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The effects of membership in the Polish National Cittaslow Network

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Abstract

Research background: Identification of the effects achieved by cities owing to their membership in the Cittaslow network plays a role not only in the development of every city, but also in the growth of national and international Cittaslow networks. Being a member of the Cittaslow network, and thereby adopting the slow city development model, affects the process of urban management by directing it towards such activities that agree with the assumed development concept. The achieved effects, manifested in the social, economic, and spatial spheres, contribute to the improved quality of life in a slow city, which in turn influences its development.

Purpose of the article: Identification of the effects of membership of Polish cities in the Polish National Cittaslow Network.

Methods: The study included a diagnostic survey method. The diagnostic survey based on a standardized survey questionnaire was used to identify the effects achieved by the Polish cities in the Cittaslow network. The survey was addressed to mayors of all member cities in the Polish National Cittaslow Network. The survey was conducted in May 2020.

Findings & value added: The most important effects to date of cities being members of the Polish National Cittaslow Network, and their scale, have been investigated. An attempt was made to determine in which areas of urban life the effects become observable in a relatively short time (a few years), and which effects are attainable after a longer period of time. Major barriers to

obtaining the desired effects were also identified. The research fills in a gap in this scope, as it provides a complex analysis of the effects of the membership of cities in the national Cittaslow network as seen by the city authorities. The results can serve to make comparative analyses of the effects achieved on different levels of development in the national Cittaslow networks, particularly in view of the fact that the Polish National Cittaslow Network is the second largest network in the world with respect to the number of member cities.

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed an increasingly dynamic development of the international Cittaslow network. The ‘Cittaslow — International network of cities where living is good’ currently associates 264 cities from 30 countries around the world. The Polish National Cittaslow Network, founded under the auspices of the Cittaslow movement, now associates 31 members and is the second largest network of slow cities globally (second only to the Italian network) with regards to the number of member cities (*Cittaslow List*, 2019, pp. 1, 7–8). For the past 13 years, the Polish National Cittaslow Network (officially set up in 2007) has been joined by cities from different parts of Poland, and the collaboration between member cities (especially their authorities, but also local organizations or businesses) has been fortified. Interestingly, some urban development tools surpassing the local level have been employed, for example the *Supralocal revitalisation program of the cities of the Cittaslow network of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship*. It, therefore, seemed justified to review the achievements of the Polish National Cittaslow Network to date, and to focus on the effects gained by cities owing to their membership in the association. Special attention was paid to social, economic, spatial and environmental effects as well as the effects noticed in such areas as the management and promotion of a city; as well as cooperation between cities.

There is a scarcity of exhaustive studies in this field. Most investigations are rather selective, which means that they cover a selected sphere in a city’s life, for example spatial effects, effects on tourism and hospitality, or otherwise they select some cities that belong to the Polish National Cittaslow Network. This is the knowledge gap that is visible in the literature, which is filled by the current research. In addition, it is worth noticing that the identification of effects brought about by membership in the Cittaslow Network in Poland can provide valuable data for comparative analyses with other national networks operating within the international association, particularly because the Polish National Cittaslow Network is one of the largest Cittaslow networks in the world in terms of the number of member cities.

In view of the above, the purpose of this research was to identify the effects of membership of cities in the Polish National Cittaslow Network. The research subject consisted of effects of membership in the Cittaslow network achieved by each of the 31 cities that belong to the Polish National Cittaslow Network. The analysis included the effects that have been obtained during the entire membership of each city in the Cittaslow network to date, which is until May 2020. For instance, the analysis covered a period from 13 years (2007–2020) for the founding cities, which have been members of the network since its set-up, to a few months for the most recent members. The identification of the effects of the network membership of the cities was achieved according to the opinions obtained from the authorities of Cittaslow member cities. The authors are aware that a comprehensive evaluation of this research problem requires that such effects be explored from the point of view of all stakeholders, especially the local community and entrepreneurs, and are already planning such investigations. However, in this study it has been possible to gather and analyze opinions of the authorities of Cittaslow member cities concerning the perceived effects of the network membership. In this research a diagnostic survey method was applied. The survey was carried out in May 2020.

The article consists of the following parts: literature review, research methodology, results, discussion and conclusions. The literature review discusses the genesis of the idea of international and national Cittaslow networks and potential effects of being a member city. The research methodology section presents the research methods employed to identify to-date effects of the membership of cities in the Polish National Cittaslow Network. The continuing section of this paper contains a discussion of the research results pertaining to the benefits gained by member cities and their magnitude, as well as barriers to their achievement. In the discussion section, the obtained results were confronted with research provided by other authors. In addition, it was suggested how the current results might be used. The final section contains conclusions, as well as suggestions for future research.

Literature review

Nowadays, cities are struggling with many social, economic, spatial and ecological problems and, while searching for an optimal development model and instruments, they strive to maximize the benefits gained from cooperation and networking (see: Blakely & Green Leigh, 2013, pp. 71–96; Evans, 2015, pp. 135–158; Kavaratzis, 2004, pp. 58–73; Landry, 2008, pp. 20–40; Pike *et*

al., 2006, pp. 61–122; Rowe, 2009, pp. 329–354; Wichowska, 2019, pp. 419–432). This concerns small cities as well, which make attempts to face the challenges of global competition (including global crises) and are forced to redefine their vision and direction of future growth (see Atkinson, 2019, pp. 1–17; Capello, 2000, pp. 1925–1945). To this end, they take advantage of different concepts and models of urban development; for example, the smart city or the green city. Many small cities have seen an opportunity to develop in the slow city model and membership in the Cittaslow network. This is where they see a chance to improve their city's potential, promote the city, develop tourism or gain other benefits arising from the implementation of this model and network cooperation (see Farelnik, 2020a, pp. 18–36; Senetra & Szarek-Iwaniuk, 2020, pp. 1–15).

