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Department of Public Administration and Management

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Communities and local sustainable development

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MAKING SMALL TOWNS VISIBLE IN EUROPE: THE CASE OF CITTASLOW NETWORK – THE STRATEGY BASED ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT*

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to identify strategies for the development and promotion of small towns based on the implementation of the principles of sustainable development, using both endogenous social capital, unique material values of cultural heritage as well as values of the natural environment.

The strategy described in this article is a derivative of the benefits of membership in the Cittaslow global network, the peripheral location of small towns to metropolises as well as other alternative values of small towns not accessible to large cities. It has been shown that Cittaslow can be both an indicator of sustainable development, an activator of sustainable tourism as well as an instrument for raising awareness of the endogenous capital of small towns. The background to the considerations on potential implications of accession to Cittaslow is the analysis of contemporary international networks of cities whose priority or one of the key objectives is to act in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Keywords: small towns, small cities, locality, global city networks, Cittaslow, sustainable development, sustainable tourism, endogenous capital.

1. Introduction

Today's era of globalization, where distance does not seem to be a relative category, in which a high pace in almost every sphere of life in the great majority of highly developed countries is clearly visible, can also be called an acceleration era (Zawadzka, 2017b, p. 127). Therefore, small towns (less than 50,000 inhabitants) are increasing in importance. They become more attractive to tourists, ensuring the comfort of escape from the fast-paced world; small towns are a significant building block for the population structure of European countries (e.g. in Germany 1,882 out of 2,059 cities have less than 50,000 inhabitants, whereas 40% of the population of Germany lives in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants; in Poland 836 out of 923 cities have less than 50,000 inhabitants, whereas 37% of the Polish population lives in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants as of January 1, 2016). However, due to limited accessibility because of both their peripheral location (and often-underdeveloped public transport network), as well as a lack of adequate tourist facilities, they tend to lose, in terms of tourist attractiveness, to the big cities in their vicinity. Despite these limitations, it is the 'smallness' of these towns, their human scale of development, the unique urban-architectural structure, as well as the quietness and tranquility – which are scarce commodities in our modern world – that constitute their unique value. Moreover, the inhabitants of small cities have a valuable social capital that is virtually impossible to build in large urban centers: a deep sense of belonging to a place of residence that implies strong social ties and the ability to cooperate because 'participation and engagement are the life and promise of the city' (Barber, 2013, p. 110). Such an attitude produces a synergistic effect influencing and reinforcing the interrelationship of the inhabitants, as evidenced by the numerous grassroots initiatives to improve the quality of life of the small town communities. Therefore, Jane Jacobs' statement 'cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody' remains valid (Jacobs, 1961, p. 238).

Mayors and local leaders of small cities, due to the low level of anonymity, are constantly in contact with the residents and know their needs and expectations. That is why they seek a sustainable development strategy based on endogenous social capital, unique material cultural heritage as well as the value of the natural environment. In today's reality, small cities can be a remedy for information overload, noise, over-consumption of goods and services and uniformity (that is a derivative of globalist trends), enhancing the dynamically growing world trend called 'sustainable tourism', 'green tourism' or 'slow tourism' with its roots in 'Slow Movement'. Therefore, 'cities see a possible path of development in building a tourist offer based on sustainable, environmentally friendly and responsible tourism. They are increasingly aware of the great potential lying in the relationship between tourism and the natural environment in cities' (Maćkiewicz and Konecka-Szydłowska, 2017, p. 297).

The scope of the research relates to European towns belonging to the Cittaslow network. The research consists on both desk research and research visits in the twelve Cittaslow towns – six Polish (in 2010: Biskupiec; in 2012: Nowe Miasto Lubawskie;

in 2016: Nowy Dwór Gdański, Górowo Iławeckie, Gołdap, Ryn), three Scandinavian (in 2011: Danish Svendborg, Norwegian Skotterud within the boundaries of Eidskog municipality, Swedish Falköping) as well as three German (in 2011: Marihn; in 2016: Meldorf, Penzlin), using a wide spectrum of qualitative methods (unreactive, empirical, questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and participant observation). The research visits in the analyzed towns constitute a fundamental and indispensable part of the empirical research. They are necessary to recognize the socio-spatial structure of the towns, to implement the sensory perception and to carry out in-depth interviews with mayors, local leaders and, what is also important, with the inhabitants. The research visits were conducted alone, which guaranteed the optimal concentration on the task, so important when carrying out observations and interviews.

