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► **To cite this version:**

Susan Ball. An urban experiment in small town sustainability in the UK: the case of Cittaslow. *Angles: French Perspectives on the Anglophone World*, 2022, 15, 10.4000/angles.6082 . hal-03937820

HAL Id: hal-03937820

<https://cnrs.hal.science/hal-03937820>

Submitted on 9 Apr 2023

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Angles

New Perspectives on the Anglophone World

15 | 2022

Cities in the British Isles in the 19th-21st centuries

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/angles/6082>

DOI: [10.4000/angles.6082](https://doi.org/10.4000/angles.6082)

ISSN: 2274-2042

Publisher

Société des Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur

Electronic reference

Susan Ball, "An urban experiment in small town sustainability in the UK: the case of Cittaslow", *Angles* [Online], 15 | 2022, Online since 15 November 2022, connection on 16 January 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/angles/6082> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/angles.6082>

This text was automatically generated on 16 January 2023.



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Susan Ball

- 1 The experimental nature of urban policy in the UK finds one expression in the fact that the key text for students of land use planning has been re-edited fourteen times over the course of the last half-century (Cullingworth, et al. 2015). These re-editions have appeared alongside a substantial literature questioning the whys and wherefores of planning in the UK, with titles such as: 'If planning is everything, maybe it's nothing' (Wildavsky 1973), 'Whatever happened to planning?' (Cullingworth 1987), or more recently as part of Guardian Cities¹ aimed at a wider audience 'Why is Britain so bad at planning?' (Rudlin 2019). Together they point to a continuing questioning of the diverse range of attempts to plan urban places and connections between urban places in the UK since the introduction in 1947 of the Town and Country Planning Act.
- 2 These experiments over the last 70 years have been conducted from changing theoretical positions: from procedural to humanist approaches, on to structuralist approaches and ones concerned with sustainability and justice. Furthermore, these experiments have been conducted from different practical positions in the laboratories of: new towns, expanded towns, regional planning, derelict land, housing action areas, regeneration and sustainable development, heritage, neighbourhood planning, etc.
- 3 This article takes a case study of the latest round of urban experiments referred to as 'theme cities'. After having clarified the use of the term, a particular example of theme cities will be introduced, namely slow cities. The development of the slow cities movement will be described, along with what makes it stand out as a theme. While a substantial body of literature already exists on towns' motives for joining the international network of Cittaslow,² ³less analysis has been conducted on the evolving policy context of local governance in Britain and how this frames the pursuit of environment and cultural heritage agendas by Cittaslow member towns. It will be argued that while the vague concepts of community and participation help define slow

city approaches, the working out of their meaning is subject to changes in both central government policy direction and the wider economy. At a practical level, this adds to the challenges faced by local government officers charged with translating technical criteria across time and space into initiatives which can gain popular local support.

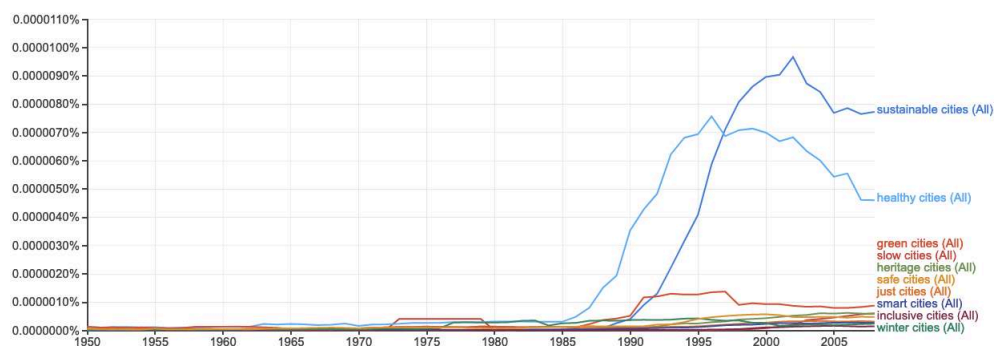
Theme Cities

- 4 The particular angle on ‘theme cities’ adopted in this article is the one developed by Wayne K. D. Davies in his book of the same name (2015). From the late 1980s Davies identified increasing dissatisfaction with the urban condition, as expressed by diverse groups including politicians, planners, business leaders, international agencies and local activists. In many so-called ‘developed nations’, the sweeping away of post-war interventionist strategies and their replacement by the neoliberal belief that planning stood in the way of profit maximising urban development had led to an ‘end of the century’ moment (Davies – quoting Peter Hall 1988 – 2015, p viii), and a new phase of urban policy. New ways of conceptualising and implementing urban policy characterised by a concerted effort to identify urban problems and to seek means to improve urban spaces in specific ways are summarised by Davies as ‘theme cities’:

Many of these new ideas and approaches to urban development have been summarized in a short distinctive word or phrase, providing an adjectival prefix to the words “urban, cities or towns”, creating such labels as New Urbanism, Sustainable Cities, Just Cities, Winter Cities or Safe Cities etc., which summarize critiques of existing situations and provide alternatives. They can be viewed as creating a new and varied set of urban themes. (2015: 6).

