

Digital nomads and sense of place: A case study of Lisbon

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Abstract

With new digital technologies, some people have enabled a 'location independent' lifestyle for themselves, working whenever and wherever they wish. A new type of traveller - the digital nomad - has emerged in recent years, typically seen to combine work and leisure whilst travelling to multiple locations. Often supported by self-employment, with an access to the internet, digital nomads are able to work in diverse locations whilst earning a living on the way. However it seems that digital nomads often travel to particular destinations where leisure potential is abundant and where certain facilities support the lifestyle, therefore resulting in the congregation of digital nomads in some places across the globe. These destinations are known to be across the globe, but some research has touched upon the lifestyle in Asia, Europe, and South America. Despite the emergence of these people in certain locations, no research has yet looked at the digital nomad and their relationships to the places they visit. Such populations should not be underestimated in terms of the effect they have on the culture and the environment, particularly where these groups congregate. Research which explores these people-place relations therefore becomes relevant for destinations. This research takes a sense of place framework to explore the relationships digital nomads have with one popular digital nomad destination in Europe: Lisbon. Through the use of three subconcepts: place attachment, place identity and place belonging, this is explored in depth in order to reveal an overall sense of place of the digital nomad. Interviews and a methodology which employed a phenomenological lens helped to uncover this information. The research concludes a number of things, including the importance of the digital nomad community and the centrality of the unique place characteristics of Lisbon to an overall sense of place. However the research also found that digital nomads can be considered a broad and diverse category for research, which could have implications for further research. Moreover, Lisbon is suggested to be very unique in terms of its suitability for digital nomads and the extent to which some digital nomads choose to stay more long term. The research then poses the question as to whether Lisbon can be considered the core of digital nomadism in Europe, and calls for research which uses a sense of place framework to uncover people-place relations in other digital nomad destinations.

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Introduction

With new digital technologies, large numbers of people have been able to become, 'location independent', away from offices or homes, working wherever and whenever they wish (Wood, 2013). A relatively new kind of traveller, known as the digital nomad, is seen to utilise these technologies and the advantages of a highly connected world, pushing the boundaries of what it means to be mobile (Richards, 2015). Most commonly discoverable via social media platforms and blogs (Reichenberger, 2017), these individuals are known to travel, often perpetually, working in numerous locations (Nash et al., 2018). Combining work and leisure, digital nomads typically uproot from their home countries, practicing persistent travel and moving between destinations.

This often means that digital nomads are supported by self-employment (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009), or at least work which takes place online (Nash et al., 2018) therefore facilitating a lifestyle which can be lived independent of location. Benson and O'Reilly (2009) claim that digital nomads prefer being their own boss for the purpose of optimal temporal and spatial freedom, and the decision to become a digital nomad is unrelated to an inability to find work in their given location. Some scholars suggest that digital nomads represent a group trying to escape from the rigid structures of everyday life and towards a lifestyle of 'true freedom', since the lifestyle often emerges from motives relating to leaving behind 9-5 obligations and the 'rat-race' of modern life and routine (Nash et al., 2018). These motives are highlighted by O'Brien (2011) who goes as far as to state digital nomads prioritise freedom over security and independence over a regular income.

Despite the trend being on the rise and expected to increase even more so with the flexibility of work contracts and the pervasiveness of ICT, academic literature has not yet sufficiently acknowledged the phenomenon. It is worth noting here, that despite a handful of scholars who have carried out some research on the topic, to date there is still no consensus regarding a definition of the digital nomad. In fact, Dal Fiore et al. (2014), when looking at the relationship between ICT and travel found only one definition of the digital nomad and this was on Wikipedia:

"Digital nomads are individuals who use telecommunications technologies to earn a living and, more generally, conduct their life in a nomadic manner. Such workers typically work remotely – from home, coffee shops, public libraries, and even recreational vehicles – to accomplish tasks and goals that traditionally took place in a single, stationary workplace." (Wikipedia, 2019).

The general lack of scientific information surrounding digital nomads renders the lifestyle to being portrayed and understood mostly through potentially biased sources of information (through blogs, online articles, social media etc) (Reichenberger, 2018). More specifically, and of interest in this thesis, it appears that no academic research has looked into digital nomads and their connections with the places in which they temporarily reside.

Digital nomads - often from Western backgrounds - travel from destination to destination, embodying a mobile lifestyle which consequently sends them to numerous locations. As a result, you might find such people working from a cafe in Bali one month and a co-working space in Berlin the next (Richards, 2015). However for many digital nomads, destinations chosen for temporary relocation are not arbitrary (Thompson, 2018). According to a number of blogs and websites, there are a handful of digital nomad 'hotspots' across the globe. These include: Medellin in Colombia, Bali in Indonesia, Chiang Mai in Thailand and Lisbon in Portugal and a handful of others (Nomadlist, 2018; Forbes, 2018; be-remote, 2019). When it comes to the reasons as to why digital nomads have congregated in such locations, Nash et al., (2018) suggest that it is likely related to a place's potential for hobbies such as surfing, hiking and skiing, whilst Reichenberger (2018) maintains that lower costs of living play an important role. However in general, very little is known about digital nomads' relationships with places and the meanings they give to the places within which they congregate. In this thesis, digital nomads' relationships to place will be explored, through a case study carried out in Lisbon, Portugal.

Preliminary problem statement

Transient communities - and of relevance here, digital nomads - should not be underestimated in terms of their effect on locations. Digital nomads as a population are often seen to cluster together, visiting only short term, and holding significant spending power, (which is higher than the average resident in Lisbon (Cocola-Gant and Gago, 2019)) thus increasing their ability to affect a place; its culture, environment and community (Benson and O'Reilly, 2005; Polson, 2015; Schlagwein, 2018). Information about these populations is especially relevant for those places which attract high concentrations of digital nomads, since a congregation could have a great affect on local welfare and public services (Benson and O'Reilly, 2005). Lisbon is city which has experienced rapid development and immense pressure on citizens, due to numerous kinds of visitors which have been attracted to the city in recent years (Cocola-Gant and Gago, 2019). It seems that one group of people the city increasingly attracts are in fact digital nomads, however until now academic research which looks at digital nomads and their relationships to certain places actually lacks. As mentioned previously, until now research about digital nomads has often focused on elements of the lifestyle as a whole and most information about the population is found merely on blogs, social media and potential biased sources of information (Reichenberger, 2018). Academic research surrounding digital nomads and their relationships to the places they visit could therefore be a helpful first step in informing places - and in this case, Lisbon - about how their environment and facilities are used, regarded and understood by the population. Currently, where information about this community and their relationships to places lacks, digital nomad 'hotspots' such as Lisbon will remain unable to make informed decisions about future developments within place which meet the expectations of both locals residents and transient communities alike. More information about the societal and academic relevance of this research, as well as more information about the case study relating to Lisbon will also be provided later in this thesis.

Research objective

In hope of contributing towards filling this gap in academic research as well as providing some potentially useful or relevant knowledge for destinations, this thesis will explore the sense of place of the digital nomad in Lisbon. Specifically, this will involve uncovering the lived-experiences of digital nomads as they exist within the city. It will seek to uncover the meanings that digital nomads attach to the city and spaces within it, as well as any feelings, emotions and understandings that are experienced in relation to place. A focus on the details relating to their sense of: attachment, identity and belonging in relation to the city itself will generate knowledge which can be used to gain an understanding about a more general sense of place from a digital nomad perspective. It is not expected that each digital nomad shares a common understanding of Lisbon as a place, however by exploring individual experiences, it is hoped that patterns and themes about a more general sense of place can be identified. The following research question will guide this research:

1. *How can a digital nomads' sense of place be understood in terms of; place attachment, place identity and place belonging?*

These sub-components of sense of place will be outlined in much more detail throughout the theoretical framework. Nevertheless, it is assumed that through the use of these sub-components, results which help to uncover how digital nomads experience Lisbon will be generated. The following section will depict why such an understanding is important and relevant both in relation to practical societal issues as well as for academic interest.

Academic relevance

Whilst research in geography, environmental psychology and other disciplines has used various theories to explore people-place relationships in certain locales, there seems to be an academic void surrounding digital nomads and their relationships with place, perhaps due to an emphasis on their transience. Manzo in 2005 called for research which uncovers an understanding of the full

range of places with which we develop relationships with. Although some research has looked at the social construction of places for location independent individuals (Mancinelli, 2018), in general research on this topic lacks. Undoubtedly this is due to the slow introduction of location independent and digital nomad research in academia in general, which until now has only seen a handful of academic articles written on the topic. In line with Manzo's (2005) suggestion to research people-place relations with a modern day, more mobile approach, the case of the digital nomad should be explored.

Manzo's claim also suggests that research should not only be restricted to those places considered home or away; not only the residential, or the holiday destination for example. With the study of mobile populations - who tend to blur the line between home and away and attach meanings to multiple places - a more modern day understanding of people-place relations can be uncovered. After all, in a world where mobility becomes more common, what truly constitutes a modern day 'sense of place' is primarily determined by the meanings given to a place by diverse individuals, whilst simultaneously, 'different people, differently placed, engage with the world in different ways' (Campelo et al., 2014. p154). The notion of sense of place with this understanding becomes changeable, fluid and unique for each person within each place. A close examination of the practices that different people use in accounting for the consumption and engagement of the places they visit therefore becomes very interesting for researchers, especially those in travel and tourism (McCabe and Stokoe 2004). Regarding the digital nomad, uncovering their sense of place on the move but specific to certain locales, is particularly interesting, since it is until now a somewhat untouched subject. This idea of sense of place as individual and unique will be central in this thesis, with attention paid less to temporality and more to the composition and complexity of sense of place in the city of Lisbon. Sense of place research which has already been carried out both in terms of those populations fixed in place and those which are more mobile will be portrayed in the theoretical framework. However, it is also important to understand how filling an academic gap in literature can also be applied to societal and practical situations. This will be explained next, in the context of Lisbon.

Societal relevance

By filling in the knowledge gap previously outlined, tangible actions can be taken. With currently very little understanding of digital nomads and their relations to the places they visit, it is resultantly difficult for destinations to make any well-informed decisions - both now and in the future - relating to digital nomads. According to Benson and O'Reilly (2009), the effects of groups that come under the heading 'lifestyle migrants' should not be underestimated since they are both growing in population size and diversifying. Moreover, since although the absolute number of those migrating from developed countries in search of increased quality of life might be relatively few compared to tourists for example, the actual effect on a place could be significant, particularly for those places which are beginning to attract high concentrations (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). This includes aspects such as culture, environment, and community. Information relating to digital nomads and their connections to digital nomad destinations - or 'hotspots' might become particularly relevant for example if areas gain a majority foreign, short term population which could have enormous implications for local welfare provision of public services. Kianicka et al., (2006) maintains that for certain tourist destinations it has often proved a challenge to strike a balance between economic development, authenticity and sustainable development, whilst taking into account the opinions of different parties within those destinations. This is particularly difficult given the economic, social and environmental impacts that tourism can create for destinations. Similarly then, without information about digital nomads' connections with the locales they visit and congregate within, successful action in terms of marketing, policy making and the formulation of successful and sustainable development is difficult to achieve. An understanding of how digital nomads attach meanings to certain 'hotspots', or the places that attract digital nomads could then have a number of interesting benefits for destinations themselves.

If we are to assume a digital nomad's sense of place forms a basis for their aims and needs regarding the future of a landscape and its development (Kianicka et al, 2006) such an

understanding can help to guide local development and policy making more effectively and in the right direction to accommodate such groups. In terms of conflict resolution between locals and visitors, Kianicka et al (2006, p.55) state that, 'conflicts among aims can be better understood if the underlying place relations are known'. Research using a sense of place framework could then be one way to provide information which could help to diminish such conflicts throughout any future changes to a landscape in which digital nomads frequent and which locals inhabit. On top of this, sense of place research has also been carried out with the intention of informing decisions about the marketing and development of destinations (Campelo et al., 2014) as well as decisions relating to the implementation of certain policies (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). After all, to some extent destination branding and development determines the future of a place and makes promises to visitors as well as inhabitants who belong in that place (Campelo et al, 2013). Since digital nomads do not fit smoothly into a well known category (for example not tourists, residents, or expats), it becomes interesting to understand sense of place for such an undefined group. For this reason, the digital nomad and their relation to Lisbon as a hotspot for digital nomads deserves scientific attention.

Structure of this thesis

Following this introduction, this thesis is made up of four main chapters:

Theoretical framework

Firstly, a theoretical framework will be provided. Within this chapter, the theory chosen for this thesis will be outlined and discussed. More specifically, this includes theory relating to sense of place as an overarching concept as well as its three sub-concepts. Additionally, phenomenology will be defined and will be discussed in relation to its utilisation for sense of place research as well as this research itself. The chapter ends with a straightforward conceptual model to depict the theory that will be used.

Methodology

Secondly, there is a chapter about the methodology used for the research. In this section information about the methods - namely interviews - data collection and analysis are outlined. A reflection about the quality and ethics of the research concludes this chapter.

Results

Thirdly, there is a results section, broken down into two parts: general findings as well as sense of place findings. The latter section is composed of three parts; place attachment, place identity and place belonging. Here, results from interviews are laid out and organised, highlighting important themes and patterns relating to each subconcept.

Discussion and conclusion

Finally, a discussion and conclusion chapter looks deeper into the results section. In this chapter, results are discussed in relation to other literature and interesting or striking findings are outlined. Moreover, there are suggestions for further research where this research uncovers interesting topics for more in-depth analysis. Finally, this section also highlights alternative reasons for the findings in this thesis and points out some limitations.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, theory and concepts which underpin this research will be outlined. The section will start with an in-depth, academic and critical discussion around sense of place as an overarching concept. Next, the three sense of place subconcepts will be outlined including examples of their use within academic research. Following this will be a section depicting phenomenology and the ways in which such a paradigm can support sense of place research. Finally, a conceptual model will be presented which will help to portray the way in which this research is constructed. First and foremost, it is deemed important to provide an introduction which outlines the theme of mobilities within literature and how this links to peoples' relationships with places.

Mobility and place

In many ways it seems like the world is on the move. There are endless social practices in the contemporary world which involve specific moving assemblages of objects, technologies and humans. In fact, our modern-day, connected world has been referred to as the mobile society (Urry, 2016) and there has been a notable increase of academic literature in the social sciences in the last decade which focuses on the importance of mobility in the social world (Endres et al., 2016). Within this realm of research in a 'mobilities paradigm', a great deal of mobile objects have been studied, as well as certain populations such as: 'asylum seekers, international students, terrorists, members of diasporas, holidaymakers, business people, sports stars, refugees, backpackers, commuters, the early retired, young professionals, prostitution, armed forces' who fill our airports, buses, trains and ships (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p. 207). Of course it is needless to say that mobility is not equal or occurring at the same rate for everyone in the world. Whilst business men transport effortlessly across long distances, some vast populations living five miles below remain static in their lifestyles (Massey, 2010). It is however undeniable that in today's world, mobility defines the lives of many.

For those who do for one reason or another travel across distances, relationships to places themselves become more complex, or in other words, people-place relationships have become increasingly fragile, complex and varied in a globalised world (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Places, according to Cresswell (2014) are physical spaces that people have made meaningful, or have become attached to in some way (Cresswell, 2014). Premodern notions of 'place' and the meanings people attached to them were once more akin to that of home; rooted in kinship systems, trust within stable community relationships, and the continuity of traditional beliefs and religion (Morley and Robins, 1995) this. Although for many this notion still persists, with places symbolic of belonging, familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment (Antonsich, 2010), globalisation and increased mobility has involved the transformation of what 'place' represents for millions. Thus, people-place relationships can be understood as increasingly complex.

Firstly, our relationships with places are somewhat complex due to their changing nature over time. A sense of hyper connectivity has brought together social, economic and political functions (Wood, 2013) 'allowing new forms of coordination of people, meetings, and events to emerge' (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p. 207). This can also be understood in the sense that more people pass through and exist within places away from home, leaving their mark and changing the landscape and society within a space. Therefore, whilst places can indeed have a character of their own, for many places there is very rarely a seamless, coherent identity, or single sense of place which everyone shares (Massey, 2010). Instead, people's routes through a place, their favourite parts of it, the connections they make (physically, or by phone or post, or in memory and imagination) between that place and the rest of the world vary dramatically. 'If it is now recognised that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places' (Massey, 2010). Secondly, and inextricably linked to this, the identities a place has are then tightly linked to the meanings given to it by those who have lived-experiences within those places (Manzo, 2005). According to Manzo (2005) sex, race, ethnicity, marital status, parenthood status, sexual orientation, income - and of particular interest in this thesis - mobility among others, each have

unique impacts on our experiences of places. In turn, our experience in a place and the resultant feelings and emotions we associate with places, therefore give a place its real meaning.

Current explorations into people-place relationships portray that they often go far beyond notions of fixity, home, or the residence (Manzo, 2003) and are in a contemporary society, complex. For example, when one considers that 61% of EU citizens aged 15 or over participated in tourism in the year 2015, whilst for those 61%, the average number of touristic trips taken within the year was four (UNWTO, 2019), it is easy to understand that many people gain experiences within many places in their lifetime. What's more, whether we visit a place as a tourist, a business person, a migrant or as a religious pilgrim, also changes the way in which we experience and give meaning to these places. Importantly, although many individuals feel certain emotions towards their own neighbourhood (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001), even a short visit to a town abroad during a holiday can also result in the development of a kind of emotional attachment with a place (Kianicka et al., 2006). Additionally, soaring global migration in recent years has resulted in huge numbers of migrants having to renegotiate their relationship with places, forcing them to forge multi-positioned connections to different locales across the globe; within their host destination, within their place of origin as well as across their migratory journeys (Cook and Waite, 2011). Many places across a refugee's journey come to symbolise fear, others hope and other, new home bases (Cook and Waite, 2011). Moreover, lifestyle migrants in search of more relaxed lifestyles in warmer climates also make up a population forging multifaceted connections and strong feelings of attachment with a new place in which they reside for part of the year (Akerlund and Sandberg, 2015). Contemporary forms of mobility have then brought to the forefront new ways of thinking about "place" with many scholars demonstrating that places are socially constituted through interaction and everyday routines in an era of globalisation (Polson, 2015). In order to explore this idea, a sense of place framework has often been used.

Defining sense of place

Sense of place, has been understood in a number of different ways. This is in part due to its use within different disciplines which each use unique ontological and epistemological perspectives. However in adding to its ambiguous understandings, sense of place research has also been used to explore varying phenomena such as; built as well as natural environments; residents as well as transient communities (Kyle and Chick, 2007). It is then no wonder that the term has been used and comprehended differently. Nevertheless, the concept, 'sense of space' as an overarching term has been discussed by numerous geographers who broadly suggest that the term refers to, 'the ways in which people organise places and attach meaning to space in their lives' (Tuan, 1977, p. 18).

In terms of the composition of places themselves, Massey (1994), who wrote about the concept of sense of place with a focus on globalisation, emphasised the importance of understanding place as a phenomenon made up of certain global networks comprised of culture, people and communications. In this way, she defined sense of place as, 'constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus'. Thus, she maintains that places themselves actually become, 'articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings' (Massey, 1994, p. 6). Broadly, sense of space - as opposed to being static - is therefore claimed by some geographers to be an ongoing process created through the coproduction of geographical setting and everything that a person brings to it (Manzo, 2003; Massey, 1994). Place understood in this way also supports the idea that cities, towns and neighbourhoods for example, should not be understood as homogenous entities, but should be understood as a composition of the realities of all who live and pass through them. In this thesis, this understanding of the term sense of place will be carried forward, whereby places themselves are understood as made up of multiple realities of those who live or move within and between places.

