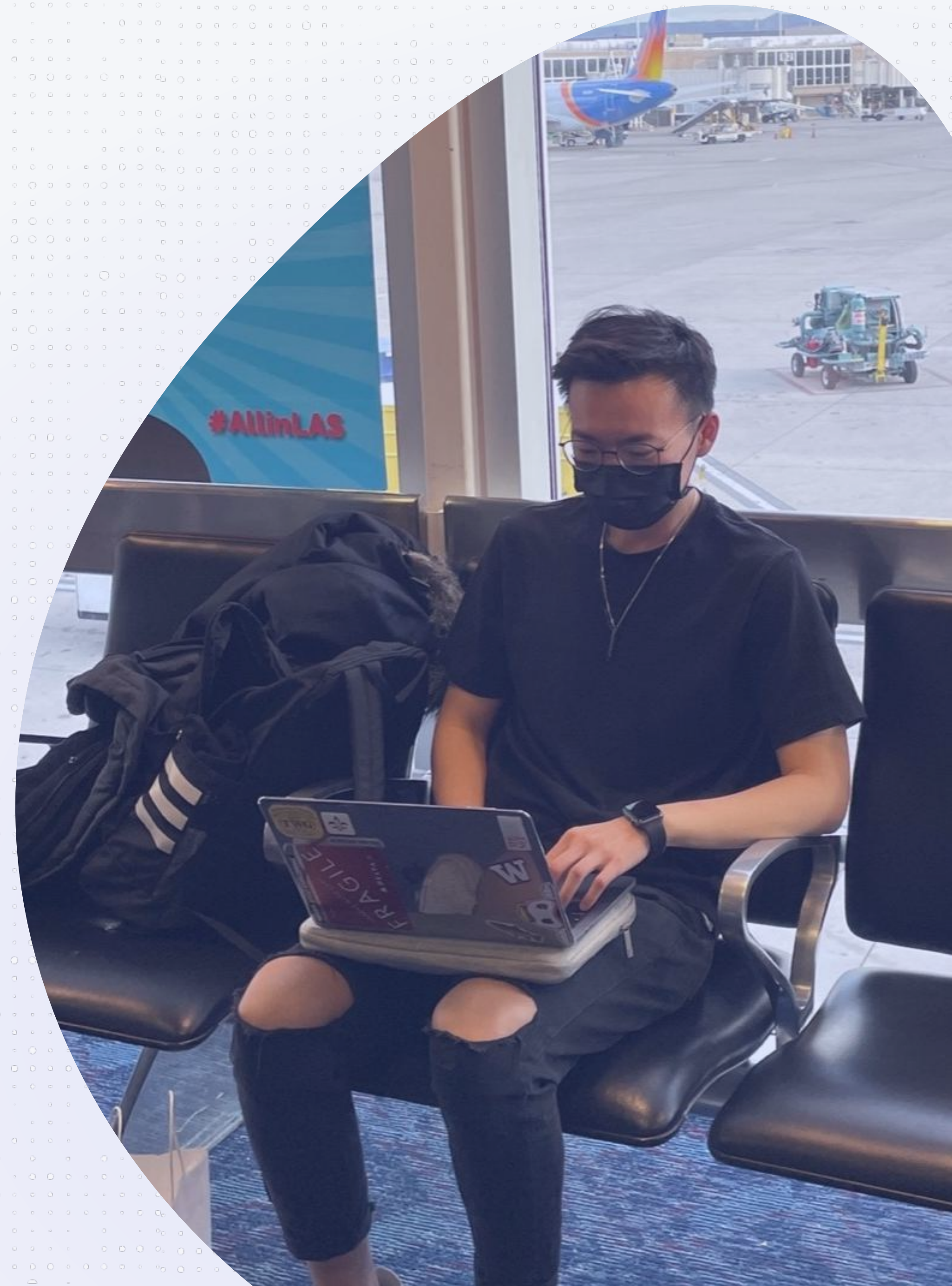


Exploring the Future of Work and Location Independence

Amya Jacobs



Executive Summary

In 2020, the entire world witnessed a seismic shift towards remote work, accelerated in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift propelled many salaried professionals out of their tiny city homes to explore alternate ways of living, working and traveling.

We've seen the emergence of a new type of worker, "COVID nomads", who are taking advantage of this new freedom to pursue location independence through a nomadic lifestyle.



source: r/digital nomad

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Introduction

We wanted to understand the future of work. How recent events shaped the way we think, learn, engage with our surroundings and play.

There's been a sudden and rapid

49% increase in Americans describing themselves as digital nomads*

*from 7.3 million in 2019 to 10.9 million in 2020



So, who is a digital nomad?

Digital nomads embrace a **location-independent, technology-enabled lifestyle** that allows them to travel and work anywhere in the internet-connected world. They are **usually independent workers** (e.g., freelancers, contractors, business owners).

Unlike the majority of remote workers, who tend to stay in one place or shuttle back and forth between their home and a vacation retreat or a relative's house, digital nomads travel and explore while working.

INTRODUCTION

There's also been a drastic shift in the composition of the type of employment digital nomads pursue. A lifestyle that was previously heavily dominated by independent workers: freelancers, independent contractors, and the self-employed has seen a

96% increase in salaried professionals pursuing digital nomadism*

*from 3.2 million to 6.3 million in 2020

After being untethered from their offices, many individuals who are employed by an organization and are considered salaried professionals decided to take to the road.

Salaried professionals now make up a majority of those pursuing this non-traditional work lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

We started wondering

**What is pushing salaried professionals to pursue
this lifestyle?**

INTRODUCTION

When we started looking at the social, economic, technological, environmental and political factors to understand the trends over time that might have caused salaried professionals to rethink their location based lifestyle.



STEPP Framework

We noticed some common trends,

1. COVID became a catalyst to remote working for all digitally enabling jobs.
2. COVID also became a major motivator for people to pursue location independence, now that they didn't have to go to office.
3. Companies moved/transitioned to temporary remote working during the pandemic.
4. Remote working allows traditional office workers to work from anywhere.
5. This increases their motivation to pursue location independence.

We hypothesize

Salariated professionals who adopted a location independent lifestyle post pandemic, who we call **“COVID Nomads”** are taking advantage of this new freedom to pursue location independence to pursue a nomadic lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

COVID Nomads

Unlike digital nomads, COVID nomads are usually **employed by an organization or an individual**, and might have a higher management to report to. They also often also have a '9-5 work life' and slightly less control over their schedule.

They also choose to embrace a **location-independent, technology-enabled lifestyle**.



DESK RESEARCH



Our overarching research objective is
**to understand how COVID nomads pursue and
experience location independence.**

Desk Research

Through our secondary research, we wanted to:

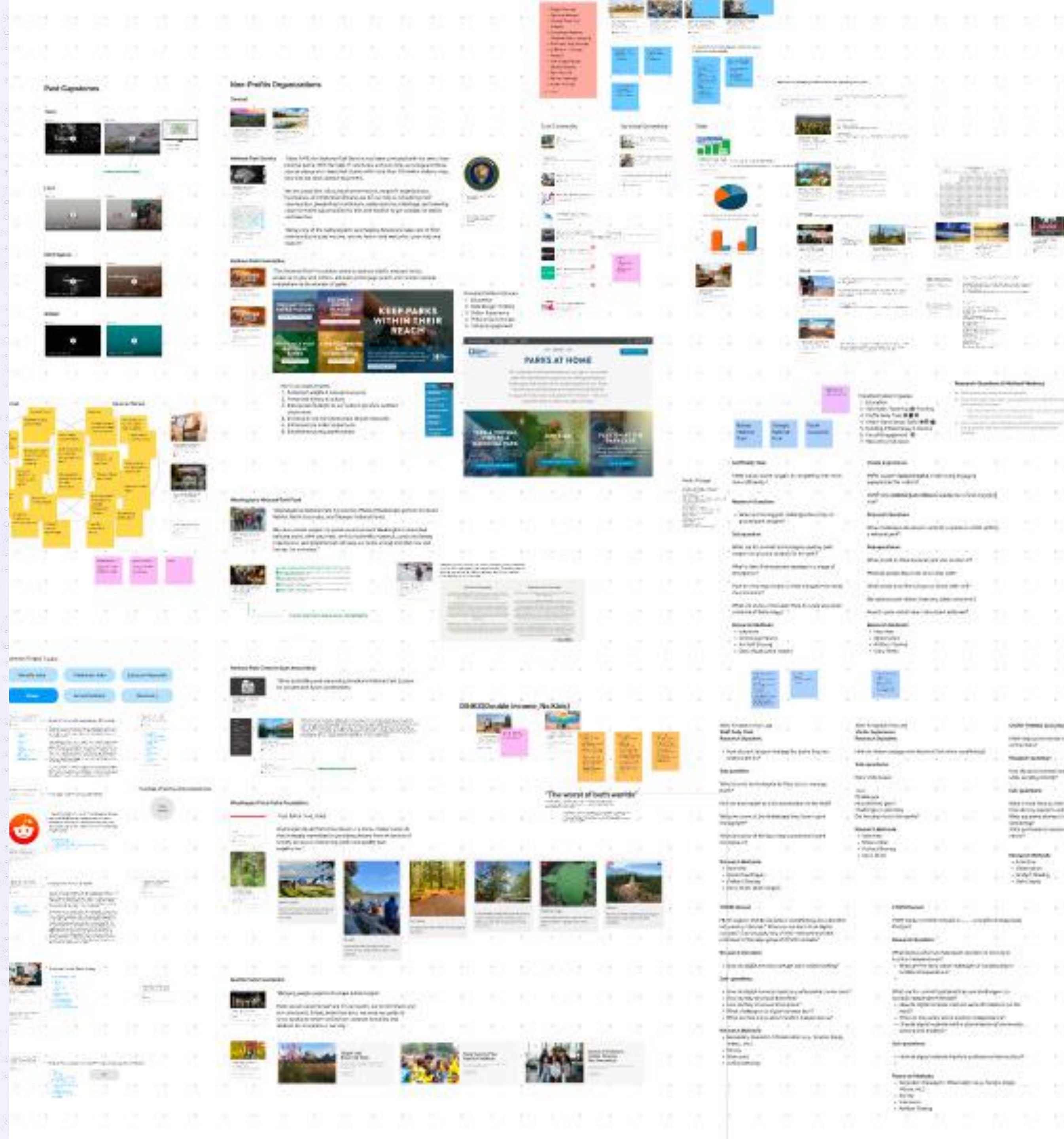
- Distinguish what makes the experiences of COVID nomads unique from that of digital nomads and remote workers
- Build an understanding of the work ecosystem [21] surrounding COVID nomads
- Identify and research the different players catering to the current digital nomad market



Methods used

We used the following research methods to develop a thorough understanding of the space.

- Academic Research
- Journal Articles and News Coverage
- Web Scraping Social Media
- Competitor Analysis



Understanding nomadicity

For long, nomadicity as a lifestyle choice would impact the kind of work you could do with most workplaces requiring an employee to pursue a location dependent lifestyle, grounding roots based on their employer's location and requirement. Even then, there have been work-based motivational forces shaping their nomadic practices, identified as choice, opportunity, and obligation [3].

1. **Choice:** Consciously choosing and moving to specific locations to engage in work according to personal preferences.
2. **Opportunity:** Engaging in work as some resources are unexpectedly made available at certain locations.
3. **Obligation:** Moving to specific sites where the needed resources are available or because a superior tells one to do so.