- 5 Davies insists that rather than being descriptive, each of the themes has “been designed with an *activist* agenda in mind, to improve the quality of our current urban centres by changing features of urban places” (2015: 7, emphasis in the original).
- 6 Concepts such as garden city, new town, world city and postmodern city are evidence that the use of an adjectival theme for urban development is not new. However, while earlier theorists and practitioners developed only one or two adjectival themes at the same time, the current period has seen the development of a wide range of themes over a relatively short period, with each one addressing a particular crisis of urban development.

Figure 1: Theme Cities from Google Ngram Viewer (using the English 2009 corpus)



Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer

- 7 Figure 1 illustrates the increase in the late 1980s of a number of theme cities, as found in the increasing use of the terms in the digitized corpus of Google Books. Although there has been a more dramatic rise in the use of some terms (sustainable cities and health cities) rather than others, there is clear evidence of an increase across more than just one or two themes. The simultaneous emergence of a range of themes is also seen in the proximity of the years in which organisations addressing different urban problems were established. The first decade of the new millennium witnessed the emergence of ‘creative cities’ by Richard Florida (2002, 2005), ‘Creative Cities Network’ (UNESCO, 2013), the popularisation of ‘resilient cities’ by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR, 2012), and the formation of networks of bottom-up initiatives themed as ‘winter cities’, ‘transition towns’ or any of a variety of green or greening themes, including ecocities and biophilic cities.

Slow Cities and the Perennial Challenge of a Sense-of-Community

- 8 As with other theme cities and urban experiments addressing late 20th century urban problems, slow cities have a long heritage. The particular problem with urban living they address is the increasing pace of life or ‘time poverty’ (Harvey 1990) brought about by the rapid changes and intense contacts of globalisation. A critical approach to the pace of life can be dated at least as far back as the classical adage *festina lente*, which re-emerged during the European Renaissance and again during the emergence of Romanticism in the context of the Industrial Revolution in Britain in the late eighteenth century (Honoré 2004). What has today grown into an international network of cities pursuing slow living under the title ‘cittaslow’ (slow cities) finds its more recent origins in the development of the Slow Food movement in Italy from the 1970s. Concern about the threat posed by industrial farming methods and global fast food chains to local, age-old practices of food production and consumption soon spread beyond Italy, so that in 1989 delegates from 21 countries met in Paris to inaugurate the Slow Food International movement and to endorse its manifesto.⁴ The movement has since grown to include more than 1,500 *convivia* (local groups of members) in over 160 countries (Slow Food, 2019). Carlo Petrini, the leading figure of the Slow Food movement, later introduced the idea of extending the principles of slow food to urban design and living at the Slow Food Congress held in Italy in 1997. Two years later the Cittaslow movement was formally established when the mayors of four founding towns in Italy signed the Cittaslow Charter, along with Petrini and the Slow Food movement.
- 9 The Charter sets out the movement’s defining policies, which are aimed at improving the quality of life and uniqueness in the individual member towns. These total 54 policy goals, grouped into seven categories, almost half of which (25) are considered obligatory features for towns wishing to become members. Many of the policies stress different aspects of sustainability that can be found beyond the slow city movement. One of the seven categories, however, deals with the safeguarding of autochthonous features in the city and its region. This objective - to protect indigenous plant and animal species as part of the heritage in cultivation of a place - distinguishes slow cities from other sustainability initiatives. By bringing a concern with the loss of environmental and cultural traditions together with an approach that values healthy

living, cittaslow's use of the qualifier 'slow' goes beyond speed to includes time spent in appreciating and achieving a qualitatively different lifestyle.⁵