In this sense, this thesis will move away from place understood as a static home and towards a more mobile understanding of the term. Sense of place research has often tended to assume an

inevitable link between sense of place and 'at homeness', thus disallowing for the inclusion of transient communities within the field of study (Kaltenborn and Williams, 2002). Contributing to this idea of synonymy between 'at homeness' and sense of place, is the idea that one's sense of place can be measured. For example, Shamai in 1991 created a scale from 0 to 10, put forward as a way to measure the intensity of people-places relations. Understood in this way, sense of place is understood as intensifying over time. Lewicka (2011) explains this more traditional view of sense of place which, "assumes that there are different gradations of 'insidedness' [varying] from a total alienation from place ('objective outsidedness') through various stages of 'insidedness', of which the highest is 'existential insidedness', a full immersion in the place, reserved for those who have lived there for generations or at least for a very long time)" (Lewicka, 2011, p. 214). Manzo (2005) argues that such a conceptualisation suggests that rootedness to a particular locale is a valued goal. Additionally, Stedman (2006), highlights the danger that understood in this way, newcomers are mostly assumed to fit within this traditional view; not sharing the true values of communities in place, not contributing to the creation of place, merely consuming such places, unable to develop attachment in short time periods, and endangering the true character of a place by bringing with them foreign ways of life.

Kaltenborn and Williams (2002) also warn against claiming equivalence between one's sense of place and their feelings of 'at homeness' or length of residence within that place. Despite the more traditional perspective, sense of place research has more recently assisted in articulating the roles that places play in human lives and the meanings attached to them, helping to validate important aspects of the human experience and uncovering the realities of diverse groups (Manzo, 2005). This includes transient groups. Research with a focus on transient communities involves university students and their move from home to campus (Chow and Healey, 2008), tourists' sense of place within destinations (Smith, 2015) and transient professionals and the role of place (Nowicka, 2007). On the level of the individual, places have been seen to generate meanings for transient communities; the meanings they attach to places simply take on a different form or may have a different kind of quality than that of permanent residents (Kaltenborn and Williams, 2002). It is therefore important not to exclude a sense of place framework from the study of transient communities and their relationships to places, but instead this can be somewhat useful when it comes to uncovering the diverse array of meanings that people attach to places. Suitably, Tuan (1977), who wrote about sense of place from a humanistic standpoint, referred to it in terms of a reality to be clarified and understood from the various perspectives of those who have given such geographical space, specific meanings. On the level of the individual then, our everyday experiences of places can therefore be understood as directly linked to our own position within the spatial assemblages of a city (McCann and Ward, 2011).

With a focus on individual human experiences within places, sense of place has also been utilised by environmental psychologists. Environmental psychologists have focused particularly on the emotions, feelings and meanings that individuals and groups have attached to diverse settings. In doing this, a handful of key terms have been used to explore the broader concept. In many cases, this has involved understanding sense of place as an umbrella concept, encompassing place relations as diverse as 'place attachment' (bonds that develop between people and environment (Altman and Low 1992)), 'place identity' (dimensions of self that define an individuals relation to environment (Prohansky et al., 1983)) as well as 'place belonging' (feelings of being at 'home' in place (Yuval-Davis, 2006)). However, it is not only environmental psychologists who have used these componential terms in their work, with geographers also extensively using them in research within sense of place research to explore relationships between people and the physical landscape. Due to their diverse use within different disciplines, it is unsurprising that the ways in which these conceptual terms are suggested to relate to each other is very often contested.

As has already been argued, in many cases the term, 'sense of place' is considered as a broader concept, encompassing these other terms (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). On the other hand, some scholars have conceptualised these aforementioned three concepts of human-place relations as equal, separate and distinct to each other (Manzo, 2003). Alternatively, Lewicka (2011, p. 208) states that the varying concepts relating to people-place relationships are best treated "as

different pieces of a broken jigsaw puzzle which may (and should) be put together.” Expressing the need for understanding between concepts and disciplines, Lewicka maintains that the individual concepts have no meaning except as part of a larger theoretical context. In any case, the terms certainly share a great deal of commonalities.

In this thesis, and in accordance with the understanding of Lewicka (2011), sense of place will be understood as an umbrella concept which encompasses; place attachment, place identity and place belonging as sub-concepts. Work from both geography, environmental psychology and other social sciences will also be used in order to provide a thorough examination of sense of place and their components. The following section will outline these three concepts and the ways in which they have been used within the disciplines of geography as well as environmental psychology. It is important to highlight here that the subconcepts are of course not entirely disassociated with each other and in many ways are inevitably linked. Nevertheless, they each bring to the table very interesting and relevant approaches and channels with which to explore a digital nomad sense of place in Lisbon. As such, the three concepts can be understood as being used in this research to provide structure and thorough exploration of the topic at hand.

Place Attachment

The first sense of place subconcept which will be used in this thesis is place attachment. Low and Altman (1992, p. 4) used the term “place attachment” to refer to human–place bonding, stressing that “affect, emotion and feeling are central to the concept”. Meanwhile, Scannell and Gifford (2010) define place attachment as the bonding that occurs between individuals and their meaningful environments. When it comes to what exactly people become attached to within a place, Stedman (2003) suggests that the physical environment and its characteristics have been downplayed, whilst the social construction of place dwelled on. In his eyes, landscape characteristics matter in that they underpin both place attachment and satisfaction within places. For example, Eisenhauer et al. (2000) found in their research that respondents were almost evenly divided when it came to why places held special meanings to them personally, with “family & friend related reasons” important for 36.9% and environmental features & characteristics of place” at 34.2%. For this thesis, both environmental features as well as social ones will be explored in hope of uncovering information about place attachment in Lisbon for digital nomads.

Place attachment has been claimed worthy of study due to its relevance to many important social processes. For example, it has been used as a framework for exploration into the different scales to which people can develop emotions or feelings of attachment for. This has included residential properties (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001), neighbourhoods (Kusenbach, 2008) as well as countries. Interestingly, Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) in their research measuring the social and physical aspects of place attachment across three spatial scales (home, neighbourhood and city), found that strength of attachment was at its greatest for home and city, whilst it was less strong at the neighbourhood scale. Additionally, place attachment has been deemed important in uncovering people-place relationships with nature. Some researchers have looked at meanings ascribed to the natural environment in order to uncover sense of place. For example, (Brehm, 2007) looked at the different meanings local residents of a small rural town ascribed to the environment, whilst Scannell and Gifford (2010) found that physical environment is often that which people become, ‘attached’ to more quickly than civic or social aspects of place.

Naturally, place attachment has also been used within research which looks at peoples’ separation from home regions due to its ability to assist in uncovering certain emotions and feelings towards places. For example, an examination of place attachment as an emotional bond has highlighted the distress and grief felt by those who are forced to relocate in processes of migration (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). However, place attachment has also been used in order to understand the renegotiation of place and home for those arriving in new destinations. This has led to a great deal of research which focuses on diasporas and the simultaneity of home (Waite and Cook, 2011) as well as attachment to new places for migrants in host countries (Qian and Zhu, 2014). Also looking at plurality of place attachments, Chow and Healy (2008) examined how students moving to

university spoke about their transition from one place to another with a focus on loss of place and the erosion of attachment to such places as well as the formulation of new ties within places. In terms of place attachment later in life, some scholars have looked at retirement migration from developed to developing countries and the ways in which place attachment is renegotiated away from home after retirement (Sunil et al, 2007). Research carried out by Sunil et al (2007) found that considerable populations of retired people from the USA chose Mexico, as a destination for better quality of life and relaxed lifestyles. The researchers found that retirees became particularly attached to the different environments they faced, the natural beauty of the location as well as the rich special and cultural life and social communities they were faced with in their new country (Sunil et al, 2007).

Part of this increased interest in the diverse composition of human attachment to different places, stems from an awareness that such bonds have become fragile and vulnerable to change, since globalization and eased mobility threaten the existence of, and our connections to, those places which most important to us (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Whilst it is clear that place attachment research has assisted in the exploration of different people-place relationships, research into digital nomads specifically is lacking. Accordingly, this thesis will explore the people-place relationships for digital nomads - which in accordance with place attachment research - also focuses on the bonding, feelings and emotions involved in the people-place relationships formed in the city.

Place identity

Going further than identifying people-place relations through the study of emotions and feelings, some scholars have gone as far as to suggest that individuals can connect to a place to the point that it comes to actually represent who they are (Urquhart and Acott, 2014). Proshansky (1978) - in the field of environmental psychology - originally defined place identity as “those dimensions of the self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals and behavioural tendencies” (p. 155). Fundamentally, this conceptualisation suggests that development of one’s identity is not based solely on individual, interpersonal and social processes, but it also extends to the physical environment; whether natural or manmade. Thus, place becomes a fundamental component of personal identity. Bernardo and Palma-Oliviera (2016) state that within environmental psychology there are three main ways in which place identity has been theorised: place experienced as part of the self or as a self-extension, place as congruent with the values, attitudes and behavioural dispositions of the self and place identity in terms of emotional links to place (most similar to that of place attachment). Despite these different understandings of place identity, what can be generalised is that place identity can be defined as a concept of self-identity, whereby people describe themselves as belonging to and identifying with certain places (Hernandez et al., 2007). This is indeed how place identity will be used in this thesis to contribute towards an understanding of digital nomads’ sense of place in Lisbon.

Place identity research has then often focused on certain attributes of places, in relation to the populations that have these lived experiences within places. For example, Urquhart and Acott (2014) explore the relationship between marine fisheries and place. Relationships between fishing identity, community identity and the physical environment are revealed, documenting the complexity and interrelationships that exist between them. As such, the authors depict a particular sense of space in fishing places encompassed of contemporary and historic fishing activity. Moreover, place identity research has also been applied to recreation and leisure. Long (2014) explores the relationship between people and place with a focus on music using a case study in Sheffield, UK. Long discusses the unique ‘soundscapes’ of cities which exist in popular imagination, highlighting the particular contribution of Sheffield which attracts tourists to the city to take part in the music scene. Similarly, sport has also been claimed as one attribute which can affect certain place identities. Tonts and Atherley (2010) uncover the formation of place identity through local and regional interactions, practices and memories in sport, highlighting the sense of difference which sport creates with nearby towns as well as the tight social bonds created within place as a result. Finally, Larson and Pearson (2012) look at work in relation to place, maintaining

that cities, states and regions are highly influential in shaping various aspects of personal identity. The scholars explore this idea through the use of interviews with entrepreneurs, looking at how local, place-based discourses shape occupational identities, and more specifically entrepreneurial ones. They claim that understanding occupational identity relies heavily upon exploring the ways in which occupation is enacted in specific places.

If one considers digital nomads as a group of individuals who visit particular places in search of certain lifestyle qualities, and who search for digital nomad communities in certain cities (Thompson, 2019), then place identity becomes an interesting concept to assist in uncovering an understanding of digital nomads and their relationship to places. According to Savage et al. (2005), people increasingly take part in what is called, 'elective belonging', which refers to how we select places to reside before putting down roots. This idea, tightly linked to place identity, emphasises the idea that local belonging can be strongly felt through a persons' choice to reside somewhere which resonates with their personal identity (Tomaney, 2014). In other words, people attach their own biographies to their chosen location, using place as a way to perform their identity. This idea is highlighted by Skovgaard-Smith and Poulfelt (2017) who look at 'cosmopolitanism' as a culture of its own within the expat community in the city of Amsterdam. The authors maintain that those who identify as, 'citizens of the world' in this way, still belong in place collectively with others who identify in similar vein. For the purpose of this thesis, the idea of elective belonging will be discussed in relation to place identity (as opposed to place belonging), in that it will help to reveal the ways in which one's identity can be directly related to a certain place. In the case of Lisbon where there exists a community of digital nomads, gaining an understanding of the relationship between digital nomad community, identity and place can then contribute greatly to a broader digital nomad sense of place.

Place belonging

As is implied above, the idea that place identity is fundamentally interwoven with the idea of belonging to a place is widely accepted not only in terms of choosing a place to live. Loader (2006), for example, puts forward that idea that, 'Who am I?' cannot in any way be separated from the question, 'Where do I belong?'. In other words, a sense of self, is closely associated with feelings and emotions relating to place belongingness. Place belonging has then naturally been used to explore the concept of, 'the home'. There is an almost unanimous opinion that the home represents the prototypical place, symbolising continuity, order, attachment, comfort, security and refuge (Lewicka, 2011). Yuval-Davis (2006) understands place belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of actually being at home in a certain place. Also with less of an emphasis on static feelings of home, Tomaney (2014) suggests that place belonging refers to a feeling of being not only 'at home' but also 'feeling safe' in a place. Emphasising the individual, and echoing a phenomenological approach of humanistic geography, Antonsich (2010) broadly describes place belonging as a symbolic space of familiarity.

Naturally this idea of familiarity has resulted in a great deal of research which focuses on belonging to a 'home' and very often this has been equated with long-term local residents. For example, McCreanor et al (2006) used place belonging as a conceptual tool for uncovering local residents' sense of place in a neighbourhood in New Zealand, examining the cultural experiences within, and feelings towards place between different native and cultural groups in the same neighbourhood. Similarly, Stratford (2009) used a place belonging framework in Hobart, Tasmania to explore place attachment of local residents during contestations over some decisions put forward by developers for the building of a marina. Her research found that notions of belonging for residents of Hobart were intimately interwoven with material and symbolic particularities of place. Literature which combines the topic of place belonging with mobility in recent years has very often focused on migration and diasporas.

Chow et al (2016, p. 243) in, "rescuing' the idea of home from its two assumed arch-enemies 'mobility' and 'urbanization', reconceptualise the idea of home, arguing for home and belonging to be understood as 'made', rather than rooted in citizenship. This kind of understanding of belonging in place has been carried forward in lots of more recent research which focuses on the re-creating of identities in new environments during turbulent and insecure processes of adaptation. Marcu (2011) in her work which looks at the settling of Romanian migrants in Spain,

emphasises the creation of multiple and fluid identities which are born in the searching and movement processes. Nelson and Hiemstra (2008) look at the day-to-day negotiation of place and belonging to place which is constructed between immigrant and non-immigrant residents in two US towns. The authors explore the interactions between both groups, unveiling the mutual creation of a new sense of belonging in place for both. Place belonging has also been researched in terms of comparisons between different generations of migrants. Waite and Cook (2010) explore the emotional attachments to place of both first as well as second generations African migrants to the UK. Their research focuses on the emotions associated with a sense of belonging and includes the idea of plurality in home and attachment to place.

Albeit with different motives for relocation, Skovgaard-Smith and Poulfelt (2017) explore the idea of belonging in place for transnational professionals who are shown to feel a sense of belonging on both a global and local scale. Similarly, in order to apply place belonging to that of the somewhat transient digital nomad, this more uprooted and mobile understanding of belonging in place is important. Thus, in this thesis, home and belonging in the context of sense of place research - as opposed to domesticated material space - stands for symbolic spaces of familiarity of various scales which connote security, comfort and emotional attachment (Antonsich, 2010). Using this understanding of place belonging, the concept will be used in order to explore the ways in which home is renegotiated and felt emotionally for the digital nomad residing temporarily in Lisbon.

To conclude this section, this thesis assumes sense of place to be an umbrella concept made up of the three aforementioned sub concepts; place attachment, place identity and place belonging. Where research has already successfully explored sense of place for static as well as more transient and mobile groups, it is clear that research relating to digital nomads and their relations with certain places is currently lacking. In terms of formulating a concrete conceptual framework and consequent methodology, it is believed that whilst these three concepts will provide a thorough exploration of digital nomads' sense of place in Lisbon, a phenomenological paradigm should also be utilised in order to generate information about digital nomads' unique and individual lived-experiences in Lisbon.

Phenomenology and place

Ontologically, phenomenology suggests that to arrive at certainty, anything outside of an individuals immediate experience should be ignored. This particular paradigm highlights personal experience as reality, reducing the external world to the contents of personal consciousness (Groenewald, 2004). From such an understanding of phenomenology, it might be unsurprising to find that in terms of research surrounding sense of place research, phenomenology has been fairly popular. According to Dovey (2002), phenomenologists call for a return to the everyday lifeworld of lived experiences in place. Manzo (2005) claims that much of the literature on people's emotional relationships to place is rooted in phenomenology. Applied specifically to people-place relationships, this paradigm is concerned with the questions of human existence and their being 'in place' (Cresswell, 2004). In other words, a phenomenological approach to sense of place gives value to the ways in which people develop feelings to places based on their use of place, their attentiveness and their emotions. According to Seamon (2013, p. 11):

'Phenomenologically, place can be defined as any environmental locus in and through which individual or group actions, experiences, intentions, and meanings are drawn together spatially', and it 'is not a physical environment separate from people associated with it but, rather, the indivisible, normally unnoticed phenomenon of person-or-people-experiencing- place'.

Very often, phenomenology is used to explore people-place relationships through the study of activities and through unveiling lived experience (Tuan, 1977). This kind of enquiry, as first formalised in geography by Yi-Fu Tuan (1976), focuses on the study of human beings' experiences and the understanding of places. Seamon and Lundberg (2016) explain this kind of 'humanistic' perspective as one which claims that a comprehensive understanding of people-place relations should consider individual as well as group experiences and meanings of place, landscape, space, region, mobility and any other related phenomena. This kind of approach was partially a reaction to

positivist geography which reduced people to abstract, rational subjects and which was dubbed 'peopleless' in the sense that it didn't acknowledge the complexity of people; their beliefs, opinions, feelings and values (Seamon, 2013). Despite being criticised by numerous feminist and Marxist geographers in the late 1980s onwards for its disregard of underlying social structures, Seamon (2014) maintains that phenomenology has continued to provide useful knowledge within geography. Through the generation of rich and in-depth descriptions of phenomena and their settings (Groenewald, 2004), such a paradigm has helped to uncover, "what there is" in the world and continues to assist in the unveiling human nature. This includes the experiences and the meanings given in relation to geographical phenomena such a landscape and place within natural and man-made environments (Seamon, 2013). Practically, according to Larsen and Johnson (2012, p. 632), one of the central aims of modern day geography has been to produce understandings of places which unveil the workings of 'social life and contribute towards progressive political thought and action' and it is phenomenology within the discipline which has contributed towards this goal.

Applied to this thesis about digital nomads's sense of place in Lisbon it is believed that a phenomenological lens will assist in uncovering the intricate and personal lived experiences within place for digital nomads in Lisbon. By using a phenomenological lens across the three sense of space concepts outlined previously, an appropriate conceptual framework is therefore produced. This framework provides a clear structure which deconstructs specific aspects of a digital nomads' relationships to the city of Lisbon and simultaneously uses a paradigm with which to bring forward into methodological considerations to uncover personal and lived experiences within the city.

