

From "Workplace Center" to "Living Field": a Socio-spatial Perspective the Rise of Digital Nomads - The Case of Dali, Yunnan Province

Zhiling Zeng ^{1,*}

¹ School of Politics and Public Administration, Guangxi Normal University, Guilin 541006, China

Abstract: In contrast to the "workplace" centered work model in first-tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, which focuses on physical division and prioritizes efficiency, the work and income model of Dali digital nomads is centered on "life", which deeply integrates daily life and work, and demonstrates the pursuit of individual autonomy, flexibility, and quality of life. In contrast, the work and income model of Dali digital nomads is centered on "life", deeply integrating daily life and work, and demonstrating the pursuit of individual autonomy, flexibility and quality of life. Based on the natural environment, low cost of living, and an inclusive atmosphere, Dali has reshaped the social significance of urban space through open urban spaces and community-based collaboration. The emergence of this phenomenon stems from three core mechanisms: firstly, the openness and diversity of Dali's urban space provides Travellers with freedom of practice; secondly, cohabitation and collaboration in the community strengthens the Travellers' social ties and sense of belonging; and lastly, through the structural reorganization of the urban space, Dali, as a nontraditional economic center, has achieved the transition from a "center of workplace" to a "center of life". Finally, through the structural reorganization of urban space, Dali, as a non-traditional economic center, has realized the transformation from a "workplace center" to a "living area". From a socio-spatial perspective, the Dali digital nomad phenomenon constructs a unique urban spatial logic and provides important insights for urban development and social innovation in the interaction between globalization and localization.

Keywords: Social Space; Digital Nomads; Workplace Centers; Living Fields; Urban Development

1. Introduction

As an emerging group in the context of digitization and globalization, the lifestyle of digital nomads presents a profound reflection on and breakthrough of the traditional urban workplace model. They rely on digital technology to realize remote work and move freely geographically, breaking away from the restrictions on working time and space imposed by fixed workplaces. This highly flexible and mobile way of working and living not only redefines the boundaries of the workplace and the living space, but also injects new connotations into the social significance of modern urban space.

In first-tier cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, the workplace center model is centered on prioritizing efficiency and the functional division of physical space, focusing on the strict distinction between work and life. The fast pace of work and high-pressure environment of this model are seen as hallmarks of modern urbanization. In contrast, in Dali, Yunnan Province, a non-traditional economic center, the work-life model of digital nomads revolves around daily life, realizing the scenario-based practice of "work is life" through an integrated urban space. Dali has attracted a large number of digital nomads through its unique natural environment, low cost of living, and inclusive cultural atmosphere. Here, the urban space is no longer a functional separation of workplace and life, but a fusion, forming a new mode of life and work. This spatial transformation from a workplace center to a living field provides new ideas for the social reorganization of urban space and brings new insights into social development in the interaction between globalization and localization [1].

Socio-spatial theory suggests that space is not only a carrier of the physical environment, but also a dynamic process of production of social relations and cultural meanings [2]. This theory is applicable to analyzing the phenomenon of Dali digital nomads because they reshape the meaning of urban space through their life practices, transforming the traditional city's job-centered function into a diverse practice of living field. Therefore, using socio-spatial theory as a research perspective, this paper explores the logic of Dali's emergence as a gathering place for digital nomads, focusing on its core mechanisms in spatial openness, community collaboration, and the transformation of urban functions. Using a combination of participatory observation and textual data analysis, this paper selects five digital nomadic sharing communities in Dali as observation scenarios, and systematically records daily activities and spatial use. Based on the in-depth

interview data of 20 Dali digital nomads, key themes were extracted through thematic analysis method and cross-validated with field notes to ensure the reliability of the findings. This paper aims to reveal the far-reaching significance of this phenomenon for modern urban spatial transformation and social development, and to provide theoretical and practical references for urban spatial optimization in the dynamic balance between globalization and localization.

2. The Spatial Basis of the Digital Nomad Phenomenon in Dali: From Natural Resources to Living Practices

2.1. Spatial Attractiveness of Livable Environment

Located in Yunnan Province in Southwest China, Dali has become an ideal destination for digital travelers with its unique natural scenery and pleasant living environment. The majestic rolling hills of Cangshan Mountain and the clear and open Erhai Sea contrast with each other to form a unique picture of nature, making it an important field of attraction for digital travelers. For those who have been trapped in the urban steel jungle for a long time, this open and free natural environment is not only a visual enjoyment, but also a spiritual healing.

