



THE EFFECTS OF CITIES' MEMBERSHIP IN THE CITTASLOW NETWORK IN THE OPINION OF THEIR RESIDENTS: THE EXAMPLE OF BARCZEWO AND BISKUPIEC

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Abstract

The aim of the research was to assess the effects of cities' membership in the Polish National Cittaslow Network based on the opinions of their residents. An attempt was made to identify both positive and negative effects felt in cities and to determine in which areas they occur most. The study used the survey research method. The survey questionnaire was addressed to residents of two slow cities: Biskupiec and Barczewo. Most respondents indicated positive effects of membership in the Cittaslow network. The most benefits were indicated in three areas of the city's functioning: increased tourist attractiveness, expanded cultural offer of the city and better promotion of the city. Importantly, the majority of respondents support the city's continued membership in the network and believe that it will accelerate the economic growth rate and the city's long-term development.

**EFEKTY PRZYNALEŻNOŚCI MIAST DO SIECI CITTASLOW W OPINII
ICH MIESZKAŃCÓW: PRZYKŁAD BARCZEWA I BISKUPCA*****Wioletta Wierzbicka***Wydział Nauk Ekonomicznych
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Słowa kluczowe: miasta *slow*, sieć Cittaslow, efekty członkostwa, badanie opinii mieszkańców.**Abstrakt**

Celem badań była ocena efektów członkostwa miast w Polskiej Krajowej Sieci Miast Cittaslow na podstawie opinii ich mieszkańców. Podjęto próbę identyfikacji zarówno pozytywnych, jak i negatywnych efektów odczuwanych w miastach oraz określenia, w jakich obszarach jest ich najwięcej. Wykorzystano metodę badań sondażowych. Kwestionariusz ankiety skierowano do mieszkańców dwóch *slow cities*: Biskupca i Barczewa. Większość ankietowanych wskazała na występowanie pozytywnych efektów członkostwa ich miasta w sieci Cittaslow. Najwięcej korzyści wskazano w trzech obszarach funkcjonowania miasta: wzrost atrakcyjności turystycznej, poszerzona oferta kulturalna i lepsza promocja miasta. Co ważne, większość ankietowanych popiera dalsze członkostwo miasta w sieci i uważa, że wpłynie to na przyspieszenie tempa wzrostu gospodarczego oraz długofalowy rozwój miasta.

Introduction

Modern cities face many problems of an economic, social and spatial nature and, moreover, they operate in a very dynamically changing environment, which forces them to look for an optimal development model. The answer to this challenge is the slow city concept, which draws attention to improving the quality of life in the city and sustainable development based on local resources. It is an alternative concept of city development that promotes the culture of good and unhurried life.

The concept of slow city was born in Italy from the concept of slow food, initiated by Carlo Petrini, who was outraged by the creation of a McDonald's restaurant on the Spanish Steps in Rome. The originator of the idea to create the Cittaslow network, i.e. a network of cities that would like to develop in accordance with the assumptions of the slow city concept, was Paolo Saturini, mayor of the small Italian town of Grave di Chianti. Together with the authorities of three other cities: Bra, Orvieto and Positano, he initiated the creation of the Cittaslow network

in 1999, which was quickly joined by other Italian cities. In order to legally regulate the functioning of the network, in the same year an association called “Cittaslow – International Network of Cities of Good Life” was established, which is a non-profit organization aimed at promoting and disseminating the culture of good life.

The slow city concept has found and still finds many supporters, not only in Italy, but all over the world. The international Cittaslow network currently includes (June 2024) 301 cities from 33 countries. Small and medium-sized cities with a population not exceeding 50,000 can become members of the network. Cities are initially accepted into the international network, and then create a national network. In Poland, this is the Polish National Cittaslow Network.

