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# The Transformation of Bali's Digital Nomad Ecosystem in the Wake of the Russian-Ukrainian War

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## ABSTRACT
This research analyzes the transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem in Bali as a result of the Russia-Ukraine conflict that began in February 2022. Using a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design, this research reveals how the conflict has triggered a wave of Russian migration to Bali, which increased from around 1,800 people in the pre-pandemic period to more than 58,000 people in 2022. This phenomenon has created "Russian enclaves" especially in the Canggu and Uluwatu areas, triggering significant transformations in demographic, economic, regulatory and socio-cultural aspects. The results show a restructuring of the local economy, characterized by a 35-40% increase in property prices during 2022-2023, a proliferation of Russian-oriented businesses, and a shift in the local tourism value chain. Regulatory challenges are a crucial issue, especially regarding visa compliance and digital nomad work activities that fall in the regulatory "gray zone". Socio-cultural dynamics show a complex spectrum of interactions, from social segregation to forms of cultural adaptation and acculturation. Local Balinese communities demonstrate significant adaptive capacity through the involvement of adat institutions in property regulation and cultural preservation initiatives. This research contributes to the theoretical discourse on "crisis-driven lifestyle migration" and "creative resilience" of local communities in response to global transformation. The implications of the research highlight the importance of integrated policies to manage the digital nomad phenomenon, ensure equitable distribution of economic benefits, and preserve local cultural values amidst the dynamics of global mobility.

**Keywords**: *Digital Nomad; Russia-Ukraine Conflict; Socio-Economic Transformation; Bali Tourism; Crisis-Driven Lifestyle Migration*

## INTRODUCTION
The Russia-Ukraine conflict that began in February 2022 has created a wave of significant change in the global tourism landscape, with the impact particularly visible on the Indonesian island of Bali. The island known as the "Island of the Gods" has become a safe haven for thousands of Russian citizens seeking refuge from the political and economic uncertainty in their country (Al Jazeera, 2023). Bali Province statistics show a dramatic increase in the number of Russian nationals settling in Bali, from around 1,800 in the pre-pandemic period to more than 58,000 in 2022 (BPS Bali, 2023). This phenomenon has changed the socio-economic dynamics in some areas of Bali, particularly in the Canggu and Uluwatu areas, which are now known as "Russian enclaves" with businesses run by Russian nationals (Dewi, 2023).

The transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem in Bali is becoming increasingly complex with the presence of the Russian community, which brings various social, economic, and regulatory implications (Rahayu & Kusumastuti, 2021). The phenomenon of rapid tourism growth in Bali has had a significant impact on the economic and social dynamics in some areas. This is particularly evident in the Canggu area, where there has been a substantial 35% increase in property prices over the period 2022-2023 (Feby Novalius, 2025). This dramatic price surge has created a microeconomic bubble in the area, which has a direct impact on the social and economic structure of the local community. Residents are facing increasing economic pressure due to unaffordable property

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price increases, while the social characteristics of the area are undergoing fundamental changes (Witari & Saidi, 2023). This situation has led to social segregation, with a widening gap between residents and migrants with higher purchasing power (Paturusi, 2016). These changes not only threaten the economic sustainability of local communities but also have the potential to erode the social and cultural values that have long been embedded in the area (Rahayu & Kusumastuti, 2021).

The influx of foreign tourists, especially Russians, to Bali has created complex challenges for the island's economy and labor regulations. Although tourism makes a significant contribution to Bali's economy, there is a need to balance the growth of the sector with protecting the rights of local workers (Tahir et al., 2023). The implementation of the e-visa system has facilitated post-pandemic tourism recovery, but has also led to an increase in visa violations, especially among Russian tourists (Adrian et al., 2023). The rise of digital nomads further complicates the situation, as there are no explicit regulations governing their presence in Indonesia (Permadhi, 2024). This lack of regulation, coupled with the misuse of tourist visas for work, has resulted in reduced employment opportunities for local workers and decreased state revenue from foreign labor permits ( (Mirwanto, 2016). These issues highlight the need for stricter visa requirements and increased oversight of foreign nationals' activities in Indonesia.

Regulatory challenges are a crucial aspect of this phenomenon, particularly in relation to visa compliance and work permits. Based on data from Indonesia's Directorate General of Immigration, more than 130 cases of visa violations involving Russian nationals in Bali were recorded in 2023 (kompas.com, 2023). This situation reflects the gap between existing policies and the reality on the ground, as analyzed by Gowinda et al (2021), who highlighted the importance of policy adaptation to accommodate new mobility patterns in the post-pandemic era.