The mild climatic conditions make Dali livable all year round, providing a stable pace of life and working environment for digital nomads who wish to avoid frequent migration. Compared to the cold north or hot south, Dali has a comfortable average temperature year-round, which is conducive to outdoor activities and provides a climate that is secure for long-term stays. Dali also has an increasingly well-developed infrastructure, particularly the coverage and reliability of the communications network, which provides important support for digital nomads working remotely. These conditions combine to provide a space where efficient work and high quality of life go hand in hand for Travelers. Dali's livability is further enhanced by its convenient transportation network [3]. As a local city, Dali is not only served by direct flights from a number of cities in China, but its road and rail network is also laid out in a way that provides Travelers with convenient ways to explore locally and move across the region. This accessibility not only allows digital nomads to move quickly when they need to, but also allows them to use Dali as a base from which to explore the natural and cultural resources of neighboring regions and expand their life experiences.

2.2. The Combined Advantages of Low Cost and Inclusive Atmosphere

Dali's low cost of living is one of the major factors attracting digital nomads. Compared to the tens of thousands of dollars in monthly rent in first-tier cities, the cost of housing in Dali is only half or even less. Whether it's a boutique B&B around the Erhai Sea or an affordable city apartment, digital nomads can enjoy high-quality living conditions at a lower financial outlay. Shared communities like the Snow Lodge Art Apartments not only provide a well-supported living environment, but also create a cozy social atmosphere to help new nomads integrate quickly [4].

Dali's low level of consumption is also reflected in a number of areas such as food and beverage, transportation and daily entertainment, which allows Travellers to devote more resources to self-development and career exploration. Dali's increasingly abundant forms of sharing economy, such as shared office space and flexible rental models, save digital nomads money on cost of living and provide highly flexible work and living options. This cost-effective lifestyle reduces Digital Nomads' reliance on income stability and provides a solid foundation for their pursuit of flexible and free work styles.

Complementing the low cost is Dali's inclusive cultural atmosphere. As an ethnic minority settlement, Dali boasts rich local cultural traditions such as the Bai ethnic group, while at the same time has long hosted tourists and transplants from across the country and around the world due to its status as a tourist city. This diverse cultural background provides a unique ground for the arrival and integration of digital nomads [5]. In Dali, Travelers not only experience the unique charm of the local culture, but also build cross-cultural understanding and connection through interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds. This atmosphere of inclusion is also reflected in community activities. digital nomad gatherings such as the NCC community regularly organize events such as technology exchange sessions and art exhibitions, allowing nomads to build social connections and find a sense of belonging in a relaxed environment.

2.3. Transition from Workspace to Living Space

Dali's spatial structure is centered on close proximity to the field of life, subverting the spatial logic that separates "workplace" from "life" in traditional cities. In Dali, cafes, community shared spaces, park benches, etc. can all become workplaces for digital nomads. This flexible mode of space utilization allows nomads to complete their work in their daily lives without losing their deep connection with nature and society. Cafes by the Erhai Sea are not only places for relaxation, but also venues for inspiration; community shared spaces become a vehicle for seamlessly switching between work and socialization by providing technical support and socialization opportunities.

The blurring of the boundaries between Dali's workplace and living field not only enhances the life satisfaction of digital nomads, but also stimulates their creativity and productivity. This scenario-based practice removes the constraints of a fixed workstation in the traditional workplace and enables work to be integrated into the daily routine of life. Travelers can finish their email replies after a morning yoga class or brew up ideas during an afternoon walk in the mountains. This full-time, full-scene practice makes Dali a model for a "work-life" model.

This spatial transformation in Dali is not isolated to individual practices, but is realized through a synergistic shift in community and city functions. The digital nomad community, as a key force in this, not only provides functional support such as shared offices and social events, but also injects more economic and cultural vitality into the city through activities such as creative sharing sessions and entrepreneurial roadshows. This transformation from workplace space to living space demonstrates a new type of urban development logic for Dali as a non-traditional economic center, which not only provides diverse living options for Travellers, but also creates conditions for the diversified development of local economy and culture.

3. The Logic of Urban Spatial Reorganization under Socio-Spatial Theory

In Dali, Yunnan Province, urban space has undergone a remarkable reorganization of function and social significance with the gradual gathering of digital nomads. This reorganization process provides a new paradigm and inspiration for modern urban development through the open spatial structure, the integration of locality and mobility, and the multi-level reproduction of social space.

3.1. Openness of Space and Freedom of Practice

Dali's open urban space offers diverse possibilities for digital nomads to practice, making it an important place for mobile individuals to realize their freedom and creativity. Shared office spaces, community public spaces and informal living venues together build a diversified open space system, providing a wide range of choices for the work and life of digital nomads.

