material that requires interpretation" and "...dealing with research questions exploring personal or social meanings" (Schreier, 2012, p. 21).

Sample and data collection

In this research, we have worked with purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). As Patton and Ritchie and Lewis suggest, to gain an in-depth understanding of the research units, and to potentially develop detailed information. This is premised upon our ability to adjust the research criteria to specific cases, which, through the data provided, enables us to expand the scope of inquiry and offer interpretative keys to what has been observed. It is advantageous to study "...people who share a common experience or perspective" (2002, p. 231), so we must ensure that the sample allows us to establish new categories to understand common and contrasting visions, particular ways of conceiving a problem, or even thoughts and behavior patterns in the face of one (Creswell, 2009).

The sample consists of a series of documents belonging to 24 countries that have implemented special visas for digital nomads, and where policies have already been established to further that nation's status as a digital nomad destination (see Table 1). The selection comprises data on official programs and precise information on policy mechanisms designed to attract workers. Consideration was given to cases that had

established a protocol primarily oriented to digital nomads, and for which only remote workers and their families could apply for visas. Also, the information should be public and prepared by the same institutional actor. The sample units were selected based on "...particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes" (Chevtavaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021, p. 4). In our paper, these were policy frameworks and digital nomad visas. The sources of information are diverse, and as suggested by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), they focus on emerging concepts and issues to answer the research question. Official websites and brochures were considered. On the other hand, commercial information from intermediaries and brokers of each country were not included in the sample.

This list has not included specific nomadic destinations inside each country, as they do not meet the official program criteria. However, they can be adapted, as in the Startup Law (Spain) case or the *Portugal D7 Visa* (Portugal). Although governments and institutions allow workers to visit under these guidelines, the programs themselves were not created with the digital nomad in mind. Another representative case is Indonesia, a nomadic destination *par excellence*, where workers opt for alternatives such as the *Visa on Arrival* (VoA). In the future, these projects could materialize as future visas for these groups, but at the time of this research, they did not meet this criterion.

Table 1. Countries with Relevant Policies Supporting Digital Nomads

Analysis

The interpretative policy analysis is used to ascertain the purpose of selected policy frameworks and introduced visa systems. As Yanow (2007, p. 111) suggests, the approach of interpretative policy "entails not only the substantive study of meaning(s) in a specific policy issue (expressed, for example, in policy-relevant events and documents) but also the specification and development of methods for such analysis". This is an ideal approach to identify organizational procedures, which are contained both in technical documents such as reports and in websites and other non-technical literature which, taken together, comprise an institution's overall strategy (Bowen, 2009).

The interpretive perspective has been used primarily in the government sector to explain the purpose behind its actions and to manage strategic decision-making and the "rules of the game" (Durnová, 2022; Durnová & Weible, 2020). Within the tradition of qualitative research, the review and study of public policies from an interpretive perspective has built a vision based upon the contributions of phenomenology, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology as interpretive philosophies (Yanow, 2000). The focus of this vision is oriented to the multiple meanings an issue has for a social actor and how it is presented and communicated (Van Bommel et al., 2014). Therefore, this approach attempts to explain these meanings based on human action and how they create a reality in a specific context and situation (Jennings, 1983). The analyzed document types are a) official reports and documents; and b) content from websites directly tied to formal sources of the nomadic destinations in our sample. Coding schemes were proposed based on specific topics related to key topics (e.g., digital nomad visa, official visa programs, digital nomad destinations, requirements to digital nomads, etc.). This allowed grouping information related to the topic, establishing recurrent information, key messages and matching them to the research questions (Saunders et al., 2009; Silverman, 2004). After analyzing these documents, some thematic categories emerged, and recurrent topics in the policy frameworks were also identified (Durnová, 2022). This type of analysis "...emphasizes the importance of contextual understanding, ordinary knowledge,

narrative storytelling, emotional expression and communicative practices generally" (Fischer et al., 2015, p. 5). We will proceed to the formal data analysis process after completing this stage.

