



**UPROOTING OR WANDERLUST? OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AND MOBILITY REQUIREMENTS OF "DIGITAL NOMADS". A SWISS-GERMAN PERSPECTIVE**

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**ABSTRACT**

Occupational mobility is not only an essential narrative of contemporary societies but is also already a gainful employment requirement of the proletariat or the hobos during industrialization. In the 21st century, the requirement of mobility is continued by figures such as the "digital nomads". These mobility requirements can be accompanied by a feeling of freedom and self-determination, but also by a lonely and unattached drive. These structural, psychosocial aspects of occupational mobility and contradictions in the way of living are analyzed in this article on one hand in terms of sociology, gender theory and occupational psychology. The theoretical results are on the other hand contrasted by narratives of swiss-german digital nomads captured during email interviews and group video chats. The interviews were a preliminary study of the later founded and ongoing project "Work-Life-Balance 4.0" (2018-2019) by the Swiss federal office for gender equality (FOGE).

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**INTRODUCTION**

The meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos in 2016 had the motto "Mastering the Fourth Industrial Revolution": While the challenges of the last three major changes in the working environment were the introduction of industrialized production methods, mass production, and the globalization of markets, the forum predicts that the fourth phase will focus on fundamental changes in working forms and working conditions in the entire working environment through digital information and communication technologies and through digitization. At present, the increasing networking and cooperation between man and machine is already changing the pace and locations of production, creating new forms of work. This is accompanied by changes in stress and psychological strain. Accelerated work processes, reduction of the core workforce, just-in-time employment contracts, the abolition of permanent workplaces go hand in hand with this (HIS 2015/2016). These trends in the world of work also have an impact on the way workers live. Their biographies become more fragmented, they are more on their own. They must have the willingness to manage their own labor, to deploy it anywhere, to optimize it through continuous training and to rationalize it by increasing the speed of action (Paulus 2016). In addition to the traditional location- and time-dependent employment relationships, there are increasingly employment relationships in outsourced areas or temporary projects.

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In the information and communication technology sector, stationary workplaces and attendance requirements are increasingly being called into question by home offices, virtual teams and workplaces or by flexible workplace models. With this growing importance, which the changes in means of production and work processes have for companies, workers and society, new patterns of mobility and socialization are emerging. The pair of terms "mobility and mobilization" of workers is considered an essential narrative of contemporary societies (Götz *et al.* 2010). The model "Always on the go" of the US working class in the early 20th century - embodied in the figure of the migrant worker or Hobo's, which embodied freedom and homelessness in equal measure (Anderson 1975; Butler 2011) - is continued in the 21st century by figures such as "digital nomads" or by the governmental appeal "be mobile" (Urry 2007). This appeal is directed at a new class of workers in the industrialized countries who are to come together in international value chains and corporate cultures (Beck *et al.* 2010, Beck and Grande 2004) and who may run the risk of uprooted and unattached driving away due to occupational mobility requirements (Sennet 1998).

In the work theses of this article it is therefore assumed that location-independent work is on the one hand forced by modern work processes and leads to a spatial separation that can lead to an imbalance in work-life balance as well as to a decline in social contacts. On the other hand, it is assumed that working from any location leads to personal freedom and self-determination.

The following article generally refers to sociological (chapter 2), gender theory (chapter 3) and occupational psychology (chapter 4) perspectives of occupational mobility and asks how the causes of mobilization of workers in the different disciplines are negotiated. These perspectives serve as a contrast foil to present in the respective chapters the concrete example of the "digital nomads" (Makimoto and Manners 1997) mobility requirements as well as external and self-mobilizations. The presentations are based on e-mail interviews and a video group chat with German and Swiss "digital nomads"<sup>1</sup> as well as on their self-portrayals and reports of their experiences in portfolios and online forums. At the center of this exchange was the question of how mobility requirements are experienced and what expectations are placed on the design of each individual mobility regime. This approach allows the self-portrayals and the previously described occupational mobility requirements to be systematically correlated. These connections reveal social, health, psychological and desirable aspects of a mobile lifestyle (chapter 5). Finally, research gaps are summarized in the outlook (chapter 6).