Shared office space has become an important field of practice. Shared office space is the core carrier of digital nomads' life and work. Shared office space represented by NCC community not only provides basic hardware facilities, such as high-speed internet, independent workstations and meeting rooms, but also creates the possibility of cross-discipline collaboration by organizing activities such as programming exchanges, brainstorming and project roadshows, etc. The "Inspiration Canteen" event of NCC community is not only a social gathering for sharing meals, but also a venue for nomads to share professional inspiration and creativity. The NCC community's "Inspiration Canteen" events are not only social gatherings where meals are shared, but also venues for Travellers to share professional inspiration and ideas. These spaces support Travellers' personal career development within the community, while stimulating creative potential through cross-cultural interactions, and facilitating the dissemination of knowledge and the integration of resources from the individual to the group.

The social function of community public places further expands the scope of open space. Dali's community public spaces, such as the Black Persimmon B&B, the Cultural Activity Center, and the Creative Bazaar, further expand the openness of the space. Weekly AI-themed programming exchanges at the Black Persimmon B&B attract not only local digital nomads but also entrepreneurs from far and wide to discuss the latest technology applications. These venues provide informal social environments for hobos to engage in community activities such as outdoor adventures, art creation, and cultural exchanges at a low cost. Such open public spaces build an inclusive network that not only deepens Travelers' sense of identity with the local culture, but also drives the local economy.

Spatial openness promotes innovation in social practice. Spatial openness provides Travellers with a variety of options from physical places to social practices, allowing them to escape the constraints of time and space imposed by the traditional workplace. Travelers are able to complete work tasks on the erg, as well as find inspiration and partners in community activities. This openness promotes innovation in social practices and creates a highly satisfying lifestyle for Travelers, while making Dali an important driver of local economic revitalization and cultural innovation.

3.2. Tensions between Locality and Mobility

The lifestyles of digital nomads exhibit a dynamic balance between locality and mobility. On the one hand, they realize professional mobility through global networks; on the other hand, they rely on local resources to achieve stability in their daily lives and deep cultural experiences. By combining local resources with mobility practices, Dali realizes a unique balanced relationship between locality and mobility.

Local resources have become an important factor in attracting digital nomads. Dali's natural resources, such as the Cangshan Mountains and the Erhai Sea, not only provide a physical and spiritual resting place for Travelers, but also serve as a source of inspiration for their professional practices. Outdoor photographers utilize Dali's rich natural landscapes for their creative work, and artists conduct art workshops along the Erhai Sea, further deepening the interaction between Travelers and local resources. Dali's cultural resources, such as the March Street and the Bai festivals such as the Songs Around the Mountain Forest, provide unique cultural experiences for Travelers, and this attraction of local culture has given digital Travelers a deep sense of belonging to Dali [6].

Mobility practices enhance the creativity and social connectivity of Travellers. Despite their high degree of mobility, digital nomads' practices are often supported by local resources. Many Travelers choose to change their place of residence on a six-month cycle, and Dali's livable environment and cost-effective cost of living make it an important choice for them. Through the NCC community and online platforms, Travelers not only deepen their social networks with each other, but also gain professional inspiration through local cultural activities. This mobility practice satisfies Travelers' need for freshness and flexibility, and also strengthens their attachment to Dali through the utilization of local resources.

The fusion of locality and mobility enhances Dali's global appeal. Dali transforms local resources into a global lifestyle field through the reorganization of urban space. The combination of shared office spaces and open community public spaces allows Travelers to efficiently utilize local resources while remaining connected to global networks. This fusion of locality and mobility not only fulfills the dual needs of Travelers in terms of their lives and careers, but also enhances Dali's cultural and economic impact as a global digital Traveler meeting place.

3.3. Multi-level Reorganization of Social Space

The digital nomad phenomenon in Dali involves not only the simple interaction between individuals and local resources, but also reflects a multi-level socio-spatial reorganization from the individual to the community to the city as a whole. This reorganization redefines the function and meaning of urban space, forming a unique socio-spatial structure of integrated living spaces.

At the individual level, Digital Nomads have achieved a high degree of work-life integration in Dali. Digital nomads have realized a seamless integration of work and life in Dali, breaking the boundaries between the traditional workplace and home space. They choose where and when to work according to their own preferences, and the workplace may be a shared office area in the community, a café by the Erhai Sea, or even a natural landscape site at the foot of Cangshan Mountain. Through a flexible remote working model, digital nomads are not only able to complete their work more efficiently, but also utilize their fragmented time to participate in community activities or develop their personal hobbies, such as painting, music or photography. This high degree of spatial and temporal integration not only increases their professional fulfillment, but also enhances their overall well-being.

