CAN THE SLOW CITY (CITTASLOW) MOVEMENT OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY?: A CRITICAL APPROACH

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Abstract

Today we are witnessing stunning changes and innovations in proportion and simultaneous with the turnover rate of technology on a global scale. In particular, advances made in communication and transportation technologies are removing all borders and although not the end of history, it is asserted that the end of spaces has been reached. In this context, everything located at the other end of the world and considered to be inaccessible start to become near us and lose their meaning. Undoubtedly certain gains and advantages are achieved from every progress. However, losses are not quite realized as long as achievement of gains and advantages continue. For example, with globalization on one hand the world is starting to turn into a "global village" - as expressed by McLuhan - where everyone is informed of one another through communication and transportation technologies and on the other hand the world is becoming a place where different and unique cultures, beliefs, lifestyles and experiences start to melt in the pot of power based on technological progress. In this process being successful and strong are held to be equivalent with "being fast" while on the other hand deprivation and failure are held to be equivalent with "slowness, sluggishness or calmness". Accordingly, those who wish not to be included in weak, deprived and failed categories try to catch the rhythm of a life based on speed and are thus concerned with catching up with everything and everyone by acting with a sense of "not being late or lacking" in the face of changes or innovations. Here fastness has positive whereas slowness has negative connotations.

However, it should not be forgotten that every event or conceptualization should be evaluated in its own context. For example, when someone is told that her/his tumor has made considerable progress, this is not actually a good thing. The same relation could be established between global capital accumulation processes and global warming. In short, action is taken with a sense of drifting, speed itself could enter a phase where we could witness the end of ourselves and the world. In such case, being fast not only does not bring along success, the good and power, but also not guarantee such positive value attributions. Hence, today we also witness many people becoming part of a fast lifestyle by mercilessly acting with the worry and concern of continuously "being late" to something. These people are actually living and acting on behalf of others and are thus late to themselves and their selfhoods within the routine of daily life. For example, it is possible to observe this rush in the name of not being late, from eating habits to greeting, fashion or superficial relations. In such case, we encounter negative cases where being fast is not always a good thing and thus makes sustainability unsustainable.In this sense, this study primarily focuses on slowness and the slow city (Cittaslow) movement and then discusses whether these can constitute an alternative option for urban sustainability. According, this study takes into consideration and makes a comparative analysis of global successful and unsuccessful slow city model practices.

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1. Introduction

The issue of slowness and slow city movements are being frequently expressed due to the problematic effects of globalization. As known, in the globalizing world everything is based on fastness and the ability to predict the future. However, despite so much preplanning, programming, calculation and rational arrangements, we are faced with unpredictable, incalculable and out-of-control irrational developments more than predictable things. For example, formation of queues in places with self-services and automatic toll collection systems, is not rational but is irrational. In other words, every move or every step taken within a system for being fast ends up with being unsystematic. Hence, although new opportunities and riches are created today with globalization, cases are encountered where much more disorder, chaos, unpredictability, deprivation and poverty are experienced. And this paves the way for questioning speed and fastness.

In this context, being fast and thus trying to sustain a lifestyle based on speed is regarded as a hazard in itself. For example, those who participated in the process of globalization with a sense of drifting are mercilessly competing with one another in the name of falling behind the times. However, when this competition spreads to all fields of social life and is based on success, we are starting to encounter ideal-types acting with a sense of dissatisfaction. And this means burning, demolishing, destroying, in short, consuming everything in the name of getting satisfaction and reaching this aim. Therefore, wanting to be fast and live a life based on success, together with dissatisfaction means making all sustainable things unsustainable.

At this exact point, those who wish not to be consumed together with what they consume start to act slow rather than fast in the name of living life fully in a sustainable world and enter into deeper philosophical thoughts. The slow movement, which first started as Slow Food, a reaction against global fast food chains, later developed as slow city (Cittaslow) and then spread all over the world. However, today there are unsuccessful cases in addition to successful cases around the world which characterize themselves as slow cities based on certain criteria. In this sense this study focuses on whether slow cities (Cittaslow) can constitute an alternative option with representation and sampling capability in the sustainability of cities.