Conceptual model

Sense of place, as an overarching theme will be used in this thesis to grasp an understanding of the ways in which digital nomads experience the city of Lisbon. As outlined previously, three components will be used as tools to uncover the sense of place of digital nomads: place attachment, place identity and place belonging. Such a framework provides a clear structure which focuses on specific aspects of a digital nomads' experience of Lisbon. What's more, phenomenology gives priority to individual experience through physical and mental processes and thus such a lens can be applied to formulate an appropriate and complete theoretical framework. Descriptions and patterns will be generated which respect the particularity of places as well as the place experiences and place meanings of individuals involved in the research (Seamon, 2013). The following diagram on the following page shows the conceptual model used for this thesis:

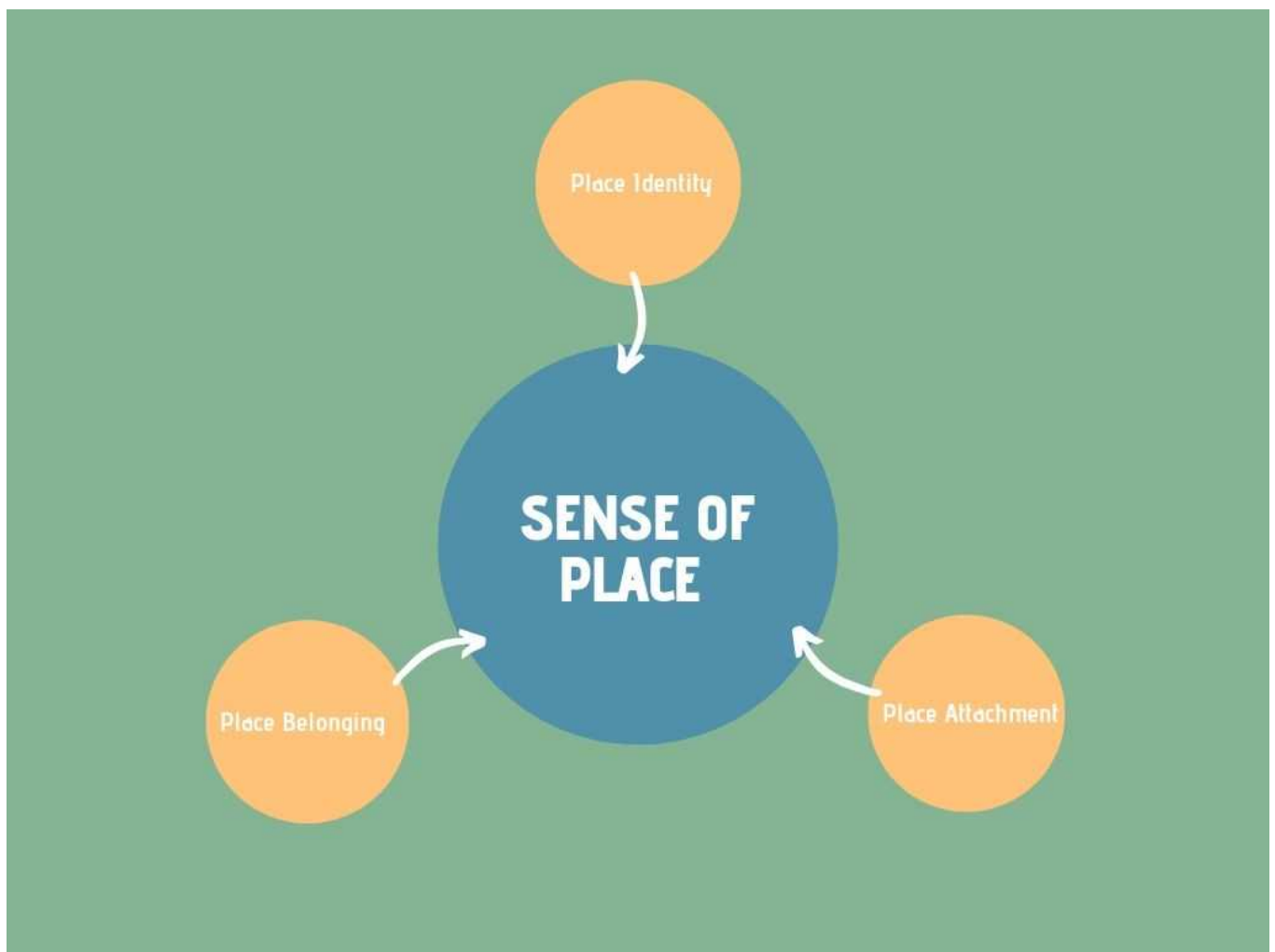


Figure one: a sense of place conceptual framework

Methodology

The following chapter will outline the methodology behind this thesis research. The methodology used was carefully constructed using the previously presented conceptual framework whilst also taking into account a phenomenological epistemology. What's more, since background reading on sense of place research was based mostly in the fields of environmental psychology and geography, considerations from both fields were taken into account. This was especially true when - for example - it came to translating the three sense of place concepts into interview questions. Methodology will be outlined in this chapter using four sections: a description of the case study and context, methods used (mostly made up of information about interviews), data collection and data analysis. Before describing the methods behind this research, it is first important to outline in more detail the case study of Lisbon and thus explain why this location was chosen.

Case study: Digital nomads in Lisbon

Lisbon is a city which in recent years has experienced huge growth of many different kinds of visitors and which has undergone extensive developments relating to facilitating these groups (Gursoy and Nunkoo, 2019). After the financial crisis in 2008, Lisbon's position on the map as an international tourism destination was accelerated as tourism and foreign investment were seen as solutions (Mendes, 2018). This has included: the expansion of the airport in 2007, additional port openings for cruise ships in 2018 and stark increases in the numbers of hotels and other accommodations.

During this time, a great deal of visitors have been attracted to the city, with Lisbon being positioned as an ideal destination for: international students, tourists, digital nomads and other mobile destinations (Cocola-Gant and Gago, 2019). The government has also made Lisbon attractive for foreign investment, introducing low personal taxation to EU citizens and a Golden Visa program allowing Schengen freedom to those not from the EU but who buy property for at least 500,00 euros (Cocola-Gant and Gago, 2019). Collectively, these changes have put immense pressure on the quality of life for citizens of Lisbon which is overrun by outsiders, whilst also threatening home rental cancellations for older citizens paying low rents (Gursoy and Nunkoo, 2018). Cocola-Gant and Gago (2019) stress the processes of social injustice, increasing insecurity experienced by residents of Lisbon, caused by the great force of Airbnb which in many ways can be seen as an example of buy-to-let gentrification.

Despite a lack of any scientific or trustworthy sources, with some very basic internet and social media searches, it is clear that the city of Lisbon in Portugal seems to have attracted digital nomads in their numbers. Some blogs and online articles dub the city as the digital nomad capital of Europe (Worldpackers, 2019; Digitalnomadgirls, 2019; Gogoplaces, 2019; Remoters, 2019). What's more, a simple Google search of 'digital nomads in Lisbon' reveals blogger's tips and tricks for digital nomads during their time in the city as well as suggestions for the best co-working spaces and temporary accommodations. Facebook, has an abundance of groups exclusively for digital nomads, which seem to have been created for the purpose of sharing details of short term rentals, exclusive digital nomad events and providing social and professional support for each other. In fact, one group, 'Lisbon Digital Nomads' has more than 11,000 members. Equally, Meetup.com lists events tailored specifically for digital nomads in Lisbon, inviting these individuals to communicate with each other and forming a kind of online community in the city. Thompson (2018) names Lisbon - in her research about the digital nomad lifestyle - as one of the most popular destinations for these groups, whilst she actually bases her research on interviews held at DNX festival; a digital nomad conference based in Lisbon in 2017. With a simple search then, it is clear that Lisbon is one of these digital nomad 'hotspots' and a place which could potentially continue to attract increasing number of digital nomads. Research which looks at sense of place of the digital nomad in certain hotspots, is then interesting for these destinations.

Methods

Semi-structured interview

As is very common in much qualitative research, interviews were used in this research as the method of gathering data. These interviews were in this case, in-depth and semi structured. Roulston (2019) states that semi-structured interviews are used across a wide range of disciplines as a primary research method, mostly due to their ability to generate free ranging conversations about certain topics yet with the ability to keep interviewees focused on certain criteria. According to Dunn (2005), this kind of partial flexibility is achieved with the researcher bringing some degree of predetermined order to the interview, whilst also ensuring and allowing for flexibility in the way issues are addressed. Clifford et al. (2018) suggest that semi-structured interviews are useful when exploring behaviours, opinions, emotions, affects and for collecting a diversity of experiences. Semi-structured interviews therefore were a good fit for this research which aimed to uncover the experiences, emotions and feelings of digital nomads within the city of Lisbon. Whilst it has been outlined already that this thesis takes a phenomenological lens, it is important to outline here how this actually translated into semi structured interviews.

Phenomenology and interviews

Researchers looking to examine lived experience often use phenomenological interviews in order to uncover the experiences of individuals and the meanings they give to those experiences (Flick, 2017). In this thesis which focuses on uncovering the sense of place of a particular group, such a conceptual lens can be useful. Phenomenologically, place is considered not a physical environment separate from those people associated with it, but is instead comprehended as a range of real-world perspectives (Seamon, 2013). If we are to accept that vocabulary is shared through cultures whereby experiences are identified and named in a consistent manner, then an interview becomes an appropriate and natural means of explicating the experiences of digital nomads (Bevan, 2014). Moreover, Seamon (2013) suggests that one major phenomenological aim is the production of descriptions that respect the specifics of particular places, experiences and meanings for individuals or groups. Interviews were therefore chosen for this research for these aforementioned reasons; in sum gathering descriptions from interviews with digital nomads in turn provides researchers with manifestations of the phenomenon of inquiry; sense of place in Lisbon (Vagle, 2014).

In terms of formulating appropriate questions, it seemed appropriate to ask specific questions about digital nomads' experiences - in this case relating to being in Lisbon. This mostly revolved around gaining descriptions about the way in which Lisbon was experienced for each person. More specifically, questions were generally broad and open ended, ensuring that the interviewee had sufficient opportunities to explain their own viewpoint in as much detail as they could (Bevan, 2014). What's more, questions were written with the aim of gathering descriptions of certain situations and places as opposed to gathering general opinions about the Lisbon. For example, interviewees were asked to describe the atmosphere of the work environment they preferred to frequent. This resulted in descriptions about the physical place they worked in, as well as the interactions digital nomads had with others, whilst it also invited participants to share any other more specific or intricate details of a specific place of interest.

Phenomenology was also taken one step further than this in interviews to actually include the senses. Curtin (2006) argues that the most appropriate method for researching lived experiences - in her case with tourists - in a place is phenomenology. She suggests that phenomenology aims at gaining deep understandings of the meaning of our experiences whilst also bringing us into more direct contact with a phenomenon by isolating and identifying the essences of experience. Taking this further, Küpers (2014) argues for a more embodied approach to uncovering the intricacies of experiences, involving the body and senses which are important in the sense making process. He explains that, "mediated by senses and the body, human beings 'make sense' of the realities in an ongoing process of transmutation of reality" (Küpers, 2014, p.327). In other words, the senses of sight, hearing, smell taste and touch are all part of the lived experience of individuals and therefore

cannot be ignored. For this reason, the senses are taken into account within some interview questions in hope of uncovering further details about lived-experiences of place, for example relating to; the taste of the food and the different views and sights of the city (with encouragement to unveil intricate or descriptive details).

Interview guide

In line with typical semi-structured interview techniques, an interview guide was used which was made up in this case of 18 open-ended questions. It was kept in mind that questions in the guide were used only to help retrieve information and guide conversations (Boeije, 2010). Questions were asked generally in order, however when a participant brought up an interesting topic, the researcher asked more personalised questions about these topics in order to gain more in-depth insight into the matter at hand. In some cases when questions were already answered ahead of them being asked, questions were purposely missed out later on to avoid repetition. Semi-structured interviews and open ended questions allowed for a kind of openness for participants to speak about any other relevant information they could bring to the interview.

The interview guide was divided into four sections in accordance with the conceptual framework and centred around; place attachment, place identity and place belonging as well as a beginning section aimed at gathering basic information about the participant. This beginning section involved questions about duration of time in Lisbon, career and age for example. It also involved a more general question which asked about the individual's journey as a digital nomad until this point. This helped to create a relaxing atmosphere and helped to introduce the style of interview to be expected. From literature about each sense of place concept, questions were formulated and adapted to the topic of digital nomads in Lisbon. This allowed for the researcher to take academically relevant and interesting themes from past work and use them for the topic at hand. The interview guide is attached at the end of this thesis, however table one is provided below which outlines the kind of questions asked per sense of place concept.

	Example question one	Example question two
Place attachment	Can you talk about a place in the city of Lisbon that you feel particularly connected to (if any)?	What is your perception of the appearance of Lisbon as a city?
Place identity	What made you decide to come to Lisbon in the first place?	To what extent does the digital nomad community here play a role in your life?
Place belonging	Can you talk a little about your accommodation here in Lisbon?	To what extent do you feel comfortable or at home here in Lisbon?

Table one: example questions per sense of place subconcept

Before and after the interview

Before the interview process it was important to explain the data collection process as well as the aims and motivation behind the thesis, including the academic and practical relevance. Informing participants fully about the research ensured that each individual was placed in a situation where they could decide in full knowledge of the risks and benefits of the study before going ahead (Boeije, 2010). In general, this firstly helped to inform the participant of the approximate interview time and structure whilst also helping to set the scene and and spark the interest of participants. Of course, informing the participant about the research process also enabled the researcher time to make sure that each person was happy to be recorded for transcription purposes later on. Luckily, due to the nature of the research, much of the questions asked and information gathered was not particularly sensitive. Only on one occasion did one participant ask that her answers to one question were not to be shared in the final thesis since it included private information. This section

of data was left out of the transcription process. In terms of confidentiality, participants were also informed that pseudo names would be used in the results section of the thesis and that therefore their identity would remain unknown.

After the interviews, participants were thanked for their time and asked if they felt comfortable or satisfied with the process which had just taken place and the ways in which the information gathered would be used. In many cases - particularly during the first interviews - the researcher then went on to ask if the digital nomad had any other contacts who might be willing to meet for an interview and share their experiences in Lisbon. In three cases, for reasons relating to their own interest in the topic, digital nomads also asked for a copy of the final project.

Data collection

Participant selection

As is common in qualitative research, participants were intentionally selected according to the needs of the study in a process of purposive sampling (Boeije, 2010). Participants were first approached through the use of a Facebook page for digital nomads in Lisbon. The page - which is used as a platform mostly for support, advice and socialising amongst digital nomads - has more than eleven thousand members. Since it was assumed that not all of these digital nomads would still be in Lisbon at the time of research, the researcher scrolled through the page to find those who had recently commented on or participated in some way on the page. Selecting around 15 digital nomads, a message was sent via Facebook private message which outlined: my own identity, my research aim, my request for digital nomad participants and concluding with a request to meet for an interview. This message also asked for an answer to the question, 'do you consider yourself as a digital nomad?'. No definition of what a digital nomad is was provided at this point and this was left for respondents to answer for themselves. If a respondent answered positively to this question, they would qualify for an interview. In a few cases, digital nomads answered positively to the question but also felt the need to ask whether they still qualified since they also - for example - taught yoga on the side of their online work, or had clients located in Portugal. Even in these cases, digital nomads were interviewed. As a result of this, an array of digital nomads who had; been in Lisbon varying amounts of time, been digital nomads for varying amounts of time and moved between locations at varying paces, were included in the research. Table two outlines information about the participants in this research.

Pseudonym	Age	Nationality
Alice	33	Argentina
Julia	30	The Netherlands
Jorge	33	US
Jack	25	US
Jacob	35	Isreal
Nicolas	34	US
Polly	30	US
Rita	37	Tunisia/France
Sally	40	US
Tara	34	Brazil
Taylor	39	The Netherlands
Timothy	28	UK
Una	31	Czech Republic
Vera	28	France
Zara	29	Belgium

Table two: information about participants. Please note that two participants were interviewed together and two interviews were carried out on Skype

From this initial round of interview requests, a handful of digital nomads responded and many of them fitted the criteria for the research. The criteria for participation was simply that first the individual considered themselves a digital nomad and second, they were in Lisbon and would be willing to meet. It must be noted that in some cases, people were willing to meet but failed to answer positively to being a digital nomad. In these cases, individuals were thanked for their response but were informed that the research was purely for digital nomads. Due to the nature of digital nomads who are often travelling, some had already moved on to other destinations and therefore answered negatively to being in Lisbon. In two cases, interviews were still held with these people over Skype after consideration relating to their validity for the sample. Following this round of participant selection, facebook messages were sent in a similar fashion as and when they were needed. Despite this, it should also be noted that in some cases, digital nomads were very happy to pass on the contact information of friends or other digital nomads they had met. For this reason, the facebook method became less vital at a certain point as the researcher met more and more people who passed on the interview request to friends. This resulted in a kind of snowball sampling method towards the second half of the interview process which was a very effective and convenient method for the researcher (Boeije, 2010). In general, it was pleasing to find that finding participants was not particularly difficult, and from those who did respond to facebook messages and who were put in contact with the researcher, almost all individuals were very willing to share their experiences and showed enthusiasm for the topic. Only in one case was a response more negative at the point of initial contact.

Participants were of a number of different nationalities; many of whom were from Europe, but with a few from the US and South America. In terms of age, participants ranged from 25 to 40. In total, there were 15 participants and 14 interviews, since one interview was held with a couple who were

both digital nomads. Whilst not purposeful, participants had also been staying in Lisbon for varying amounts of time. One participants had been in the city only two weeks, whilst for one digital nomad it had almost been a year. For some participants it was not their first time in the city.

Time and place

Since the researcher wanted to experience places frequented by digital nomads, the location of interviews was left to the participant. This was helpful for a few reasons. Firstly, the researcher was able to visit a number of popular co-working cafes, co-working spaces or offices as well as various parks and restaurants. In this sense, the researcher gained a better understanding of the places these digital nomads worked and also spent their free time. Choosing a place whereby you can learn most about your topic of study is vital (Boeije, 2010). Secondly, within interviews participants were asked to talk about the place they had chosen, whether it was a working place or a place they enjoyed to visit in their free time. Resultantly, the researcher was able to gather in-depth descriptions about the place of the interview by asking questions about specific aspects of the place. Sometimes this turned into conversations about work atmosphere in cafes (positive and negative), other times it resulted in conversations about yoga classes attended in certain parks across the city as well as where the best coffee could be found locally. This provided interesting descriptions of place, highly useful for achieving descriptive data about each persons sense of place in Lisbon.

Thirdly, allowing participants to choose the interview location allowed for more flexibility in who the researcher could speak to. Many people proved to have busy schedules and therefore visiting digital nomads where they worked resulted in arguably a higher positive response rate in terms of organising interviews than perhaps if participants had to travel to reach a different location. Finally, visiting digital nomads in their preferred location also allowed for them to feel more relaxed about the interview process, meaning that they did not have to step too far out of their comfort zone and normal routines to speak with the interviewer. Gubrium et al. (2012) emphasise that interview locations should be both convenient and familiar to participants, ensuring that they feel comfortable and secure to talk as freely as possible.

All interviews lasted between twenty five and forty five minutes depending on the extent to which participants elaborated on their answers. Only in one case was an interview cut short due to time restrictions on the side of the interviewee. As previously mentioned, two interviews were carried out on Skype. This occurred when participants were unable to meet in Lisbon because they had already left at the time of initial contact on facebook. In these cases, interviews were carried out as normal and were also recorded. Of course without stimuli in terms of the physical surroundings of the city, conversation was sometimes different and lacked the more specific descriptions which came from speaking within Lisbon itself. However, Skype conversations also brought another dynamic in that they could bring a kind of 'beginning to end' narrative of participants' time in the city.

Analysis

The analysis in qualitative research involves the breaking down, separating or disassembling of data into pieces, elements or parts. These smaller pieces can then be sorted more easily in order to finally construct data in a fashion that is more meaningful (Boeije, 2010). Transcription is the key to beginning this process. Since all interviews were recorded, transcription was possible for all 14 interviews with the 15 participants. Transcription was carried out word by word, manually and resulted in 14 documents which could then be used for coding purposes. A code, in qualitative research is most often a word or a short phrase which symbolically assigns an essence-catching or summative attribute to a section of language based data. Codes are researcher-generated constructs that symbolise data for later stages of detecting patterns (Saldana, 2015). To start the coding process, a round of reading commenced and notes were made manually. This included colour coding initial patterns that arose, as well as making notes on other relevant points which

could be revisited at a later stage. Such a process then resulted in a general identification of certain themes which could be brought forward to the coding programme which was used next.