The origin of the International Cittaslow Network can be sought in the growing popularity of the *Slow Food* movement and the initiative undertaken by mayors of four small Italian cities: Bra, Greve in Chianti, Orvieto and Positano, who sought an opportunity for the development of the cities they governed in adopting such a philosophy and model of a city. The name Cittaslow comes from the Italian word *città* (a city) and the English word *slow*. 'Cittaslow — International network of cities where living is good' was founded on 15 October 1999 in Orvieto, Italy. The Cittaslow association is a not-for-profit entity, and its objectives are to promote and spread the culture of good living through research, testing and the application of solutions for the city organisation. Identity, memory, environmental protection, justice, social inclusion, and community, as well as an active citizenship, are among the values which the association promotes (*Cittaslow International Charter*, 2017, p. 5).

The notion and activities of the Cittaslow network rest on five pillars (*Cittaslow — International network...* 2019, pp. 5–6):

1. The positive side of slowness – life in accord with one's own natural rhythm, thoughtful production, consumption, taking care of cultural heritage and social relationships;
2. Circular economy – the concept of economy in a closed circuit, taking care of natural resources, lower consumption, recycling, cooperation with entrepreneurs, farmers, small businesses in this scope;
3. Resilience – adoption of shared aims in the development of Cittaslow cities, concerning their current and future growth, which is pivotal to what their social and economic development will be like in the future (also for future generations);

4. Social justice – the right of a community to use local resources and the principles of social justice;
5. Sustainability and culture – responsible use of natural resources, taking care of cultural heritage and nurturing tradition (crafts, cuisine, etc.).

The Cittaslow network functions as an association which can be joined by common members, i.e. cities with a population of no more than 50,000. To enter the network, a city must pass through a certification process, which is an assessment carried out in seven areas: energy and environmental policy, infrastructure policies, quality of urban life policies, agricultural, tourism and artisan policies, policies for hospitality, awareness and training, social cohesion, partnerships, which are evaluated using 72 detailed (requirements). The requisite for accessing the Cittaslow network is to pass the above assessment with at least 50% + 1 requirement. The same catalogue of requirements is applied during the subsequent assessment (the so-called re-certification), which the cities undergo five years after joining the network. The organs of the Cittaslow Association are: International Assembly, International Coordinating Committee, International President, President Council, Board of Guarantors and, the International Scientific Committee. The association can be aided by the so-called ‘Supporters of Cittaslow’ (regions, provinces, towns, cantons, metropolises, unions of municipalities, etc.) and ‘Friends of Cittaslow’ (cultural and scientific associations, economic and commerce chambers, cultural and scientific associations, non-profit professional and trade associations in the production and services sectors, etc.) (*Cittaslow International Charter*, 2017, pp. 8–11, 25–27).

The Cittaslow network in Poland was initiated in 2004, when Reszel declared its willingness to join the network. The subsequent cities that contributed to the founding of the Polish National Cittaslow Network in 2007 were Bisztynek, Biskupiec and Lidzbark Warmiński. When this study was performed, the network already comprised 31 localities, including 30 cities and 1 village (Table 1). Some of these cities have been member cities in the Cittaslow network for over a decade now, but there are some that have joined the network a few months ago. Therefore, changes in Cittaslow cities induced by their membership and adoption of the *slow city* model guidelines depend on how long a city has been in the network but are also affected by a variety of other endogenous and exogenous factors.

Regarding the first group of factors, it needs to be emphasized that cities in the Polish National Cittaslow Network vary in the size of population, population density, their situation in the labor market, and their level of social and economic development (Wierzbicka *et al.*, 2019, p. 121; Wierzbicka, 2020, p. 203). Thus, they differ in their inner socio-economic and spatial potential (see Konecka-Szydłowska, 2017, pp. 61–73; Jaszczak & Kristiano-

va, 2019, p. 9), which has a bearing on the effects they gain from their membership in the network.

The scale and scope of positive changes which take place in Cittaslow cities depend on numerous factors, such as the extent to which local authorities are engaged in the pursuit of actions concordant with the *slow city* concept, how they are able to collaborate with other networked cities, the awareness and knowledge of Cittaslow assumptions among city residents, the degree of participation and involvement among local entities to promote the idea of developing their locality in the spirit of a *slow city*, the availability of (own and external) funds in member cities and, last but not least, the stage of development that the Polish National Cittaslow Network has now achieved, i.e. recognizability of its brand, the development of network links, the experience gained while implementing different projects in collaboration, particularly creating city networked products (see Bařarangil & Ulař, 2017, pp. 112–115; Grzelak-Kostulska *et al.*, 2011, pp. 190–191).