### **Sociological perspectives on mobility and mobility requirements**

In current sociological research on mobility is viewed from different perspectives. The definitions of the term mobility are correspondingly varied. Läßle (1995) generally defines mobility as the movement of people and things in spaces. Castells describes mobility as an expression of a society in which information, capital, interaction and sign flows (Castells 1996). With the term mobility, Bonß and Kesselring refer to changeability and liquefaction and sharpen the term to the psychic movement and the change of social coordinates (Bonß and Kesselring 2001, p. 177; Bröckling *et al.* 2004, p. 307). In

<sup>1</sup> The e-mail interviews were conducted in German during 2016/2017 and translated for this article. The response rate of the approximately 35 interview requests were 15 interviews. Cancellations were partly justified by an excessive workload. Some other feedbacks included self-portrayals, articles and references to the fact that there are already texts and experience reports on their own portfolios and that there is an active exchange in blogs, forums and Facebook groups. I was invited to the closed Facebook group "CH Digitale Nomaden Schweiz" with 120 members (2017) and I could ask further questions in a group video chat. The answers are either translated or paraphrased. In the literature chapter you will find therefore further occupational information's of the interviewees or self-portrayals or articles. The interviews were a preliminary study of the later founded and ongoing project "Work-Life-Balance 4.0" (2018-2019) by the Swiss federal office for gender equality (FOGE). The interviews are semi-structured interviews with key questions:

- 1) How do you organize your work as a digital nomad?
  - What do you understand by "digital nomads"?
  - What is the fascination of digital nomadism?
  - How is the location-independent contact with customers, colleagues organized (day/night difference)?
  - Do you sometimes have to be on the spot/at the customer?
  - Do you sometimes need the location-dependent exchange or contact with colleagues?
  - How does your time management work?
  - How much time is "lost" through the creation of a working infrastructure?
  - What would it take to improve your mobile office?
  - How helpful are co-working places?
  - Where should companies and authorities respond better to your needs or those of the "digital nomads"?
  - Which working concepts/organization models would be meaningful or forward-looking for the 21st century?
- 2) How does the organization of social affairs work?
  - How's the contact with family, friends? How did you participate in their life?
  - Do you sometimes feel lonely?
  - If you are single: Is it difficult to find contact? What about sexuality?
  - If you live in a partnership: How do you keep in touch? What are the difficulties?
  - Do you sometimes feel like you're missing out on family life, friends?
  - How do you deal with the elimination of categories that create identity such as
    - 1) Nation
    - 2) Place of residence
    - 3) Private retreats
    - 4) Fixed leisure possibilities or a local pub around?

terms of manpower, mobility is considered one of the central new requirements and is described as "imperative of independence" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2003, p. 169), which "presupposes a renunciation of stability and rootedness, of attachment to a place and the certainty of long-standing contacts" (*ibid.*). However, it would be premature at present to speak of mobility sociology as a broad social theory programme, as Kesselring (2012, p. 85) emphasizes. Rather, there are different sociological focuses on the topic of "mobilizing the world of work". Sociological studies on current forms of mobility and mobility types range from precarious migrant labor (Cyrus 2007; Ngai and Lee 2010), to transcontinental labor migration (Hess 2009) and business trips by highly qualified workers around the globe (Kesselring and Vogl 2010; Belenkiy and Riker 2012).

Historically, Bonß and Kesselring (2001) refer to different phases of mobility within the respective historical period. The mobilization or release of labor can already be established in the early 15th century as a "pattern of historical capitalism as a world system" (Arrighi and Moore 2001: 45). Marx also described as early as 1848 "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe" (MEW 4, p. 465). However, it was only the "full monetization throughout the world" (Altwater und Mahnkopf 1996, p. 518) in the post-fordist period (Hirsch 2001) and in the second modern period (Beck 2010) that made it possible to "intensify global social relations" (Giddens 1995, p. 85). For Digital Nomads, this context is equally important:

"Nomadism is the other side of globalization of the world of work. While corporations around the world have been looking for the best conditions for a long time, many of us only now realize that even as startup or freelancer you have the choice to live and work where you enjoy it the most and can thus take advantage of location advantages for yourself". Matthias.