2. Globalization and the Emergence of the Slow Movement

The incident of globalization causes varying impacts on countries with varying levels of development. For example, today while advanced countries have no difficulty turning crises caused by globalization into opportunities, this issue constitutes a very significant problem for underdeveloped and developing countries. Especially underdeveloped and developing countries that fail to keep pace with the global-scale rate of change and to establish new alternative standards, become extensions of strong countries. In such case, with the impact of globalization we face on one hand countries that have the potential to topple over or grind whatever they face and make a difference, and on the other hand countries that lose all their distinctions, uniqueness or local characteristics during this process.

In this context, according to Waters globalization not only refers to revival of difference but also characterizes a complex level of mixture of differentiated tendencies with homogenized tendencies [1]. Hence, in discussing globalization Robertson also separately mentions the concept of glocalization especially in the formation of space. This is because globalization on one hand includes regional separations at the concrete level, but on the other hand includes the local gathering of global flows in certain places or spaces [2]. However, the gathering of these global flows in certain places or spaces without any rules, barriers or borders usually result in the loss of the uniqueness of the local or traditional.

The deepest meaning that can be inferred from such an encounter in the process of globalization can thus be said to be the uncertain, lawless and independent nature of world affairs; the lack of a center, a control table, a board of directors or an administrative office. In other words, globalization in Jowitt's new-world disorder. According to Bauman it is not possible to eliminate this disorder. The reason for this is that unlike the past today there is no proud locality left that consciously raise its voice and thus make itself heard against problems the social order and humanity [3]. After a while this issue initiates discussions about what could be the alternative to and resist the problems caused by living everything in "online" speed.

As known, being fast characterizes the better and the more successful and also includes the aim to complete and conclude multiple tasks simultaneously. However, it cannot be asserted that anything that is done fast has higher quality than a single task performed with focus. Hence, according to findings from research, a very small number of persons can be

successful in performing multiple tasks in a professional and high-quality manner [4]. When interpreted in the reverse order this expression concludes that a majority fails. In this case, today, when network relations are experienced, slowness seems to have priority over fastness and thus, stands out as a positive qualifier for certain words or names.

What is meant by being or acting slow is controlling the rhythms of our own lives rather than being simple or easy. The issue of struggle or resistance is our right to determine our own pace. It means taking time to create a new task especially in the event of a high-paced life. Accordingly, slowness depicts positive characteristics that replace common fast characteristics [5]. In this context, it can be said that slowness is a philosophy that endeavors to add maturity rather than growth and quality rather than quantity into both human relations and business life and depth of thought and mind rather than speed into life quality [6]. New skills are learned and something more than a choice of lifestyle is reached through slowness with this philosophy. Attention is especially drawn to a resistance movement that emphasizes the value of things that cannot be purchased or sold, against the ability to purchase everything in the current consumption culture [7].

The McDonald's restaurant chain has a significant impact on the emergence of slowness as a philosophical grassroots movement. This is because this restaurant chain constitutes a standardization model named as "McDonaldization". This model is also based on efficiency, calculability, predictability and regular experiences [8]. In this context, slowness refers to a struggle and resistance against brands that know no global bounds, in the name of emphasizing, preserving and clinging the local, the unique and the distinct. "A protest demonstration by a group led by journalist Carlo Petrini at the opening of the McDonald's restaurant as in Roma Piazza di Spagna (Spanish Stairs) in Italy in 1986" [9] is especially referred in how slowness assumed the form of a grassroots movement. Rather than taken, consumed or eaten foods, the protested issue here was the assault against individual or social identities and tendencies.