The Cittaslow cities carry out many activities which help to create and strengthen collaborative relations (Farelnik *et al.*, 2017, pp. 414–425). The main ones are: exchanging experience and good practice during mutually held events, meetings and conferences; conducting promotional activities with another member city or other member cities; multidimensional cooperation with the supporting member, the Marshal's Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship; implementation of the program *Supralocal revitalisation program of the cities of the Cittaslow network of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship*; acting as a 'mentor city' for a candidate city applying to join the Cittaslow network; executing cultural, social and infrastructural projects together with one or several member cities; using the support of the 'mentor city' in the application process to join the Cittaslow network; active participation in the association's organizational structures — it is not only the board of the Association 'Polish Cittaslow Cities', but also the representation of Polish cities in the organs of the International Cittaslow Network. The main areas of cooperation between Cittaslow cities in the Polish network are: the promotion of the city, tourism, culture, sport, recreation, management, spatial economy, environmental protection, local enterprise and education (Farelnik, 2019, pp. 85–86; Farelnik, 2020b, pp. 273–274). Thus, it can be expected that the most evident effects connected with the membership in the network should appear in these areas. Relationships between cities which belong to associations or unions are often referred to as cooptition, which is simultaneous cooperation and competition between local government units. Cooptition describes an inter-organisational relationship that combines 'cooperation' and 'competition' (see Bouncken *et al.*, 2015, p. 2). It can be assumed that relationships between cities which belong to the Cit-

taslow network are of this nature (especially when it comes to attracting tourists or acquiring investors or external sources of investment funds, e.g. from the EU funds). From this perspective, effects of the membership in the network, which manifest themselves with different strength in different cities, can be perceived as a consequence of coopetition. It seems that the coopetition among the Cittaslow network cities is mainly partner-type one, where cooperative relations prevail over competitive ones, or otherwise they demonstrate a solitary attitude, where both competitive and cooperative actions are infrequent (Bartkowiak & Koszel, 2017, p. 79).

Some authors (Farelnik & Stanowicka, 2016, p. 369; Tocci, 2018, pp. 118–120; Zadęcka, 2018, p. 95), who have analysed features of the *slow city* model, indicate that it can evolve towards a hybrid model (e.g. *smart slow city*, *slow green city*), and that the actual incorporation could be unique to a city. This individual pathway for implementing a development model will depend, for instance, on the approach of a city's authorities and residents. The way local authorities and city inhabitants will take advantage of the slow philosophy, which is whether a city's membership in the Cittaslow network will become the priority in the city's management and the foundation for entrepreneurship (especially tourism), can be pivotal in the city's growth. It may be assumed that the *slow city* model is adaptable, which means that the way it is implemented (an individual pathway for each city in agreement with the Cittaslow principles) depends on the interpretation of the slow policy made by local authorities and residents. Thus, different character and the intensity of the effects observed in Cittaslow cities may be a consequence of such a unique approach developed by local bodies. Urban policy, implemented on both national and EU levels, seems most important in this regard, in addition to the activities pursued by the national and international Cittaslow association. It is worth emphasizing that changes occurring in Cittaslow cities also depend on exogenous conditions, both domestic and international. A meaningful role, especially in the early days of the Polish National Cittaslow Network, was played by the Marshal's Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, which initiated many actions to promote and integrate Cittaslow cities. The engagement of so-called 'support members' and 'friends of Cittaslow' as well as the support of the Cittaslow Network Scientific Committee may prove to be crucial in the subsequent stages in the development of the domestic network, after the implementation phase.

Due to the city's membership in the Cittaslow network, effects may be achieved in various spheres. In the economic sphere, these may be (see Mayer & Knox, 2006, pp. 326–327; Strzelecka, 2018, p. 53; Zawadzka, 2017, pp. 99–101);

- development of entrepreneurship (connected with tourism and hospitality, promotion of local cultural heritage, including cuisine), using the Cittaslow logo as a quality label of products and services provided by the city,
- development of the hospitality and catering facilities,
- positive changes in the labor market, such as a growing number of jobs,
- development of tourism (*sustainable tourism*, *green tourism* or *slow tourism* as an alternative to the *all-inclusive*), also based on local resources, network tourist product and effective promotion of cities,
- development of the market of local products based on traditional recipes,
- higher budget revenues owing to a more rapid pace in the development of the city,
- development of collaboration and cooperation among local organisations and businesses, also under the framework of creating network products by Cittaslow cities,
- economic activation of degraded, crisis-stricken areas of a city which are undergoing revitalisation,
- improved attractiveness of a city for potential residents, investors, visitors (improved investment attractiveness and competitiveness of the city).

In the social sphere, special attention is drawn to the possible emergence of the following effects (Radstrom, 2011, pp. 102–106; Erdogan, 2016, p. 245):

- increased level of the quality of life in a city,
- increased activity, integration and involvement of local communities,
- stronger local identity, residents identifying themselves with the city that has a well-defined and acceptable vision of development,
- the flow of population to other cities is inhibited,
- transformation of lifestyle to a slower one, according to the promoted concept of being *slow*,
- city residents become more open, innovative and creative.

Examples of potential effects noticed in the spatial and environmental sphere are (see Presenza *et al.*, 2014, pp. 201–203):

- revitalisation of degraded parts of a city,
- the built-up areas are tidied up, while the architectural heritage is preserved,
- improved aesthetic value of public spaces,
- green areas and recreational sites are more numerous and of better quality,
- greater ecological awareness among the residents,

- improved quality of the natural environment (water bodies, air, soil resources),
- sustainable development of a city, sustainable tourism, sustainable farming.

The effects that can be attained in the sphere of management, promotion and cooperation between Cittaslow cities include (see Presenza *et al.*, 2015, pp. 40–64):

- better work of public administration and improved urban management process, owing to the adopted action strategy based on the Cittaslow guidelines, conclusions drawn from the certification process, sharing knowledge and experience with other *slow cities*, etc.,
- better use of supralocal and network instruments of local development, such as the supralocal revitalisation programme, a network tourist product, etc.,
- the authorities now focus on the improvement of the quality of life in the city and satisfying the needs of the local community,
- improved participation of residents and other local stakeholders in the decision-making processes concerning the implementation of urban projects,
- better access to external funds allocated to the city's investment projects (e.g. the EU funds),
- development of cooperation within cities (between businesses, non-profit organizations and municipal authorities),
- development and reinforcement of the collaboration with other cities which are members of the Cittaslow network (not only in the country but also internationally), and with the 'supporters of Cittaslow' and 'friends of Cittaslow',
- improved image of the city, better recognizability of the city and its local products.