Bonß explains that the globalization of the 21st century represents a quantitative leap in terms of the number of mobility types in the form of working nomads, refugees or migrants and leads to new requirements such as long-distance removals or long-distance relationships (Bonß 2007). Each phase of mobility, such as migration of peoples, the release of the labor force in early capitalism or even military mobilizations require specific mobility concepts, i.e. certain models and mobility types (Bonß and Kesselring 2001, p.187; Kesselring 2009, p.18). Just as tact-bound Fordist industrialism required a certain type of human being appropriate to the "timely movement of machines and human production gestures" (Gramsci 1999, p. 529), the highly flexible and mobile post-Fordist mode of production also requires a certain way of life and a corresponding type of mobility (Voß 2010; Moosmüller 2010). In this context, sociologists of work speak of the type of "work force entrepreneur (Arbeitskraftmanager)" (Voß and Pongratz 1998) or of "digital nomads", whose workplace and social imprisonment is to "escape space" (Beck 1999, p. 540) and become cosmopolitan (Beck *et al.* 2010, p. 139f). Beck describes cosmopolitanizing as the erosion of clear boundaries that still separated modernity, markets, states, civilizations, cultures, living environments and people. Today, or in the so-called second modernity or fourth industrial revolution, workers find themselves in the transformation of a social formation shaped by the nation-state, which is globalizing internally into a transnational forced community

(Beck 2000; 2011). This model of cosmopolitan mobility narrative and the mobility requirements seem to be particularly attractive for "digital nomads". Tim and Ben, both digital nomads, represent this figure as follows:

"A digital nomad is an entrepreneur or employee who uses almost exclusively digital technologies to carry out his work and who leads a lifestyle that can be described as non-settled, location-independent or multi-local. Digital nomads typically work with remote technologies from home, hotel, café, internet café, co-working space or in public libraries. Your workstation is where Internet access is available." (Tim 1)

"Digital nomadism is often advertised as an alternative lifestyle that enables us to cross boundaries and experience new things in many ways based on the maxim 'Get out of the comfort zone'." (Ben)

There is a basic understanding of the examined "digital nomads" that especially in location-independent work there is the chance and vision to move from "encrusted work structures to more flexibility and work-life balance" (Anja, Fee and Matthias) and to combine travel and gainful employment. Lorenz and Christoph also confirm this view. The fascinating thing about "digital nomadism" for Christoph is first and foremost freedom and independence:

"In my case, designed as a perpetual traveler, there is the prospect of worldwide management freedom, tax exemption and a multitude of opportunities for business and investment. In addition, there is a varied lifestyle with completely free time management and choice of workplace, the possibility to travel a lot and permanently, to get to know other cultures and many new people as well as to live something 'social' contrary". (Christoph)

For Lorenz the fascinating thing is "that by travelling I always work in other places and can incorporate these influences into my projects". For him, companies and authorities should respond better to the needs of "digital nomads" in that "The outdated obligation to be present should be replaced and employees should increasingly be able to choose in what relationship they would like to combine home office and presence." For him, location-independent work "has a great future in our service society. The current shortage of skilled workers will put a lot of pressure on the HR departments of large companies, so that in the future it will hopefully become easier to work independent of location". (Lorenz)

This need for a new generation of workers also meets the megatrends and challenges of the working environment in the 21st century, because "success in 21st century companies will indeed depend on the ability to master the nomadic environment" (Pistorio). Market researchers from the American Future Foundation are also investigating how the future world of work could and should change. A significant trend has emerged: Most of tomorrow's workers will be able to work from anywhere and the growth of telework will blur the boundaries between work and leisure to the extent that this requires new solutions in work organization (Albers 2009). The need for structures that promote "work from anywhere" is also expressed by Daniel, a "sidepreneur in a 70% employment relationship":

"In order to work regardless of location, the employment relationship would have to change into a kind of location-independent home office, which would be relatively easy to

implement, since as team leader of social media at an online marketing agency I am primarily dependent on the Internet and a notebook. But employers in Germany are generally not yet open to such things. Employers should primarily have more confidence in their employees to meet their needs, which certainly has a positive effect on productivity and identification with the company. Even if companies and authorities are still somewhat stiff at the moment with regard to 'digital nomads', a change in the working environment in this respect will not be able to be averted, at least in part. (Daniel) Another central and jointly supported way of life as well as a jointly supported model of the "digital nomads" seems to be to create time prosperity through efficiency by increasing monetary income through a reduction in expenditure:

"Even amateurs in business administration can easily understand this logic. And since most of us were born in a high-wage and high-price country, the logical step of this logic is to go to cheaper countries but continue to receive the European wage. So you're kind of outsourcing with yourself." (Oliver)

Christoph sums up this way of life as follows:

"Geoarbitrage is the magic word with which you can lead a luxury life abroad with little money. [...] A single normal working day as a freelancer allows you a comfortable life in many developing countries - whether Nicaragua, Bolivia, Mozambique, Nepal or Vietnam". (Christoph)

To put it bluntly, "digital nomads" try to use their way of life in a rational relationship to a corporate goal (Pieper and Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2003, Foucault 2000, p. 64; 2006, p. 162; Bröckling 2003, p. 18) or to make their way of life independent (Voß and /Pongratz 1998, 2003). The individual requirements here lie in organization, reproductive work as an ability to manage relationships and friendships as well as family and care work (Winker und Maus 2001).