It should not be forgotten than the form of eating, as also stated by Fischler, is not only the identity of a society or community, but also reveals its diversity, hierarchy and organization. In other words, members of a certain society or community are biologically, psychologically, socially and culturally constructed by the foods they chose [10]. In this sense, it could be stated that slowness and the slowness movement is a defensive expression of a society or community that feels threatened and does not wish to lose its uniqueness and local differences. Adoption of slowness against fastness by this movement

should not give the impression that it is closed against innovation or change. This is because resisting change and innovation is also very important as is being open thereto. This issue manifests itself as "the conservative nature of change" [11].

Then, considering the conservative nature of change together with slowness, reference is not made to a conservatism, but on the contrary, to changes and innovations with alternative sustainable stability against the existing. In this sense, slowness, the slow movement, slow food, slow eating and slow city can be considered and regarded as an innovation that can sustain difference and diversity as a space and feeling against the discomfort felt against standardization.

3. The Slow City (Cittaslow) Movement and Sustainability

The slowness that started with Slow Food in time manifested itself in the food industry and cities. The Cittaslow movement was first created in October 1999 by Bra (Francesco Guida), Orvieto (Stefano Cimicchi) and Positano (DomenicoMarrone), mayors of three Italian towns, in accordance with the vision of Paolo Saturnini, the former mayor of Greve in Chianti [12]. In time the movement not only turned into sustaining a high-quality life in a sustainable city and environment based on certain criteria, obtaining a Cittaslow certificate itself also became a prestige throughout the world.

Slow Food and food are the bases of the Cittaslow movement. However, food is only one part of the whole equation. Only the philosophical slowness of Slow Food is considered in Cittaslow and this slowness is adopted in a manner to determine the framework and course of alternative urban policies to be implemented. The slowness in Cittaslow is more related to the consideration to allocate time for quality. Thus, Cittaslow not only preserves the unique features of the city but also both turns the city into a better environment and offers a high life quality for the habitants. For this purpose, alternative environmental policies are developed to fulfill the required and sufficient terms of Cittaslow, focus is put on awareness, infrastructure and design is prioritized, environmentally-friendly technologies are developed, training courses are organized for tourism and high-quality hospitality, certain centers and routes acquire the Cittaslow mark and significant effort is made to raise consciousness in the public in this regard [13]. The basic aim is to sustain life with a high-quality stability in a sustainable environment. Components constituting sustainability are taken into consideration for this.

The concept of stability has four significant components in the basic sense. Futurity, the first of these components means being concerned from today for intergenerational and future generations' welfare. The second, equity, includes socially just intergenerational distribution of economic benefits and burdens. Global environmentalism, the third component defines the global aspects of ecological problems related to the consumption or utilization of natural capital. Biodiversity, the fourth and last component takes into consideration the preservation and preservation methods of biological diversity in the ecological system [14]. When these components are fully fulfilled and material production is started to be rejected beyond need, all life between humans and the nature can be expected to be sustained with high-quality through strong mutual bonds and connections [15].

In this context, the continuity of sustainability depends on carrying to the future its components in a balanced stability. Otherwise, in the event of distancing from a balance stability between the components, it is inevitable for two types of costs, "consumption of resources" and "pollution" to emerge in connection with the enlargement of the scale of the economy that does not grow and has borders within a certain ecosystem. And this is the proof that a non-economic growth creates poverty rather than prosperity by destroying ecological capital, which is more valuable than human-made capital. The important issue here is the requirement that this output amount does not exceed the capacity of the ecosystem to absorb wastes and renew the consumed resources. With the achievement of this balance "the economy itself also becomes ecologically sustainable" [16].

In this sense, Cittaslows offer a suitable solution for cities and towns who wish to plan and sustain their current identities in a holistic framework. This solution does not remain at the individual local level but is also carried to a different aspect through the establishment of new relations through networks based on the local powers of member cities of CittaSlow. Thus, Cittaslow emerges as a network both with a common identity and existing in a level different from geographically defined relations. In other words, Cittaslow both uses local identity and sense of place to create the strong aspects of each city and also takes advantage of globalization for this purpose. Accordingly, it can be said that Cittaslow is a framework for better understanding the role of the identity and opportunities of a place. In this context, Cittaslows focus on becoming places only for inhabitants and thus become candidates for the best and most prestigious implementation. Therefore, Cittaslow must be a place for living better in order to sustain life with higher quality and standards. For this

purpose, Cittaslowsare not only places where the defined sustainable balances are preserved, but also become wonderful places for living [17].