Findings

Once all the documents were reviewed, categories of analysis emerged that allowed us to organize how to respond to this research. Previous research on digital nomads (*e.g.* Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Ehn et al., 2022; Mancinelli, 2020) emphasized recurring themes such as lifestyle and, recently, the post-COVID landscape for these practices (*e.g.* de Almeida et al., 2021; Ehn et al., 2022). In the analysis stage, responses related to these variables emerged, confirming that the policies and strategic guidelines for digital nomads respond to what has been proposed in previous literature.

Defining the Conditions

Regarding the design and elaboration of policies for digital nomads, an essential component concerns the conditions of access of the worker to the destinations (*i.e.*, everything related to the visa). All documents refer to the necessary steps for the application process, costs, requirements, and visa duration times. Generally, all visas can be extended, and some can be processed before traveling, or even after entering the country with a tourist visa. The longest-lasting are those of Bahamas and Cyprus (36 months), followed by Antigua & Barbuda, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Hungary, and Latvia (24 months). Finally, those of shorter duration are typically annual in nature, with a few (Argentina, Curaçao, and Iceland) being as short as five or six months.

The visa application process for digital nomads is presented easily and fairly, even if bureaucratic snags lengthen the actual timeframe to obtain a visa. However, the availability of guidance from private consultants and the host countries' governments can make this process easier to navigate. The application and the visa fee can prove costly (*e.g.*, in Anguilla, Georgia, and Barbados, it can cost as much as \$2,000). For these destinations, the annual income required from prospective residents is also the highest. In contrast, Mauritius is the only country in the sample with a free visa for digital nomads.

The guidelines for entering and staying in a country as a digital nomad have the same degree of formality and bureaucracy as any other visa process. As our results show, long lists of requirements can slow down the visa application and resolution process. The ubiquitous document for all applications, regardless of country, is a valid passport. Other standard requirements are proof of income, health insurance, proof of remote work, and clean criminal background. Although these are special visas for digital nomads, primarily entrepreneurs, Italy is the only country that requires validation of the skills and high qualifications of the future applicant, such as professional training.

In all the documents consulted, the leading issuer is the government or official institutions that manage international affairs or tourism in direct collaboration with private enterprises. One such example occurs in Argentina, with the case of Airbnb, and the launch of *Digital Nomad BA*, to encourage the incorporation of workers into the business fabric. For some countries, the creation of strategic programs to attract remote workers is part of an overall strategy to adapt to new global market trends (Hannonen, 2020; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021) as well as to position themselves as ideal environments for remote

work and establish their brand globally (Kaefer, 2021). In addition, transforming hospitality industries to offer suitable accommodations for these groups has a positive impact on local investments, and leads to improved infrastructure for the community (Lee et al., 2019; Orel, 2019). Countries that have adopted policies for digital nomads aim to formalize the programs and provide a risk-free legal framework for both their institutions and governments; this is demonstrated, for example, through transparent taxation, permanence in the country, and the total number of remote workers that can legally reside in a given location (Everson et al., 2021).

One such example is Estonia, which has been a trendsetter in adapting digital nomads to their everyday environment. This country has taken advantage of its platforms in telecommunications technologies not only to incorporate remote workers (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021), and to elevate its status on the global stage (Kaefer, 2021), but also to foster a space for innovation and disruption of traditional models (Aroles et al., 2020). Another example is Bermuda, where digital nomads include workers and students. With the *Work from Bermuda Certificate*, the local government promotes itself as an environment for digital nomads. This program seeks to attract digital nomads by offering such incentives as a stable economy, a high-level entrepreneurial ecosystem, and a legal regime of visits and residences on the island.

On the other hand, each country establishes the level of economic income that a digital nomad must prove to qualify as a future resident. In our results, the Cayman Islands is the most expensive destination, requiring a monthly income of more than €8000 to be eligible for a visa, followed by Iceland (€6490), Dubai (€4853), Latvia (€2857), and Malta (€2700). In addition to these types of financial requirements, savings may also be required. The amounts can increase considerably if the visa application is made on behalf of a couple or family. The financial status of the digital nomad is one of the primary determinants when filtering a candidate (Aroles et al., 2020).