DESK RESEARCH

We live in the tech-mediated future described by technology visionaries, Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners in 1997. They predicted the rise of technology enabled nomads, who we now know to be digital nomads with the emergence of computing technology and proliferation of Wi-Fi [5] that can help individuals “carry” their work wherever they go. The increased mobility in the workplace brought in by the fluidity of mobile interactions and computer technologies is enabling more geographically fluid movements and interactions. [3]



We understand that remote workers, like digital nomads, need a different level of support from their co-workers and other players in their ecosystem, including their managers, employers etc. When studying digital nomad based communities on Twitter, Jeff and Ingrid identified the following themes [4] through web scraping and analysis.

1. The first theme centers on worker identity and is currently dominated by the experiences of digital nomads.
2. The second theme focuses on the practicalities of working in a physical location and is currently dominated by issues related to co-working spaces.
3. The third theme is a loose and speculative set of ideas around the evolution of work in the future, predicting how enterprises may have to adapt to new ways of working.

Understanding work ecosystems

We wanted to understand the first three degrees of interdependent actors, from within the organization and beyond that are working to pursue both their individual and collective goals.[3]

We collected all our insights from current news articles and media coverage to make two stakeholder maps, to understand the employee and employer priorities.



What we learned

After mapping the stakeholder ecosystem, we tried looking at the changes in adjacent verticals and how they impact the space.

Uptake in Flexible Working

Only 7% of civilian workers in the United States, or roughly 9.8 million of the nation's approximately 140 million civilian workers, have access to a "flexible workplace" benefit, or telework, according to the 2019 National Compensation Survey (NCS) from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics.[10]



There's been an uptake in "work tourism" post pandemic.

Countries like Barbados and Estonia are offering working visas as well as travel opportunities to neighboring countries to jump start their economy [15] In doing so, these nation-states and their newly minted digital nomad/remote work visas are overturning long-held exclusionary practices towards nomads.

Not everyone wants to work remotely:

There has been a major shift to remote or hybrid working but not everyone wants to work from home, or can be effective there. Companies going remote might also have their employees coming in on an ad hoc basis.

Having a dedicated space for that once-a-week meeting wastes money,

A coworking space is one example-solution that provides great value for both individuals and hybrid teams.[20]



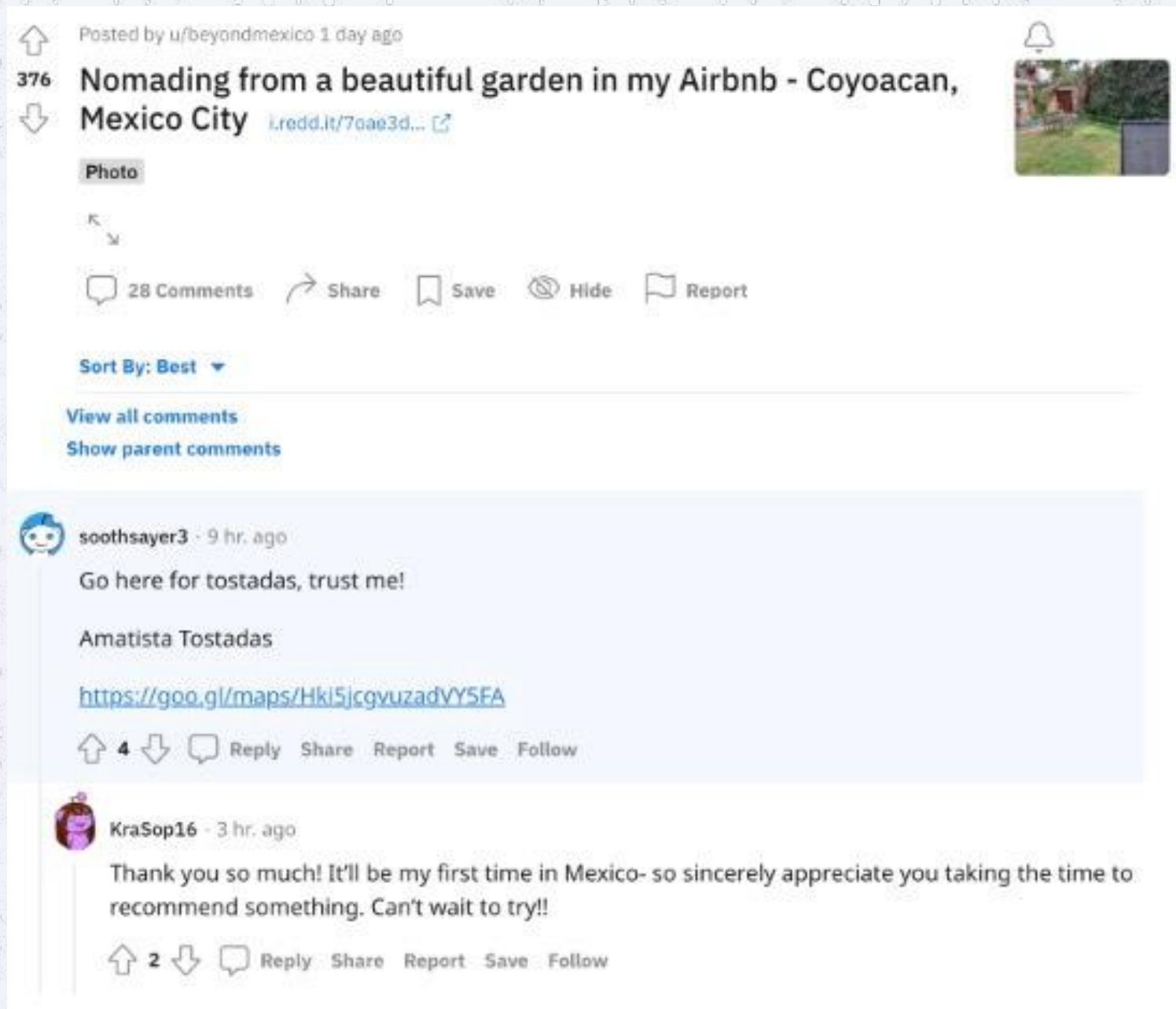
Companies need a Nomad Policy

Having digital nomads on the payroll can leave firms open to a wide variety of regulatory and legal risks. But the approach shouldn't be purely defensive or informed only by compliance concerns. The forces that both enable and encourage digital nomadism are here to stay.[9] There are multiple issues both, "global covid nomads" and "domestic COVID nomads" can cause for the company lawsuits and more.[22]

In most cases, they work out arrangements with their immediate bosses, go nomadic under informal "don't ask, don't tell" agreements, or travel without their organization's knowledge.

Nomads are practicing a form of geoarbitrage — they often travel through low-cost areas while earning the wages prevailing in the high-cost areas where their companies are located.

Web scraping



Source: r/digital nomad

Community size: 1.5 million

Through our observation of online communities, we noticed the following trends:

Motivation, Caution and Pointers: Experienced nomads encouraged novice travelers to have realistic expectations from the lifestyle.

- E.g., “Besides the obvious stuff, I like to have a cheap local cell phone. This way if it is lost or stolen, I will not be too upset about it and have my US phone as backup. Ear plugs, bring 3 pairs, thank me later, also a sleep/eye cover mask. - Redditor”



← Crossposted by u/Energetic504 2 days ago

Gear Anyone got one of these bad boys on their gear list?

r/Frugal · Posted by u/sunny946 2 days ago 2 2

Electronics Used a laundry basket and a towel to see my computer outside. And when I'm done they'll go back to their normal uses, so no extra clutter. Versions online average \$50 US



5.8k points · 156 comments

Sharing Workarounds

*No, you can't be a digital nomad | Reddit

Sharing Experiences, Community Building:

Individuals in the community shared advice, resources and lessons from being on the road. We saw community building and camaraderie in the community.

Basic Needs Don't go away: " If you want to live anywhere you need the same things you need to live where you are now: income (or a pile of cash in the bank), the legal right to stay there (and maybe the legal right to work there), a couple of changes of clothes, and some common sense. Calling yourself a Digital Nomad doesn't make these basic needs go away."*

Common topics discussed in posts:

There were a lot of conversations around motivations, planning and experiencing the location independent lifestyle. We saw some significant themes standing out. Which were,

- # How to start living like a Digital Nomad
- # Remote Jobs/Work
- # Freelancing Jobs
- # Location Research
- # Accommodation
- # Visa/Taxes
- # Gear
- # Loneliness

Competitor analysis

Many products and services have been created with competitors tackling the following most common problems:

- Social connection ([Eat With](#), [Meetup](#), [Web Work Travel](#))
- Navigating the lifestyle ([raddit](#), [Digital Nomad Daily](#))
- Decision making ([Nomad List](#))
- Travel aids ([Nomad Notes](#))
- Accommodation Platform ([Selina](#))
- Planning ([Nomad Collective](#))
- Obtaining work ([Galavant](#))
- Routine ([Classpass](#))

Nomad Competitor

Competitor List	Project Type	Purpose	Stage	Relation	Feature	Notes
Digital Nomads Daily	Website Platform	Experience Sharing/ Forum	Stay, Work, Experience	Direct	Podcast, Vidoes, Articles	Curated with sponsor
Nomad List	Website Platform	Experience Sharing/ Analysis	Stay	Direct	Data Visualization of location based review	Free version can only see the report, paid one can participate the community
reddit/ Digital Nomad	Website Platform	Experience Sharing/ Forum	Stay, Work, Experience	Direct	Weekly discussion, post, popular topics, other sources	Prob the oldest platform
Meetup	Website/ APP Platform	Experience Sharing/ Community	Stay, Work, Experience	Direct	online events, group, artices	Choose based on interests to form group
Nomads Talk	Slack Community	Community	Stay, Work, Experience	Direct	Slack communcatinon for transportation, trip guide, stay	Promoting the idea that travel with no fixed plans
Digital Nomads World	Website platform	Experience Sharing	Stay, Work, Experience	Direct	Job posting, skills sharing, tips, community,	Giving discount around the world when you sign up
Web Work Travel	Website platform	Travel community	Experience	Direct	Finding poeple with common interests	Mostly high class activites
Eat Wlth	Website platform	Travel community	Experience	Analogous	Book a food date with other nomad	Using food, abd time to form a temp group
Nomad Project	Website platform	Community	Work	Direct	Using side gig as an opportunities	Two perspective, Looing for someone to join, or for project
Nomad Collective	Website platform	Searching	Experience	Direct	Trip to look up based on ur availabilities	Travel without worrying anything, plan for the DN
Outsite.co	Website platform	Searching	Stay	Direct	Looking for place to stay	Shared space all over the world for nomads
WWR	Website platform	Searching	Work	Direct	Jobs seaking, blog, podcast and more	For people who wants to work remotly
Galavant	APP	Resource	Stay, Work, Experience	Direct	Looking for co-working companion or just a space	All across after moving to a place
LMDES	Website platform	Resource	Stay, Work, Experience	Direct	Articles, and class for ppl to buy to learn how to be nomads	Selling their experience
Facebook Groups	Website platform	Experience Sharing/ forum	Stay, Work, Experience	Direct	Posting, sharing, asking question	Could join group thats based on interets or locations
Selina	Website platform	Searching	Stay	Analogous	Looking for place to stay	Bussines for everything they visit a new place
Classpass	Website platform/ APP	Searching	Experience	Analogous	Looking for daily activites to do that's across the globe	Mainly fitness/ daily habit focus
Nomad Notes	Website platform	Resource	Experience	Direct	Resource of different platforms	Categorized by modern nomad jobs

DESK RESEARCH

Through our competitor analysis we discovered that everyone has a different experience with this lifestyle and many products and services have been created to solve for a variety of pain points. It also dispelled the common misconception that digital nomads navigate these challenges alone. Many of the tools were created or centered around the community. They also largely focused on the individual nomad as the key stakeholder.