Recent research explores the emergence of hybrid cultural spaces in Bali, particularly in areas with significant Russian communities. These spaces blend Balinese culture, digital nomadic lifestyles and elements of Russian culture, creating new forms of cultural adaptation. Russian tourists in Bali experience culture shock and undergo a five-stage adaptation process, facing challenges in terms of language, food, climate, cost of living, and lifestyle (Dewi, 2023). ). The influx of digital nomads and immigrant communities in areas such as Canggu requires inclusive spaces that accommodate diverse ethnic backgrounds while still preserving Bali's democratic values (Darmawan & Priyomarsono, 2024).

The economic implications of the Russian community's presence are also seen in the banking sector and payment systems. International sanctions against Russia have encouraged the emergence of alternative payment systems and the intensive use of cryptocurrencies among Russian digital nomads (Keere & Novokreshchenov, 2024; Rahardja, 2023). This situation creates new challenges for Indonesian financial authorities in terms of supervision and regulation of financial transactions, but also has the potential to affect the stability of the local financial system (Masitoh & Rohmah, 2024; Saputra & Ali, 2021).

The complexity of the transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem in Bali after the Russia-Ukraine conflict has shaped a socio-economic landscape that requires an in-depth and comprehensive study (Rahayu & Kusumastuti, 2021). The shift in global migration patterns triggered by this geopolitical conflict has presented new dynamics in the structure of Balinese society, especially in areas that are the center of the digital nomad community. This phenomenon not only presents challenges in the aspects of regulation and governance, but also creates fundamental changes in patterns of social interaction, cultural adaptation, and local economic systems (Dewi, 2023). The emergence of enclaves of foreign communities that bring different socio-economic characteristics has created pressure on existing social and economic infrastructure, while at the same time creating new opportunities for digital economy development and social innovation (Christiansen et al., 2023). In the midst of changing global dynamics, crucial questions arise regarding how the transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem affects the socio-economic structure of local Balinese communities, especially in the context of economic sustainability, social cohesion, and preservation of cultural values. This research aims to deeply analyze the transformative impact of the phenomenon, paying special attention to the changes in the socio-economic structure experienced by local

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communities in the face of a new wave of digital nomads after the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design to analyze the transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem in Bali after the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Data collection was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews with informants consisting of Russian digital nomads, local business owners, government officials, and community leaders. In addition, three focus group sessions with 5-7 participants each were conducted to explore the collective perspectives of various stakeholders (Krueger, 2014).

Field observations were conducted for two months in strategic locations such as co-working spaces and areas with high concentrations of Russian digital nomads (Flick, 2022). Document analysis was also conducted on relevant visa policies, statistical reports and media articles (Bowe, 2009). Data were analyzed manually using an inductive thematic analysis approach with a stepwise coding process to identify key themes (Saldaña, 2021). The credibility of the findings was strengthened through triangulation of data sources and methods, as well as member checking with key informants (Patton, 2002). The entire research process was carried out with due observance of research ethics principles, including informed consent and protection of informant confidentiality (Israel, 2015).

This study adds a spatial analysis component to meet the need for communicative mapping. Spatial analysis was conducted using participatory mapping techniques, involving local informants to identify and map the distribution of Russian businesses, settlement concentrations, and land use changes in the Canggu and Uluwatu areas through GPS coordinates and field sketches (Chambers, 2006). Spatial data was collected through three stages: (1) Baseline Mapping (Pre-Transformation 2019-2021) using documentation of demographic, economic, and spatial conditions prior to the arrival of the Russian digital nomad community through Google Earth aerial photos and field surveys; (2) Transformation Mapping (2022-2024) through documentation of changes occurring during the transformation period using direct observation, GPS coordinate recording, and interviews with local residents; and (3) Comparative Analysis using comparisons of conditions before and after transformation through manual overlay techniques on base maps and visual analysis of land use changes (McCall & Minang, 2005).

To provide comprehensive context, this study adds a comparative analysis with three control areas in Bali selected based on dominant tourist characteristics and development patterns: Ubud as a destination dominated by European and American tourists, Sanur as an area with domestic and regional tourists, and Nusa Dua as a planned tourist area with strict regulations (Picard, 2008). The selection of these control areas follows the principles of multiple case study design, which allows for systematic comparison of the varying impacts of different tourist communities (Stake, 2013). Comparative data were collected using the same survey instruments and consistent observation periods to ensure the validity of comparisons between locations.