In negative scenarios, job-related mobility is described as uprooting because, for example, frequent changes of location can cause a purposeless and unattached driving away or mobility enables and requires the detachment from traditional relationship constellations and the emotional release of individuals (Sennet 1998). As early as 1986 Beck spoke in this context of a "fully mobile single society" (Beck 1986, p. 199). With reference to the e-mail interviews, these findings can be consolidated. Asked how the social organization works, how contact with family and friends is maintained or how the danger of loneliness is dealt with, Christoph answers that Skype, messengers like WhatsApp and above all social media (Facebook/Instagram) establish sufficient contact and that regular visits drive out the loneliness. Loneliness is an important topic in the nomad scene:

"Yes. I can't avoid it. However, loneliness is always the best chance to do something for his business. In this respect - since one always has something to do - the loneliness is quickly balanced, since one never feels bored. As a relatively young digital nomad, however, I usually spend the night in hostels, which makes social contacts a lot easier. There are also many other events where you can easily get to know people or apps like Tinder ;). Sometimes it's frustrating with sexuality. Personally, I am a polyamorist and have no problem with changing sexual partners. Of course, this is often not so easy due to the limitation to one-night stands." (Christoph)

In this context, however, mobile working practices of "place making", deceleration and refusal of mobility are also described (Schneider *et al.* 2002, p. 183, Vonderau 2003). In order not to drift along without commitment Tim describes that he is on the road a lot,

"but 90% of my time I spend in 2 or 3 fixed places where I have good friends, find my way around, at least have language basics and feel at home. That's why I keep coming back to these places. Precisely because I feel safe there and people are waiting for me there who are looking forward to seeing me. I feel uprooted every now and then, when I travel alone to a completely new place." (Tim 1)

"Digital nomads", see mobility requirements more as a challenge, although

"sometimes it's a shame to be away. Especially on long journeys you miss important events: happy - and sad. You miss cooking with your friends for no special reason and drinking a few bottles of red wine. You miss the birth of your best friend's first child. "You miss a party of the century." (Johannes)

In summary, with sociological perspectives on mobility and mobility requirements, mobility regimes can be identified which promote the mobilization of workers. However, further perspectives are needed to shed light on the connections between the social contradictions between entrepreneurial models and individual lifestyles. In the following, this perspective is taken up by results of gender studies.

#### **Gender Perspectives on Mobility and Mobility Requirements**

Gender-specific perspectives on mobility point to the problem of breaking down the boundaries of "life and work" and to the fact that the mobilization of labor goes hand in hand with the intensification of gainful employment and the organization of reproductive activity (Gottschall and Voß 2003; Janczyk 2009; Lutz 2009; Jürgens 2010). The concept of the labor force manager of Winker and Carstensen (2004, 2007) illustrates this tension and extends the work sociological concept of the "labor force entrepreneur" of Voß and Pongratz (1998, 2003) by the sphere of reproduction. Winker and Carstensen describe that the more flexible requirements that apply to the sphere of production are transferred to the sphere of reproduction. This means that the control, management and supervision of own activities should also be applied to the organization of reproductive work - whether in relation to pregnancy, child rearing or care for the elderly (Winker and Carstensen 2004, p. 278; 2007, p. 281, cf. also Gerson 2010). In their essay "Is the labor force entrepreneur female?" Voß and Weiß read the concept of the labor force entrepreneur gender-sensitive and conclude that the labor force entrepreneur is "perhaps actually rather female - but certainly not a mother" (Voß and Weiß 2005, p. 84). Behind this statement is the recognition that women must have self-control and self-rationalization, because they must act more economically due to double burdens. This means that successful workforce management depends above all on how the mobility requirements described are balanced in the context of reconciling gainful employment and reproductive work. Concrete case analyses describe that mobile workers get into reproductive contradictions (no time for family, being single) (Schondelmayer 2010, p. 30ff; Roth 2010, p. 84; Kesselring and Vogl 2010, p. 108ff; cf. also Beck 1986, p. 199). Winker (2007, 2010) points to the difficulty or necessity of a mobile and flexible lifestyle that can be

