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Digital Nomads in China – A Case Study of Anji's Digital Nomad Community

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Abstract

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Title **Digital Nomads in China – A Case Study of Anji's Digital Nomad Community**			
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Abstract The purpose of this thesis is to increase the understanding of digital nomads' motivations and experiences in China, specifically within Anji's digital nomad community. To achieve this goal, the research addresses three key research questions. Firstly, why Chinese digital nomads have decided to go to Anji's digital nomads' community. Secondly, how co-living and co-working experience of digital nomads looks like. Thirdly, what the co-living and co-working space's preferences of Chinese digital nomads are, and how to target them. Previously research identified digital nomadism as a lifestyle phenomenon and focused on the Western perspective, whereas no academic research can be found on the digital nomads in China. This aim of this research to focus on the motivations of Chinese digital nomads by understanding their behaviors and potentially gain insights in the operation of co-living and co-working space. This thesis is carried as qualitative research, and netnography is used with inductive approach. Non-participant observation is used to collect the first-hand data of WeChat Official Account's content as well as additional secondary data of two podcast episodes conducted by people who had visited Digital Nomad Anji ("DNA"). Qualitative content analysis is used to analyze the data. The implication of the study contributes to support Iso Ahola's motivation model and expands the concepts of co-living and co-working space by understanding how co-living and co-working spaces can be integrated in the rural revitalization. This study suggests target group of Chinese digital nomads, while three strategies are given to the owners of co-living and co-working spaces.			
Keywords **Digital nomadism, Co-living space, Co-working space, Motivation, Chinese digital nomads, Chinese working culture**			

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Digital nomads have become a growing phenomenon in different part of the world, including China. With the waken of the Chinese youths to escape from the rat-race in the big cities, digital nomadism as a novel lifestyle has become more wide-spread and accepted by the Chinese youth people. This trending phenomena caught the intention of various business magazines: the background of digital nomadism in China is unique since it provides an alternative to the two extreme work attitudes, namely, 9-9-6 work culture and "tangping". 9-9-6 work culture refers to an overworking style from 9 am to 9 pm for 6 days a week, while "tangping" refers to a "lying flat" attitude meaning working as little as possible. And digital nomadism is perceived as the antidote to the forced office work culture that brings flexibility and freedom to the Chinese workers (Bloomberg News, 2022; Tai, 2023). However, no academic research has been conducted on the digital nomads in China. Currently, there are only two digital nomads' hotspots in China: one being the DAO space in Dali, the other being the "DNA" in Anji. This study takes a closer look at the latter location – Digital Nomad Anji (DNA).

The 'Anji hood' project, located in Anji County, Huzhou City, Zhejiang Province, China, is a rural revitalization project created jointly by Shanghai Aijia Investment (Group) Co., Ltd. and the Anji Government, with a total investment of 6 billion yuan (equivalent to 0.8 billion euros). The 'Anji Creative and Design Center' ("ACDC"), constructed in January 2022, is a non-profit organization that provides public services in the creative and design industries, including an 8000 square meter multi-use space for cultivating design and creativity. While Digital Nomad Anji ("DNA"), created by Song Xu and De A, aims to provide co-working and co-living spaces for digital nomads, and is in the 'Anji hood' area, with ACDC providing additional co-working space and a design library to DNA residents. (ACDC, 2022; DNA Community, 2021; Qianqiqianzhen, 2020, 2021) While the "Anji hood" project is closely connected to the fields of rural tourism and destination management, the focus of this study is not on the supply side - local community and/or stakeholder perspectives, but on the demand side - motivations and experiences of Chinese digital nomads within co-living and co-working spaces.

1.2 Previous Research

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of digital nomads, yet certain research gaps remain. Specifically, most digital nomad studies have been conducted from a Western perspective, leaving the experiences and perspectives of non-Western digital nomads, such as those from Asian cultures, underrepresented. This limited focus potentially excludes important cultural perspectives from the study of digital nomadism (Reichenberger, 2018). Additionally, scholars have called for further investigation into the role of co-living and co-working spaces, which are the key elements of digital nomads' daily lives. Thompson (2019) has emphasized the need to understand the specific realities faced by digital nomads in co-living environments, while Orel (2019) called for investigating the activities of digital nomads and how the co-working environments are used. Moreover, as Chevtaeva (2021) stressed, the experiences of digital nomads within co-working spaces varied between western and Asian nomads. This paper presents the non-Western national, Chinese context on the example of Anji's digital nomad community in China, making a significant contribution to the literature on digital nomadism.

Digital nomadism is a complex research field with various perspectives, including individual leisure, mobility activities, and work-related issues. Thus, currently there are several approaches to digital nomadism. Researchers tend to study digital nomadism with different perspectives: serious leisure; self-discipline; relationship of leisure and work; representation of radical disruption; lifestyle mobility; and tourists (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Cook, 2020; Green, 2020; Mancinelli, 2020; Müller, 2016; Reichenberger, 2018; Thompson, 2019). Müller (2016) initially identified two research domains associated with digital nomadism, such as leisure and mobility activities of individuals as well as work-related or labor market issues, emphasizing "leisure activities, travel, and mobility practices" and "professional and career-related matters" of digital nomadism. Thompson (2019) framed digital nomads through the lens of serious leisure since the way they choose where to go isn't based on work but on how they like to spend their time and live their lives. Thus, she added, the digital nomad lifestyle is "the ability to work

remotely from a laptop and travel the world while enjoying the freedom of being away from an office." Cook (2020), who investigated the role of disciplining practices in managing the work-life balance for digital nomads, utilized the concept of discipline. Similarly, Reichenberger (2018) placed digital nomadism within the relationship between leisure and work, emphasizing leisure as a central concept and discussing the role of work regarding digital nomadism.

Even though lifestyle is considered the most important part of digital nomads' mobility, Hannonen (2020) mentioned that the work-related part should be discussed, and she suggested that digital nomadism should be put into the lens of lifestyle mobility as "an ongoing state and lifestyle." This was agreed upon by Mancinelli (2020), who also examined digital nomads through the lens of lifestyle mobility. However, Hannonen (2020) acknowledged that this method doesn't consider the role of remote work and what it means for the future of work. Green (2020) viewed the digital nomad lifestyle as a representation of radical disruption while investigating how the disruption has historically affected work and tourism. Although traveling is an essential part of being a digital nomad, not enough research has been done to recognize and understand digital nomads as tourists. (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021)

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

The aim of this research is to focus on the motivations of Chinese digital nomads by understanding their experiences and preferences in co-living and co-working spaces in Anji's digital nomads' communities and potentially gain insights in the operation of co-living and co-working spaces. Digital Nomad Anji ("DNA") is a shared space that consists of co-living and co-working spaces in Anji County, while both Anji Creative and Design Center ("ACDC") and Digital Nomad Anji ("DNA") are parts of "Anji hood" project, which is a complex rural revitalization project. The aim of "Anji hood" project is to facilitate Anji becoming a better destination. (See Figure 1) The purpose of this research is to increase the understanding of digital nomads' motivations and experiences in China, specifically within Anji's digital nomad community. To achieve this goal, the research addresses three key research questions.

Research Problems:

a. Why Chinese digital nomads have decided to go to Anji's digital nomads' community?

b. How does the co-living and co-working experience of digital nomads look like?

c. What are the co-living and co-working space's preferences of Chinese digital nomads, and how to target them?

The first research question seeks to explore why digital nomads have chosen to go to Anji's digital nomad community by investigating the underlying motivations behind their decision. The second research question aims to understand what the co-living and co-working experience is like for digital nomads in the Anji community. This involves exploring the everyday life of digital nomads who lived in Anji's digital nomads' community. Finally, the third research question aims to identify the co-living and co-working space preferences of Chinese digital nomads and develop segmentation strategies to target them more effectively. By addressing these research problems, this study seeks to contribute to our understanding of digital nomadism in China and provide practical insights for improving the experience of digital nomads in co-living and co-working spaces.

This study is conducted as a netnography study with inductive approach, exploring the motivations and experiences of Chinese digital nomads in "Digital Nomad Anji". The study utilizes non-participant observation to collect the first-hand data of WeChat Official Account's content created by the nomads themselves with additional secondary data, such as: podcasts and social media materials. Qualitative content analysis is used to analyze the data.

Figure 1: Position of the Study
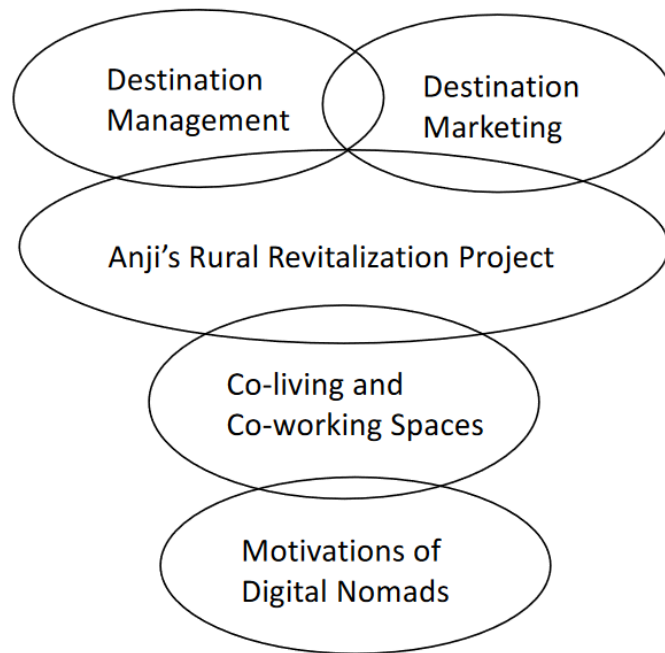
1.4 Key Concepts

Digital Nomads

Digital nomadism was introduced by Makimoto and Manner (1997) to describe the lifestyle of highly mobile, location-independent professionals. Due to the fragmented nature of research on digital nomads, various definitions have emerged. Some researchers define digital nomads as workers who possess flexibility in choosing where and when to work while retaining location independence, while others define them as individuals who utilize information and communications technology to work remotely without locational constraints while exploring the world. Other definitions include self-employed individuals who manage their own work schedules continuously or highly mobile professionals whose work is location independent (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Green, 2020; Hannonen, 2020; Mancinelli, 2020; Müller, 2016; Thompson, 2018).

Co-living and Co-working Spaces

Co-working spaces are shared work environments that provide flexible rental options, high-speed internet, meeting rooms, and communal spaces for socializing and networking. (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2018; Gandini, 2015; Howell, 2022) Co-living spaces are shared living arrangements in which individuals live and work in a communal space. (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020) There are diverse types of co-working spaces, including corporate, open corporate, consultancy, and independent spaces, while co-living spaces can also be differentiated in single co-living and branded co-living spaces. (Bouncken et al., 2018; Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Howell, 2022; Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020) Two main functions of co-living spaces and co-working spaces overlap, including: shared workplace and accommodation.These spaces are preferred by digital nomads (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021), and offer a unique and engaging experience for digital nomads. (Yang et al., 2019).

Chinese Working Culture

Traditionally, Chinese culture is significantly influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism, while traditional Chinese cultural values were identified, including harmony, benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, and filial piety. (Lihua, 2013). Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is regarded as a contemporary approach to Chinese culture using six dimensions: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. (Hofstede, 1984a, 1984b) However, there appears to be a transformation in Chinese society where the rise of individualism and materialism contradicted the traditional Chinese culture values while the 9-9-6 work culture unfolded, as well as "neijuan" ("rat race" in English) and "tangping" ("lying flat" in English) coming to the public's view (Linyan & Boqing, 2023).

Iso-Ahola's Social Psychological Model of Tourism Motivation

Iso-Ahola (1982) had proposed a social psychological theory of tourism motivation that integrated individual- and social-level factors. According to the theory, both personal desires and social influences motivate individuals to travel. Personal desires consist of the desires for novelty, escape, and personal development, while social influences consist of cultural norms and expectations, peer pressure, and the desire to belong to a specific social group. (Iso-Ahola, 1982) Iso-model Ahola's highlighted the significance of understanding the social and cultural contexts in which tourism occurs, specifically the complex interplay between individual-level and social-level factors that shape tourist behaviour. Hence, Iso-Ahola's social psychological model of tourism motivation is suitable for this study.

1.5 Briefings of the Case Study

"Whether it is AI or the metaverse, the next era will be dominated by creativity and digitalization. Therefore, we plant seeds in 'Anji hood' and create a favorable growth environment in prospect of its blossoming."

– Jenny Li, President of Shanghai Aijia Investment (Group) Co., Ltd.

1.5.1 Tourism Industry in Anji

Anji County's tourism industry has historically been a significant contributor to the region's economic growth. Tourists are coming to Anji for its rural tourism and agritourism resources (People's Government of Anji County, 2021). The People's Government of Anji County (2021) reports that the total number of tourists increased from 14.952 million in 2015 to 28.074 million in 2019, reflecting an average annual growth rate of 13.4 percent. This surge in tourism also generated a notable increase in total tourism revenue, which rose from 17.56 billion yuan (equivalent to 2.39 billion euros) in 2015 to 38.82 billion yuan (equivalent to 5.29 billion euros) in 2019, indicating an average annual growth rate of 17 percent. Additionally, the added value of

tourism accounted for 11.93 percent of the GDP of Anji in 2019, making up 32.2 percent of the tertiary sector of the economy. However, the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected Anji County's tourism industry, with the total number of tourists falling to 21.05 million in 2020, marking a 6.2 percent decrease compared to the previous year. Total income from tourism also dropped to 30,504 billion yuan (equivalent to 4.16 billion euros), which was 1.8 percent less than what was earned in 2019. Nevertheless, the added value of tourism in 2020 was 5.16 billion yuan (equivalent to 0.7 billion euros), comprising 10.6 percent of the GDP of Anji. Notably, Anji County's tourism industry rebounded remarkably well, with 11.35 million tourists and 14.65 billion yuan (equivalent to 2.00 billion euros) in total tourism revenue recorded in the first six months of 2021, representing a 51.8 percent increase in the total number of tourists and a 43.1 percent increase in total tourism revenue compared to the same period in 2020. Impressively, the region's tourism industry returned to its pre-pandemic level in 2022, with 27.21 million tourists visiting Anji County, generating 39.33 billion yuan (equivalent to 5.36 billion euros) in tourism revenue (Anji News, 2023). Despite the pandemic's effect, Anji County's tourism industry has demonstrated its resilience, recovering from the slump caused by the pandemic (See Figure 2). In addition to tourists that come to Anji for its natural resources, since Digital Nomad Anji ("DNA") is the second digital nomads' community in China, and is co-planned by its predecessor in Dali, Anji has become an attraction for digital nomads.

	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of Tourists	14.952 m	28.074m	21,05 m	11.35 m (Jan-June)	27.21 m
Total Revenue from Tourism (EUR)	2.39 b	5.29 b	4.16 b	2.00 b (Jan-June)	5.36 b

Figure 2: Tourism Data in Anji County (People's Government of Anji County, 2021 & Anji News, 2023)

1.5.2 Anji hood, ACDC & DNA

Established in 1998, Shanghai Aijia Investment (Group) Co., Ltd. is a large multinational corporation that focuses on the comprehensive operation of new industrial cities while also expanding into multiple other fields, including finance, education, healthcare, and agriculture. (Qianqiqianzhen, 2021) Jenny Li, the new president of Shanghai Aijia Investment (Group) Co., Ltd., debuted the 'Anji hood' project in 2019 as the first branded specialty township under the corporation. (Forbes China, 2022) "Anji hood" ("白茶原" in Chinese), located in Anji County, Huzhou City, Zhejiang Province, China, is a complex rural revitalization project jointly planned by Shanghai Aijia Investment (Group) Co., Ltd., and the Anji Government. While the total investment in the project is 6 billion yuan (equivalent to 0.8 billion euros), the area of the specialty township is about 33.1 square kilometers. (Qianqiqianzhen, 2021)

Constructed in January 2022, "Anji Creative and Design Center" ("ACDC") as a part of the pilot zone in "Anji hood" is a non-profit organization that provides public service in the creative and design industries as well as a multi-use space that takes up 8000 square meters for cultivating design and creativity. (DNA Community, 2021) Three functions of the "ACDC" were emphasized: the exhibition venue, the extensive design library, and the establishment of designer communities through the hosting of seminars, training, and workshops. (ACDC, 2022) If Jenny Li is the key figure wo secure the finance of "Anji hood", Song Xu and De A are the major initiators who facilitated the born of Digital Nomad Anji ("DNA"). According to Song Xu and De A, their interest in learning more about digital nomadism prompted them to travel to Bali, one of Asia's digital nomad hotspots. During their stays, they observed that people could use their laptops with headphones by the pool, and they would visit the self-service snack bar if they were hungry. While these people close their laptops at sundown and go surfing, Song Xu is convinced that "there is no better life than this". Therefore, Song Xu wanted to create a similar space for digital nomads in China when he was given the opportunity to participate in the "Anji hood" project (Jia, 2022).

After the project proposal was finalized and the design team was assembled, the renovation of the old building commenced. In August 2021, Song Xu flew from Dali to Anji, where he saw an abandoned bamboo processing plant transformed in just three months into a bright and spacious public hall with large blackboards and pine boards reminiscent of Bali, while the outer space was covered in lawn (Jia, 2022). According to DNA Community (2021), the main building of DNA was designed to accommodate the co-working and co-living needs of digital nomads by incorporating shared offices and living spaces. Notably, ACDC also provides additional co-working space and a design library to residents of DNA. To sum it up, DNA is embedded in ACDC, while ACDC is a part of Anji hood (see Figure 3). While the philosophy underlying DNA is togetherness and inclusivity, which emphasizes that when digital nomads from various industries come together, they become each other's arms, forming a collective strength that no single person can match. Currently, DNA is only open to members of ACDC, while there are three requirements for the applicants, including: the applicants should be at least 18-year-old; the applicants must stay for a minimum of 7 days; and the applicants should love rural life.