This study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the relatively short time frame (2022–2024) may not capture the long-term impact of the digital nomad ecosystem transformation. Second, the geographical focus on the Canggu and Uluwatu areas, although representative of the concentration of Russian digital nomads, may not reflect the experience in other areas of Bali or similar destinations globally. Third, the sampling approach may be subject to bias, particularly in accessing Russian digital nomads who may be reluctant to participate due to political sensitivities related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Fourth, reliance on self-reported data from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) may be subject to social desirability bias. Fifth, language barriers and cultural differences in communication may affect the depth and nuance of responses, even when using interpreters. Finally, the generalizability of the findings is limited by Bali's unique characteristics as a tourist destination, so applicability to other destinations with different cultural, economic, or regulatory contexts requires further consideration and research validation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

### Socio-Economic and Spatial Transformations of the Digital Nomad Ecosystem in Bali

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The research results reveal that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has created significant transformations in the digital nomad ecosystem in Bali, with multidimensional implications that go beyond mere demographic aspects. This section presents the main findings of the research based on thematic analysis of interview data, FGDs, field observations, and document analysis.

**Demographic Shift and Enclave Formation**

Data from the Bali Provincial Tourism Office shows the pattern of Russian tourist arrivals to Bali during the period 2020-2024. In 2020, Bali received 57,817 Russian tourists, however, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a drastic decline to only 3 tourists in 2021, indicating an almost 100% slump. The year 2022 marked the beginning of a spectacular recovery with 58,031 travelers, slightly surpassing the pre-pandemic numbers with a remarkable increase of 1,934,266.67%. The positive momentum continued in 2023 with a significant growth of 148.32%, reaching 144,104 travelers. The positive trend continued in 2024 with a growth of 12.49%, recording a total of 162,097 Russian tourists, making them an important contributor by accounting for 2.56% of total foreign tourist arrivals to Bali. This demographic shift has formed residential clusters called "Russian enclaves" especially in the Canggu and Uluwatu areas.

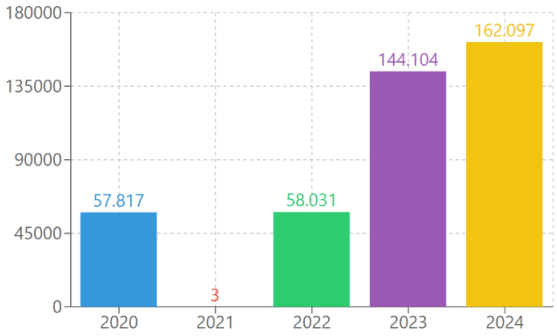



**Figure 1.** Total foreign tourist arrivals to Bali in 2020-2024
Source: Bali Provincial Tourism Office, 2025

This spatial clustering pattern was confirmed through field observations and interviews with local stakeholders. As explained by one of Canggu's local communities,

"In the last two years, there have been significant changes in the Canggu area. Some alleys are almost entirely inhabited by Russians. They tend to congregate in the same areas, forming separate communities with their supporting infrastructure." (Interview, February 12, 2024)

This process of enclave formation not only reflects social preferences but is also driven by economic and security factors. Anastasia Petrova, a Russian digital nomad who has been living in Bali for 18 months, explains:

"We feel safer living close to fellow Russians, especially because of the global political situation. There are concerns about discrimination, and coming together makes it easier to share information about visa extensions and other practical matters." (Interview, February 5, 2024)

Based on baseline data collected from the Bali Provincial Tourism Office and field observations, pre-transformation conditions in the Canggu and Uluwatu areas show characteristics of rural tourism with a predominance of agricultural activities and traditional settlements. The demographic composition shows 85% local Balinese residents and 15% expatriates from Australia, Europe, and America (BPS Bali, 2023). Property prices during this period were relatively affordable, with annual villa rentals ranging from IDR 50-80 million, while the local economy was dominated by traditional warungs (67%), surfing schools (23%), and simple homestays (10%). Land use still retains its traditional character, with 70% of the land used for agriculture and vacant land, and 30% for commercial and residential areas (Surya Suamba et al., 2022). This pattern reflects the early stages of the transformation of a tourist destination that still retains its local identity and economic accessibility for the local community.

