

Digital Nomads: the harbingers of radical change and innovation in modern-day society

The term “digital nomad” was first coined in 1997, but how much do we really know about what it means to be one.

On a surface level, this community of world-travellers can be defined by their desire to move seamlessly from one location to another, following only their innate desire for adventure, and, of course, their need for a stable internet connection. They’ve made headlines in recent years for going against the normal tempo of the nine-to-five life, and instead, creating a work-life balance enviable by all who watch from the sidelines.

“A person susceptible to “wanderlust” is not so much addicted to movement as committed to transformation.”

— ***Pico Iyer***

But, is it just this physical change that defines this group of visionary workers; is it just the community’s shared ability to work from anywhere that has an internet connection, or do they have more in common than just this flexible way of working, and, in fact, share the values, thoughts and ambitions that could change the future workforce, and perhaps even the way we look at society’s infrastructure?

Now that we’ve had more than a quarter of a century to digest and understand this new type of citizen, perhaps we can look beyond the lifestyle similarities and understand their outlook on the world.

While there’s no denying that digital nomads are individuals in their own right, it’s clear to see that many share similar traits that have set them on this path of unconventional living. To leave the comfort of your home, to move away from your friends and family takes a certain amount of confidence, a firm belief that there are better opportunities to found in the world, and an ability to think a little outside of the box.

Despite striving for something more than the outdated traditions that we currently live by, digital nomads and their radical thoughts are often met by old-fashioned barriers. What if these outdated political, social and economic hurdles could be removed before they had to be jumped? Perhaps then, and only then, would digital nomads and remote workers have the biggest potential for creating radical change and building new world structures.

“Every man can transform the world from one of monotony and drabness to one of excitement and adventure.”

— ***Irving Wallace***

Through their search for this alternative type of lifestyle, digital nomads have uncovered the faults, failings and irrelevance of the current systems and institutions that the world has come to accept as normal. As Lauren Razavi, an award-winning writer and strategist, explains in her article on [Building a Nomad Internet Country](#):

“Failing institutions. Lack of trust in government. Weakened democracies. Nation-states have reached a crisis point in the 21st century.”

Digital nomads are by no means the first to bring light to the problems of modern world structures, but they are one of the first communities to go against the grain and could be best positioned to actually do something about it. Often falling between the cracks of existing infrastructures - away from their homes, they often give up national health care, public welfare and other safety nets - digital nomads are likely to be the first people to address them and innovate towards the solutions.

Looking beyond the outdated nation-states, past the 19th-century government structures, and towards a digital future, the digital nomad community has the vision, the passion, and the desire to create a *new world* that accommodates *new-world workers*; a world where no one, whether you're a digital nomad or not, will have to compromise on basic benefits like health care and retirement, and a world where taxes and visas are simplified, and fair.

To do this, they must analyse what has already been made and work around it, creating a system that is impossible for traditional authorities to overlook: something new, fresh, and all-encompassing.

“If you can’t beat them, obstruct them. We need to find pathways to change the systems by building alternatives. Don’t fight; build a new model, and make the old model obsolete”.

— Pia Mancini ([Building Remotely Podcast](#))

The concept of digital nomads and the hunger for radical change isn't a new concept; it's something that has been bubbling under the surface for decades now. What makes the next decade such a time for change, is the advantage of technology. The physical borders that once separated people of different nations are broken down bit by bit as the online world becomes ever more poignant in our lives. You no longer need to go to Nepal to meet a local or understand the Nepalese culture, you no longer need to go to an office to land your dream job; the world is changing and we must keep up.

So what is the digital nomad community doing to work towards an improved future? Many prominent nomads are already taking action, not only to make this borderless world we live in more accessible but to make sure local communities are not negatively impacted by the changes.

One such person is Tarek Kholoussey, the founder of the social enterprise [Nomads Giving Back](#). He leads a community of nomads, ex-pats and travellers, in a bid to make it easier for these people to give back to the towns and cities that they temporarily call home. Whether it be through careful cultural exchanges, improved education on the topic or something as simple as organising a meet-up.

So far, the enterprise has facilitated more than 65 events in its two main hubs, Bali (Indonesia) and Medellin (Colombia), but there are big plans in the years to come. It is these small steps that will create positive social change around the world and digital nomads are best placed to jump into the thick of it.

Their mission reads:

“Make it easier for you to give back to local communities and create positive social change around the world through social impact-themed trips, culture and language exchanges, skill-sharing programs, advocacy events, meet-ups, impact workshops, volunteering access to organizations we support and more”

Also making the digital nomad dream even closer to a reality for so many is Peter Levels, founder of [Nomad List](#). Nomad List is an online resource that helps remote workers and budding digital nomads find their perfect home from home. The platform ranks different destinations by important factors including safety, internet speed, cost of living, visa availability, weather and more, allowing visitors to filter towns, cities and even villages out by preference. This is just one more example of how easy it is becoming to pack your bags, grab your laptop and jump on a plane to the other side of the world; happiness, balance and satisfaction await.

So the wheels are in motion, what's the next step and the ultimate goal?

“The nation-state model is outdated. It's time to create the infrastructure for a borderless world”.

Lauren Ravazi ([Minimum Viable State: Building a Nomad Internet Country](#))

If we rewind a little to Pia Mancini's worlds earlier on in the article, we can recognise that there is room for change in the world. And who better than digital nomads to make that change. So what could this future look like? Perhaps a little like Plumia; the first country on the internet.

[Plumia](#) is an initiative that was first headed by [SafetyWing](#) but has now been handed over into the care of Lauren Ravazi, an award-winning writer, strategist and self-confessed digital nomad. Plumia is a concept that has been slowly simmering away for a couple of years now; born from SafetyWing's desire to build a global safety net, available to everyone, regardless of their nationality.

Plumia was created to build the first country on the internet, to be the infrastructure for living anywhere, with the function of a geographic country. The world has changed with the internet, and as we mentioned earlier, our systems are not keeping up. Our institutions are slowly, but surely, becoming obsolete, to a point where some may no longer be needed in the next decade. Plumia has been established to address the problem, to rally radical leaders from across the globe to create a digital country that transcends borders and provides equal opportunity for everyone. Citizenship will no longer be something that you are born with, but something you can choose.

The idea of Plumia is not something that is being taken lightly. The community behind the initiative are well aware of the trials and tribulations that come with creating such a complex and radical concept in such an outdated environment. But if not now, then when?

“Wherever nomads go, they bring their new, borderless values with them. Those values will be the foundation for new opportunities, strategies, practices, networks, policies, and everything else in the years ahead.”

Lauren Ravazi ([Minimum Viable State: Building a Nomad Internet Country](#))

Digital nomads are ordinary people with an extraordinary outlook on the world. While their ideas and desire for a new and improved future may seem radical, when you take time to look a little closer, you'll realise that these changes are well overdue; they are simply one of the first communities to question the outdated realms of society that we continue to live in, that we have lived in for so long, and to take significant steps towards creating a better, more balanced world that is supported by the technology that we are so lucky to have at our fingertips.

Plumia has the planted seed, but we will watch it grow over the coming years into something that could bloom into revolutionary societal change for the better.