Membership in the Cittaslow network is perceived by cities as an opportunity for their development and improvement of the quality of life of their residents. Cities hope to achieve benefits in various spheres: economic, social, natural, spatial, organizational and image, so they are willing to engage in activities consistent with the assumptions of the slow city concept. They undertake numerous initiatives in the field of environmental protection, tourism, development of public space, education and social integration. They engage in cooperation within the network and joint promotional activities (Wierzbicka, 2021, p. 912). Importantly, some effects of the actions taken may be visible shortly after joining the network, while others may have to wait at least a dozen or so years for cities to see them. Due to the above, an attempt to assess the effects achieved by selected Polish cities in connection with their membership in the Cittaslow network was considered important and interesting.

The aim of the research was to assess the effects of cities' membership in the Polish National Cittaslow Network based on the opinions of their residents. An attempt was made to identify both positive and negative effects felt in cities and to determine in which areas they are most abundant. These effects were analysed in the following areas of the city's functioning: local entrepreneurship, labour market, tourism, integration of residents, cultural offer, spatial development, protection of the natural environment, city promotion, quality of life in the city. The research was conducted among residents of two selected slow cities – Biskupiec and Barczewo. Both cities are located in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship. Biskupiec is one of the founding cities of the Polish network, so it has been a member of it for over 15 years, while Barczewo joined the network in 2013, six years later.

The following research question was formulated in the work: In what areas of the city's functioning are the greatest benefits from membership in the Cittaslow network felt? An attempt to answer the research question formulated in this way was formulated in the form of the following research hypothesis: *Membership in the Polish National Cittaslow Network brings the most benefits to cities in the area of promotion.*

Research Methodology

The research was conducted using the diagnostic survey method. The survey questionnaire was distributed to the inhabitants of the selected cities in two ways: directly, by the Author conducting the survey on the streets of the selected cities, and indirectly – via the social media of the researched cities. The survey questionnaire contained 19 closed questions and one open question in which the respondent could share his or her opinion on the subject under study. The questions contained in the questionnaire concerned the respondents' knowledge of the Polish National Network of Cittaslow Cities, the city's membership of the network and the effects of that membership. Respondents were asked to state whether they had observed changes in the above-mentioned areas of the city's functioning and what their degree of impact was. For these types of questions, a Likert scale was used to collect relevant qualitative data. The study was conducted in the period from January 5, 2023 to March 13, 2023 and concerned the effects achieved throughout the entire period of the city's membership in the Cittaslow network. The collected primary data was analysed using ratio analysis.

Literature Review

The Polish Cittaslow network was established in 2007. The founding cities of the network were four cities located in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship: Biskupiec, Bisztynek, Lidzbark Warmiński and Reszel. The Marshal's Office of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship in Olsztyn became a supporting member of the network. The Polish National Network of Cittaslow Cities currently includes 38 cities, including 28 from the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship: Barczewo, Bartoszyce, Biała Piska, Braniewo, Biskupiec, Bisztynek, Działdowo, Dobre Miasto, Głubczyce, Golub-Dobrzyń, Gołdap, Górowo Iławeckie, Jeziorany, Kalety, Kisielice, Lidzbark, Lidzbark Warmiński, Lubawa, Morağ, Murowana Goślina, Nidzica, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie, Nowy Dwór Gdański, Olecko, Olsztynek, Orneta, Pasym, Prudnik, Rejowiec Fabryczny, Reszel, Rzgów, Ryn, Sępól, Sianów, Sierpc, Szczytno, Węgorzewo, Wydminy . The member cities of the Polish Cittaslow network are very diverse. They differ in terms of size, natural and cultural values, as well as socio-economic potential (Janusz, 2018, p. 71-82; Jaszczak & Kristianova, 2019, p. 1-9; Konecka-Szydłowska, 2017, p. 61-73; Senetra & Szarek-Iwaniuk, 2020, p. 1-15; Wierzbicka, 2023, p. 32-41).

The aim of the Polish National Cittaslow Network is to promote and disseminate the idea of a good, harmonious life. The activities of cities cooperating in the network focus on improving the quality of life of residents using valuable, endogenous resources, while striving to maintain the unique character of each of them (Radstrom, 2011, p. 90-113; Hatipoglu, 2015, p. 20-36; Perano *et al.*, 2019, p. 195-203). Cities belonging to the network focus on pro-social and

pro-environmental activities. They try to cultivate traditions and at the same time use innovative ways of organizing the city so as to maintain a balance between development and a quiet pace of life (Strzelecka, 2018, p. 56, 57; Tocci, 2018, p. 110-128).