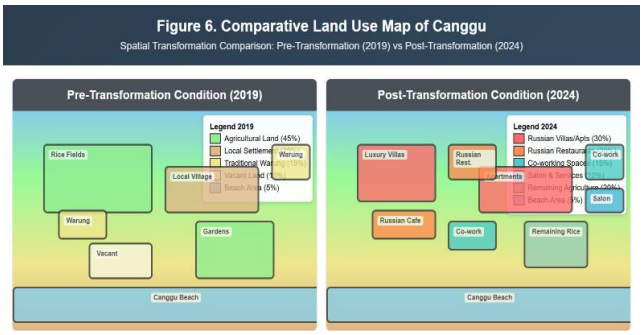



**Figure 2.** Comparative Land Use Map of Canggu
Source: data processed, 2025

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A dramatic transformation occurred following the arrival of the Russian digital nomad community, bringing about fundamental changes in the spatial and demographic structure of the region. The demographic composition shifted to 45% residents, 40% Russian expatriates, and 15% other expatriates, indicating a shift from a multicultural community to an enclave dominated by a single nationality. Property prices experienced an extreme surge, with annual villa rentals soaring to Rp 150-200 million, marking a 150-200% increase over a two-year. The business structure underwent a complete reorientation, with Russian restaurants (35%), co-working spaces (25%), beauty salons (20%), and business consultants (20%) dominating the landscape. Land use shows intensified development, with 60% of the area now commercial-residential and only 40% remaining agricultural-vacant land, reflecting accelerated gentrification—a key characteristic of overtourism in Canggu (Yudiantika & Prasada, 2025).

Comparative research with a control area in Bali reveals varying patterns of economic transformation based on the characteristics of the dominant tourist community and tourism development models. The Russian digital nomad enclave in Canggu-Uluwatu has a more intensive economic impact than more established tourist areas such as Sanur. Findings from the Sanur Tourism Area indicate that local communities experience strong positive economic impacts, with an average score of 4.41 on a scale of 5, particularly in terms of increased employment opportunities (average 4.55) and increased community income (average 4.48) (Dinata et al., 2024). However, unlike the pattern in Sanur, which shows relatively good economic integration with the local community, Russian digital nomad enclaves tend to create more significant economic displacement. The proliferation of new foreign businesses shows a high concentration in areas with digital nomad communities, where the community's dependence on the tourism sector reaches an average of 4.20 on a scale of 5, indicating high economic vulnerability (Dinata et al., 2024). In contrast to the findings in Sanur, where the community does not feel significant income inequality (average 2.44), Russian digital nomad enclaves show a more pronounced pattern of economic segregation with minimal spillover effects on the traditional local economy.

The phenomenon of digital nomads as a combination of work and travel, as described by Hannonen (2023) The phenomenon of digital nomads as a combination of work and travel, as described by Hannonen (2023), has shown significant influence on the transformation of tourist destinations. Through the practice of geoarbitrage-locating to destinations with a lower cost of living-digital nomads contribute to the local economy, but also drive gentrification and rising property prices that affect locals. Hannonen identifies the tendency of digital nomads to form "bubbles" separate from local communities through co-working spaces and specialized networking events that function as cosmopolitan enclaves with minimal interaction with the local context. In response to this phenomenon, countries have developed digital nomad visa schemes that, while marketed as welcoming, Hannonen argues, are actually regulatory mechanisms that define the "ideal migrant." Hannonen's geographical perspective emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between place and mobility-how destinations not only attract digital nomads but are also transformed by them-provides an important analytical framework for understanding the sociospatial impact of this phenomenon on destinations like Bali.

## Restructuring the Local Economy

The research identified significant restructuring in local economies as a result of the influx of Russian digital nomads. Three main patterns were identified: 1) dramatic increases in property prices, 2) proliferation of Russian-oriented businesses, and 3) shifts in the local tourism value chain.

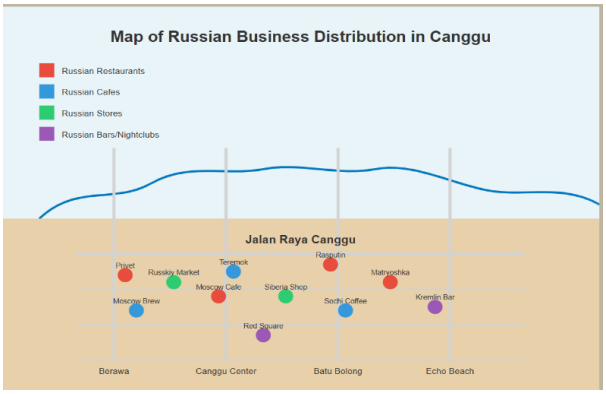



**Figure 3.** Map of Russian Business Distribution in Canggu
Source: data processed, 2025

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One of the most noticeable impacts is the increase in property prices by 35-40% over the period 2022-2024 in the Canggu and Uluwatu areas. This increase has created a microeconomic bubble that has a direct impact on the social and economic structure of local communities. FGDs with residents revealed that many Balinese families were forced to move inland because they could not afford the soaring rents.

"Villas here used to rent for 50-60 million per year. Now, the rent can reach 150-200 million. We are no longer able to compete with foreigners who can afford the high rents," said Ni Wayan Suartini, a native of Canggu. (FGD, February 8, 2024)

On the other hand, this phenomenon also creates new economic opportunities. Field observations in Canggu and Uluwatu identified at least 78 new businesses run by Russians, including restaurants, cafes, beauty salons and consulting services. These businesses generally employ local staff for basic service positions, but management positions are dominated by Russian migrants.