Journey map

We used our research findings to create a journey map that showcases major milestones, thoughts, and feelings commonly experienced and expressed by people who choose to pursue this lifestyle.



DESK RESEARCH

Planning

Plans Move	Executes Move	Designs Experience
Researches locations	Books an Airbnb	Creates a budget
Finds accommodations	Puts belongings in storage	Plans for the ideal lifestyle they want to have
Decides what to do with belongings (keep, sell, bring, put in storage, etc.)	Makes copies of important documents	Plans activities, locations they want to visit, and things to do
Preps and manages legal documents	Logistics (change address, purchase insurance, etc.)	

I need to find somewhere affordable to live for a couple of months

I need to make copies of important documents in case I lose them while traveling

How much can I afford to spend each month?

What is important to bring with me?

How can I design my lifestyle to maximize my experience.

What do I need to do so that people can find me while I am on the road?

Optimism Excitement Confidence

Experiencing

Work	Life (Physical)	Personal Fulfillment
Finding an ideal work/life balance	Managing responsibilities (mail, taxes)	Maintaining mental and emotional wellbeing
Managing responsibilities (access, connectivity)	Finding essentials (food)	Maintaining social connections
Choosing and setting up a workspace	Maintaining wellness (gym, medical needs)	
	Navigating safety and security	

How much can I afford to spend each month?

I want to minimize risk. How can I secure the safety of myself and my belongings?

I want to make more friends.

Stress Anxiety Loneliness

Tiredness
Disconnection

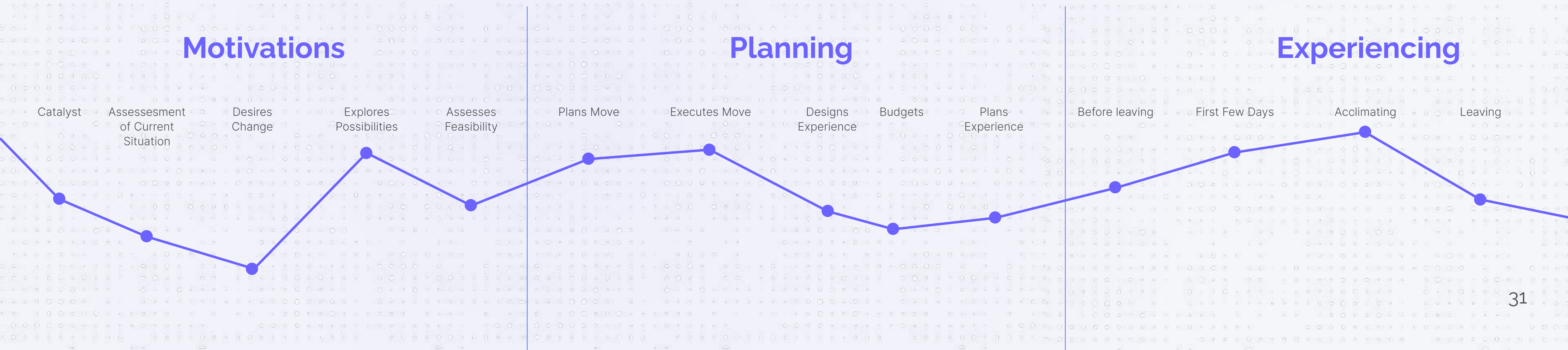
FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH



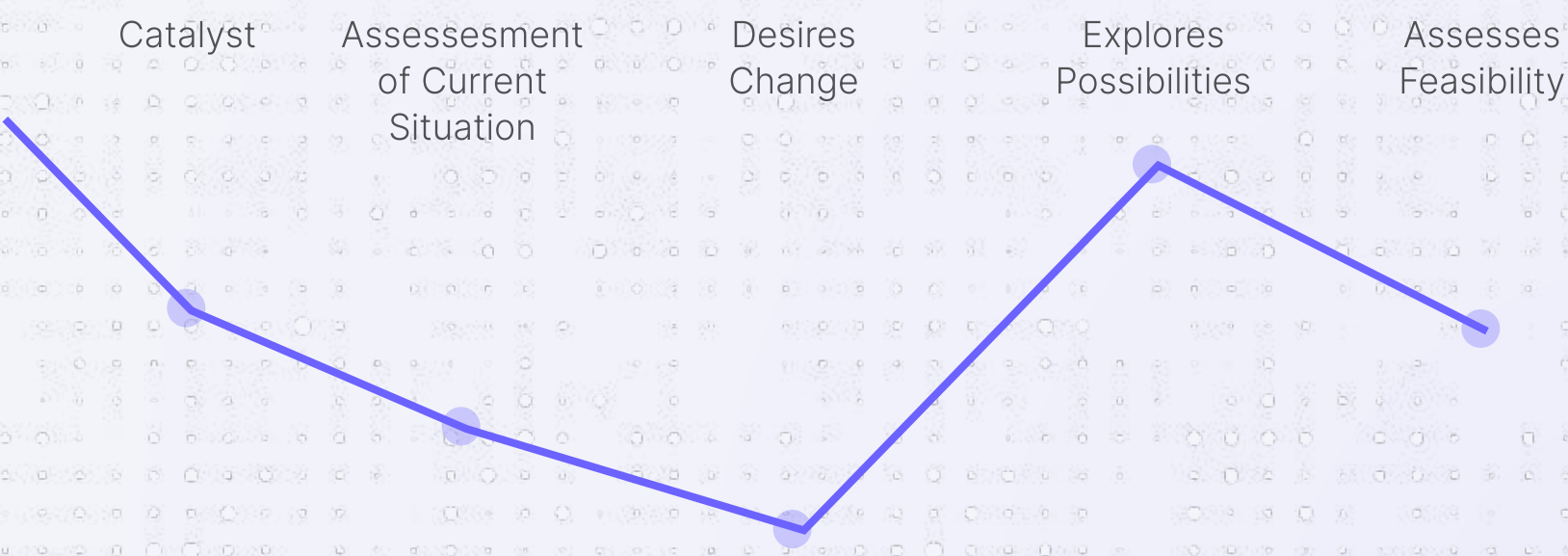
FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH

Our primary research question is

What do the different stages of moving, pursuing and experiencing a location independent lifestyle entail?

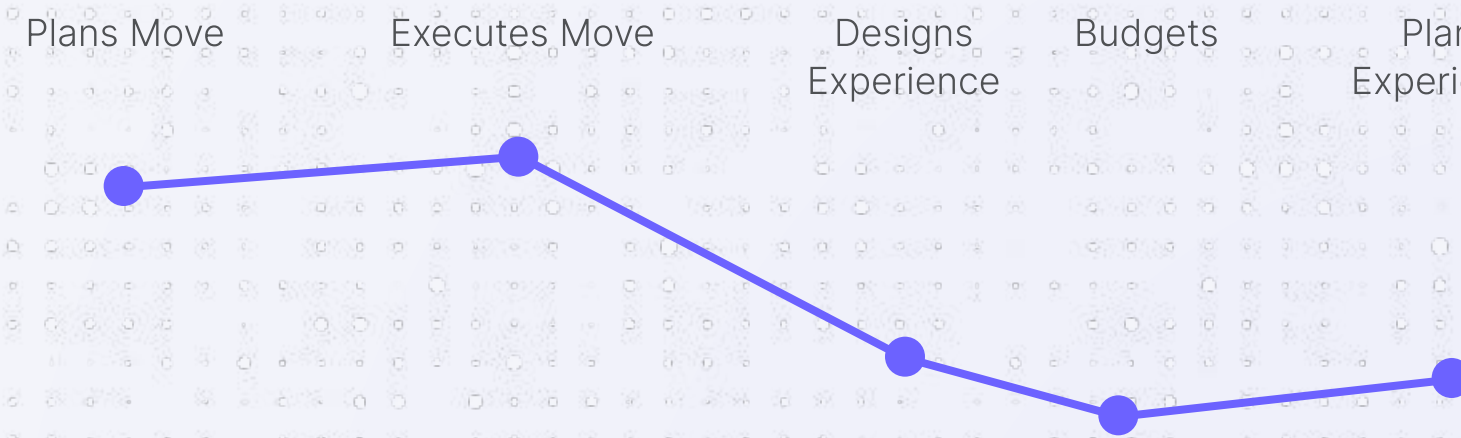


Choosing



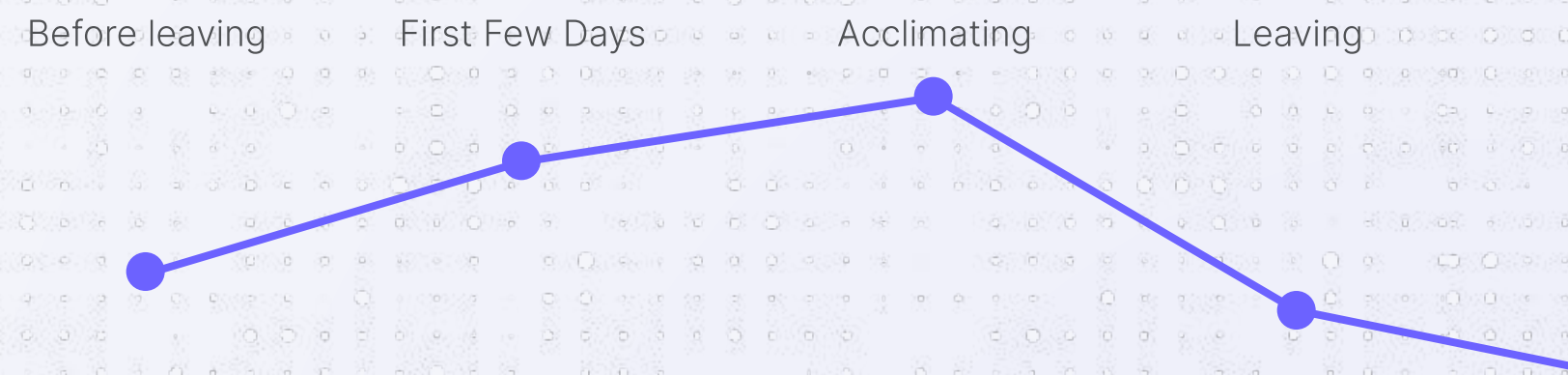
- **Why do workcationers pursue location independence?**
 - What is the individual's motivation to pursue this lifestyle?
 - Do they want to experience culture or experience freedom?
 - How does their life stage affect their motivation?
 - What factors affect an individual's decision?
 - What digital tools and services did they utilize ?
 - What are the pains? What was enjoyable?
 - Why are they hesitant to pursue this change in lifestyle?

Planning



- **What are the current enablers and barriers of a location independent lifestyle?**
 - How did they prepare for the transition?
 - How did they approach planning for the travel?(e.g., understanding logistics)
 - What tools did they use? Was it helpful?
 - Was there anything they didn't expect?

Experiencing



- **What do people enjoy the most about location independent lifestyle?**
 - How do digital nomads maintain work-life balance?
 - How do digital nomads manage their responsibilities? (e.g., scheduling/resourcing; expenses & overhead; gear/tech/platforms; location planning; travel planning, work, etc.)
 - What support do they receive from their employers?
 - How do digital nomads build community? (e.g, among one another, with locals, etc.)
 - How did the experience meet their expectations (or not) from planning?
 - What do you enjoy the least? What is challenging?