Framing the Advantages

The package of benefits a given location offers is a constant theme in the narrative of digital nomadism (Reichenberger, 2018). The digital nomad's "engagement experience" with the lifestyle made available by this trend is fundamental to the proposition of a "better life" (Schlagwein, 2018, p. 3), which combines work and leisure in an ideal environment (Reichenberger, 2018). The digital nomad is not only looking for a place to live and work; according to Bonneau and Aroles (2021), digital nomads select destinations based on their potential for tourism, culture, self-development, and entertainment-related travel. Thus, focusing on the perquisites and amenities is a way to attract them. Such is the case of Anguilla, where exclusive resorts and villas have been created for these groups, equipped with everything necessary for quick adaptation. In addition, the future worker is given comprehensive information regarding supermarkets, grocery and convenience stores, schools, and public offices to help them become familiarized with the place and ease the transition to their new destination.

Another example is Seychelles, where the *Workation* program encompasses everything necessary to comfort the future remote worker, whether alone or as a family. A digital nomad's permit includes discounts, accommodations, investment advice, and health services. While there are no significant differences in the application requirements for digital nomads and other visa applicants (save for perhaps the financial statements), the

benefits package is distinct. For Huertas (2014), documenting and promoting the functional attributes of a destination (*e.g.*, landscapes, technological networks, infrastructure, leisure activities, etc.) helps strengthen that place's brand, attracting new audiences and consolidating positioning.

Conversely, certain emotional and symbolic attributes are also important when considering a territory. The place experience starts “by ‘imagineering’ experience environment, (...) involves peoples’ senses, mental imagery processes, emotions, social interactions and actions” (Govers & Go, 2009, p. 134). Nomadic destinations continuously highlight a sense of security as part of their benefits. Offering an effective sanitation infrastructure assures future workers and their families. Likewise, the fact that most countries in the sample require a clean criminal record also inspires a sense of confidence for digital nomads in their new destination.

The local government serves as the leading actor in constructing narratives for digital nomads. However, the results show different ways of establishing this communication. In the documents consulted, the objectives are clear: to develop the requirements for access to the country, the temporary conditions which apply to the visa, and, if the visa is granted, a series of benefits that will be available to the worker and his or her family. This last point can become a key differentiator between destinations. While places like Brazil, Cayman Islands, or Curaçao promise the sea and a warm climate as an attraction, in Italy or the Czech Republic, the rich sense of history and heritage draws many visitors. Consequently, the lifestyle in each location is also informed by the characteristics of its environment.

Figure 1. The Two-Step Framework of the Digital Nomad’s Application Process

As we can see in the Figure 1, those actors constructing narratives about digital nomadism and elaborating their policies do so from both logical and emotional perspectives (see Figure 1). One is related to the previous steps to manage a visa and fulfill the profile established by each place. The promoters present this stage as the first phase, which seeks to attract the nomad. The second (emotional) is based on the symbolic values of the place brand, the adaptation of the new resident, and the enjoyment of the promised benefits. Governments widely communicate both notions to retain talent and make it part of these desirable destinations (Florida, 2019; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021). Although it is vital to establish the conditions and legal framework, the identity of the place created is an essential motivating factor when choosing one destination over another (De San Eugenio Vela, 2012; Govers & Go, 2009). The digital nomad's symbolism evokes aesthetics of enjoyment and attractive landscapes, which are part of the overall communication strategy that accompanies the migratory process and generates trust (Bozzi, 2020). According to Baker (2019), this seeks to convey the spirit of the place’s brand, so that the target audience to which it is addressed can establish positive relationships and associations. Resorting to the sociocultural imagery of digital nomadism as part of the strategy to attract these groups constitutes a basis for the advantages implied by this growing and expanding trend (Bozzi, 2020; Mancinelli, 2020).