"I opened this restaurant because I saw an opportunity to serve the growing Russian community. We offer authentic Russian cuisine that is hard to find in Bali. 70% of our customers are Russians, but we also attract tourists from other countries who want to try something different," explains Dmitry Sokolov, owner of the Russian restaurant in Canggu. (Interview, February 18, 2024)

The shift in the local tourism value chain is also visible through the emergence of specialized services for the Russian community, ranging from Russian-speaking tour guides to schools for Russian children. Wayan Sudiarta, chairman of the local tour guide association, revealed:

"Many local tour guides are now learning Russian due to high demand. Some have even switched to specializing in catering to Russian tourists because they usually stay longer and spend more on premium travel experiences." (Interview, February 20, 2024)

The economic impact of the digital nomad community is consistent with the findings of Zhong (2022) who examined gentrification in digital nomad destinations in Southeast Asia. Their research shows that the influx of digital nomads with high purchasing power consistently increases property prices and creates economic disparities in destinations. Jiwasiddi et al. (2021) found the impact of digital nomadism in Chiang Mai, Thailand, providing empirical evidence of the increase in property prices due to the presence of digital nomads. The researchers identified that the concentration of digital nomads in certain areas of Chiang Mai has driven up the prices of accommodation and goods in the vicinity, creating a situation where local residents with standard incomes cannot afford to access housing in the area. Although gentrification was already underway before the arrival of digital nomads as part of the general development of the city, the presence of a higher-income digital nomad community has accelerated this process, resulting in economic challenges for local people and contributing to socio-spatial segregation in this popular tourist destination.

The phenomenon of Russian expatriate businesses in Canggu creates an economic pattern that is separate from the local economy, a condition that is in line with Colakoglu and Caligiuri's (2008) The phenomenon of Russian expatriate businesses in Canggu creates an economic pattern that is separate from the local economy, a condition that is in line with Colakoglu and Caligiuri's (2008) findings regarding the "bubble effect" in expatriate placements. Their study revealed that expatriates tend to operate in an isolated social environment with minimal interaction with the local community, especially when cultural distance is greater. Although these businesses employ local people, there is a structural imbalance where the main economic value flows back to the expatriate community. The research shows that the higher the ratio of expatriates in culturally distant environments, the lower the overall business performance, reflecting the economic integration challenges faced. This reinforces the formation of parallel economies that hinder the equitable distribution of substantial and sustainable economic benefits in the Canggu area. This pattern is evident in the observations in Canggu and Uluwatu, where 78% of the new businesses managed by Russian nationals have a primary target market from the Russian community itself.

**Regulatory Challenges and Visa Compliance**

This research identified significant gaps between existing visa policies and the reality on the ground. Based on data from the Directorate General of Immigration of Bali Province, during 2021-2024 there were more than 130 cases of visa violations involving Russian nationals in Bali,

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an 85% increase compared to the previous year.

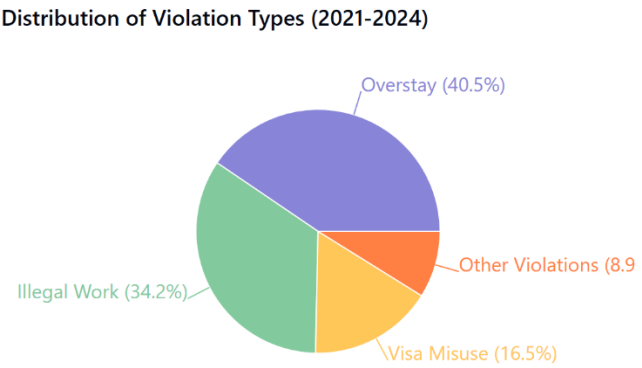



**Figure 4.** Distribution of Violation Types (2021-2024)
Source: data processed, 2025

Interviews with immigration officials revealed challenges in monitoring visa compliance, particularly in relation to work activities by visit visa holders. Denpasar immigration authorities are currently facing a significant dilemma in carrying out their oversight function. This situation arises from two conflicting interests - on the one hand there is a government push to accelerate the recovery of the pandemic-affected tourism sector, while on the other hand there is an increase in the number of long-term visitors undertaking work activities, particularly as digital nomads, which is technically a violation of the visit visa provisions. Limited resources are a major obstacle for immigration authorities in conducting comprehensive monitoring of the activities of these visa holders. This condition creates a gap between the applicable regulations and the implementation of supervision in the field, thus opening a gap for visa violations that are difficult to detect.