Coding using a programme - namely, SaturateApp - followed and interviews were read through a second time. Codes taken from the first round of reading were entered into the programme and others were uncovered, thus formulating a set of more detailed and organised themes. This process also naturally resulted in the formation of categories but also sub-categories and what Saldana (2015) calls a hierarchical tree, whereby some categories became inserted below other broader ones. Whilst it was not planned, since more codes came to light when reading the last few interviews for the second time, the researcher then read through the transcripts a third time. These codes which arose 'last minute' were then kept in mind during this last reading which in turn revealed places where certain themes had been missed or skipped over. The result of the coding process was numerous codes - including many sub-codes - which could be used to organise the findings of the semi-structured interviews. Some codes were particularly prominent and were highlighted a number of times through different interviews. Structurally, these codes provide this thesis with a structure which outlines these main findings.

Methodology: a reflection

Positionality

"Positionality refers to the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study - the community, the organisation or the participant group" (Rowe, 2014). Empirical data are the results of personal interpretation and therefore it is important to pay attention to our assumptions as well as social, cultural, intellectual and linguistic traditions (Corlet and Mavins, 2018).

The researcher chose the topic of this thesis due to an interest in digital nomads as a new lifestyle choice. More specifically, this fascination came from their portrayal through social media channels which highlighted certain ideals of freedom for example. This research is therefore the result of a genuine interest in the concept. A motivation for the research also came from the idea that formulating such a research topic and speaking with digital nomads would make for an interesting thesis process. Coming from an academic background in tourism also meant that the researcher also brought a critical lens to the topic. It is therefore important to note these considerations in terms of personal motivations before moving forwards, since this thesis is resultantly shaped by this background. More specifically, this interest in digital nomadism will in some ways have affected the research process when it came to - for example - curiosity to find out answers to certain questions within interviews.

Despite this, going into this process as an academic, it is expected that some digital nomads would have held back when speaking about some things. For example, if a fellow digital nomad had asked the same questions as the researcher, participants may have answered differently. It is difficult to fully understand the perception of participants towards students for example, and therefore the way in which questions were answered may have varied depending on this perception. Equally, when it comes to representing participants in writing of the thesis, positionality may also have an effect. For example, with an academic background in tourism, participants' answers may have been interpreted differently to how they were meant, thus affecting the quality of data.

Quality of research

The quality of research is linked tightly to reliability and validity in qualitative studies (Kirk and Miller, 1986). In terms of reliability in social research, this is generally understood as consistency of the methods used (Boeije, 2010). However, reliability remains complicated in social research. The use of flexible methods in qualitative research is sometimes said to pose a threat to reliability, since replication is often difficult; prompts can be unsystematic and probing is certainly selective (Kirk

and Miller, 1986). In general, it is therefore difficult to think of reliability as the same as replicability. However, in this thesis reliability was practised through the use of one interview guide to control - to a certain extent - conversations. The writing of an interview guide (in appendix) can also be considered a form methodological transparency which at least facilitates possible replication of studies for the future. In order to practice reliable research further, fifteen people were interviewed. During these interviews, the same interview guide was used and remained mostly unchanged from the first interview. This number of participants was chosen, since at the point of the last interview, a sense of saturation was sensed whereby participants suggested or spoke of similar things in their answers to questions. Since this thesis aims purely to identify patterns in sense of place of digital nomads in Lisbon, the ability to generalise is not pertinent. Despite this, reliability could have been improved with the interviewing of more participants since fifteen interviews provides only a small insight into the topic at hand.

Additionally, validity is important to take into account when reflecting on the quality of methodology. Validity translates as being specific about what is being assessed, whilst it also relies on the use of correct measures (Boeije, 2010). In this research, the way in which validity was ensured initially, involved the clear setting up of aims, followed by the clear construction of a theoretical framework. Following this, the formulation of such a framework into interview questions required careful consideration in order to ensure that what was being measured was indeed what was intended to be measured. However, it must be considered for example that when it came to the sampling process, some digital nomads who declined to take part, or who did not show interest in interviews, may have represented a different group of digital nomads to those who showed interest in the research. In this sense, validity of the research could be improved, since a certain segment can be considered as left out of the sample. Moreover, reflecting on positionality, it is always possible that digital nomads did not want to share certain things about their feelings towards Lisbon, avoiding certain topics. Going further than this, it is also possible that after speaking about the context of research before the interview process, participants felt the need to speak about information useful to my research aims, leaving out other important information.

Ethics

The topic of this research which focused on sense of place for digital nomads in Lisbon was not particularly sensitive. Although the researcher had to take ethics into account, in comparison to some research which should be handled more delicately, this particular research did not aim to uncover any sensitive topics. What's more, it rarely occurred that digital nomads specifically asked for anonymity. Nevertheless, a number of ethical considerations were taken into account. The following ethical considerations are taken from Flick (2009):

Informed consent: As previously mentioned, participants were informed of the motivations and aims of the research as well as the way in which the data would be handled. This meant that digital nomads could make an informed decision about whether they wanted to take part and were willing to be recorded, before the interview took place.

Avoiding harm for participants in collecting data: In this research, this was practised by avoiding questions which were more personal to participants. When participants suggested that they would rather avoid certain topics, this was taken into account and no further questions on those topics were asked. This happened on two occasions relating to more private aspects of life.

Doing justice to participants in analysing data: Making judgements or assumptions on a personal level as opposed to ensuring that these are grounded in data is important not only for the validity of the research but also for the sake of participants. In some cases, participants requested to be sent the thesis after completion and it is therefore even more vital that information provided is portrayed accurately and without assumptions to avoid any kind of harm.

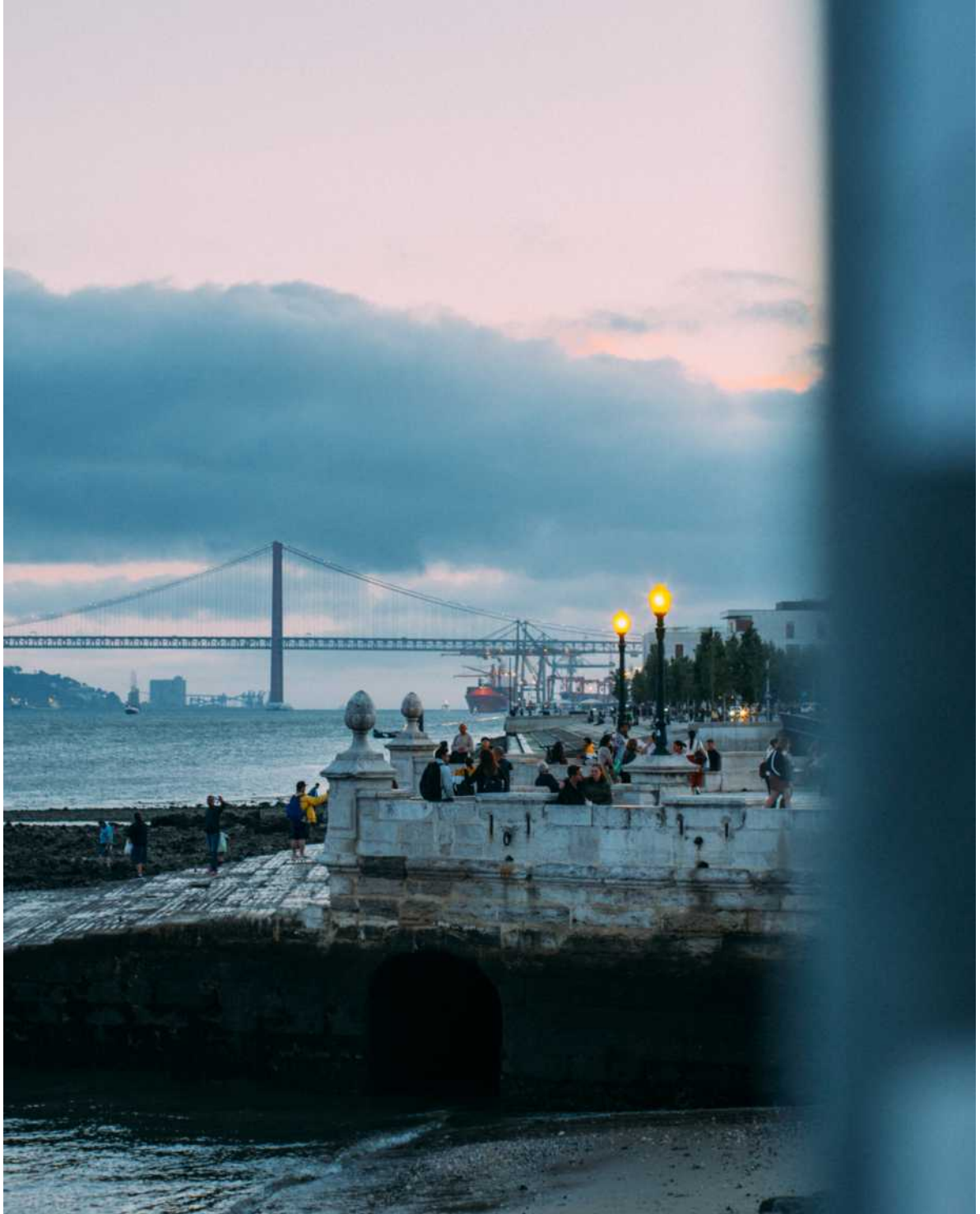
Confidentiality in writing about your research: As previously mentioned, confidentiality was promised to participants in this thesis. This involved ensuring anonymity through the use of pseudo names.

The problems of context in qualitative research: Finally, and tightly linked to the previous point, Flick (2009) states that it is sometimes problematic when you carry out research with several members of a specific setting and from text people may be able to recognise other participants. Since the digital community in Lisbon is relatively small and in many cases participants knew each other, it was important to leave out any specific information about participants which might reveal their identity.

Results

The following section will depict the results of the research carried out for this thesis. Since to date there is very little academic research relating to digital nomads in general, it is thought that an outline of findings relating to the digital nomad lifestyle more broadly will help to set the scene for subsequent findings relating to the topic of this thesis: sense of place in Lisbon. In portraying these more general results about the participants in this study, comparisons can be drawn with the results of other studies and thus interesting findings will be highlighted. This is academically interesting since work on the topic of digital nomads is to this date under-researched. Next, since this thesis focuses on sense of place for digital nomads in Lisbon, the second and largest part of this results chapter will address the research question directly. This involves the portrayal of results relating to digital nomads' sense of place in Lisbon according to the three subconcepts: place attachment, place identity and place belonging. Resultantly, this main section of the results chapter will be divided into three parts. Under these three parts, themes and findings relating to each sub-concept will be outlined.

General findings



Am I a digital nomad?

A very common theme that spanned across most interviews with digital nomads in this research can be defined by the connection between location independence in work and a sense of enhanced freedom. These kinds of connections often arose when discussing individual motives to become digital nomads. In some interviews, an element of escaping something actually emerged as has also been discussed by Muller (2016). This included escaping from place (mostly home regions) and instead exercising mobility through travel, whilst it also included escaping work routines and instead opting for temporal freedom. This idea of escaping something through certain lifestyle choices was highlighted by a great deal of participants. Three examples of this are given below:

"I wanted to start my own business at some point and I tried a few different things but they kept me in one place and I was like, this isn't going to work. So I wanted to be mobile and see the world and I liked to live in places instead of just running through them and being a tourist." Una, Czech Republic

"So, I'm a graphic designer. Web designer mainly. I went freelance a year ago. Worked for a company in London for like five years, six years. And at the kind of age I am, you kind of want to explore different avenues, you know what I mean? Before its too late....Just to do what you want. When you're young, I think between 20 and 30 you should try all sorts of stuff." Tim, UK

"I consider myself first a nomad, because that's really what started it for me. Travelling. So becoming digital is part of my way to keep this nomad life actually... Being your own boss makes it easier to decide what to do." Rita, Tunisia/France

These examples indeed support the idea discussed by certain scholars, that digital nomads desire an escape from the 'rat race' of modern life, and a withdrawal from 9-5 obligations (Nash et al., 2018). Freedom and the ability to control one's lifestyle both temporally and spatially were described in a number of cases as motives for a transition to the digital nomad lifestyle. However, in this research, it also became evident that the motives people had to become digital nomads very much varied. Whereby some participants were motivated mainly by travel and seeing the world, others sought after the lifestyle due to curiosity to explore different avenues of work and place, in some cases, respondents even suggested that their main motives were about experiencing new cultures and learning new languages.

It is also important to outline that for some people, the decision to become a digital nomad was not as purposeful as has previously been suggested in literature (Muller, 216). One participant spoke of the moment he realised he was a digital nomad, quite some time after deciding to take advantage of his online work to become more mobile:

"Funny thing is, I only learned about digital nomading since I got here [to Lisbon]...Back then I was with a friend who set me up with an apartment ..and we met on the street here this Israeli guy who I was rooming with some months ago or something. He was here with another guy, who is a storyboard artist like me. He's was digital nomad, been doing that also for like four years or something like that. So when he said to me, oh you're a digital nomad! I'm like, what is that? And he was like, oh yeah, I hang out with a group of them." Jacob, Israel

In this case, Jacob did not describe a time when he decided to quit work at home and purposefully begin a digital nomad identity and lifestyle. Instead, after deciding to become a freelancer and take advantage of his location independence by moving abroad, he was informed that the decision he had taken to work online in Lisbon actually gave him a certain identity within society. Therefore, whereby some participants are seen to purposefully adopt a kind of digital nomad lifestyle and identity in order to facilitate a lifestyle that addresses their individual needs in all areas of life (mostly involving international travel and leisure) (Reinchenberger, 2018), others found themselves

actually making a certain lifestyle choice without knowledge about digital nomadism and later falling into a category. Interestingly, this kind of distance from the label of digital nomad was not uncommon, with other participants suggesting in some ways that they stayed clear of the digital nomad title. For example, one participant spoke of their lack of interest in the label itself, speaking about their own lifestyle less in terms of travel and more in terms of a long process of finding the perfect place to settle down. On the other hand, this participant still admitted to being a digital nomad, simply due to what the definition itself suggested: a person who works independently of location. Furthermore, two other respondents also suggested that they were dissatisfied with the label, one of which who admitted to fitting into the category by definition, but expressing their purposeful distancing from the local digital nomad community. This respondent spoke about motives to work remotely mostly in relation to making local friends and using the Portuguese language.

One might ask at this point whether this distinction between different 'types' of digital nomads actually matters, since participants in this research all fell under a certain category - digital nomads - based on location independence amongst other lifestyle choices. The reason this distinction is important in this research is because in previous literature one factor central to being a digital nomad has often been stated; meeting like-minded, interesting people as central to living an interesting digital nomad life (Schlagwein, 2018). Whilst this was true for some people in Lisbon, who were found to describe the digital nomad community as a great support system and a positive addition to their lifestyles, this was not always true; fitting under the definition of a digital nomad didn't always mean identifying as such and belonging to a group of like-minded people. Schlagwein (2018) does identify in his research that some digital nomads preferred not to be identified as such, similar to the idea that someone might say, 'don't call me a hipster'. However, this research would like to take this one step further to suggest that for some, despite fitting into the overarching category by definition, contact with other digital nomads was sometimes only vaguely or actually not present at all, resulting in an affiliation with the definition but not the identity.

When someone is not involved in the collective community and identity of digital nomadism in a certain location, this then poses the question, 'Am I really a digital nomad?' for some. The kind of division that emerged within the digital nomad category in Lisbon was strikingly different to what was expected, in that in much of the previous literature, digital nomads have been spoken about in terms of a homogenous group with shared values, goals and behaviours in certain places. This idea of a shared identity will be discussed in-depth in the the place identity section, however it is important to outline this finding here for a few reasons. Firstly, whilst digital nomadism is often associated with one tight-knit community, this thesis will frequently refer to different 'types' of digital nomad: those who are more and those who are less involved within the 'central' digital nomad community. This will be done because group identity and belonging is central to this thesis and to sense of place. For those who did not identify with the 'central' digital nomad group, such things were not very valid. Secondly and very much linked to this, by no means does this research claim that there are two separate categories of digital nomad, but instead it suggests that there is a great deal of diversity when it comes to digital nomads in Lisbon. However, it is very important as the reader to keep in mind that the term 'digital nomad' means very different things to different respondents. In order to consider this diversity of the category, in some cases this thesis will refer to the 'central' community, broadly referring to those digital nomads who by means of social media and other sources of information and communication, organise and attend digital nomad events and who generally identify and get involved more heavily with the community that exists in Lisbon. The use of this term will help to depict this diversity that was identified in the research.

Work and career

What was certainly common was that digital nomads worked online. Since for digital nomads, one's career is often what facilitates the lifestyle itself, work is a somewhat important aspect of life and therefore featured somewhat in interviews with participants. In line with a handful of scholars who have written about digital nomadism (Thompson, 2019; Gretzel and Hardy, 2019; Reichenberger, 2018) it was firstly very common to find that digital nomads were self-employed or

freelancers. In fact, of the digital nomads in this sample, only two were salary employees. In these cases, the participants explained that they worked for a company in their home countries. For example, one participant - a software developer from the US - worked for a company in the US which allowed for flexible working. More specially, the participant stated:

"It's very straight forward actually, I know that a lot of digital nomads are like doing a lot of freelance and entrepreneurship and that stuff, but I'm a salary employee...I took a job that I had back in New York and made it remote. They had a flexible policy." Nicolas, US

Aside from these two exceptions, participants described their work as either freelance or they spoke about owning or running their own company. Participants' jobs therefore included; digital marketing, illustration, wellness coaching, running a social enterprise and translation amongst others. It should be noted that the conditions upon which people worked; whether independently, as an entrepreneur, working for a company or as a salary employee varied dramatically. However as it might be expected, participants mostly spoke about working with clients all over the world and emphasised their use of the internet, thus freeing them to a certain degree of location dependence. One participant who owned their own social enterprise spoke of her set up in terms of work using the internet:

"For me, I'm a digital nomad because I can work anywhere in the world. My office is in the cloud. Minus some conferences or meetings where I do have to be physically in attendance. Otherwise I'm gaining and completing my tasks online. It fulfils all my needs. Everything" Polly, US

Such an answer was very common for most participants who suggested that their work was almost completely dependent on a connection to the internet. WiFi connection therefore allowed for flexible lifestyles in terms of working hours as well as location as previously outlined by scholars who have also studied digital nomad lifestyles (Thompson, 2019). However, as stated by Alice and perhaps understated in previous research about digital nomads, place and location often seemed to be more connected to work than previously thought, rendering digital nomads not entirely location independent in some cases. A few further examples can be presented here to describe this phenomenon. During one interview, a freelance illustrator spoke of a trip to Hollywood, US, to where he purposely had to travel in order to obtain new clients. Despite then returning to Lisbon to actually work on the projects he had won, this participant actually described a situation whereby he had to use his mobility effectively for work purposes. Secondly, another participant spoke about the general increase in clients that she experienced once moving from Asia and Central America to Europe:

"I have way more opportunities to have many clients now that I'm here than when I was in Costa Rica or Bali. It's the time zone. It's the being connected. If you have a phone call with a company that's looking for a freelance for a UK company and you're in Bali, you're probably going to... yeah, the time difference is hard" Alice, Argentina

On top of this, a salary employee working for a company in the Netherlands mentioned a business trip where he would be spending three weeks in Saudi Arabia in the near future to work on a project. In a number of ways then, whether related to visiting certain conferences or events, travelling to meet clients, or locating oneself in a region where time zone criteria is satisfied, digital nomads in this research were often found to be less independent of location than has previously been suggested. In fact, in some ways digital nomads were much more tied to locations than has been previously stated in literature to the extent that work obligations or preferences often led nomads to certain places. For example, where Muller (2016) speaks of digital nomads as being able to work essentially anywhere and Thompson (2019) suggests that digital nomads choose their locations purely dependent on leisure and connection to the internet, this research would like to suggest that in a number of cases, location-independence should be considered more alike to location-flexibility. Some digital nomads depended on certain locations much more so than has emphasised by other authors, or at least they felt that the locations they travelled to were not solely dependent on leisure and actually had more to do with work. In some ways, a description of the

digital nomad lifestyle where total temporal and spatial is emphasised can be considered exaggerated. Accordingly in this research, digital nomadism can be understood as more in line with results from research by Reichenberger (2018) who found that digital nomads themselves do not consider the extent of travel as a criterion of being a digital nomad. Instead, Reichenberger maintains that mobility and travel are two connected yet very independent features of what a digital nomad is; perpetual travel did not have to be practised despite its facilitation by enhanced mobility. In other words, whilst digital nomads have enhanced freedom both spatially and temporally, travel is not unlimited so to say, but simply easier to practise. In sum then, digital nomads in this sample had enhanced mobility due to their careers, but the extent to which their travel was unlimited and determined purely by leisure - as suggested by some authors - is not fully supported.