Research method

Semi-structured Interviews with Artifact Sharing

We conducted 60 minute semi-structured remote interviews with 8-10 participants with the goal of:

- Confirm hypothesis from secondary research and build on the journey map
- Understand more pain points and workarounds participants have experienced in real life.
- Narrow down problem space with the need for technological intervention.

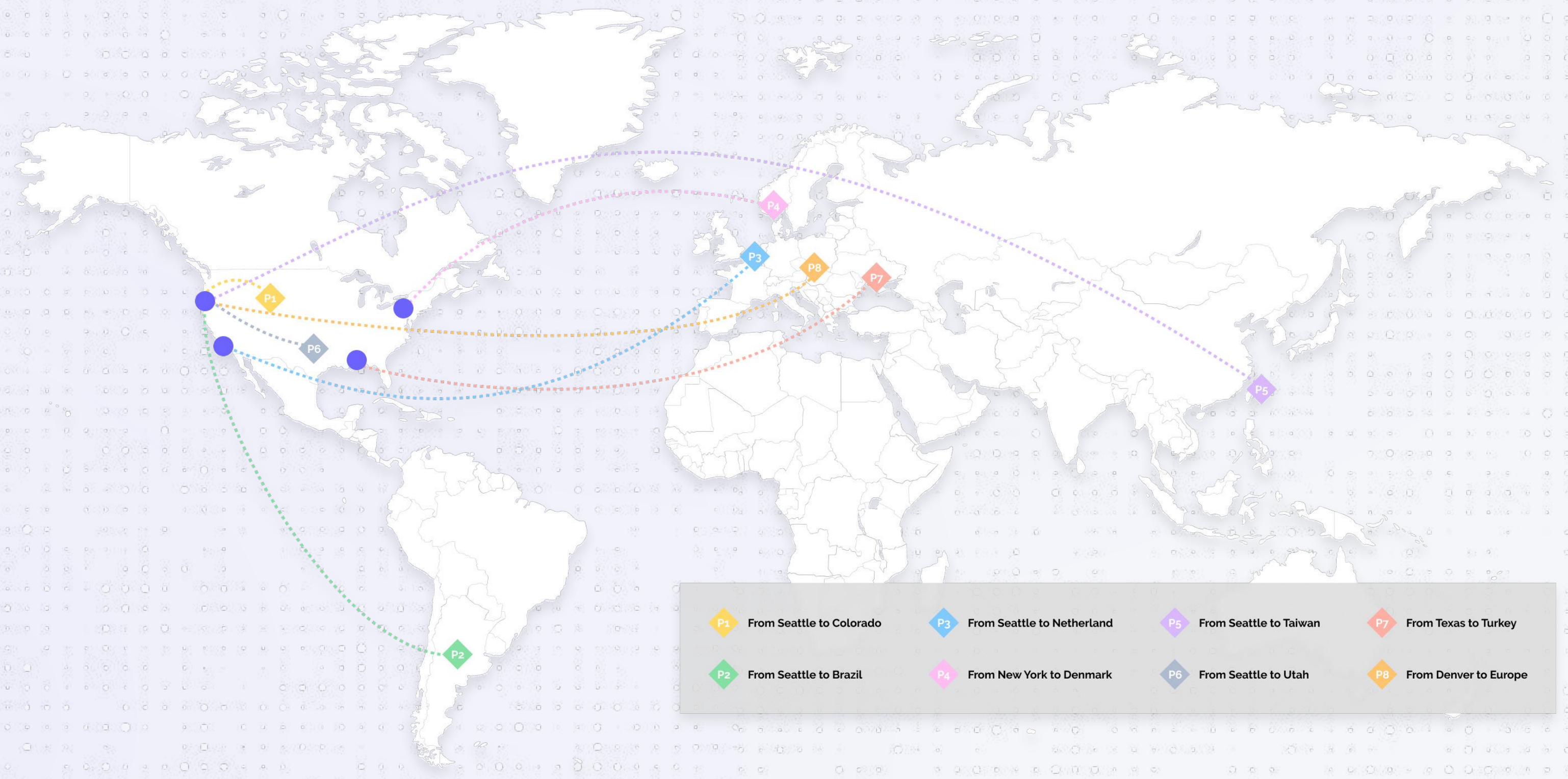
Why artifact sharing?

- To understand the resources and tools used by participants during their transition into location independence and tools/ resources they use to sustain their location independent lifestyle.
- This could unveil frustrations with certain tools, challenges they faced and surface pain points for technological intervention.

Recruitment

All our participants qualified the criteria

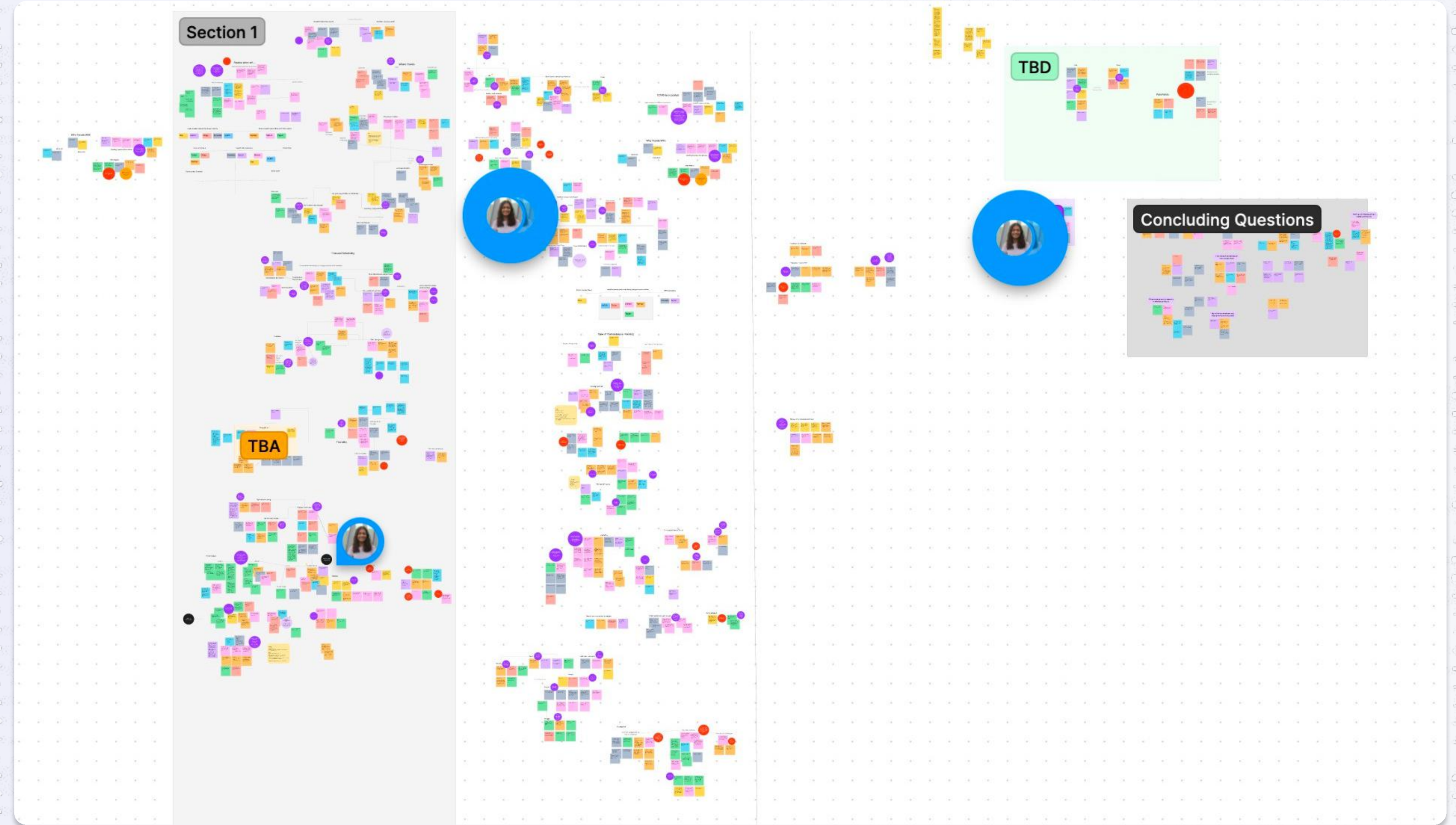
- Are either full time salaried professionals or long term contract based employees.
- They either pursued or are pursuing a work and travel lifestyle recreationally after March 2020.



The map shows all our participants last work+travel trip

Sensemaking and data analysis

We affinity mapped our coded data and interview notes based on wide patterns and themes and then co-related them.



Insights

We expected our participants to be a bunch of globe trotters; traveling and working for their full time, steady paying jobs. Instead, what we were met with, challenged our assumptions about our primary population. We discovered the following insights.



“COVID nomads” aren’t nomads. They just want the agency to travel more often.

We noticed a wide range of travel pattern among our participants that were unlike a traditional nomad or a vacationer. To understand our primary population better, we built a mobility spectrum.

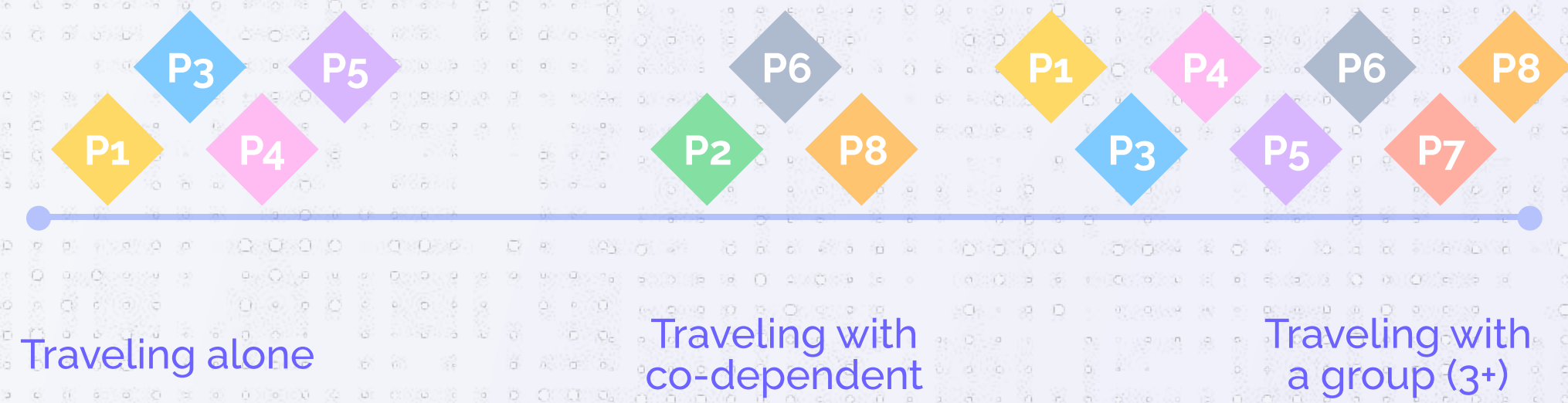
Mobility spectrum, is a framework that helps us map our user’s journey based on their travel pattern.

Their place on the spectrum is often times influenced by their motivations, expectations from this lifestyle, personal experiences and laws and policies.