Hence, in connection with rapid growth and consumption Cittaslow is today emerging as an alternative for sustaining the unsustainability of life, nature and the environment. Successful examples realized both on a local level and through global network relations are observed in this regard. Increase in the number of such examples is also drawing the attention of local governments, municipalities, foundations, associations and development unions and thus, making the efforts to sustain life in a more habitable world, more motivational and functional. In short, the Cittaslow movement is not restraint only to small cities or towns on a local level but is also starting to become a valid option for large cities.

4. Successful Slow City (Cittaslow) Examples

In the recent years some cities are arranging their potential resources both in accordance with the content of Cittaslow and also struggling to certify such arrangement through global network relations. In short, through the certificate they aim and desire to draw attention to the fact that an alternative level of urbanization can be realized through the Cittaslow mark on a both local and global scale.

In accordance with this aim and desire, examining the network relations that continuously find new followers on both local and global scale, it is witnessed that towns that guarantee to keep a population of less than fifty thousand people and that great effort is made to improve the life quality of housing habitants. In such effort it is possible to strongly observe both the design and implementation of an environmental policy as stated in the acceptance criteria for achieving suitable natural state [18]. The most significant proof of this is the ever-increasing number of cities participating in the Cittaslow network. The general framework of the cities participating in the Cittaslow network consist of social development, struggle against poverty, creation of productive employment, social integration, public health, environmentally sustainable land use, construction of habitable human settlements, nature-friendly alternative energy use, sustainability of transportation and communication systems, balancing of settlements in rural regions, development of disaster prevention, reduction and preparation and post-disaster rehabilitation abilities, preservation of historical and cultural assets, green development, bio-territorialization and ecological development of urban economies [19].

Cittaslows draw attention with their habitants' resistance against an agenda where development in the neo-liberal sense is not equal in terms of business-focus. In this regard the Cittaslows in Spain give important information about the meaning of being glocal. It is especially observed that cities became "clone cities" and were not overwhelmed by the pressure of globalization and are taking a different route unique to Spain. As known, preserving traditional (autochthonous) production is one of the categories required for excellence in the practice of Cittaslow. Cittaslow requires its members to participate in the tradition of local restaurants, preserved structures and school cafeteria. Therefore developing "education and nutrition programs in schools in cooperation with slow foods" is encouraged. For example, rice is at the center of the local food lines at Pals and 20 families including the mayor make a living and earning out of business processes related to planting and grinding rice using a method developed in the 15th century. The interesting point here is that civil servants in charge of Cittaslow focus on improving sustainable development in the progress of the city and utilize technology as a tool for ensuring local integration. Benefit is made from this tool for life quality rather than efficiency and growth. This benefit is achieved through two means in Cittaslows in Spain. In the first stage towns achieve a marketing and branding perspective and in the second stage steps are taken through the validity of local cultures and values. In certain cases, these must also be supplemented with resistances established by current policies and structured environment. For example, habitants of Lekeitio state that they have "neither the space neither the intention to develop" large supermarkets. The important point here is to make the local brand consciousness that is created with nature-friendly technologies, functional for their own use-values to realize the aims of Cittaslow [20].