Discussion

In this article, we have asked ourselves how, and through which actors, the policy frameworks of digital nomads are constructed. First, it bears noting that these decisions are part of the development strategies of each country, and that their objective is not only to adapt to new ways of working, but also to attract and retain talent. Additionally, the very act of appealing to digital nomads leads to the incorporation of information technologies and new businesses into the commercial ecosystem (Orel, 2021b). In our research, we have identified the importance of the tourism and leisure industry within these strategies. Although digital nomads are not considered "tourists", the conditions created for them start from this conceptual basis, and the narratives created for them are oriented in this direction (Prester et al., 2019; Thompson, 2019). We could clearly identify this in cases such as Anguilla, Dominica, the Cayman Islands, and Seychelles.

On the other hand, visas can be managed in different ways. Again, the existence of a "strong" passport or privileged nationality can make notable differences for the remote worker segment, and for the approval of certain requirements (Aroles et al., 2022; Smercina, 2019). In the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Italy, visas are directed at non-Europeans; EU citizens are not required to obtain one. This also applies to countries such as the Bahamas, where specific travel permits are not required for citizens of certain countries. American and Canadian passports are among those that benefit the movement of digital nomads.

The documents analyzed confirm the interest of some countries in incorporating the practices of digital nomadism into their work, residence, and social dynamics (Yanow, 2007). Although some places have been positioning themselves in recent years as nomadic destinations, the legal framework to establish this figure has not been sufficiently defined (for example, Indonesia, Mexico, and Spain), and governments are still working on providing clear guidelines designed for this segment. Currently, other countries such as North Macedonia, Panama, and Romania are in the process of approving their visas for digital nomads. As our previous exploratory research has shown, they use other types of visas to work remotely (e.g., Business Visa or Personal Work Permit, for stays of more than 90 days). However, these permits are not designed or intended for digital nomads.

In the process of bringing digital nomads to the destination, there are two fundamental moments in which the government is a key support point. The first is preparing and processing the visa, in which the documentation is gathered for further study and management. The second is the formal adaptation of the worker (alone, in a couple, or family group) into the local system. The results indicate that the initial mechanisms to attract digital nomads and formalize a visa begin with communication campaigns presenting the destination and the lifestyle it offers. This conclusion is corroborated by Hooper and Benton (2022), who state that nomadic destinations represent a powerful marketing tool for governments. This can be seen through the positioning of brands such as Bali (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021), Barbados (Hermann & Paris, 2020), and Thailand (Müller, 2016; Orel, 2021a), each of which has established itself as a hub for digital nomads, and in which their managers accompany the worker in the consumption of their "ideal places".

Within our sample, the case of Costa Rica is very relevant. Through its country brand "Essential Costa Rica", it promotes the attraction of digital nomads through incentives such as income tax exemption, the possibility of opening bank accounts, and the validation of the driver's license of the country of origin. Furthermore, as we have identified in the results, climate, natural landscapes, public services, and an optimal Internet connection are highly valued assets. Continual professional advice from experts smooths the process. The government acts as both guarantor and promoter of the digital nomadic lifestyle.

The documents demonstrate the importance of digital nomadism as part of a country's tourism offering (Borges et al., 2022; Cook, 2020; Thompson, 2019), and how an attempt is being made to establish a legal framework for it. This is especially true for those cities seeking to position themselves as important references in technology and innovation, and that also have widely recognized tourism and leisure attributes. In this sense, digital nomadism can serve as a focal point for consolidating policies for a country's economic development (Matos & Ardévol, 2021; Müller, 2016; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021), and implementing changes that attract and retain highly skilled workers. An example of this would be the extensive offer in coworking spaces in nomadic destinations, and how through their use narratives of a creative life, professional synergies, and new ties with peers are reinforced (Cruz et al., 2021; Orel, 2019). The discourse of "freedom" in both the professional and personal sense, and the possibility of displacement, is part of the experience of living as a digital nomad (Reichenberger, 2018), and these narratives underpin policies for the expansion of a lifestyle based on work and leisure (Stebbins, 2015; Thompson, 2019).