The goal of the article is to identify strategies for the development and promotion of small towns based on the implementation of the principles of sustainable development. The strategy described in this article is a derivative of the benefits of membership in the Cittaslow global network, the peripheral location of small towns to metropolises as well as other alternative values of small towns not accessible to large cities. The structure of the article is divided into two parts. The first one is the review of contemporary international networks of cities and towns (whose priority, or one of the key objectives, is to act in accordance with the principles of sustainable development) as a background to the considerations on potential implications of accession to Cittaslow. The second part is the indication of benefits from membership of Cittaslow in answering the three main questions:

1. Whether Cittaslow certification criteria can be treated by mayors, local leaders and inhabitants as a direction of sustainable development;
2. Whether the Cittaslow brand can be an activator of a thriving global sustainable tourism trend; and
3. How the certification process for accession to Cittaslow can be treated by mayors and local leaders as an instrument addressed to inhabitants in order to increase awareness of having endogenous capital in terms of material heritage, natural environment and strong social relationships.

2. International networks of cities and towns based on sustainable development

‘From the very beginning of urban history, flourishing entailed urban networking’ (Barber, 2013, p. 110). The New Charter of Athens 2003 states that ‘to increase their comparative advantages, individual cities will be compelled to join various networks, which will function effectively as more or less integral systems, with cities as nodes, connected either physically or virtually or both’ (European Council of Town Planners, 2003). Spatial-socio-economic conditions as well as the development potential of cities are conducive to cross-linking. ‘Culture, philanthropy, social movements, and NGOs all have urban roots, and all of them nurture global networks and ongoing exchange’ (Barber, 2013, p. 108). Moreover, ‘the natural urban tendency to civic

networking around trade, labor, culture, technology, environment, information, and security that this history reflects is endemic to the very meaning of the city' (Barber, 2013, p. 111). Any city joining the network can only gain without losing any of its strengths that distinguish it from other member cities, and the exchange of experiences is a synergistic developmental determinant. Therefore, 'the new phase of globalization which has been triggered by the development of information and communication technologies (primarily the development of the Internet starting with the mid-90s of the twentieth century) confirmed the predictions about the growing importance of network structure' (Grzelak-Kostulska, Hołowiecka and Kwiatkowski, 2011, p. 189).

Nowadays, there are many international networks of cities; both in Europe as well as worldwide, whose priority (or one of the key objectives) is to act in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. 'Metropolis', founded in 1985, intends to promote projects in partnership for urban sustainability, understood simultaneously in its environmental, economic, social, and cultural aspects; it comprises 136 capital cities around the world. 'The Network of Major European Cities (EUROCities)', founded in 1986, aims to reinforce the important role that local governments should play in a multilevel governance structure, consisting of over 130 of Europe's largest cities (100 full members and 30 associate members) from 39 countries of Europe. 'Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)' were established in 1990 as the first global program promoting participatory governance and local sustainable development planning, which includes more than 1,500 diverse cities of all sizes from more than 100 countries around the world. 'The MedCities Network' was established in 1991 in order to develop the awareness of interdependence and common responsibility as regards policies of sustainable development, environmental conservation and social cohesion of the Mediterranean basin; it currently consists of 27 cities located in 16 countries of the Mediterranean region. 'The Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC)' founded in 1993, intends to encourage, on both regional and international levels, cooperation and the exchange of information and expertise among historic cities throughout the world in close collaboration with other organizations pursuing similar goals while promoting action likely to support the efforts of cities located in developing countries; it has 294 member cities (280 members and 14 observer members) in 97 countries of the world. The 'European Network of Historical Cities and Territories (AVEC)' was created in 1997, and its aim is to integrate, as harmoniously as possible, innovation in what already exists for a sustainable development of the historical and cultural heritage of the cities and territories in Europe. It consists of 30 cities in 11 countries in Europe, and its members are cities for which material and immaterial heritages are vectors of identity and sharing – a base on which to build a sustainable city. The 'Alliance in the Alps' was created in 1997 in order to develop their alpine living environment in a sustainable way. Its basic and guiding principle for sustainable development is the Alpine Convention and it consists of 262 cities in 7 Alpine states. 'The European Association of Historic Towns and Regions (Heritage Europe)', established in 1999, intends to promote the interests of historic cities across