Leisure and travel

It has often been suggested that freelance and location independent work leads to having more time for leisurely activities (Muller, 2015). Almost always this was deemed as true by respondents. In terms of what exactly this free time makes way for, participants in this study provided a number of responses. Reichenberger, (2018) suggested that digital nomadism allows for travel itself to become not an occasional or temporally restricted leisure activity but a constant part of life. The term 'travel' can be understood as encompassing a number of things. Despite travel often being associated with tourism, participants in this study were sometimes seen to differentiate themselves from tourists, instead choosing to speak about their experience in Lisbon more akin to short term residency. One participant positioned her motivations for travel as separate to that of tourists, stating:

"When I travel, it's not to do touristy things, it's to really understand the culture that I'm living in. So I love living in Saldana [area of Lisbon] because I get to be around regular people. I barely ever see tourists here. I'm like, I'm just living in the city. It feels really wonderful" Sally, US.

In Sally's case, it was important to spend time experiencing a Portuguese way of life. An emphasis on integration and experience in travel and tourism is of course not undocumented within literature, with numerous scholars writing about the increasing desire of travellers for a deeper involvement in society and their interest in the authenticity of experience (McCabe, 2002). Distinction from tourists was commonly seen throughout interviews with participants. On the other hand, participants also often spoke about taking part in certain leisure activities which involved visiting areas within Lisbon as well as its surrounding beaches and nature, thus suggesting that tourism was indeed a part of their free time. Zarrilli and Brito (2016) emphasise the consolidation of a postmodern 'culture of pleasure' in tourism, whereby tourists seek culture and aesthetics in urban environments. Similar to the results of these scholars who looked at tourists' image of Lisbon, digital nomads in this study also spoke of the "gastronomy", "local lifestyle", "architecture", "nightlife" and "gardens" (Zarrilli and Brito, 2016), therefore suggesting that to some extent, participants enjoyed taking part in tourist activities in their free time.

Aside from authentic, cultural experiences, Nash et al., (2018) suggested that digital nomads often decide to reside temporarily in regions where specific leisure activities and hobbies can be practised, such as; surfing, hiking, backpacking and skiing. Of course this is another element of what travel can mean for people. In the context of Lisbon and in this study, this was certainly revealed and numerous participants talked about the activities they had partaken in during their stay. To mention just a few, digital nomads outlined a number of hobbies including: dance classes, Muay Thai, surfing, climbing, yoga as well as involvement in charitable or voluntary organisations. Interestingly, whilst hobbies, sport and leisure activities such as these were frequently brought up by participants, the ways in which these leisure activities fitted into the lives of digital nomads were often less 'one-off' than perhaps a tourist activity might be. Many participants took part in classes or had memberships to clubs, whether these were educational or sport related, resulting in a kind of weekly - or routine - activity which often happened after work hours.

Digital nomads did in many cases strive for a more leisurely lifestyle with fewer working hours, and more time to practice certain leisure activities. However, a separation between work and leisure was often found, with work dealt with during the day and with leisure activities often practiced routinely. Literature on digital nomad has however seemed to describe the blurring of work and leisure. For example, Thompson (2018) suggests that digital nomads claim travel, and specifically slow travel to be a regular part of their everyday lives as nomads, whilst O'Brien (2018) actually states that the use of information technology for work itself actually blurs the line between what is work and what can be considered leisure. Even more directly than this, Reichenberger (2018) maintains that digital nomads use the opportunity to work online to travel to exciting locations and therefore in doing so essentially blur the boundaries between work, travel and leisure. In this research it was found that this was only to an extent true. Some participants talked about their need for setting up a kind of work and leisure routine on arrival in a new place to create a certain level of comfort and contentment. One participant portrayed well this idea that a certain level of routine and comfort was important:

"I feel at home when I have found a place to live, of course, then find a yoga studio, and find a gym or a Muay Thai gym or something like that...Normally I do my research in advance, but I was planning to go to another yoga studio and walked past a new one and they just opened two days before. It's a cool place...And then I need a co-working space, a cool working space where I feel at home. When those places are fixed, I just drop my bag." Taylor, Netherlands

Therefore when it comes to leisure and travel, a few conclusions can be drawn from this research. Firstly, digital nomads were seen to (in many cases) have more free time and free time was often spoken about as a large proportion of life. According to Hilbrecht (2007), this is called downshifting, whereby working hours and income are reduced in an effort to put more focus on living a balanced life and away from materialism. This research indeed found that a work-leisure balance was often important and featured centrally in respondents' lives. Reichenberger (2019) referred to this by suggesting that digital nomads strive for a more holistic approach to life. However, a perception of the digital nomad lifestyle as holistic, with work and leisure not dichotomous but equally contributing to life, was not always visible in this research. Thus, secondly, the free time facilitated by a digital nomad lifestyle was often spoken about less in terms of touristic activities and travel and more in terms of 'just living in the city'. This was described in some cases as simply setting up and experiencing a temporary life in a new location. Finally and very much linked to this, the digital nomad lifestyle was often spoken about with more emphasis on structure, routine and comfort than has previously been suggested by other scholars (Reichenberger, 2019). Work and leisure were for some participants very much separated in time and space and certain classes and activities were said to be practised in a routine-like manner. In fact for some, such routine-like activities were seen as requirements for feeling comfortable in a new location.

Findings: Sense of place



Place attachment: "It's shabby charm"



Experiencing the city

According to Stedman (2003), whilst the social construction of places is somewhat vital in understanding place attachment, in most place attachment research there has been some neglect of the physical environment and the role it plays in people-place relations. He suggests that the local physical environment itself actually sets bounds and gives form to the social constructions which make a space, a place. After all, place meanings and attachments which are products of shared behaviours and cultural processes must come from somewhere, not just 'out of thin air' (Stedman, 2003). In this research, many participants spoke descriptively about the scenery in Lisbon and elaborated on some intricate details which they found to be integral to their understanding of and feelings towards Lisbon. Of course, it is not to say that these physical elements mentioned by participants are stripped of social or cultural symbolism. However, understanding the meaning that physical and tangible components of the city have for people provides a basis upon which to explore further themes of attachment and ultimately assist in the understanding of a digital nomad sense of place attachment in Lisbon.

When asked about their perspective on the visual aspects of the city of Lisbon, respondents often spoke about the components of the built environment. This included the typical Portuguese architecture, the narrow streets and the tiles which are used on the pavements and roads in some areas of the city. Some examples of this are depicted below:

"I love it, its well, it just feels very Southern European, the layout of the streets. I love like the narrow, cobblestones streets. Not so great for riding a bike, but nice and very pretty." Vera, France

"Specifically Lisbon is very charming. It's very beautiful, the architecture is divine." Jacob, Israel

"The architecture is amazing. Even if you look to the floor, and all these stones, and you think how much time it took for them to do it. There's so many details in the city. Just... Yeah. It's amazing". Tara, Brazil.

On top of this, climate and the brightness of the city were emphasised by a number of participants who claimed that this was one of their favourite aspects of Lisbon. In fact, although this was frequently mentioned to be one reason as to why Lisbon appeared attractive as a destination for the digital nomads in the first place, it also seemed to also become part of the image that people had of the city after residing there for some time. Julia stated:

"The small streets, they're so colourful and there is always so much light everywhere. So the light is really, I mean, even in wintertime. I was here January and its still super light everywhere". Julia, Netherlands.

Similarly, Polly described the way in which the sun added to her experience of the city:

"When I got here I landed in Lisbon. I woke up to walk around the city and I just... I don't know. It could be the sunshine, the sea, the beauty, I don't know. Maybe the trees too. There's an air to it." Polly, US.

Whilst these previous images depicted of Lisbon as somewhat idyllic, encompassing the sunny warm weather and romanticised narrow cobblestone streets, one theme identified in this research actually contradicted in many ways this perfect image and featured throughout many interviews. Laced throughout respondents' descriptions of the city, language which connoted an element of imperfection was identified. This imperfection was not however deemed as a negative characteristic but actually as an integral characteristic to the true experience of Lisbon as a place.

In other words, the idea that Lisbon as a place revealed cracks in its beautiful exterior, was somewhat attractive as a place characteristic for many digital nomads. Respondents often referred to visual aspects of the city, speaking about the mismatched cityscapes and a uniqueness rooted

in imperfection which came partly from the physical environment of Lisbon. Some examples of this are provided below:

“There is such a mixture of things like yeah. I mean, architecture. There is like this.... All the ruins and like, they're ugly. There are a lot of things that make it unique. I look from the window, nothing seems to match, but somehow it matches.” Rita, Tunisia

“It's really run down, you know. It's shabby charm.” Jacob, Israel

“If you walk on the river side towards the park, its like they don't have anything there yet. Its really old and breaking up. And I'm like, ‘Oh man, you could make such cool restaurants here or whatever.’ But they don't do it and I actually like it that they don't. I think thats what I like about it...I think I like it that its not too perfect. Like I have a really crappy apartment as well. Yesterday I was doing my laundry and trying to boil water and then the power goes off. I sort of like it that its not too perfect.” Julia, Netherlands

A certain appreciation for this ‘shabby charm’ was prevalent and became a very central theme to respondents understanding of Lisbon as a place and thus to this research in terms of place attachment. As is evident from the quotes portrayed above, imperfection of the cityscape became something which digital nomads were fond of and it also contributed to the meanings respondents gave to Lisbon as a place. In some ways this affection for imperfection also became part of the experiences and realities of respondents during their time in Lisbon. For example, Julia - having learned that things don't always go smoothly in her apartment - had learned to accept and appreciate the lack of predictability she was presented with, which in turn contributed to her perspective of Lisbon as a city. She actually expresses a kind of fondness to the imperfection she describes.

Quiet suburbia or a capital city?

Inevitably it was not only the physical environment which contributed to the meanings digital nomads gave to the city, or the feelings they had towards it. In many cases respondents spoke about the people of Lisbon and how they also contributed towards a certain sense of place, specifically one which depicted the true culture of the city. Naturally then, authentic elements of Lisbon were often expressed through descriptions of the people of Lisbon and the way in which they practiced their daily lives. For some respondents, local people sitting outside in the streets and living their daily lives became somewhat integral to the sense of place they constructed and the feelings they had towards the city. In this sense, the people of Lisbon also became an important visual and atmospheric component to Lisbon as experienced as a place. Sara explained:

“I really just like the warmth of the people and the energy when I walk in the streets and people are sitting outside and talking” Sara, US

“I love that you see there are these old ladies in the park and you know. It's very local.” Taylor, Netherlands

“Even in the streets where there are a lot of tourists, you will still see grandmas standing and looking at the window” Una, Czech Republic

A sense of fondness can be identified in these descriptions of the local people, suggesting that respondents enjoyed seeing the way in which local people lived. More specifically, the way in which respondents described the local people was often in terms of their slow-paced, everyday activities; sitting in parks, standing in windows, sitting outside and talking. These kinds of descriptions were not uncommon and it seemed that interviewees saw this kind of relaxed, social, outdoor culture as an integral part of Lisbon's spirit; in other words this kind of image of Lisbon captured a certain element of Lisbon that digital nomads became fond of, or attached to.

Whilst respondents often claimed that the people of Lisbon depicted a kind of slow-paced and relaxed atmosphere, some referred to a more general sense of relaxation they felt in the city. This became a very common theme, laced through conversations about many aspects of Lisbon. Very often this was spoken about in terms of the city being peaceful, somewhat unlike other cities which felt comparatively large and fast-paced. The way in which respondents spoke about this unique place characteristic suggested a kind of contentment with the liveability of Lisbon as a place in balance; not too busy yet also not too quiet. In describing this, some participants made comparisons to other places they had been to. Julia explained:

"I'm actually from the countryside, so I'm used to a quiet place...I do like city life because there's a lot going on in the cities, but I've been living in really crowded cities before and I get bored of that. But if I'm in the countryside, it's too boring. There's not enough going on. So I feel like Lisbon has the perfect mix of everything. Like it's really easy to go into nature, the beach or the river. But there's so much going on as well." Julia, Netherlands

Similarly, Tara explained:

"I am not a fan of big cities in general. That's why I lived already in a lot of cities and decided not to live in them anymore. I'm here a little bit by chance, even if I don't believe in chance. I do believe that Lisbon is one of the best cities for that because it's really laid-back. I like it a lot." Tara, Brazil

It was not uncommon for respondents to emphasise that Lisbon as a city provided a sense of a smaller city, or at least one which felt smaller due to its layout and atmosphere. Very often, as mentioned by Julia, this involved descriptions of local parks - of which there are many - the river and the ease escaping the busy center for quieter areas. It was often very common for respondents to mention the proximity to beautiful areas of nature in which they were able to practise certain leisure activities, whilst the river was very prevalent in conversations where digital nomads told of how they used it for walking or running besides in their free time. In fact, Zara remarked that Lisbon felt like a number of small towns put together, emphasising the way in which Lisbon was less of a metropolis and more akin to a less hectic suburbia.

Alternatively, some respondents spoke about the relaxing energy of Lisbon, or its quiet, suburban atmosphere in much less tangible terms. Polly, referring to the history of the city, spoke about a certain energy she felt when walking through Lisbon, which she could not quite put her finger on:

"It's an energy thing. You can tell that these places... The people are peaceful. Even if they're not always as friendly... but there's a sense of peace here. Like, you can just...Historically, I think energy can be transformed over years and years and years. And you can just feel it. I've been to some countries which are war torn and you can feel the history of grief. Here there is not so much of that. It's very serene. I think that's why I like it here. It's about the past. I feel that it's peaceful. I don't know how to explain it." Polly, US

Not in terms of history but more in terms of spirituality, Tara explained how being in Lisbon provided her with a peaceful atmosphere in which she could live her everyday life but also feel relaxed. Tara had been living in a meditation centre for six months before coming to Lisbon, but decided to move to Lisbon in order to start work again. She explained how Lisbon was a good place for her to find a balance between work and spirituality:

"I came back here because I said it would be good for me to go back to the business mindset instead of going to another crazy place. And it's actually been very, it's almost a blessing to be here because at the same time, I still feel that this city has everything I need for now. Because some cities like in Holland, or Paris, that I was living in, don't have this spirituality. Doesn't have yoga. It does have it, but it's different. Here I can really combine these two parts of my life". Tara, Brazil

In these cases, respondents explained their feelings towards the city in more emotional terms. They described how Lisbon provided them with something they could not particularly put their

fingers on, but which allowed for a certain balance and feeling of contentment. In these cases, it can be argued that respondents became particularly attached to Lisbon as a city through a unique atmosphere which the city provided; one based on balance and relaxation. Physically and on the surface, Lisbon was suggested by many to be an ideal environment within which to live the digital nomad lifestyle. Of course, this was not a surprise for the most part, since there must of course have been a reason that the digital nomads had chosen to reside there initially.

In many cases, digital nomads felt very connected with Lisbon as a place fairly quickly, due to the physical environment and the atmosphere it provided through the culture and local people - as previously outlined. Many people also felt somewhat connected to Lisbon since they created tight bonds with other people in the digital nomad community who they could closely relate to. This will be discussed in more detail later on in relation to place identity. However, an overwhelming sense of disconnection from place was also sensed in some interviews, mostly throughout conversations relating to integration into the city and the difficulties in befriending local inhabitants.

Distance from locals

In many cases respondents admitted to not having any Portuguese friends, but mostly associating with members of the digital nomad community. Descriptions about the local people of Lisbon were often worded as if being gazed upon from afar, resulting in a notion of distance between the lives of digital nomads and local people. From descriptions, there was a sense that whilst local people stayed stationary in parks, homes or on the streets, tourists and digital nomads passed by and observed their lifestyles from a distance. For some respondents, due to their transience, the option available to them to make friends with those involved in the digital nomad community was easier and provided the necessity of a social life through quick and efficient means. In these cases, interviewees indeed mentioned their lack of integration into Portuguese society but with a sense of acceptance that this was the norm for digital nomads in a foreign country. Nevertheless, some digital nomads openly expressed a kind of distance between themselves and local people despite trying to 'immerse' themselves in the local culture. Examples of both will be outlined below. In some cases this was generally a source of frustration and resulted in a feeling of disconnection between themselves and the city. Polly described her difficulties and feelings towards the local people in terms of integration:

"I think its a cultural thing actually. I really believe that their culture is like... they're closer in terms of families, but in terms of general human connection there's a shyness or something. A closed-off-ness. It's difficult." Polly, US

One participant spoke about his experience in Lisbon whereby he was lucky enough to integrate into a more local community:

"I also have a few local friends and then they really took me to like all the local spots and showed me you know, all the spaces foreigners don't go to, and helped me to integrate into those communities. I also have the Portuguese roommates too which also helped. Two different Portuguese roommates, and that also helped tremendously because I also learned that the Portuguese are, it's very difficult to get into their social groups. It takes a lot of work to win them over as like, a friend in their community. For whatever reason. Maybe they're threatened or whatever. That was really challenging for me you know, to be like pushed away in that way and having a lot of extra work to you know, be a friend in these social groups". Jack, US

According to Jack, it was difficult to make friends with local people simply because he was a foreigner in the city. Zara - who speaks fluent Portuguese - also described her struggles in terms of integrating with the local communities:

"Even if I can speak good Portuguese, you always have this difference. Even if you make the efforts to be one of the girls, to be respectful, to do as best to, to get inside their daily life, you will always be the foreigner...Language has helped a lot, but its not enough here." Zara, Belgium

In some cases then, respondents felt that their connection to Lisbon was perhaps halted to a degree by a lack of ability to integrate. By being outsiders to Lisbon, some digital nomads who tried to integrate into more local communities found it difficult to feel as though they were a part of a city. In the above quotes, it is also possible to see an element of emotion, with residents emphasising that it was 'challenging' or 'difficult' for them to experience such a thing. In this sense, whilst the people of the city were often described as being warm, or to be an integral part of the overall sense of place, this was often very much from a distance and on a surface level. Whilst there were a handful of exceptions, for many digital nomads a real connection with local people was either not sought after, or was actually described as difficult and induced a sense of disconnection from the place itself.