- 10 Membership of the Cittaslow movement is open to cities with a population of less than 50,000, which are more commonly referred to as 'towns' or 'third-tier cities' in urban hierarchies. The focus on smaller centres is in part a function of Cittaslow's origins in Italy, where the founding and subsequent members of the movement are historic market towns and their region. It is also a reflection of the importance attached to 'community' by the movement. The word 'community' is generally understood to serve two purposes: to characterise a group of people in a definable place (including residents and visitors), and to depict a unifying experience that draws the group together, with the whole representing something greater than the sum of its parts. 'Community' therefore has both a place-based component and a more elusive sense-of-community component. When these two are brought together in slow cities, the place-based component of community is linked to the sense-of-community component by the recognition that people are part of an environmentally and culturally unique town undergoing change.⁶ In slow cities the reality of place, which has been widely suppressed or devalued by a mechanistic view of nature (Spretnak 1997), is made prominent by policies aimed at addressing environmental and cultural traditions which form part of a sense-of-community. Growing awareness of the problems brought about by the accelerating pace of change in the globalised urban network and the threats that these pose to the valued unique qualities of a town provide the context within which individuals and groups organise as slow city members of an international network. The challenge that has to be faced – and the one which Patrick Geddes engaged with as what he held as a principle of planning in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth (Geddes 1915; Hall 1988) – is how to bring people to work together as a community with a shared sense-of-place. A century later, addressing this challenge is made more difficult by external market and political forces that make place meanings less stable, and can more easily permeate local and regional boundaries. The communities of third-tier cities have to compete with larger urban areas in order to retain/attract residents, employment and investment. Destination marketing or city branding is one means of doing this, although for third-tier cities this has to be achieved on a modest budget. Once the award of Cittaslow status has been achieved, an annual subscription fee of between 600 euro (towns with less than 1,000 residents) and 3,500 euro (towns with more than 30,000 residents) (Cittaslow 2017, Attachment B, Article 11)⁷ buys into the image of a global network of communities promoting 'the culture of good living' (Cittaslow 2017: 5). This is not to say that Cittaslow is city branding or imaging of the type that only stresses the advantages of a place; far from denying or decentering the challenges and difficulties that arise from current trends in urbanisation, Cittaslow towns set out to address them in each of their (relatively) unique third-tier locations.⁸
- 11 In a comparative study of theme cities' governance structures (top-down versus flat-networked) and modes of operation (technical versus social/community), the Centre for Health Equity Training, Research and Evaluation (CHETRE) classifies the Cittaslow network in the technical / flat-networked quartile (CHETRE 2018). It shares this quartile with the members of the (UNESCO) Creative Cities Network, which the CHETRE positions as relatively more technical and flat-networked than slow cities. Both networks function in order to promote the local cultures of their members and are a means by which members can share experiences, ideas and best practices as means of

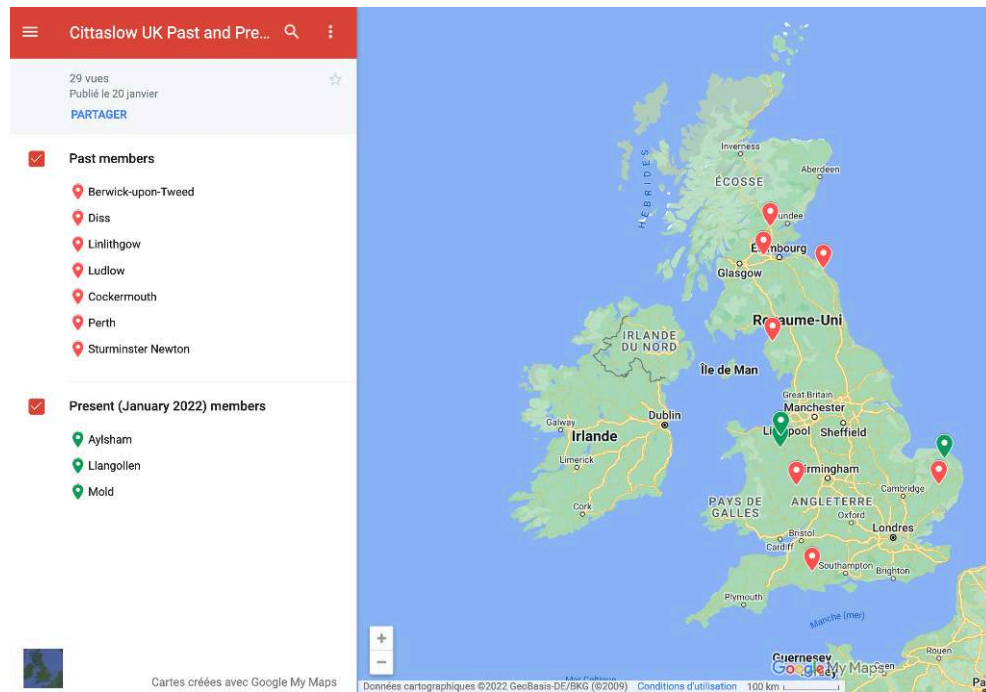
assisting social, cultural and economic development. While slow cities are specific in terms of their focus on town uniqueness and autochthonous characteristics, creative cities are identified in terms of their focus on developing creative environments for the production and consumption of arts and culture (Moore-Cherry 2015). In order to achieve these broad objectives both types of theme city rely on community involvement. In the type of creative cities formulated by Florida (2002, 2005) the nature of the community involvement has been identified as one of the main weaknesses of this approach. When city governance takes up the theme of creative cities in order to promote regeneration the policies that are introduced have been found to reinforce pre-existing social divisions by diverting resources away from areas in greatest need (for a summary see Moore-Cherry 2015: 373-376) and leading to state-sponsored gentrification (Peck 2005). This critique is based on the role played by Florida's creative class, which has been identified as an elitist group of professionals in the high-technology and creative industries (Frank 2016). While such a group of urban-professional gentrifiers is unlikely to characterise community involvement in slow cities, the question of the importance of the form of community involvement and its relation with urban governance locally and internationally is raised. This article addresses the evolving context in which Cittaslow ideals were translated from charter requirements through the agency of individuals, local organisations and governance agencies in member towns in the UK, thereby shedding light on some of the hurdles to introducing an approach based on lifestyle in communities each comprised of a complex web of lifestyles endemic to a place in constant change.⁹