Europe through promoting vitality, viability and sustainable management of historic cities and regions. Over 1,000 historic and heritage cities and regions in 30 countries in Europe are its members. The 'International Network of Cities Where Living is Good' (Cittaslow) was established in 1999 with the aim of working towards sustainability, defending the environment and reducing our excessive ecological footprint, committing ourselves to rediscover traditional know-how and to make the most of our resources through recycling and reuse, through the application of new technologies. It currently consists of 237 small cities in 30 countries around the world. 'The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)' was founded in 2004, and intends to, for instance, strengthen international cooperation between cities that have recognized creativity as a strategic factor of their sustainable development; the UCCN currently has 116 member cities from 54 countries of the world. 'C40 Cities (C40)', set up in 2005, focuses on tackling climate change and driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, while increasing the health, wellbeing and economic opportunities of urban citizens; its members are 91 of the world's greatest cities. The 'EUniverCities Network (EUniverCities)', founded in 2012, aims to exchange and spread the knowledge, expertise and experience about city-university cooperation across urban Europe; it consists of 14 cities in 13 countries of Europe. The 'City Protocol', created in 2013, intends to define a common systems view for cities of any size or type, and to embrace or develop protocols that will help innovators create – and deploy modern cities – cross-sectorial solutions that can connect and/or break city silos; its members are 33 cities around the world.

The criteria for membership in the aforementioned networks are either size (with preference for large cities), territorial or refer to the capital status of the city. Only capital cities and urban areas with a population of at least 1 million inhabitants may apply for a membership of 'Metropolis'. Cities (or metropolitan areas) which want to belong to EUROcites should be an important regional center with an international dimension, usually having a population of at least 250,000 inhabitants. The status of Megacities in the C40 can apply to any city with a population of 3 million or more, and/or metropolitan area with a population of 10 million or more, while the status of Innovator Cities can be claimed by one of the top 25 global cities, ranked according to their current GDP output. Any city can belong to ICLEI, 'City Protocol', OWHC, AVEC and 'Heritage Europe' regardless of its size. The criterion for accession to OWHC is fulfilled by those cities within which there are sites included on the UNESCO World Heritage List; while AVEC and 'Heritage Europe' are designed for historic cities and regions. UCCN membership can apply to cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development covering seven creative fields: crafts & folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, music and media arts, and its members are capital cities as well as large and medium cities. The city that wants to belong to EUniverCities must have a university or academic center, provided that the applicants are medium sized cities. Territorial restrictions, due to network programming, determine the accession to 'The MedCities Network' (only

cities from the Mediterranean basin may belong to it), 'Alliance in the Alps' (towns from Alpine states).

This is where the Cittaslow network stands out – the only international network targeting smaller cities (or towns), which do not have to meet demanding requirements connected with the character of the city or the capital. In the long run, with proper promotion and cooperation, participation in 'Cittaslow network' may provide member cities with a chance to appear on the regional or Europe map.

3. Cittaslow – the international network of small towns based on sustainable development

3.1. Cittaslow as a direction indicator of sustainable development

One of the main features – perhaps the most important – of modernity is the acceleration of time and the concentration of space; it is expressed by the free flow of ideas, services and human capital over a relatively short period in real time. Beside the main trend of this era of precedence of time over other values is an ever-growing 'Slow Movement'. Today, more clearly than a few years ago, this has had a significant impact on the culture, art and other areas of human activity. In addition to institutionalized organizations such as Slow Food, Cittaslow and Slow Money, there are other informal movements such as 'slow urbanism', 'slow design', 'slow photography', 'slow media', 'slow technology', 'slow science', 'slow education', 'slow marketing', 'slow travel', 'slow gardening', 'slow reading', 'slow fashion', 'slow goods', 'slow living', 'slow parenting', 'slow ageing', etc. Since 1999, when the mayors of four Italian cities extended the concept of slowness to lifestyle and the way the city was managed in order to preserve the cultural heritage of their cities as well as to protect the environment, the number of member cities has grown to 237 in 30 countries, of which up to 201 cities are in 20 European countries (as of August 2017). The association brings together small towns (with population less than 50,000 inhabitants), while membership is also permitted for international associations of cities as well as those municipalities which, due to their location, share common environmental, archaeological or cultural interests.