Place Identity: 'Self-proclaimed digital nomads'



Shared identity and the digital nomad community

Despite this sense of distance from local Portuguese people, many digital nomads said that they found their relationships to grow mainly from within the digital nomad community of Lisbon. Friendship and support was often found from a group of people also living in Lisbon as digital nomads who use social media, as well as events catered specifically for the digital nomad community in order to provide each other with a certain level of comfort and familiarity. This was very much in line with Schlagwein's (2018) findings who suggested that the community of digital nomads within a certain place assisted each other with settling into a new place, sharing information, educating one another and also sharing clients and work. In this sense, the specific needs of digital nomads and the community they built within places helped to build a community and thus identity in a place. According to Proshansky et al. (1978), one's identity can often be linked to one's surrounding environment, by means of preferences, values, goals, behavioural tendencies and ideas. In the case of digital nomads in Lisbon, it was clear to see that many digital nomads shared many of the same goals, behavioural tendencies and preferences and that they also used and congregated in many of the same places, thus consolidating the collective identity within place. Of course, when this thesis refers to place identity in relation to digital nomads in Lisbon, it is not meant that the entirety of Lisbon can be understood as a playground for digital nomads. Instead, it is useful to understand how digital nomads - particularly as a community with a shared identity - use certain spaces of the city, or facilities in their daily lives, and in turn how this contributes to their identity in Lisbon and their sense of place.

In many cases, Lisbon was suggested to be an ideal destination for digital nomads not only due to the reasons presented in the previous chapter relating to physical place characteristics, but for the very reason that there was a somewhat established digital nomad community already existing in the city. The existence of an established digital nomad community was often suggested to be very efficient and provided digital nomads who were new to the city with a very instant way of connecting with like-minded people, or those who were living similar lifestyles. In line with the understanding of place identity in terms of goals, behavioural tendencies and values for example, it was common for digital nomads to speak of the enjoyment of sharing these things with other people in Lisbon. One respondent stated:

"I basically just want nomads groups to meet people who are like, not just a backpacker, the ones you typically meet when you're travelling, but people who are a bit older. People who work and are living kind of the same, you know, daily or weekly schedule as me. I think I relate a bit better to them and they're less transient too... it's like a nice community. I've met way more people who live here who I can circle back with when I come back here, than basically anywhere else I've been."
Nicolas, US

A number of respondents considered the digital nomad community as a whole to be welcoming and maintained that it eased the process of moving in and settling down, since - for example - on facebook just one question posted on the group with over 11,000 members yielded numerous and relevant responses. This was of course particularly true since digital nomads, often had similar lifestyles and therefore, the same questions and a shared understanding for each other. As was suggested previously, it is vital to remember that digital nomads in Lisbon often stated whether they did, or did not, relate to or get involved with the central and active digital nomad community. Participants in this study therefore came to represent a very diverse group under one overarching digital nomad category, not only due to their type of job and nationality, but at least in this research, it was found that digital nomads were very diverse in their approach to the digital nomad lifestyle itself. Of course this is mostly in comparison to other research and there were also found to be a number of similarities when it came to the lifestyle and identity too. Although research which touches upon digital nomad 'hotspots' has tended to focus on the central groups (reference), the digital nomad category in Lisbon was found to actually span wider than this. For example, some participants in interviews actually spoke of different 'types' of digital nomads in Lisbon as if they were clearly defined. Often this distinction came down to: those who were involved in the digital nomad community and those who were less involved. In a few cases, participants who did not

necessarily choose to be involved with the digital nomad community in Lisbon, used terms such as 'hard-core digital nomads' and 'self-proclaimed digital nomads' to identify members of the community, even to the point where names of people were given as examples of such individuals. One participant, Tara, who identified as a digital nomad but who spoke about the digital nomad community from a distance said:

"I just felt again people showing off, and I'm being really general here, I'm just creating a stereotype, but what I felt was like people showing off and wanting to sell their thing instead of really this community of people... Sometimes, I think it's just a trend and people want to show off and it becomes a status, 'oh I'm a digital nomad, and you?' It's not me at all... So I kind of got away from it and now I'm looking for other types of groups. Some of them are still digital nomads, but it was different the way I met them." Tara, Brazil

What's more, Zara, a translator from Belgium, explained how she preferred not to identify with the digital nomad community of Lisbon herself, since she saw herself as separate from the group and with different values:

"I don't like it [identifying as a digital nomad]. I don't know why....It's also really a kind of job, kind of business and also a certain level in the society, if I can dare to say that... it's really making a business. It's not for translation guys." Zara, Belgium

Nicolas - who was a salary employee - found himself intrinsically different to most people in the digital nomad community. He described how he was generally interested in being involved in the group socially, but his work meant that he was fundamentally excluded in some ways:

"It's always roughly the same people [at events organised by the digital nomad community], but I usually just end up going to the Thursday happy hour so that's a bit more social. They have like, co-working days and I don't really do that because it doesn't fit with my hours and then they have workshops and seminars and stuff, which again cause I'm just a salary employee, like some things are a little more geared towards digital nomads. Like networking and building client bases and things like that..." Nicolas, US

In terms of place identity, it can therefore be seen that from this sample, one seamless digital nomad identity within place was not uncovered. In fact, for those who preferred not to associate with the central digital nomad community at all or who felt that they didn't completely 'fit in', it was difficult to uncover any kind of patterns relating to how place played a role in their identities. For these digital nomads, Lisbon naturally had a role to play in the development of their identities but for very diverse reasons outside of belonging to a group. Additionally, what cannot be ignored from these quotes stated above, is that the work people took part in online partly contributes towards the extent to which people actually feel part of the central digital nomad community in Lisbon. Nicolas actually refers to 'digital nomads' as separate to himself when speaking about the kind of work he does compared to what 'they do', despite answering positively to being a digital nomad himself. By saying this he actually hints that in order to be a 'true' digital nomad in Lisbon, one should take part in very specific work involving entrepreneurship and self-employment and attend the events held by the community. Entrepreneurship for some digital nomads is somewhat irrelevant to their career - since they are part of an agency, or employed by a company. It is unclear as to whether this distinction occurs elsewhere, however in Lisbon this seemed to result in a kind of distinction between different digital nomads within the overarching category; those who have careers which fit into the entrepreneurship category share career and social goals and values, and those who do not 'tick every box' of the digital nomad criteria so to say.

Spaces of shared identity

The idea that many digital nomads typically share the same values and goals relating to improving their work life and their lives outside of work in a particular way, can be seen to produce a shared set of behaviours in place. In this research it was found that both work environment as well as

events and meet-ups in particular places were important to supporting the values and identities of the central digital nomad community. Firstly, day to day work was mostly carried out in a co-working establishment or a cafe where other digital nomads frequented. Schlagwein (2018) claims that, 'the emergence of digital-nomad-centric coworking spaces and hubs was described as instrumental for fostering the community and identity of digital nomads'. In this research, coworking places and certain work friendly cafes across Lisbon were found to be the most popular environments for work. In line with Schlagwein's (2018) research, specific places of work in Lisbon were also seen to foster a sense of community for digital nomads. The researcher - due to allowing participants to choose the location of interviews - was invited to certain locations more than once; for example particular cafes or co-working places, helping to identify digital nomad locations across Lisbon. It also came to light that the digital nomad community arranged on the site Meetup, that a certain cafe in Lisbon would be used on Mondays as a coworking location. On this day, numerous digital nomads would meet at this cafe to engage in work individually yet along side each other and some respondents claimed to visit each week. On the other hand, some digital nomads - mostly those who chose not to associate a great deal with the community - worked in diverse locations across the whole city, as well as at home. Reasons for this were sometimes expressed through complaints about the high prices of coffee in digital-nomad-famous locations or the expensive co-working rental prices. However, overall this was less common and mostly work was carried out in work spaces. Some explanations of respondents' working routines in terms of location are provided below:

"I split my time between working at various co-working places and cafes... I work in a few different coffee shops with other digital nomads too". Jack, US

"I've been at co-working spaces as well before. At this moment I'm not because I found a few really good spots to work. Mondays is mostly here [a well know cafe for digital nomads], and one of my friends has a shop in the center of Lisbon. It's actually just a shop where she has a big table with a few chairs, and so its like our own private co-working place" Julia, Netherlands

"I actually always work in co-working spaces. And now I choose this one [where interview was conducted]...Although we are staying in a co-living, they have a small working space also, but in two weeks we move because our contract ends, so then I will probably work full-time here." Taylor, Netherlands

It was clear to see then, that for many digital nomads coworking places as well as cafes were important to supporting a comfortable work environment as well as creating a sense of community. These certain locations in the city became very integral in their lives and routines as well as collectively important to the continued support of the digital nomad community as a whole. Without the abundance of spaces in which people could work in Lisbon, such a community might not be enabled in practicing their everyday lives. Resultantly, a kind of tight-knit community within very specific places was formulated across the city, to the point that very often digital nomads could rely on others being in certain places at certain times.

Secondly, various events and meet-ups centred around a handful of themes which take place in specific locations in Lisbon, also helped to depict the idea of the construction of an identity in place. Bernardo and Palmo-Oliviera (2012) suggest that places themselves can be seen as social categories with shared social meaning which occurs as a result of interactions between group members. In other words, places are not simply scenarios where interaction occurs, but they become much more intrinsic to group identity itself. In terms of the locations where digital nomads met with each other to socialise and attended events in Lisbon, one particular place, referred to as 'Selina', was mentioned by most participants at some point within interviews. Selina Secret Garden is a place in Lisbon which is geared towards digital nomads in that it provides accommodation, working spaces, event and conference rooms, a cafe and bar, amongst other things all in one building. Selina was often referenced as the epitome of the digital nomad scene in Lisbon or at least an example of where many of the communities' activities took place and participants often mentioned this location whenever referring to meet-ups or events. A handful of other places were

also mentioned where certain business and entrepreneurship related seminars, talks and presentations took place. With the repetition of certain places in Lisbon which were described as facilitating these congregations, particular places then become entangled with social meaning, in this case digital nomadism. Put simply for example, you can't think of digital nomads in Lisbon without thinking of Selina, and you can't think of Selina without thinking about digital nomads.

Interestingly, whilst this thesis previously questioned the extent to which digital nomadism in Lisbon involved the blurring of work and leisure (Reichenberger, 2019), it was clear to see that this kind of blurring was indeed present when it came to events and meet-ups run by this central digital nomad community itself. J states:

"I would say that it is actually both [work and leisure]...the people I spend time with, because it was challenging to connect with the locals, I found myself you know, wanting to be in this community because it was really easy to connect with them and so I actually spent a lot of time not only working but also like, pleasure. All of my social activities were with this community, so it was everyday you know? I saw them for both work and pleasure, I would say half and half". Jack, US

Sara explains in detail some examples of how her social and work life overlap:

'There are a lot of meet-ups for social events, but then there's a lot of meet-ups that are different talks about business. Like last night, I went to one that was about... It was that guy who funds startups, and he was talking about his path and the people that he met there were people who had some business ideas and so we were just talking about how to scale it and supporting each other in that way. But last week I went to a talk with somebody else who was sharing their digital nomad story. But then we connected about travel as well as work. I've also plugged into the creative community here through creative mornings, so that helped me get more connected with people doing design and things... I'm going to cafes a lot too where you can find a huge digital nomad group". Sally, US

Sara suggests that in her experiences, events run by this community incorporate both social and business related activities. Her description of her involvement with the digital nomad community shows no division between work and leisure, with examples of both interlaced throughout her words. In terms of the events and meet-ups that were frequently open and available for digital nomads, these therefore seemed to be considered as both social as well as work related, and in many cases events provided both of these things simultaneously.

This research argues here then, that through the use of certain places across Lisbon, a shared digital nomad identity is formed based on collective values and goals. Digital nomads in Lisbon due to certain requirements for facilities and environments are initially attracted to particular locations. When understood in this way, places become even more integral to the community and identity itself since places themselves become the actual meeting points for digital nomads, upon which certain collective behaviours related to work and social life are enacted. In many ways, this entanglement of place with identity resonates with findings from Larson and Pearson (2012) who found that whilst high-tech entrepreneurs encompass a group which epitomise the, "place does not matter" notion, place actually plays a very significant role in the shaping of occupational and lifestyle identities.

Place identity on an individual level

However, discussions merely around work and the central digital nomad community exclude those who do not affiliate so much with the group. Additionally, it also excludes those aspects of identity which relate directly to the more general physical aspects of the city and those aspects of identity which can be understood on a more individual level. Leisure activities outside of the central community in wider Lisbon, as well as the natural landscapes accessible from the city also seemed to play a part in terms of place identity or respondents. The physical setting of Lisbon was in some cases said to assist in enabling a kind of identity for digital nomads. In many ways this can be

understood on more of an individual level. For each digital nomad, different and diverse aspects of the city contributed to their preferred leisure activities, thus enabling people to practice what they enjoyed doing and who they enjoyed being in the city. It was clear to find examples of this, where individuals directly stated something they enjoyed doing, and how Lisbon as a place specifically enabled them to enact or support this behaviour. In many cases, participants spoke about their enjoyment of being outdoors, within and just outside of the city. Mostly, this included walking - often by the river - visiting parks, practising yoga, as well as photography. Jack and Alice explained how Lisbon provided them with an ideal environment in which to walk, something they enjoyed doing in their free time:

"I did a lot of walking. There's a big walking culture in Lisbon. I really wanted to immerse myself. Other places aren't so suited for that, but in Lisbon everything is tightly compact". Jack, US

"I really appreciate being in a city as beautiful as Lisbon, and you can walk around and find different things like history and art...sometimes I just go for a walk. I love being active." Polly, US

In the case of Alice, her interest in history and art was supported in Lisbon and the built environment allowed her to continue enjoying such things in her free time by simply walking around the city. Meanwhile, for J who felt strongly about immersing himself in the culture, the layout of the city allowed for him to walk around the city. Lisbon was then suggested to contribute to individuals' expressions of their own identity. Whilst walking was considered important to the lifestyle of quite some respondents, others spoke of numerous other activities and hobbies which they felt were supported by the setting of Lisbon. T stated that Lisbon was a good place for his photography:

"I'm a pretty laid back person so most of what I do is just chilling out. But I like getting out and I do a lot of photography too. It's a good place for that." Timothy, UK

Additionally, Jack claimed that Lisbon was a very active place in terms of events and parties:

"The nightlife is really great. Every single night it seems like there's something to do. There are tonnes and tonnes of holidays and street parties. People go outside and I really enjoyed that aspect a lot." Jack, US

Some respondents spoke about activities which took place just outside of the city, such as the beach as well as nature more generally. Very often this was suggested to be a benefit of living in Lisbon, since one didn't have to travel far to reach these regions. Tara explained how the natural aspects of Lisbon and the surrounding area allowed her to get some peace and quiet, since she described herself as someone who was not fond of big cities and the stress associated with them:

"There's a tiny beach I wouldn't recommend for tourists, but I can go with my dog and just stay chilled. It's a small beach you know. Nobody bothers me and I can do some reading. There are also so many hidden parks like Graca." Tara, Brazil

It is clear to see here that in some cases, the things people enjoyed doing were facilitated by the city itself. Lisbon as a place can therefore be seen as contributing to an overall sense of place for digital nomads on an individual level, in that it provided individuals with specific place characteristics which helped them to practise their own identities within place. Whilst identity is culturally reproduced, it is also mediated by the unique attributes within landscapes (Stedman, 2003) and it is clear to see how certain landscapes in Lisbon were described by respondents to assist in co-creating certain identities. However, in some cases, leisure activities became more alike to 'serious leisure' with a few respondents referring far more directly to the connections between Lisbon as a place and their own identity. Thompson (2018), who discusses serious leisure, argues that digital nomads often define themselves in relation to their interests and and leisure activities. Serious leisure can supposedly be identified by more extreme investments of time, dedication, money and seriousness (Thompson, 2018). She claims that for digital nomads, this often involves the beach and surfing, climbing and snowboarding for example, which are

spoken about when referring to individual identity more so than work life and career. In a few cases this was identified and some participants explained that Lisbon actually supported something for them which really defined them as people. Alice explained that she travelled according to where she could go surfing regularly:

"I've signed up for a WhatsApp for surfing buddies, so you know, you kind of buddy up with people that want to go surfing, I met people like that as well... It's funny but I think if you talk to people that have been doing this for a while and are also into surfing, they've all been to the same places. This is one of them... For me, I always look for waves and WiFi, and now its a community thing too."
Alice, Argentina

In Alice's case, being located in Lisbon really came to contribute to her own identity through the act of surfing. Whilst other cases were also identified whereby respondents felt that Lisbon's physical landscapes supported the continuation of their identity, Alice's example truly helps to portray this idea. Surfing, Lisbon as a place and Alice's identity are then interwoven in a few ways. Firstly, in Lisbon Alice can take part in a certain activity that she sees as very important to her and her overall lifestyle. The physical environment allows her to express her identity which is specifically based upon the material reality of the coastline near Lisbon which provides the right conditions for surfing. She can carry this identity with her and practise in numerous locations. Lisbon therefore becomes a place within which she can exercise this identity of hers. Secondly, she describes that practising her surfing in Lisbon also allows her access to a certain group of people through WhatsApp in Lisbon who share an identity in that they enjoy surfing. Alice is therefore able to associate with people who have similar interests within Lisbon itself, but what's more, on a larger scale Alice also becomes part of a very specific global identity of those who are digital nomads who enjoy surfing travel to certain destinations. Lisbon is therefore naturally a place she would visit since it is on this 'route' as it satisfies her requirements for 'waves and WiFi'. In line with Manzo (2003) who claims that people can be seen to use places to actually construct and maintain their identities, this respondent displays this phenomenon very clearly.

The reasons as to why digital nomads choose to settle in certain places was also often referred to in terms of their identity. According to Savage et al. (2005), people increasingly take part in what is called, 'elective belonging', which refers to how we select places to live. Of course this is tightly linked to the idea of place identity since if one is fortunate enough to be able to select where to live depending on certain criteria, it is likely to be a place where they can attach their own biographies as a way to perform their identity (Tomaney, 2014). In terms of digital nomads, this is a very relevant concept, since location independence allows these people to practice elective belonging fairly often and more freely. Within interviews, it was very common for digital nomads to speak about their motivations to stay in Lisbon and naturally, these were often connected to their own identity. Alice's search for waves and WiFi clearly depicts this, since her own identity as a surfer results in her choosing of certain places. Furthermore, Sally described how she needed to be her the sea, since she had always lived in proximity to it. In turn this resulted in her formulation of certain requirements for moving to and belonging in a place:

"I wanted to live somewhere where there is nature. Every place I have lived for the last 15 years has always been close to nature, but I still need the energy of the city to thrive and have a community... I'm Mediterranean blooded and I wanted sunshine and warmth too. Plus, I've always lived buy the sea my whole life, so always being by the water." Sally, US

In this case, certain place characteristics of Lisbon came to represent the ideal place for Sally to live, since she was most comfortable with particular conditions. She was a person who had always lived by the sea and therefore it became a requirement for her when relocating. In fact, this went as far as relating to her identity in terms of her ancestry. In order to take this further, the following chapter will explore the idea of belonging in a place. Since digital nomads in Lisbon do not often stay for long in comparison to residents, understanding how they reconstruct a feeling of home within the city can help to unveil a more general digital nomad sense of place in Lisbon.