By adopting the assumptions of the slow city concept and joining the Cittaslow network, cities hope to achieve benefits resulting from both the network membership itself and the cooperation of cities. However, how quickly these benefits will be visible and what their degree of impact will depend on the specificity of a given city, as well as many conditions, both endogenous and exogenous (Farelnik *et al.*, 2021, p. 157).

According to A. Gruszecka-Tieśluk (2013, p. 389, 390) the most important benefits that Cittaslow network member cities can achieve are:

- cross-linking,
- determining the direction of development,
- city promotion.

Cittaslow gives member cities the opportunity to present themselves online at both local and international levels. Networking enables building an aware community and local uniqueness. Cities cooperate with each other and draw on each other's experiences, but importantly, they do not thoughtlessly imitate the behaviour of other network members. Membership in the Cittaslow network is a kind of development guide for cities, which suggests how to properly stimulate the development of the city and the region. Membership in the network is also the promotion of the city, the promotion of a place where you can live well and where it is worth coming to relax, because time passes slower here and there is a friendly atmosphere. A. Szczepańska and K. Pietrzyk (2018, p. 262) emphasize that membership in the association itself is a positive effect, as it allows the use of the Cittaslow brand and logo, and also allows participation in events organized for network members (e.g. international conferences), allows access to innovative ideas or solutions developed, for example, during workshops.

According to P. Szarek-Iwaniak (2019, p. 16), membership in the Cittaslow network significantly influences the development of a given settlement unit and allows for increasing the development opportunities of cities, among others through:

- possibility of being present on many levels;
- exchange of experiences in city management and taking actions;
- cooperation in the promotion of the movement/brand;
- defining a vision for the development of the network, taking into account the individual potential of member cities;
- building regional identity and inhabitants;
- assistance in the development of smaller cities with lower development potential;
- joint implementation of projects aimed at improving the standard of living;
- possibility of receiving financial support, e.g. from European funds.

Similar benefits are also noticed by E. Strzelecka (2017, p. 36), who emphasizes that membership in the network enables cities to shape a common development framework based on "real life" values. Mentioning the importance of building partnerships with residents and their identity, she cites as an example the organization of annual events such as Cittaslow Sunday, and since 2017, Cittaslow Week. She emphasizes that the Supra-local Cittaslow Revitalization Program of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship is an important socio-economic undertaking. It is a document assuming coordinated and targeted urban revitalization. Its goal is to fight poverty, support social inclusion, improve the quality of life in problem areas and improve the tourist offer and cities' attractiveness (Galibarczyk, 2017, p. 119).

Cities hope to achieve benefits in various areas, for example (Wierzbicka, 2022, p. 3, 4; Zawadzka, 2017, p. 99-101):

- economic,
- social,
- nature,
- spatial,
- image.

W. Wierzbicka (2022, p. 3, 4) emphasizes that when it comes to the natural (environmental) sphere, cities have a chance to achieve effects such as improving the quality of the natural environment, sustainable development of the city or increasing the use of alternative energy sources.

Membership in the Cittaslow network is perceived by cities as an opportunity for their development and improvement of the quality of life of their residents. The potential effects of accession to the Cittaslow network include (Erdogan, 2016, p. 244):

- benefits resulting from the cooperation of cities within the network;
- setting directions for sustainable development of the city based on the list of mandatory certification criteria;
- city promotion;
- building awareness among residents of the city's resources and strengths;
- co-financing from EU funds;
- higher revenues from tourism.

