

Social Risks and Human Values in Context of Digital Nomadism

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Abstract—The article is devoted to the analysis of digital nomadism as a phenomenon, a sociocultural event, a lifestyle, and a professional activity of a person in the modern network information and communication society. There is a summary of modern research and practical experience, which allowed identifying advantages and problem areas in life organization and professional activities of digital nomads, viewed as a distinct social category of people. The article discusses the results of the empirical research and analyses the life values and causes of social risks as exemplified by photographers' – digital nomads' – lifestyle and professional activities. It is concluded that within the framework of digital nomadism considered as a risky lifestyle and environment, there is a need to manage social risks, to prevent and minimize them through realizing a person's social and individual potential.

Keywords—social risks, life values, professional activities, digital nomadism, digital nomad, photographer

I. INTRODUCTION

The experts of the day state a change in the social structure following the development of remote network communications, digital technologies, and the emergence of the information society. Physical space is no longer an obstacle in communication and professional interaction. As a result, society as an organization to a certain extent ceases to be hierarchical and dependent on the space, acquiring the features of a network (a rhizome) with a multitude of connections between its objects. There are areas of virtual presence and interaction with different functional orientation.

The virtual environment changes the social structure, people's lifestyles and values, their interaction, simultaneously forming the global information space, which makes the basis of the information society. Today, the virtual environment concentrates business, education, and entertainment information, provides access to databases in virtually every area of the society from various information

resources of public and private institutions, companies, libraries, etc. The number of organizations switching their employees over to the “nomadic” mode of work is rapidly growing, as well as the number of free (autonomous) “nomads”.

An integral part of nomads' mobile lifestyles and professional activities are social risks. The digital nomad is constantly exposed to risks because today the social function is partially performed by a single virtual information space, which begins competing with the environment relevant to the organization of social processes.

Thus, it evidentiates the relevance of this scientific problem, since the rapid development of digital technologies and the formation of the information society make the nomadic lifestyle more and more widespread.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The term “digital nomad” emerged quite recently in the scientific literature and professional practice. Digital nomads are freelancers of the new generation. Digital nomads include professionals (photographers, cameramen, journalists, designers, IT specialists, etc.) or entrepreneurs from a certain field, and they are not tied to a particular job site in their work.

The “digital nomads” project the nomadism phenomenon in terms of a modern metaphor as unlimited freedoms; they are a modern brand, conceptual innovation, symbolizing a certain existential freedom.

Digital nomadism is a relevant topic for scientific research in information technology, humanities and social sciences (J. Attali, W.J. Mitchell, A. Bard and Y. Soederqvist, I. P. Kuzheleva-Sagan et al.).

The term “digital nomadism” as a system of attitudes, values, and a purpose, a modern urban nomadic lifestyle, met a controversial approval in earlier concepts and phenomena

of social life. G. M. McLachen, back in the 1960s and 1970s, assumed that modern nomads would move quickly everywhere, use everything they needed right along the way, without needing a permanent home. J. Attali in the 1980s used this term to predict a new era, when members of the elite, rich and not too attached to their homeland, would fly around the world in search of new opportunities, whereas workers, poor and also not too attached to their homeland, would migrate looking for a better life. Later, J. Attali proposed to consider modern nomadism no longer as a subculture, but as a lifestyle of the third millennium man. He put forward the idea that future nomads are not just travelers without a specific place of deployment, but they are people who have no links with institutions such as the state, nation, and family [1].

In the 1990s, the concept of modern nomadism was enriched by T. Makimoto, D. Manners in their book “Digital Nomad”, devoted to the latest technological possibilities [15].

Another concept of nomadism was presented by Spanish sociologist M. Castells, who suggests that nomadic mobility may be both virtual (Internet space) and global (physical movement) [4].

Nomadism allows one to learn new languages, cultures, expand the boundaries of consciousness and perception [2]. A person starts belonging not only to a social and professional group, but, to a greater extent, to the communicative networks. As a result, people suffer less from nostalgia and a feeling of loss pertaining to the familiar living environment, home, relationships with loved ones.

According to L. Fortunati, nomads’ use of mobile communications allows to build a space without an address and precise localization. A mobile phone and a virtual environment themselves become a real home at any place provided communication is accessible at any time. At the same time, according to the author, every space-temporal and social change contributes to the construction of a nomad’s identity and self-presentation [7].