At the community level, collaborative models promote a sense of belonging and cultural innovation. Digital Traveller communities play a key role in the reorganization of social space [7]. Taking the NCC community as an example, the collaborative model provides a platform for knowledge sharing and resource integration for Travellers through activities such as inspiration sharing sessions, skills workshops and co-

creation experiments. The "Inspiration Canteen" activities not only serve as a stage for showcasing professional competence, but also as an important channel for finding opportunities for collaboration. These activities not only enhance the sense of belonging among community members, but also promote the intermingling of local and global cultures. In the community's co-creation experiment, local artists and digital nomads collaborated to plan an ecological conservation project for the Erhai Sea, combining artistic creation with technological application to promote the modern expression of local culture while conveying the concept of sustainable development.

At the level of the city as a whole, Dali's functional transformation highlights the integration of the digital economy with the local economy. Dali is undergoing a transformation from a traditional tourist city to a globalized lifestyle center. The open urban spatial layout and rich cultural activities integrate the digital economy with the local economy. The rise of shared office spaces and digital nomad communities not only attracts global remote workers, but also creates more career opportunities for local residents. Events such as community technology exchanges and creative bazaars have spurred the development of local services and cultural and creative industries, injecting economic vitality and innovation into the city. These diverse cultural activities have not only enriched city life, but also enhanced Dali's attractiveness in the global digital nomad network [8].

4. Social Functions of the Digital Nomad Community: Identity and Belonging in Co-habitation and Collaboration

With the rise of digital nomads as a group, a communal lifestyle has become an important vehicle for enhancing their social functions. In Dali, digital nomad communities, represented by the NCC community and the Xuelu Art Residence, provide a platform for nomads to belong and identify themselves through co-habitation models, collaborative practices and cultural activities, while stimulating the creative energies of local and global cultures. These communities not only reduce the impact of mobility in resource sharing, but also promote cultural dissemination and professional development through co-creation and collaborative practices.

4.1. Cohousing Models and Community Networking

The high mobility of digital nomads makes a sense of belonging a central challenge in their lives, and the cohousing model creates a stable network for nomads through shared resources and collaborative spaces. In the NCC community, for example, the monthly "Inspiration Sharing Meeting" has attracted around 50 digital nomads and local artists from all over the country, with more than 70% of the participants saying they were inspired by their careers after the event. The event also led to the launch of five new projects, including an art program for ecological conservation in the Erhai Sea. These activities helped the Travelers overcome their sense of isolation while facilitating the building of trusting relationships and enabling them to quickly integrate into unfamiliar environments [9].

The cohousing model further strengthens emotional connections through carefully planned activities. Regular dinners and movie nights at the Snow Lodge Art Residence provide a relaxed social scene for Travellers, creating a bond of psychological support in an unfamiliar environment. Participants in these events are able to open up and share their personal and professional experiences with members of the community, creating a 'mobile family' like relationship. This model not only meets the emotional needs of Travellers, but also creates opportunities for them to work together, bringing life and career development closer together.

Cohabitation communities play an important role in cultural integration. Through activities such as "cross-cultural dialogues", the community allows Travellers to have in-depth cultural exchanges with local residents, thus contributing to the dissemination and preservation of local culture. In this interaction, Travellers are not only observers of culture, but also disseminators and builders of it, thus deepening the emotional connection between them and the local community [10].

4.2. Creative Dynamics in Collaborative Practice

The Digital Traveller community acts as an incubator for collaboration and innovation, stimulating the creativity and professional potential of Travellers through co-creation projects and professional practice, as well as promoting the modern expression of local culture. Community collaboration is not only reflected in

the sharing of resources, but also provides an important platform for individual career exploration and cross-cultural innovation.

In the Erhai Ecological Conservation Project, community members combine artistic creation and technological application to design environmentally friendly art installations, spreading the concept of sustainable development to a wider public. These installations have not only become cultural highlights in the Erhai public space, but have also attracted a great deal of attention through the festival's activities, giving modern expression to local culture. Participants not only gained the opportunity to showcase their creativity, but also improved their professional skills through cross-disciplinary collaboration, providing a new path for their career development.

Digital Travelers combine their interests with career development through community activities. Photography courses in the NCC community not only help Travelers to earn extra income, but also promote the local dissemination of creative skills. These activities form a system of multi-vocational services, including design workshops, technical guidance and creative writing, which builds a bridge of interaction between Travelers and local residents. This innovative practice has made community activities an important venue for career exploration and capacity building, giving Travelers greater career flexibility.