According to E. Farelnek, A. Stanowicka and W. Wierzbicka (2017, p. 421, 422) in addition to the previously mentioned benefits, cities can also achieve such benefits as:

- an increase in the inhabitants' satisfaction with living in the city and, consequently, e.g. a decrease in the scale of migration;
- increase in demand for products and services, which increases the investment attractiveness of the city;
- increase in investment, which will provide residents with new jobs and higher incomes;

- economic growth and development of the city made possible by stable internal demand and investments;
- increase in the city's attractiveness as a tourist destination, which will stimulate further economic growth;
- creation of a clear and desirable image of the city, which will further improve the city's competitiveness.

The latter benefit is very often emphasised in the literature. This is because towns cooperating with each other have the opportunity to carry out more effective promotion and increase the prestige of the towns, for example by using the Cittaslow logo. Cities organise joint promotional activities such as festivals and workshops, which not only promote the cities, but also strengthen cooperation within the network, foster the exchange of know-how, ideas and good practices (Wierzbicka, 2021, p. 910). An example of such activities is, for example, the participation of cities in the annual international competition "Chiocciola Orange" for the best practice in the Cittaslow network. The promotion of Cittaslow towns is intended to show that life in a small town is good because it is close to nature, high-quality products, strong local communities and a friendly atmosphere. The common image of 'good life' towns is supposed to be an impulse that revitalises the economy and the activity of the inhabitants, it is supposed to allow small towns to 'appear', improve their competitiveness and economic situation (Szczepańska & Świdorski, 2017, p. 159).

As emphasised by many authors, membership in the Cittaslow network is also supposed to help cities in obtaining EU funds – this is referred to, for example, in the Tourism Development Strategy of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship until 2025 (Szczepańska & Pietrzyk, 2018, p. 262). Membership in the network is supposed to be an asset for the city when applying for funding, as it is a sign that the city has a coherent development concept and actively seeks opportunities for promotion and socio-economic development (Szczepańska & Świdorski, 2017, p. 158). Cooperation between authorities and local stakeholders (private as well as public entities) can strengthen the development of cities (Zadęcka, 2018, p. 103), accelerate their economic growth, help reduce poverty, and implement innovative economic projects (Strzelecka, 2017, p. 35).

Membership of the Cittaslow network is an important factor that can positively influence the development of the tourism potential of small towns (Treutle, 2017, p. 260). The effect of towns' membership in the network can also be the restoration and revitalisation of old town centres and monuments (Lewandowska *et al.*, 2019, p. 566). According to W. Pawłowski and E. Strzelecka (2017, p. 7) it is the city centres (especially historic cities) that should play a leading role in creating the tourist attractiveness of slow cities.

"According to the authorities of the cities belonging to the network, the most important effects of membership, already visible in some cities, are: more effective promotion of the city, revitalisation and activation of certain areas of the city, obtaining additional sources of financing for investments and improving

the aesthetic value, quality and accessibility of public space in cities” (Farelnik *et al.*, 2021, p. 157). The introduction of modern technological solutions in cities, the practical use of the historical fabric and the uniqueness of cities are also visible. There is also a change in human behaviour, an increase in tourism, high standards of hospitality and an expansion of the cultural offer. Residents are beginning to see the potential of their surroundings and the possibility of financial gain, and they recognise the many measures being taken in the city to improve quality of life (Szczepańska & Pietrzyk, 2018, p. 262-263).

When talking about the benefits of cities becoming members of the Cittaslow network, it is also worth mentioning some of the negative effects that may accompany this. The most frequently mentioned are (Wierzbicka, 2021, p. 908):

- the need to pay an annual membership fee,
- the misunderstanding of the slow city concept and thus the identification of network cities with open-air museums, backward cities or slow cities,
- homogenisation of cities,
- increasing number of tourists attracted by improving the tourist attractiveness of a city.

Cities belonging to the Cittaslow network are perceived by some as open-air museum towns and are wrongly identified with lazy or backward cities (Zadęcka, 2017, p. 170). The idea of Cittaslow, whose hallmark is the snail, is wrongly associated with laziness and slowing down, whereas it should be associated with calm but modern living. This misunderstanding of the slow city idea is due to the cultural difference between Poland and Italy, the cradle of the movement. According to M. Szczepańska and A. Świdorski (2017, p. 159, 160), in Italy the idea of slowing down the pace of life fits perfectly with a lifestyle in the spirit of ‘vita lente’. In Poland, on the other hand, technological development, increased consumption and living standards are still followed, which for many seems to contradict the idea of slow and the snail logo. This is why Poland’s lack of readiness for solutions aimed at slowing down the pace of life is sometimes mentioned.