successfully mastered if time-consuming care and nursing tasks are taken over by service providers close to the home - and in some cases illegalized (Winker 2007, p. 37f; Näser 2010, p. 70f). The organizational compatibility of gainful work and reproduction work is thus subject to performance orientation and, according to Winker, can hardly be achieved if people are not physically fit as required or cannot afford services close to home (Winker 2010, p. 178). The requirement to be mobile also increases the pressure on self-care and social relationships (Lanz 2010) or make it impossible to build relationships at all:

"I lacked deep friendships and a partner. The chances for both did not increase due to the permanent travel. It was maddening: I was uncomfortable at home because I lacked relationships. On the way I was less burdened by this deficit, but I could not build (deep) relationships while travelling. The more I traveled, the more uncomfortable I'd feel at home. I could not or would not tell anyone about this dilemma. I felt correspondingly isolated and lonely on some days." (Patrick)

This means that by restricting care and self-care work, a multi mobile lifestyle is made possible in the first place (Winker and Maus 2001) and that a mobile lifestyle is a challenge especially for singles and parents (Hoser 2010). What is exciting in this context is that the gender-sensitive quantitative study by Büchel *et al.* on regional and occupational mobility of highly-qualified persons finds that in comparison Germany/USA more women than men work on the move (Büchel *et al.* 2002). They conclude that mobility in Germany is far less pronounced than in the USA and that a mobility culture of "trial and error" would not exist in Germany due to traditional models (see also Lörz and Krawietz 2011). For US-American employees, institutional regulations to minimize mobility barriers offer a considerable advantage in career and thus in life chances (Büchel *et al.* 2002, p. 238). In their quantitative comparison of three transnational organizations on "Travel, availability and work-life-balance", Bergmann and Gustafson (2008) make it clear that gender-specific hierarchies can be seen in the gender-specific frequency of business trips and family work (Bergmann and Gustafson 2008, p. 199). They conclude that "frequent travelers were less likely than other respondents to do more household work and less paid work than their partners" (Bergmann and Gustafson 2008, p. 199). Further gender-sensitive studies on mobility (Schneider *et al.* 2002; Petrova 2010) support the postulate of gender studies that unsecured childcare options for parents force parents to be flexible in time and place. The flexible organization of daily life in terms of time and place pushes welfare work to its limits, for it is difficult to make listening, comforting or tenderness flexible in terms of time and place (Roth 2010, p. 93; Larsen *et al.* 2008, p. 98; Voß and Weiß 2005, p. 84; Henninger 2003a, p. 119). In this context, work-life balance measures are regarded as recipes for entrepreneurial success to be able to cope with flexible working hours and work locations. Industrial, human resources and organizational sciences, and in particular US companies, are explicitly concerned with company mobility arrangements in the context of diversity management, work-life balance and work-life concepts (Blair-Loy and Jacobs 2003; Lyn and Mullan 2010). Many of these concepts merely show why mobility arrangements are of great importance for the personnel management of companies (Mohe *et al.* 2010; Lleras 2008; Usdansky and World 2008). But the way of life and perspective of parents often remain underexposed, "because

the employer is only interested in my work", as an employee with burnout syndrome reports in an interview on work-life balance measures (Paulus 2012, p. 325). For the younger generation of mobile workers, being mobile appears to be a reconcile problem:

"Just last week I met a former co-worker for breakfast. When we met, he was single. He was independent and haphazard - but happy. Now he is married and has three wonderful children. He is bound and stressed - but happy. He used to be able to travel and move around the houses without answering to anyone. Today he is dependent on his salary, which arrives on his account month after month - because his children want food, toys, clothing and school trips. He is dependent on his apartment - because contrary to all romantic ideas, children no longer find it cool to be driven through world history in a motorhome. He depends on the safety offered by the so-called hamster wheel - because that's exactly what lets him sleep peacefully at night and come home to his family in the evening with a big grin on his face. [...] I myself am the exact opposite. I have always been incredibly freedom-loving, opportunistic, homesick and, to a certain extent, perhaps selfish. Because I'm not (yet) ready to give up my freedom for a permanent job, children and a family." (Franzi).