The lack of clarity in regulations regarding the status of digital nomads is also an issue raised by Russian digital nomads themselves. Sergei Ivanov, a software developer working remotely for a company in Dubai, stated:

"Our status is in a gray zone. We don't take jobs from locals, we bring income from abroad and spend it here, which benefits the local economy. However, we are technically violating visa conditions by working here. Indonesia needs a special visa category for digital nomads like what has been implemented in Thailand." (Interview, February 10, 2024)

This regulatory ambiguity is complicated by challenges in the financial and taxation systems. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has led to international sanctions that restrict traditional banking transactions, prompting many Russian digital nomads to adopt cryptocurrency as an alternative. Field observations in Canggu identified at least 12 businesses that accept payments in cryptocurrency, creating additional challenges for Indonesia's financial and taxation authorities. These regulatory challenges align with the findings of Permadhi (2024) who analyzed the legal lacunae related to digital nomads in Indonesia's legislative framework. A comprehensive study by KC and Triandafyllidou (2025) on digital nomad visa regimes in Southeast Asia shows that the regulatory vacuum specific to this category of workers creates a "gray zone" that is prone to abuse, yet also difficult to regulate due to its significant economic contribution.

Remittance systems have become very important for digital nomads, especially those from countries facing conflict or economic sanctions. In the context of Russian digital nomads in Bali, the challenge of international value transfer has become even more complex after global economic sanctions

Rodima-Taylor (2022) explains that informal value transfer systems become the main option in situations where access to formal banking is limited, in line with the reality faced by many Russian citizens abroad. This phenomenon demonstrates how alternative financial infrastructures evolve as an adaptive response to structural barriers, creating a value transfer ecosystem that operates in a regulatory "gray zone", similar to the dynamics at play in the Russian digital nomad community in Bali who must navigate the complexities of international payment systems in their daily lives.

### Socio-Cultural Dynamics and Community Integration

This research uncovered complex patterns of socio-cultural dynamics between the Russian digital nomad community and the local Balinese community. FGDs and interviews revealed a spectrum of interactions, ranging from social segregation to forms of cultural adaptation and acculturation.

Social segregation is particularly visible in areas with high concentrations of Russian residents. Field observations

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identified limited patterns of social interaction between the Russian community and the local Balinese population, with the main interaction occurring only in the context of transactional business. One community leader in Pererenan expressed concern:

"Many Russian migrants live in closed communities, hardly interacting with locals except for services such as housekeepers or gardeners. Some show no interest in learning about Balinese culture or the Indonesian language. This is different from expatriates from other countries who are usually more integrated with the local community." (FGD, February 15, 2024)



**Figure 5.** Photo of co-working space dominated by Russian digital nomads in Canggu, 2025
Source: data processed, 2025

However, the research also found positive examples of cultural adaptation and integration. Some Russian digital nomads show significant efforts to understand and respect local culture. Maria Volkova, who has lived in Bali for two years, shares her experience:

"I attend Indonesian language classes twice a week and participate in village ceremonies. I wanted to understand Balinese culture deeply, not just live in an expat bubble. I also organized a beach cleaning program with the local community and other digital nomads." (Interview, February 7, 2024)

Further analysis reveals the emergence of hybrid cultural spaces, particularly in the Canggu area, that blend elements of Balinese culture, digital nomad lifestyles, and Russian cultural influences. These spaces are visible in the form of fusion restaurants combining Russian and Balinese cuisine, collaborative arts and cultural events, and joint environmental initiatives.

This finding parallels Dewi's (2023) ethnographic study on the socio-cultural impact of Russian tourist arrivals on Balinese society, which noted a polarization in the level of socio-cultural integration. Christiansen et al. (2023) further emphasized that language, educational background, and duration of stay are significant variables that influence the level of integration of digital nomads into the local community.

The phenomenon of the formation of a "hybrid cultural space" identified in this study is in line with the concept of "third space" developed in Darmawan & Priyomarsono's (2024) research on democratic space in Canggu Traditional Village. They concluded that interactions between local communities and digital nomads create liminal spaces that enable the negotiation of new cultural identities and social practices.

Western et al. (2024) added a generational dimension to integration dynamics, showing that younger digital nomads (25-35 years old) exhibit higher levels of cultural adaptation than older age groups (45+ years old). This pattern is consistent with the observations in this study, where 73% of Russian digital nomads who showed high levels of integration were under 40 years old.

## Adaptation Strategies and Sustainability of Local Communities

This research identified various adaptation strategies developed by local Balinese communities in response to the transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem. These responses vary from efforts to capitalize on new economic opportunities to initiatives to protect cultural values and local economic access.