A disadvantageous effect of network membership may also be the homogenisation of cities, i.e. the similarity of cities to each other, which may result from the fact that all network cities are based on mutually duplicated elements of development (Szczepańska & Pietrzyk, 2018, p. 263).

A threat arising from membership of the Cittaslow network may also be the increasing number of tourists, which may disrupt the development of the town, negatively affect the environment or over-saturate town centres, giving them a commercial character (Grzelak-Kostulska *et al.*, 2011, p. 189-191). An increase in the number of tourists can contribute to the loss of attractiveness of a place, disrupt the development of an area and lead to the disruption of social ties (Szczepańska & Pietrzyk, 2018, p. 262, 263).

The mayor of one of the founding cities of the Polish Cittaslow network, namely Lidzbark Warmiński – Mr. Jacek Wiśniowski in an interview concerning

the effects of joining the Cittaslow network points out that there are certain threats in the context of the long-term development of the slow cities. He stresses that in order to avoid these risks, a member city must have strong foundations, i.e. a vision of development based on proven resources and a thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses (Strzelecka, 2017, p. 37).

In summary, by joining the Cittaslow network and entering into co-operation with other member towns, towns expect to achieve a number of benefits, including improved quality of life for their inhabitants, increased attractiveness for tourists, improved image of the town or raising additional funds for investment. In the long term, cities also expect to improve their level of socio-economic development. As C. Honoré (2012), this process is already being observed in many Italian cities, where joining the Cittaslow network has allowed member cities to reduce unemployment and breathe new life into a 'limping' economy.

Results

A total of 80 people took part in the survey, including 53 women and 27 men. The respondents were first asked whether they were aware that the city they lived in was a member of the Polish National Cittaslow Network. Sixty-seven people (84% of respondents) answered this question in the affirmative, with the remaining people (16% of respondents) answering in the negative. This result means that most of the surveyed inhabitants know about the Cittaslow network and the fact that the town in which they live belongs to the network. This may reflect the effective promotion of the network in the surveyed cities and the respondents' interest in what is happening in the city (cf. Batyk & Woźniak, 2019, p. 60).

Next, people who knew about their city's membership in the Cittaslow network were asked whether they noticed any positive effects of this membership. The respondents' responses are presented in Figure 1.

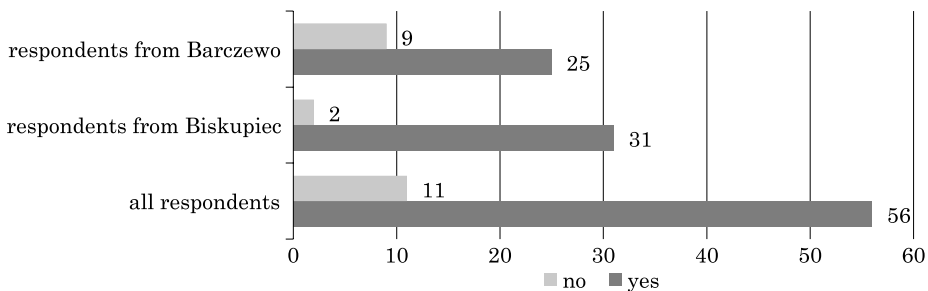


Fig. 1. Noticing the positive effects of membership in the Cittaslow network
Source: own study based on survey research.

As many as 56 respondents (84% of the total) indicated that they noticed positive effects of cities' membership in the Cittaslow network. This may mean that membership in the network has a real impact on the changes taking place in the city, because residents are already feeling them. A higher percentage of affirmative answers (94%) was recorded in Biskupiec, which may be related to the fact that it has been part of the network longer than Barczewo, so more positive effects had a chance to be revealed there.