Figure 3: Position of Digital Nomad Anji ("DNA") within the Rural Revitalization Project "Anji hood"
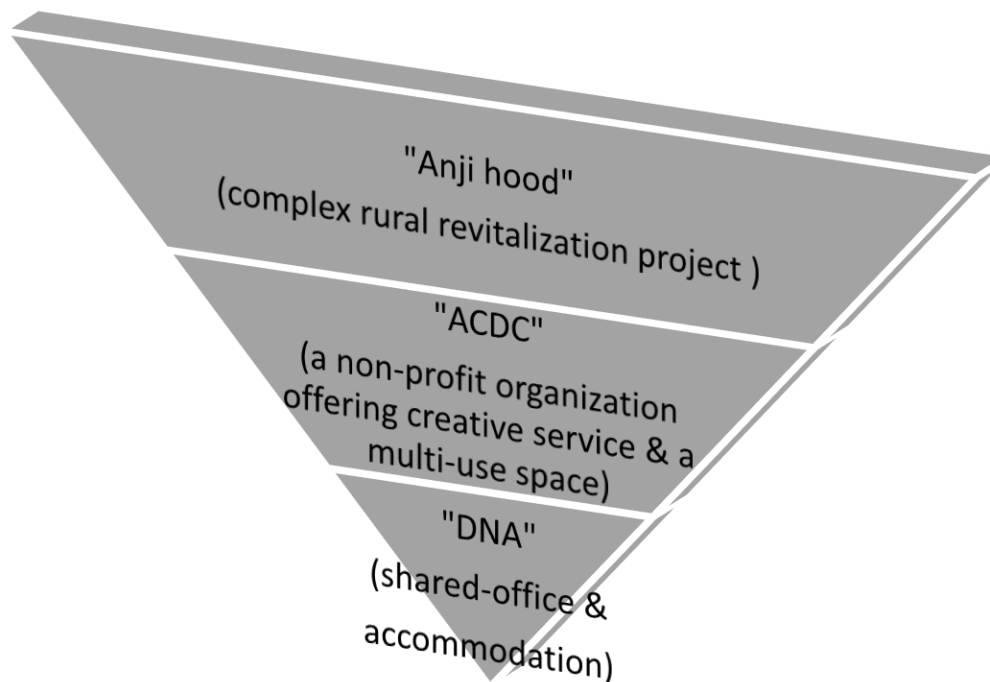
1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis includes four major sections, namely, the introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusions. Introduction includes the background of the study, objectives and research questions, key concepts, and the briefings of the case study. Literature review focuses on three topics: digital nomad, co-living and co-working spaces and digital nomads' experience, as well as Chinese working culture. Then the methodology includes the research approach, data collection method, and data analysis method. Then, findings that respond to the research problems are reported. Lastly, the conclusion discusses of the findings, theoretical and managerial implications as well as the evaluation of the study.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Digital Nomad

2.1.1 Definitions of Digital Nomads

"Digital nomad" as a concept was first introduced by Makimoto & Manners (1997), whereas due to the interdisciplinary nature of digital nomadism, several definitions and approaches have been developed (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Green, 2020; Hannonen, 2020; Mancinelli, 2020; Müller, 2016; Thompson, 2018). Figure 4 illustrates distinctive definitions of digital nomads.

Figure 4: Definitions of Digital Nomads

Definition(s)	Author(s)	Year
A lifestyle developed by highly mobile, location-independent professionals.	Makimoto & Manners	1997
Individuals who possess flexibility in choosing where and when to work, while retaining location independence to travel freely without the restrictions of their employers or companies.	Müller	2016
Workers who are 'location independent' and travel regularly both domestically and internationally since their professions can be done via the internet.	Thompson	2018
Those who utilize information and communications technology with internet access to work remotely without locational constraints while exploring the world.	Mancinelli	2020

Self-employed and self-motivated individuals who manage their own work schedules continuously.	Green	2020
A rapidly emerging class of highly mobile professionals, whose work is location independent.	Hannonen	2020
Location-independent remote workers who are simultaneously engaged in extensive leisure travel without a break from work.	Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet	2021

Though the usage of terminology remained vague when various 'nomadic terms' are used interchangeably, such as "neo-nomads," "global nomads," "modern nomads," or "neo-nomads". Hannonen (2020) clarified and differentiated the term 'digital nomads' from other types of lifestyles and work-related mobility types, including backpackers, flash packers, telecommuters, freelancers, travel professionals, global nomads, and neo-nomads. In addition, Cook (2020) distinguished digital nomads from other types of travelers, such as business travelers, working expats, non-working expats, backpackers, tourists, and non-working elites, by emphasizing their work-oriented and highly mobilized nature. While Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021) also distinguished digital nomads from expats, business travelers, freelancers, and global nomads by focusing on the travel aspect, they further narrowed the definition of digital nomads for tourism research. Relying on previous definitions and approaches, this paper defines digital nomads in the following way: "Digital nomads are highly mobile, location-independent professionals who use technology with internet access to work remotely while possessing the freedom to choose where and when they work, often while engaged in leisure travel."

2.1.2 Characteristics of Digital Nomads

Travel and leisure are major components of digital nomadism. Reichenberger (2018) identified three components of digital nomads, including leisure, work, and travel, and explored how they were intertwined. She regarded the underlying motive of digital nomads as being to pursue work-life balance by means of enabling travel and leisure activities as an essential part of their lives, which was supported by Orel (2019), who mentioned that digital nomads are more focused on leisure than on work.

Another key attribute of digital nomads is freedom, which is manifested in the form of mobility. Reichenberger (2018) divided digital nomads into three tiers based on the extent of their location mobility. Tier 1 digital nomads have flexibility in workplaces, whereas little travel is involved. In contrast, tier 2 digital nomads travel on a regular basis while retaining their permanent residency. To an extreme, tier 3 digital nomads abandoned their permanent residency while fully shifting to a life of mobility.

The life of a digital nomad is appealing to a lot of people, but not everyone has the prerequisites to become one. Hannonen et al. (2023) and Thompson (2018) found that the key factor for being a digital nomad is to have powerful passports, along with freedom from family obligations as well as some income. This argument was supported by Mancinelli (2020), who claimed that favored prerequisites for digital nomadism were often overlooked, including their nationalities, living circumstances, education levels, and visa mobility.

Information communication, and technology are the means of living a digital nomad lifestyle. Since office work was impractical for digital nomads' lifestyle, they would have to adapt to a downward financial mobility due to their reliance on gig work (Thompson, 2018). She further explained that an individual must undergo a mobility transition to become a digital nomad, while this process is easier for those who are tech-savvy and equipped with advanced skills in digital professions. However, the over-reliance on information and communication technology also shifted digital nomads' traditional work-life balance as it blurred the lines between their personal and professional lives (Thompson, 2018).

For digital nomads, success is defined by themselves rather than the external world. As Mancinelli (2020) indicated, digital nomads fear that the constraints of "success-defining" expectations imposed by conventional everyday living would prevent them from making their own life decisions. Thus, they provide an alternative to fighting against the "rat race," which consists of ceaseless competitions to pursue material possessions, social status, and income figures. And thankfully, the accessibility of transport and the disintermediation of the tourism industry make it more convenient for digital nomads to make their decisions and travel (Mancinelli, 2020).

Most media celebrated the freedom and employment flexibility of digital nomads, whereas their downshifting status was potentially neglected (Thompson, 2019). Similarly, Cook (2020) found that freedom and autonomy in digital nomadism were exaggerated or glorified, which is complicated by the fact that not all digital nomads actually experienced freedom. Even though the concept of digital nomadism was utilized to depict the victorious figure of opposition in traditional work-life balance, Mancinelli (2020) found that the freedom of digital nomads was nonetheless constrained by realities, such as network connectivity, the affordability of accommodations, and visa requirements, since these factors determine the mobility of digital nomads. Moreover, digital nomads were concerned with their children's education, their own medical care, and retirement plans. And surprisingly, digital nomads also find it challenging to maintain a work-life balance and to be efficient and effective due to their concerns about economic stability. Ironically, urging to achieve a better work-life balance was used by digital nomads to justify their nomadic lifestyle (Mancinelli, 2020).

2.1.3 Motivations of Being Digital Nomads

Iso-Ahola (1982) proposed a social psychological theory of tourism motivation that integrated individual- and social-level factors (see Figure 5). According to the theory, both personal desires and social influences motivate individuals to travel. Personal desires consist of the desires for novelty, escape, and personal development, while social influences consist of cultural norms and expectations, peer pressure, and the desire to belong to a specific social group. (Iso-Ahola, 1982) Iso-model Ahola's highlighted the significance of understanding the social and cultural contexts

in which tourism occurs, specifically the complex interplay between individual-level and social-level factors that shape tourist behavior. Hence, Iso-Ahola's social psychological model of tourism motivation is suitable in this study.

Figure 5: A Social Psychological Model of Tourism Motivation (Iso-Ahola, 1982)

Seeking Intrinsic Rewards

	Personal	Interpersonal
Personal Environment		
Interpersonal Environment		

(Vertical axis label: Escaping the Everyday Environment)
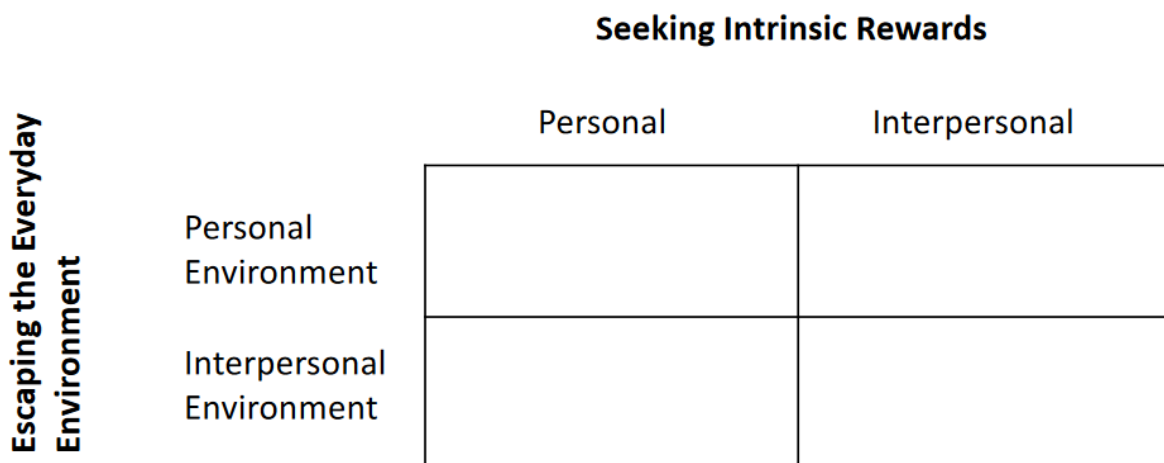
Freedom of movement is also seen as the main motive for being a digital nomad (Hall et al., 2019; Orel, 2019; Reichenberger, 2018). While Reichenberger (2018) noted that digital nomads aim to get away from extrinsic activities that restrain their freedom and personal pursuit, she believed that a holistic digital nomad lifestyle consists of three realms, namely professional freedom, spatial freedom, and personal freedom, and that only by achieving these three kinds of freedom can digital nomads fully accomplish the states they are looking for. Professional freedom refers to the motivation to select the work that one desires to do, which is associated with employment. Spatial freedom refers to the motivation to live and work in distinct locations while enriching one's experience, which is associated with location independence. And ultimately, personal freedom is seen as the result of achieving professional freedom and spatial freedom, which leads to better self-development, which is associated with leisure.

Living a meaningful life requires the freedom and time to regain control over decision-making and embrace novel experiences for digital nomads. Alternatively, Orel (2019) identified that

digital nomads were motivated to maintain their identities as a result of their freedom of movement, flexibility in managing their own time, and ability to make life-altering decisions, which is supported by Hall et al. (2019), who claimed that digital nomads seek for freedom and tend to move into locations that offer their favored leisure activities. Similarly, Mancinelli (2020) also stated that in pursuit of a meaningful life is one of the most important reasons for digital nomadism by abandoning fixed working locations, while she added the aspect of new cultural encounters, combined with their work.

Additionally, novelty is a key motivator for digital nomads, who prioritize travel and experiences over material possessions. (Hannonen, 2020; Hannonen et al., 2023) Hannonen (2020) found that novelty is a key driving force for digital nomads, who are motivated by the opportunity to explore new places, experience different cultures, and meet new people while maintaining a flexible work-life balance. Hannonen et al. (2023) examined the supplier side view of digital nomadism in Gran Canaria, and they emphasized the importance of promoting the destination's cultural and natural attractions to attract the digital nomads for novelty and new experiences.

2.1.4 Issues of Being Digital Nomads

Digital nomads failed to recognize their privileged lifestyle and its effects on the local community. Thompson (2018) addressed the issues of inequality that the mobility of digital nomads enabled and accelerated the gentrification process in typical digital nomad destinations, which is similar to the outcomes of overtourism and foreign investment in real estate. That being said, locals of the digital nomad destinations face higher cost of living due to the inflow of digital nomads. In addition, digital nomads made little to no contribution to the local community aside from economic consumerism. (Thompson, 2018) Similarly, Hall et al. (2019) underlined that as the number of digital nomads increases, unethical behavior by digital nomads is likely to increase, which may have irreversible effects on the destination. Further, Thompson (2019) found that digital nomads were oblivious to their privileged lifestyle while ignoring their disruptive behavior towards local communities. In contrast, digital nomads of color are more likely to become aware of social inequalities and engage in cultural exchanges during their travels. (Thompson, 2019)

Digital nomads struggled to be motivated with regard to work when their work-life balance was off. Due to the digital nomad lifestyle, the boundary between personal and professional lives of digital nomads becomes ambiguous. (Cook, 2020; Green, 2020; Mancinelli, 2020) Green (2020) found that some digital nomads struggled with motivation and productivity, while others lacked self-discipline because being a tourist and remaining relaxed is always the preferred option. Surprisingly, digital nomads who traveled alone struggled with self-discipline, while digital nomad couples were able to self-discipline and support one another (Cook, 2020). While Mancinelli (2020) addressed the needs of digital nomads by expanding their revenue stream, their experience became susceptible to becoming commodities, which is in line with the findings by Hall et al. (2019) claiming that some digital nomads faced financial pressure.

Digital nomads commonly mentioned experiencing feelings of isolation and loneliness in their lifestyles. (Hall et al., 2019; Orel, 2019; Thompson, 2019), which is why they tend to gather in groups (Hall et al., 2019; Thompson, 2019). Orel (2019) stated that digital nomads look for a proper working environment to cope with the challenge of work-life balance as well as to overcome loneliness and isolation. He stated that workplaces that promote community were preferred by digital nomads, such as co-working spaces. Similarly, Hannonen et al. (2023) reveals that the destination is adapting to cater to digital nomads' needs by offering various services such as coworking spaces, accommodation, and networking events. Hence, understanding the notion of co-living and co-working is necessary to comprehend digital nomads' lifestyle.

2.2 Co-living and Co-working Spaces & Digital Nomads' Experience

2.2.1 Introduction of Co-living and Co-working

Howell (2022) defined co-working as a work environment in which individuals from different organizations work in a shared space, predominantly with the intention of promoting

collaboration and innovation. These spaces provide flexible rental options, high-speed internet, meeting rooms, and communal spaces for socializing and networking. Co-working spaces provide a flexible and autonomous use of both office and social space for social, learning, cultural and business-related interests. (Bouncken & Reuschl, 2018) Gandini (2015) defined a co-working space as "a shared workspace for knowledge industry professionals to collaborate in a communal environment.".

Co-living is a shared living arrangement in which individuals live and work in a communal space. These spaces often include both private living areas and shared areas. Additionally, co-living spaces could provide co-working spaces, social events, and networking opportunities (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). According to von Zumbusch and Lalicic (2020), there are a variety of co-living space variants, such as single co-living space and branded co-living space. It is common for these co-living spaces to include furnished rooms and shared areas, whereas co-working spaces may be rented under certain terms.

Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021) identified two types of co-working space: corporate co-working space and individual co-working space. Corporate co-working spaces are owned by corporations and tailored to foreign visitors, whereas individual co-working spaces fulfill primarily the needs of the local market. Similarly, Howell (2022) also identified two types of co-working spaces: corporate co-working spaces and community-based co-working spaces. But neither Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021) nor Howell (2022) provided a comprehensive picture of the co-working space category. Further, Bouncken et al. (2018) categorized co-working spaces into four types: corporate, open corporate, consultancy, and independent spaces based on the level of confidentiality and restrictions on user types. Corporate spaces exist within established businesses and provide employees with flexible working arrangements. Open corporate spaces are accessible to external users whose knowledge can benefit the company's employees. Consultancy spaces are intended for companies that require office space and want to network with other companies. Independent spaces are created by third-party providers who charge a fee for access to the workspace.

It seems that co-living and co-working space overlapped regarding their accommodation and working areas. To avoid confusion, this chapter refers to co-working spaces with accommodation features and co-living spaces with co-working areas collectively as co-living and co-working spaces while focusing on the digital nomads' experience in these spaces.

2.2.2 Digital Nomads and Co-living and Co-working Spaces

Co-living and co-working spaces offer solid workplaces for digital nomads to collaborate and network with each other while facilitating a sense of community. (Berbegal-Mirabent, 2021; Bouncken et al., 2018, 2021; Chevtaeva, 2021; Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Howell, 2022; Orel et al., 2022; Voll et al., 2022; von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020; Yang et al., 2019) Within these environments, digital nomads are more likely to increase their productivity and creativity, which will therefore benefit their self-discipline at work. (Bueno et al., 2018; Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Howell, 2022; Orel et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2019) Hence, co-living and co-working spaces are useful to improve the work-life balance of digital nomads, and further alleviate their feelings of isolation and loneliness. (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020; Yang et al., 2019)

To summarize the characteristics of co-living and co-working spaces, Von Zumbusch and Lalicic (2020) identified three types of resources: social, physical, and psychological. They found that these resources have a significant effect on digital nomads' wellbeing. Similarly, themes identified by Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021) in the co-living and co-working experience include digital nomads' community, engagement with locals, profound connection to people, as well as learning and living a balanced life. In terms of social resources, digital nomads form their own community, which creates direct or indirect networking opportunities (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020), which is supported by Yang et al. (2019) and Howell (2022), in which they claimed that the focus of these spaces is community, networking, and collaboration. Similarly, Berbegal-

Mirabent (2021) and Chevtaeva (2021) mentioned that these spaces provide a pleasant, convenient, and adaptable work environment as well as networking and socializing opportunities to individuals.