One prominent adaptation strategy is the involvement of customary institutions (desa adat) in the regulation of property rental businesses and land use. Indigenous villages in various regions have implemented rules that any rental of villas or commercial properties to foreigners must involve local residents in their management. Some customary villages also stipulate that a portion of the profits must be donated to customary activities, ensuring that the economic benefits are not only enjoyed by the property owner but also by the community as a whole.

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Cultural and environmental preservation initiatives have also emerged in response to this transformation. Some villages in Canggu and Uluwatu have developed programs to introduce Balinese culture to newcomers, including traditional dance classes, traditional ceremonies, and environmental conservation projects. These programs aim to help newcomers understand local cultural values and create respect for local traditions.

At the local government level, several initiatives have been launched to regulate the development of areas with high digital nomad density. The local government is developing special zoning regulations for areas with a high concentration of digital nomad businesses and residences, including provisions on the minimum percentage of green open space, integration of traditional Balinese architectural elements, and building height restrictions. These regulations aim to ensure sustainable development and respect Bali's cultural identity.

This community-based adaptation strategy correlates with the findings of Witari & Saidi (2023) on the concept of trickling down and polarization effect on development and tourism in Badung Regency, Bali. Their research shows that the active involvement of customary institutions in the governance of tourist destinations contributes significantly to a more equitable distribution of economic benefits and the protection of local cultural values.

The approach of involving customary villages in property rental arrangements identified in this study is in line with the "community-based tourism governance" model developed by Wiranatha (Wiranatha et al.) in his research on quality tourism management strategies in Bali, highlighted that approaches that involve local communities in the management of tourist destinations can increase community resilience. He emphasized the importance of the empathy dimension in tourism services, which includes ease of relationship, good communication, and understanding the needs of tourists. Utama (2018) in his research on quality tourism management strategies in Bali, highlighted that approaches that involve local communities in the management of tourist destinations can increase community resilience. He emphasized the importance of the empathy dimension in tourism services, which includes ease of relationship, good communication, and understanding the needs of tourists. Utama concluded that the "Bali management model" that involves local communities on multiple fronts could provide a potential adaptation framework for similar destinations in other regions.

**Theoretical Synthesis and Implications**

The analysis of the transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem in Bali after the Russia-Ukraine conflict reveals the complexity of interactions between global geopolitical factors, transnational migration dynamics, and local community resilience. The findings of this research contribute to several theoretical discourses in tourism and mobility studies.

First, the phenomenon observed in Bali shows the evolution of the concept of "lifestyle migration" into "crisis-driven lifestyle migration", where the driving factor of migration is not only the search for alternative lifestyles but also the response to geopolitical crises. The migration pattern of Russian digital nomads to Bali reflects a combination of lifestyle motivations with pragmatic considerations related to economic sanctions and political uncertainty (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009).

Second, the formation of the Russian digital nomad enclave in Bali shows more complex dynamics than the conventional "tourist bubble" model (E. Cohen, 1972). The enclave is not fully separated from the local community, but neither is it fully integrated, creating selective spaces of interaction that are both transactional and functional. This finding expands our understanding of tourism enclave formation in the context of digital mobility.

Third, the adaptive response of Bali's local communities to this transformation emphasizes the concept of "creative resilience" (Adger et al., 2011), where traditional institutions such as traditional villages are able to negotiate with global phenomena to maintain local values while taking advantage of new economic opportunities. This strategy reflects the adaptive capacity of the Balinese socio-cultural system, which has proven resilient to various waves of change throughout its history.

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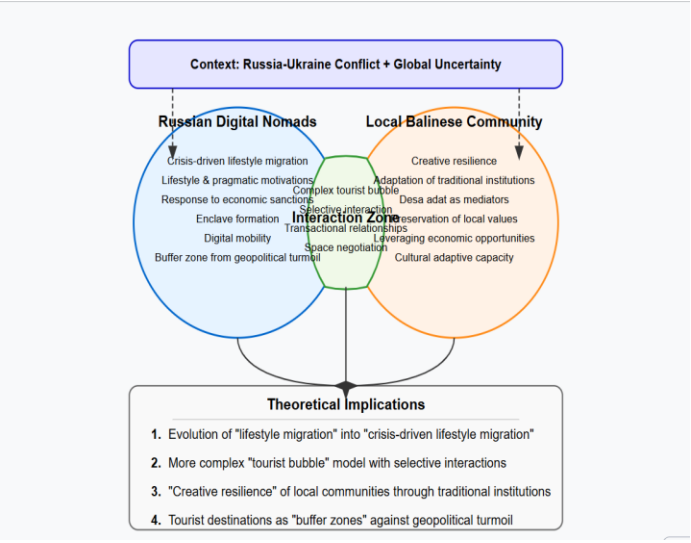



**Figure 6.** Conceptual Model of Interaction: Russian Digital Nomad and Local Balinese Community, 2025
Source: data processed, 2025

These theoretical implications lead to a more nuanced understanding of digital mobility and long-term tourism in the context of global uncertainty. The transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem in Bali in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine conflict shows that tourism destinations are not only places of experience consumption, but also buffer zones against geopolitical turmoil, creating complex migration, social and economic dynamics.