In summary, the failure of mobile work force management is often the result when changes in family environments and institutional constraints come together due to mobility. Although mobility is desired on the one hand through guiding principles, on the other hand it cannot be implemented in practice due to a lack of offers. In the following, occupational psychological studies are presented as a contrasting foil to the previous perspectives to understand the coping strategies in dealing with mobility regimes from a "selfish" point of view.

### **Occupational Psychological Perspectives on Mobility and Mobility Requirements**

In addition to the structurally required willingness to be mobile, there is also a need for employees to travel and discover foreign worlds - not only with the intention of getting to know future holiday destinations in advance (Kerr *et al.* 2012) or to use professional mobility to get to know new languages, cultures and working environments (Špidla 2006, p. 5). Ghiselli (1974) describes the form of voluntary self-mobilization as "Hobo syndrome".

About the culture of the Hobos - precarious US-American migrant workers who roamed the USA in the early 20th century in search of wage labor on freight trains and were described by artists such as Woody Guthrie or Jack Kerouac in their songs or books as freedom lovers (Albrecht and Kertscher 1999) - Ghiselli (1974) develops the thesis that mobile workers feel a form of "wanderlust":

"A periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place. This urge to move seems not to result from organized, logical thought, but rather would appear more akin to raw, surging, internal impulses [...]" (Ghiselli 1974, p. 81).

In this context, mobility is seen as an opportunity to escape company hierarchies. Ghiselli's study, based on informal discussions with precarious workers, was qualitatively reviewed and quantified by Viega (1981). Viega concludes that manager types are proportionately more often driven by the "wanderlust" than other occupational groups. "To the

extent that mobility is an instinct, organizations will have to contend with some managers who are unwilling to stay put long" (Viega 1981, p. 38). Here mobility is seen as an opportunity for individual changes and economic improvements. The qualitative long-term study by Judge and Watanabe (1995) on Ghiselli's thesis confirms these results and describes that the "periodic itch" depends on integration into the company and is influenced by positive or negative experiences of arriving in a foreign environment. Christoph's statements prove this "Hoboness":

"Identity is the foundation of my business, my vision, my readers and customers as well as my goals for my life. Since I define myself as a citizen of the world, home and place of residence are quite unimportant. Permanent leisure activities (I play chess and poker, for example) are also easily possible as a digital nomad, as are private retreat areas (even if they change constantly, but a room with a bed is always the same for me in the end)". (Christoph)

Becton *et al.* (2011) conclude in their quantitative study "The hobo syndrome and job complexity" that above all the conditions of the job and the "Big Five personality traits" (openness, self-organization, enthusiasm, cooperation and neuroticism values) have a significant effect on self-mobilizations (Becton *et al.* 2011, p. 457). This means that the worse the conditions of a company and the more pronounced the respective five essential personality traits are, the higher the probability of self-mobilization:

"It's not 'just' eight hours, it's most of the day that goes on for work. You start at nine, so you have to get up at eight at the latest. You'll be barely home before seven in the morning. If you go shopping or do anything else, later. So the day is as good as over. [...] I did an internship in a medium-sized company in 2011, a bicycle manufacturer to be exact. I used to be a semi-professional cyclist, so I thought it would fit quite well. I had a normal 40 hours week - and I was deadly miserable. Why? Because I didn't burn for it. Nothing of what I did there aroused even a trace of satisfaction in me. To save my soul from doom, I'd go on a nice vacation once or twice a year to convince myself how well I'm doing. This experience was a key point for me. I realized that money doesn't change as much as we think or how society wants to sell us. But work can also be something completely different. Working can be self-realization." (Anchu)

This example shows that needs and wishes also would contribute significantly to remaining in a company. Woo (2011) extends Ghiselli's thesis in this context with the aspect that the personality traits are to be examined more closely and comes to the following critical conclusion: "The current study illustrates that while hobos share specific, distinguishable pattern of behavior and attitudes regarding frequent job movement, everyone has such a tendency to varying degrees" (Woo 2011, p. 468). Further studies in this context should deal qualitatively with the social practices of "hoboness", Woo concludes in summary (Woo 2011, p. 468). But there are currently no comprehensive occupational psychological or practical studies on everyday working life and on the motives for action of "digital nomads". In personnel development-oriented studies on Hobo syndrome, however, it becomes clear that mobility as a need for self-realization is also regarded as a value-adding resource. The quantitative study by Munasinghe and Sigman (2001) following Ghiselli's study, based on data

from the US National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth (NLSY), concludes that the potential of "wanderlust" as a human capital and resource can be tapped. A similar result is also reached by Teles et.al. (2012). They note that the experience of mobile workers increases operational opportunities to use high-quality human resources (Teles *et al.* 2012, p. 521ff). In the concluding case, the logic of a post-fordist mobility regime becomes clear: what was perceived as a disturbance in the fordist production model, namely self-realization and which led to the anti-authoritarian criticism of the 1960s and 1970s, is attempted to be transformed into resources in the post-fordist model.