Regarding physical resources, digital nomads have access to various communal spaces, some of which are designated for leisure and others for work. These communal spaces are labeled differently, allowing digital nomads to draw a healthy boundary between work and leisure (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). Similarly, Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021) found that these spaces offer digital nomads the opportunity to learn and maintain work-life balance. But what are the components of the community within co-living and co-working spaces? Is it just the digital nomads alone? Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021) suggested that the community within these spaces consisted of digital nomads, employees of the spaces, and owners of the spaces, as opposed to just digital nomads. Among these community members, community managers are highlighted by Bouncken et al. (2018) since they are considered both hosts and individuals while taking the responsibility to create the environment, establish the rules, and resolve the conflicts. This argument is supported by Von Zumbusch and Lalicic (2020), who regard community managers as a physical asset of these places due to their responsibility for organizing events and moderating social interactions, making them an essential role in maintaining the community. Hence, they were regarded as the mediators for balancing the tensions in the community.

Correspondingly, Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021) discovered that co-living and co-working spaces foster deeper and more meaningful connections among digital nomads. As Bouncken et al. (2021) emphasized that community building and social support were crucial in co-living and co-working spaces, Orel et al. (2022) supported their arguments by claiming that these spaces offer individuals a flexible and adaptable physical space while promoting a supportive and collaborative culture. In addition to that, social interaction assists digital nomads in maintaining self-discipline (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). This is supported by Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021), who found that co-living and co-working spaces are preferred by digital nomads because they reduce distractions, help improve overall, and consequently boost work efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, co-living and co-working spaces help digital nomads to increase productivity, creativity, and social connections (Bueno et al., 2018; Howell, 2022; Orel et al.,

2022), while Yang et al. (2019) added that various amenities and services are also offered by these spaces, such as high-speed internet access, meeting rooms, and events, to boost up their work performances. Additionally, individuals possess more flexibility while accommodating and working in these cost-effective spaces. (Bueno et al., 2018; Howell, 2022; Yang et al., 2019).

Regarding psychological resources, digital nomads reported feelings of isolation, whereas the co-living space and the community serve as a support system to alleviate their anxiety (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). In addition, digital nomads interact with the local community outside of these spaces, which enabled them to be closer to the local community while experiencing the local culture (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021). Overall, co-living and co-working spaces create a unique and engaging experience for digital nomads (Yang et al., 2019).

2.2.3 Challenges of Co-living and Co-working Spaces

Privacy and security concerns were perceived as disadvantages by users of co-living and co-working spaces (Bouncken et al., 2018). Insufficient accommodation, loud parties, and overpricing were also regarded as the downsides of these spaces (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet (2021). Also, the business operation of co-living and co-working spaces was questioned by Berbegal-Mirabent (2021); and Seo et al. (2017), who pointed out that these spaces should make sure their businesses are profitable and sustainable. Berbegal-Mirabent (2021) stressed that business operators of co-living and co-working spaces may face an oversaturated market, and she added that balancing the interests of various stakeholders is also vital.

If profitability is more vital to business operators, then the users of these spaces are more concerned with the space's flexibility and the quality of the facilities. (Seo et al., 2017) Features and offerings of these spaces result in divergent opinions by digital nomads (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021). In addition, the challenges of community management were brought up by several studies (Bouncken et al., 2021); Bouncken & Reuschl (2018); Howell (2022), in which

they emphasized the need for effective management and governance to ensure a positive and productive co-living and co-working environment among diverse communities.

More importantly, co-living and co-working spaces can be strategized for urban revitalization and economic growth since they foster entrepreneurship and creativity (Bouncken et al., 2021), which is consistent with the background of this case study. "DNA" is a part of "Anji hood", which is a complex rural revitalization project, acts as a shared space for digital nomads in forms of co-living and co-working spaces.

2.3 Chinese Working Culture

2.3.1 Traditional Chinese Cultural Values

It is necessary to understand the Chinese working culture beforehand since Chinese digital nomads are the main users of DNA. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism are regarded as the most significant influences on traditional Chinese culture, with Confucianism being the most significant of these three systems. The status of Confucianism as the "orthodox philosophy of the Chinese state" has been established historically since the Tang Dynasty when the state also supported Taoism and Buddhism in addition to Confucianism. Nonetheless, Confucianism and Taoism are becoming increasingly popular for modern Chinese people to study (Lihua, 2013). Therefore, this paper includes Confucianism and Taoism to explain their core concepts and differences. And to approach Chinese working culture, this chapter is proceeded to brief the traditional Chinese Cultural values with the support of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, followed by the emerging phenomenon in Chinese society, such as: the 9-9-6 working culture, "neijuan" ("内卷" in Chinese) that can be regarded as a rat race, and "tangping" ("躺平" in Chinese) meaning 'lying flat' and achieving a greater work-life balance by rejecting the unnecessary works.

The psychology and identity of a country are determined by its cultural values, while Lihua (2013) identified the traditional cultural values that affects the psyche of Chinese people, including:

harmony ("和谐" in Chinese), benevolence ("仁" in Chinese), righteousness ("义" in Chinese), courtesy ("礼" in Chinese), wisdom ("智" in Chinese), honesty ("信" in Chinese), loyalty ("忠" in Chinese), and filial piety ("孝" in Chinese). Traditionally, classic Confucianism values include benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, honesty, loyalty, and filial piety, while harmony is shared by both Confucianism and Taoism but interpreted differently. Lihua (2013) posited that the concept of harmony in Chinese culture involves rationality, propriety, and compatibility, and it is defined as the "proper and balanced coordination between things." The value of benevolence emphasizes the importance of familial and blood relationships, while also extending to friendships and social connections and is closely related to other values such as courtesy, wisdom, and loyalty. Lihua (2013) further explains that righteousness relates to justice and correctness, which can be applied on various levels, including individual, collective, community, and national levels. The value of courtesy entails being modest and prudent in everyday life. According to Lihua (2013), wisdom refers to the capacity to distinguish good from evil and bad from the good, to understand oneself and others, and to be resourceful in promoting good and containing evil. Honesty is valued by Chinese people as a moral virtue, representing an individual's trustworthiness, integrity, and credibility. Loyalty is expressed as service to the motherland and faithfulness to family and friends. Finally, filial piety is regarded as a fundamental family virtue derived from Confucianism, whereby younger generations have duties and responsibilities to take care of the older generations. In addition, Lihua (2013) suggested that these traditional Chinese values should be integrated with contemporary values, such as: freedom, democracy, and human rights.

In contrast to Confucianism, the core concept of Taoism is "Tao" ("道" in Chinese). Though Confucianism interpreted "Tao" as "the way of something," "Tao" from the perspective of Taoism considered it a completely independent entity, and it replaced the function of the law ("天" in Chinese). Moreover, Taoism believes that the world was born from "nothing" ("无" in Chinese), and the ideal state of a Taoist is to keep oneself innocent from knowledge and free from desire. While Taoism was emphasized more in the context of governing style as the art of the government. In this belief, the governing party is a part of the nature, and should avoid doing anything so that the people will not acquire new desires ("无为而治" in Chinese) (Lin et al., 2013).

In short, the idea of Taoism is being simple and living in harmony with "Tao", following the law of nature and benefits everyone.

2.3.2 Contemporary Approach of Chinese Work Culture

Developed by Hofstede (1984a, 1984b), Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a framework for understanding how culture influences behavior and values across societies based on a large-scale study of IBM employees in more than 50 countries. There are six dimensions that can be utilized to describe and compare different cultures through the following cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint.

Power distance refers to the degree to which people in a society accept and expect power differences and inequalities (Hofstede, 1984a, 1984b). According to "Hofstede Insights" (n.d.), China ranks high in power distance with a score of 80, indicating a societal acceptance of inequality between individuals. This results in a polarized subordinate-superior relationship in which superiors are unafraid to exercise their authority. Individuals in such a society tend to be influenced by formal authority and sanctions but are generally optimistic about the leadership and initiative potential of others. In addition, individuals are encouraged not to aspire beyond their assigned rank.

Individualism-collectivism indicates the degree to which people in a society prioritize individual goals and interests versus group goals and interests (Hofstede, 1984a, 1984b). China is a highly collectivist culture, with a score of 20 on collectivism, which means that individuals prioritize the interests of the group over their own individual interests. In-group considerations play a significant role in hiring and promotion decisions, with family and other close in-groups receiving preferential treatment. Although employee commitment to the organization is low, relationships with colleagues within in-groups tend to be cooperative, whereas those with out-groups are often cold. Moreover, personal relationships take priority over tasks and business objectives ("Hofstede Insights," n.d.).

Masculinity-femininity refers to the degree to which people in a society value assertiveness, competitiveness, and material success versus caring for others, quality of life, and relationships (Hofstede, 1984a, 1984b). China is a masculine society that is success-oriented and driven, with a score of 66. Many individuals in Chinese society are willing to sacrifice their family and leisure time to achieve success. Also, leisure time is not considered a significant priority. Additionally, Chinese students place a great deal of importance on their exam scores and rankings, as this is considered the primary criterion for achieving success ("Hofstede Insights," n.d.).

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which people in a society feel threatened by ambiguity, uncertainty, and risk (Hofstede, 1984a, 1984b). China has a low score of 30. The concept of truth may be viewed as relative or subjective in China – there are default rules that people are expected to follow within certain social circles though they may not be formal laws and regulations. Nonetheless, there is still pragmatism and flexibility in how these rules are applied to specific situations. The Chinese are used to ambiguity, and their language is rich with ambiguous meanings that may be hard for Westerners to comprehend. As a result, Chinese people are adaptable and entrepreneurial. Notably, most of enterprises in China are small to medium-sized family businesses (SME) ("Hofstede Insights," n.d.).

Long-term versus short-term orientation describes the degree to which people in a society prioritize long-term planning and future-oriented thinking versus short-term goals and immediate gratification (Hofstede, 1984a, 1984b). China scores 87 in the dimension of pragmatism, which is regarded long-term orientation, indicating that Chinese culture places a great emphasis on practicality. Also, people in a pragmatic society tend to believe that truth is not absolute, but instead dependent on the context and situation. Therefore, Chinese people are adaptable and can easily adjust traditions to fit changing conditions, while they tend to have a strong tendency towards saving and investing, and they are generally frugal and persistent in their efforts to achieve desired outcomes ("Hofstede Insights," n.d.).

Indulgence versus restraint refers to the degree to which people in a society value indulgence, enjoyment, and pleasure versus self-control, discipline, and restraint. (Hofstede, 1984a, 1984b). China is regarded a restrained society with a score of 24, indicating strong control over desires and impulses. While it suggests that Chinese people tend to be cynical and pessimistic. Compared to indulgent societies, Chinese people do not prioritize leisure time, and prefer to

control their desires. Also, they believed that social norms limit their conducts and view indulgence as inappropriate ("Hofstede Insights," n.d.).

According to Yang et al. (2018), the work values across generations in China varied. Baby boomers placed the most importance on job security, and Generation X placed the most importance on work-life balance, while millennials placed the most importance on career development. In addition, there were differences in the importance placed on extrinsi versus extrinsic work values across the generations. Baby boomers and Generation X placed more importance on extrinsic values, such as job security and salary, while millennials placed more importance on intrinsic values, such as job satisfaction and work-life balance. Moreover, Yang et al. (2018) found that these differences in work values were related to differences in work-related attitudes and behaviors. For millennials, they were more likely to report intention to leave their current job, since career development and job satisfaction are their focus. Baby boomers, on the other hand, reported higher levels of job involvement due to their focus on job security (Yang et al., 2018).

Interestingly, work stress was found to be negatively correlated with work well-being in regions that adopted Chinese work values, such as China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, while harmony, hierarchy, and loyalty moderated the relationship between work stress and work well-being. Specifically, when employees held strong values of harmony, hierarchy, and loyalty, the negative effect of work stress on their work well-being was weakened. In contrast, when employees held weak values in these areas, the negative effect of work stress was stronger. Moreover, there were differences in work values and work stress levels among the three regions. Hong Kong had the highest level of work stress, followed by China. Hierarchy was strongly emphasized in China, while harmony was placed significant in Hong Kong, and loyalty was valued in Taiwan (Lu et al., 2011).

2.3.3 Transformation of Work Culture in China

The "9-9-6" work culture has emerged in China, requiring employees to work from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week (Bao, 2022). Research has revealed that Chinese workers who have

adopted this practice often experience exhaustion and burnout due to the long working hours, leading to reduced productivity, creativity, and job satisfaction (Bao, 2022). This toxic work culture creates a "striving trap," in which individuals are constantly pursuing success and feel inadequate if they do not meet the high standards set by the culture. Furthermore, the 9-9-6 work culture creates an imbalance between work and personal life, making it difficult for individuals to prioritize personal relationships and hobbies (Bao, 2022). Consequently, the 9-9-6 work culture is not sustainable in the long run since it has negative effects on employees' physical and mental health (Bao, 2022). In a broader societal and economic context, the 9-9-6 work culture exacerbates income inequality since companies can exploit low-paid and overworked employees to increase their profits. Additionally, this culture demotes the entrepreneurship and innovation of individuals since they do not have time or energy to pursue their own lives (Bao, 2022).

Chinese society has undergone significant changes in recent decades, characterized by a rise of individualism and consumerism and a growing emphasis on the pursuit of material wealth and social status (Linyan & Boqing, 2023). However, these changes are contradicted by the traditional collectivist values that prioritize social harmony and community over individual pursuits (Linyan & Boqing, 2023). Also, they mentioned two social trends in contemporary China that reflect the contradictory nature of Chinese society. The first trend, known as "neijuan" ("内卷" in Chinese) or "rat race" in English, refers to the phenomenon of intense competition and pressure in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, and social status (Linyan & Boqing, 2023). In this regard, they argued that "neijuan" has led to individuals pursuing success at any cost and sacrificing their well-being and relationships. The second trend, "tangping" ("躺平"in Chinese) or "lying flat" in English, posits a social trend where some young people in China are rejecting the traditional pursuit of success and instead choosing to live a more relaxed and non-competitive lifestyle with fewer material possessions and expectations. In this regard, they suggested that "tangping" represents a response to the contradictory nature of Chinese society, since young people strive to find a balance between personal fulfillment and social expectations. Furthermore, Linyan and Boqing (2023) argued that China is at a critical moment where cultural transformation is necessary to balance the contradicting values and enable sustainable development.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopts virtual ethnography or netnography as the research methodology. Virtual ethnography or netnography are the versions of ethnographic research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Ethnographic research employs a cultural perspective when examining the lives of individuals within their respective communities. (Akinson, 2007; Fetterman, 2010, as cited in Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Ethnographic research can be conducted in a variety of communities, ranging from formal to informal settings such as workplaces, trade shows, and social media platforms (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015) Nonetheless, the main objective of ethnographers remains to be unchanged, which is to gain insights into the cultural dynamics of a society by observing and analyzing the ways in which individuals interact with one another and with their surroundings.

According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2015), virtual ethnography refers to conducting "fieldwork" within virtual communities, networks, or groups, while it has advantage of examining virtual business teams and consumer groups, particularly the capacity to convert the conventional localized "field" into a cyberspace for business research, specifically for tackling intercultural and global research problems. Although the core research materials of virtual ethnography are made up of interactions within a virtual community, digital material can be utilized to observe the group of people in the study as well. This can be done in either non-participant observation or participant observation, or both. The difference between these two observations is whether the researchers are involved in producing the materials (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Costello et al. (2017) added that netnography can be used to study offline communities that have an online presence rather than exclusively for the online communities. Moreover, they encouraged

researchers to conduct netnography research using a participatory approach for fully engaging within the online community.

Few limitations regarding this research method are identified with ethical issues, such as a lack of interest and motivation among people and consumers due to an overload of requests for digital materials. Additionally, concerns about confidentiality and the respectability of research projects using data from social media may lead to distrust. Participants may also face distractions while providing data, such as multitasking during meetings or while watching television. Technological challenges, including limited access to digital technologies or lack of competence in using them, may also occur. Moreover, verifying the identity of individuals providing data, such as distinguishing whether a company blog was written by the CEO or their media assistant, may pose another challenge. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015) Similarly, Whalen (2018) noted the challenges of using netnography in hospitality and tourism research, such as: ethical concerns, lack of transparency, and issues with validity and reliability. It is suggested to be transparent in methodology and acknowledge the biases, limitations, and assumptions.

In this study, the main digital materials used in this study consist of the contents of WeChat Official Accounts (DNA Community, n.d.), with the additional two podcast episodes conducted by people who had visited DNA. WeChat Official Accounts (WOA) offer a range of features and tools that allow organizations and individuals to share information, engage with their followers and measure their affect. Key characteristics and features of WOA include official verification, account types, content creation, interactive features, analytics, messaging and QR code. WOA are verified by WeChat after the account owner submitted their business license and other relevant documents for review. There are two types of account: subscription accounts and service accounts. Subscription accounts are used to push contents to followers' subscription folders, while service accounts can provide more interactive features, such as a menu bar for navigating services and contents. Various types of contents can be created via WOA, such as: texts, images, videos, and audio materials. Interactive features are also provided in WOA to engage with their followers, such as: surveys, quizzes, and live streams. Messaging features are integrated in WOA to communicate with their followers, such as: respond to private message and inquiries. Each WOA has a unique QR code that followers can scan to follow the WOA (Shen et al., 2019). In this

study, WOA: "DNA 数字游民" ("DNA Digital Nomads Anji" in English) as a service account was selected, from which 35 selected posts were retrieved in the album of "#数字游民接管计划" ("#DigitalNomadsTakeOverProgramme" in English). According to DNA Community (2021), "#DigitalNomadsTakeOverProgramme" aims to "produce contents in a decentralized way by inviting the DNA's residents to take over the account in turn, while encouraging all kinds of content creation."