Respondents who admitted that they felt benefits from their city's membership in the Cittaslow network were asked to indicate in what areas they noticed these positive effects and what is the degree of their impact. A five-point Likert scale was used to examine residents' opinions in this regard. Respondents were asked to rate their observations on a scale from 0 to 4, where 0 meant no noticeable effects, 1 – a small number of noticeable effects, 2 – an average number of noticeable effects, 3 – a significant number of noticeable effects and 4 – a lot of noticeable effects. The distribution of the answers provided is shown in Figure 2.

According to the respondents, the least positive effects of membership in the network are currently felt in areas such as: improvement of the situation on the labor market and, interestingly, better integration of city residents. The lack or small number of noticeable effects in these areas were indicated by 39% and 41% of respondents, respectively. Only 11% of respondents indicated a very large number of effects observed in the labor market. This is probably due to the fact that such changes are rather long-term and strongly dependent on the economic situation of the country and the region.

The respondents indicated that the most positive effects of the city's membership in the network are visible in the following areas: tourist attractiveness of the city, cultural offer of the city and promotion of the city. In the area of the city's tourist attractiveness, the vast majority of respondents (61%) notice a lot of positive effects, and another 23% notice a significant number of them. In the opinion of city residents, membership in the network also has a significant impact on expanding the city's cultural offer. 50% of respondents indicated a very large number of positive effects in this area, and a significant number of them were indicated by another 34%. Interestingly, not a single person indicated a lack of noticeable effects in this area. Almost half of the surveyed residents (46%) also indicated that there were many positive effects in the area of city promotion. Another 34% of respondents indicated a significant number of them.

Many positive effects were also recorded in the area of spatial development of the city and the development of cooperation with other cities in the network. A very large and significant number of effects were indicated in these areas by 57% and 55% of respondents, respectively. A slightly smaller percentage of respondents – 45% also indicated a very large or significant number of positive effects in the area of development of local entrepreneurship and quality of life in the city, which is crucial from the point of view of the assumptions of the slow city concept.