INSIGHT 1 | COVID NOMADS

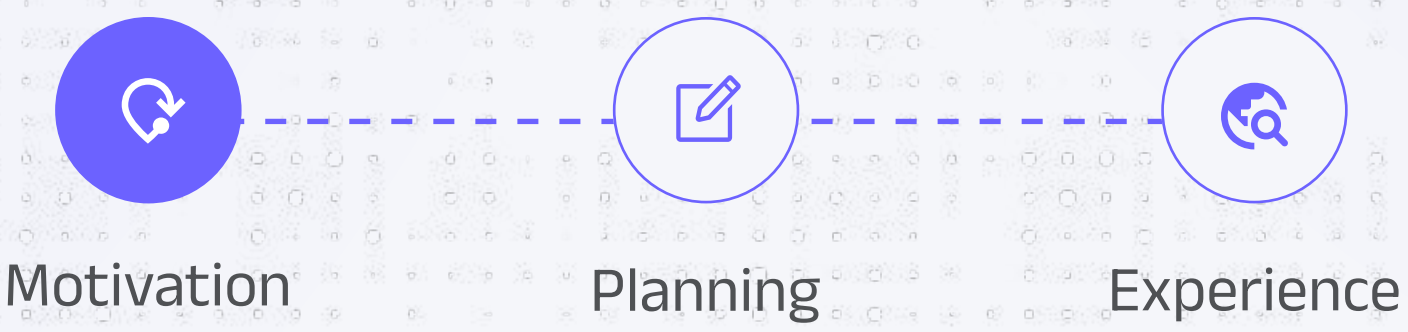
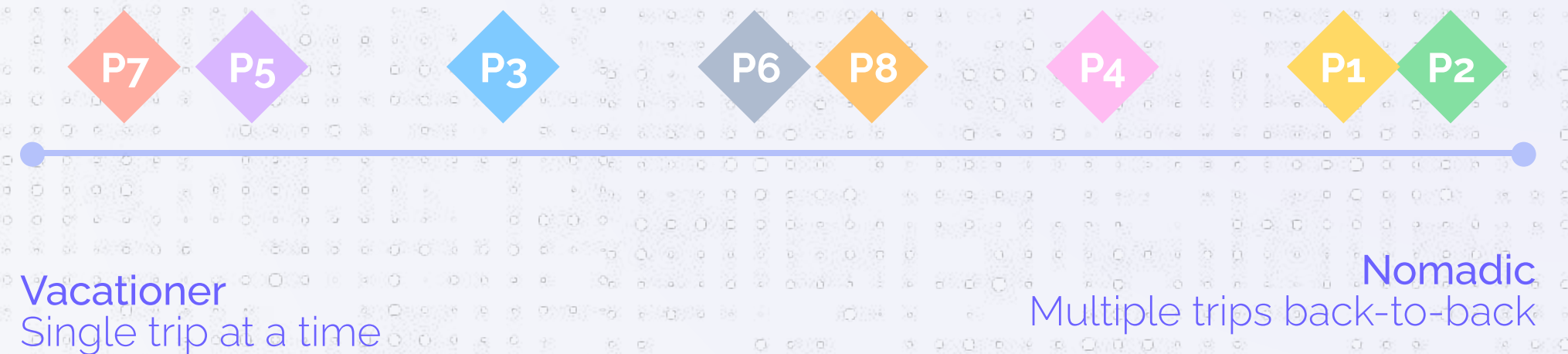
Unlike traditional digital nomads, Majority participants **traveled in groups or pairs** for at least one trip.

Social travel pattern



Participants spent majority of their time in their **home base** taking short recreational travel trips (2-4 weeks) during which they continued working.

Frequency of work & travel



INSIGHT 1 | COVID NOMADS

Our participants were starting to rethink what was possible, and consider new ways of living.

Some described leaving their city “shoebox” apartments behind, some mentioned finally getting a chance to spend more time in a warmer climate, and others described working from their ideal time zone.

The ubiquity of remote work during the pandemic inspired more people to **rethink the status quo.**

“ can work anywhere, which was definitely not possible pre-pandemic this is now a possibility for people. Then you can make work more interesting.”

- P6



Motivation



Planning



Experience

COVID was a catalyst for intrinsic motivations to take over like exploring new places, reconnecting with friends and family, and testing potential homes.

Participants don't seek a fully location independent "lifestyle", but simply use their **newfound freedom** to work from anywhere.

“ I was working remotely so I went mountain biking out there(in Arkansas) and then I went to New Mexico, and then I was up in Washington, sort of quarantining with my with some family. Then ended up going back to New Mexico for a month...”

- P1



Motivation



Planning



Experience

Work while traveling can deepen preexisting relationships at the expense of new ones.

While they may take other trips in between, The majority of participants are using location independence as a way to **meet and reconnect** with old friends and family who don't live around them.

“ I've been able to spend more time with my family in Denmark than I otherwise would have. My nephew's confirmation, my mom's birthday, etc. [It's] a good time to be here.”

- P4



Motivation



Planning



Experience

However, since they can't be in all places at once, they acknowledge that there is an obvious trade-off.

Participants are willing to **sacrifice** the possibility of making new friends and professional connections to spend more time with people they already know.

For the most part they don't mind, but some had moments of regret. Despite being ultimately satisfied with his decision to leave his former city to travel and work near family.

“ [You'll experience] a bit of FOMO like you'll see people hanging out in office or like you'll see happy hours pop up on [social media] and you're like 'oh shit like that would be fun', but you make the most of what you can.”

- P8



Motivation



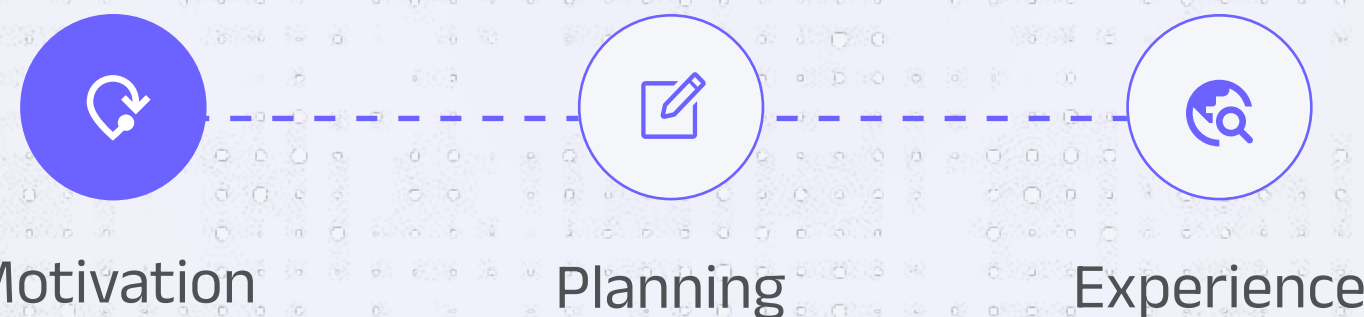
Planning



Experience

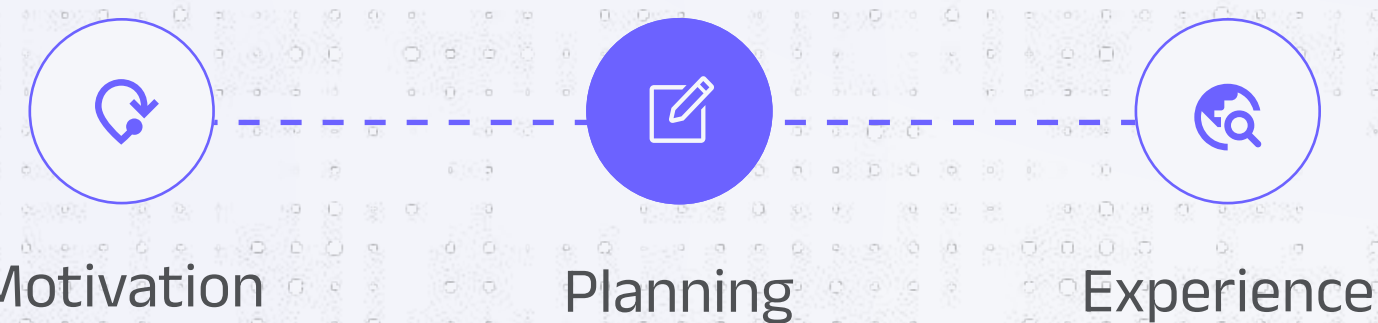
There's been a lot of talk about "the great resignation" and we definitely saw signs of that with our participants as well. It seems like we are living in a unique time with many experiencing.. We call it the

The Great Realization; Participants have shown a shift in post pandemic mindset. They are rethinking what work means and how it defines their life.



Planning never ends.

In order to travel somewhat frequently, regular and **constant planning** is required to maintain the work and travel lifestyle. It is a cyclical, ongoing process.



Discovery

Research

Planning

Aspiration

Booking

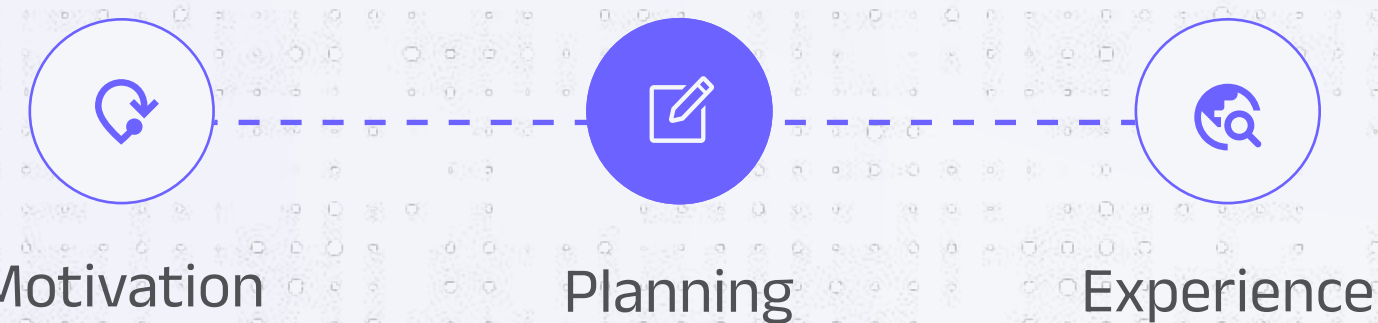
INSIGHT 3 | PLANNING

Planning for the next move in the current location also plays a role that will reducing enjoyment of a location. It's a delicate balance.

Over planning by excessively compacting activities between work hours can reduce enjoyment of trip.

“Another big challenge actually is planning and thinking about where else you want to go while still being present in the current place that we're at.” - P2

“ [You underestimate] the reality of how busy you are, and [then realize] 'oh my gosh, I've overbooked myself... I'm actually tired, and this wasn't much of a relaxing vacation.' It was more of pushing, pushing, go, go go.” - P2

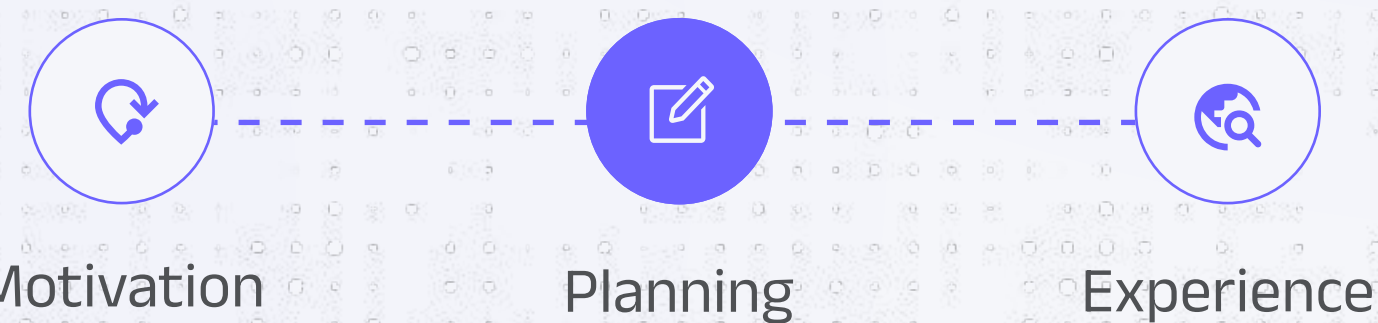


INSIGHT 3 | PLANNING

Through experience, participants learn to **balance work** and **maximize travel**.