Participation in Slow Cities in the UK in a Changing Policy Context

- ¹² The first town in the UK to be awarded city slow status by Cittaslow was Ludlow (Shropshire) in 2003 (population in 2003: 9,695, Office for National Statistics 2020). Over the following six years nine more towns joined the UK network, which peaked at ten members in 2009. Although a case study of Cittaslow UK published in 2013 pointed to its 'growing in a steady, organic manner' (Office of the Regulator of Community Interest Companies 2013), over the last decade seven towns have withdrawn from the network, leaving a total of three members in January 2020 (Aylsham, Llangollen and Mold) (Figure 2). The rise in membership coincided with the arrival of climate change as a major agreed challenge in the 2000s, and calls to action around the ambiguous concept of 'sustainability' or the need to take environmental issues into account.¹⁰ Interest in membership may well have been spurred by environmental groups and local government offices seeking to clarify what 'sustainability' means, which was itself a consequence of 'the achievement of sustainable development' having been added to the purposes of land use planning in 2004.¹¹ Two very different uses of the sustainability concept have been identified by Shiva: one which relates to the primacy of nature, its 'processes, cycles and rhythms' (strong sustainability); and the other which addresses 'market sustainability' or 'weak sustainability' concerned with conserving or finding replacements for resources required for development (Shiva 1992: 192). The 54 Cittaslow Charter requirements, and the overriding concern for 'quality of life' and autochthonous development, are possible ways of defining the principle of strong sustainability. It is reasonable to suggest that these would appeal to local

environmental groups as a step towards converting the goal of strong sustainability into policies and actions.

Figure 2: Cittaslow UK Past and Present Members



Source: Author using Google My Maps¹²

- 13 Another key aspect of the political changes taking place in the UK at the time a number of towns were considering or actually applying to become Cittaslow members was the increased focus on public participation and local empowerment introduced by Local Agenda 21 (LA21), with all local authorities required to have an LA21 in place by the government's target date of 2000. LA21 is a special mandate given to local government within Agenda 21, resulting from the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro 1992. It is aimed at encouraging local authorities to promote more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable communities. In 2000 it was complemented by the Local Government Act, which placed a new duty on local authorities to prepare 'community strategies' for "promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom" (Local Government Act, 2000, section 4.1). The impact of LA21 and community strategies on local policies for sustainable development is not at issue here;¹³ however, their part in setting the political, legal and planning context within which ten towns in the UK received the award of Cittaslow membership should not be ignored. After more than a decade of experimentation with market-led, top-down approaches to local policy formulation and implementation, LA21 and community strategies ushered in a more participatory approach aimed at involving local stakeholders and local communities. The origins of Ludlow's membership - the first town in the UK to join Cittaslow - can be traced to a meeting organised by the town's LA21 group. Attended by 30 people, the meeting led to the proposal for membership being backed by the town and district councils and the local chamber of trade and commerce (Heitmann *et al.* 2011). Both practitioners and