Mayors and local leaders of small towns strive to establish their position in the region, based on the positive (often-sparse) spatial and social aspects. Therefore, the fact that Poland – the country inhabited by rather not very optimistic people – is the second among 30 countries of the Cittaslow network (the founding Italy has 80 towns, while Poland has 27 towns) – is a kind of phenomenon, and positively contributes to the further development of this network in Poland as well as achieving tangible benefits resulting from its membership in this network. Even more, the year 2015 turned out to be a breakthrough in the history of the Polish Cittaslow movement. The association of 'Polish Cittaslow cities', established in that very year, brought together towns of the Cittaslow movement from the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship. It received from the Marshal of the voivodship a total of € 51.1 million from the 'Regional Operational Program of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship' for the years 2014-2020

towards a comprehensive revitalization of the towns belonging to this association under the 'Supra-local revitalization program of Cittaslow network'. This is an unprecedented world record success of Polish cities in the international Cittaslow network. As part of revitalization activities, many historic buildings and objects will be renovated (Zawadzka, 2017b, pp. 135-137). The implementation of revitalization projects can not only improve the quality of life of the inhabitants, but also increase the attractiveness of the towns, increase the tourist traffic and, therefore, increase the revenues of the towns, institutions and individual households.

According to the data on the demographic structure of European member cities, available as of August 2017, there is a clear correlation. The number of Cittaslow towns is inversely proportional to the number of their inhabitants. The majority of the towns have less than 5,000 inhabitants – 65 towns; the second group – from 5,001 to 10,000 inhabitants – 49 towns, and the last four groups with the highest number of inhabitants contain only two towns (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of inhabitants in European towns belonging to the Cittaslow network

	< 1,000	1,001-2,000	2,001-3,000	3,001-4,000	4,001-5,000	5,001-10,000	10,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,001-25,000	25,001-30,000	30,001-35,000	35,001-40,000	40,001-45,000	45,001-50,000	> 50,000	Total number of towns
Italy	6	7	8	8	6	25	9	3	6	2	1		1		1	83
Poland			3	1	3	4	8	3	4	1						27
Germany		1		1	3	3	2	3	4							17
Turkey						3	2	2	1	1	3	1			1	14
Netherlands						3		4	1	1	1					10
Spain	1		2	1		3		1								8
France	2	2	1	1	1											7
Belgium					1	2	1		1	1						6
Portugal							1		1	1	2	1				6
Great Britain				1		1	2							1		5
Norway		1		1		1		1								4
Austria						2	1									3
Cyprus				1		1	1									3
Denmark										1			1			2
Finland						1										1
Hungary														1		1
Iceland	1															1
Ireland					1											1
Sweden								1								1
Switzerland							1									1
Total number of towns	10	11	14	15	15	49	28	18	18	8	7	2	2	2	2	201

Source: Author's compilation

In 2012, the first conference of the International Association of Cittaslow was held in Brussels, with the European Parliament in participation; the conference aimed to present the Cittaslow as a movement towards improving the quality of life of the European community. During this conference, Zygmunt Bauman – sociologist, philosopher and the author of the concept of ‘liquid modernity’ – stated that Cittaslow is one of the world’s 18 forces capable of restoring the power of local communities. The development and incorporation of new cities into the Cittaslow movement in Europe unites nations that exchange experiences and, together, create a new quality of local life (Strzelecka, 2016, p. 31). Cittaslow is a ‘model of urban development that is an alternative to globalization, or corporate-centered development’ (Kopeć, 2012, p. 55). Moreover, it ‘may be certainly interpreted as an alternative vision of development, aimed towards preserving the precious local values’ (Grzelak-Kostulska, Hołowiecka and Kwiatkowski, 2011, p. 191).

Cittaslow, now almost twenty years after its creation, is experiencing a renaissance, which can be seen from both the yearly growing number of member cities and the interest of researchers (e.g. geographers, urbanists, anthropologists and sociologists) exploring this phenomenon. Some of the reasons for this success are: increasing rivalry of today’s fast-paced, consumptive and often unreflective lifestyle; the shallowness of relations between people built mainly via social media or through the uniformity of products and services. The idea promoted by Cittaslow is to ensure the possibility of meeting those needs that are not possible readily available in big cities. The slower and more attentive daily life creates space for strengthening and building real social bonds, resulting in grassroots initiatives in order to improve the quality of life in a small city. Mazur-Belzyt (2014, p. 41) rightly points out that Cittaslow city residents have a generally underestimated social bond as well as the ability to cooperate, which results from a deep sense of belonging to the place where they live.