Cittaslows thus also offer the means to plan and manage local government objectives in a more sustainable manner [21]. The activities executed by ecological municipalities and the agricultural development corporations also provide a very important opinion in this regard. For example, the town of Övertornea with a population of six thousand, located in northern Sweden won the municipality of the year award in the mid-1980s. A "win-win" relation is being established between the nature and the society in this town. The town habitants have observed that by establishing such a relation, making ecology-oriented investments shall have positive economic impact. Habitants of Övertornea have adopted the title of "eco-municipality" to define the transformation they initiated. The secret of this success is broad participation. Habitants of Övertornea have undertaken the task of developing their

community and established the city that they desired. These new enterprises include farming, beekeeping, fish farms, inexpensive husbandry and eco-tourism enterprises. It can be said that the story of Övertornea's transformation spread to the whole country within a few years and led to approximately 3300 agricultural development groups inspired from this story, to create a nation-wide development and movement where they had a say. This issue contributed to the development of similar eco-communities also in Norway, Denmark and Finland in the early 1990s. All these developments, as a result of the cooperation established among Scandinavian eco-cities and eco-towns reach a peak with the presentation of a joint eco-community declaration at the 1992 United Nations Rio Sustainable Development Summit. The issues expressed in this declaration also constituted a model for the "local agenda 21". Today there are more than seventy thousand eco-municipalities, around one third of the total, in Sweden. Another example similar to eco-municipality is the agricultural development corporation (ADC). The importance of this corporation comes from its achievement of the national environmental award "Blue Planet Award" in 2007 with the "A preservation and welfare alternative for increasing diversity in Southeastern Colombia in accordance with principles of human-scale development" project. Additionally, the corporation also organized three international seminars with 250 participants mostly from Latin American countries starting with the 1990s, in 1996, 1998 and 2000. Dreams about the future were mostly shared in the seminars. Participants making presentations in the seminars described themselves both as "dream designers" and explained the dreams they designed [22].

Thus, each local difference began to gain the identity of becoming a role model to create awareness on a global scale. In order to ensure that this identity is strengthened and made sustainable in the case of Cittaslow, it must strictly be integrated with ecological villages regarded as life-support units and rings in their own right [23]. Considering Cittaslows, it could be stated that such integration has the possibility of decreasing external dependencies, minimizing ecological footprint, ensuring food safety, eliminate food alienation and establish a brand value and identity through geographic marking of the product.

5. Discussion

Conditionings focused on consumption-based growth and exchange value continuously stand out in the discussions on whether Cittaslows can constitute an alternative against the

unsustainability of current cities. Additionally, each of the conditionings is associated with capital accumulation processes. In such case, it is emphasized that Cittaslows themselves are unsustainable. As the reason for this, examples where places acquiring the Cittaslow mark usually integrate with capital accumulation processes through network relations and become an extension of monopolistic powers.

The hazard that emerges here is first the instrumentalization of the Cittaslow certificate for increasing the market shares of products, starting to regard Cittaslow itself as an instrument and this process preparing a suitable basis for standardization. However, the Cittaslow movement also means a struggle and resistance against standardization. At this point criticisms are stated that Cittaslows "sustain development against globalization from the base in a fair and authentic manner, how they shall be able to re-discover a continuous economic growth and consumerism with a place culture, and preserve their own identities, roots and values" [24]. There is a truth to this criticism. This is because the bearing capacity is highly exceeded in places where production and consumption are carried out more than needed, based on exchange value. And this means that communities established with good-faith for sustaining ecological diversity and their places go bankrupt.

Hence, the fact that only 17% of tropical forests have remained in Costa Rica reveals the extent of this bankruptcy [25]. The point attempted to be explained here is how a movement can easily degenerate when it goes out of its founding purpose and objectives. Another important issue regarding the Cittaslow movement is whether it constitutes an alternative to capitalism. First, the Cittaslow movement faces and resists the serial production of development countries and large cities. However, although the Cittaslow movement is not fully against capitalism, it suggests to provide us a life line where capitalism can be made more sustainable. And this suggestion includes a slow capitalism that permits slow and sure steps for the economy against global capitalism [26]. When the principles of the Cittaslow movement are adopted and turned into rules of life, prospects for a sustainable future and city can always remain. And this turns the Cittaslow movement into an alternative option against current urban developments.