Intercultural events in the community, such as international programming competitions and art festivals, reinforce the integration of globalization with local resources. Through these events, local culture is presented through the lens of globalization while engaging international nomads and entrepreneurs, injecting economic and cultural vitality into Dali. This collaborative practice of two-way integration allows local resources to become the basis for global cultural innovation, while increasing Dali's presence in the global digital nomad network.

4.3. Enhancement of Sense of Belonging and Social Connection

A sense of belonging is an important need for digital travelers seeking stability in their mobile lives, and community activities, through planning and implementation, provide emotional support for travelers and strengthen social connections in local cultural identity. By organizing rich cultural activities, the digital nomad community allows nomads to deeply participate in local culture, thus building a two-way relationship of belonging.

The NCC community's "Culture Night" combines local festivals with community experiences, inviting Travelers to participate in the traditional Bai ethnic festival of March Street or the Songs Around the Mountain Forest, allowing them to experience the uniqueness and diversity of local culture. This kind of immersive participation not only satisfies Travelers' curiosity about local culture, but also enhances their emotional connection with local residents through interaction. Through these activities, digital nomads gradually realize that they are not only observers, but also purveyors and protectors of local culture.

Although the average length of stay in the community for Travelers was only 58 days, the emotional support and deep interaction of community activities significantly increased their life satisfaction. The group-building activities at Snow Lodge Art Residence, such as Erhai cycling and Cangshan hiking, allowed Travelers to build trust through shared experiences, increasing the quality of socialization during their short-term stays. This model of deep socialization not only creates more possibilities for Travellers' career development, but also provides stability in life through friendship and emotional support.

Intercultural activities further strengthen a sense of belonging and social connection, and the NCC community's "Intercultural Dialogue" program invites Travellers from different countries to share their cultural backgrounds and discuss cultural preservation and innovation with local residents. This interaction provides Travelers with the opportunity to showcase their own cultures, while at the same time giving local cultures a new international perspective. Through this kind of cross-cultural cooperation, Travellers experience a sense of belonging that transcends geographical limitations in their mobile lives, and at the same time inject vitality and new ideas into the local community.

Through cultural activities and diverse interactions, the digital nomad community creates stable and rich social connections for individuals on the move. This social function not only enhances the life satisfaction of travelers, but also further strengthens Dali's position as a global cultural center for digital travelers through the two-way interaction between culture and economy.

5. The Significance of Urban Spatial Transformation of the Digital Nomad Phenomenon in Dali

The rise of Dali as a gathering place for digital nomads not only demonstrates the reshaping of urban spatial structure by emerging lifestyles, but also provides a new way of thinking about modern urban development. Through the transformation from workplace center to living field, open and inclusive urban form, and the dynamic balance between locality and globalization, Dali's spatial practice provides an important reference for exploring the innovative development of non-traditional economic centers. This urban spatial transformation meets the needs of mobile individuals and stimulates the cultural and economic vitality of local society.

5.1. Structural Transformation from Workplace Center to Life Field

The digital nomad phenomenon in Dali highlights how non-traditional economic centers can attract creative workers through the reorganization of urban space, breaking down the traditional functional structure of cities centered on the workplace. Unlike the intense workplace life of first-tier cities, Dali offers a new model of "life-as-work" for nomads through flexible spatial patterns and a pleasant living environment.

In traditional economic centers, the functions of urban space are usually strictly divided into residence, work and entertainment, a fragmented model that often leads to a lack of individual life experience while pursuing efficiency. Dali, on the other hand, seamlessly integrates work and life through the integration of urban space. Travelers can get their work done at cafes along the Erhai Sea and participate in creative brainstorming in community shared spaces, while enjoying the psychological healing brought by natural landscapes. This model not only optimizes the use of time, but also allows individuals to have more independent choices after work. The community-based living scenario provides diverse social support for Travellers, allowing them to complete their professional tasks while also participating deeply in local cultural and social activities.

With its low-cost and high-quality living environment, Dali offers creative workers the freedom and flexibility to practice their careers. The combination of shared office space and social venues allows Travelers to break free from the constraints of a traditional fixed workplace and inspire creative potential in an open environment. Through this transformation from workplace center to living field, Dali not only attracts more digital nomads, but also provides a new paradigm for the diversification of urban functions [11].

5.2. Openness and inclusiveness of Urban Space

The digital nomad phenomenon in Dali also highlights the important value of open and inclusive urban spaces. As a non-traditional economic center, Dali attracts a large number of mobile individuals from different backgrounds through its open spatial form and inclusive cultural atmosphere. The stay of these individuals in Dali not only boosts the local economy, but also promotes the multi-level reorganization of social space.