The uniqueness of interpersonal relations (which shall be further discussed later in this article) is emphasized by the Cittaslow residents themselves, as well as by the inhabitants of other small towns that do not belong to the Cittaslow movement. According to the opinion of one inhabitant of Zamość (a Polish city with nearly 65,000 residents, where the Old Town was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1992): people are much closer here. Not in the physical sense, although it is also true that you can go around the city on foot. However, people here are rather closer to each other – and this is the reason why people have more in common with each other. Perhaps, because it is much harder to be fraudulent in a city of this size. You would really need to have the guts to cheat in such a small community (Springer, 2016, p. 36). It is important to emphasize that small towns are also rich in other unique values characteristic for Cittaslow cities, which are unattainable in large cities: in terms of authenticity and sensuality. The inhabitants of Cittaslow cities realize that, unlike in the metropolis, in their cities, they can really live without having to pretend to be someone they are not. This is because Cittaslow ‘replaces the seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing and touching experiences brought by global capitalism with the authentic

ones' (Turkseven Dogrusoy and Dalgakiran, 2011, p. 132) and experiencing these cities can be done 'sensorially rather than simply economically, intellectually or emotionally' (Pink, 2008, p. 105).

All researchers dealing with the idea of Cittaslow movement emphasize that under the programming exercise of the association, sustainable development is the basis for the direction in which Cittaslow town should develop. Knox claims that the aim of Cittaslow movement 'is to foster the development of places that enjoy a robust vitality based on good food, healthy environments, sustainable economies and the seasonality and traditional rhythms of community life' (Knox, 2005, p. 6). Both Mayer and Knox believe that 'Slow Cities are places where citizens and local leaders pay attention to local history and utilize the distinct local context to develop in better and more sustainable ways' (Mayer and Knox, 2006, p. 322) stressing that 'sustainable urban development falls into the realm of alternative urban development agendas; its goal is to protect a city's environmental assets while at the same time fostering profitable and fair economic development' (Mayer and Knox, 2006, p. 324). Gruszecka-Tieśluk claims that the approach followed by the Cittaslow movement is a response to the need for change due to the incompatibility of past development ideas focused primarily on economic growth, without regard to environmental issues and the quality of life of individuals (Gruszecka-Tieśluk, 2013, p. 338). Hatipoglu believes that 'many small towns around the world are searching [for] ways to achieve sustainable development. Cittaslow promises to maintain small-town distinctiveness by protecting the local heritage, slowing the pace of time and increasing livability, while supporting the principles of sustainable development' (Hatipoglu, 2015, p. 33).

In order to join the network (apart from the size criterion), the city needs to meet a minimum of 50% of the 72 criteria grouped into seven categories; fulfilling at least one criterion in each category. The detailed rules of membership are defined by the 'International Statute of Cittaslow Towns'. These categories are as follows: (a) energy and environmental policy; (b) infrastructure policy; (c) urban quality policy; (d) agricultural, tourism and craft policy; (e) hospitality, awareness and education policy; (f) social inclusion policy; and (g) partnership policy.

The analysis of the criteria indicates that 89% of the criteria directly relate to the principles of sustainable development – the fundamental concept of city management. The remaining 11% of the criteria refer to the principles of sustainable development indirectly, because it deals with the rules of promotion and interoperability within the Cittaslow network (e.g. use of Cittaslow logo on letter-headed paper and website). Among the criteria directly related to the principles of sustainable development, there are those referring to environmental requirements (e.g. air and water quality conservation; selective municipal solid waste collection; public energy production from renewable sources; reduction of public light pollution; development of organic farming). There are also criteria that aim at supporting local products (e.g. protection of handmade and labelled artisan production; taste education and promotion of the use of local products, if possible organic, in the catering industry and private

consumption; determination of zones for the sale of local products). Particular attention should be paid to criteria regarding the development of the city using the latest technological advances (e.g. harmonious planning of alternative mobility for private cars; use of 'ICT' in the development of interactive services for citizens and tourists; promotion of private and public sustainable urban planning: passive house, building materials, etc.). It is important, in so far as the Cittaslow member cities do not aspire to create urban open-air museums, but to skillfully use the modern technology in a way that does not interfere with the historical spatial structure and local traditions, e.g. in Orvieto, noiseless electric buses go along the medieval streets (Honoré, 2011, p. 99). Furthermore, city authorities support initiatives geared towards improving the quality of life of residents and the aesthetics of urban space as well as preserving local traditions. For example, the Town Council in Bra issues grants for the renovation of buildings, which requires using the region's distinctive red tiles and honeycomb plaster (Honoré, 2011, p. 99). Presenza, Abbate and Perano reflecting upon the main reasons that led the local leaders to join Cittaslow, point 'the need to respond to the increasing requirements of sustainable development, a sustainable governance style would be most appropriate for a local authority seeking to improve its public value production' (Presenza, Abbate and Perano 2015, p. 42). Kwiatek-Soltys and Mainet believe that 'fulfilling the long list of requirements makes the local authorities think carefully about the current situation and the prognosis for the development of a town' (Kwiatek-Soltys and Mainet, 2015, p. 130).