To summarize the findings, the government is the leading actor in policy frameworks. This role is best observed in programs such as Estonia's E-Residence program, or in Antigua and Barbuda's Nomad Digital Residence. In these cases, the government invites future residents to become part of the nomadic group. It presents the steps to formalize the visa and the contributions that this entails in the country. "Through improvement to the local business environment and consumption of local services, digital nomads still contribute to the host nation" (Wang et al., 2019, p. 7). However, a key consideration for digital nomads is that the visa process should be simple, and if possible, not required at all (Kelly et al., 2021). In the previous section, we commented on the importance of "strong" passports and the benefits some nationalities may have in facilitating these procedures. Factors such as reliable Internet, good weather, and a low cost of living are definitive when choosing a nomadic destination (Kelly et al., 2021). Consequently, they are constantly offered by promoters of visas for digital nomads. Woldoff and Litchfield (2021, p. 11) argue that for digital nomads, "place matters". This coincides with how, as we have already noted, the set of advantages a particular government can offer is framed.

Conclusion

Digital nomads are a distinct category of expat knowledge workers. In most cases, they seek long-term relationships with the places in which they are located, inserting themselves into the community and becoming part of the identity of such a destination (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021). Although previous literature has tended to romanticize the lifestyle through idyllic narratives (Richards, 2015; Thompson, 2019), it is a phenomenon with multiple nuances and contrasting discourses. The choice of nomadic destination is not only due to technological, economic, and sustainability considerations, but also to a

policy framework that affords the remote worker a series of real opportunities. A clear and user-friendly legal framework increases the feasibility of a worker emigrating and enjoying the destination's benefits, but also alerts the worker to his or her obligations, especially fiscal (Ramos & Ferreira Morgado, 2021). Digital nomads are not tourists moved by the novelty of the destination; they are people who enter a working environment with different characteristics from the traditional workforce, essentially betting on another work culture.

The flexibility and disruptive nature of digital nomadic practices make it a phenomenon that is still difficult to manage (Müller, 2016; Nash et al., 2018; Prester et al., 2019). Despite this, the movement is still gaining strategic allies for development and expansion opportunities, creating attraction mechanisms for expats. To Hannonen (2020, p. 347)" several countries have established attractive taxation, visa-free stays, e-residency, and digital nomad visa schemes to welcome more temporary residents and digital nomads". This appeals to the digital nomad community and helps jumpstart the local economy and improve technological infrastructures (Orel, 2021; Wang et al., 2019).

The main limitation of this article is the sample used. Although we have focused on existing proposals, there are initiatives and improvements in special visas for digital nomads in the process of formalization and legalization in other places. More and more countries are pushing forward to have their policy interventions and are attempting to regulate their frameworks for action. While we can analyse the data publicly available, we cannot access the initiatives in the development, mainly as they are not yet publicly disclosed. Such is the case for countries like Colombia, Costa Rica, Romania, South Africa, and Spain, just to name a few. Digital nomadism is a growing phenomenon that goes hand in hand with innovative economic and business development plans, as well as the willingness of governments and institutions to support these policies (Everson et al., 2021). Future research should include updates on new visas, as some have ceased as mere adaptations for digital nomads (*e.g.*, Indonesia, Portugal, etc.), and have become tailor-made for these workers. Other aspects, such as the narratives and imagery of digital nomadism in these countries, should be addressed. Although some research has previously studied the mediatization of these practices (see, *e.g.*, Bozzi, 2020; or Willment, 2020), it remains to be explored what discourses generate the most engagement between workers and destinations, and what role do place brands play in promoting digital nomadism as a way to attract new audiences. The answers to these questions also impact the design of new policies, and how these ideas are communicated (Lewis, 2021). Approaching these narratives and imagery will aid researchers in understanding how the destination's identity is compatible with the nomadic style, its degree of involvement and commitment.