For comparison, Zadęcka (2018, pp. 96, 100–101) names six categories of benefits from the implementation of the *slow city* model: economic, social, natural, spatial, organizational and image; as well as six planes (spheres) of local development of Cittaslow cities: economic, political, ecological, social, infratechnical and spatial.

Aside from the positive effects, attention should be drawn to certain threats that might arise from the implementation of the *slow city* model. They may be due to some misunderstanding of the idea of slow or the risk of a city being burdened with excessive tourist traffic and the degradation of resources it might cause, which in turn would mean a deteriorated quality of life for

residents and a worsening image of the city (Grzelak-Kostulska *et al.*, 2011, p. 190).

In summary, the positive effects which are attainable through membership in the Cittaslow network and adoption of the *slow city* model stimulate the city's development and improve the quality of life in the city. Moreover, membership in the Cittaslow network and the pursuit of the unique development model (*slow city*) it offers can prove to be essential, should a city face a crisis. It seems that managing a city which employs the *slow city* concept and the experience gained from collaborating with other Cittaslow cities and a number of positive effects (economic, social, environmental or institutional) achieved owing to membership in the network, can have a positive influence on the so-called urban resilience, thus creating a chance for the city to develop following a more resilient community pathway (see Drobniak, 2012, pp. 15–16; Drobniak, 2019, pp. 47–61; Wilson, 2012, p. 147).

Research methodology

To identify the effects achieved by Polish cities owing to their membership in the Cittaslow network, a diagnostic survey was accomplished, with the help of a standardized survey questionnaire. The survey was addressed to mayors of all member cities of the Polish National Cittaslow Network. The survey questionnaire contained closed, semi-open and open questions, regarding the effects of the city's membership in the network, the scale of such effects and the barriers which prevent the attainment of desired outcomes. There were both multiple-choice and single-choice questions, including ones with answers on a five-level Likert scale. The process of formulating questions and scaling answers had been preceded by a review of the literature, interviews with members of the staff of the Cittaslow Office at the Marshal's Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship and consultations with the mayors of selected Cittaslow member cities. The survey was carried out in May 2020. It was returned by all network member cities. Therefore, the study was of a comprehensive character and comprised all the units belonging to the studied population. The conclusions were drawn from data pertaining to the entire population, and therefore the use of statistical inference methods were not required.

As the cities which belong to the Polish Cittaslow network vary in terms of how long they have been in the network (Table 1), where justified, an analysis of the interdependence of economic phenomena was carried out, using an appropriate correlation coefficient, which in this case was the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. It was employed to analyze the

direction and power of the relationship between the number of effects achieved by cities in every sphere of urban life versus the duration of a city's membership in the Cittaslow network. The reason why the Spearman's correlation coefficient was chosen is the fact that it is applied to study dependences between two variables in a situation where these variables are of a quantitative character and the analyzed population is small, but also in situations where variables are of a qualitative character yet can be ordered according to the strength of a variable (Hauke & Kossowski, 2011, p. 89). Due to the presence of repeated values of the ranked variables, the study employed the Spearman's correlation coefficient for tied ranks. It was computed from the formula (Meloun & Militký, 2011, p. 652):

$$r_s = \frac{\frac{n^3-n}{6} - T_X - T_Y - \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - y_i)^2}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{n^3-n}{6} - 2T_X\right)\left(\frac{n^3-n}{6} - 2T_Y\right)}} \quad (1)$$

where:

n – population size,

x_i, y_i – ranks for variables X and Y ,

T_X, T_Y – coefficients for tied variables computed from the formula:

$$T = \frac{\sum_j (t_j^3 - t_j)}{12} \quad (2)$$

where:

t_j – is the number of observations having the same j -th rank of the variable X and Y .

The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient takes values from the interval $\langle -1; 1 \rangle$. The strength of a correlation is tested by the absolute value of the coefficient, while the sign indicates its direction.

The authors would like to add that as the size of the analyzed population was very small and comprised some atypical elements, the results of the correlation analysis are interpreted with great caution. A correlation observed in some cases might have been an apparent one, arising from the influence of other variables.

Results

Bearing in mind the set objective of the research, the respondents were asked to state what in their opinion were the most significant effects of the

city being a member of the Cittaslow network achieved thus far. Each respondent could indicate no more than 5 of the most important effects. The replies were collated in Table 2.

The research reveals that it was only in one of the cities that no significant effects attributable to its membership in the Cittaslow network were noticed. As for the other cities, such benefits were observed although their scale varied. Most respondents (almost 60%) indicated that membership in the Cittaslow network enabled a more successful promotion of the city. This is most probably because shared efforts to promote *slow cities* are more intensive than any promotion of a single city, while incurring lower unit costs. At the same time, they give the opportunity to position the city's offer based on new attributes which arose from the *slow city* model being implemented. Moreover, it is possible to promote a city with its own brand and the Cittaslow brand simultaneously. Over 40% of those surveyed indicated that their city, by being in the Cittaslow network, was able to create a positive image of a Cittaslow city — 'a city where life is good'. Nearly 60% also pointed out that by being a member city they were able to revitalise and activate degraded areas in the city. In more than half of the cities, one of the positive effects indicated was access to additional sources of funds for investments. Nearly half of the respondents also pointed to the improved aesthetic value, quality and accessibility of public space in their city. In the light of the survey results, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that beside individual (single) city revitalisation programmes, as many as 19 of the Polish *slow cities* were included in the ongoing *Supralocal revitalisation program of the cities of the Cittaslow network of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship* (2019, pp. 8–9). Under this project, the cities secured support for the planned activation efforts (investments in the infrastructure and social programmes) granted from European Union funds. Such activities are an important pro-development stimulus, especially in small cities. Revitalisation of selected urban areas improves the aesthetic value of public space, the availability of services and the quality of life in a city. It may also be important in the context of creating a network tourist product by cities situated in the same region (as was the case of the mentioned revitalisation programme). Another significant effect of being a member in the Cittaslow network (indicated by mayors of 11 cities) was the growing collaboration with other member cities. Meetings, workshops and mutually performed projects offered an opportunity to exchange knowledge, experience and good practices in municipal management; as well as to initiate new undertakings.