academics embraced Agenda 21 as the mainspring of a new environmental agenda (Agyeman and Evans 1995), which would be implemented using a participatory democratic approach (Voisey *et al.* 1996, Marvin and Guy 1997). With guidance from the Improvement and Development Agency, local authorities would take public consultation to a new level by means of involving local groups in discussions over the meaning of 'sustainability' and how to work towards setting goals and assessing progress. However, as Selman and Wragg warned, this inclusive approach also has a negative side: "excessive inclusivity may lead to a lack of clear purpose, direction and commitment" (1999: 339). While recourse to Cittaslow's 54 charter requirements may have been a possible means of adding clarity, it would only succeed if local officers, locally elected representatives, local groups and local stakeholders considered the requirements to be comprehensible and acceptable. Moreover, once accepted, membership would have to weather the storms of an evolving and complex political and institutional environment characterised by financial restraint.

- 14 The condition of having to satisfy at least half of the policies of the Cittaslow Charter before being accepted as a member means that each of the towns has a prior history of putting in place policies which accord with the movement's philosophy and which will have been developed in consultation with pre-existing local groups with environmental and cultural heritage agendas. A range of such groups are to be found in the ten members of the UK network, including local branches of Friends of the Earth and Civic Voice, Slow Food convivia, local history societies and allotment associations. Participation through a link with another national organisation such as English Heritage or the National Trust allows member towns to secure funding from external sources. Local litter collection exercises, for example, have been conducted in a number of slow cities with help from Keep Britain Tidy as part of its River Care and Spring Clean campaigns. Joint-working with a range of local organisations, and their regional and national allegiances, also has a negative aspect as this leaves little room for dissent. Longer-standing environmental and cultural heritage groups may feel that their efforts are being dissipated or submerged by adherence to the goals of the Cittaslow Charter.
- 15 Many of the organisations Cittaslow towns work with benefit from charitable status. The form of institutionalisation taken by Cittaslow UK since 2009 is that of a Community Interest Company (CIC), which is supported by the broader infrastructure surrounding social enterprise as first introduced by the New Labour government. CICs allow social enterprises to benefit from both the public image of a charity and an entrepreneurial organisational status (Davies, 2004). They achieve this by satisfying the requirement that they are run in the 'interest of the community' rather than shareholders, which is itself ensured by the requirement that control remains in the community¹⁴ and the assets which are developed remain within the community. CIC legislation, however, does not provide clarification of what is meant by 'interest of the community', nor does it address the multiplicity of (possibly conflicting) interests to be found in a local community.¹⁵ Cittaslow UK became a CIC a year before David Cameron became prime minister and ushered in an era of Conservative Party governance. This left the social enterprise community unclear as to how Cameron would fulfil his aspiration 'to do more with less' (Krugman 2012) as part of an austerity drive during a recession.

Withdrawing from Cittaslow

- 16 Member towns may withdraw from Cittaslow at any time by means of submitting a written request (Cittaslow 2017, attachment B, article 7). Despite Cittaslow status for Sturminster Newton being heralded as one of the outcomes of the North Dorset District Council's 'partnership of partnerships' approach to localism (North Dorset District Council 2011), the initiative struggled to get off the ground leading the town to withdraw within its first year of membership. Aylsham has had the longest membership, which has continued over sixteen years including four years when the town was a board member of Cittaslow UK (2006-9) and having acted as the secretariat of Cittaslow UK CIC since its incorporation in 2009 (Companies House 2019). The contrast between these two towns' periods of membership is made less stark by the comment made by the town clerk, that "I can't say we'll stay but for now it works" (Anon. c, interview 8th June 2017). Membership is in a process of continual review by town council members and officers, and local stakeholders, not only as central government increasingly looks to local partnerships to implement policy but also as the resulting processes of governance require town councils to address newly emerging – and unanticipated – situations. When Aylsham applied to be a member of Cittaslow it did so in order to address third-tier town issues of the time. This was when the town was 'teetering' between decay or relegation to serving second-tier Norwich: "Aylsham looked very sad and tired, and was at risk of turning into a dormitory town for the city. It was in danger of losing that market town buzz it had" (Susan Flack of the Aylsham Partnership quoted in Barkham, 2004). The goals of the Cittaslow charter were formulated twenty years ago, at a time when a number of issues such as threats to the high street posed by online retail, 'county lines' (drug gangs expanding their operations from large cities to smaller towns),¹⁶ knife crime, the sell-off of council assets, sharp increases in damage and insurance claims due to flooding, calls for rewilding and rapid growth in the number of food banks were unknowns or – at best – unanticipated by town councils. The need to update Cittaslow's goals was recognised in 2010, when four years after having become a member Mold gave a presentation to One Voice Wales (the principal organisation for town councils and communities in Wales) setting out a new set of goals broadly in keeping with the Cittaslow philosophy (Mold Cittaslow 2010). This discussion has been continued as part of the UK Cittaslow conferences and in conferences organised by other national networks and Cittaslow International (for a list of 89 conferences held between 2011 and 2019 see Cittaslow International 2019a). One means by which it is being taken forward is by Cittaslow International finding ways in which to address the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (and 169 targets) that the UN proposes as benchmarks (United Nations, 2015; Cittaslow International, 2019b). These address a broad range of issues from gender inequality to climate change, which are brought together by a commitment to end poverty and take Cittaslow International far beyond its initial remit.
- 17 In order to understand how towns in the UK Cittaslow network have reassessed their membership of Cittaslow International over a period characterised by a shift from top-down government initiatives to governance by local partnerships, threats posed by an increase in natural hazards (most notably flooding since 2000), and socio-economic changes aggravated by austerity-driven cutbacks since 2008 a series of telephone