W. Mitchell coined the term “field of presence”, which stands for the possibility of carrying out activities (participation in the production process) at a distance, with the result that the traditional binding of a person to a certain place becomes irrelevant. Remote communications give rise to “digital nomads” who operate outside given conditions and use space situationally [6]. These processes may not require the physical presence of a person.

Some linguists, in particular N. S. Baron, believe that nomadism should cause concern, since the dominant way of thinking within a nomadic culture neglects the language, so that the language does not matter, and this will further aggravate social risks [3].

A whole caste of “digital nomads” is formed abroad, which represents both individual travelers and families traveling for many years and earning their living along the way, following the idea of deterritorialization.

The analysis of intentional sources allowed one not only to summarize scientific research, but also to obtain information about digital nomadism on Internet sites. These are books, articles, stories about the nomadic lifestyles of different professions – writers, web developers, photographers, etc.; recommendations, with step-by-step instructions on the nomadic way of life, on how to fulfill the dreams of spatial independence, how one can change one’s life and the world around.

Certainly, Russian Internet resources also provide information about this lifestyle; moreover, nomads themselves share experience and give tips on how to minimize the negative effects of this unique and, in some ways, risky lifestyle.

I. P. Kuzheleva-Sagan believes that digital nomadism is a sociocultural phenomenon belonging exclusively to the modern network information-communication society, because it arose primarily due to the Internet, the latest digital and mobile technologies, and the widespread wireless communications. Digital nomads are mainly characterised by their mobility and constant connection to the global Internet. The author believes that digital nomadism will soon become a worldwide phenomenon for all territories covered by satellite communications, therefore raising a number of various questions, including developing a strategy for business communications in the digital nomadism environment [5].

Digital nomads use digital telecommunication technologies to fulfill their professional duties, they are able to use a whole range of professional activities: programming and web-design; design in all its possible forms; tutoring, counseling, distance learning (voice and video communication via Skype); system administration; photography and video shooting; photo processing – retouching, restoration, etc.; text writing for various subjects, search promotion and others.

Digital nomads as a special social category are characterized by a mobile lifestyle, dynamism, the result of which is constant movement. Accordingly, the modern man’s mobility develops from an optional property into an integral characteristic of human nature. The second such quality is the need for unlimited freedom, a certain preference for space, which does not press, like time, on human consciousness.

The bulk of modern digital nomads are fairly rational people who consciously choose the nomadic behavior as a manifestation of their life position. This is a kind of departure from the existing system of values, imposed stereotypes and standards, an attempt to improve the quality of life (in the sense that burdensomeness of numerous rules and norms of social behavior peters out). In this regard, the individual ego is achieved not within the generally accepted norms, but sometimes, contrary to them.

The system of values is formed in an individual’s socialization, and it results in a relatively stable and independent characteristic for the individual. The choice of values is huge; however, only some of them become

anything more than external requirements and get included in the personal motivational structure eventually turning into life values.

Life values can be classified in many aspects, including fundamental (primary) and derivative (secondary), individual and social, real and symbolic, natural and artificial. These aspects are not mutually exclusive, so that the same values can appear in different categories. Fundamental, individual values relate to the human natural needs for food, clothing, housing, family, socializing, health, entertainment, recreation, etc., and the means to satisfy them. Experience shows that these values are not always obvious. People get used to them as something self-evident, as gifts of nature [15].

The systems of chosen and internalised personal values can vary.

In our opinion, the value system includes the following components: (a) axiological ideas about certain areas of life; (b) axiological ideas about more general social values which are associated by people with relevant areas of activity and which can be achieved through these areas of activity [16].

For digital nomads, the industrial system of values, based on the accumulation of material goods, gives way to such vital values as creativity, self-realisation, and values associated with the activity of an individual as a person (individuality, responsibility, curiosity, open thinking).

However, along with the positive aspects of the digital nomads' professional activity, there are various risks, including social.

In recent years, the problem of social risks is distinguished into a special branch of research, which is associated with the diversity of their sources, generated by human activity itself. The increase in the number of risks is traced not only to technological and demographic changes, but also to the influence of global processes (such as the interpenetration of business, culture, and technology) on human activity [10-12; 13; 14, 17].

Social risks are the individual's assessment of communicative situations of uncertainty associated with the possible benefits and losses for the individual [9]. In particular, A. M. Molokostova differentiated three main types of social risks (professional, existential, communicative). A professional type of social risks includes: (a) the discrepancy between the individual's capabilities and the professional requirements; (b) role risk; (c) the risk of incompetence; (d) the inability to achieve the desired result.