Significantly, in some of the cities the mentioned benefits have already led to a higher level of satisfaction among two important groups of stake-

holders. Firstly, the satisfaction among city inhabitants from living in a given city grew (this effect was noted in 8 cities), and their involvement in social participation had increased (the effect observed in 6 cities). Secondly, tourists showed a growing interest in the city's offer (this was the response given by mayors of 7 cities). Seven cities also reported a positive effect of creating a long-term city development strategy in line with the *slow city* concept. It was only in 5 cities that the implementation of projects aiming to protect and improve the state of the natural environment was implicated as a positive effect of joining the Cittaslow network. This may be because environmental conservation is one of the pillars of the paradigm of sustainable urban development. Consequently, pro-environmental actions and their outcomes may not be directly associated with membership in the Cittaslow network.

Unfortunately, none of the respondents suggested that membership in the Cittaslow network contributed to growth in local entrepreneurship. There was only one city mayor who indicated that the number of jobs in the city increased as a result of joining the network, and two mayors stated that the city's competitiveness improved. These results can be explained by the fact that the economic growth of cities depends on a great number of factors, both exo- and endogenous. It is conditioned by the socio-economic potential of a city, macroeconomic circumstances, as well as spatial and historical factors. The economic effects caused by a city's membership in the network depend on what stage of development the network is at, the scope of cooperation with other member cities, and the knowledge of the slow concept among the city dwellers. In light of the above, it is worth underlining that the emergence of the aforementioned effects in the cities may have been an indirect consequence of these factors as well as a product of various activities taken in these cities, even prior to their official access to the network. On the other hand, it is worth noticing that the cities which decided to apply for membership in the Cittaslow network could have orientated their policy and activities towards attaining the Cittaslow goals even before they officially joined the network. Hence, these effects were identified by the mayors of these cities as associated with membership in the network and are interpreted by the research authors as such.

The respondents were also asked to evaluate the scale of the effects achieved thus far owing to membership in the Cittaslow network, with regards to different spheres of urban life. The indications given with respect to the number of achieved effects in the distinguished areas are presented in Table 3. The table also contains values of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between the number of observed effects given by a city's authorities and the duration of this city's membership in the network.

The results confirm the conclusions drawn earlier. The smallest number of observable effects was implicated in the sphere of the labor market and local entrepreneurship connected with the labor market. Significantly, concerning the entrepreneurship sphere, there was quite a strong positive correlation between the number of observable effects and the duration of the city's being in the network. This finding implicates that it is only by being a network member for a longer period of time that a city may expect positive changes in this area.

The highest number of visible effects appeared in the sphere of a city's promotion. As many as 12 cities were reported to have a high number of effects in this area, while 10 more cities indicated a considerable number of effects. Interestingly, none of the cities who took part in the survey reported a lack of evident effects in a city's promotion, and it was the only area where such replies were obtained. Visible effects were also noted in the sphere of the quality of life in a city. In 21 cities, the number of effects in this area was considered the least significant. Moreover, the coefficients of correlation between the number of observed effects in these spheres versus the duration of a city's membership in the network were 0.45 and 0.47, respectively, which may signify the presence of a moderate albeit quite distinct dependence between these variables.

The scale of the effects achieved in the spheres of tourism, spatial management, culture and integration of a city's inhabitants was evaluated to be slightly smaller. However, over 50% of the respondents assessed that the number of effects attained in each of these spheres was at least considerable. Regarding the integration of the city inhabitants, it was also noticed that numerous effects were indicated in this scope, even in the cities which had belonged to the network for a relatively short time. This is certainly connected with an extremely individualistic approach of residents to the idea of strengthening social bonds and feeling a strong bond with one's home city as a place where life is good. This is also a consequence of highly diverse character and intensity of actions undertaken by the cities in this regard.

Interestingly, the coefficient of the correlation between the number of effects achieved in spatial management and the duration of a city's membership in the Cittaslow network reached 0.54, implicating quite a strong relationship between these variables. It was confirmed that the mayors of nearly all cities which had belonged to the network for more than 10 years identified a large or even a very large number of effects in this scope. Nevertheless, similar responses were obtained from mayors of 2 cities which had been in the network for less than 5 years. It was also noted that as many as 15 out of 17 cities providing such an answer were the ones which had

previously implemented the project, mentioned earlier, called the *Supralocal revitalisation program of the cities of the Cittaslow network of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship*. Doubtless, this programme enabled the participating cities to execute a much larger number of projects involving spatial development. Based on the results of this study, it is therefore impossible to verify whether the longer duration of a city's membership in the Cittaslow network translates into a larger scale of the effects achieved in that city.