interviews were conducted by the author in 2017 with the town clerks of eight of the ten former or actual members of Cittaslow.¹⁷

18 The purpose of the interviews was to identify the factors underpinning a weakening or a continued commitment to Cittaslow International as evidenced in a decision to withdraw or continue membership.¹⁸ The town clerks agreed to be interviewed as the means of developing their responses to earlier requests for information provided in email exchanges. Triggers to leaving, which were specific to individual members, were identified. These included:

19 - pressure on town council budgets from austerity measures and the cost of repairs due to flood damage which increased the relative financial cost of membership;

- the loss of a key personality driving membership of the initiative, either as a local resident or voluntary adviser to another town in the UK network;

- the loss of council officers and expertise consequent on local government reorganisation in 2009;

- loss of support on the town council following local elections.

20 Building up behind these triggers, however, was a prevailing sense that commitment to a ready-made, top-down initiative adopted from outside the local community had not been achieved. This was frequently related to the difficulty of securing a widespread understanding across the community of the technicalities of individual charter requirements, let alone how they should be prioritised and how they are interconnected – a task which requires complex skills developed over many years. In the words of a member of Linlithgow Cittaslow Steering Group:

For the most part (...) people support sustainable development and think that the local authority (West Lothian Council) should be involved. They probably can't explain what they mean by it, and I don't think that they really want to put the work into understanding most of the technical aspects, but they like the idea and they particularly liked the international flavour of Cittaslow. Still, this is very far from getting voluntary groups to focus attention on the type of criteria Cittaslow had in mind for promoting a sustainable way of life. This made it very hard to get it off the ground once we'd completed the arduous task of being accepted (by Cittaslow International); initiative fatigue very quickly set in. (Anon. a, interview 3rd March 2017)

21 The problem of understanding the overall philosophy of Cittaslow at the grassroots level was expressed as follows by an administrator of Sturminster Newton's application: "the ethos of Cittaslow was hard to grasp by some/many - the name was unhelpful and most of my time on the project was spent trying to explain it!" (Anon. b, email 3rd March 2017).

22 While the Cittaslow brand appears to have an international allure, the concept of 'good living' in unique communities had to be transplanted in space and time to each town's changing socio-political environment. It is small wonder that translating the idea into reality has hit hurdles. Local supporters of Cittaslow may set out to use the processes of governance to promote open participation from across the community but the signs are that lifestyle politics based around local uniqueness is not being taken up by the population at large. Pockets of – casual if not explicit – resistance to such a politics can be found in deliberate acts of littering, the defacing of signs for footpaths or in

complaints about ‘too many foodies.’ If the members of the Cittaslow network do not address the struggles that participation in a wider politics than lifestyle implies, then membership of the movement may prove to be little more than a ‘quality of life Oscar’ (*The Cockermouth Curiosity* 2018), which more members decide to return.

