



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLISH NATIONAL CITTASLOW NETWORK

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JEL Classification: O18; R11.

Key words: city, idea Cittaslow, Polish National Cittaslow Network, diversity of cities.

Abstract

The purpose of this article has been to present the history of the Polish National Cittaslow Network, to discuss its development and to draw the attention to the diversity of network member cities.

The authors emphasise the fact that the Polish National Cittaslow Network is developing very dynamically, and is the second largest network of Cittaslow in the world. Today, it is composed of 28 cities, of which 20 lie in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship. Other two centers are currently in the process of joining the network.

The member cities are diverse in terms of their size as well as environmental or cultural assets. They are also diverse in terms of the level of socio-economic development. There are such cities in the network whose level of entrepreneurship, measured by the number of private sector businesses per 1,000 residents, is much higher than the average for the whole network (Rzgów, Murowana Goślina), but there are also cities with a very low level of entrepreneurship (Rejowiec Fabryczny, Jeziorany). Despite the differences, the cities associated in the network share the same concept and pursue shared aims in order to improve the quality of life for their inhabitants. They are proponents of implementing pro-social and pro-environmental measures, while striving to preserve the unique character of each of these cities.

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Słowa kluczowe: miasto, idea Cittaslow, Polska Krajowa Sieć Miast Cittaslow, zróżnicowanie miast.

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu było przedstawienie historii powstania Polskiej Krajowej Sieci Miast Cittaslow, omówienie jej rozwoju oraz zwrócenie uwagi na zróżnicowanie miast członkowskich sieci.

W rozważaniach podkreślono, że Polska Krajowa Sieć Miast Cittaslow rozwija się bardzo dynamicznie i stanowi drugą co do wielkości sieć Cittaslow na świecie. Członkami polskiej sieci Cittaslow jest obecnie 28 miast, w tym 20 z województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego. W trakcie procesu przystępowania do sieci są już kolejne dwa ośrodki.

Miasta członkowskie sieci są zróżnicowane nie tylko pod względem wielkości, posiadanych walorów przyrodniczych czy kulturowych. Są też zróżnicowane pod względem poziomu rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego. W sieci znajdują się miasta, w których poziom rozwoju przedsiębiorczości, mierzony liczbą podmiotów sektora prywatnego przypadających na 1000 mieszkańców, jest zdecydowanie wyższy od średniej dla ogółu miast sieci (Rzgów, Murowana Goślina). Są też miasta o bardzo niskim poziomie rozwoju przedsiębiorczości (Rejowiec Fabryczny, Jeziorany). Pomimo tego zróżnicowania, miasta zrzeszone w sieci przyjęły wspólną ideę i realizują wspólne cele, aby polepszyć jakość życia mieszkańców. Stawiają na działania prospołeczne i prośrodowiskowe, dbając przy tym o zachowanie niepowtarzalnego charakteru każdego z miast.

Introduction

The idea of Cittaslow originated in Italy in 1999. This is a novel concept of the development of a town, which promotes the culture of a good and harmonious life as an alternative to a big city's hectic life and progressing globalisation. Cittaslow is a concept of balanced development, which ensures adequate relations between the economic growth, conservation of the environment and improvement of the residents' quality of life. This is a concept which presumes the implementation of modern technologies and innovative ways of urban management in order to ensure that the peaceful pace of life does not collide with the constant and thoughtful development.

The concept of Cittaslow has found many proponents both in Italy and all across the world. The international Cittaslow network today comprises 250 cities. The network can be joined by small and medium-size cities with a population of no more than 50,000. Cities are first admitted to the international network, and after reaching the required minimum number of cities in the country, they create a national network. In Poland, this is called the Polish National Cittaslow Network.

The purpose of this article has been to present the history of the Polish National Cittaslow Network, to discuss its development and to draw the attention to the diversity of network member cities.

The considerations contained in this paper arise from a review of the subject literature and from an analysis of secondary data obtained from the offices of the Polish National Cittaslow Network and from the Local Data Bank.