Bearing in mind differences in the scale of effects arising from the to-date membership in the Cittaslow network, the respondents were requested to evaluate the influence of these effects on the quality of life in their city and its development. The respondents' opinions are presented in Table 4.

As many as 29 out of 31 representatives of the cities included in the analysis expressed a positive opinion about the effects achieved thus far by their cities being members of the Cittaslow network. Thus, it seems justified to state that the adoption of the *slow city* development model by these cities generated the expected effects. However, as the structure of responses to the first question implicates (Table 1), an improvement in the quality of life of a city's inhabitants is not counted as one of the most important effects of the city being a member of the Cittaslow network. The reason could lie in the fact that other effects have been felt more strongly today. Over 80% of the respondents positively evaluated the effects achieved in the context of a city's development. Recapitulating, the general opinion about the effects attained owing to a city being in the Cittaslow network is positive. The mayors already notice these effects and see them as beneficial. Meanwhile, they have pointed to certain barriers, which make it more difficult to gain expected benefits. These barriers are included in Table 5.

Most of the municipal authorities have suggested that the shortage of funds to carry out different projects is a barrier that inhibits obtaining the full effects from being a *slow city*. This obstacle was mentioned to exist in 21 out of 31 cities. In 12 cities, the representatives of municipal authorities pointed to the lack of distinct local products, which could be a distinguishing feature in the city's brand. Interestingly, the *slow city* development model presumes that local products are to be an important attribute of a city, fundamental to the development of local entrepreneurship. As it turns out, some *slow cities* either lack characteristic local products or else such products have not been identified yet.

Another significant barrier to obtaining the desired effects of being in the Cittaslow network is an insufficiently long time that a city has been a member. This barrier was recognized in 11 of the analysed cities. The mayors of seven towns implicated that the long distance away from other

member cities was an obstacle to gaining membership benefits, while another barrier identified in five cities was the small scale of collaboration with other cities. It is true that Polish *slow cities* are concentrated in the Province of Warmia and Mazury, and these member cities certainly have better chances to maintain direct and frequent contacts, which helps to strengthen collaboration. The large distance between cities, however, should not prohibit collaboration. Scattered networks, and the Polish Cittaslow network is considered to be one, harbor the sense of shared aims and not infrequently they can build stronger relationships than cities located closer to one another. The problem arises from the fact that, at the current stage in the development of the Polish National Cittaslow Network, cities either enter into collaborative relationships or develop existing partnerships. At this stage, partners are building mutual trust. It is only after such trust is gained that collaboration between cities, even ones lying far from one another, can be strengthened.

While identifying the factors which inhibit the achievement of expected membership effects, 4 mayors drew attention to the insufficient promotion of the Cittaslow brand, which leads to its poor recognizability. In addition, the city's tourist product, which by definition should be the focus of attention in *slow cities*, was deemed to be of low quality in 4 analyzed cities. Obviously, adequate measures should be taken in these areas. A larger scope of cooperation between cities, as well as a wider promotional campaign of the Cittaslow brand could generate additional benefits, for example a chance to create a high-quality network product.

Importantly, only two cities suggested that a barrier to attaining greater benefits from being in the Cittaslow network was the negative attitude of residents to the notion of slow life. The fact that municipal authorities serve specific terms of office and electing new authorities might entail a change in the attitude to the *slow city* notion, was interpreted as a barrier in just one city. These findings substantiate the conclusion that the attitude of residents and authorities in most of the analyzed cities to their city's membership in the Cittaslow network is positive.

Respondents were also asked if they noticed any negative effects in their city after becoming a member of the Cittaslow network. As many as 26 representatives of cities replied that they did not observe any negative effects arising from being a member of the network. Four admitted that the membership fee a city is obliged to pay annually is a problem. Just one mayor suggested that due to its membership in the Cittaslow network the city might be perceived as a backward one, skansen-like, with a slow pace of economic development. This concern seems justifiable as the *slow city* development model is often misunderstood. It is equated with 'the slowing

down’ of the development of a city, whereas the actual assumption is ‘to slow down’ the pace of life in a city. As demonstrated by the research results, most representatives of the Polish Cittaslow cities do not have such concerns.

Discussion

There is scarcity of exhaustive studies into the effects achieved by all cities that belong to a national Cittaslow network (not just the Polish network, but other national organizations as well). Most investigations are selective, i.e. they concern only a selected area in the life of a city (e.g. spatial effects, effects in cultural cooperation, tourism or promotion) (see Çiçek *et al.*, 2019, pp. 400–414; Coşar *et al.*, 2015, pp. 212–220; Yurtseven & Kaya, 2011, pp. 91–98) or they only include one or a few Cittaslow cities, being more like case studies (see Donaldson, 2018, pp. 99–104; Karatosun & Çakar, 2017, pp. 71–82; Özmen & Can, 2018, pp. 13–23).

One such study analyzed the effects of slow city on tourism development in Seferihisar. It turned out that domestic tourists and local residents as well as owners and managers of tourism establishments acknowledged the positive influence of the slow city model on the municipal economy, especially in tourism, culture and the promotion of the city. The respondents noted that value in labor had increased, new employment areas had been created, organic agriculture and marketing had been encouraged, tourist arrivals had increased, the incomes of local people had been boosted, building exteriors had been rearranged, local people had become aware of environmental issues, and the number of social and cultural activities had soared (Coşar *et al.*, 2015, p. 215). These results, although obtained from a small sample of respondents and only in one city, coincide with the outcome of our study, which included all Polish slow cities. However, it should be mentioned that the local inhabitants of Seferihisar also noticed certain negative effects of the growth in tourism (e.g. excessive tourist flow, degradation of resources, noise, and rising property prices), which can deteriorate the quality of living for local residents and worsen the image of the city. By comparison, in our study over 80% of the respondents did not mention any negative effects from their city being a member of the Cittaslow network.