3.2 Data Collection

Figure 6: Overview of Collected Data

	Types of Data	Date of Contents	Means of Documentation	Gender (M/F)	Occupation	View Counts
N1	Podcast	04.10.22	Audios	Male	International business operational procurement agent	-
N2	Podcast	10.05.22	Audios	Females	Copywriter; language coach; podcaster; entrepreneurs; e-commerce designer	-
N3	WOA	27.05.22	Videos, texts, photos	Male	Pottery craftsman	2325
N4	WOA	03.06.22	Videos, texts, photos	Female	Street artist	2124

N5	WOA	10.06.22	Videos, texts, photos	Females	Entrepreneurs; e-commerce designer	3454
N6	WOA	24.06.22	Texts, photos	Male	International business strategic purchasing agent	2630
N7	WOA	01.07.22	Texts, photos, illustrations	Males & Females	Content creators	2828
N8	WOA	08.07.22	Texts, photos	Male	-	2401
N9	WOA	15.07.22	Texts, photos, audios	Male	Designer	2153
N10	WOA	22.07.22	Videos, texts, photos	Female	Sound engineer	2229
N11	WOA	12.08.22	Videos, texts, photos, illustrations	Male	Designer; illustrator	2217
N12	WOA	12.08.22	Texts, photos	Male	Writer; podcaster	2964
N13	WOA	19.08.22	Texts, photos	Female	Undergraduate student	2063
N14	WOA	26.08.22	Texts, photos	Female	Graduate student; magazine writer	2368
N15	WOA	02.09.22	Texts, illustration	Female	Illustrator	1276
N16	WOA	09.09.22	Texts, photos, illustrations	Female	Entrepreneur	1964
N17	WOA	16.09.22	Texts, photos	Female	Public-school teacher	4535
N18	WOA	23.09.22	Texts, photos	Male	Programmer	3538

N19	WOA	14.10.22	Texts, photos, illustrations	Female	Illustrator	2662
N20	WOA	28.10.22	Texts, Illustration	-	Designer	2209
N21	WOA	13.1.23	Texts, photos, illustrations	Female	Sculpture undergraduate student	1371

The data for this study was collected between December 29, 2022, and March 29, 2023. There are two phases of data collection. In the first phase, 35 out of 49 WOA contents are included since they were labeled "#DigitalNomadsTakeOverProgramme," from which the first post was created on May 20, 2022, and the last post was created on March 24, 2023. And the posts that were not labeled as "#DigitalNomadsTakeOverProgramme" were excluded from this study since they were created by DNA official personnel. In the second phase, 19 out of 35 WOA contents were further included in the analysis. The inclusion criteria heavily rely on the quality of the contents, such as: the relevance to the research questions, the first-person writing perspective, and the repetitiveness of the experiences. In other words, the WOA contents that were irrelevant to digital nomads, and the DNA community, while written in third person and describing other people's experiences, as well as repetitive descriptions of experiences, were excluded. (See Figure 6). Considering the means of documentation are diverse, such as text-based posts; videos and text-based posts; videos, illustrations, and text-based posts; and audio materials, this study used different methods to collect these contents. For the textual and image-based posts, they were collected by screenshot and then imported to ATLAS.ti 23. For the video-based or mixed posts, they were directly reviewed on the WOA websites and further documented on Notion.so. Additional podcast materials were also collected directly from the source websites.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative content analysis is used to analyze the data in an inductive manner. Qualitative content analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data, while the use of the term "qualitative" indicates an emphasis on understanding the phenomenon being studied in its appropriate context. This type of analysis focuses on both the content of the data, such as what is said and done, and the contextual meaning of the data, such as how and why something is said or done in a particular way. Data used for qualitative content analysis can be either textual or audiovisual data, while there are two purposes of qualitative content analysis including: "provide a holistic and factual description that offers a thorough view of the phenomenon within the study" as well as "provide a detailed interpretation of the contextual meanings of the data." It is recommended for the novice researcher to provide a factual description about the data before jumping into the interpretation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).

Coding, on the other hand, is a relevant part of qualitative content analysis when the researcher wants to categorize the data for the purpose of writing a factual description of the data. When coding the data, the researcher strives to be objective so that other researchers can replicate the coding process and analysis and reach the same research results. In qualitative content analysis, the role of theory in coding process emphasizes the contextual nature of data and requires the coding scheme to be generated based on the data. This approach allows for the development of new theoretical and conceptual ideas. Therefore, the coding categories are generally derived inductively from the data in qualitative content analysis. However, it is important to note that qualitative content analysis can be conducted without coding. In such cases, the researcher relies on other procedures such as intuition, mind mapping, memo writing, and close reading of the text, leading to direct interpretation. These procedures emphasize the role of the researcher as a subjective and self-reflective interpreter of the data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The analysis of this study is conducted in both coding and non-coding approaches since the research questions related to factual description such as: "how the co-living and co-working experience of digital nomads looks like" and "what the co-living and co-working space's preferences of Chinese digital nomads are", whereas other research question related to "meaning making" perspectives such as: why Chinese digital nomads have decided to go to Anji's digital nomads' community.

There are two types of qualitative content analysis, namely categorization and interpretation. Categorization seeks to depict the content of the data in a way that presents an overall and comprehensive representation of the studied phenomenon. The process of categorization involves selecting appropriate coding units that capture the data accurately and align with study goals, such as: key words, phrases, sentences, and themes, while the selection of units depends on the nature of the data being analyzed. The following step is to create a coding scheme including all coding categories. A coding scheme should include labels or names for the codes, specifications of what each code concerns, instructions on how to identify proper content and meanings for each code, criteria for exclusions, and examples of excluded sections of the data. Regarding coding categories, they should be exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and independent, and can be derived from theory or data, or a combination of both. As for the coding process, it should be flexible, allowing for new categories to be generated and original categories to be revised if necessary. After categorizing the data, it is important to check for overlapping or irrelevant codes and adjust accordingly. While the analysis of categorized data involves searching for patterns, trends, and relationships between categories, which can be summarized to provide a description of the big picture (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).

On the other hand, interpretation endeavors to understand the phenomenon by constructing meaning within a specific context. The method of interpretation in analysis focuses on how and why meanings are created and involves examining the relationships between concepts to understand how things are said and done and their significance. Researchers aim to identify local and context-specific nuances in the contents through the relationships between concepts. Moreover, it is important to have a research question to guide the analysis, which can be generated through preliminary analysis or memo writing. Also, categorization of content can facilitate the researcher to become familiar with the data and exploring different research questions. The following steps are analysis of meaning and interpretation. The analysis of meanings may involve systematic coding to examine the existence, strength, direction, and nature of relationships between various concepts, while the focus of interpretation is on how the content is understood in the specific context rather than just describing the content. This requires researchers to equip themselves with intuition, flexibility, and creativity while

benefitting from experience (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The analysis of this study uses both categorization and interpretation to answer the research questions, that is to produce a comprehensive picture of DNA community as well as to know the context-specific motivations of digital nomads in DNA community.

Appendix 1 showcases the coding scheme, the categorization, and the interpretation process. There are three main themes, namely, motivations, co-living and co-working experiences at DNA, and the preferences of Chinese digital nomads, which are derived from the three research questions, respectively. There are four steps in categorization and interpretation. Firstly, the meaning units are retrieved and categorized based on their contexts. Secondly, condensed meaning units are further extracted, and thirdly, these condensed meaning units are interpreted within their own themes. Finally, the sub-themes can be finalized after the previous three steps are done.

4 Findings

4.1 Motivation of Chinese digital nomads

4.1.1 Novelty is what brings people to DNA.

Several digital nomads have expressed their fascinations about the environment of Anji hood as a different and novel atmosphere. As an international business operational procurement agent (N1) has shared in a podcast:

> "I particularly wanted to try a different way of living. Before [*in Beijing – Z.H.]*, I experienced long commutes and it was extremely crowded, which sometimes made me a little irritable. Through a friend's social media, I saw (Anji hood) this place several times, and I found it interesting. What probably struck me the most initially was seeing the tea plants covering the mountains, and then people sitting together inside, some working and some engaging in recreational activities. I found this place intriguing, so I came here eventually." (N1, international business operational procurement agent)

He (N1) has emphasized that he "wanted to try a different way of living" (N1) since the overcrowded and busy commute in the big city like Beijing enabled him to think about mobility. Also, he saw the social media posts of "Anji hood" from a friend that people were working and living in the view, which he found it an interesting and attractive scenery. This led N1, the international business operational procurement agent to DNA. Similarly, other digital nomads - a pottery craftsman (N3) and a street artist (N4) have also expressed that they heard about DNA from a friend and were attracted by its environment:

> "I heard about the closed beta of DNA from a friend, while the location is surrounded by tea mountain, maybe I can create some pottery related to Anji." (N3, pottery craftsman)

A street artist (N4) has expressed their intrigue in the community of DNA, and she mentioned that her friends' visitation to Anji:

> "Last fall, I heard from friends in Dali about their visit to Anji for an inspection. Later, I learned that a digital nomad commune had been established here. When I saw the news about the closed beta, I applied to come and stay for a while." (N4, street artist)

It seems that many nomads (N1, N3, and N4) have their own sources, and they were informed of the closed beta testing, which means an internal trial that opens for limited capacity for the purpose of testing the feasibility of DNA before opening to the public officially. The street artist (N4) also mentioned that her friends were in Dali, which is the first well-known digital nomad city in China. It is the status of her friends as people who are related to digital nomads and her intrinsic interests in the digital nomad commune that convinced her to take the opportunity and come to DNA.

Interestingly, an entrepreneur (N16) came to DNA without a clear purpose:

> "It's quite hard to explain "why we are here" in a single sentence.", while one of the most intuitive feelings is: how can everyone has so many topics to discuss, as if the inspiration never ceases day and night." (N16, entrepreneur)

As an entrepreneur who owns a juice shop (N16), revealed, she does not know why she came to DNA, or rather, her motivations for coming to DNA were left blank and yet to be found. And it is

her "intuitive feelings" that reminded her why she wants to come to DNA, which is to look for the inspiration in relation to her entrepreneurial profession:

> "Three weeks ago, we brought a juicer, magazines, cup lamps, and tea sets, but we didn't have a clear idea of what to do. We simply felt that we wanted to be closer to nature and interesting people and let the unknown and life take care of the rest. Three weeks later, not only have we made 6 or 7 kinds of jams (for the sandwiches) inspired by everyone and "Anji hood", but we have also fallen in love with this place from the bottom of our hearts." (N16, entrepreneur)

She (N16) has also emphasized that "the nature and the interesting people" were the initial motives of coming to DNA, while the inspiration that Anji hood provided enables her to create new products, namely, 6 or 7 kinds of jams for the sandwiches. And she has expressed that she enjoyed her stay at DNA.

4.1.2 Socializing and networking with people is crucial for Chinese digital nomads.

Face-to-face communication is one of the key components of Chinese digital nomads' everyday lives at DNA because they can learn from each other through activities and social events. For the international business operational procurement agent N1, he does not regard coming to DNA as a lone-wolf journey but rather as a practice of taking initiatives to attain and exchange the information in a face-to-face way:

> "Sometimes there are evening gatherings to drink and chat. Drinking is not the main point, but mainly to deepen our understanding with others and obtain information through opportunities. As I mentioned earlier, 'we are not alone in the countryside. In this rural environment, we are a group of city people from various industries, with a lot of

information being exchanged.' So, whether it's drinking gatherings or parties, we can all

learn something from each other…. However, deep down, I still desire communication,

like having serious conversations, rather than just eating and drinking. I don't have much

interest in purely eating and drinking, so for me, I do need it (deep conversations). Firstly,

socializing can alleviate negative emotions in humans, and secondly, I think it is a more

efficient way to obtain information." (N1, international business operational procurement

agent)

Also, the strong social needs can be found among Chinese digital nomads, which may be derived

from the strict quarantine policy under the effect of COVID-19 previously, while the international

business operational procurement agent also mentioned that having deep conversations can

"alleviate negative emotions." (N1) in addition to exchanging the information. Moreover,

Socializing and communication enables the transformation of turning a group of people into a

community, and as a writer and podcaster (N12) states:

"The time saved from daily chores like commuting and cooking has been happily spent on

casual conversations. Don't underestimate the power of these chats, as they serve as a

catalyst for the community: while individuals can focus on their work, it's only when they

start to communicate that the group transforms into a true community. But once you

want to start a conversation, it couldn't be simpler. Just make eye contact, sit down next

to an empty seat, and chat! Casual conversations after dinner (which can turn into all-

nighters if they get serious) have gradually become a ritual: as soon as a watermelon is

cut in half and placed on the big table under the eaves, people will spontaneously gather

around it within ten minutes, like ants attracted to the sweetness. They can come and go

as they please, joining and leaving the conversation freely." (N12, writer and podcaster)

Initiating or joining a conversation at DNA is very easy, as the writer and the podcaster (N12)

mentioned: "just make eye contact, sit down next to an empty seat and chat." (N12) Also, casual

conversation after dinner has become "a ritual" at DNA, which denotes that Chinese digital

nomads accept and adopt the casual conversations to exchange information with each other so frequent that it becomes a part of their daily lives. While these casual communications can be extended to an extreme, as a public-school teacher (N17) describes:

"Pulling all-nighters is a common thing at DNA. Chatting and drinking with friends until the break of dawn, we would stay up from the bright moonlight to the sunrise. Then, we would climb to the rooftop to watch the purple-red hues of the morning glow paint the entire sky." (N17, public-school teacher)

From her (N17) description, these digital nomads have become friends and created deep connections to each other through frequent casual conversations, while they would further participate in activities together to strengthen their bonds. An illustrator put her motive of coming to DNA in a simple way:

 "I yearn for more daily, frequent, deeper, and valuable interactions communication. That's why I came to DNA." (N19, illustrator)

Chinese digital nomads crave for face-to-face communication since it can be done easily in the countryside environment at DNA. While casual conversations have integrated into the daily lives of digital nomads, and these frequent casual conversations transform the separate individuals into a community, while the activities in turn maintain the deep connections among the nomads.

4.1.3 Chinese digital nomads want to integrate with the locals.

The DNA requires digital nomads to stay for at least seven days, and this requirement encourages the digital nomads to step out of their comfort zone, which is the DNA itself, and

integrate with the local communities. An international business operational procurement agent (N1) expresses his opinion towards it:

> "Changing locations is meaningful to me. Personally, I don't like travelling at a face pace, and I've never been fond of quick check-ins. For example, going somewhere for just two or three days doesn't hold much appeal, unless it's for work. If it's for leisure travel, I'd be more resistant to the idea. Instead, I prefer to stay in a place for an extended period, building connections with the local community. As DNA mentioned, if you don't stay for at least seven days, it's difficult to establish many connections. So, I hope to develop deeper relationships with locals, which can lead to a unique and different experience." (N1, the international business operational procurement agent)

He (N1) has emphasized that the establishment of deep relationships with the local people enables a unique experience during his stays. It is indeed challenging to establish meaningful relationships for a short period of time, like two to three days. The international business operational procurement agent (N1) also expressed that quick check-ins and leisure-oriented travel are not appealing to him. However, it seems that digital nomads and the local people do not understand each other quite well, as an international business strategic purchasing agent (N6), states:

> "In my view, DNA is a 'special zone' located in Xilong Village, Xilong Township, Anji County, Huzhou City, Zhejiang Province. The people, work characteristics, and lifestyle here are distinctly different from the local area. Half a year after the emergence of DNA, the local villagers still don't quite understand what these people in the courtyard do, and the majority of DNAers know very little about the local life outside the walls (I'm guessing)." (N6, international business strategic purchasing agent)

In his (N6) view, DNA as a shared space that emerged in a village is a novel experience for the local people because this facility attracts the talents from the big cities to the small village of Anji, and this is contrary to urbanization. However, the local people seem to misunderstand digital nomads. During one of his joggings, the international business strategic purchasing agent (N6) passed by a convenient shop, and it took him an hour and a half to introduce himself and explain what digital nomads are to the local people since they misunderstood digital nomads as unemployed. Also, Chinese digital nomads regard themselves as "new villagers" or "new species" in Anji County, as an illustrator (N11) describes:

> I am N11, and I've been at "DNA" for over 7 months, with my residency almost the same age as "DNA" itself. From initially staying in bed until past 8 am in winter to being able to get up at 5 am in summer, I finally regained the skill of waking up early after becoming a new resident of Xilong Village for half a year, and occasionally led the "Early Rising Cultivation Group" for morning runs. One of the great benefits of waking up early is that the day feels exceptionally long, giving a sense of satisfaction as if you've "earned" something. Morning runs allow me to slowly pass through the village, and I often change and develop new routes, greatly increasing the chances for me, as a "new villager," to interact with local villagers. Recently, I've been working on the "Anji hood" journal, in which "digital nomads" appear as a "new species" in Xilong Township. Indeed, in the village, we "new species" are often surrounded by curious villagers. It may seem like a joke, but digital nomads truly are a "new species" in "Anji hood". At this moment, they are practicing a completely new lifestyle in Anji hood, where work, learning, travel, and vacation are happening simultaneously. (N11, designer and illustrator)

Interestingly, the designer and illustrator (N11) regarded digital nomads who live and work at DNA as "new species" in Anji and himself as a "new villager". He (N11) is one of the oldest members of DNA, and he has also shared that he was misunderstood by the locals during one of his morning runs. One of the local people misinterpreted the intentions of the designer and the illustrator (N11) and regarded him as a slacking outsider who intended to steal his chicken, whereas after seeing his running routine regularly, the local realized his mistake and they began

to greet each other afterwards. It is the potential gaps between the digital nomads and the local community that intrigue the digital nomads to build connections with the local people. During this process, digital nomads are involved in social integration since they are adapting the Anji's way of life and potentially creating or innovating a new Anji's way of life.