History of the Cittaslow network in Poland

The Cittaslow movement was born in Italy in 1999 (*città* means a city in Italian) and its purpose was to extend the concept of “slow food” to other aspects of urban living and to use it in designing and planning cities.

The creation of the Cittaslow network was initiated by the authorities of 4 Italian cities: Bra, Greve in Chianti, Orvieto and Positano. The new concept of city development very quickly found many supporters. Many Italian cities became interested in “a new quality of life”, identifying themselves as being a good and quiet city as opposed to globalised cities that are always in a rush (Ball, 2015, p. 565, 566). To formalise the network, in 1999 the association called the “Cittaslow – International Network of Cities of the Good Life” (Cittaslow in short) was established. The association is a non-profit organisation whose aim is to “promote and spread the culture of good living through research, testing and application of solutions for the city organisation” (*International Cittaslow Charter...*, 2014, p. 5).

The idea of Cittaslow emphasises local distinctiveness in a context of globalisation and seeks to improve the quality of life locally (Pink, 2008, p. 97). It is an alternative life philosophy, a type of mobilization encouraging sustainable, original and fair urban development against globalisation (Semmens & Freeman, 2012, p. 357). The idea of Cittaslow is a response to the need for change due to the incompatibility of past development ideas focused primarily on economic growth, without regard to environmental issues and the quality of life of individuals (Gruszecka-Tieśluk, 2013, p. 383). It is much more than an urban design ideology. Cittaslow is one of the more important ideas in the prevention of urban agglomeration and the stress of a busy city life (Grzelak-Kostulska *et al.*, 2011, p. 186). Cittaslow promises to maintain small-town distinctiveness by protecting the local heritage, slowing the pace of life and increasing livability, while supporting the principles of sustainable development (Hatipoglu, 2015, p. 33).

The Cittaslow network brings together small cities with a population of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants. In order to join the network (apart from the size criterion), the city needs to meet more than 50% of the 72 criteria grouped into seven categories (*International Cittaslow Charter...*, 2014, p. 27-29):

- energy and environmental policy;
- infrastructure policies;

- quality of urban life policies;
- agricultural, turistic and artisan policies;
- policies for hospitality, awareness and training;
- social cohesion policy;
- partnership policy.

Cities belonging to the Cittaslow network have the aim of sustaining their unique characteristics, while also improving the urban conditions so that a city becomes a better environment in which its residents are able to enjoy living (Radstrom, 2011, p. 96). Slow cities agrees to work towards a set of goals that aim to improve the quality of life of citizens and visitors, and to share good ideas, experiences and knowledge across the national and international Cittaslow networks (Miele, 2008, p. 135; Heitmann *et al.*, 2011, p. 116, 117).

At present (September 2018), the international Cittaslow network consists of 252 cities from around the world. The network is dominated by European cities – currently there are about 190. The second most numerous are Asian cities – about 50 cities on that continent are cities of “good life”. The European leader in terms of the number of Cittaslow cities is Italy – as many as 84 cities work together as part of the network. Poland comes in the second, with its 28 cities, and the third place is occupied by Germany – 19 cities. As for Asian countries, the majority of Cittaslow cities are in Turkey and South Korea (15 in each of them) (*Cittaslow List*, 2018, p. 1-10).

The idea of Cittaslow reached Poland in 2003. The first Polish city which decided to join the international Cittaslow network was Reszel. The efforts to enter the network started in July 2004, and were initiated by the local government of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, the municipality of Reszel and the Zamek Cultural Association in Reszel. The subsequent cities in the region of Warmia and Mazury which joined the network of ‘good life cities’ were Bisztynek, Biskupiec and Lidzbark Warmiński. These three cities passed a resolution in July 2005 to enter the network. They also expressed their wish to create a national network of Cittaslow. As a result, the Marshal of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, the mayors of Biskupiec, Bisztynek, Lidzbark Warmiński and Reszel, and the President of the association “Cittaslow – International Network of Cities of the Good Life”, signed a letter of intent concerning the establishment of the Polish National Cittaslow Network.