Another significant issue that stands out in the discussions on Cittaslows is the problem of fabric. As known, the Cittaslow movement includes a strong Italian identity. Although this strong identity does not constitute a problem within the European culture, outside Europe examples draw attention which misinterpret the criteria of Cittaslow and prevent its success. For example, in New Zealand on one hand success is requested from the action

plans for Cittaslow, however serious concerns are also encountered regarding sustainability in the conducted practices. Matakana, which earned the Cittaslow certificate in New Zealand in 2007 constitutes the most obvious example of such concerns. Similar concerns are also valid for Raglan and Morrinsville in the context of sustainability of alternative lifestyles. The Cittaslow criteria implemented in these mentioned places are regarded and perceived as a deterrence rather than a tool for motivation. The reason for this is that plans and rich communities that have adopted the Euro-centric culture of sustainability and which are currently slow, are very scare in New Zealand. Therefore, the success of Cittaslow in New Zealand depends on its ability to be more flexible, less regulatory and less emphasizing in the criteria. There is also a demand to provide aid to increasing the incentives for local communities and increasing their endurance. It is asserted that thus the certificates of Cittaslows in New Zealand shall become more suitable and accessible when they are registered in the transition process without getting canceled [27].

However, small towns and cities that acquire the status of Cittaslow need to verify or certify their compliance with the rules once every five years in order to sustain their accreditations [28]. For this purpose, plans are being developed that coordinate the relations among the population and increase environment, infrastructure, health, safety and life quality through diversified strategies based on the slow philosophy against fast and unhealthy urbanization [29]. In such planning, determining the areas of administration where air quality and pollution levels exceed targets, waste strategy, performance standards regarding recycling and imperatives for sustainability stand out [30]. When these imperatives are successfully fulfilled, then Cittaslows not only manage to evade being places used for only for touristic purposes but also reach a continuous stability regarding "reminding local values, unique identities, tastes and flavors to all the metropolises of the world" [31].

Then, it can be stated that when a balance is achieved between the end and means and thus the bonds and connections are established to carry these to a sustainable future, it shall be possible to increase the number of successful examples regarding Cittaslow. The important point here is to utilize the capacity for realizing Cittaslow at the required and sufficient scale.

Conclusion

Today we are going through a period when speed is dignified, the perception is created that being fast shall solve all problems and people are forced to live in a manner continuously based on speed. At this point it is observed that although there are some who gained certain advantages, a large majority remained well under their capacities in this process and fail to sustain a happy and high-quality life. In this sense, philosophical slowness and tranquility can be perceived positively for both being in harmony with the nature and also for sustaining life according to quality standards. As known, humans turn to the nature sometimes as a lifestyle and sometimes to get away from the pace of daily life. However, considering the routine of daily life, a life to be sustained in tranquility is usually not more than a retirement dream.

At this exact point the slow movement and its philosophy is making a great effort to both change this perception of people and to find a meaningful answer to what slow life is. For this purpose, the slow movement aims to make people live life fully and enjoy life and to preserve and sustain the values that construct the society, culture and humans in the context of a certain lifestyle. The essential point in such an objective is to transform my moving slowly and making life sustainable in a slow manner. In short, the essence is to assert transforming rather than consuming. However, a stand is taken in the asserted transformation, against the pillage of nature in every field and moment of life.

This study examines the slow city criteria on the basis of urban sustainability. As a conclusion of this study, it is asserted that Cittaslow is a movement resisting the negative aspects of globalization rather than an anti-globalization movement. In fact, a slow capitalism in mentioned against global capitalism. And successful and unsuccessful example practices throughout the world have been taken into consideration to ensure that the examined issue can make a holistic sense and be explained. Based on the findings obtained from these practices, it was found that the ability of Cittaslows to constitute an alternative to existing practices and make themselves sustainable depends on coordinated and disciplined implementation of the criteria and making each practice a rule of life.Hence this issue is frequently encountered in successful Cittaslow practices. And this proves that Cittaslows are not utopias or extreme things, but on the contrary, example models with representation capability.

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