Existential risks include: (a) environmental uncertainty; (b) loss of meaning; (c) status risk; (d) value risk.

Communication risk is linked with difficulties in the communication environment and, as a result, with possible emotional distress, and includes: (a) communication risk proper; and (b) risk of emotional infection.

Digital nomads, striving to ensure a decent material standard of living for themselves and their families, pay a high price for their social well-being, as the highest social

value, for their professional independence, sometimes at the expense of their mental and physical health. The person's being left to one's own devices and without a guaranteed support from the state and society results in necessity to analyse the causes of social risks and find constructive ways to protect against them.

A notable example of digital nomadism can be photographers' professional activities, whose social risks and life values are analysed in the article.

The photographer's profession is relatively young and quite prestigious in the modern society. A photographer is a person or a specialist whose tasks include preparing for shooting (selection of topics, negotiations, obtaining permits and approvals, selection of models, props, equipment, a location, etc.), taking photos, and doing subsequent work on developing and printing photos, selling materials.

The professional activity of a digital nomad photographer implies relatively free working hours and the absence of a daily routine. The success of these activities largely depends on professional skills and abilities, as well as on the availability of a camera, a fast and powerful computer, special editing programs, fast Internet connection, and information storage security.

Too many directions in photography suit the digital nomad lifestyle quite well, for example, reportage, sport, closeup, micrograph, art, advertising, travel-photo or picture on a journey, stock, landscape, and others.

A photographer's digital nomadism is a specific philosophy, because such people change their views on life, on many social processes, on themselves, change their values, become more tolerant.

The system of values of the nomad photographer largely depends on the constantly changing social environment and on the level of personal development. A nomad photographer's values are dynamic, they change over time and as a result of his activities.

During one's life, an individual, including a nomad photographer, constantly reassesses life values, which is a natural result of restructuring a person's relationship with the world, adopted consciously by the general meaning of his/her life. Status values (social and professional status, prestige, wealth, power), associated with the occupation of a certain, possibly high, position in society, fade into the background. At the same time, creative values (creativity, curiosity, open thinking) and values that ensure self-actualisation (justice, honesty, individuality, independence) acquire particular significance. By changing the familiar comfortable object-spatial environment, digital nomad photographers become creators rather than consumers.

A. Research Questions

As many as 72 respondents participated in this study. The sample was accidental. The study involved photographers from different countries and cities: 79% of the total number of respondents from Russia (Astrakhan, Kemerovo, Kostroma, Moscow); 10% – Belarus (Brest); 7% – Turkey

(Istanbul); 4% – Greece (Thessaloniki). Out of the total number of respondents, 58% are males, 42% are females. 79% of respondents are married, 83% have a higher education.

B. Purpose of the Study

The study consisted in identifying the possible range of social risks in the professional activity for a digital nomad and analysing their life values. This problem is difficult to study due to the ambiguity of its understanding, as well as due to the lack of appropriate tools for measuring social risks, since foreign methods may not take due account of the unique features of reality.

C. Research Methods

The survey employed the following research methods: information analysis and systematisation based on scientific papers and Internet resources. A questionnaire survey was used as an empirical method.

III. FINDINGS

We believe that there is a relationship between the value system and the possibility of social risks in the professional activities of photographers – digital nomads – as a social category.

An analysis of the positive and negative aspects of nomadism revealed the factors causing the preferences of the nomadic way of life for photographers:

- Freedom of choice, independence (75% of respondents).
- The individual's ability to act and do at their own discretion (58.3%).
- An opportunity to realize oneself, self-actualization (54.2%).
- Cognition of other cultures through travelling; new impressions (45.8%).
- The integral perception of the worldview, expressed through the willingness to interact with people and groups of people constructively (20.8%).
- Environment, that can change depending on the individual's needs and desires, because the world is beautiful in its diversity (16.7%).
- Expansion of the off-line communication range (a large number of correspondents / respondents, 8.3%).

According to respondents, nomadism, as a sociocultural phenomenon, has its negative consequences, entailing the certain social risks:

- Blurring the boundaries between leisure and work (66.7%).
- Depletion of the material resources (58.3%).
- Independent organization of their space-time chart (37.5%).

- Language barriers (29.3%).
- Refusal from familiar and comfortable things (16.7%).
- Overabundance of new impressions (12.5%).
- Wi-Fi problems (12.5%).
- Changing the circle of contacts. Regular communication with relatives, old friends and acquaintances is possible only via the Internet (8.3%).