The results of another study, conducted in 61 cities from different national Cittaslow networks, also confirmed the achievement of effects in promotion and enhancement of local cultural events. As many as 70% of surveyed cities pointed to effects associated with the organization of cultural events (Roma *et al.*, 2012, p. 70).

A study on the effects of Cittaslow membership on the conservation of cultural heritage in two cities of Turkey drew attention to such effects observed in slow cities as the recognition of the cultural potential of the locality, encouragement of the conservation of local products and usage of traditional places, becoming a popular ‘slow’ destination, and increment of financial support (Karatosun & Çakar, 2017, p. 80). The fact that city authorities noticed new opportunities for securing sources of funds for investment and a chance to build a positive image of a slow city has also been confirmed in this study, which comprised cities in Poland. Among the negative effects of being a member of the Cittaslow network observed in the cited Turkish study, the following should be mentioned: creation of artificial cultural events, creation of an inauthentic identity for tourism purposes, impermanent conservation projects, development of tourism-focused projects and a growing number of visitors. No such negative consequences were observed in our study.

Most of the research carried out so far has focused on potential rather than actual benefits from the Cittaslow membership. This research fills in a gap in this scope, as it contains a complex analysis of the effects of membership in the Polish National Cittaslow Network. Based on the results, the most important effects achieved by Polish cities owing to their membership in the Cittaslow network as well as their magnitude were identified. In addition, barriers to attaining desired effects were specified as well. An analysis of correlations between the number of visible effects in particular areas of the city's functioning versus the duration of a city's membership in the Cittaslow network was made.

Because the diagnostic survey was conducted among the mayors of all member cities in Poland, this is a complex study reflecting the opinion of the authorities of these cities on the subject raised in this research. However, there is a need to conduct more in-depth studies in this field, and to carry out representative investigations collecting opinions of residents of *slow cities*, including entrepreneurs operating in every city. The first study into opinions of city inhabitants has already been done, but it only concerned 10 of the *slow cities* in Poland and a small number of residents (see Batyk & Woźniak, 2019, pp. 56–66). The research authors believed that the mentioned study should be seen as a pilot. However, it needs to be stressed that in the light of its results most respondents did not equate the access to the Cittaslow network with improved quality of living for the city's residents. Nonetheless, nearly half of the respondents (46%) claimed that the Cittaslow network membership had a moderate influence on the city's socio-economic development, while 25% claimed that the said influence was strong. Interestingly, as the authors of this study would like to emphasize, opinions on the degree

to which membership in the Cittaslow network has affected selected socio-economic aspects were highly varied in all cities. The results also varied depending on the sex, age and education of respondents. Worth noticing is the fact that residents of 10 cities included in the survey maintained that the membership of their city in the Cittaslow network least affected the reduction of unemployment and development of entrepreneurship, which is consistent with the results of the study reported in this article.

Conclusions

Changes occurring in Cittaslow cities owing to the membership in the network and the adoption of the *slow city* model depend on many endogenous and exogenous factors. The engagement of local authorities, awareness of the assumptions underlying the Cittaslow movement among the inhabitants, the level of participation and involvement of local stakeholders, the ability to cooperate with other Cittaslow member cities, as well as the national and regional urban policy or the activities of the national and international bodies of the Cittaslow association can be important contributors to the achievement of positive results from membership in the Cittaslow network. These effects may appear in the economic, social, spatial and environmental spheres, but can also emerge in the sphere of city management.

The research demonstrated that nearly all cities belonging to the Polish National Cittaslow Network have observed significant results from their membership. According to the representatives of cities, the most important effects of this membership have been more effective promotion of the city, opportunities to revitalise and activate areas, a chance to obtain additional sources of financing for investments and to improve the aesthetic value, quality and accessibility of public spaces in cities. However, the scale of the effects achieved in the different areas of a city's life varies. Thus far, the most notable effects have occurred in the areas of promotion of a city, quality of life in the city, tourism, spatial management, culture and integration of residents. The least noticeable effects have appeared in the spheres of the labor market and local entrepreneurship, connected with labor resources. Interestingly, the duration of a city's membership in the network does not translate directly into the scale of effects achieved in different areas. This study shows that it is possible to gain considerable benefits in some areas over a short time. Nevertheless, this depends on numerous factors, including the proper understanding of the slow philosophy, appropriate involvement of a city's authorities, entrepreneurs and inhabitants in the implementation of the activities undertaken, the scope of cooperation with

other cities of the network or the availability of funds (own and external), which have an impact on how effective the activities pursued in *slow cities* can become.

The study has also revealed that the strongest barriers to achieving the desired network membership results are limited funding for projects, a lack of distinct local products that could become an important attribute of a city and its unique identity, as well as an insufficiently long period of being in the network. A very important observation is that most respondents did not report negative effects resulting from the city's membership in the network. It is, therefore, justified to conclude that membership in the Cittaslow network, seen by cities as an opportunity for their development and improvement in the quality of life of residents, brings the desired results. However, the scale of these effects varies from one city to another, as well as between different aspects of city life.

The research results presented in this paper make a constructive contribution to the debate on the effects of a city's membership in the Cittaslow network. By recognizing the effects of belonging to this network and implementing the *slow city* model, it may become possible to analyze individual development pathways of Cittaslow cities associated in national networks (Polish, Italian, or Chinese model), or perceived from a larger perspective (the European or Asian model).