The positive completion of the certification process and obtaining the status of Cittaslow is just the beginning of the implementation of the principles of sustainable development. City members commit themselves to abide certain rules and to respect local specificity as well as meeting further criteria that are subject to monitoring, such as cyclical verification of the criteria by authorized personnel from the Cittaslow network. This is important in the context of the actual implementation of the adopted course of action for sustainable development, and the continuous improvement of standards in this area.

3.2. Cittaslow as an activator of sustainable tourism

Provincial towns are often overlooked in tourist guides, and, because of their size, are not included on the regional maps. Only a few of them are capable of promoting themselves based on the status of the spa or the place of birth of world-famous scientists, culture or the arts. That is why they benefit from the promotion of their local strengths (mainly traditional local foods, historic monuments or active forms of spending time: kayaking, biking, and hiking in valuable natural areas) through social media. The rules governing the global sensation-based media make news about small towns to appear most often in a negative and disingenuous context for tourists. The effective self-promotion used by the Swiss Bergün also known as Bravuogn (a town of 500 inhabitants and located 40 km from Davos) is a rare exception. Information about Bergün broke into the world media due to the ban on photography set up at

the beginning of the tourism season of 2017. It was said that it has been scientifically proven that photos of beautiful places make the viewers unhappy because they cannot be there. Therefore, Bergün invited people to admire the view, while at the same time set a symbolic fine of CHF 5 for breaking the ban; the penalty money will be used to protect the Alpine landscape in the Graubunden Valley. This form of promotion, which actually evoked extreme opinions, has yielded tangible results – people's interest in Bergün has increased rapidly, however, it should be assumed that it was incidental and short-lived.

The socio-spatial conditions of small towns make them increasingly popular destinations for tourists traveling in the rapidly growing global trend called 'sustainable tourism', 'green tourism' or 'slow tourism' as an alternative to the 'all-inclusive', touring trips or accommodation in a 5-star hotel. This form of relaxation may seem to be archaic and old fashioned; however, it is a response to today's fast-paced and consumer-centered nature of globalization. It is also the implementation of sustainability goals – the World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as 'tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities' (United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization, 2005, p. 12). Revenues from tourism, instead of going to global chains of hotels, restaurants, or stores, go to local manufacturers, plus the environmental dimension associated with the short supply chain that limits fuel combustion and the consequent impact on the environment. Park and Kim claim that 'sustainable tourism through community empowerment is likely to be achieved through Cittaslow, as this concept utilizes local skills and knowledge as fundamental resources for community development, and puts the community at the center of decision-making process in relation to the improvement of the quality of life across diverse social and environmental dimensions' (Park and Kim, 2015, p. 14). Therefore 'changing lifestyle trends, value systems, and consumption practices suggest that a growing number of tourists will seek the type of travel experience that Slow Tourism provides' (Lowry and Lee, 2011, p. 10).

An appropriate promotion emphasizing the benefits of sustainable tourism can increase the attractiveness of tourism of small towns. However, in spite of the fact that more revenue, as a derivative of increased tourist traffic, comes into the town's budget, institutions and individual households, the local leaders have stressed that they are not interested in mass-market travel, but that they would rather expect to have informed and interested tourists traveling individually or in small groups. Honoré, documenting the development of one of the first four Cittaslow towns – the Italian Bra – notes that Cittaslow is partly a victim of its own success: the promise of a slow life attracts tourists and other visitors, and they bring along haste, noise and hustle (Honoré, 2011, p. 102). In the long run, the described case study is as well possible in other towns of Cittaslow. However, taking into account the current socio-economic conditions of these towns and the current pace of their tourist development, the

concerns about a repetition of the Bra case – in the vast majority of Cittaslow towns – seem to be premature (although not impossible).

The travel guides to world metropolises: Melbourne, Sydney, London and Dublin, such as: 'Go Slow France' and 'Go Slow England & Wales' and the series 'The Slow Guides: 'live more, fret less' strengthen the trend of sustainable tourism, and at the same time manifest nostalgia for a slower pace of existence, rooted in the 'Slow Movement'. It is worth emphasizing that developing countries such as Georgia, Albania, Romania or Moldova will be (and already are) a significant group of beneficiaries of sustainable tourism. Instead of global hotel networks, restaurants or shops (apart from cultural, social and natural values of their regions) they offer tourists the opportunity to meet silence and calmness – the rarest goods of the modern western world.