4.1.4 Escape from 9-9-6 work anxiety and pressure

If digital nomads want to escape from the extended and overworked 9-9-6 routine, "tangping" ("lying flat" in English) is the way they choose to cope with it. An illustrator (N15) mentioned that she and her boyfriend practiced remote working due to their freelance jobs, and she (N15) described their home as both a resting place and a workplace, while their daily routine was limited to the bedroom and workplace as if they were stuck in the "tiny hamster ball." The freedom of freelance work comes with the price of no fixed working and resting hours in a 24-hour day, as she (N15) puts it:

> "This marks the fifth year of my freelancing career. Although freelancing is often associated with freedom, it also means that there are no fixed working and resting hours within the 24-hour day. My boyfriend also works from home, and our house serves as both a resting place and a workspace. Our daily routine consists of moving between the bedroom and the workspace. When work and life become intertwined, if you're not good at time management or tend to procrastinate, it can be like a looming storm cloud of disaster. Year after year, deadlines after deadlines, and we feel like we're living in a tiny hamster ball, constantly running on a wheel to earn our living. We then numb our minds with the pleasures of the online world and keep spinning the wheel frantically. The information cocoon and virtual social interactions form the strongest fortress of this hamster ball. Like every busy person living in a city, the view outside the window changes with the seasons, but we no longer take the time to look up at the starry sky or listen to the birds singing. It wasn't until an opportunity in June, when I saw DNA's beta testing

event, that I reconsidered my situation. At that point, I had already stopped working due to physical and mental exhaustion, so I carefully weighed my options before sending an email to participate." (N15, illustrator)

The illustrator (N15) paused her work and came to DNA to "tangping", while resting her mind and body. Similarly, a sculpture undergraduate student (N21) also paused her work and came to DNA simply to rest the mind:

 "After working for a year, I left Shanghai and pressed the pause button to rest at DNA." (N21, sculpture undergraduate student)

Though the illustrator (N15) has been a freelancer for five years, she has recognized the disadvantage of remote working, in which her work and life have intertwined, while the "freedom" of working at home does not seem to benefit her lifestyle and has become a burden that has brought her physical and mental exhaustion. And her (N15) experience is similar to N18, a programmer, who later transferred to a remote worker in a consulting company:

"My name is N18, a former algorithm engineer, and I transferred to a consulting company later, which brought me to the world of remote working. Now I am an independent full-stack developer. Recently, the lifestyle of digital nomads is being promoted by various media, claiming that you don't need to commute, and you can travel all the time while using the geographical arbitrage... However, they might not know it [*being a digital nomad – Z.H.]* means to be always demanded: being available 24/7 whenever the boss called - if I don't reply to my boss within ten minutes, my boss will go crazy, and the boundary of work and life become vague, while I lose the autonomy in managing my time... I want to point out whether it is companies being forced or voluntarily implementing remote work, they could have given employees full trust and focus on results rather than the process of them sitting in front of the screen." (N18, programmer)

He (N18) also mentioned that the freedom of digital nomads' lifestyle was glorified by the mainstream media, whereas being a digital nomad also meant being demanded on-duty 24/7, such as: being available whenever the boss called. The programmer (N18) struggled to enjoy the freedom and autonomy that digital nomad lifestyle brings to him (N18) because the boundary of work and life is vague.

Indeed, 9-9-6 is one of the reasons why people are anxious and unhappy about their lives, but mainstream narrative remains to be the obstacle of approaching happiness. N1, the international business operational procurement agent has pointed out that the economic and societal pressure due to 9-9-6 work culture is quite toxic:

> "When you are in a particular environment or under a specific set of rules, you either follow the rules or step out and refuse to play by them. Alternatively, you can create your own set of rules. Most people cannot break free due to lack of courage, ability, or willingness to envision themselves outside the norm. People are influenced by various societal expectations, such as whether studying is the only way out, whether taking the college entrance exam is the only path, whether intimate relationships and marriage are the only ways to happiness, or whether having children is the only fulfillment in life. People are expected to strictly adhere to these norms, or else they are deemed non-mainstream, incorrect, and face doubt or condemnation." (N1, international business operational procurement agent)

The international business operational procurement agent (N1) pinpoints that adopting the digital nomad lifestyle is perceived as "incorrect" in the mainstream narrative, while most people are constrained by social norms and societal expectations and therefore neglect the possibility of escaping from the 9-9-6 routine—and adopt digital nomadism. It is the willingness to escape

the 9-9-6 circle that enables people to rethink their relationship to work and life and eventually become digital nomads while confronting mainstream 'proper' norms.

4.2 Co-Living and Co-Working Experience at DNA

4.2.1 Co-creation is triggered by intrinsic interest.

N3, a pottery craftsman, was attracted by the natural environment of DNA, and he (N3) hoped to find the proper clays in the fields while creating some pottery related to Anji by himself. N3's initial plan was to introduce his profession in a PowerPoint presentation and work on his own. To his surprise, digital nomads showed great interest in crafting pottery after the presentation, which led the fellow digital nomads to join N3 in making pottery:

> "I set two main goals for myself: introducing and making pottery in Anji. The first task was quickly completed with a PowerPoint presentation and a speech, which rapidly bridged the distance between me and everyone else. The subsequent plan to *start making pottery from scratch in an unfamiliar place*" sparked great interest among my fellow residents. Pottery itself indeed has its unique charm. From discovering suitable minerals, selecting materials, refining clay, making, and firing, more people constantly wanted to join or inquire about related matters. I also felt the enthusiasm exchanged due to my passion. The original plan was for me to independently create some pottery works using local materials and documents and display the entire process. Later, it evolved into a way of interacting with my fellow DNA residents: I took out all the collected clay and invited everyone to create together." (N3, pottery craftsman)

Digital nomads are moved by the passion of N3 and intrinsically interested in making pottery. Therefore, they actively engaged themselves in this activity. This is clearly a co-creation process related to professional work, while it is the digital nomads themselves that decided to create and

participate in this event and co-created the pottery crafting experience with him (N3). Similarly, N4, a street artist, held an exhibition in the shared spaces of DNA with the help of other nomads:

"During this time, we considered doing a transparent exhibition setup in a public environment, which was challenging, as people working, chatting, and listening to music were mutually constrained, with no clear boundaries between public and private spaces. Some friends helped. Although it was brief, I'm very grateful." (N4, street artist)

She (N4) mentioned her experience in conducting an exhibition in a transparent manner, meaning that digital nomads can see the whole process of how the exhibition is set up because the venue of the exhibition was set in shared spaces. To digital nomads, setting up an exhibition in shared spaces is perceived as an intriguing and novel experience; they also participate in this process out of their intrinsic interests. Co-creation at DNA is quite common, whether it is related to work and profession or merely a brainstorming artistic idea. This involves the active participation of digital nomads in certain activities or events. Nonetheless, these co-creation processes manifest due to the intriguing nature of these activities and events.

4.2.2 Chinese digital nomads actively engage themselves to make the shared spaces better.

DNA seems to be well-equipped with facilities, whereas the fitness areas are mostly outdoor venues, such as basketball fields and badminton courts. However, these outdoor venues require sports equipment, such as basketball and badminton rackets. And the absence of an indoor fitness area became a problem for the nomads because there is a need for an indoor fitness area among the digital nomads. One day, N8, a fitness enthusiast, brought two battle ropes to DNA, and this triggered the nomads to create their own fitness area for the needs of exercising:

"From time to time, the numbers of the battle ropes increased from two to three, and then to five. A wave of fitness enthusiasm was sweeping through DNA, but unfortunately,

the dust was overwhelming. The original builders [*of DNA – Z.H.]* never imagined that one day the cement floor of the dining hall would be repeatedly pounded by thick battle ropes. As a result, the floor cracked, and dust filled the air, making it necessary to constantly sprinkle water to reduce dust. After visiting the ACDC construction site, they found a roll of protective cloth from the library's construction waste. The fitness area finally enjoyed a brief respite from the dust. With the improved environment, the girls were smiling. Unfortunately, the protective cloth didn't last long since it could not withstand the wear and tear of just a few days and fell apart. The gym continued to be dusty, and it became clear that only professional shock-absorbing rubber flooring would work in the long term. With financial support from <Nomad K>, the temporary manpower of <Nomad N> and <Nomad S>, and the mending and cutting skills of <Nomad C>, a decent fitness area was finally born after many twists and turns." (N8, fitness enthusiast)

According to the fitness enthusiast (N8), the renovation of the fitness area occurred in the corner of the dining hall, while it took them twice to finalize a decent fitness area. It can be observed that digital nomads who live in DNA are given the freedom to modify the shared spaces, while the process is quite smooth and permitted by DNA. During the renovation process, we can clearly see the involvement of other nomads, such as nomads <K>, <N>, <S>, and <C>, while nomad <K> even paid for the materials by himself, from which they are creating their own culture—a "do-it-yourself" spirit as well as an active engagement in making their co-living and co-working spaces better.

4.2.3. Chinese digital nomads also practice the work-life balance at DNA

Digital nomadism for Chinese digital nomads is a relatively new concept. Some of them have gone to DNA to practice the feasibility of this lifestyle, while others have shared their transitional experience when they first arrived there. N7, a group of content creators, has gone to DNA with the purpose of team building for a week, and they state:

"We've accepted the fact that we have to work at DNA, but we still want to make our work as interesting as possible. Frequently switching our work environment is the last stubbornness of creative workers." (N7, content creators)

Ironically, due to the nature of their work, namely, content creation, they (N7) spent most of their time working at DNA in different venues, such as the fitness area, the tiered classroom, and the beverage store. Indeed, with many daily activities happening at DNA, it can be difficult for digital nomads to maintain their focus. In the scenario of N7, these content creators (N7) were practicing work-life balance. However, this might be a common challenge for a newcomer at DNA, as the international business operational procurement agent (N1) has reflected:

"After the novelty faded away, he took some time to adjust his working style not to be distracted by the activities of DNA. He recalled that "I remember there was a period when my working hours were a bit short, so I would deliberately avoid some crowds. At that time, my workstation was very wild, sometimes under the tree in the white hut, sometimes in the fields, anyway, just find any place to hold my computer and go. So, I think it's important to make good use of fragmented time. The environment can have a significant effect on people, so everyone should take a reasonable view of the 'novelty'." (N1, international business operational procurement agent)

The international business operational procurement agent (N1) has described his experience of maintaining the work-life balance, and how he copes with it – by avoiding people and changing his workstation frequently. And he (N1) has pointed out that digital nomads at DNA should rewire their brain towards the concept of novelty since it will eventually fade away. N18, the programmer, has also shared his transition and adaptation to the remote working:

At the beginning of my job transition, I also had a hard time adapting to the remote working rhythm - Starting to fear face-to-face instant communication: When a life-or-

death video conference call comes in on DingTalk, I start to feel anxious - did I write code with bugs in it? Did I cause a P0 incident? Why is there no warning before the call? Becoming more procrastinating: Previously, when I was at my desk, I could ponder and think deeply about problems, but at home, I began to procrastinate more systematically. The time cost of cooking: Although there is no need to commute, cooking has become a significant mental burden: grocery shopping, washing dishes, washing pots... Before you know it, two hours have slipped away. Longer working hours but lower work efficiency... My goodness, this is not the remote life I wanted at all! After discussing with colleagues, I found that they also had similar problems... This means "not everyone is suited for such a free and self-disciplined lifestyle." So, before quitting your job with confidence to become a Nomad, consider asking yourself two questions: Can I find a remote company that embraces nomadic culture and encourages employees to travel and live in different places? If I work for myself, can I complete communication and established tasks with high efficiency and clear objectives? (N18, programmer)

The programmer (N18) has mentioned that he was not quite adapted to remote work at the beginning of his transition. This can be seen as he (N18) started fearing face-to-face instant communication and felt anxious about it, and he became more procrastinating than ever. Also, the programmer (N18) mentioned the time cost of cooking: "although there is no need to commute, cooking has become a mentally burdensome task: grocery shopping, doing dishes... two hours can easily slip away." (N18) The programmer (N18) was shocked at first since his working hours were longer than before but with lower efficiency. Interestingly, after discussing with his colleagues, the programmer (N18) found that they struggled with these issues as well, and he (N18) then realized that the lifestyle of digital nomads requires highly self-disciplinary traits, and this lifestyle is not suitable for everyone.

4.3 Preference of Chinese digital nomads

4.3.1 Autonomy in making decisions on one's own

Giving more flexibility and customization to the digital nomads may be useful to attract Chinese digital nomads to co-living and co-working spaces, whereas it should be noted that the digital nomads' autonomy is what gives them the freedom to take initiative in the decision-making process and lead the directions of their lives even though other people may misunderstand them. N2a is an entrepreneur who owns a business in room vehicle renovation, whereas her parents, especially her mother, did not quite understand her profession. Though N2a's father gradually supports her, N2a's parents will not feel proud of her since she did not follow the path that her parents desired:

 "There are many things my mother doesn't understand, but they are not necessarily conflicts. From five years ago until now, my mother has always thought I am unemployed, not knowing what I am doing for work. Even though she knows I am running my own business, she still asks if we have no business during the recent pandemic or if we are just idling around. My parents know my personality and can't stop me. Over the years, we've upgraded our room vehicle living space, and my mother has gradually come to terms with the fact that living in a room vehicle can be comfortable. But she still thinks I'm just fooling around. My father, on the other hand, has slowly started to support me, as he believes we have a sustainable income and are doing something logical and serious. However, they won't feel proud of these things. There are many doctors in my family, and in the eyes of intellectuals, 'doing business' is not the best path. In my mother's view, it's extremely unwise to give up high income and promotion opportunities at a major internet company. Emphasizing that I am happy and at ease living in DNA doesn't help much." (N2a, entrepreneur in room vehicle renovation)

The profession of N2a is perceived as "extremely unwise" by her mother because she (N2a) has given up the high income and the promotion opportunities that a major internet company could offer. Similarly, N2b is also an entrepreneur and has her own coffee truck. Her mother worried about N2b and tried to convince her (N2b) to sell the truck since her mother did not understand what digital nomads are. However, N2b still takes the initiative and continues her nomadic lifestyle:

"I've always been trying to tell her [*my mom – Z.H.*] that I [*current work – Z.H.*] am working too. And for the past three or four years, she's been trying to persuade me to sell the truck and go home. So, I couldn't convince her, I can only report to my family when I get to a new place. She would start asking me, 'Hey, how many cups of coffee did you sell today?' Most of the time, I'm having fun and can't really say how many cups of coffee I sell every day, because the coffee truck only operates during events. Then she would say, 'Oh, did you sleep until noon again, skipping breakfast and lunch, because you have no money for food?' She's still in a worried state. My mom thinks quitting my job to run a coffee truck is not taking life seriously. She doesn't understand digital nomads and these new types of occupations; she's just worried about her daughter with no permanent residence. We often talk on the phone and occasionally video chat to show each other our work and life situations, and she's become much more reassured. I can't change her, and she can't change me. I emphasize time and time again: It's my life, and I'm responsible for it." (N2b, entrepreneur in mobile coffee truck)

N2b's mother worried about N2b's status for not owning a permanent residence because driving a coffee truck and selling coffee was not "correct" in her mother's view. However, not all the Chinese digital nomads' parents hold a traditional perspective towards the idea of digital nomads. N2c is an e-commerce designer, and her (N2c's) parents keep an open mind and support her freelancing jobs after N2c explains to them, and they like the idea of digital nomads:

"I have relatively fewer conflicts with my parents. At first, I didn't directly tell them that I quit my job to become a freelancer. Later, I told them, 'I can also take orders on my own.' They would worry about whether I could make as much money as I did when I was working for a company, or if I could support myself. After I explained to them that my income was actually similar to when I was working for a company and that I had more freedom, they were quite supportive. They liked the idea that I could travel and make money at the same time - sometimes, I would bring my laptop and work from different

places. They even felt proud of me in front of their friends and relatives." (N2c, e-commerce designer)

Although N2c's parents worried that N2c could not support herself, they eventually came to a relief and even felt proud of their daughter. Digital nomads enjoy the freedom to make their own choices, and they will take the initiative and be the masters of their seas. Other nomads, such as an international business strategic purchasing agent (N6), a writer and podcaster (N12), and an international business operational procurement agent (N1), also express their preference to make their own choices:

"This trip to Anji marks the first time I've lived in the countryside for such an extended period. Even after the novelty has faded, I still feel comfortable. I think the key lies in the fact that this is a proactive choice, as well as a natural one." (N6, international business strategic purchasing agent)

The international business purchasing agent, N6 has mentioned that coming to DNA is the first time that he (N6) has lived in the countryside for an extended period. Though the novelty has faded, he (N6) still feels content since the decision was made by himself. N12, a writer and podcaster mentioned that he (N12) prefers to have choices:

"DNA actually has a spacious, well-equipped kitchen, but being able to avoid cooking for a week and still enjoy familiar tastes is significant for me, who has been forced to cook at home for two months and feels down whenever I open the fridge: I'm willing to cook and eat out, but I prefer to have choices." (N12, writer and podcaster)

These choices were offered to the writer and the podcaster (N12), which gives him the freedom to occupy his time and spend it on other things. An international business operational

procurement agent (N1) further concludes that digital nomads prefer to have choices and make their own decisions:

"I believe that I have a strong sense of personal awareness, knowing what I can and cannot do, as well as my strengths and weaknesses. I feel that I can plan and arrange my life on my own. Of course, my arrangements might seem unreliable to others, but that's okay – I know myself better. I prefer to plan my life, work, and personal affairs according to my own methods. This proactive arrangement and active choice are very important. Anxiety often stems from choices that are arranged by others, which are passive. Many times, conflicts, dilemmas, and struggles come from the arrangements others make for you. This *[subjective initiative – Z.H.]* is the fundamental source of inner peace and fulfillment for me." (N1, international business operational procurement agent)

The self-consciousness of the international business operational procurement agent (N1) is quite strong since he (N1) knows himself better and believes that he can make the most proper decisions of his life. From the perspective of the mainstream, the digital nomads' way of life seems "unrealistic" or "incorrect", yet this perceived "incorrect" lifestyle is the outcome of the digital nomad's autonomy, and they enjoy the freedom to direct their own lives while preferring to have more choices throughout their nomadic journey.