- Strategically planning and using PTO days
- Not over planning
- Leaving room for spontaneity

“I think that was part of the reason why both of us [them and partner] at the time decided to do remote work was to allow for that **spontaneity**.” - P8

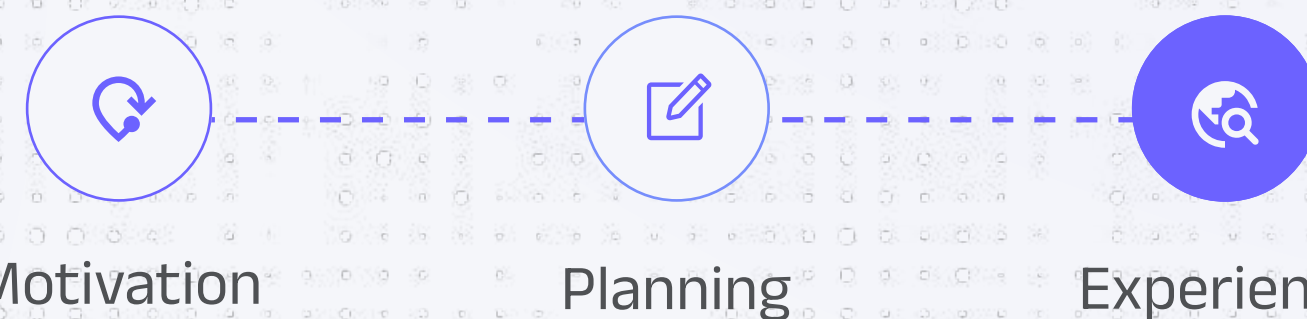


Work flexibility is the future.

When it comes to experiencing this newfound freedom, Almost all participants moved to a **fully remote job** during the pandemic, with the majority actively seeking fully remote positions.

“ I actually got the job that I have now because it's completely remote. ”

- P1



INSIGHT 4 | FLEXIBILITY

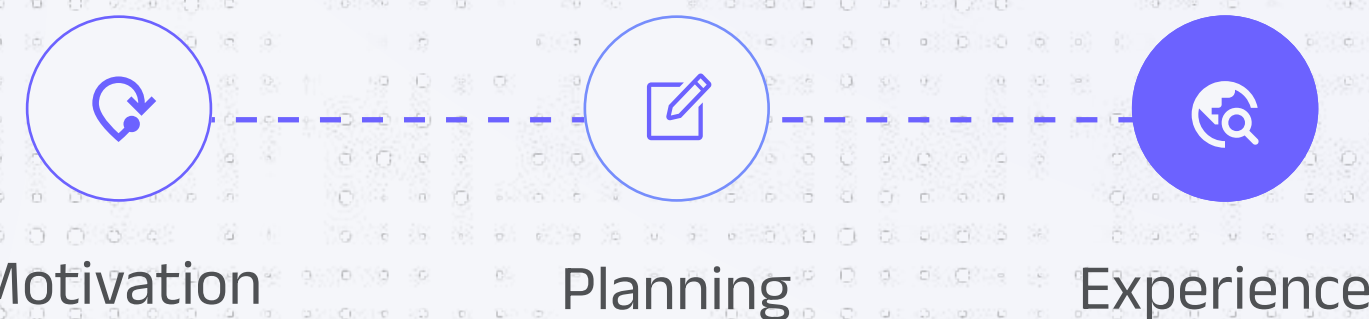
Half mentioned preferring hybrid work in the future where they could choose how often they work in-person.

Participants find remote work isolating at times, and miss the physicality an office place has to offer from time to time.

Participants seek opportunities that offer **control** and **freedom** of when and where to work after experiencing this lifestyle.

“ My perfect job would be one where I could actually go in the office occasionally, whenever I want because it is kind of isolating [to work remotely]. I do kind of miss [the office], happy hours on zoom are not the same. ”

- P8



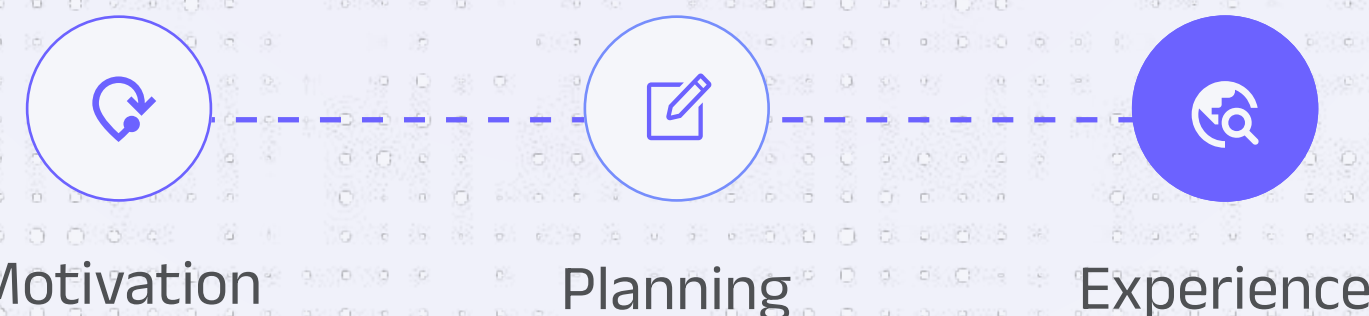
People have the same self expectations for personal and professional routines when traveling as when they are in their home-base.

Routine is key for participants to be **productive**.

Constant changes in environment and schedules caused by location based activities, timezone differences, lack of resources cause disruptions in their routine.

“ Routine is the hardest part for me... the timezone switching, the weather switching, the niceness of where I stay switching, the language switching... all that stuff breaks [my routine]. ”

- P4



INSIGHT 5 | ROUTINE

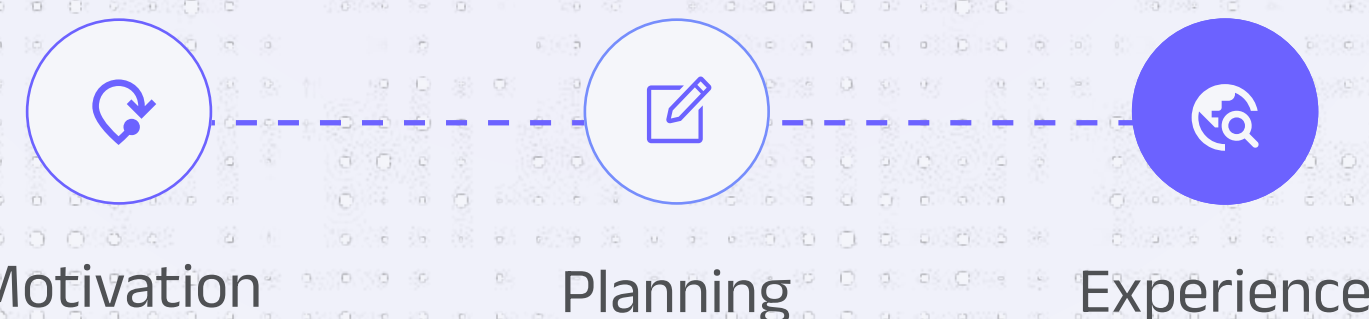
Routine is not only seen as key to ensuring work productivity, but also other aspects of their lives --- like personal wellness and comfort.

Participants find it hard to create and maintain a routine for themselves.

Participants found themselves **struggling to set a new normal** expectation for themselves: Exercise, keeping up with friends and family, work, engaging with locations, doing interesting activities, etc.

“ It is important... that when I'm traveling I can keep a healthy routine [like] I would have at home, like workouts [before going] to work. ”

- P3





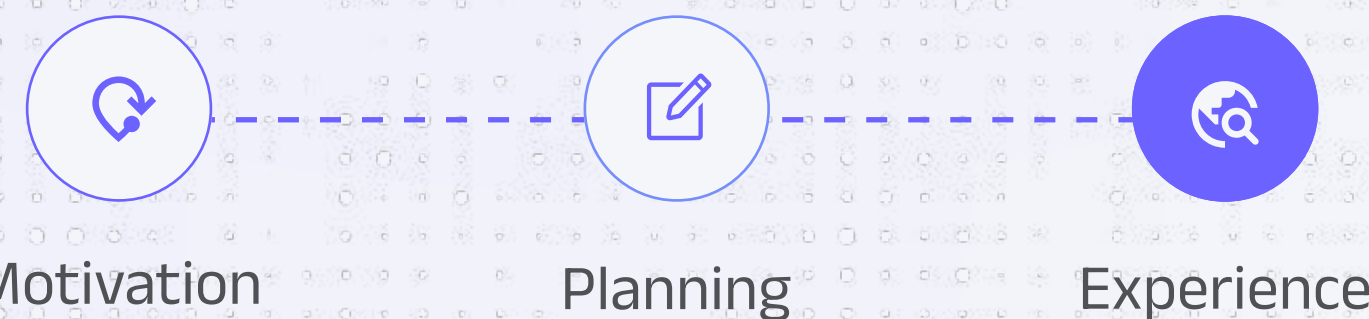
One of our participants used to be F45 instructor when she was living in Seattle. While she was expecting to give that up to travel she was surprised how difficult it is to even do simple things like getting a temporary gym membership.

People view establishing an office-like work environment as essential to maintain work productivity while traveling.

When packing for a trip, people put in more care and effort into thinking about their work equipment in comparison to personal items.

Most mentioned packing **“work kits”** with essential equipment.

“ [I'm] trying to keep my work routine consistent and not switch it up too much. I like having a dedicated [space] even if it's just like this is the desk I work at is good for me, you know and having that setup, the same as I would set it up at home. And things like that. So trying to kind of bring a little bit of consistency.” - P6

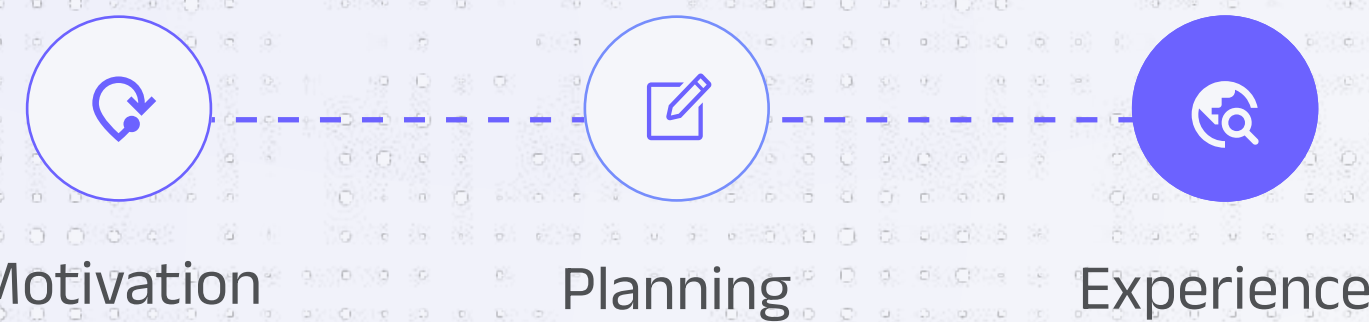


Accommodation was often selected based on availability of **adequate work space.**

Participants are willing to **purchase temporary tools** to support work productivity when they are traveling depending on how much time they are spending in a location.