As a result, nomad photographers face a number of psychological problems (the total percentage is not 100, since the paper reflects the maximum choices for each block of significant problems).

The most likely problems are:

- 1) *Anxiety arising from the fear of the unknown (29% of respondents).*
- 2) *Internet addiction (17%).*
- 3) *Negative emotions (17%).*

Problems of average magnitude include:

- 1) *"Life for yourself", "life without obligations to the family, professional community" (37%).*
- 2) *Loneliness caused by homesickness, lack of loved ones (25%).*
- 3) *Changes in the emotional state and subjective well-being (25%).*

Relatively rare problems are:

- 1) *Isolation that occurs when the feeling of loneliness becomes much more intense and lasts longer (25%).*
- 2) *Stagnation of development and rejection of achievements (25%).*
- 3) *Depression. Feeling isolated for long periods of time often results in depressive symptoms: loss of appetite and sleep disorder, a sense of inferiority, a complete lack of vital interests, satisfaction and pleasure in anything, irritability, anger, etc. (17%).*

The results of a questionnaire survey for the respondents showed that it is important to have some kind of environment for creative implementation, social communication, and business synergy for physical, psychological comfort, and leveling the negative effects of nomadism to digital nomads. This environment is called "coworking", and it has already been emerging all over the world.

The precarious employment of nomad photographers is one of the most likely problems of professional activity. According to the respondents, to prevent this and other problems, special attention should be paid not only to language skills, but also to the prevention of financial and material difficulties. The subjects identified a number of ways and opportunities for nomad photographers to get income (Table I).

TABLE I. ACTIONABLE WAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN INCOME FOR NOMAD PHOTOGRAPHERS, %

Income opportunities	%
Direct sales of their services and works	83.3
Using social media for self-presentation	41.7
Blogs	41.7
Work for a magazine/newspaper, articles, photostories for the media	29.2
Photostocks	25
Training	20.8
YouTube	4.2
Product placement in expedition trips	4.2

As the majority of the respondents (83.3%) note, the most actionable way to earn income is to directly sell their services to the clients in the process of interacting with them. 41.7% of the photographers believe that social media are necessary for self-representation. At the moment, the richest travel photographers in the world are not those who work best, but those whose self-presentation skills are better than those of others. Some of the most active Instagram users can earn only on their subscribers, who regularly place orders with them. The same percentage of professionals specify blogs as a possible source because they perform a number of functions for a photographer: communication, self-presentation, entertainment, consolidation, and retention of social connections, self-development, psychotherapy, goods and services promotion. Work for a magazine / newspaper, articles, photostories for the media was noted by 29.2%. For example, one of the famous photographers of Siberia traveled around Thailand, India, Nepal, and China. On the way home he also visited Russian cities – Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Chita, Ulan-Ude, Irkutsk, and Krasnoyarsk. All this time he collaborated with various local periodicals, where he sent his photos. Besides, the periodical "Gazeta Kemerovo" started a special blog titled "Exploring Asia", where the author published his impressive photo reports, and travel notes. 25% believe that you can earn a living by photo stocks. The authors place their portfolios on different sites mediating between the photographer and the buyer. The main customers of photo stocks are information portals, websites, and just different companies. The advantage of photo stocks also lies in the fact that one and the same photo can be sold countless times.

According to the respondents, the possible range of social risks faced by digital nomads with a mobile lifestyle is presented in Table II. The respondents were offered the above types of social risks and were asked to choose up to three most likely ones and to rank them according to their degree of significance.

The data obtained in the survey show that the risk of precarious employment received the maximum number of respondents' choices, which is quite natural, since digital nomadism differs significantly from work in an office, where employment and income are a priori predictable and stable. In addition, difficulties arise in combining two (or more) social roles – family and professional, – the fulfillment of which also exceeds the capabilities of the individual. Risks associated with living conditions that exceed the abilities and capabilities of a person are classified as major occupational social risks, and it is not always possible for a photographer

to accurately predict how climate, safety, material costs will correspond to his expectations about a particular country. It is quite natural to recognize the facts that the future habitat cannot be fully modeled during the preparation for work in mobile conditions, and the environment will be different from the imagined one.