Dali's openness is first and foremost reflected in the flexibility of its spatial form. The cafes along the Erhai Sea, the creative bazaars in the ancient city, and the community shared spaces constitute diversified fields of practice. These venues not only provide Travelers with infrastructure for work and life, but also stimulate social interaction and cultural innovation through spatial diversity. The public space of the NCC community is both a workplace for Travelers and a major vehicle for social and cultural activities. This spatial flexibility meets the multiple needs of Travelers to live and work, and allows the urban space to become a meeting point for cultural and economic activity.

Inclusive communities further reproduce the value of local resources through cultural sharing and collaboration. In Dali, various community events such as cultural nights and inspiration sharing sessions not only facilitate connections between Travelers, but also give local residents the opportunity to interact with foreign individuals. In this process of multicultural intermingling, Dali's local resources are given a new value. Through community activities, traditional Bai festivals and folklore are presented in a modern form, while the globalized perspectives of the Travellers inject new elements into the local culture. This inclusiveness makes Dali's urban space an open cultural network, creating possibilities for synergy between the local community and globally mobile individuals.

5.3. Openness and inclusiveness of Urban Space

Dali has found a dynamic balance between local culture preservation and globalized lifestyles through the construction of urban spaces. Compared to the Ubud area of Bali, Dali attracts a large number of digital nomads with a lower cost of living and an inclusive cultural atmosphere, while compared to Chiang Mai, Dali's model of community collaboration emphasizes more on the preservation of local culture and innovation, which has led to the formation of a unique cultural ecology among the gathering places of digital nomads around the world. This balance not only provides a unique experience for digital nomads, but also allows the local economy and culture to be revitalized in the wave of globalization.

The protection and inheritance of local culture is an important element in the transformation of Dali's urban space. As a cultural city with a long history, Dali attracts a large number of travelers with its rich traditional Bai culture and unique natural resources. The participation of these travelers in the community provides a new way to spread the local culture. By combining artistic creation with the concept of sustainable development, the Erhai Ecological Conservation Project not only allows for the effective utilization of local resources, but also presents Dali's cultural characteristics to a wider audience. This culture-centered model of resource development creates new possibilities for nomadic professional practice while preserving the roots of local culture.

At the same time, Dali's transformation of urban space caters to globalized lifestyles through openness and innovation. Intercultural events, international programming competitions, etc. have created platforms for local and global connections. These events not only attract creative workers globally, but also benefit the local economy. Through the mobility of Travellers, Dali's local services, cultural and creative industries, and sustainable development programs have been significantly enhanced. Vocational training and skill-sharing activities in the Traveller community have not only helped local residents to enhance their professional competitiveness, but also given Travellers a sense of belonging and fulfillment in cross-cultural collaboration [12].

The integration of locality and globalization is also reflected in the synergistic development of urban functions. Through the construction of shared office space and public cultural venues, Dali has realized the organic combination of local resources and global networks. This combination allows local culture to be spread globally in a modernized way, while at the same time injecting more vitality into the local economy through a global perspective. This dynamic balance in Dali offers lessons for other non-traditional economic centers, demonstrating how to find innovative development possibilities between locality and globalization.

6. Socio-cultural Insights of the Digital Nomad Phenomenon in Dali

As a typical case of the interaction between globalization and locality, the digital nomad phenomenon in Dali not only reflects the changes at the modern individual, community and city levels, but also reveals the new trend of socio-cultural development in the digital era. Through the freedom of life choices at the individual level, diverse cultural practices at the community level, socio-spatial values at the city level, and its inspiration for global urban spatial innovations, Dali provides an important reference for the combination of local culture and globalization.

6.1. Individual Level: Freedom of Choice from Work to Life

The practice of digital nomads reveals the high level of individual pursuit of quality of life and work autonomy in modern society. In Dali, Travelers have freed themselves from the constraints of the traditional workplace through remote work and flexible living patterns, exploring a lifestyle based on personal values. This freedom of choice is not only reflected in the flexibility of occupation, but also in the high degree of control over the place and schedule of life.

Travelers are able to choose to complete projects in cafes by the Erhai Sea, brainstorm with like-minded individuals in community shared spaces, or find inspiration through immersive experiences at the foot of Cangshan Mountain. This model demonstrates the deep integration of life and work, allowing individuals to enjoy a high quality of life while pursuing professional development. This shift from "accomplishing tasks" to "realizing values" reflects the digital nomad's redefinition of the meaning of life.