Conclusions

- 23 While slow cities are not part of UK planning in terms of legislation and guidance to regulate land use in the public interest, the 54 policy goals of the Cittaslow Charter do provide guidelines by which partnerships formed from public, private and voluntary organisations can pursue the added ‘purpose’ of planning to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The addition of this purpose has occurred at a time of growing importance for governance and community participation in local development, which has coincided with increased awareness of the negative effects of human activities on cities at all tiers of the urban hierarchy. One such effect is a reduction in the diversity of cities by threats posed to their unique characteristics, many of which have been developed over centuries. Third-tier cities are at a crucial moment in this regard: while they have not developed the marked degree of homogeneity shared by global cities, their individuality is threatened by job losses, stagnation and the problems that follow. Promoting quality of life in a town around concepts of sustainable development, and environmental and cultural heritage is one locally-aware approach that has been taken up by ten towns in the UK as members of the international network of Cittaslow.
- 24 Relative to other theme city approaches to ‘end of the century’ urban problems, the Cittaslow network is relatively bottom-up. The type of participation envisaged by Geddes of individuals working together as federated homes in local communities is nevertheless dependent on the agency of local government, which is itself structured by changes in central government policy directions and the role of international capitalism. Supporters of Cittaslow ideals are no more able to require local councils to legislate for any of the Charter’s 54 requirements than they are to oblige residents and visitors to their towns to adopt lifestyle changes. Local government officers in the frontline of translating/explaining, prioritising and relating a set of technical criteria are being required to do so as ‘expert generalist(s),’¹⁹ at a time when local government services are widely acknowledged as having to act at the frontline of austerity.
- 25 The aims of slow cities – like those of other urban experiments – have a lineage. Calls for participation and the pursuit of environment and cultural heritage agendas at the local level won’t go away; indeed, in the context of continuing problems for third-tier cities, it is all the more likely that they will continue as they find ways to take on emerging issues. Over the foreseeable future, government officers’ perception of local sentiment in each of these communities indicates that whether the everyday working practices of a small and decreasing number of towns in the UK continue to fall under the umbrella of Cittaslow International is of less importance than commitment to working out what is meant by sustainable development.
- 26 Commentary on specific types of theme city or urban experiment that takes a critical view of contemporary urban realities can be anticipated to develop further some of the concepts briefly drawn on in this chapter, including: urban activism, urban austerity and neoliberalism. This may act to cut across previously identified theme cities, and/or

to encourage the development of new forms of stakeholder-based initiatives employing a new or more qualified set of adjectives in their appellations. At the time of writing, conference titles and special issues of journals indicate that pandemic-related qualifiers for the 'resilient city' are the leading contenders in the latest round of theme cities. As new activist agendas addressing specific problems of contemporary urban places emerge, so the lessons learnt from one round of urban experiments can be passed on to new forms of engagement, organising, enterprise, capacity building, etc. in collective decision-making for small town sustainability.

27 Acknowledgements

28 I would like to thank the former and current town clerks, who despite very heavy workloads, found the time to take part in this research. I would also like to thank the organisers of and the participants at the workshop 'Changing the world – urban experiments in the UK, 19th-21st centuries', (CREW-CREC Université Sorbonne Nouvelle). Lastly, I extend my thanks to the two anonymous peer reviewers and the editors of this thematic issue for their very helpful comments on drafts of this article.

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NOTES

1. Guardian Cities specialises in independent urban journalism. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/>

2. 'Cittaslow' with a capital 'c' is used in reference to members of Cittaslow International, headquartered in Orvieto, Italy.
3. Commentary on the slow movement and slow cities has produced a burgeoning literature over the last 15 years. Some of the most frequently cited texts, which inform this author's earlier discussion of the emergence and application of the Cittaslow concept (Ball, 2015), are: Knox, 2005; Mayer and Knox, 2006; Miele, 2008; Pink, 2007, 2008 and 2009. With regard to France, see: Mallet, 2018.
4. For a more comprehensive overview of the rise and politics of the Slow Food movement see Andrews (2008) and Petrini (2007, 2009).
5. See Ball (2015) for a summary of each of the 54 policy goals and an outline of how towns qualify to become members of Cittaslow.
6. Among the characteristics that distinguish slow cities from other theme cities is the importance attached to maintaining tradition in many aspects of urban life. This goes beyond urban morphology to include a focus on autochthonous (unique) developments ranging from production methods and traditions in crafts and cultural events, to protection for plant and animal species. For a detailed study of the workings of autochthonous knowledge systems in the Cittaslow UK members Mold and Berwick-upon-Tweed see: Holland, 2017.
7. When there is a national network (such as Cittaslow UK) 80% of the membership fee is attributed to the National Coordination, with 20% being passed to the International Coordination (Article 11, Cittaslow 2014). A number of Cittaslow Charters, attachments to and translations of, are available online. The information they contain is not always consistent. The subscription rates quoted here are taken by combining information from two recent sources the author considers to be reliable.
8. The distinction between these two types of urban marketing is made by Brabazon (2014, p8) and by Baker (2007) for third-tier cities.
9. This account draws on a limited number of governance initiatives for community participation introduced by central government over the last two decades. A more comprehensive account would include closer attention to: Neighbourhood Plans, the Localism Act 2011 and the Countryside Agency's Market Towns Initiative.
10. On the ambiguity of the term 'sustainability' see Cullingworth and Nadin 2006: 250, 283.
11. This 'purpose' was given by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 s. 39. The National Planning Policy Framework (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2012, para.14), while supposedly facilitating the presumption in favour of sustainable development, left the definition of 'sustainable' "unclear and underemphasised" (Marshall 2021: 77).
12. For the full searchable version see here: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1lmoc6zbsqbwalonKLgzeDrLeYxn4I-ks&usp=sharing>
13. Any assessment of the outcomes of LA21 in the UK, for which 93% of local authorities had produced an LA21 document by 2002 (Church 2002), would have to find a means by which to assess a wide range of outcomes stemming from the multitude of possible goals generated by Agenda 21's key concepts. With regard to research undertaken to 2006, Cullingworth and Nadin comment: 'the sum of the evaluations (and a review of examples of strategies) suggest that they have succeeded simply in presenting the agenda, with limited impact on mainstream policy' (2006: 261).
14. The officers of Cittaslow UK CIC in May 2019 were from Aylsham, Mold, Llangollen and Berwick-upon-Tweed (Companies House 2019).
15. For a critical analysis of social enterprise and the role of local community organisations in the UK in the 1990s and early 2000s see: Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2003.
16. Norfolk, the county in which Aylsham is situated, had the highest number of persons with links or suspected links to county lines. Although Aylsham does not feature among the top