Place belonging: “The place where digital nomads come to die”



A piece of home in Lisbon

The question 'who am I?' is difficult to understand without asking, 'where do I belong?' (Loader, 2003). Since digital nomads are very often on the move and transient in their lifestyle, the idea of belonging is interesting to explore. What's more, when applied to a specific place, it can contribute to uncovering how a person renegotiates a sense of belonging and a broader sense of place. In the previous chapter, Sally explained how Lisbon provided her with what she needed to feel comfortable by describing the physical and built environment and how it had commonalities with the places she had grown fond of throughout her life. Many respondents in this research also spoke about their sense of belonging by comparing Lisbon to their home countries, or to places they have previously felt a sense of belonging. One respondent spoke very fondly of her attachment to her home in California, but expressed that Lisbon provided her with a similar climate and environment, thus making her feel at home in the city:

"I didn't even know where Lisbon was. I was asked to be here to speak at a conference, but once I came here, I could not stop thinking about it even when I was away. So I had to come back... Within 24 hours of arriving I called my dad. I was like, 'Dad, this feels like home... This place feels like home. It reminds me of home'. And he's like, 'there's nowhere like home'." Polly, US

Polly explains how Lisbon's shared place characteristics reminded her of her home country, and this made her feel comfortable. In accordance with Antonsich (2010) who argues that a sense of belonging in a place is rooted in certain symbolic spaces of familiarity, Polly clearly depicts that her fondness and attachment for Lisbon was rooted in a sense of familiarity. In fact it made her want to come back. Polly goes on to explain what exactly it was that made her feel this sense of belonging in Lisbon:

"There's like, a tree, a kind of tree here we have at home. It's actually a Brazilian tree originally, but we have them in California too... Also, I'm American, I should emphasise that so spaciousness is a homey thing for me. So staying in an Airbnb is better for me, they make me feel even more, like a home. The bathrooms here are usually the size of me. I can't move around. It's very European and I don't mind it. Don't get me wrong, I love that. But if it's more spacious then it really feels like home. And light, I need a lot of light coming in. I know that those things are what make me feel good." Polly, US

In Polly's case it is interesting to see that firstly, Lisbon as a place shared certain similarities with her home and therefore she found herself comfortable in the environment. However, what is also interesting is that she claimed to know exactly what it is that she can do to make herself feel an enhanced sense of belonging on the move. By choosing accommodation with certain characteristics, she was able to create an environment away from home within which she did not have to work hard to adapt to. In her case, this was her way of renegotiating a sense of home in Lisbon, combining both a European environment with an American one. Also having lived in California, Sally explained how Lisbon also shared certain qualities with San Francisco, thus making her feel comfortable in the city:

"I lived in San Francisco for a long time and I wanted a place that felt familiar, and I didn't realise until I got here how familiar it is to me." Sally, US

In these cases then, a feeling of comfort came from a sense of similarity that Lisbon had to respondents' home regions. Where interviewees could see similarities, they felt that they could renegotiate their sense of belonging in Lisbon and this seemed to be enough for them to settle down in a place for a while. However, in a handful of cases digital nomads were more negative about the concept of belonging, in a few cases stating that they would never really feel that they belong anywhere other than their own countries. Zara explained how after being on the road for some years, she never truly felt at home Lisbon in a way that she might not be able to change:

"But I would admit, the only thing is that you're never home actually...I confess that, like I told you, I'm never feeling home. I'm starting to miss it a bit, that feeling of being at home. I don't know, maybe because I'm almost thirty". Zara, Belgium

Zara explained her style of digital nomadism in terms of staying in places longer than most digital nomads. She explained that she preferred to integrate into a society and enjoyed creating meaningful relationships with local people. Despite this, she claimed that she ever really felt truly at home, hinting towards the idea that even when she created a new home in a new place, she always felt as though the strongest sense of belonging would be in Belgium. More directly related to Lisbon, another respondent stated that there were certain things that he missed from his home in the UK:

"There are always going to be parts you're going to miss, friends and family. Some of the things I used to do on a regular basis, which you know...because I used to party a lot, like music and raves and stuff. The scene is different here." Timothy, UK

For Timothy, a few things about the city and its facilities were different to his home town which he missed for a few reasons. This meant that he was not able to carry on a similar lifestyle in Lisbon to the one he was used to at home. Meanwhile, the lack of friends and family around him was also mentioned to be a negative aspect of being in Lisbon, hindering him from feeling completely in place.

Home on the road

Discussions about missing certain places or expressing a lack of belonging were however void in a number of interviews. The digital nomad lifestyle is based upon transience and uprooting from home as well as various locations over the years. Some digital nomads expressed that they had no problem with this kind of lifestyle and that Lisbon had become a temporary home for them simply because anywhere can. Respondents talked about how belonging in a place for a certain time was less to do with the place itself, and more to do with their state of mind:

"I don't really know if I feel disconnected here. This will sound cheesy but maybe its how you feel in general. You can be anywhere in the world and if you feel disconnected to yourself or the people around you then you won't feel like you belong anywhere." Alice, Argentina

"I feel at home very easily. I take some time to feel grounded, but my space, my room at least, and then my dog. Then I'm at home". Tara, Brazil

When feeling at home is understood in terms of feeling internally content, Lisbon as a place can be understood as partially irrelevant to a sense of belonging and a wider sense of space that digital nomads create, in the sense that it isn't really sought after by some. Individuals in these examples show how a sense of belonging travels instead within them and can be transported to different locations. This is very much in contrast to other digital nomads in this research - such as those spoken about above - who describe specific physical aspects of the environment that they enjoy as well as their emotional responses towards missing home as well as becoming attached to specific characteristics within Lisbon. It should be noted here however, that the respondents who expressed this eternal feeling of home did not speak about Lisbon void of emotional language during entire interviews. The same interviewees spoke very in-depth about their feelings towards Lisbon and only when it came to the idea of creating a home on the move did these respondents express their ability to uproot themselves with ease, suggesting a kind of irrelevance of place and its characteristics.

This kind of matter of fact, or practical response was also present when some respondents spoke about the extent to which Lisbon was a suitable digital nomad destination for them to reside in. Certain practical qualities appeared to provide some digital nomads with the correct conditions for them to feel at home. For these individuals, practical elements seemed to provide enough for them

to feel that they could fit in and be content for some time. For example, all interviewees spoke about lower prices in comparison to other countries in Europe or in comparison to their home countries. Topics surrounding money and low prices were always spoken about in positive terms and almost always contributed to the reasons as to why respondents enjoyed living in Lisbon. Rita explained why she considered Lisbon to be a place which she could make her temporary or part time home, since it provided a low cost of living amongst other things:

“Definitely yes [I do feel at home here]. It basically just answers all my needs: good weather, good cheap food, accommodation is not that cheap though. But its a beautiful base for Europe. Because for me, half a year I spend in Asia and since now two years, I was trying to find a base for the summer and so yes, definitely Lisbon is the one I choose”. Rita, France/Tunisia

Feeling at home or belonging to a place is of course difficult to discuss when it comes to those who are transient and who move between places frequently. However, whilst for some it was suggested that a sense of feeling at home came from within oneself, it is clear that for some respondents, more tangible, physical conditions for digital nomadism such as the ones Rita describes made it easy for digital nomads to set up temporarily in a place. Thus as much as is possible on the move, some respondents created a temporary home for themselves by choosing a place which ticked off a number of their preferences. It is perhaps this kind of process of choosing certain places by certain preferences which allowed some digital nomads to feel as though they belonged to certain places around the globe and not others. It is clear then that home could for some be transported; within oneself or by choosing places using criteria which fostered a sense of home in new places.

Deeper connections

On the other hand, similar to that of Polly (who called her dad in the US to express her initial connection to Lisbon), some digital nomads shared a more emotional and romanticised narrative relating to the way in which Lisbon became their temporary home. Julia explained how she gaged a sense of somehow belonging in Lisbon when she visited, which then brought her back some years later:

“Well actually, its exactly two years ago that I was in Lisbon the first time and I was just on holiday. I remember I told my friends like, I could live here. But I was not a good digital nomad yet. But just a month after that I think I became a digital nomad. In December I was in Brazil and I was then...It just felt it was too hot, too humid, so much partying, no one really...like... I felt like people were not ambitious or creative with their work. So I was not inspired at all and I just thought ok, Lisbon. I remembered that it was a creative place with the right balance. So I just decided when I was there, I want to go to Lisbon and see if I can make it a home base for now. When I was here for two weeks, I already knew that it could be”. Julia, Netherlands

Julia described a number of things about Lisbon, in comparison to other places which made Lisbon the perfect place for her. Supposedly it enabled or supported her creative work, it had the right climate for her and a kind of work-life balance that she preferred. In Julia's case, a number of factors came together to create an environment which she 'just knew' would suit her. Understanding place belonging in this sense mirrors the understanding of Yuval-Davis (2006) who maintains that belonging in a place can be understood as a slightly intangible, personal, intimate feeling of actually being at home within a place. The intangibility of place belonging in Lisbon was also a theme which was laced through many interviews. Some respondents reported that they felt like as though Lisbon had made them feel at home, yet used more spiritual or abstract reasons to justify this. Jacob was from Israel and had recently found out about some Portuguese ancestors, which made him legible for Portuguese citizenship. In describing his sense of belonging to Lisbon as a whole, he stated:

“Nowhere has been completely home. Some places have been definitely less welcoming and homey. But I don't know. I ask myself, half of my life at least, I haven't even really felt at home in Israel...but I am Portuguese in my blood... my family are from here”. Jacob, Israel

Similarly, Jack who was from the US but half Dutch also spoke about his connections to Lisbon in relation with his own family connection to Europe:

"Compared to in the US, they'll go out to lunch and they spend a really long time out on lunch having coffee. They'll have a beer, they'll be smoking cigarettes... I really connected with a relaxed way of life and that kind of spoke to my European blood. I enjoyed being that way you know." Jack, US

Finally, Sally - who is also from the US - also speaks about her deeper sense of connection to the way of life in Lisbon that goes further than purely tangible place characteristics:

"I think its just the energy here in the streets [that makes me feel at home]. You know, people sitting outside, talking... My family is from Europe, so for me that feels normal." Sally, US

It was then striking to find that for some digital nomads, a deeper sense of connection with Lisbon was expressed through actually belonging in place through ancestry. The aforementioned participants actually described the atmosphere, energy or a sense of feeling more welcome, as directly linked to their family history. In terms of a broader sense of place, this became interesting since respondents were seen to describe their understanding of the place as intrinsically different, since they suggested to have an already established connection or sense of belonging upon which to give meaning to the city.

Lisbon as the place where digital nomads belong

Despite the fact that some digital nomads described having more romanticised or deep connections to the city itself, the most commonly referenced sense of belonging seemed to be rooted in the connections made within the digital nomad community. In accordance with the rest of this thesis, of course this can only be said for those who were in some way involved with this group. If place belonging can be understood in terms of spaces of familiarity (Antonsich, 2010) as well as that of continuity, order, attachment, comfort, security and refuge (Lewicka, 2011), then many aspects of the digital nomad community located in Lisbon were said to provide these things. Since digital nomads are often moving between places, the community in Lisbon was said by a number of digital nomads to assist in the settling in process and increasing comfort for those travelling alone. Resultantly, respondents often shared how they felt more at home in Lisbon than other places they had been:

"Although it can also be a bad thing too, I feel like its been great because when you're a foreigner its way easier to adapt and to connect with people if there are a lot of other people out of town like... on the same boat and doing similar stuff. So I think that's one of the main reasons why I chose Lisbon as a destination. The fact that there are people working remotely from here. The fact there are so many, so many events for digital nomads or people working as freelancers. I also think that a lot of people that I've met lately, including myself, are considering staying here in the long term." Alice, Argentina

"Having this community of digital nomads in Lisbon, the good thing is that they are open to kind of help or guidance. So sometimes, business-wise I would have some questions and I would just write them on groups. And if it happens that someone can help me, I just meet to talk to them, or call them, that kind of thing." Rita, France/Tunisia

"I think Lisbon is best for digital nomads because well the community has been here and has been established for a long time...I can see why a lot of people settle here. Its a kind of snowball effect too." Nicolas, US

A number of things can be taken from these respondents who enjoyed being a part of the central digital nomad community. Firstly, the digital nomad community in Lisbon was often said to really

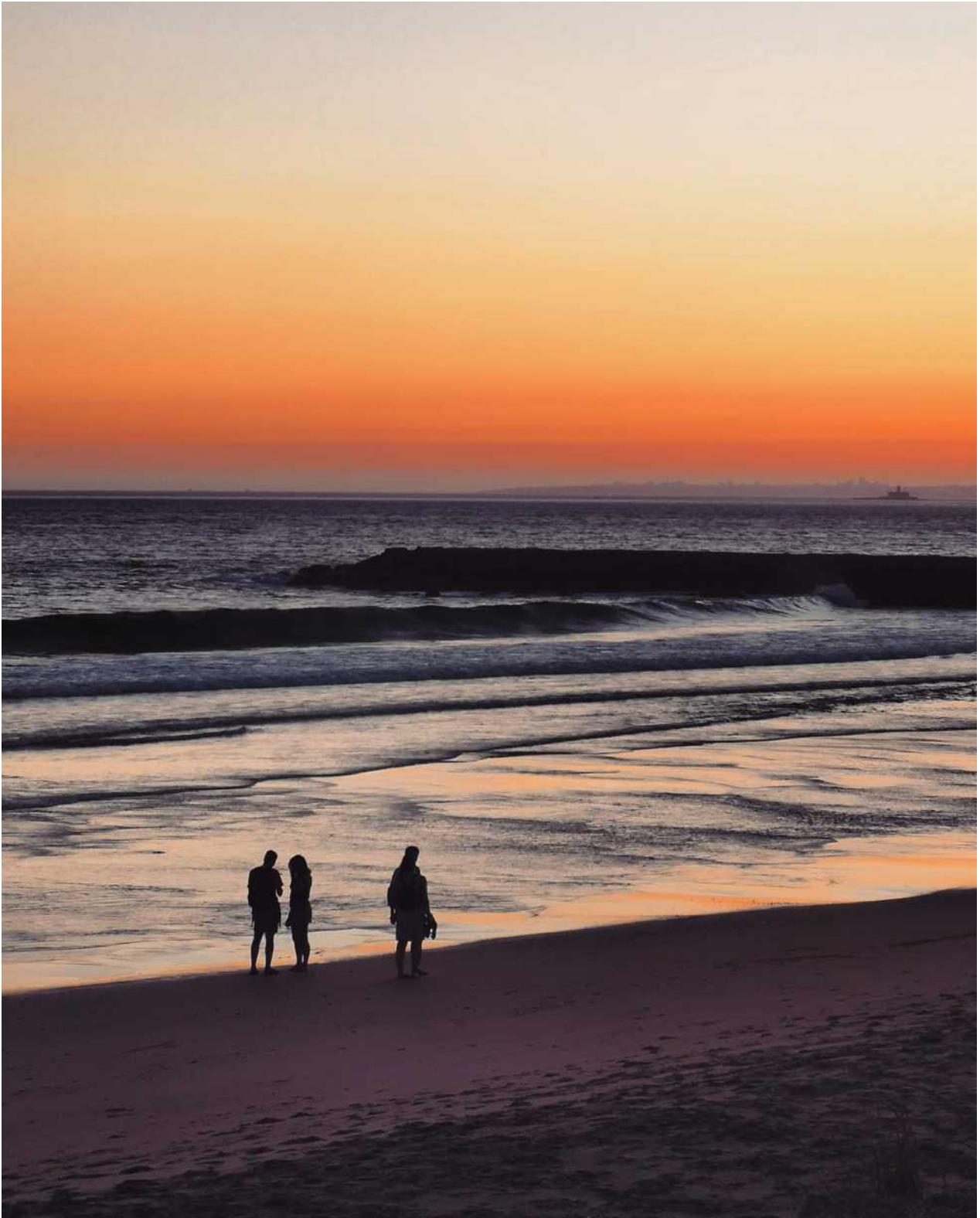
assist in the settling-in process for independent travellers. For example, Rita explains how when she had a business related issue, she could quickly find assistance. Support found in the digital nomad community was not uncommon and it was often expressed that Lisbon and its established community provided the right conditions for this kind of comfort. Secondly, the fact that digital nomads in Lisbon shared similar lifestyles, worked remotely and were 'on the same boat' provided digital nomads with a kind of community within which they could plug into. The fact that they shared the same values was often suggested to result in a heightened sense of collective belonging in place since they were 'all in it together'.

Finally, it was striking to hear that this sense of belonging found within the community often lead to digital nomads wanting to stay in the city for the foreseeable future. This was a very significant finding in this research. In three separate interviews, the phrase, 'Lisbon is the place digital nomads come to die' was used. This phrase highlighted the idea that Lisbon was becoming a centre so perfect for those who worked remotely, that it actually seemed to keep hold of such people therefore taking the 'travelling' aspect out of the digital nomad somehow. The extent to which digital nomads made Lisbon their home after visiting, varied. For example, some respondents suggested they would certainly visit again, some wanted to create a part-time base in Lisbon whilst travelling short term to other locations at certain points in the year, whilst others even stated that they wanted to stay for the long term. In one case, a couple actually decided to invest in property with the vision of creating a home. Taylor, describes this concept:

"There are some digital nomads which are really like... I think they're not really nomads anymore. They're quite stuck here. They also say, 'Lisbon is the city where digital nomads come to die'. So everyone comes here and stays here. During travelling, they all got stuck here. I think they should be kicked out of the facebook group [laughs]." Taylor, Netherlands

Ironically then, since digital nomads are so well catered for through the existence of a community which provide a shared identity and sense of belonging in Lisbon, many digital nomads supposedly don't leave. Since the central digital nomad community in Lisbon are so niche, specific and generally tight knit, a sense of a home base is suggested to exist for some digital nomads. As a result, their sense of finding the real 'core' for digital nomads in Europe created a feeling of belonging in a place. Compared to other literature about digital nomads, this finding is very unique. Although - for example - Schlagwein (2018) explores the role of digital nomad communities, emphasising the way in which they allow for nomads to share experiences and information, fostering education and providing open invitations on community websites, the idea that such communities induce a sense of belonging to certain places is not present. Oftentimes, the digital nomad lifestyle has been described as so transient that perhaps real place connections are not recognised. It has certainly not been recognised that digital nomads in Lisbon stay long enough in one location to the point that it really begins to transition into their new places of belonging as a digital nomad. Thus, this thesis - unlike other academic research on the topic - claims that the digital nomad and their ability to create strong, long lasting connections to places should not be underestimated. A sense of belonging in Lisbon, particularly for those who enjoyed inclusion in the central digital nomad community was seen to be comforting and very strong.

Discussion and conclusion



This research set out to explore sense of place for digital nomads. Where the transience of digital nomads has often been emphasised in previous research (Schlagwein, 2018; Nash et al, 2019), this has sometimes left little room for in-depth explorations into the connections these individuals make to the places within which they spend time. This research uncovered a number of interesting findings relating to the meanings digital nomads attach to Lisbon and an overall sense of place. This was divided into three sections; place attachment, placement identity and place belonging. What's more, since research about digital nomads is generally lacking to date, this research also contributed to preexisting findings about this category of people and the lifestyle more broadly. This chapter will outline and discuss the main findings in this research, thus answering the research question and highlighting the most important findings. At points, the discussion section will also explain alternative explanations for results, it will discuss other literature and will look at the limitations of this research as well as directions for further research. The chapter will begin with a discussion about the digital nomad as a diverse and broad category of individuals.

Digital nomads as a research category

This research firstly uncovered the idea that digital nomadism was a diverse category for research and one which should perhaps be thought about in a different way in future research, especially since the definition - currently only found on Wikipedia - was sometimes found to be irrelevant in terms of identifying as a digital nomad. Despite the recognition of certain themes which have also been explored in other digital nomad literature, some digital nomads' motives for the lifestyle choice as well as their exercising of it, made it difficult to understand digital nomads as one individual research category. The term digital nomad has become increasingly popular in recent years. However, some digital nomads in this research seemed to accept the title by definition, but rejected the identity, or were sometimes confused more generally about whether they even qualified for the title. Schlagwein (2018) identifies that some digital nomads preferred not to be identified in such a way, similar to the idea that someone might say, 'don't call me a hipster'. However, this research argues that such a comparison is not entirely, or not always true. This research found that there were a number of reasons for this ambiguity.