The practice of digital nomads also challenges the traditional definition of success. They no longer use wealth accumulation or professional status as the only criteria, but rather self-realization, social participation

and cultural experience as the core indicators of life choices. This freedom of choice has inspired more people to re-examine their lifestyles and values, and inspired new thinking about work-life relationships [13].

6.2. Community Level: Cultural Practices of Diversity and Collaborative Innovation

Models of co-habitation and co-creation are core features of digital nomadic communities, which not only create new ways of connecting local and global cultures, but also demonstrate how diversity and collaborative innovation can push the boundaries of cultural practice. Traveler communities in Dali, such as the NCC Community and the Snow Lodge Art Residence, have created a cultural ecology that is both inclusive and innovative through shared living resources and open collaboration platforms.

These communities promote knowledge sharing and resource integration among members through activities such as inspiration sharing sessions and cultural nights, while also providing new ways to disseminate local culture. Travelers collaborate with local residents through co-creation projects, transforming topics such as Erhai ecological conservation into creative art and community practice. This collaboration not only promotes the innovation of cultural content, but also realizes the reproduction of cultural values in practice.

Diverse community cultural practices also provide a sense of belonging and identity for individuals from different backgrounds. Here, members do not define themselves by their socialized identities, but rather shape new individual and collective relationships through interests, passions, and collaborations. This cultural practice exemplifies how digital nomadic communities find commonalities in diversity and become an important node of interaction between local culture and globalization through openness and synergy [14].

6.3. The Urban Dimension: the Socio-spatial Value of Non-traditional Urban Centers

As a non-traditional economic center, Dali has explored possible paths for a new type of urban development through the reorganization and optimization of social space. In contrast to first-tier cities, Dali does not have a spatial layout centered on the workplace, but rather attracts digital nomads, a group of creative workers, through livable environments and flexible living patterns, injecting new vitality into the city's economy and culture.

This socio-spatial value exemplifies how Dali facilitates connections between local resources and mobile individuals through open urban spatial forms and diverse cultural activities. Open cafes, shared office spaces, and community venues break down the functional division of traditional urban spaces, allowing work, life, and socialization to merge in the same space. This life-centered spatial organization not only enhances the life satisfaction of travelers, but also provides a new growth engine for the local economy.

The transformation of Dali's urban space has also provided a platform for the interface between local culture and global networks. Through the organization of cross-cultural events and international creative festivals, Dali has become a window for the dissemination of local culture and globalization collaboration. This innovative socio-spatial-based practice shows that non-traditional urban centers can find their own unique development paths in the context of globalization through flexible spatial configuration and resource integration.

6.4. Global Significance: Urban Spatial Innovation in the Digital Age

The Dali digital nomad phenomenon not only serves as a model for local development, but also provides important insights into the innovation of urban space in the context of globalization. In the digital era, the diversified value of urban space is becoming more and more significant, which not only includes the redefinition of physical space, but also covers the reengineering of socio-cultural significance.

Dali's practice shows that openness and inclusiveness are key to innovation in urban space in the digital age. By attracting mobile individuals like digital nomads, Dali demonstrates how open social spaces can meet diverse needs and promote two-way economic and cultural mobility. This experience provides a viable reference for other cities, especially non-traditional economic centers, demonstrating how spatial innovation can attract creative groups and enhance the global competitiveness of cities.

The role of local culture in globalization has been strengthened. Through the practice of nomadic communities, Dali combines the traditional culture of the Bai people with modern lifestyles, which not only continues the vitality of local culture, but also injects new elements into the global cultural system through

cross-cultural interactions. This model shows that the preservation of local culture and globalization are not contradictory, but rather a win-win situation can be achieved through the design of urban space.

The digital nomad phenomenon in Dali highlights the interaction between urban space and social culture. Through flexible spatial layout and the planning of cultural activities, cities have become not only carriers of economic activities, but also catalysts for social and cultural innovation. This model of cultural innovation based on urban space calls for global cities to pay more attention to the coexistence of local and diverse values in their development, and provides new ideas for building a more inclusive, flexible and sustainable urban system [15].

7. Concluding Remarks

With its unique urban spatial practices and socio-cultural patterns, the phenomenon of digital nomads in Dali, Yunnan Province, provides a new perspective on local urban development in the context of globalization. By transforming from a workplace center to a living space, Dali not only attracts a large number of digital nomads and creative workers, but also shows how non-traditional economic centers can achieve a win-win situation for both culture and economy through the optimization of social space. Under the open urban space and inclusive cultural atmosphere, Dali has built a diverse collaborative network, enabling local culture to find a balance between preservation and innovation, and providing practical experience for local development in the era of globalization.