3.3. Cittaslow as an instrument for the awareness of having endogenous capital

The certification process for accession to Cittaslow membership can serve not only the leaders in determining the direction of sustainable development, but also the inhabitants as an instrument for raising awareness about the merits of their city, both in terms of material heritage, the natural environment and social capital. Therefore, 'certifications, such as Cittaslow, may represent suitable instruments to stimulate and activate strategic pathways aimed at achieving more sustainable development. In this sense, certification represents an appropriate support for small towns because it allows a check-up of the destination to be carried out in terms of strengths and weaknesses in all the strategic areas identified by the Cittaslow movement. The certification assessment also contributes to providing a framework within which to develop strategies for improving visibility and attractiveness' (Presenza, Abbate and Perano, 2015, p. 56).

In particular, there are small towns located near metropolis (or other large cities), which serve as workplace for the inhabitants. A big city acts like a magnet. It is extremely difficult for small towns to stay and function well against the development of large cities. The city officials of these small towns face a particularly difficult challenge: how, in a situation where the competition with a metropolitan city is impossible, to create such a vision of development that will keep residents from emigrating as well as to attract tourists. It seems, however, that 'the peripheral location and falling behind the latest trends in the global economy, although at first glance seems to be a big disadvantage, with the right strategy development, full use of own resources, as well as significant involvement of residents, may lead to strengthening their identity and enjoying what the "province" brings' (Mazur-Belzyt, 2014, p. 45). A significant case study of a town where the local identity is cultivated and social bonds are strengthened is Polish Nowy Dwór Gdański located in the north of the country about 40 km southeast of Gdańsk, inhabited by just a little over 10,000 inhabitants, and a member of the Cittaslow network since 2014. Every month, numerous events for children, young people and adults are organized by the mayor and as well by local leaders. The aim is to promote knowledge about the difficult history of post-war

settlers, the Vistula Delta landscape, historical monuments and culinary heritage of the region (Zawadzka, 2017a, pp. 83-86). Also Meldorf, a German town, located about 80 km northwest of Hamburg and inhabited by less than 7,300 inhabitants, deserves a special attention. Meldorf joined the Cittaslow network in 2015 – the jubilee celebrations of the 750th anniversary of the city. The mayor of the city was the initiator of this accession and the chief coordinator of the process. It was on her initiative that the certification process to be covered by the media in order to show the uniqueness of Meldorf: regional uniqueness instead of global standardization, and quality of life instead of urban sprawl. On February 25, 2015, having adopted the resolution expressing the will to join the Cittaslow association, an announcement was published in the local press informing the residents about the possibility of sending a short sentence to the editorial office. People were required to complete the following sentence 'Meldorf is a city worth living in because ...'; the opinions were published over a month. Residents of all ages (from 37 to 87 years, however, not all participants gave their ages) expressed their opinions, including representatives of various professions and functions, such as Mayor of town/woman (in Table 2 her statement is marked as number 1); school secretary, female/51 years old (2); inactive office worker, currently editor, author, journalist, female/60 years old (3); resident, female (4); inactive evangelical pastor, male/76 years old (5); inactive teacher, male/75 years old (6); seller at the local weekly market, growing spices, herbal lover and beekeeper, male/52 years old (7); teacher, female/53 years old (8); therapist, female/70 years old (9); chairman of the municipality council, female (10); tourist office worker, female/51 years old (11); visual arts artist, male/50 years old (12); a man staying at home/50 years old (13); architect, female/44 years old (14); inactive pastor, male/87 years old (15); resident, female (16); a specialist in movement therapy, female/37 years old (17); pensioner, female/79 years old (18); inactive teacher, female/70 years old (19); physiotherapist, female/62 years old (20); clerk, male/61 years old (21); customs officer and city guide, female (22); writer, female (23).

Among the opinions expressed by the residents, strong local bonds was the value indicated most often (in 16 out of 23 opinions), followed by the residents' involvement in the life of the city (in 10 opinions). In their statements, the inhabitants also paid attention to the specifics of the location, the so-called *genius loci*, urban-architectural structure of the city and landscape values of its surroundings. The historical background of the city, the sense of belonging to a place, the benefits of migration to Meldorf, the quality of its local products, and the security assured in this local community have also been appreciated (Table 2).