To sum up, the Hobo syndrome - paradoxically like the refusal of mobility - is to be understood as a reaction to industrial power and inequalities. In this context it becomes clear that the mobility requirements of companies and the mobility needs of employees promote and require the assumption of a certain subject position. This type of mobility is characterized by its ability to implement far-reaching changes in the private sector and by its critical approach to gainful employment situations. In conclusion, this means that the described occupational psychological perspectives on mobility and mobility regimes represent a contrast to previous representations of occupational mobility because they make the wishes and motives of employees the starting point of their research. It would then be necessary to examine which modes of subjectivation these models of wanderlust produce.

### Summary

Regarding the critical reflection of the disciplinary imperatives, the following can be noted: The sociological studies presenting mainly the negative effects of mobility requirements. The research aspects described the relationship between mobility, subjectification and gender, above all on the premise of breaking down the boundaries between "work and life". Voluntariness, individual desires and forms of desire all too often remain underexposed and mobilization is described under the aspect of coercion, uprooting or homelessness (Sennet 1998; critical Boomers 2004). There is no focus on the (self-) mobilization of employees. In this context, "geo-arbitrage" and "self-outsourcing" (cf. Sebastian) are perspectives to further illuminate the self-mobilizations of the digital nomads - on the one hand also to describe wishes for the discovery of foreign countries and the way out of the "hamster wheel" and on the other hand to understand how private interests are reconciled with the desire to generate profit (Steffi and Sebastian) or how their own ego-ideal is projected into the capitalist logic of exploitation.

As has become clear from previous perspectives and self-portrayals, the success of mobile work relationships is not a sole decision-making or attitude problem, but part of a social and company mobility arrangement. This means that the demands for action of mobile employees unfold not only through structural framework conditions, but also through certain subjective feelings and/or entrepreneurial models or the idea of entrepreneurship (Oliver 2012, p. 3859ff). However, mobility requires a multifaceted support system that balances wanderlust and uprooting or makes social and professional life possible: Organizing 'co-presence' with key others (workmates, family, significant others, friends) each day [...] becomes more demanding with this loss of collective 'localized' co-ordination" (Urry 2010, p. 330f). In the absence of support,

identity disorientations, the burden on personal relationships up to rising divorce and falling birth rates, job loss or burnout syndromes are described as negative effects of mobile work (Rüger 2011; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2011; Press *et al.* 2006; Jurczyk and Voß 2000, p. 171ff):

"The price of freedom is also often isolation. Not every place has its own connection. You must be able to be alone with yourself. You must be able to work when others go to the movies. I can be pretty good alone by now. Sometimes better, sometimes less good - it is also a question of mood. I even need it sometimes that I am alone for a longer time. But I often have moments when I feel terribly lonely. You must get through that. You only get real happiness when you share it. That's what I believe. You can also watch a great sunset *alone*, but only the people with whom you share the moment make it a special moment. So once you are alone longer, the moments you experience are far less fulfilling. Period." (Tim 2).

This example illustrates the contradiction in which workers stand: On the one hand, professional mobility requirements and needs require a change of location - on the other hand, individual mobility reduces the number of people living with family, friends and at home (Sondelmayer 2010; Vogl 2011; Näser 2010). This means that social support structures enable or restrict mobility and can lead to stress-related morbidity and mortality patterns and psychosocial risks (Forlano 2008; Vogl 2011).