“ There's a couple of things which are hard to plan. Spacing is one... I cannot tell you how many times I've looked through photos to try to determine how many workable surfaces are in an Airbnb... I don't believe in working from couches or beds. ”

- P4





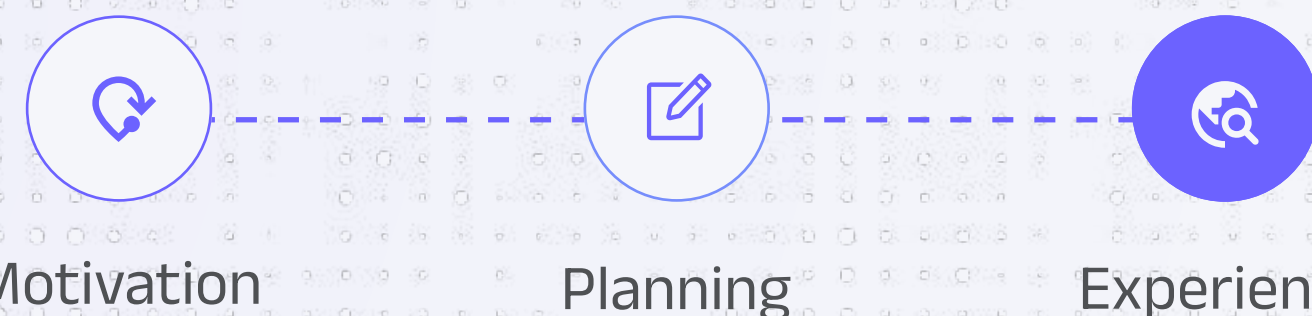
Product Name	Price	Category
Apple iPhone 12	\$699	Electronics
Samsung Galaxy S21	\$699	Electronics
Microsoft Surface Pro 9	\$1,299	Electronics
Apple Watch Series 7	\$399	Wearables
Sony WH-1000XM4	\$349	Headphones
Fitbit Versa 4	\$199	Wearables
Amazon Echo Dot	\$49	Smart Home
Google Nest Mini	\$49	Smart Home
Philips Hue Light Bulb	\$14.99	Smart Home
Logitech MX Keys	\$99	Peripherals
Logitech MX Mouse	\$99	Peripherals
Logitech G Pro X	\$149	Peripherals
Logitech G502	\$129	Peripherals
Logitech G900	\$149	Peripherals
Logitech G Pro Wireless	\$199	Peripherals
Logitech G Pro X Superlight	\$199	Peripherals
Logitech G Pro X Wireless	\$199	Peripherals
Logitech G Pro X Wireless Gaming Mouse	\$199	Peripherals
Logitech G Pro X Wireless Gaming Mouse	\$199	Peripherals
Logitech G Pro X Wireless Gaming Mouse	\$199	Peripherals
Logitech G Pro X Wireless Gaming Mouse	\$199	Peripherals

People are reluctant in accessing information of laws and company policies due to how it might affect their travel plans.

Most participants are **unaware of company policies** and laws that makes them reluctant to **disclose** their travel activities to their employers.

“ I don't tell [my company]... I don't feel the need to announce it, and I'm also not legally obligated to... The only time you are, I believe, is when you're staying in a place for more than a month or two. ”

- P8



Some people openly share their plans with employers while others **intentionally hide** that they are traveling while working.

Participants also seem to have a very vague understanding of tax laws if they plan to take longer trips.

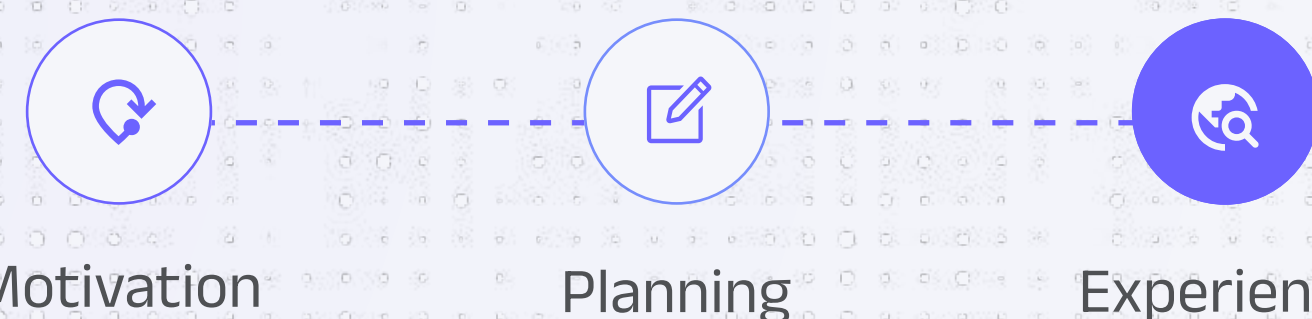
From our secondary research, we understand that very few organizations have formal policies and programs to support this lifestyle.

“ I don't know how it works with HR, but [my managers tell me] don't tell HR.”

- P2

“ The other side that [I consider] is that I have a green card in America... which puts sort of upper bounds on how much [I can travel] out of the US.”

- P4



Design Opportunities

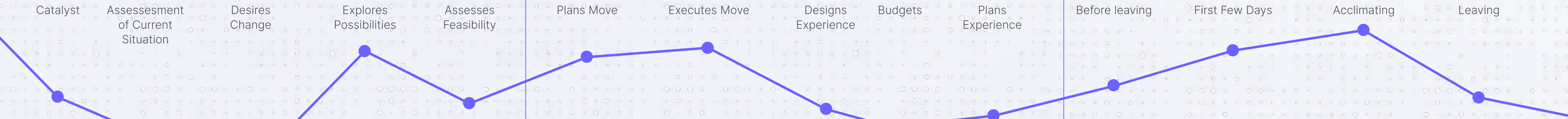
1. Designing for the future of work and this new “normal”
2. Supporting group travel and social connectedness
3. Alleviating the pain of planning.
4. Assisting people in finding the work flexibility they crave
5. Helping with maintaining routine or productivity
6. Creating an ideal work environment while on the road

DESIGN OPPORTUNITY

Motivations

Planning

Experiencing



How might we support open dialogue between employees and employers?

How might we help users create and maintain an effective routine?

How might support users in planning so that they are able to maximize their experience when working while traveling?

How might we help users find work friendly environment in their trip?

Citations

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- 2 Ciolfi, & Lockley, E. (2018). From Work to Life and Back Again: Examining the Digitally-Mediated Work/Life Practices of a Group of Knowledge Workers. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 27(3-6), 803–839. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10606-018-9315-3>
- 3 De Carvalho, A. F. P., Ciolfi, L., & Gray, B. (2017, February). Detailing a Spectrum of motivational forces shaping nomadic practices. In *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (pp. 962-977).
- 4 Hemsley, J., Erickson, I., Jarrahi, M. H., & Karami, A. (2020). Digital nomads, coworking, and other expressions of mobile work on Twitter. *First Monday*, 25(3). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v25i3.10246>
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- 6 Olga, H. (2020). In search of a digital nomad: defining the phenomenon. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 1-19.
- 7 <https://www.mbopartners.com/state-of-independence/2020-digital-nomads-report/>
- 8 <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/09/06/work-from-home-why-digital-nomads-think-theyre-future-of-remote-.html>
- 9 <https://hbr.org/2021/07/your-company-needs-a-digital-nomad-policy>
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- 12 <https://www.npr.org/2020/11/16/931400786/small-cities-are-a-big-draw-for-remote-workers-during-the-pandemic>
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- 16 <https://www.inc.com/cameron-albert-deitch/remote-worker-relocation-incentives-benefits-post-covid.html>
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- 21 <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-future-of-work-is-through-workforce-ecosystems/#:~:text=We%20define%20workforce%20ecosystem%20as,both%20individual%20and%20colle>
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Appendix