For the national network to be established, several formal requirements needed to be met by the local government of the voivodeship and by the candidate cities:

- to obtain an approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to join the international association Cittaslow;
- to create posts for Cittaslow matters in municipal offices;
- to make a study trip to cities which belong to the international association Cittaslow;

- to develop a regulation of the Polish National Cittaslow Network¹;
- to successfully undergo the process of certification.

Having satisfied all formal requirements, the Polish National Cittaslow Network was established on 13 April 2007. The network member cities were Biskupiec, Bisztynek, Lidzbark Warmiński and Reszel (the network's founding city), while the Marshal Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship became a supporting member.

The goal of the Polish National Cittaslow Network is to promote and spread the idea of a good life for town residents by implementing in towns certain solutions which belong to the scope of environmental and infrastructural policy, urban space, hospitality, social cohesion and partnership (*Regulamin Polskiej Krajowej...*, 2017, p. 1). The head office of the Polish National Cittaslow Network is the Marshal Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, and the network's organs are (*Regulamin Polskiej Krajowej...*, 2017, p. 3, 4):

- National Assembly of the Members – consists of representatives of all member towns of the national network, and is the network's highest authority;
- National Coordinating Committee – composed of representatives of 8 member towns of the national network;
- National Science Committee – composed of experts from different fields (5 to 7 persons indicated by the National Coordinating Committee).

The network is coordinated by the office of the Polish National Cittaslow Network, set up in October 2008 and incorporated within the structures of the Marshal Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship.

The Polish National Cittaslow Network, being the second largest network of Cittaslow in the world, is distinguished by a very high rate of new cities entering the network. The network was first expanded in 2010, while the latest incorporation of new members took place in 2017 (Tab. 1). Two more centers are in the process of being admitted to the network: Braniewo and Wydminy.

At present (September 2018), the Polish National Cittaslow Network is composed of 28 cities, of which as many as 20 lie in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship (Fig. 1).

The fact that Poland – a country inhabited by people who are not very optimistic – has the second largest network of Cittaslow among 30 countries with Cittaslow networks – is kind of a phenomenon, which positively contributes to the further development of this network in Poland as well as to the achievement of tangible benefits resulting from its membership in this network (Zawadzka, 2017, p. 95). It is therefore worth emphasising that the dynamic development of the Cittaslow network in Poland, and especially in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, is an outcome of numerous measures undertaken to promote the concept of cities of 'good life'. Below are a few examples:

¹The original regulation has been amended a few times. The current regulation was approved on 20 April 2017 by Resolution 3/2017 of the Polish National Cittaslow Network.

– the Marshal Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship conducted two projects: *Promoting the concept of Cittaslow in Warmia, Mazury and Powiśle*, and *Cittaslow – a network of towns in Warmia, Mazury and Powiśle promoting good quality of life*. These projects were executed under the Regional Operational Programme for Warmia and Mazury in 2007-2013, and co-funded from the European Regional Development Fund;

– in June 2013, the Provincial Assembly of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship resolved to adopt the *Strategy for the Social and Economic Development of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship until the year 2025*, in which the international cooperation under the framework of partnership towns (including the Cittaslow network) was named as one of the operational goals (*Strategia rozwoju...* 2013, p. 29, 47);

– in June 2016, the updated *Strategy for the Development of Tourism in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship* was accepted, where the slow cities were a tourist product of the region shaping the region's image among potential visitors (*Strategia rozwoju turystyki...*, 2016, p. 39, 40);

– in November 2017, an office Cittaslow International was opened in Olsztyn; the office has been delegated the international tasks of the Cittaslow movement, connected with the European policy as well as with contacting towns in Central and Eastern Europe which are interested in joining the Cittaslow network.