The core significance of this phenomenon is that it reveals the dynamism and creativity of social space. At the individual level, digital nomads have broken through the spatial constraints of traditional cities and explored more flexible and valuable lifestyles through freely chosen modes of living and working; at the community level, the cultural practices of cohabitation and collaboration not only provide nomads with a sense of belonging, but also promote multi-directional connections between the local and global worlds through cultural exchanges and skill-sharing; and at the city level, through the reorganization of spatial forms, Dali has become a model of innovation for non-traditional economic centers by organically combining local resources with globalized networks. At the urban level, Dali has become an innovative example of a non-traditional economic center by reorganizing its spatial form and combining local resources with globalized networks.

Dali's practice also provides important insights for urban transformation in the context of globalization. In the fast-changing digital era, how to attract talents through spatial innovation, optimize the allocation of urban resources, and take into account the preservation and development of local culture has become a common challenge for cities around the world. The digital nomad phenomenon in Dali shows that by building an open and inclusive social space, local cities can not only meet the diverse needs of mobile individuals, but also shape cultural and economic values with local characteristics in the process of globalization.

In the future, Dali should focus on three aspects when optimizing its socio-spatial structure: first, strengthening infrastructure development, especially network coverage and shared space provision; second, promoting in-depth collaboration between local residents and Travellers, and creating multicultural interactions through more cultural festivals and community co-creative activities; and, third, setting up a long-term mechanism to monitor the impact of digital Travellers on local resources to ensure sustainable development.

In conclusion, the Dali digital nomad phenomenon is not only a successful example of the interaction between locality and globalization, but also a model for other non-traditional cities to follow. Based on the realization of cultural preservation, social connectivity and economic innovation, this phenomenon promotes a rethinking of the path of urban development, and provides important practical significance for the construction of a more open, flexible and sustainable urban system.

References

1. Jiang X. *Research on Transnational Urban Climate Networks under the Concept of Global Localism Governance*. Master's Thesis, Foreign Affairs College, China, **2021**.
2. Liu H, Zhou X, Ming Q, et al. Review and trend exploration of Yunnan tourism and transportation integration development. *Resour. Dev. Mark.* **2019**, 35, 578–584.

3. Yao J, Zhu Y. Reflections on the political economy of global digital nomadic lifestyles. *Nanjing Soc. Sci.* **2024**, 9, 104–114.
4. Lefebvre H. *The Production of Space*; Blackwell: Oxford, UK, **1991**; pp. 154–196.
5. Yao J. Research on Digital Nomads in the Perspective of Communication Political Economy. *J. Nanjing Univ. (Philos. Humanit. Soc. Sci.)* **2024**, 61, 126–129.
6. He X. Vocational Education Model for the "Digital Nomad" Group. *Contin. Educ. Res.* **2024**, 4, 81–86.
7. Niu T, Chen J. Nomadic generation of "media space": a study of the four logics of digital nomadic spatial production. *Journalist* **2024**, 7, 15–30.
8. Bao Z, Xu Y. Research on the development mode of urban night tourism under the background of culture and tourism integration. *J. Qiqihar Univ. (Philos. Soc. Sci. Ed.)* **2021**, 12, 80–83.
9. Zhang W, Zhang L. Unfinished Identity: Mediated Production and Negotiation of Chinese Digital Nomad Identity—A Field Study Based on the Dali Digital Nomad Community. *Journalism Writing* **2024**, 7, 76–90.
10. Wang Z, Deng Y, Du F. The heterotopian socio-spatial production practice of digital nomads—The example of Zhejiang Anji DNA digital nomad commune. *Future Commun.* **2023**, 30, 42–51.
11. Anhui Daily. Yixian County, Huangshan City, builds a digital nomadic community to cultivate a new force for rural revitalization. Available online: http://www.wehefei.com/news/2024/07/29/c_607237.htm (accessed on 24 December 2024).
12. Lookout. "Digital nomads" to Dali. Available online: https://xxzx.fujian.gov.cn/jjxx/szjj/202404/t20240423_6438345.htm (accessed on 24 December 2024).
13. Bono C, Arrows J, Estaniasi C, et al. The commodification and romanticization of digital nomadic lifestyles: online narratives and the shaping of professional identity work. *Open Age* **2024**, 3, 183–198.
14. Xu L, Wen C. "What is home": a study of young digital nomads' sense of place in a mobile society. *China Youth Res.* **2023**, 8, 70–79.
15. Yao J, Yang H. A Review of Western Digital Nomad Research and China's Revelation. *China Youth Res.* **2023**, 11, 81–89.