Firstly, some digital nomads worked online as well as within Lisbon and therefore the lack of purely online work for some created confusion surrounding affiliation with the term. Secondly, the motives digital nomads explained to begin the lifestyle sometimes created a lack of clarity around belonging to the category. Finally, and most strikingly, the work one did and the extent to which one became involved in the digital nomad community resulted in the illusion of insiders and outsiders in Lisbon. This was a particularly significant finding in this research. In terms of Lisbon then, the term digital nomad was found to cover a broad range of people, whilst involvement in a central community of digital nomads often defined digital nomadism. Being involved with this community in the city; attending social or work events, for some people was sometimes more important than actually qualifying for the digital nomad 'criteria' or the definition revolving around location independence and travel. This was somewhat unexpected, since a literature review and initial online research via social media uncovered the somewhat homogenous and popular perspective of the scene in Lisbon. In hindsight, this is perhaps due to the central community's visibility online and on social media. When carrying out research on the lifestyle, it is of course natural that researchers may have previously approached these congregations and groups, thus ignoring 'outliers' and formulating a sample which was not representative of the broader category.

In addition, in this research it was important to see that by understanding digital nomads more in terms of the definition and an overarching category, they were seen to be less unique when compared to other transient groups. For example, respondents in this research sometimes spoke about their lifestyles not dissimilarly to expats, or more broadly lifestyle migrants (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; Polson, 2013). The line between telecommuters, flexible workers, remote contract workers and digital nomads can be seen as very blurred from this research, despite location independence or flexibility being a common denominator (Thompson, 2018). In fact Thompson (2018) in some ways compares the lifestyles of telecommuters and digital nomads in her research, highlighting the supposed similarities and differences. What's more, in adding to this

blurring between digital nomads and other categories, some nomads explained that they were not tourists or travellers either but, 'just living in the city'. More specifically, this kind of pattern emerged when it came to conversations about how free time was structured in relation to work. A kind of separation of work and leisure in time and also space contributed to the idea that to be a digital nomad in Lisbon was actually similar to a 'normal' working life in Lisbon, whereby individuals separated the spheres of work and leisure. When it comes to the population as a category for research, it should be kept in mind that whilst some research has emphasised travel, tourism and leisure as integral and interwoven parts of the lifestyle (Nash et al., 2018), this is not always the case.

Grasping a fuller scope of the definition could result in both academic and societal implications. In terms of this research a reflection on the sample can be made. Whilst it was interesting to uncover the existence of diverse digital nomads in this research, sense of place research in Lisbon may have been more coherent if only those who interacted with the community were chosen for interviews, whilst purposefully allowing for the absence of the broader definition from the sample. This would have been particularly useful in terms of place identity and belonging and could have helped to uncover more in-depth information and reveal more patterns and themes about the aspects of sense of place in Lisbon. Whilst this research did explore identity and belonging in some depth, results were broad and very diverse thus making it difficult to draw conclusions about the different 'kinds' of digital nomads or different groups and communities. Of course acknowledgement of a broader definition in academia could also have implications for society too. When it comes to societal implications, a consideration of a broader definition in Lisbon might help to inform certain policy decisions which could - with this knowledge - be made using more appropriate and accurate information. Further research - perhaps quantitative - which looks into the diverse lifestyle choices by digital nomads in places could be used to complement this research and could quantify certain aspects of the lifestyle. For example, a more accurate and inclusive number of digital nomad population could be estimated in certain places, whilst different 'types' of digital nomad identified and diverse people-place relations uncovered. After all, if 'sense of place' forms a basis for the aims and needs of diverse groups regarding the future of landscapes and their development (Kanicka et al, 2006) an understanding of this diversity can help to guide local development and policy making more effectively and accurately and in the right direction to accommodate and manage diverse groups.

Place and the digital nomad

Taking into account the ambiguity of the population, this thesis looked at a sense of place for digital nomads in Lisbon and uncovered some interesting patterns and themes. Practically, by uncovering sense of place for digital nomads in a place, as stated by Kanicka et al. (2006), destinations can move forward in their developments and take informed decisions about the future of a locale. Place, and the meanings that digital nomads gave to specific locations across Lisbon as well as the city as a whole, were found to be very central to the social construction of digital nomadism and were key to unveiling important aspects of the digital nomad lifestyle in the city. Respondents spoke about Lisbon and very specific parts of the city in relation to their feelings of attachment, sense of identity and their belonging to place as a digital nomad. The following section will discuss the three subconcepts more in terms of how they overlap and complement each other. In this research whilst each was separated, the subconcepts very much depended on each other in order to contribute towards a broader understanding of sense of place. Therefore this section will be discussed in terms of the whole picture; the overall sense of place.

Sense of place

The privilege of transience

Physical, tangible and also sometimes intangible aspects of Lisbon were touched upon within interviews, where individuals spoke about their individual experiences as people existing within the city. In line with a phenomenological approach, emphasis on individual experience, feelings and emotion was encouraged by the interviewer. Respondents spoke about their contentment with the consistently warm climate in the city, the brightness, the idea that it felt like a small city or suburbia, whilst it was also described as relaxing, slow-paced or to use the exact word often repeated, 'chilled'. Descriptions of Lisbon connoted a feeling of a liveable and stress-free environment within which respondents could spend their time working and enjoying free time. However, Lisbon was almost always suggested to have a kind of 'shabby charm', defined by imperfection, quirkiness and a lack of development, whilst laced with areas of derelict as well as beauty and history. This finding was very significant but also should not only be understood on a surface level in terms of the physical appearance and culture of Lisbon as a digital nomad destination. It is thought that a fondness to this kind of landscape can reveal multiple things about sense of place in Lisbon, as well as the broader digital nomad lifestyle and journey. There are a number of reasons as to why this kind of environment can be appealing to digital nomads, one of which is highly important to the discussion but has not yet been touched upon in great detail.

Schlagwein (2018) maintains that a lower cost of living is central to the digital nomad life, in that it enables them to sustain their lifestyles. What's more, it often allows digital nomads to live a life whereby they can work less, for a better quality of life than at home. Costs of living is often much lower in Lisbon compared to digital nomads' countries of origin, which is why - according to some scholars - certain locations around the world are frequented by these populations (Schlagwein, 2018). Throughout interviews it was very common for digital nomads to speak about their attraction to Portugal due to the potential for higher qualities of life and also due to lower costs of living. Since many digital nomads were freelancers and entrepreneurs, it was suggested that Lisbon provided them with a safe environment in which to practice self-employment, since the risk factor was reduced by comparatively low costs of living. Interestingly, rent prices were suggested to be comparably high to other living costs, however as a whole respondents expressed their satisfaction with being able to pay less in Lisbon and still experience a better quality of life than at home. Some digital nomads who were aware or perhaps conscious of their position within the city even compared their monthly income to the average Portuguese person and described how their income - which they mostly received from outside the country - allowed them a certain standard of living that was difficult to attain when employed in Lisbon itself.

When understood in this way, it could therefore be argued that the imperfect physical landscape of Lisbon symbolises the notion of a high quality of life for outsiders. Undoubtedly, these two things are related in some way. In other words, it could be argued that speaking of the run-down landscapes in Lisbon with fondness highlighted the extent to which digital nomads were completely disconnected to the city and in a position of luxury. Whilst the run-down or less attractive areas of Lisbon often make up the homes and livelihoods of local working-class communities, digital nomads could gaze upon this interesting place characteristic from afar with fondness and appreciation for the local culture. Previous research in the field of tourism has found that travel and tourism are rooted in experiencing what is novel and different and it draws upon images and ideas about unfamiliar and distant regions and their inhabitants (Urry, 2002; Steinbrink, 2012). Of course this idea of visually consuming and experiencing difference in travel is not new, however here such a phenomena is very evident too. Since digital nomads have eased mobility, they need not suffer from any economic or political issues within a place, and since they earn an income from places outside of their current destinations, they do not need to be concerned about low wages and can make the most of (usually) comparably high wages (Schlagwein, 2018). As a result, the digital nomad becomes not only spatially and temporally free but also politically and financially free from place. Digital nomads then are put in a somewhat privileged position for these reasons and they

are able to gain experiences similar to that of tourists involving the visual consumption of places of difference and unfamiliarity.

Taking this one step further, it is not only simply the gaze which puts digital nomads in this kind of position in comparison to locals. The population also contributes to the growth of visitors to Lisbon and specifically short-term rentals (often Airbnb's) in the city. The influx of short term visitors to Lisbon is resulting in the displacing of work-class communities and is increasing housing insecurity for renters as more affluent tenants move in. Resultantly, exclusionary displacement occurs as new residents are unable to move in and local people experience a process of social injustice (Cocola-Gant and Gago, 2019). This more tangible outcome of digital nomad existence in the city, puts the population in a position of power in the city. It could be argued that idealised romantic and undeveloped landscapes described by digital nomads can be seen as inextricably linked to their own financial freedom and increased luxury when to local residents these same place characteristics might represent social injustice. It is important to note that a number of digital nomads expressed guilt mainly regarding their contribution to the pushing out of local people. In fact one participant decided to volunteer for a local charity as a way of giving back to Lisbon as a whole. In terms of research in Lisbon, some has been carried out which looks at the short term rental market in relation to impacts and local people (Cocola-Gant and Gago, 2019). Potentially, further research which looks at the differences in sense of place between local working-class residents and specifically digital nomads could reveal a lot about the disparity that exists between both sense of place accounts. Research using this framework could help to bring attention to this structural social injustice.

Belonging to the digital nomad community

As it has been suggested multiple times, digital nomads seem to congregate in place for many reasons; for a higher quality of life in places where money can stretch a long way, but also due to climate and leisure potential for example. In Lisbon, this has resulted in the formulation of a very tight-knit digital nomad community. Involvement in the digital nomad community has been discussed in all three sections of this research and has been relevant in providing digital nomads with a certain experience in place as well as contributing to their wider sense of place of Lisbon. When it came to the central community, this meant that in some cases digital nomads were in a way excluded from analysis, since they did not speak of the community in interviews. In terms of place attachment, many digital nomads explained their fondness of Lisbon as a result of being socially supported and due to making like-minded friends quickly. In relation to place identity, it was suggested that the community displayed similar goals, behaviours and opinions. In terms of lifestyle and career, whilst also frequenting certain locations around the city. This resulted in a kind of supporting of the physical environment for the digital nomad community and shared identity. However, this was in some ways very inseparable from place belonging, since many digital nomads spoke about their affiliation with the digital nomad group, suggesting that it made them feel at home on the road. This research uncovered results in line with Bernardo and Palmo-Oliviera (2012), who suggest that places themselves can be seen as social categories with shared social meaning which occurs as a result of interactions between group members. Lisbon was experienced in a certain way by digital nomads due to their use of shared spaces with other members of the community. Sharing these places across the city became key to their attachment to Lisbon but also the formulation of a shared identity through a process of group belonging.

Although whilst it was clear that a digital nomad identity in Lisbon often seemed to be built upon connections and experiences with certain places, it is unclear as to how this kind of shared identity and somewhat large scale community became rooted in certain locations. Additionally, how did a kind of digital nomad place identity emerge initially in Lisbon? Such questions are of course not only rooted in questions of place identity but also attachment and belonging. Lisbon as a city clearly provides digital nomads with necessities; such as coworking spaces, comfortable cafes providing fast WiFi for example, whilst as a city itself digital nomads - as previously mentioned - have been attracted by its culture, climate and low cost of living (Nash et al., 2018). However, this research argues that an attractive place identity has been well established in Lisbon, one which is

not only relating to tangible elements, but also one which is bound up in extensive social media and online activity. Polson (2013) argues that digital media practices are employed in order to create flexible places that span both on and offline. He maintains that both online and offline communication practices can be used to create a sense of place which then allows for feelings of attachment to a particular setting and community. This research agrees with this idea that sense of place can to an extent be created through online spaces. Most digital nomads referred to facebook, instagram, meet-up and nomadlist for example, as ways in which they stayed up to date with activities in the area and as online places they could turn to for support, inspiration and community. Whilst this was beyond the scope of this research, if further research is to look into digital nomad hotspots using a sense of place framework, perhaps more attention should be paid to the online community and its contribution to the formulation of a place identity as well as a broader sense of place. This contribution should not be underestimated, since these less tangible places hold great deals of information which could be analysed. In the case of Lisbon, whilst interviews with participants revealed a lot about the lifestyle, certain aspects relating to community, support systems, belonging and more generally the digital nomad identity should be considered in more detail. Research which includes methodology surrounding social media is increasingly relevant for exploration into digital nomads, since it currently enables people to communicate whilst on the move, bringing professional as well as private relationships to the road and creating increasing potential for the co-ordinating of more meetings and events, therefore making it a very central part of mobile lifestyles.

Yet, in the exact opposite direction, whilst the existence of a digital nomad community helps to create a certain virtual sense of place and an attractive environment for nomads, an online presence of a digital nomad community also results in some cases in digital nomads choosing to come to Lisbon. Through instagram posts as well as the ease of finding social digital nomad groups and meet-ups in Lisbon on various platforms, some nomads knew a lot about the potential of Lisbon as a destination due to its prevalence online as an unofficially branded location for digital nomads. Since many nomads seemed to be in search of support, community and socialising with groups of like-minded people, the idea of elective belonging was key here too in terms of the central community. The idea of elective belonging, combined with sense of place research might be helpful for destinations when looking to market to digital nomad audiences. If we can understand sense of place as a framework used to validate the important aspects of the individual human experience and to uncover the realities of diverse groups (Manzo, 2005), then it becomes useful for destinations. For example, Campelo et al., (2014) argue that destinations should brand for specific audience and that they should communicate a very unique image, meets achieved through sense of place research. They argue that destinations are embedded in places and thus destination branding and marketing should be guided by such a theory in order to benefit from and to contribute to the place's natural, cultural, social and economic wealth (Campelo et al., 2014). However, this thesis argues that since digital nomad community was so key to many respondents, this is also an avenue to explore for destination marketing. Since some destinations such as Malaysia are beginning to show an interest in attracting digital nomads, and whilst digital nomads are such an under-researched population, further research into sense of place taking in other locations might be useful. Furthermore, if digital nomads are seen to take part in elective belonging, which sees them choosing places depending on a perceived and unique sense of place, often relating to community, then further research into the relationships between digital nomads and the way in which they get in touch with, as well as interact with the digital nomad community is essential.

Is Lisbon 'the place digital nomads come to die'?

When discussing Lisbon as a destination on the digital nomad journey, many respondents were often fond of the city and expressed its suitability for the lifestyle. In many cases this went as far as explaining it as an ideal location for the lifestyle, taking into account many aspects that have been outlined throughout this research relating to physical characteristics, community and people amongst others. It was overwhelming to see that fondness and attachment to the city for many reasons resulted in feelings of being at home in Lisbon. Of course, there were exceptions, however

in some cases digital nomads spoke of a sense of belonging which stemmed from ideal conditions for the digital nomad lifestyle. Place characteristics were said to be key in creating a sense of belonging. This has been extensively discussed, in both the sections about place attachment and place identity; for many digital nomads feelings of fondness towards certain aspects like climate, beauty of the city, low cost of living and abundance of activities were all mentioned to be important for respondents to feel at home. Moreover, digital nomad communities which also meant interesting events and talks on certain topics and the ease of slotting into a circle of like minded people and gaining a social life were very important for some. In fact, if place belonging can be understood in terms of spaces of familiarity (Antonsich, 2010) as well as that of continuity, order, attachment, comfort, security and refuge (Lewicka, 2011), then many aspects of Lisbon were said to create a sense of belonging in place. The emphasis on Lisbon being a perfect digital nomad destination was a very significant finding in this thesis and the repetition of the phrase, 'Lisbon is the place digital nomads come to die', highlighted this. Ironically, it was suggested to be so ideal for some, that it took the 'nomad' out of digital nomad.

The final section of this discussion would like suggest the possibility that Lisbon as a digital nomad 'hotspot' might to some extent be an anomaly in comparison to other hotspots. Numerous respondents considered Lisbon to be most comfortable and suited for their way of life in comparison to other places in Asia or other European destinations. This research argues that for many, the central digital nomad community and everything supporting its existence; everything from social events, social media pages, coliving establishments, business events, coworking cafes make up the most important aspect of belonging to Lisbon for many nomads. What's more, this research also argues that for numerous people, this specific subconcept of place belonging was very integral in the formulation of an overall sense of place. Whilst this was not true for all participants, a shared identity in place and a shared sense of belonging certainly eased the lives of digital nomads entering the city and at least offered to make any negative consequences of digital nomadism less severe. Where loneliness has been emphasised in some literature, it seemed to be limited for those involved in the community, whilst business and personal life were supported by a great deal of people on social media who were at hand to answer questions 24/7. Thus, as people in society who do not live a typical life fixed in one place so to say, Lisbon seemed to have been deemed ideal; through the gradual establishment of such a community, Lisbon has become increasingly branded a place in which such people can congregate.

This important finding relating to digital nomad sense of place in Lisbon is of course very ironic. It seems that due to the creation of such an ideal conditions for the population, Lisbon has captured many nomads and in some cases put a stop to their nomadism or at least reduced it. Where literature has very often emphasised the transience of digital nomads, it is thought that this research provides some evidence that the lifestyle can be much less transient and that people-place relations, whether to the social or physical environment are much more relevant than has been suggested. Digital nomads can perhaps be considered less transient citizens of the world, but more attached to certain places. What's more, with research focusing more on the lifestyle of nomads as they travel, no research has looked at the end of the digital nomad lifestyle and those who have chosen to return home or settle down in certain places. Research with a focus on the end of the digital nomad lifestyle would be interesting, since it might highlight more of the problems associated with the lifestyle, whilst also helping to identify exactly what it is in terms of place characteristics that attracts transient people to settle down. However this research would like to suggest and emphasise the importance of more research into sense of place in different locations across the globe, where digital nomads frequent. This kind of research could help to uncover information about many aspects of digital nomadism, as well as also helping to provide more in-depth and relevant information for destinations. Finally then, whilst this thesis has explored a sense of place for the digital nomad in Lisbon, might it be that Lisbon is dissimilar to other hotspots? Is Lisbon the perfect place for digital nomads, or is it the place digital nomads go to die?

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Appendix

Interview guide

Introduction

- Ask interviewee if they mind being recorded during the interview.
- Introduce yourself and the motivation behind your thesis.
- Thank interviewee for taking the time to attend the interview.

Opening questions

1. What is your name,
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from?
4. Do you consider yourself a digital nomad? Why? Why not?
5. Can you talk a little about the kind of work you do?
6. How long have you been in Lisbon?

Place attachment

5. In Lisbon, which places do you spend most time when working? Why there?
6. Where do you spend most of your free time? Why there?
7. What is your perception of the appearance of Lisbon as a city?
8. Can you talk about a place in the city of Lisbon that you feel particularly connected to (if any)?
9. Is there anything about Lisbon you feel particularly disconnected to? Please explain.

Place identity

11. Who do you spend time with in Lisbon?
12. How did you meet these people?
13. To what extent does the digital nomad community play a role in your life here?
14. Are your relationships here based on work or leisure?
13. Does Lisbon provide you with things to do in your free time? Please explain.
14. Does Lisbon provide you with an enabling environment for your work? Please explain.
15. What exactly made you decide to come to Lisbon in the first place?

Place belonging

17. To what extent does the internet or social media have something to do with your decision to visit somewhere as a digital nomad?
19. Can you talk a little about your accommodation here in Lisbon?
21. To what extent do you feel comfortable or at home in Lisbon? Why? Why not?
18. Lisbon has been dubbed by many as the European capital for digital nomads. If you had to try and explain why you think digital nomads come to Lisbon, what would you say?

Conclusion

- Ask interviewee if they have anything extra to say.
- Inform interviewee that they can be sent the thesis if they need to see the finished product.
- Thank interviewee for taking the time to meet.