county towns in terms of persons with links to county lines, Norwich and Great Yarmouth – both in Norfolk – featured prominently in the results of a ‘Rescue and response’ project conducted by MOPAC between June 2018 and June 2019. (Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime 2019).

17. These interviews are part of on-going research being conducted by the author on town councils in England and Wales. While this research covers the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is not covered in this article.

18. The date of a town’s leaving Cittaslow International is not always clear. The name of a town may continue to appear on the website Cittaslow International after the town has been reported to have left in local sources (council minutes, local press) and/or has resigned from Cittaslow UK CIC. Confusion over an ‘official’ date of leaving was also made clear during the course of the interviews.

19. A term used by a town clerk in an interview conducted by the author (Anon d, 26th November 2019).

ABSTRACTS

Member towns of the international network of slow cities are recent examples of the working out of development approaches that aim to involve local communities in the maintenance of the unique environmental and cultural heritage of individual locations. Formalised as Cittaslow, over the last two decades these towns are having to respond to a range of issues brought on by the increasing pace of life associated with globalisation and, conversely, stagnation due to being bypassed by footloose capital. The charter requirements of Cittaslow offer a means by which third-tier towns may address sustainable development. Having bought into the ideas for action promoted by Cittaslow International, ten towns in the UK have worked towards developing support in the community for a package of complex, connected technical measures. They have done so over a period marked by a shift from government to governance, and in an economic climate characterised by austerity. Evidence from local government officers points to the challenges of maintaining support for a view of sustainable development formulated elsewhere and which many people find hard to grasp. Quality of life and local uniqueness are nonetheless broad goals, around which communities can be anticipated to continue to organise in processes of governance for sustainable development.

Les villes membres du réseau international des villes lentes sont des exemples récents de l’élaboration d’approches de développement qui visent à impliquer les communautés locales dans la préservation du patrimoine environnemental et culturel unique à une ville. Formalisée sous le nom de Cittaslow au cours des deux dernières décennies, ces villes ont dû répondre à un éventail de problèmes provoqués par le rythme de vie croissant associé à la mondialisation et, inversement, à la stagnation et au désinvestissement. Les exigences de la charte de Cittaslow offrent aux petites villes un moyen d’aborder le développement durable. Après avoir adhéré aux idées d’action promues par Cittaslow International, dix villes du Royaume-Uni ont travaillé à développer le soutien de la communauté pour un ensemble de mesures techniques complexes et interconnectées. Ceci a été effectué dans une période marquée par un passage du gouvernement à la gouvernance, et dans un climat économique caractérisé par l’austérité. Les témoignages fournis par les fonctionnaires locaux mettent en évidence le défi de maintenir un soutien à une vision du développement durable formulée ailleurs et que beaucoup de gens ont du mal à saisir.

La qualité de vie et l'unicité locale sont néanmoins des objectifs larges, autour desquels on peut s'attendre à ce que les communautés continuent à s'organiser pour le développement durable.

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Mots-clés: villes lentes, petites villes, participation locale, développement durable

Keywords: slow cities, third-tier towns, community participation, sustainable development

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