4.3.2 Chinese digital nomads value the decentralized and informal community at DNA

Chinese digital nomads tend to have different opinions towards the idea of "settle down" since mobility is a life course for them. Nonetheless, they will "settle" temporarily when they can relate to certain values and share with the community during their stays in certain destination. N1, an international business operational procurement agent states:

"I'm not very clear about the concept of settling down. Does it mean buying a house here and not leaving, or living here for 5-6 years without moving? What counts as settling

down? As for a place to reside long-term, I prefer places with a sense of humanity, warmth, and vitality. Scenic views are a plus, but not a necessity. At the moment, living in a place like DNA, with a community of people, is more appealing to me. Although you can integrate with the locals, sometimes you need the company of those who share the same values, whether they have moved to the countryside or migrated together. This could be a bonus for me. Currently, I can't think of a specific city to settle down in. There's a term called 'global citizen,' and although the places I've visited are far from that concept, I identify with it in my heart. To me, there's no significant barrier wherever I go. If I want, I can quickly make friends in Africa and not feel lonely. Anyway, I don't have a strong sense of discomfort anywhere." (N1, international business operational procurement agent)

The international business operational procurement agent (N1) stresses that having a community of people that share the same values is quite important to him, while anything else is regarded as a bonus in terms of a place. He (N1) brings up the idea of settle down, and he has mentioned the confusing part of it – "what exactly is regarded as settling down", while the international business operational procurement agent has identified himself with the term "global citizen." He (N1) believes that no matter where he goes, the sense of loneliness would not become an issue to him since he understands what he wants and will make the decisions that best suit his needs, such as staying in DNA. Similarly, N10, a sound engineer of an independent documentary filming crew had a new understanding towards the idea of "settling down":

"With the locals' sincere blessings and reluctance to let us go, the day of farewell eventually arrived (I also feel it's cheesy). After spending several days in the DNA village, our understanding of "settling down" seemed to have broadened. Often when we think of "settling down," we only associate it with the choices of a small family. The DNA community seems to provide another possibility – settling down can also be a choice of lifestyle. It's not just about finding a place to live, but about whether one can integrate with the people and things in the area and, at the same time, find a comfortable direction for their own work." (N10, sound engineer)

Though the international business operational procurement agent (N1) and the sound engineer (N10) have different understandings towards "settle down", they can relate to the shared values that derives from the same concept, such as the mobility lifestyle, and the integration with the people and the area. Chinese digital nomads have decided to come to DNA not because of the extrinsic benefits of DNA, such as sufficient and quality facilities or beautiful scenery, but rather because of the unique community sense of DNA, which is decentralization and informality. And when these shared values unite the Chinese digital nomads, the formation of community is manifested. From the observation of a designer (N9), she denotes:

> "I enjoy sitting with a group of people, listening to their conversations as they drink. That night's "decentralized chat" has been recorded in DNA's history. More than a dozen people sat together, each talking about their own things, as lively as a family reunion dinner during Chinese New Year. Sometimes, we also discuss more profound and serious topics, without the taboo of shallow conversations. All we have is the courage to not be afraid of being challenged and the respect for being understood and accepted." (N9, designer)

Decentralized chat or communication is like a "unique selling proposition" of DNA and is regarded as an intangible asset – the sense of community. The designer (N9) mentioned that the atmosphere of decentralized conversation reminded her of Chinese New Year as if they were having a family reunion dinner. This indicates that the close integration of digital nomads has developed beyond mutual respect and understanding as if they are like family to each other. However, it also means that community managers do not exist in DNA's community because every interaction is end-to-end. Also, the atmosphere of DNA is perceived by one of the content creators (N7) as: worry-free, relaxing, and inspiring:

"Of course, apart from coffee, it's the atmosphere of DNA that truly makes <Nomad X> feel like she's found the right answer - an atmosphere of relaxation, freedom, creativity, and inspiration. It's as if everyone has found their own interest points in DNA. Stress is being released, emotions are being let go, happiness is flowing, and smiles are spreading... Our eyes are no longer focused solely on work and "rat race", but also on the various people and things around us. Before we know it, a week has gone by. Looking back, each day at the same location was never repetitive, with people densely connected to one another, much like college life - lively, happy, carefree, and worry-free." (N7, content creators)

Even though the content creators' group (N7) has come to DNA to experience remote working, they (N7) genuinely find that living and working at DNA is a sense of relief compared to the "rat race" environment in the city. They (N7) reflect that their experience at DNA is like "college life," in which people are more connected with each other with fewer anxieties. For Chinese digital nomads, they appreciate the community that shares the same values as them. And it is the community sense of DNA, such as decentralization and informality, that enables the Chinese digital nomads to extend their stay at DNA.

4.3.3 Convenience of living and working & mental wellbeing at DNA

Chinese digital nomads report that most facilities and services are available at DNA, while living in Anji has its downside as well, as N1, the international business operational procurement agent, mentions:

"Here in DNA, delivery services are even more convenient than in Beijing; it only takes 15 steps to reach the delivery pickup point. The situation here is that things you can find in the city are not lacking, such as essential services like delivery, takeout, and grocery shopping through Meituan. Additionally, coffee shops, bakeries, fitness facilities, and entertainment facilities can all be found here. Moreover, we also have access to rural

elements that are not seen in the city. So, we can enjoy the advantages of both urban and rural life while avoiding their disadvantages. Here, we don't need to travel 15 kilometers to participate in activities because we can create many things ourselves. Some facilities, like the subway, are not necessary, and not having them doesn't cause inconvenience. The only drawback is the distance to large public transportation hubs." (N1, international business operational procurement agent)

Though DNA is located in a rural area—a County, the facilities and services are quite sufficient and easy to access, whereas the only disadvantage is its distance to large transportation hubs, such as airports and high-speed rail. Chinese digital nomads find that living at DNA makes little to no difference compared to living in the big cities, while there are additional bonuses to living in the countryside, including the friendly local people and nomads who share similar values and passions, as well as the beautiful scenery and fresh air. More importantly, Chinese digital nomads perceive their living and working experiences as beneficial to their mental wellbeing, as N2a, an entrepreneur in room vehicle renovation, states:

"I also value mental wellbeing in retirement, and I hope to continue living in communities like DNA, enjoying life with everyone until the end." (N2a, entrepreneur in room vehicle renovation)

The entrepreneur in room vehicle renovation (N2a) has mentioned the significance of mental wellness to her, and N2a has expressed that she wanted to stay at DNA as long as possible because she enjoys the company of such like-minded communities that DNA offers. The convenient facilities and services are the foundation that cover the various needs of Chinese digital nomads, and the overall experience of DNA benefits the mental wellbeing of Chinese digital nomads.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this research is to increase the understanding of digital nomads' motivations and experiences in China, especially within Anji's digital nomad community, by reviewing nineteen primary data sets of WOA contents as well as two secondary data sets of podcasts. To meet the purpose of the research, three research questions have guided the study: why Chinese digital nomads have decided to go to DNA; how the co-living and co-working experiences of Chinese digital nomads are; and what the co-living and co-working spaces' preferences of Chinese digital nomads are, as well as how to target them.

In this study, Chinese digital nomads tend to pursue intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic rewards. This is consistent with previous research, which claims that digital nomads aim to escape from extrinsic activities that limit their freedom and personal pursuits (Reichenberger, 2018). The motivations of Chinese digital nomads are concluded using Iso Ahola's model to answer the first research question (See Figure 7), while the DNA's eco system is presented to answer the second and third research questions (See Figure 8), and further elaborations can be found below:

Figure 7: Motivations of Chinese Digital Nomads (Adapted from Iso Ahola's Model)

Seeking Intrinsic Rewards

	Personal	Interpersonal
Personal Environment	**Novelty** (scenery & digital nomad's lifestyle)	**Socializing & Networking** (engage with other nomads)
Interpersonal Environment	**Escape from Reality** (anxiety caused by societal expectation & 9-9-6)	**Social Integration** (engage with locals)

(left vertical axis label: Escaping the Everyday Environment)

Figure 8: DNA's Eco-system
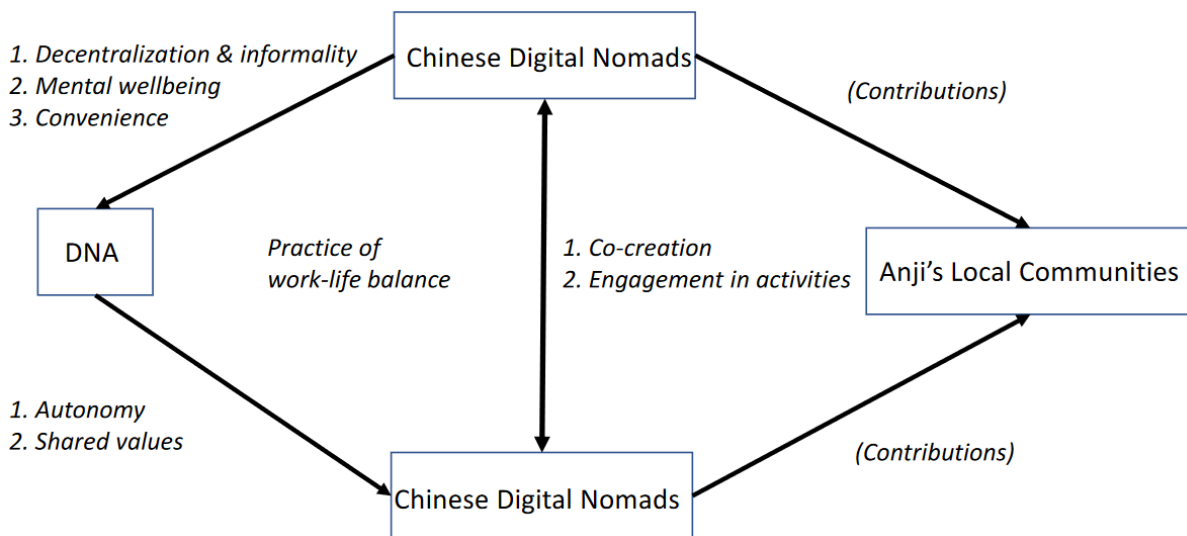
In DNA's eco-system (See Figure 8), Chinese digital nomads are attracted by the decentralized and informal community sense as well as the convenience that DNA offers, while they perceive DNA as a positive community that is beneficial to their mental health. DNA as co-living and co-working spaces is an ideal shared space for Chinese digital nomads to practice the work-life balance in which they can involve themselves in each other's professional and leisure activities

while co-creating their own culture. It is the DNA that unites the Chinese digital nomads and forms the DNA's community since they share the same values, while the Chinese digital nomad regains their autonomy in the environment of the DNA's community.

"Digital Nomad Anji" (DNA) is a shared space that consists of single co-living space (based on the classification by Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020) and independent co-working space (based on the classification by Bouncken et al., 2018). As a part of the "Anji hood" project, DNA and ACDC act as tools to attract creative talents from the big cities to Anji County, enhancing the destination image of Anji County. And attracting more tourist flows and investment funds can improve the economy of Anji County and therefore contribute to Anji's local communities.

Digital nomads are attracted by the presentation of DNA in social media, while showing great interest in practicing the digital nomadic lifestyle. This result is consistent with previous research that shows that novelty acts as the main motivations of digital nomadism (Hannonen, 2020; Hannonen et al., 2023).

Interestingly, Chinese digital nomads choose to integrate themselves with the local community, which is quite different than the finding from Thompson (2018), while supports Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021)'s finding that digital nomads experience the local culture. Intriguingly, feeling of isolation and loneliness (Hall et al., 2019; Orel, 2019; Thompson, 2019) is seldom visible in Chinese digital nomads since they have engaged with the activities that intrinsic interested to them, which leads to a closer connection to the other nomads. While the DNA as the co-living and co-working space indeed is beneficial to Chinese digital nomads' mental wellbeing, which is in line with previous research (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020).

Moreover, co-creation processes among Chinese digital nomads can be observed in DNA's community, while many of the Chinese digital nomads take the initiatives to modify the shared spaces to fit their needs. Like previous research on digital nomads (Cook, 2020; Green, 2020;

Mancinelli, 2020), the result of this study shows that Chinese digital nomads also found it hard to keep the balance due to the rich offerings of the activities Chinese digital nomads highly valued the autonomy in making their own decisions.

Regarding the freedom of the digital nomad lifestyle, Chinese digital nomads also valued the freedom of the digital nomad lifestyle as much as Western digital nomads. Chinese digital nomads tend to take initiative to make their own decisions even though they might be misunderstood by their families and friends, and they may find a lack of some facilities that support their lifestyle in the shared spaces, such as an indoor fitness area. From the DNA's community, it can be observed that Chinese digital nomads have renovated and created their own in-door fitness area that meets their needs.

Lastly, the decentralized community sense is what truly separates DNA from the other shared spaces because there are no community managers, while the interactions of nomads are end-to-end. This contradicts previous research claiming that community managers are essential and act as moderators in these shared spaces. (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020) Nonetheless, socializing and networking as a means of knowledge exchange are similar to the previous study (Hannonen et al., 2023).

5.2 Theoretical Conclusions

This thesis supports Iso Ahola's motivation model and uses it to explain the motivations of Chinese digital nomads. Moreover, the concepts of co-living and co-working spaces are expanded from a business point of view by understanding how co-living and co-working spaces can be integrated into the rural revitalization process. It is hard for DNA alone to attract the digital nomads to come to Anji County since DNA is a single actor that provides the co-living and

co-working spaces. With the support of the government and corporate funding, the "Anji hood" project became the foundation of ACDC, while DNA was derived later to better equip the organization with the vision and mission of Anji hood. From the study, we can observe the long-term orientation and the collectivism components of Chinese culture in a macro setting, while we can also observe the transformational outcome of traditional Chinese culture. For example, Chinese digital nomads tend to embrace uncertainty, reject the "top-down" power distance of the past, and become more self-indulgent.

In this study, Chinese digital nomads were attracted by the decentralized and informal community management style and practiced the work-life balance that the digital nomad lifestyle promotes. They strongly agree with these values that DNA presents and take initiative of their own so that they decide to come to DNA. Throughout their stays, they are highly engaged with each other, and even co-create their own culture. In such a stress-free, co-created, and decentralized community, Chinese digital nomads are content with the environment and willing to spare their efforts to involve themselves in rural revitalization. Although the outcome of rural revitalization is not yet foreseeable, DNA provides its own philosophy to tackle it. To date, the destination image of Anji has been greatly changed from the previous "small town famous for their white tea" to "the first digital nomads' community backed by the government and locals and ready to embrace the world".

5.3 Managerial Conclusions

The motivations of Chinese digital nomads and their preferences on co-living and co-working spaces can be practically used for the owners of these shared spaces. Based on the co-living and co-working experiences of Chinese digital nomads, the target group of Chinese digital nomads is those who start to commit to mobility and remote work and want to practice the digital nomad lifestyle.

Autonomy is found to be preferred by Chinese nomads, whereas the practice of autonomy depends on to what extent Chinese nomads take the initiatives in their decision-making. Though the owners of co-living and co-working spaces cannot offer the autonomy to Chinese nomads, they can target those Chinese nomads who start to commit to mobility and remote work while encouraging them to try the co-living and co-working spaces. Also, Chinese nomads prefer to stay in the community where they can relate themselves to the values of co-living and co-working space. Hence, it is recommended to visualize these values in the form of videos, brochures, or other visual materials so that they can be intrigued by this visual presentation. Moreover, giving Chinese digital nomads the permission and allowing them to modify the co-living and co-working space can be perceived as a unique selling proposition. Finally, it is advised to make use of the electronic word-of-the-mouth effect (eWOM) to promote co-living and co-working space since this is more convincible compared to paid advertisement. For instance, the owners of the co-living and co-working space can invite the nomads who are currently in stays while leaving the space for creativity.

5.4 Critical Evaluation of the Research

The credibility of the study can be guaranteed since the collected data are all under the "#DigitalNomadsTakeOverProgramme", and these contents were created by the Chinese digital nomads themselves, while they were given the autonomy and freedom to express their authentic experiences in DNA. The transferability of the study is questionable since this is the first study that focused on the Chinese nomads, and particularly in DNA's community. Regarding the theoretical generalization, this study adapts the social psychologocal model of tourism motivation by Iso-Ahola (1982). About the dependability, findings of the study can be reproducible. The confirmability of the study can be improved by using other methods, such as interviews with nomads since more potential weaknesses and disadvantages of DNA as a co-living and co-working space are yet to be uncovered.

5.5 Suggestions for the future research

Future research can focus on the turnover of Chinese nomads who have visited DNA and their subsequent destinations, while also potentially conducting a long-term ethnographic study at DNA. Also, what iteration occurred to the first Chinese digital nomads' community as well as its co-living and co-working spaces in Anji remains unclear, and what the lifespan of co-living and co-working spaces is can be studied further.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Analysis log

Meaning unit	Condensed meaning unit	Interpretation	Sub-themes	Themes
"I particularly wanted to try a different way of living. Before [*in Beijing – Z.H.*], I experienced long commutes and it was extremely crowded, which sometimes made me a little irritable. What probably struck me the most initially was seeing the tea plants covering the mountains, and then people sitting together inside, some working and some engaging in recreational activities. I found this place intriguing, so I came here eventually." (N1)	Tired of the overcrowded commute system in the big city Intrigued by the nature and the community element of DNA	Digital nomads are intrinsically intrigued by the presented nomadic lifestyle of DNA and want to experience on their own. Though the physical environment of Anji is attracted to these nomads, the craving for deep connections with other people remains to be the primary drive.	• Novelty • Nature • Community of Nomads • Socializing & Networking • Social integration • Escapism	Motivation
"We are not alone in the countryside. In this rural environment, we are a group of city people from various industries, with a lot of information being exchanged." (N1)	Establishing deep connections with other nomads	Some nomads suffer from anxiety due to work and come to DNA for relaxation.		
"As DNA mentioned, if you don't stay for at least seven days, it's difficult to establish many connections. So, I hope	Wanting to establish connections and integrate			

to develop deeper relationships with locals, which can lead to a unique and different experience." (N1)	with the local communities			
"And at that time, she had stopped working due to physical and mental exhaustion, and after careful consideration, she decided to rest her mind in DNA." (N15)	Escape from exhaustion due to work			
"More people constantly wanted to join or inquire about related matters. I also felt the enthusiasm exchanged due to my passion. The original plan was for me to independently create some pottery works using local materials and documents and display the entire process. Later, it evolved a way of interacting with my fellow DNA residents: I put out all the collected clay and invited everyone to create together." (N3)	Other nomads join in pottery-making event	Digital nomads are granted the freedom to create their own things in the co-living and co-working spaces, such as: the fitness area, the exhibition. It can be observed that digital nomads are actively engaged in many kinds of activities out of intrinsic interest though there might be a period of adjustment since too many activities were held at DNA.	• Co-creation • Engaging in activities • Practicing work-life balance	Co-living and Co-working Experience at DNA
"During this time, we considered doing a transparent exhibition setup in a public environment, which was challenging, as people working, chatting, and listening to music were mutually constrained, with no clear boundaries between	Holding an exhibition in the co-living and co-working spaces			

public and private spaces." (N4)				
"One day, he (the boss) threw us a link and said, 'This place looks nice. How about we go for a team-building week?'" (N7)	Team building			
"We've accepted the fact that we have to work at DNA, but we still want to make our work as interesting as possible. Frequently switching our work environment is the last stubbornness of creative workers." (N7)	Work in anywhere at DNA			
"With financial support from K, the temporary manpower of N and S, and the mending and cutting skills of C, a decent fitness area was finally born after many twists and turns." (N8)	Renovate the fitness area with nomads			
At first, I thought I could make up for it by working at night, but I found that there were even more activities at night. So, during that period (less than a month), I was in an imbalanced state between work and leisure. (N1)	Work-life balance can be an issue at the beginning.			
"I prefer to plan my life, work, and personal affairs according to my own methods. This proactive arrangement and active choice are very important.	Prefer to have choices and plan his life	Digital nomads prefer to have the autonomy in making decisions on their own.	• Autonomy • Shared values • Decentralized and informal	Preference of Chinese Digital Nomads