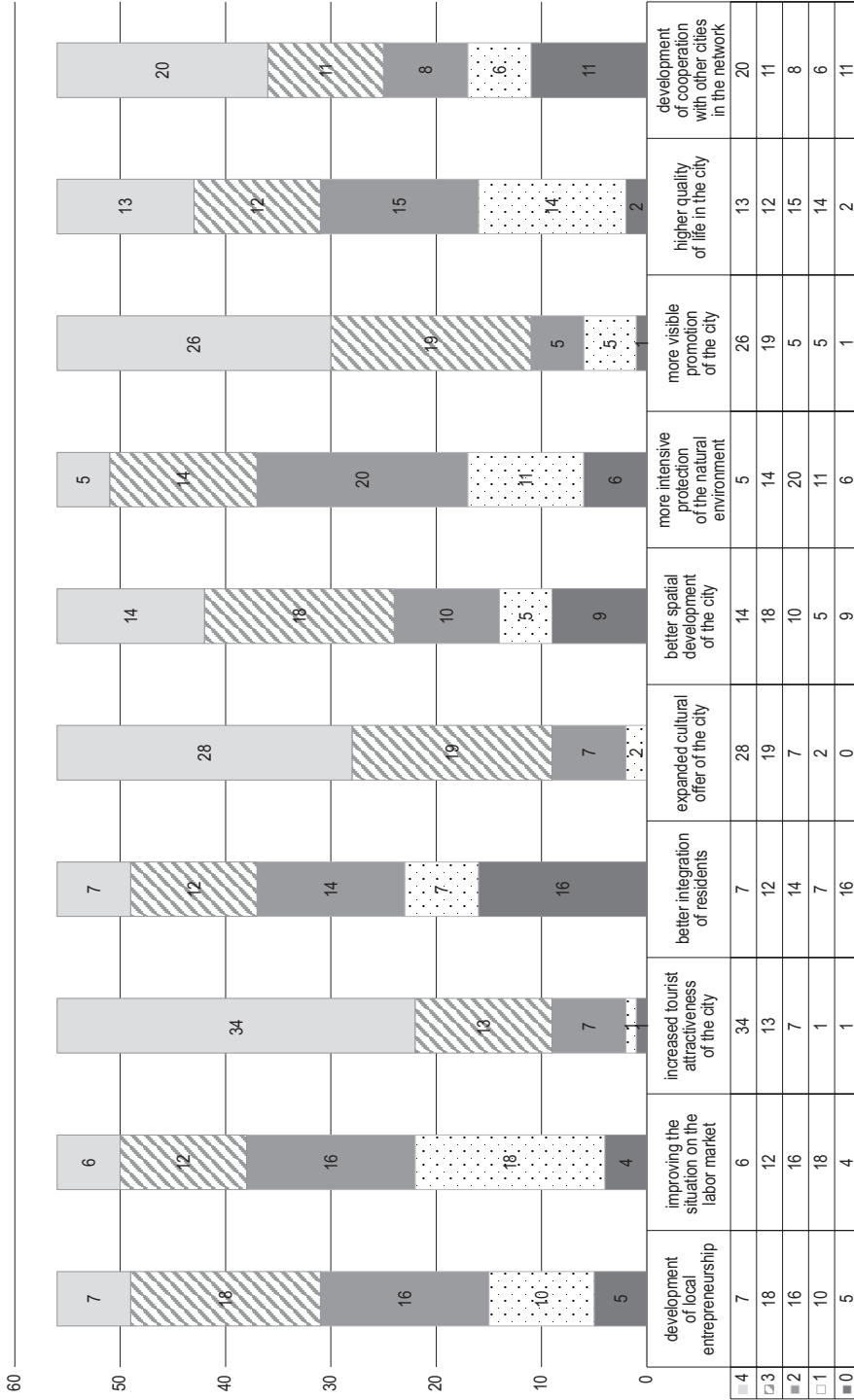


Fig. 2. Benefits from cities' membership in the Polish Cittaslow network, in the opinion of their residents

Source: own study based on survey research.

Next, the respondents were asked whether they noticed and felt any negative effects of their city's membership in the Cittaslow network. Only 4% of respondents answered this question affirmatively, 96% of respondents indicated that they did not notice or feel any negative effects. Respondents who indicated negative effects of the city's membership in the Cittaslow network were asked in which areas these negative effects occur and what is the degree of their impact. The respondents indicated that negative effects occur in areas such as: residents' reluctance to the idea of slow, as it is associated with slowness and backwardness; homogenization of the city, because it loses its uniqueness and becomes similar to other cities in the network; increase in tourist traffic, which becomes burdensome for residents. However, respondents indicated a small number of negative effects in these areas.

Residents of the surveyed cities were also asked to answer two questions: do they support their city's continued membership in the Cittaslow network and will its continued membership in the Cittaslow network result in accelerating the economic growth rate and long-term development of the city? Importantly, as many as 97% of respondents (65 out of 67 people) were in favour of continuing to belong to the network. The structure of the answer to the second question is shown in Figure 3.

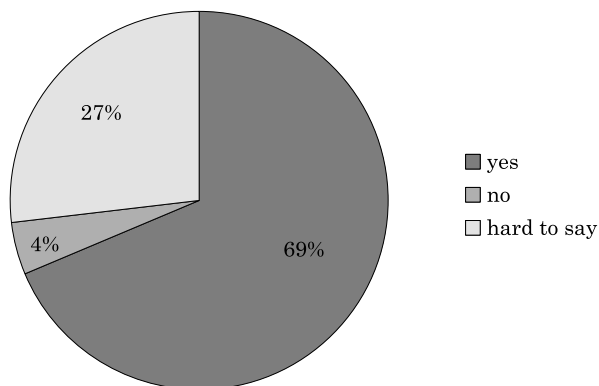


Fig. 3. Do you think that continued membership in the Cittaslow network will accelerate the economic growth rate and long-term development of the city?

Source: own study based on survey research.