Here are the three full selected statements that show the uniqueness of the town and the attitude of its inhabitants: '...you can feel a real life here, not just an artificial 'lifestyle', because the local people are able to combine progress with tradition. They do not blindly go after every trend. This, in turn, leaves room for daily affection, which I can experience so often here. In such an environment, I feel safe, like at home. For this reason I moved from the metropolis of Hamburg to Cittaslow Meldorf' (3);

Table 2: Endogenous capital of the city of Meldorf indicated by the local residents

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
Strong social bonds		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Grassroots initiatives	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓					
Genius loci	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓		✓			✓				✓				✓	
Urban and architectural structure	✓				✓			✓	✓		✓											✓	✓	✓
Landscape values		✓			✓				✓	✓												✓	✓	
Historical background	✓					✓																✓	✓	
Sense of belonging to a place	✓	✓			✓						✓													
Benefits of migration to Meldorf			✓						✓								✓							✓
Quality of local products										✓				✓		✓					✓			
Security			✓	✓			✓																	
Names of streets and squares						✓																		

Source: Author's compilation

'...I can participate in the life of my town. Social initiative is welcomed and desirable. Just as constructive criticism, which helps to make Meldorf a town worth living in. Among the circle of people involved in the Cittaslow movement, I have met people who are not afraid of discussing important issues and working on such areas as sustainable development, environmental protection, promotion of regional products and regional markets or social cohesion as well as the integration of new citizens. That is what I liked from the very beginning and I am sure that Cittaslow is the right way for the city and for us residents' (16); '...this is a place where human life still matters. People look into each other's eyes here. They greet each other and are interested in the fate of their co-inhabitants. People stick together and help each other. A huge number of lectures, meetings with various authors, concerts, theater performances and several other events show the great commitment and openness of the people. That is why I moved here with my daughter from Hamburg two and a half years ago' (17).

The functioning and the image of Meldorf is a result of the synergistic cooperation of local authorities and residents who are equally committed to improving the quality of life and the aesthetic view of the city. According to the Mayor of Meldorf: it is not so much of doing something for others that measures the quality of life, but rather to do something together with others. The organization of over 130 cultural and sport events in the jubilee year is a significant expression of the people's involvement in the life of the town; only a dozen of such events were held under the auspices of the Town Hall, while others took place thanks to the grassroots initiatives. Moreover, as a result of these grassroots initiatives, the free 'Meldorf on foot' mini-guide was designed and printed using private funds. It is available in three languages: German, English and Danish, and available at the tourist information desk. Another example of a grassroots initiative is a wooden orange snail (inspired by the Cittaslow logo) situated at the square in front of the Town Hall. It is a symbol of support for the ideology of the Cittaslow movement and the town's affiliation in this movement. It is im-

portant to emphasize that the understanding of the Cittaslow idea by the inhabitants of Meldorf is a derivative of the great involvement of the town's mayor in disseminating and clarifying the meaning of the Cittaslow idea, which, in her view, helps to present itself outside in a conscious and clear way.

4. Concluding remarks

Nowadays, cities face the need to seek development strategies that will both preserve and strengthen endogenous capital, and at the same time create a foundation for their promotion, which will allow them to be important points on a tourist map of the region or Europe. Cittaslow's membership, conditioned by the fulfillment of its criteria (the implementation of the principles of sustainable development) not only determines the direction of a city's development, but also Cittaslow's 'label can have a powerful marketing effect' (Mayer and Knox, 2006, p. 331). Membership in the global network can trigger a scale effect as positive impression of a tourist visiting one of 237 Cittaslow cities in the world may be an incentive to visit other ones in different countries. It turns out that in the age of globalization and acceleration provincialism can be quite attractive, and peripheral location, away from the tourist's routes, can make small towns the target for tourists seeking alternative forms of leisure that fit in with the global trend called 'sustainable tourism', 'green tourism' or 'slow tourism'. What is more, the cities of Cittaslow are 'using their membership to advertise the virtues of their towns to outside audiences such as tourists and businesses. The more substantive goals of environmental protection, economic localism, and sustainability satisfy grassroots environmental groups and the locally rooted business community' (Mayer and Knox, 2006, p. 331).

The experience of research trips to twelve Cittaslow cities mentioned in the introduction shows that Meldorf is a model city of Cittaslow. All of the studied towns are characterized by unique urban, architectural (although oftentimes the state of conservation of the architectural objects requires corrective action) and landscaping values as well as the hospitality and friendliness of the inhabitants. However, Meldorf, with all the above-mentioned values, stands out against other towns in terms of being sustainable cities, respecting local traditions and history, and its inhabitants are heavily involved in numerous grassroots activities for their local community. Moreover, the exemplary process of certification has created added value, which has made people to realize the endogenous capital of the city, both in material terms and in strong social bonds.

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