Anxiety often stems from choices that are arranged by others, which are passive. Many times, conflicts, dilemmas, and struggles come from the arrangements others make for you. This subjective initiative is the fundamental source of inner peace and fulfillment for me." (N1)		Also, it is crucial to digital nomads for being surrounded by people who share the same values. Digital nomads live a convenient life at DNA, and they can basically do everything within 15 steps, while the facilities are quite sufficient. Besides, nomads at DNA are given access to rural elements, such as: beautiful landscapes, friendly people. Other than that, decentralized communication and mental wellbeing are valued by digital nomads.	community sense • Convenience of living and working • Mental wellbeing	
"At the moment, living in a place like DNA, with a community of people, is more appealing to me. Although you can integrate with the locals, sometimes you need the company of those who share the same values, whether they have moved to the countryside or migrated together. This could be a bonus for me." (N1)	Needing of the people who share the same values in the journey			
"I enjoy sitting with a group of people, listening to their conversations as they drink. That night's "decentralized chat" has been recorded in DNA's history. More than a dozen people sat together, each talking about their own things, as lively as a family reunion dinner during Chinese New Year." (N9) "Of course, apart from coffee, it's the atmosphere of DNA that truly makes Y feel like	"Decentralized communication" occurs quite often, which is one of the most engaging activities in DNA, while the atmosphere of DNA is			

she's found the right answer - an atmosphere of relaxing, freedom, creativity, and inspiration." (N7)	perceived as stress-free			
"Here in DNA, delivery services are even more convenient than in Beijing; it only takes 15 steps to reach the delivery pickup point. The situation here is that things you can find in the city are not lacking, such as essential services like delivery, takeout, and grocery shopping through Meituan. Additionally, coffee shops, bakeries, fitness facilities, and entertainment facilities can all be found here. Moreover, we also have access to rural elements that are not seen in the city. So, we can enjoy the advantages of both urban and rural life while avoiding their disadvantages. (N1)	Life at DNA is as convenient as living in the city, while there are rural elements that city lacks			
"I also value mental wellbeing in retirement, and I hope to continue living in communities like DNA, enjoying life with everyone until the end." (N2a)	The experience of living at DNA is delightful and perceived beneficial to nomads' mental wellbeing.			

Appendix 2. List of original citations in Chinese.

Citation 1

特别想换一个活法，以前（在北京）也经历过长时间的通勤，也特别拥挤，有时候也会有一点点暴躁。通过朋友的朋友圈，有看到（白茶原）这边，持续发了几次，我觉得有点意思。可能当初比较震撼到我的是看到那种满山的茶园，然后看到大家在里面坐在一起，有办公的，也有娱乐活动。我觉得这地方有点意思，所以后来我就来到这儿了。(N1)

"I particularly wanted to try a different way of living. Before [*in Beijing – Z.H.*], I experienced long commutes and it was extremely crowded, which sometimes made me a little irritable. Through a friend's social media, I saw (Anji hood) this place several times, and I found it interesting. What probably struck me the most initially was seeing the tea plants covering the mountains, and then people sitting together inside, some working and some engaging in recreational activities. I found this place intriguing, so I came here eventually." (N1)

Citation 2

在朋友处得知了安吉 DNA 数字游民的内测活动，地点又处茶山环绕之间，也许我可以因地制宜地做些东西。(N3)

I heard about the closed test of DNA from a friend, while the location is surrounded by tea mountain, maybe I can create some pottery related to Anji. (N3)

Citation 3

去年秋天，听大理的朋友说起到安吉考察，后来也知道这儿建立了数字游民公社，看到内测的消息便申请过来呆一段时间。(N4)

Last fall, I heard from friends in Dali about their visit to Anji for an inspection. Later, I learned that a digital nomad commune had been established here. When I saw the news about the closed beta, I applied to come and stay for a while. (N4)

Citation 4

要问我们是来干嘛的？说真的，挺难用一句话说清的。一个最直观的感受是，大家怎么有这么多话题？每日每夜，灵感不止。(N16)

It's quite hard to explain "why we are here" in a single sentence, while one of the most intuitive feelings is: how can everyone has so many topics to discuss, as if the inspiration never ceases day and night. (N16)

Citation 5

三周前，我们搬来了果汁机，带来了《果篓小刊》、杯子灯、茶具，但并没有想好可以做点什么，只是单纯觉得，要离山野近一些，离有趣的人近一点，剩下的就交给未知和生活吧。三周后，我们不仅做了6，7 款灵感来自大家和白茶原的果酱，还打从脚底，喜欢上了这里。(N16)

Three weeks ago, we brought a juicer, magazines, cup lamps, and tea sets, but we didn't have a clear idea of what to do. We simply felt that we wanted to be closer to nature and interesting people and let the unknown and life take care of the rest. Three weeks later, not only have we made 6 or 7 kinds of jams inspired by everyone and "Anji hood", but we have also fallen in love with this place from the bottom of our hearts. (N16)

Citation 6

要么就是晚上有局，喝酒聊聊天。喝酒倒不是主要的，主要是通过机缘吧，跟大家深入了解一下，获取一下信息。这是刚刚说的'我们不是自己一个人下了乡。而是在乡下这个环境下，是一群城市生活的人，而且是来自各行各业的人，里面有很多信息在交融'，所以我对酒局也好，聚会也好，大家相互可以学习到一些东西。但是说来说去还是比较渴望有人能够沟通，就，认真地聊天这种，而不是仅仅吃吃

喝喝这种，单纯的吃喝我没有太大的兴趣，所以对我来讲，我是需要（精神交流）的。因为一来社交可以缓解我们人类消极的情绪，二来我觉得能够以一种更高效的方式去获得信息。(N1)

Sometimes there are evening gatherings to drink and chat. Drinking is not the main point, but mainly to deepen our understanding with others and obtain information through opportunities. As I mentioned earlier, 'we are not alone in the countryside. In this rural environment, we are a group of city people from various industries, with a lot of information being exchanged.' So, whether it's drinking gatherings or parties, we can all learn something from each other.... However, deep down, I still desire communication, like having serious conversations, rather than just eating and drinking. I don't have much interest in purely eating and drinking, so for me, I do need it (deep conversations). Firstly, socializing can alleviate negative emotions in humans, and secondly, I think it is a more efficient way to obtain information. (N1)

Citation 7

从通勤和做饭等琐事中省出来的时间被愉快地用到了闲聊上。可别小看闲聊，这正是社区的催化剂：埋头做事的只能是个体，只有开始交流了，群体才质变成为社区。但一旦想开启一段聊天，那也再简单不过了。对个眼神，旁边的空位一坐，聊吧！晚饭后的闲聊（严重起来就变成了通宵）逐步演变成了一项仪式：只要在屋檐下的大桌子上出现了一只切成两半的西瓜，十分钟内人们就会像追着甜味来的蚂蚁一样自发的围过来，随到随聊，进出自由。(N12)

The time saved from daily chores like commuting and cooking has been happily spent on casual conversations. Don't underestimate the power of these chats, as they serve as a catalyst for the community: while individuals can focus on their work, it's only when they start to communicate that the group transforms into a true community. But once you want to start a conversation, it couldn't be simpler. Just make eye contact, sit down next to an empty seat, and chat! Casual conversations after dinner (which can turn into all-nighters if they get serious) have gradually become a ritual: as soon as a watermelon is cut in half and placed on the big table under the eaves, people will spontaneously gather around it within ten minutes, like ants attracted to the sweetness. They can come and go as they please, joining and leaving the conversation freely. (N12)

Citation 8

DNA 的通宵是常有的事情。和小伙伴们喝酒谈天到天亮，从皓月当空熬到了太阳升起，我们会爬上天台，看着紫红色的朝霞印染整个天空。（N17）

Pulling all-nighters is a common thing at DNA. Chatting and drinking with friends until the break of dawn, we would stay up from the bright moonlight to the sunrise. Then, we would climb to the rooftop to watch the purple-red hues of the morning glow paint the entire sky. (N17)

Citation 9

我渴望更日常、更高频、更有深度和价值的互动与交流。于是我来到了 DNA。(N19)

I yearn for more daily, frequent, deeper, and valuable interactions communication. That's why I came to DNA. (N19)

Citation 10

换个地方对我来说是有意义的，对我来说，我是不喜欢停停走走的，快速打卡我一向都不喜欢，比如去三天两天，没太大的意思，除非是为了工作。如果是生活旅行的话，我会比较排斥，我倒是希望去旅居，多住一段时间，跟当地有一些联系。就像 DNA 说，你来了以后不住个 7 天，你很难有太多联系，所以我是希望和本地有一部分的联系，深一点的联系，它带给人的一种感觉，是很不一样的。（N1）

Changing locations is meaningful to me. Personally, I don't like stopping and going, and I've never been fond of quick check-ins. For example, going somewhere for just two or three days doesn't hold much appeal, unless it's for work. If it's for leisure travel, I'd be more resistant to the idea. Instead, I prefer to stay in a place for an extended period, building connections with the local community. As DNA mentioned, if you don't stay for at least seven days, it's difficult to establish many connections. So, I hope to develop deeper relationships with locals, which can lead to a unique and different experience. (N1)

Citation 11

在我看来，DNA 是位于浙江省湖州市安吉县溪龙乡溪龙村的一处"特区"，这里的人群属性、工作特征、生活方式与本地截然不同。DNA 出现半年后，本地乡亲还弄不太明白院子里这些人是干什么的，广大 DNAer 也对围墙外的本地生活知之甚少（我猜的）。(N6)

In my view, DNA is a "special zone" located in Xilong Village, Xilong Township, Anji County, Huzhou City, Zhejiang Province. The people, work characteristics, and lifestyle here are distinctly different from the local area. Half a year after the emergence of DNA, the local villagers still don't quite understand what these people in the courtyard do, and the majority of DNAers know very little about the local life outside the walls (I'm guessing). (N6)

Citation 12

我是 N11，来 DNA7 个多月，驻留时间几乎与 DNA 同龄。从最初冬季赖床到 8 点多，到夏季可以 5 点爬起来，我终于在成为溪龙新村民半年之后恢复了早起的新技能，并时不时带领"早起修仙组"一起晨跑。早起的一大好处就是感觉一天过得特别长，有种"赚到"的满足感。晨跑会让我慢速经过村庄，而且经常变换和开发新路线，大大增加了我这个"新村民"和当地村民交流的机会。最近在画"白茶原"手帐，风物册里，"数字游民"作为溪龙乡"新物种"而出现。的确，在村子里，我们这些"新物种"，时常被村民围观。这看起来像个玩笑，但数字游民确实是白茶原的"新物种"。此刻，它们正在白茶原实践工作，学习，旅行和度假同时发生的全新生活形态。(N11)

I am N11, and I've been at "DNA" for over 7 months, with my residency almost the same age as "DNA" itself. From initially staying in bed until past 8 am in winter to being able to get up at 5 am in summer, I finally regained the skill of waking up early after becoming a new resident of Xilong Village for half a year, and occasionally led the "Early Rising Cultivation Group" for morning runs. One of the great benefits of waking up early is that the day feels exceptionally long, giving a sense of satisfaction as if you've "earned" something. Morning runs allow me to slowly pass through the village, and I often change and develop new routes, greatly increasing the chances for me, as a "new villager," to interact with local villagers. Recently, I've been working on the "Anji hood" journal, in which "digital nomads" appear as a "new species" in Xilong Township. Indeed, in the village, we "new species" are often surrounded by curious villagers. It may seem like a joke, but digital nomads truly are a "new species" in "Anji hood". At this moment, they are

practicing a completely new lifestyle in Anji hood, where work, learning, travel, and vacation are happening simultaneously. (N11)

Citation 13

今年是我自由职业的第五年。自由职业虽然被冠以自由，但这也表示每天的 24 小时里没有固定的工作和休息的时间。男朋友也是在宅职业，我们的家既是休息站又是工作室，卧室到工作间就是我们每天的两点一线。生活和工作搅在一起，如果不善于时间规划或者严重拖延，那真是一场灾难的雷雨云。如期而至的截稿日期记录着一年又一年，我们就像生活在一个小小的仓鼠球中，不停地蹬轮子，以此来获得生存物料。接着靠网络世界的欢愉麻痹大脑继续疯狂踩轮，信息茧房和虚拟社交构成仓鼠球最坚固的堡垒。就像每个生活在城市中忙碌的人一样，窗外的景色四季流转，却不再抬头去看星空和鸟鸣。直到 6 月的一个契机，看到了 DNA 的内测活动，此时我已经由于身心疲惫而叫停了工作，于是考虑再三投出了邮件。(N15)

This marks the fifth year of my freelancing career. Although freelancing is often associated with freedom, it also means that there are no fixed working and resting hours within the 24-hour day. My boyfriend also works from home, and our house serves as both a resting place and a workspace. Our daily routine consists of moving between the bedroom and the workspace. When work and life become intertwined, if you're not good at time management or tend to procrastinate, it can be like a looming storm cloud of disaster. Year after year, deadlines after deadlines, and we feel like we're living in a tiny hamster ball, constantly running on a wheel to earn our living. We then numb our minds with the pleasures of the online world and keep spinning the wheel frantically. The information cocoon and virtual social interactions form the strongest fortress of this hamster ball. Like every busy person living in a city, the view outside the window changes with the seasons, but we no longer take the time to look up at the starry sky or listen to the birds singing. It wasn't until an opportunity in June, when I saw DNA's beta testing event, that I reconsidered my situation. At that point, I had already stopped working due to physical and mental exhaustion, so I carefully weighed my options before sending an email to participate. (N15)

Citation 14

我是 N18，前算法工程师，后来辗转去了一家 Remote Work 的咨询公司拉开了远程工作的序幕，现在是一枚独立全栈开发程序员。近来各大媒体的宣传中，数字游民的生活看起来可谓自由恣意——不用通勤，四处旅居，地理套利…但是，他们也许不知道，这意味着在工作时被要求：钉钉随叫随到，微信即时响应 —— 10 分钟没回复领导就疯了，生活工作混杂不清，完全失去自主时间……我想说，不管是被迫还是主动实施远程办公的公司，一定要给员工充分的信任，以结果为导向而非盯着他们屁股坐在屏幕前的过程。(N18)

My name is N18, a former algorithm engineer, and I transferred to a consulting company later, which brought me to the world of remote working. Now I am an independent full-stack developer. Recently, the lifestyle of digital nomads is being promoted by various media, claiming that you don't need to commute, and you can travel all the time while using the geographical arbitrage… However, they might not know it [*being a digital nomad – Z.H.*] means to be always demanded: being available 24/7 whenever the boss called - if I don't reply to my boss within ten minutes, my boss will go crazy, and the boundary of work and life become vague, while I lose the autonomy in managing my time… I want to point out whether it is companies being forced or voluntarily implementing remote work, they could have given employees full trust and focus on results rather than the process of them sitting in front of the screen. (N18)

Citation 15

因为你在一个环境下，在一个规则下，要么你就遵循这个规则，要么我就跳出来，我不跟你玩，或者我自己创立一套规则体系，因为大部分人跳不出来的，没有魄力或者没有能力也好，或者没有这种'我能跳出来'的意愿或愿景。大家是被各种 pua。就好像我从小，读书是不是唯一的出路，高考是不是唯一的出路，然后亲密关系-结婚是唯一的一个出路，生小孩子是唯一的出路，不生小孩的 - 不孝有三 无后为大等等等等都要讲究绝对的正确，否则你就非主流，你就不正确，大家会质疑或谴责。（N1）

When you are in a particular environment or under a specific set of rules, you either follow the rules or step out and refuse to play by them. Alternatively, you can create your own set of rules. Most people cannot break free due to lack of courage, ability, or willingness to envision

themselves outside the norm. People are influenced by various societal expectations, such as whether studying is the only way out, whether taking the college entrance exam is the only path, whether intimate relationships and marriage are the only ways to happiness, or whether having children is the only fulfillment in life. People are expected to strictly adhere to these norms, or else they are deemed non-mainstream, incorrect, and face doubt or condemnation. (N1)

Citation 16

工作一年后离开上海，摁下暂停键来 DNA 休息。(N21)

After working for a year, I left Shanghai and pressed the pause button to rest at DNA. (N21)

Citation 17

我给自己制定了两项主要计划：在安吉驻地介绍与制作陶瓷。第一件事情很快完成了，一份 PPT，一场演说，迅速拉近了我与大家的距离。而之后 "从零开始在陌生的场所做陶" 的计划，更是激起了驻地伙伴们的兴趣。陶瓷自身的确有其魅力所在。从发现合适的矿物开始，到选料、炼泥、制作、烧成。不断有人想要加入或者咨询相关事务。我也感受到因我的热爱而交换到的热情。原本的计划是我用本地材料独立制作一些作品，并且记录和展示整个过程。后来变成了和驻地伙伴相互交流的一种方式：我放出收集的所有粘土，邀请大家一同制作。（N3）

I set two main goals for myself: introducing and making pottery in Anji. The first task was quickly completed with a PowerPoint presentation and a speech, which rapidly bridged the distance between me and everyone else. The subsequent plan to *"start making pottery from scratch in an unfamiliar place"* sparked great interest among my fellow residents. Pottery itself indeed has its unique charm. From discovering suitable minerals, selecting materials, refining clay, making, and firing, more people constantly wanted to join or inquire about related matters. I also felt the enthusiasm exchanged due to my passion. The original plan was for me to independently create some pottery works using local materials and documents and display the entire process. Later, it evolved into a way of interacting with my fellow DNA residents: I took out all the collected clay and invited everyone to create together. (N3)

Citation 18

期间，我们考虑到在公共环境下做一次透明的布展，具有挑战性，办公、聊天、听歌的人相互制约，眼下公共和私人没有界限。(N4)