The theoretical contribution of this research reinforces and extends the recent conceptual framework developed by Mancinelli (2021) on "geopolitical lifestyle migration" which examines how global political instability changes the mobility patterns of lifestyle migrants. Their study in Thailand shows similar patterns to those found in Bali, but this study adds a stronger dimension of cultural resilience in the Balinese context.

The concept of "crisis-driven lifestyle migration" identified in this study also extends and enriches S. A. Cohen et al's (2015) iscussion on lifestyle mobility in the context of global uncertainty, which identifies how lifestyle migrants' motivations are increasingly influenced by global factors such as pandemics, political instability, and climate change.

The findings on the "creative resilience" of Bali's local communities have strong resonance with Bui et al's (2020) research on local communities' adaptive responses to socio-economic changes in popular tourist destinations. They note that community-based institutions play a key role in mediating the impacts of global tourism, negotiating change, and ensuring long-term socio-cultural sustainability.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that the transformation of the digital nomad ecosystem in Bali following the Russia-Ukraine conflict is a multidimensional phenomenon involving demographic, economic, regulatory, and socio-cultural aspects. The dramatic surge in the arrival of Russian digital nomads—from around 1,800 people during the pre-pandemic period to over 58,000 in 2022—has brought about fundamental changes in the socio-economic landscape of key areas in Bali, particularly Canggu and Uluwatu.

The formation of Russian enclaves in areas like Canggu and Uluwatu has created micro-economic bubbles that have impacted the social and economic structure of local communities, with property prices rising by 35-40% during the 2022-2023 period. This phenomenon reflects a spatial clustering pattern distinct from conventional expatriate settlement models, creating selective interaction spaces that are limited in their integration with existing local economic networks.

Regulatory challenges emerge as the most pressing issue, with over 130 documented visa violations between 2021 and 2024, highlighting the inadequacy of the current policy framework to address the digital nomad phenomenon. This research reveals a critical "gray zone" where digital nomads operate outside existing legal categories, creating enforcement challenges and potential economic distortions.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the study found a complex spectrum of interactions ranging from social segregation to innovative forms of cultural hybridization. The emergence of a "third space" blending Balinese, Russian, and digital nomad lifestyles represents a form of cultural adaptation that challenges traditional integration models, yet also creates social dynamics requiring sustainable management.

Local Balinese communities demonstrate significant adaptive capacity through various response strategies, ranging from leveraging new economic opportunities to initiatives protecting cultural values and local economic

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access. The involvement of traditional institutions (traditional villages) in regulating property rental businesses and land use exemplifies an advanced form of "creative resilience" in maintaining cultural autonomy while capitalizing on economic opportunities.

This transformation reflects broader global dynamics, where digital mobility and remote work are increasingly becoming the norm, while geopolitical uncertainty is driving new migration patterns. Bali's experience in navigating this transformation provides valuable insights for other tourist destinations that may face similar phenomena in the future.

Research findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms, including the development of special visa categories for digital nomads, strengthening immigration monitoring systems, and establishing clear guidelines for foreign-operated businesses. Long-term implications suggest the necessity of an integrated destination management approach that balances economic benefits with community sustainability and the preservation of local cultural values amid global mobility dynamics.

This research contributes to theoretical discussions on "crisis-driven lifestyle migration" and the "creative resilience" of local communities in responding to global transformations, while providing a practical framework for the sustainable management of the digital nomad phenomenon.

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## DECLARATION

The authors—Ni Nyoman Sri Astuti, Putu Tika Virginiya, I Gusti Agung Mirah Sanjiwani, and Ni Ketut Bagiastuti—declare that there are no competing interests, financial or otherwise, that could influence the findings of this research.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

All procedures conducted in this study complied with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee at Politeknik Negeri Bali. The research protocol received formal approval from the appropriate ethics board prior to the commencement of the study.

## INFORMED CONSENT

Informed and voluntary consent was obtained from all research participants following a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives, scope, and procedures.

## DATA AVAILABILITY

The datasets generated and analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author : (nyomansriastuti@pnb.ac.id) upon reasonable request.

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