The present gender-sensitive studies illustrate not only the influence of the category "being a parent" on the participation of mobile working relationships, but also which mobility-related restrictions on action can arise. Not only wage differentiation, but also the different amount of time required to carry out reproduction work constitute unequal opportunities and approaches (Konietzka 2012; Gottschall 2008). For Germany this currently means: "62 percent of mobile women have no children, but only 27 percent of mobile men remain childless" (Pardion 2012, p. 84). This means that, on the one hand, job mobility can delay or prevent partnerships or family development among women:

"A consistently travelling digital nomad can only maintain such ties at home via internet. That's possible, limited, but you can't hug each other, you can't drink a beer together. It's definitely not like direct contact." (Klaus)

On the other hand, the results of the studies on Hobo syndrome suggest seemingly freely configurable and flexible possibilities for action and modes of subjectivation. Whether "wanderlust" or nomadic lifestyles serve as an opportunity for the subject to escape restrictive demands for action and operational hierarchies and to find moments of self-determination within the capitalist logic of exploitation. The few research projects that analyses mobility as a self-chosen social practice focus primarily on traditional lifestyles and (semi-)nomadic lifestyles from an ethnological perspective (Gertel and Calkins 2011). A synthesis that would enable the different research perspectives to be communicated would offer many possibilities for presenting intra-categorical and inter-categorical approaches to the topic of mobility. The resulting multiplication of interpretation possibilities simultaneously opens new perspectives on the needs and wishes of a new generation of workers and on the redesign of mobility arrangements.

## **Outlook**

The self-representations make it clear that the "digital nomads" also focus on the question of how to create professional mobility arrangements and, above all, how to design individual modes of reproduction. The present aspects point out that classes of modernization winners and losers can develop who either successfully organize their way of life in the interplay of being on the move and being at home or who fail in their attempts to strike a balance between the requirements of mobility and the individual reproduction of their work force and care systems (Wilde 2014). The exemplary self-representations of the "digital nomads" point to a need of a young generation of workers, which don't want longer work locally and may also refer to forward-looking models of work organization in the 21st century. However, so that the different statements do not develop into an eclectic bricolage, the following points can be derived as open research positions:

1. The mobilization of the workforce can be understood as self-mobilization - embedded in personal motives, wishes or values and as part of an externally controlled mobility regime - embedded in the capitalist value chain. What can be described more concretely about the exemplary self-representations of "digital nomads" is that new cultural demands on gainful employment and on the organization of everyday life are arising. This means that the fourth industrial revolution predicted by the WEF will revolutionize not only gainful employment but also the way of life. Future working relationships will change from clear time schedules, defined working and leisure times, stable handling processes and standardized routine activities to complex and dynamically manageable tasks and activities, as multi-locality, time management and reconciliation requirements require new forms of organization of gainful employment and care work as well as self-organization. With the digitalization of the working world, new value orientations and design possibilities arise, but also uncertainties and ambiguities. With the generation of "digital nomads", more and more young people are entering working life, which is particularly important for the meaningfulness of gainful employment and the compatibility of this with their lifestyles. Looking to the future of work, various challenges can be identified accordingly: The debate on "Industry 4.0" has so far focused on technological visions such as automation, rationalization or the optimization of work processes, but also on horror visions such as robotization and mass unemployment. The social challenges and new opportunities for socialization, such as co-working spaces or location-independent working of employees, have been little discussed so far.
2. Another aspect of research indicates that new research approaches must adapt thematically and methodologically to mobility requirements: Previous research approaches describe an intra-categorical approach to mobility. Here, old models of thought - based on methodological nationalism - must be replaced by cross-sectoral analyses that also consider transnational patterns of interdependence. This approach also requires a corresponding gender-

sensitive methodology (Anthias 2011), which operates at the subject-scientific level (Sutter 2012) and beyond the borders of the nation state (Beck 2010; Pries 2010) and incorporates the cosmopolitanization of the research object and research methods. For a sociology "located in the container of the nation state", as Beck stresses, "is methodically suspected of working with zombie categories" (Beck 2000, p.16). Rather, it produces reflexive self-understandings and concepts that reflect the transformations of social conditions in a one-dimensional and condensed form. An interdisciplinary perspective, on the other hand, can at least capture the dynamics of external and self-mobilizations in a more differentiated way (Hildebrandt et.al. 2001) and emphasize inter-categorical interactions between the research disciplines. This means that the manifold and contradictory requirements of mobility can no longer be fully analyzed with conventional sociological and psychological methods or with one-dimensional perspectives (Bonß and Kesselring 2001, p. 178).

Thus, in the current studies on mobility, research gaps become apparent which grasp the aspect of the mobilization of labor as a double effect of foreign and self-government and work out the interplay of production and reproduction relationships from a transnational point of view.

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