The Polish National Cittaslow Network is developing very dynamically. The member cities focus on gradually improving the living conditions for their residents, protecting the nature, landscape and cultural values, and on creating the grounds and instruments for the implementation of sustainable growth principles (Szelałowska, 2014, p. 221, 222). According to the concept of Cittaslow, the cities take care of their history, nature, tradition and hospitality.

Table 1

Members of the Polish National Cittaslow Networks, including the year of their admission

Members of the Polish National Cittaslow Network	Year of admission	Number of new members admitted in the same year
Biskupiec, Bisztynek, Lidzbark Warmiński, Reszel	2007	4
Murowana Goślina, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	2010	2
Lubawa, Olsztynek, Ryn	2012	3
Barczewo, Dobre Miasto, Gołdap	2013	3
Górowo Iławeckie, Kalety, Nidzica, Nowy Dwór Gdański, Pasym, Rejowiec Fabryczny	2014	6
Bartoszyce, Działdowo, Lidzbark, Orneta, Prudnik	2015	5
Głubczyce, Jeziorany, Sępólno	2016	3
Rzgów, Sianów	2017	2

Source: the table was developed by the authors, based on the *Cittaslow List* (2018, p. 7) and information provided by the Marshal Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship.

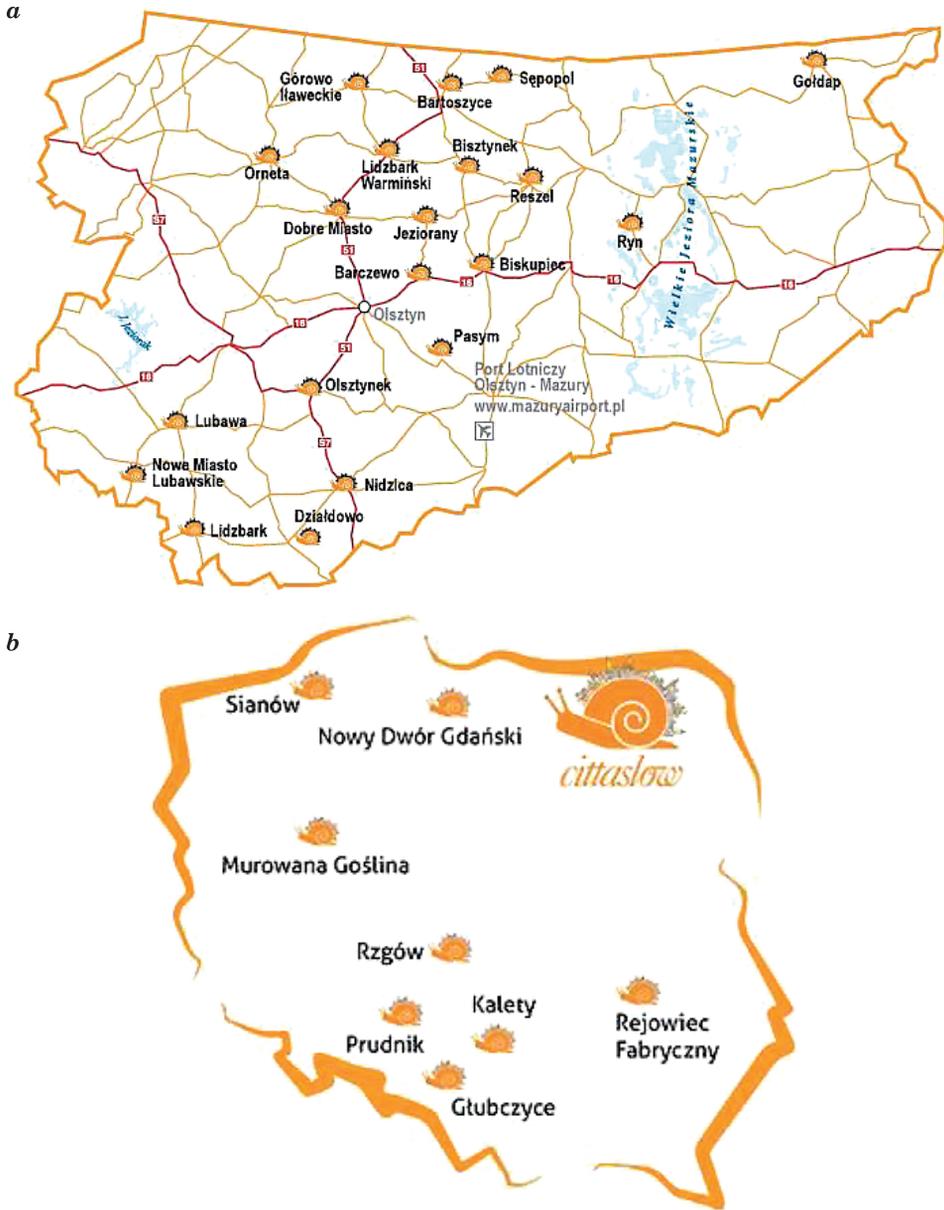


Fig. 1. Cities who are members of the Polish National Cittaslow Network: *a* – in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, *b* – in other Voivodeships
 Source: website of the Polish National Cittaslow Network (*About Cittaslow*, 2018).

Yet, they have no intention of becoming live skansens. The towns have set up an association called the Polish Cities of Cittaslow, which is a legal person and is an object predisposed to acquire funds from external sources to develop and promote the whole network. The association was started on 18 March 2015, by 11 member cities of Polish National Cittaslow Network. Today (September 2018), the association gathers 21 cities of Polish National Cittaslow Network, including 20 from the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, as well as the Kalety from the Śląskie Voivodeship. The association is a partner of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship in the scope of executing the project titled *Supralocal Programme of City Revitalisation of Cittaslow Network in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship*. This program concerns 19 cities of the network, i.e. Barczewa, Bartoszyce, Biskupca, Bisztynka, Dobrego