On the other hand, analyzing the promotion of these destinations – as places that offer guarantees such as safety, quality of public services, and leisure that are highly attractive to the lone worker (Bozzi, 2020) and also to their families (Costa, 2022) – can also be the subject of analysis. For most visa requirements, the option is given to undertake the process for both the couple and the family group. For Smercina (2019), one of the most significant problems for the digital nomad is the feeling of loneliness and isolation. In this sense, the nomadic experience is transferred to the family, seeking benefits such as adaptability, language learning, and a non-traditional learning experience (Costa, 2022). In this sense, it is crucial to address the well-being and quality of life obtained by the digital nomad, and to study the benefits sought, such as the sense of belonging to place

and community, self-realization, and human relationships that arise from the nomadic experience (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021). In this line, the growth and expansion of infrastructures (e.g., coworking spaces, coliving spaces) and how they correspond to policy interventions for digital nomads is a necessary avenue to investigate (Orel, 2019). Delving into what the worker finds once located at the destination, and how that space and community responds to their social and psychological needs is part of the formation of their identity as a digital nomad, and reinforces values associated with this trend, such as sharing, belonging to the community and a sense of security (von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). The administrative framework this requires is complex, especially when stays are extensive. "Although any particular destination might be temporary for a digital nomad, many view this lifestyle as a long-term choice ... When nomads go on a visa run, they are broadcasting their more serious commitment to the digital nomad lifestyle and community" (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021, p. 5).

Finally, the adherents to the digital nomad movement continue to grow in number, with COVID-19 having served to accelerate the adaptation of remote work practices. Policymakers are trying to create a framework to fill the legal and administrative gaps that may exist for the entry and permanence of these remote workers. Overall, the experience is positive. By June 2022, more than 24 countries around the world have included among their human talent policies, facilitating the integration process of digital nomads (Hooper & Benton, 2022). Some have formalized visas designed for this group (e.g. the sample of this study), and others are defining a visa proposal and migration conditions, especially in Latin America (Kelly et al., 2021). To think of digital nomads as another type of tourist is to reduce these ideas to something superficial. We are presented with a community that seeks welfare through a lifestyle and sense of freedom that allow them to move around the world, enabling them to integrate into the geographical context, its people, and its economy. For this reason, governments continue to promote policies that favour this segment.

Implications for policy makers and practitioners

The formalization and regulation of visas for digital nomads is part of the agenda of those countries that have promoted entrepreneurship and seek to consolidate business ecosystems. To attract these remote workers, efficient visa management is essential for choosing a destination. Therefore, optimizing bureaucratic procedures and the barriers imposed by the public administration can be significantly positive. Although work visas or visas for skilled workers have been adapted, they are not specially designed for the digital nomad, whose conditions and profiles can differ. For example, the length of stay, the type of employer, the possibility of managing the permit as a couple or family, etc. The nature of the visa for the digital nomad requires a flexible constitution and transparent terms that are distinguished from other non-compatible cases (Ehn et al., 2022). As underlined by Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021), the main thing is that policymakers understand a digital nomad's nature and profile. Still, the culture of digital nomadism remains novel and unexplored in terms of its practical regulation (Borges et al., 2022; Hannonen, 2020; Schlagwein, 2018), which is why designing mechanisms to guide it, it is first necessary to understand its implications and scope.

On the other hand, nomadic destinations are positioned as pleasant environments for work and leisure, where tourist managers seek to create engaging experiences full of positive attributes (Hooper & Benton, 2022). Governments and communication managers induce

hedonistic images that turn the destination into a consumer good (De San Eugenio Vela, 2012; Holbrook, 2006), as has happened with cases such as Bali (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021) or Berlin (Orel, 2019). However, this image can become superficial in practice, and the relationship between the digital nomad and the destination becomes weak. For Frochot and Batat (2013), involving the remote worker with the community through local actors is a fair practice to strengthen the sense of belonging and feeling part of the environment. This is especially important for fostering exchanges, social relations, and well-being. Another noteworthy aspect is how the hospitality industry responds to these challenges, for example, to the emergence of workation, "...a combination of work and vacation" (Alonso, 2021). For example, some hotels offer promotions for remote workers to stay there while they work. This increased during the pandemic, when "workation packages" allowed mitigating losses in the hotel crisis, and at the same time, offering a safe environment (Madsen, 2022), creating mechanisms to attract digital nomads, precisely, promoting the idea of community in a vacation destination (Voll et al., 2022).

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