Future studies into the effects of a city's membership in the Cittaslow network should be expanded to include other groups of respondents (residents, entrepreneurs or visitors). Such investigations could verify the scope and scale of these effects and reveal differences in the perception of effects of the Cittaslow membership between different groups of stakeholders. Studies into the effects of the Cittaslow network membership could also be carried out in other national networks. This would provide a basis for benchmarking networks that develop in different national or regional settings, and for inferring possible similarities between the European and Asian models.

Moreover, studies once completed could be repeated after a few years to assess changes in the structure of membership effects identified in member cities, as well as barriers to achieving thereof. An interesting research component could also be the juxtaposition of the results of this research with the outcomes of a repeated certification (so-called) recertification process, based on criteria assigned to different spheres of city life, which every member city must pass through five years after accessing the network. This would ensure a more complete picture of changes in a city stimulated by its membership in the Cittaslow network.

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Annex

Table 1. Member cities of the Polish National Cittaslow Network

Length of membership	Year of admission	City	Voivodeship	Total population ¹
≥ 10 years	2007	Biskupiec	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	10.634
		Bisztynek	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	2.359
		Lidzbark Warmiński	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	15.697
		Reszel	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	4.550
	2010	Murowana Goślina	Wielkopolskie	10.433
		Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	10.850
≥ 5 years < 10 years	2012	Lubawa	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	10.388
		Olsztynek	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	7.514
		Ryn	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	2.843
	2013	Barczewo	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	7.501
		Dobre Miasto	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	10.182
		Gołdap	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	13.708
	2014	Górowo Iławeckie	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	3.940
		Kalety	Śląskie	8.589
		Nidzica	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	13.694
		Nowy Dwór Gdański	Pomorskie	9.888
		Pasym	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	2.498
		Rejowiec Fabryczny	Lubelskie	4.386
	2015	Bartoszyce	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	23.284
		Działdowo	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	21.274
		Lidzbark	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	7.741
		Orneta	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	8.723
		Prudnik	Opolskie	20.989
	2016	Głubczyce	Opolskie	12.521
		Jeziorany	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	3.153
		Sępól	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	1.941
	2017	Rzgów	Łódzkie	3.371
		Sianów	Zachodniopomorskie	6.621
	2019	Braniewo	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	16.992
		Sierpc	Mazowieckie	17.933
		Wydmyny	Warmińsko-Mazurskie	6.233

¹ date from 31 December 2019

Source: own work based on Local Data Bank (2020).

Table 2. Most important effects of the membership of cities in the Polish National Cittaslow Network

Effects achieved in a city owing to its membership in the Cittaslow network	Number of indications	Percentage of cities (%)
More effective promotion of the city	18	58.1
Revitalisation and activation of degraded areas in the city	18	58.1
Improved aesthetic value, quality and accessibility to public space	17	54.8
Acquisition of additional sources of investment funds (e.g. from the EU funds)	16	51.6
Building a positive image of a Cittaslow city, 'a city where living is good'	13	41.9
Developing collaboration with Cittaslow member cities	11	35.5
More intensive cultural life and events connected with the preservation of cultural heritage	9	29.0
Improved quality of life in a city, noticeable to city residents	8	25.8
Building new or refurbishing existing recreational and sports facilities	7	22.6
Higher number of tourists visiting the city	7	22.6
Directing the long-term policy of the city's development in line with the <i>slow city</i> concept	7	22.6
Integration and more intensive engagement of residents in social participation processes	6	19.4
Execution of projects aiming to protect and improve the condition of the natural environment	5	16.1
Better competitiveness of the city	2	6.5
Increase in the number of jobs	1	3.2
Lack of significant effects derived from the city's membership in the Cittaslow network	1	3.2
Growth in local entrepreneurship	0	0.0

Table 3. Scale of the effects achieved by cities owing to their membership in the Polish National Cittaslow Network

Areas evaluated	Number of indications				Spearman's correlation coefficient value
	Lack of noticeable effects	Few noticeable effects	Moderate number of noticeable effects	Many noticeable effects	
Local entrepreneurship	12	12	6	0	0.53
Labor market	12	12	6	0	0.41
Tourism	3	3	9	13	0.32
Integration of city inhabitants	3	4	8	13	0.09
Cultural events	1	3	9	13	0.23
Spatial management	6	2	6	10	0.54
Protection of the natural environment	8	2	8	10	0.22
Promotion of the city	0	3	6	10	0.45
Quality of life in the city	3	5	2	14	0.47

Table 4. Impacts of the effect of membership in the Cittaslow network achieved to date on the quality of life and development of a city

Impact on the quality of life in a city	Number of indications	Percentage of cities (%)	Impact on the development of a city	Number of indications	Percentage of cities (%)
positive	29	93.5	positive	25	80.6
negative	0	0.0	negative	0	0.0
no impact	2	6.5	no impact	6	19.4

Table 5. Barriers to the achievement of expected effects of membership in the Cittaslow network

Barriers	Number of indications	Percentage of cities (%)
Limited funds available to the city to carry out various undertakings	21	67.7
Lack of distinct local products which distinguish the city	12	38.7
The city has not been a member in the Cittaslow network long enough	11	35.5
The city lies too far away from other Cittaslow cities	7	22.6
The scope of collaboration with other slow cities is small	5	16.1
Promotion of the Cittaslow brand is not intensive enough, and so the brand awareness is low	4	12.9
Low quality of the city's tourist product	4	12.9
Residents oppose to the concept of slow – associate it with the slowing down, backwardness	2	6.5
Possible change of local authorities' attitude to the city's membership in the Cittaslow network resulting from serving terms of office	1	3.2