Miasta, Działdowa, Goldapi, Górowa Haweckie-go, Jezioran, Lidzbarka, Lidzbarka Warmińskiego, Lubawy, Nidzicy, Nowego Miasta Lubawskiego, Olsztynka, Ornety, Pasymia, Reszla and Rynu. The aim of the program is to achieve coordinated and complex revitalisation of degraded areas of the cities in the Cittaslow network, so that they can preserve their unique character and values while offering better living conditions to their inhabitants. The cities are to be allocated over 200 million PLN under the framework of the Regional Operational Programme for the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship in 2014-2020, to finance the attainment of this goal.

Thus, the fact that a city operates in the spirit of slow life does not equate to any deceleration of its economic growth. On the contrary, as shown by A. Augustyn (2011, p. 745), it means development through an improvement of the quality of life for the city's inhabitants, which simultaneously increases the city's competitiveness. The concept of Cittaslow does not exclude innovativeness of cities, either. According to E. Strzelecka (2017, p. 35, 36), slow cities combine the cultural identity and tradition with innovative actions. However, M. Bryx (2014, p. 239) highlights that the key to attaining such innovativeness, that is successfully completing investment projects (not only pro-ecological ones), is to acquire more funds than these cities themselves would manage to secure alone.

The member cities of the Polish National Cittaslow Network

All Polish cities which belong to the Cittaslow network have a population of less than 50,000. As many as 25 cities are small, with up to 20,000 residents. Only three cities, Działdowo, Prudnik and Bartoszyce, are medium-size cities, with more than 20,000 inhabitants. The average size of a Polish cities in the network is around 9.4 thousand people².

² For comparison, an average size of a cities in the Italian network is 9.2 thousand, but in Europe it reaches 13.8 thousand people (more on this question in: Maćkiewicz & Konecka-Szydłowska, 2017, p. 297-309).

The cities in the Polish network are diverse not only in the size of population but also in the population density, their situation in the labour market, or their level of social and economic development (see: Janusz, 2018, p. 71-82; Konecka-Szydłowska, 2017, p. 61-73). To characterize the level of this diversity, Table 2 presents selected statistical data on the member cities of the network.