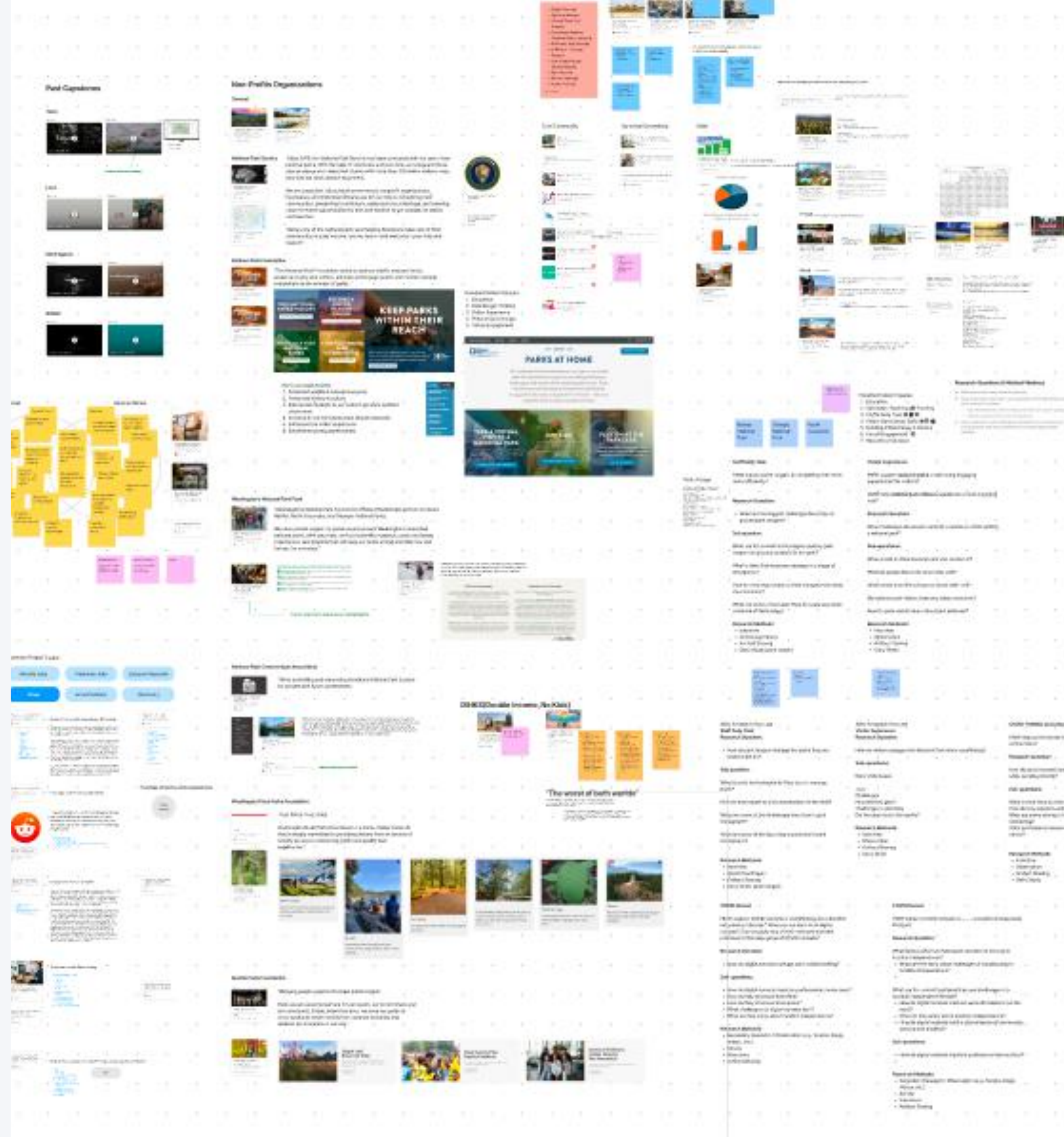
Definition of terms

- **Location Independence:** Having the agency and ability to live and work on your own terms, from wherever you want. You are not tied to a specific geographical location by your professional or personal duties.
- **Digital Nomads:** Individuals who are location independent and use some form of technology to perform their jobs, living a nomadic lifestyle.
- **Remote Workers:** Individuals with jobs that are not restricted to a location/office setting. These individuals (for our purposes) often use some form of technology to mediate communication among co-workers and do their job-related work.
- **Self-Employed Professionals:** Individuals who are not employed by an organization or an individual and instead work as freelancers, run their own business or work on contract basis. These individuals often have more control over their time and work/life balance.
- **Salaried Professionals:** Individuals who are employed by an organization or an individual. They might have a higher management to report to. These individuals often also have a '9-5 work life' and slightly less control over their schedule.
- **Workcationer (COVID Nomads):** For the purpose of our research study, we are seeking workcationers who share the following characteristics:
 - Employed professionals at the onset of the pandemic (2020 or later), who adopted a semi or fully nomadic lifestyle and oftentimes have a permanent residence but travel to a destination for long periods of time (approximately 50% or more of their time away from a permanent address).
 - The attitudes of their lifestyles will be more of a blend between work and travel at the same time. They view traveling as an extension of vacation or leisure time.

Desk research

Email to request link to Figjam research document containing:

- Academic Research
- Journal Articles and News Coverage
- Web Scraping Social Media
- Stakeholder Ecosystem Map
- Competitor Analysis
- Journey Map



Foundational research

Primary research study plan

Team 6 Nomad - Research Plan

Amya Jacobs, Eric Chen, Nikita Nerukar

Introduction:

Digital nomadism has been growing in popularity over the years, largely due to technological advancements. In 2020, the entire world witnessed a seismic shift towards remote work, accelerated in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift propelled salaried professionals out of their tiny city homes, into a location independent lifestyle.

- The number of salaried professionals working as digital nomads grew by 96 percent, from 3.2 million to 6.3 million in 2020.
- The number of digital nomads from the U.S. has more than tripled over the past few years—from 4.8 million in 2018 to 15.5 million in 2021
 - The number of van lifers grew to 2.6 million in 2021, making up 17% of American digital nomads.
 - 32% plan to be digital nomads for a year or less—many expect to return to the office after the pandemic.

Combined with the nomadism trend, we've seen the emergence of a new type of worker—"COVID nomads" also known as "workcationers"—who are taking advantage of this new freedom to pursue location independence through a nomadic lifestyle.

Unlike the traditional digital nomads of times past who may have pursued this lifestyle full-time, many workcationers view this as a temporary experience.

- 54% plan to continue as digital nomads for the next two to three years.
- 65% of workcationers have spent a maximum of 1-3 consecutive months traveling
 - 14% have traveled 3-6 consecutive months
 - 10% have traveled 6 months to 1 year
 - Finally, 11% state they have traveled for 1+ year
- Many workcationers keep a permanent residence and travel part-time

Terminology:

- **Location Independence:** Having the agency and ability to live and work on your own terms, from wherever you want. You are not tied to a specific geographical location by your professional or personal duties.
- **Digital Nomads:** Individuals who are location independent and use some form of technology to perform their jobs, living a nomadic lifestyle.
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 - Employed professionals at the onset of the pandemic (2020 or later), who adopted a semi or fully nomadic lifestyle and oftentimes have a permanent residence but travel to a destination for long periods of time (approximately 50% or more of their time away from a permanent address).
 - The attitudes of their lifestyles will be more of a blend between work and travel at the same time. They view traveling as an extension of vacation or leisure time.

Research Objective:

Our overarching research objective is **To understand how workcationers pursue and experience location independence.**

Research Questions:

What do the different stages of moving, pursuing and experiencing a location independent lifestyle entail?

- **Choosing** (location independent lifestyle): Why do workcationers pursue location independence?
 - What is the individual's motivation to pursue this lifestyle?
 - Do they want to experience culture or experience freedom?
 - How does their life stage affect their motivation?
 - What factors affect an individual's decision?
 - What digital tools and services did they utilize ?
 - What are the pains? What was enjoyable?
 - Why are they hesitant to pursue this change in lifestyle?
- **Planning**(for a location independent lifestyle): What are the current enablers and barriers of a location independent lifestyle?
 - How did they prepare for the transition?
 - How did they approach planning for the travel?(e.g., understanding logistics)
 - What tools did they use? Was it helpful?
 - Was there anything they didn't expect?
- **Experiencing** (anything that happens when they're in the location of stay):
 - What do people enjoy the most about location independent lifestyle?
 - How do digital nomads maintain work-life balance?
 - How do digital nomads manage their responsibilities? (e.g., scheduling/resourcing; expenses & overhead; gear/tech/platforms; location planning; travel planning, work, etc.)
 - What support do they receive from their employers?
 - How do digital nomads build community? (e.g, among one another, with locals, etc.)
 - How did the experience meet their expectations (or not) from planning?
 - What do you enjoy the least? What is challenging?

APPENDIX

Methodology

1. Secondary Research:
 - How will we collect the data:
 - Academic Research
 - Web Scraping Social Media
 - Articles and News coverage
 - Competitor Analysis
 - What we want to learn:
 - Create a hypothesis journey map and affinity map of their pain points, motivations and experiences. This will help us build hypotheses for our interviews.
 - FigJam: [Secondary Research](#)
 - Figma: [Understanding User Journey](#)
2. Exploratory Interviews & Artifact Sharing
 - Semi-structured interviews to journey map our problem space and **narrow down to a specific stage in the journey.**
 - Who are we looking for:
 - 4/5 Workcationers who are either currently pursuing this lifestyle or pursuing it.
 - Recruitment: Screener for participants: [Link](#).
 - Session Guide: [Link](#) (Page 1).
 - 3 Remote Workers that thought about adopting a workcationer lifestyle but did not.
 - Recruitment: Snowball through Alumni/ DUB Slack channel.
 - Session Guide: [Link](#) (Page 2).
 - Why Artifact Sharing?
 - To understand the resources and tools used by participants during their transition into location independence and tools/ resources they use to sustain their location independent lifestyle.
 - This could unveil frustrations with certain tools, challenges they faced and surface pain points for technological intervention.

- What we want to learn:
 - Confirm hypothesis from secondary research and build on the journey map
 - Understand more pain points and workarounds participants have experienced in real life.
 - Narrow down problem space with the need for technological intervention.

3. Update 25th May: [Survey Research Plan Doc](#)

Diary Study/ Semi-Structured Interview

- The method of research will **heavily rely on the stage we narrow down after exploratory research.**
- Who are we looking for -
 - TBD but mostly workcationers: Depends on the Exploratory study.
- Screener: TBD
 - To quickly filter our user participants and efficiently get high-level understanding of what our target audiences think and do.
 - This will also help us segment our user group around certain traits.
- What we want to learn:
 - Get a more in-depth understanding of our narrowed problem space.
 - Understand and observe the struggles of our stakeholders.
- Possible Methods:
 - Stakeholder interviews: Understand personal journeys, motivations, day-to-day life
 - Mind mapping and word association: To better understand the process.
 - Diary Studies: Get more in depth understanding of their day-to day.

APPENDIX

- 4. Qualitative Survey (Over Summer)
 - o To reinforce our research findings and understand if the qualitative studies can be stretched to adjacent stakeholder groups as well.

Recruitment

- Screener for exploratory
 - o [Link](#) to the screener survey
- Recruitment Plan
 - o Ideal Participant
 - Users who have workation before or are currently doing it.
 - Snowball sampling
 - On Facebook groups, reddit and other nomad community groups.
 - Salaried professionals' organization.

Draft message

Have you worked remotely while traveling? We would love to hear about your experience through an hour long virtual interview. Please fill out this form to participate in our academic study. Interview participants will be compensated with \$20 for their time.

Consent/Gratuity Form

Included in the pre-interview screener survey and introduction during the interview.

Thank you for joining us today! My name is [Moderator name], this my classmate - [Notetaker name], who will be taking notes for our conversation. We are Master's students at UW conducting research to learn about workcationer's experience . I'm going to ask you to share your journey and thoughts with me about this topic. There are a few things I want to let you know before we get started.

First, there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. Anything you say will be valuable to us. At the same time, we want to be respectful of your privacy, so please let me know if you are uncomfortable answering any questions or need to take some time. We are happy to pause or end the interview at any time.

We would also like to record the session today so that we can refer to it for further note taking and discussion. Everything we discuss will be confidential and won't be discussed outside of the context of the class we are conducting research for. Your identity will also be kept confidential and we'll refer to you as "Participant X".

Do you have any questions before we begin?

- Documentation Plan

Tools & Technology Checklist

- Laptop with Zoom
- [Scheduling Platform](#)
- Audio Transcription Software (Otter.ai)

Forms & Data Collection Checklist

- Gratuity Release Form
- Semi-structured interview guide
- Research exercise deck (artifact sharing, diary study, etc.)

Recording Notes

- Ask the participant for permission to record the session
- Use Zoom to record to the cloud
- Begin audio AI transcription recording

Approximate Timeline

Week	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Apr 17-23	Apr 24-30	May 1-7	May 8-14	May 15-21	May 22-28	May 29-Jun 4	Jun 5-11
Recruit Participants		Fri, Apr 22 - Fri, May 6						
Send Screeners		Fri, Apr 22 - Fri, May 6						
Conduct Interviews			Wed, Apr 27 - Fri, May 20					
Data Analysis & Transcript Coding			Wed, Apr 27 - Fri, May 20					

APPENDIX

Insights						Wed, May 25 - Mon, May 30	
Complete Final Report							Mon, May 30 - Tue, Jun 7

Operations

Responsibilities

- Participant Communication
 - Emails:
 1. Invitation to interview with link to Calendly
 2. (Optional) Email follow up for people who don't sign up for an interview
 3. Reminder of upcoming interview (automated through Calendly?)
 4. Thank you email with compensation
 5. (Optional) Follow up invite to participate in a future round of research (e.g., diary study)
 6. (Optional) A link to our final project and thank them again
 - Managing Calendar (Calendly)
 - Setting up Calendly
 - Ensuring participants and researchers are both notified of upcoming interviews
 - Managing Compensation
 - Tracking through spreadsheet
 - Making purchases
 - Ensuring participants receive compensation
 - Manage Research Roles
 - Spreadsheet to Coordinate interview and notetaker for each scheduled call

Within Team activities

-
- Sending reminder

Resources

Sources:

1. <https://www.projectuntethered.com/digital-nomad-statistics/#:-:text=70%25%20of%20American%20digital%20nomads,pandemic%2Ddrive%20remote%20work%20boom>
2. <https://www.mbopartners.com/state-of-independence/2020-digital-nomads-report/>
3. <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/how-many-people-could-work-from-home>
4. <https://nomadific.com/digital-nomad-statistics/#who-are-digital-nomads/>

Analysis & Synthesis

Email to request link to Figjam research document containing:

- Interview notes
- Research synthesis and analysis