During this time, we considered doing a transparent exhibition setup in a public environment, which was challenging, as people working, chatting, and listening to music were mutually constrained, with no clear boundaries between public and private spaces. (N4)

Citation 19

战绳两根变 3 根，又变 5 根。一股运动之风正在荡涤 DNA。风生水起，只可惜灰太大~ 当初的营造商怎么也没想到，餐厅的水泥地面有一天会被粗大的麻绳反复捶打，结果就是皮开肉绽尘土飞扬，以至于必须不停地洒水降尘。去 ACDC 施工现场凑热闹，在图书馆建筑废料里捡到了一卷装修保护布。健身区总算短暂告别了尘土。环境改善了，姑娘们笑了。只可惜好景不长，防护布经不起两天的捶打就四分五裂，灰飞烟灭。健身房继续尘土飞扬，显然只有专业的避震橡胶地板才是正道。在 K 的财政支持下，在临时壮丁 N 和 S 同学的勠力配合下，在霸道总裁 C 的修补裁剪下，一个现代化健身区几经波折终于诞生。(N8)

From time to time, the numbers of the battle ropes increased from two to three, and then to five. A wave of fitness enthusiasm was sweeping through DNA, but unfortunately, the dust was overwhelming. The original builders [*of DNA – Z.H.]* never imagined that one day the cement floor of the dining hall would be repeatedly pounded by thick battle ropes. As a result, the floor cracked, and dust filled the air, making it necessary to constantly sprinkle water to reduce dust. After visiting the ACDC construction site, they found a roll of protective cloth from the library's construction waste. The fitness area finally enjoyed a brief respite from the dust. With the improved environment, the girls were smiling. Unfortunately, the protective cloth didn't last long since it could not withstand the wear and tear of just a few days and fell apart. The gym continued to be dusty, and it became clear that only professional shock-absorbing rubber flooring would work in the long term. With financial support from <Nomad K>, the temporary

manpower of <Nomad N> and <Nomad S>, and the mending and cutting skills of <Nomad C>, a decent fitness area was finally born after many twists and turns. (N8, fitness enthusiast)

Citation 20

在 DNA 上班这件事我们已经认命，但我们还是想上班尽可能地有意思一些，频繁地切换工作环境，也是创意工作者最后的倔强。(N7)

We've accepted the fact that we have to work at DNA, but we still want to make our work as interesting as possible. Frequently switching our work environment is the last stubbornness of creative workers. (N7)

Citation 21

我记得有段时间，我的工作时间有点少，所以我会刻意地避开一些人群，所以当时，那段时间我的工位都是很野的，有时候在小白屋的树下，有时候在田野里，反正找到任何地方抱着电脑去就好了。所以我觉得要用好碎片时间。不代表大家看到的（我参加各种活动，哪来的时间去工作）是这样的，因为大家看到的，往往是别人想让我们看到的。环境会对人产生很大的影响，所以大家要合理地看待'新鲜感'。"可能需要找一个地方避开人群来独处，并处理一些事情。刚来的时候需要很强的自制力，不然会被别人带偏或者把别人带偏。(N1)

I remember there was a period when my working hours were a bit short, so I would deliberately avoid some crowds. At that time, my workstation was very wild, sometimes under the tree in the white hut, sometimes in the fields, anyway, just find any place to hold my computer and go. So, I think it's important to make good use of fragmented time. The environment can have a significant effect on people, so everyone should take a reasonable view of the 'novelty'." (N1) He also added that self-discipline is strongly needed when first arrive at DNA, otherwise, nomads would procrastinate and get no work done. (N1)

Citation 22

跳槽伊始，我也不太适应远程的办公节奏，具体表现为：开始惧怕贴脸即时沟通：当钉钉的夺命视频会议 call 过来时，就会开始焦虑 —— 自己写的代码是不是有线上 bug？出 P0 事故了吗为啥毫无征兆地就打来？变得拖延：之前坐在工位上能冥思苦想的问题，在家里便开始有序拖延。做饭的时间成本：虽说不用通勤，但做饭又变成了心智负担很重的一个事：买菜，洗碗，洗锅...一不小心 2 个小时就溜走了。工作时长拉长，工作效率却很低...天哪这完全不是我想要的远程生活啊！和同事讨论后，我发现他们也会有类似困扰... 这说明"并不是所有人都适合如此自由和需要自律的生活方式。"所以，在踌躇满志地辞职成为 Nomad 之前，不妨问自己两个问题：能否找到一个认可游牧文化、鼓励员工四处旅居的远程公司？如果 work for myself，能否超高效率、目标明确地完成沟通和既定工作？(N18)

At the beginning of my job transition, I also had a hard time adapting to the remote working rhythm - Starting to fear face-to-face instant communication: When a life-or-death video conference call comes in on DingTalk, I start to feel anxious - did I write code with bugs in it? Did I cause a P0 incident? Why is there no warning before the call? Becoming more procrastinating: Previously, when I was at my desk, I could ponder and think deeply about problems, but at home, I began to procrastinate more systematically. The time cost of cooking: Although there is no need to commute, cooking has become a significant mental burden: grocery shopping, washing dishes, washing pots... Before you know it, two hours have slipped away. Longer working hours but lower work efficiency... My goodness, this is not the remote life I wanted at all! After discussing with colleagues, I found that they also had similar problems... This means "not everyone is suited for such a free and self-disciplined lifestyle." So, before quitting your job with confidence to become a Nomad, consider asking yourself two questions: Can I find a remote company that embraces nomadic culture and encourages employees to travel and live in different places? If I work for myself, can I complete communication and established tasks with high efficiency and clear objectives? (N18)

Citation 23

很多妈妈不理解的地方，不一定是矛盾。我妈从五年前到现在，一直以为自己是一个无业游民，游手好闲的状态，也不知道我的工作是在干什么。哪怕自己已经知道我自己在经营自己的事业，最近疫情你们是不是没有生意呀？是不是闲着没事干呀？父母知道我的性格，阻止不了我。这些年我们升级房车居住空间，我妈从不理解到逐渐释然——住房车也能舒服。但她还是觉得我在闹着玩儿。我爸倒慢慢开始支持，他觉得我们有可持续的收入，是有逻辑的正经事。只是他们不会为这些感到骄傲。家里很多医生，

在知识分子眼中「经商」并不是最好的出路。放弃互联网大厂的高收入和晋升机会，在我妈眼里就是极其不理智。我多次强调，在 DNA 生活很开心自在，也没什么用。(N2a)

There are many things my mother doesn't understand, but they are not necessarily conflicts. From five years ago until now, my mother has always thought I am unemployed, not knowing what I am doing for work. Even though she knows I am running my own business, she still asks if we have no business during the recent pandemic or if we are just idling around. My parents know my personality and can't stop me. Over the years, we've upgraded our room vehicle living space, and my mother has gradually come to terms with the fact that living in a room vehicle can be comfortable. But she still thinks I'm just fooling around. My father, on the other hand, has slowly started to support me, as he believes we have a sustainable income and are doing something logical and serious. However, they won't feel proud of these things. There are many doctors in my family, and in the eyes of intellectuals, 'doing business' is not the best path. In my mother's view, it's extremely unwise to give up high income and promotion opportunities at a major internet company. Emphasizing that I am happy and at ease living in DNA doesn't help much. (N2a)

Citation 24

我一直在试图和她 （我妈）说，我（当前的工作）也是在上班。然后这三四年她都试图说服我让我把车卖了，然后回家。所以没有办法说服她，只能说到了哪里给家里报平安。（她）开始还会问我：'欸，今天卖了多少杯咖啡？'然后很多时候，（我）都在玩，没有办法说每天具体卖了多少杯咖啡，因为（咖啡车）只在有活动的时候营业嘛。然后她会说：'哎，你是不是又睡到中午，把早午饭都省了，没钱吃饭啊？'这样子（还是很担心）的一种状态。我妈觉得辞职搞咖啡车就是不务正业。她不了解数字游民这些新型职业，她只是担心居无定所的女儿。我们常通话，偶尔视频展示大家工作生活的场景，她也放心了很多。我改变不了她，她也改变不了我。我一遍又一遍强调：我的人生，我负责。（N2b）

I've always been trying to tell her [*my mom – Z.H.*] that I [*current work – Z.H.*] am working too. And for the past three or four years, she's been trying to persuade me to sell the truck and go home. So, I couldn't convince her, I can only report to my family when I get to a new place. She would start asking me, 'Hey, how many cups of coffee did you sell today?' Most of the time, I'm having

fun and can't really say how many cups of coffee I sell every day, because the coffee truck only operates during events. Then she would say, 'Oh, did you sleep until noon again, skipping breakfast and lunch, because you have no money for food?' She's still in a worried state. My mom thinks quitting my job to run a coffee truck is not taking life seriously. She doesn't understand digital nomads and these new types of occupations; she's just worried about her daughter with no permanent residence. We often talk on the phone and occasionally video chat to show each other our work and life situations, and she's become much more reassured. I can't change her, and she can't change me. I emphasize time and time again: It's my life, and I'm responsible for it. (N2b)

Citation 25

我和父母的冲突也比较少吧，我一开始也没有直接和她们说我是辞掉工作，然后做自由职业。后来，我也会和他们说：'我也会自己接单'。他们也会担忧我赚的钱是不是没有在公司的时候多，或者是养自己的问题。后来我和他们说，我在公司上班其实也差不多，而且在此之外也比较自由的话，他们其实也挺支持我的，因为可以一边旅游一边赚钱 - 我有的时候会带着自己的电脑去玩，然后四处办公。他们有时候在亲朋好友面前也会觉得，我很厉害。(N2c)

I have relatively fewer conflicts with my parents. At first, I didn't directly tell them that I quit my job to become a freelancer. Later, I told them, 'I can also take orders on my own.' They would worry about whether I could make as much money as I did when I was working for a company, or if I could support myself. After I explained to them that my income was actually similar to when I was working for a company and that I had more freedom, they were quite supportive. They liked the idea that I could travel and make money at the same time - sometimes, I would bring my laptop and work from different places. They even felt proud of me in front of their friends and relatives. (N2c)

Citation 26

这次来安吉，是我第一次在乡村生活这么久，新鲜感逐渐退去之后，依然感到舒适。我想关键在于，这是一次主动性的选择，也是一个自然的选择。(N6)

This trip to Anji marks the first time I've lived in the countryside for such an extended period. Even after the novelty has faded, I still feel comfortable. I think the key lies in the fact that this is a proactive choice, as well as a natural one. (N6)

Citation 27

DNA 其实有宽敞明亮、设备齐全的厨房，然而能一周不用做饭，吃的还都是熟悉的味道，对被迫在家做了两个月饭、打开冰箱就垂头丧气的我意义重大：我愿意做饭，也愿意外食，我更愿意有所选择。(N12)

DNA actually has a spacious, well-equipped kitchen, but being able to avoid cooking for a week and still enjoy familiar tastes is significant for me, who has been forced to cook at home for two months and feels down whenever I open the fridge: I'm willing to cook and eat out, but I prefer to have choices. (N12)

Citation 28

我觉得我自己还算是拥有比较强烈的个人认知吧，我知道自己能做什么，不能做什么，我知道自己的缺点和优势。我觉得我能够自己规划和安排我自己。当然我的安排在别人看来可能是不靠谱的，但没关系啊，我更了解我自己啊。我更希望按照自己的方式去规划自己的人生，工作，生活，这个主动性的安排，主动性的选择，是很重要的。很多时候，焦虑来源于选择，是别人给你安排的。是被动的。所以很多时候的矛盾，纠结，挣扎，很多时候是来自于别人给你的安排。这（主观能动性）是我内心觉得安宁和充实的根本来源。(N1)

I believe that I have a strong sense of personal awareness, knowing what I can and cannot do, as well as my strengths and weaknesses. I feel that I can plan and arrange my life on my own. Of course, my arrangements might seem unreliable to others, but that's okay – I know myself better. I prefer to plan my life, work, and personal affairs according to my own methods. This proactive arrangement and active choice are very important. Anxiety often stems from choices that are arranged by others, which are passive. Many times, conflicts, dilemmas, and struggles come from the arrangements others make for you. This *[subjective initiative – Z.H.]* is the fundamental source of inner peace and fulfillment for me." (N1)

Citation 29

我对定居这个概念不是很清楚，我是在这边买一个房子不走，还是生活在这边 5-6 年不走，什么算定居？但是常住的地方，我比较喜欢有人情味儿的地方，有烟火气的地方，风景有一点当然更好，没有也不是特别重要，目前来讲，在 DNA 这样的地方，一群人这样的，你有一个社群。这对我来讲会更有吸引力，因为虽然你可以和本地人融合。但是有时候你需要，我们抱团下乡的人也好，抱团迁徙的人也好。因为我们有共同的价值观在里面，所以有这样的东西，可能是加分项。目前我想不到在哪个城市定居下来，有个词叫'世界公民'，虽然我走过的地方离这个词还差很远，但我的内心对这个词是有认同的。因为对我来讲，在哪里都没有很大的隔阂，如果我想，我在非洲也可以快速地认识几个人，让我自己觉得不是很孤单。反正我在哪里都没有这种强烈的不适感吧。(N1)

I'm not very clear about the concept of settling down. Does it mean buying a house here and not leaving, or living here for 5-6 years without moving? What counts as settling down? As for a place to reside long-term, I prefer places with a sense of humanity, warmth, and vitality. Scenic views are a plus, but not a necessity. At the moment, living in a place like DNA, with a community of people, is more appealing to me. Although you can integrate with the locals, sometimes you need the company of those who share the same values, whether they have moved to the countryside or migrated together. This could be a bonus for me. Currently, I can't think of a specific city to settle down in. There's a term called 'global citizen,' and although the places I've visited are far from that concept, I identify with it in my heart. To me, there's no significant barrier wherever I go. If I want, I can quickly make friends in Africa and not feel lonely. Anyway, I don't have a strong sense of discomfort anywhere. (N1)

Citation 30

带着 DNA 村民的殷切祝福和留恋，离别的一天终将到来（我也觉得肉麻）。DNA 数日，我们对"安家"的理解似乎又宽阔了些。很多时候我们想到"安家"，只会联想到一个小家庭的抉择。DNA 社区似乎证明了另一种可能性——安家，也可以是生活方式的选择。不只是找一个地方居住，而是，能否和这个地方的人和事融合，同时为自己的工作找到一个舒适的发展方向。(N10)

With the locals' sincere blessings and reluctance to let us go, the day of farewell eventually arrived (I also feel it's cheesy). After spending several days in the DNA village, our understanding of "settling down" seemed to have broadened. Often when we think of "settling down," we only associate it with the choices of a small family. The DNA community seems to prove another possibility – settling down can also be a choice of lifestyle. It's not just about finding a place to live, but about whether one can integrate with the people and things in the area and, at the same time, find a comfortable direction for their own work. (N10)

Citation 31

喜欢和一群人坐在一起，听他们喝酒说话。那天夜里的"去中心化聊天"已经载入 DNA 史册。十几个人围坐在一起，却各聊各的，像年夜饭一样热闹。有时候，我们也谈论一些比较深刻且严肃的话题，没有交浅言深的避忌，只有不怕被揍的勇气，和被理解且包容的尊重。(N9)

I enjoy sitting with a group of people, listening to their conversations as they drink. That night's "decentralized chat" has been recorded in DNA's history. More than a dozen people sat together, each talking about their own things, as lively as a family reunion dinner during Chinese New Year. Sometimes, we also discuss more profound and serious topics, without the taboo of shallow conversations. All we have is the courage to not be afraid of being challenged and the respect for being understood and accepted. (N9)

Citation 32

当然，除了咖啡，DNA 的气质才是 X 真正感觉到「对了，就是这」的答案，那是轻松、自由、创意和灵感。就好像每个人都在 DNA 这里找到了兴趣之光。压力得到了释放，情绪在释放，开心在释放，笑容在释放...我们的眼里不再只有工作和内卷，还有各种人和物。缓过神来，才发现一周已过去。回顾起来，每天在同一个地点，却从不重复，人和人之间密集连接，像极了大学生活，热闹，快乐，自在，没有烦恼。(N7)

Of course, apart from coffee, it's the atmosphere of DNA that truly makes <Nomad X> feel like she's found the right answer - an atmosphere of relaxation, freedom, creativity, and inspiration. It's as if everyone has found their own interest points in DNA. Stress is being released, emotions

are being let go, happiness is flowing, and smiles are spreading... Our eyes are no longer focused solely on work and "rat race", but also on the various people and things around us. Before we know it, a week has gone by. Looking back, each day at the same location was never repetitive, with people densely connected to one another, much like college life - lively, happy, carefree, and worry-free. (N7, content creators)

Citation 33

来到（DNA），快递甚至比北京更方便，走路十五步就到。这边的情况是：城里有的东西，它是不缺的，像我们赖以生存的快递，外卖，美团买菜也都能获得，然后什么 coffee shop，面包啊，运动设施，娱乐设施，基本的东西都可以满足。而且还有城里看不到的，乡村的东西。所以我们这边属于，双方的优势都可以获取到，而双方的劣势在我们这边得到了避免，因为在这边我们不需要跑 15 公里去参加活动，因为在这边我们可以创造很多东西，而有些东西是没必要的，像是地铁，不会说我们没有它就不方便。唯一一个缺陷是：这边离大型的公共交通枢纽有一定距离。(N1)

Here in DNA, delivery services are even more convenient than in Beijing; it only takes 15 steps to reach the delivery pickup point. The situation here is that things you can find in the city are not lacking, such as essential services like delivery, takeout, and grocery shopping through Meituan. Additionally, coffee shops, bakeries, fitness facilities, and entertainment facilities can all be found here. Moreover, we also have access to rural elements that are not seen in the city. So, we can enjoy the advantages of both urban and rural life while avoiding their disadvantages. Here, we don't need to travel 15 kilometers to participate in activities because we can create many things ourselves. Some facilities, like the subway, are not necessary, and not having them doesn't cause inconvenience. The only drawback is the distance to large public transportation hubs. (N1)

Citation 34

我也比较注重精神层面的养老，希望还能在 DNA 这样的社区，与大家一起活到老、玩到老。(N2a)

I also value mental wellbeing in retirement, and I hope to continue living in communities like DNA, enjoying life with everyone until the end. (N2a)

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