As many as 20 cities in the Polish National Cittaslow Network lie in rural-urban municipalities, with just 8 being purely urban municipalities. The average population density in these cities is 1,098 persons per km². The city with the highest population density (i.e. 2,143 persons/km²) is Dobre Miasto, situated in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, district of Olsztyn. The city with the lowest population density, with only 113 persons/km², is Kalety, lying in the Śląskie Voivodeship, the district of Tarnowskie Góry. It is an urban municipality, where around 85% of the surface area is covered by forests.

The Polish slow cities are also diverse in terms of the development of entrepreneurship, measured by the number of businesses from the private business sector per 1,000 inhabitants. The coefficient of variation in this case reached over 30%, which corresponds to a moderate variation³. The mostly highly developed entrepreneurship was found in the cities: Rzgów (209 private sector business enterprises per 1,000 residents, versus the average for all towns equaling 92 businesses) and Murowana Goślina (144 private sector enterprises per 1,000 residents). The high level of entrepreneurship in these two cities stems from their specific location. Rzgów lies in the Łódź agglomeration, while Murowana Goślina is located within the Poznań agglomeration. The lowest level of entrepreneurship is in Rejowiec Fabryczny, in the Lubelskie Voivodeship, the district of Chełm. This city is characterised by a poorly developed sector of small and medium-size businesses, a mono-functional structure of industry and a relatively high unemployment rate. Consequently, there are only 51 private sector business entities per 1,000 residents.

The situation looks slightly differently in the case of entrepreneurship in areas connected with tourism, hospitality and catering, culture and recreation, since these are areas which are particularly important for towns following the concept of Cittaslow. The highest share of businesses in these areas (in sections *I* and *R*, according to the Polish Classification of Activities), reaching nearly 13% in the total number of economic entities registered in the REGON system, is found in Ryn. This city lies in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, in the district of Giżycko. The city is situated between two lakes and has great tourism and cultural appeal. A high share of business subjects within this area is also noted in Reszel (nearly 7.5%). This city is situated in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, in the district of Kętrzyn. Reszel prides itself

³ In line with the interpretation presented in the subject references, it has been assumed that the coefficient of variation less than 10% means non-significant variation, within the interval of <10%; 40%> moderate variation, and above 40% large heterogeneity of the analysed variable in the group examined.

Table 2

Characteristics of cities in the Polish National Cittaslow Network (date from 31 December 2016)

City	Type of municipality*	Total population	Population density (number of persons per 1 km ²)	Number of working persons per 1,000 inhabitants	Number of private sector businesses per 1,000 inhabitants	Share of section I and R** in total number of economic entities [%]
Barczewo	r-u	7,376	1,610	232.0	72.4	3.3
Bartoszyce	u	24,001	2,036	228.2	85.2	4.0
Biskupiec	r-u	10,585	2,117	262.0	90.8	3.9
Bisztynek	r-u	2,418	1,119	210.5	76.9	1.9
Dobre Miasto	r-u	10,414	2,143	282.0	76.7	4.4
Działdowo	u	21,355	1,862	325.1	80.0	4.2
Głubczyce	r-u	12,735	1,016	293.8	121.0	2.9
Goldap	r-u	13,771	801	273.5	95.1	4.8
Górowo Iławeckie	u	4,068	1,225	169.4	89.5	4.3
Jeżiorany	r-u	3,264	957	142.2	62.8	4.9
Kalety	u	8,616	113	86.4	79.6	3.8
Lidzbark	r-u	7,996	1,408	194.1	68.9	5.3
Lidzbark Warmiński	u	16,040	1,118	250.9	92.5	4.2
Lubawa	u	10,199	606	518.9	82.3	4.1
Murowana Goślina	r-u	10,404	1,207	224.1	144.2	3.7
Nidzica	r-u	14,050	2,048	288.8	89.3	3.7
Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	u	11,085	975	282.7	89.7	4.3
Nowy Dwór Gdański	r-u	9,962	1,965	221.4	99.3	6.8
Olsztynek	r-u	7,656	996	305.9	89.3	5.0
Orneta	r-u	8,921	926	120.4	99.1	3.8
Pasym	r-u	2,542	167	132.6	79.9	7.0
Prudnik	r-u	21,368	1,042	223.7	84.6	5.0
Rejowiec Fabryczny	u	4,430	310	106.8	51.0	4.1
Reszel	r-u	4,676	1,224	165.1	81.3	7.4
Ryn	r-u	2,900	700	191.4	101.4	12.8
Rzgów	r-u	3,378	201	817.9	209.0	5.4
Sępól	r-u	2,005	433	107.2	78.3	5.0
Sianów	r-u	6,633	418	142.0	110.7	4.5
Arithmetic mean		9,387	1,098	242.8	92.2	4.8
Coefficient of variation [%]		62.4	55.5	58.0	30.9	40.0