Out of 67 respondents who had knowledge about Cittaslow and their city's membership in the network, as many as 46 people (69% of the total) believe that further membership in the network may accelerate the economic growth rate and long-term development of the city. Eighteen people (27% of respondents) stated that it was difficult for them to say at the moment whether such an effect would occur. Only 3 people answered this question in the negative.

Summary and Conclusions

Small cities are currently looking for alternative development models that would help them solve the problems they are struggling with and that would enable them to achieve dynamic but sustainable development. One of such models is the slow city model, according to which member cities of the international and Polish Cittaslow network are developing. A city's membership in the network increases its prestige and sets directions for development. In order to be a certified Cittaslow city, a candidate must meet many formal requirements and, in the certification process, fulfil over 50% of the criteria in 7 macro-areas. As a member city of the network, it must, in turn, strive to improve the degree of fulfilment of the above-mentioned criteria, which guides its development.

By adopting the assumptions of the slow city concept and joining the Cittaslow network of cities, member cities hope to achieve various benefits resulting from the membership in the network itself, as well as from the cooperation of cities. They expect to achieve benefits in the cultural, environmental, social and economic spheres. Slow cities hope primarily to improve the quality of life of their inhabitants, but also to improve the situation on the labor market, develop local entrepreneurship, expand the cultural offer and improve spatial development. Membership in the network is to be an opportunity for the sustainable development of the city and is intended to help discover and show its uniqueness and promote the culture of harmonious life without rush. Are these expected effects already felt in cities?

The conducted research shows that the knowledge of the Cittaslow network and the respondents' awareness of their city's membership in this network is quite high (almost 85% of respondents were aware of it). However, it may be surprising that some of the towns' inhabitants did not have such knowledge. This may indicate insufficient promotion of the network and the need for an additional information campaign for city residents. Significantly, 84% of respondents who were aware of their town's membership of the Cittaslow network admitted to noticing positive effects of that membership. Most positive effects were indicated in such areas as: the tourist attractiveness of the town, the cultural offer of the town and the promotion of the town. A lot of positive effects were also reported in the area of town planning and the development of cooperation with other towns in the network. According to those surveyed, the least positive effects from membership of the network have been felt to date in terms of improvements in the labour market and, interestingly, better integration of townspeople. Importantly, only 4% of respondents indicated the existence of some negative effects of Cittaslow network membership. In their opinion, a small number of negative effects can be seen in such areas as: the reluctance of the inhabitants towards the idea of slow, as it is associated with slowing down and backwardness; the homogenisation of the town, as it loses its uniqueness and becomes similar to other towns in the network; the increase in tourist traffic, which becomes burdensome for the

inhabitants. The survey shows that as many as 97% of respondents are in favour of continuing to belong to the network. In addition, almost 70% of respondents believe that continued membership in the network can boost economic growth and the long-term development of the city.

In summary, the respondents' opinions show that in the surveyed towns belonging to the Polish Cittaslow network the most benefits were achieved in the following three areas: increased tourist attractiveness, expanded cultural offer and better promotion of the town. The research hypothesis, which assumed that: "Membership in the Polish National Cittaslow Network brings the most benefits to the cities in the area of promotion" was therefore verified positively. However, the results of the conducted research are not representative for the entire Polish Cittaslow network. Therefore, there is a need to carry out further research which would concern all towns of the network and would be conducted on a representative sample of their inhabitants, and perhaps also of the entrepreneurs located there.

Nevertheless, the presented research results constitute a certain contribution to the discussion on the effects of cities' membership in the Cittaslow network. The results of the research show that membership in the network brings positive effects and is perceived by residents as an opportunity for development and improvement of the quality of life in the city. However, the scale of the effects achieved in a given city depends on many factors, including the involvement of the city authorities and its residents in taking actions consistent with the assumptions of the slow city concept, the possibility of obtaining financial resources for the implementation of this type of activities or the cooperation of cities within the network. The scale of the achieved effects also depends on the specificity of a given city and its endogenous potential.

Translated by Authors

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