TABLE II. CHOICES FOR EACH TYPE OF SOCIAL RISK, %

Type of social risk	Number of choices		
	the most likely problems	the less likely problems	rarely faced problems
Precarious employment	54		
Combining family duties and professional activities	33		
Living conditions (climate, safety, material costs, etc.) exceeding the abilities and capabilities of a person	21		
The absence of remuneration guarantees (leaving the part of the work unpaid, etc.)	21		
Loss of interest in work due to the constant search for new employers		25	
The inadequacy of the required level of professionalism to the activity		21	
Lack of social benefits, because the employer, working with digital nomads, does not have any documented labor relations with the latter		21	
The state of health, the disease incidence			17
Transfer of emotions and attitudes of other people onto their condition			17
Inability to build a constructive interaction with customers			12.5

In the real life activities of a nomad photographer, the possibility of the risk occurrence is connected with the system of their life values (Table III).

TABLE III. LIFE VALUE SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE NOMAD PHOTOGRAPHER*

Life values	Significance of value, %
Active social contacts	67
Creativity	67
Self development	50
Retaining individuality	46
Spiritual satisfaction	33
One's own prestige	29
Achievement	29
High financial position	17

*The total is not equal to 100%, since each value was rated by a scale of 1-5. Whereby 5 is the highest value of significance, then by decreasing there are lower values of significance, 1 is the lowest possible value.

As a result, the analysis revealed that the professional activity of a digital photographer is a volatile diversity, having a certain set of values. Apart from the usual involvement in the virtual space, the nomad photographer attaches importance to the following:

- developing favorable relations in various spheres of social interaction, expanding interpersonal relations, playing one's social role (67% of the total number of respondents; the ratio in assessing the significance of

this value between male and female respondents was 56% and 44% respectively);

- realising creative abilities, striving for changing the surrounding reality (67%; taking into account the gender of the respondents, there was almost equal distribution in assessing the significance of this value);
- cognizing one's individual characteristics, developing one's abilities and personal characteristics continuously (50%; taking into account the gender of the respondents there was almost equal distribution in assessing the significance of the given value);
- prioritizing personal opinions, attitudes, beliefs over the generally accepted, protecting one's uniqueness and independence (46%; value is significant for 80% of men and 20% of women);
- following moral principles, prioritizing spiritual needs over material ones (33%; the significance of value for men and women was 75% and 25%, respectively);
- gaining social recognition by meeting certain social requirements (29%; the significance of value for men and women was 57% and 43%, respectively);
- realizing one's external and internal resources in order to achieve the goal (29%; the significance of value for men and women was 57% and 43%, respectively);
- striving for material well-being as the main life purpose (17%; significance of value for men and women was 75% and 25%, respectively).

Thus, in the system of life values for a nomad photographer, the life-purpose values (freedom) and interactionist values (interaction and communication) have the highest rank of significance. The least important was the value of a high material status. Statistically, significant differences in life values for the groups of male and female respondent photographers were not revealed.

The life values of photographers, who are digital nomads, are determinative in the choice of life strategy and decisions, preconfiguring orientations, achievements, and the possibility of certain social risks in the professional activity.

IV. CONCLUSION

As a result of the study, we identified the types of social risks that nomad photographers face most frequently: the risk of the impossibility of achieving results, the role risk, the risk of the inadequacy of abilities and professional requirements, the risk of uncertain environment.

For the given social group, the values of individualization (life purpose) are more characteristic, which explains their needs for a mobile lifestyle, a constant change in the social environment, and independence from domestic and social circumstances.

Based on the aforesaid, one can argue that values determine the individual's preferences in a variety of life circumstances and professional activities. The information society forms a new system of values and opens up new opportunities for personal development in the conditions of information technology and, in fact, another reality created by them. Such values of the information society are in a certain regularity and interconnection among themselves: technological changes bring information to a new level of semantic orientations. A nomad lives for the sake of getting new impressions, freedom, which gives the opportunity to choose anything, regardless of the subject's spatial location and time – they overcome the sense of space and borders.

The major modes that structure the life of a photographer – a digital nomad, – are freedom, novelty, and development. Digital nomadism becomes a life element associated with the search and implementation of ways for self-development in the professional sphere.

It should be noted that while moving around the world, photographers – digital nomads – acquire a selective attitude to the world, their worldview changes, an individual reaches a balance between the awareness of his subjective qualities and the requirements that are imposed on him at each spatial point. The individual's inner activity is manifested when s/he relates the social and cultural values to their own values.

At the same time, a photographer cannot constantly have a nomadic lifestyle, since an individual, as a social being, needs a familiar infrastructure, belonging to social institutions, social groups to meet all needs, and not just the need for self-realization.

Within the framework of digital nomadism, considered as a risky lifestyle and environment, there is a need to manage social risks, to prevent and overcome them through realizing a person's social and individual potential.

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