* a town in a rural-urban municipality (r-u), an urban municipality (u)

** according to the 2007 Polish Classification of Activities, section I - business activity connected with accomodation and catering, section R – business activity connected with culture, entertainment and recreation.

Source: the authors, based on the Local Data Bank (2018).

on rich history and many medieval buildings. The lowest share of business subjects classified to section I and section R, is noticed in Bisztynek, a city in the Warmińsko-Mazurkie Voivodeship, in the district of Bartoszyce (about 1.9%).

Differences among the Polish slow cities can also be seen in the number of working persons per 1,000 residents. The coefficient of variation for this criterion reached 58%, which indicates a large heterogeneity among the towns. The highest number of employed persons per 1,000 residents was in Rzgów (nearly 820 persons) and Lubawa, a city in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, the district of Iława (nearly 520 persons). The lowest number of persons in employment per 1,000 inhabitants was in Kalety (nearly 87 persons) and Rejowiec Fabryczny (nearly 107 persons).

Differences among the cities which belong to the Polish National Cittaslow Network can be seen in each of the discussed areas, and these are just some of the areas in which the towns function.

Summary

The growth of the Cittaslow network and the fact that more and more cities join the network and begin to develop as 'slow cities' are indications that an increasingly large population feels the need to slow down their pace of life, to protect the unique characteristics of their surroundings, based on the local culture, identity, products and services, as opposed to omnipresent uniformity and standardisation. Paradoxically, a city which functions according to the slow life concept does not develop more slowly. On the contrary, its development involves constant improvement in the quality of life of its inhabitants as well as a greater appeal of the city itself, which eventually raises its competitiveness, mostly owing to the town's endogenous resources.

The Polish National Cittaslow Network are the second most numerous network of Cittaslow in the world. The Polish network nowadays comprises 28 cities, 20 of which are situated in the Warmińsko-Mazurkie Voivodeship. The Marshal Office of the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship is a supporting member of the network. The network keeps growing, becoming more easily recognisable and more important on international fora.

The member cities of Polish National Cittaslow Network are very diverse, both in terms of their size and the level of economic development. Each city is distinguished by their own, distinct features. Each has a different history, tradition, natural values and historic buildings. What they all share is the same concept and mutually shared goals, of which the overriding one is to improve the quality of life of the local populations. Importantly, improved living standards, higher tourism appeal, mutually conducted promotional campaigns, better access to funds, for example to carry out revitalisation efforts, are a handful

of examples of the benefits that member cities see in being interconnected in the network (Farelnek *et al.*, 2017, p. 424). In the long run, these cities also expect to improve their level of social and economic development. As implicated by C. Honoré (2012), this process has already been observed in many Italian cities, whose access to the Italian Cittaslow network enabled them to reduce unemployment, and to give a new life to their ‘limping’ economy.

Translated by Jolanta Idźkowska
Proofreading by Michael Thoene

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