



Mix Sustentável

The dimension of time in design: poetic reflections from the Cittaslow

A dimensão do tempo no design: reflexões poéticas a partir do Cittaslow

La dimensión del tiempo en el diseño: reflexiones poéticas desde el Cittaslow

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Abstract: This article investigates how the principles of the Cittaslow movement can contribute to sustainable urban planning. Based on a narrative literature review, national and international publications were analyzed using keywords such as Cittaslow, Slow Movement, Slow Cities, and Design. The selection criteria prioritized studies that address the movement from an urban perspective. The results indicate that Cittaslow contributes to urban design by promoting practices that value the territory, such as the preservation of historical layouts, the use of local materials, and the encouragement of co-design. These strategies strengthen cultural identity and foster slower and more sustainable ways of inhabiting cities. It is concluded that the principles of Cittaslow offer relevant guidelines for urban design, especially when considering the relationship between design, territory, and sustainable lifestyle.

Keywords: Cittaslow; Design and territory; Slow Movement; Sustainable cities.

Resumo: Este artigo investiga de que forma os princípios do movimento Cittaslow podem contribuir para o planejamento urbano sustentável. A partir de uma revisão bibliográfica narrativa, foram analisadas publicações nacionais e internacionais identificadas com o uso de termos como Cittaslow, Slow Movement, Slow Cities e Design. Os critérios de seleção priorizaram estudos que abordam o movimento em sua dimensão urbana. Os resultados indicam que o Cittaslow contribui para o design urbano ao promover práticas que valorizam o território, como a preservação de traçados históricos, o uso de materiais locais e o incentivo ao co-design. Essas estratégias fortalecem a identidade cultural e estimulam formas mais lentas e sustentáveis de habitar cidades. Conclui-se que os princípios do Cittaslow oferecem diretrizes relevantes ao design urbano, especialmente quando se considera a relação entre projeto, território e modos de vida sustentáveis.

Palavras-chave: Cittaslow; design e território; Slow Movement; cidades sustentáveis.

Resumen: Este artículo investiga de qué manera los principios del movimiento Cittaslow pueden contribuir a la planificación urbana sostenible. A partir de una revisión bibliográfica narrativa, se analizaron publicaciones nacionales e internacionales identificadas mediante el uso de términos como Cittaslow, Slow Movement, Slow Cities y Design. Los criterios de selección priorizaron estudios que abordan el movimiento en su dimensión urbana.

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Los resultados indican que el Cittaslow contribuye al diseño urbano al promover prácticas que valorizan el territorio, como la preservación de trazados históricos, el uso de materiales locales y el fomento del co-diseño. Estas estrategias fortalecen la identidad cultural y estimulan formas más lentas y sostenibles de habitar las ciudades.

Se concluye que los principios del Cittaslow ofrecen directrices relevantes para el diseño urbano, especialmente cuando se considera la relación entre proyecto, territorio y modos de vida sostenibles.

Palabras clave: Cittaslow; diseño y territorio; Movimiento Lento; ciudades sustentables.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The process of urbanization has intensified globally in recent decades, leading to profound transformations in urban dynamics and ways of living in cities. Currently, about 56.9% of the world's population lives in urban areas, with estimates suggesting this figure could reach 70% by 2050 (UNCTAD, 2022). This growth, often driven by development policies centered on economic progress, has generated significant impacts on the environment, urban infrastructure, and, above all, on the quality of life of those who inhabit these spaces (Climate Action, 2020; UGC, 2022).

It is well known that this process does not occur in a homogeneous or equitable manner. Many cities, especially in developing countries, face the effects of rapid and disordered growth, such as increased air pollution, fragmentation of the urban fabric, overburdened transportation and sanitation systems, and peripheral expansion with limited access to essential public services (Angel et al., 2016; UN-Habitat, 2020). In Brazil, for example, more than 85% of the population already lives in urban areas (IBGE, 2023), yet various inequalities persist, including challenges related to access to green spaces and active mobility.

The logic that currently structures cities is deeply marked by the acceleration of life rhythms, the valorization of productivity, and continuous consumption, shaping territories increasingly oriented toward efficiency rather than coexistence. Although urbanization has always involved disputes and inequalities, the advent of the Industrial Revolution intensified the fragmentation of urban time and space, redefining people's relationship with everyday life and the built environment (Bauer, Neto & Trigo, 2015). As already noted by Milton Santos (1996), this process consolidated a technical and instrumental rationality that subordinates urban space to the interests of capital, deepening inequalities and weakening ties to place. This dynamic has fostered a culture of haste, in which time is instrumentalized for productivity, and ways of life are regulated by metrics of performance and consumption (Rosa, 2019; Han, 2015).

What we observe is not a shortage of production, but an excess of consumption driven by logics of obsolescence and disposability, reinforcing unsustainable dynamics within urban environments and beyond them (Severiano, 2017). With urban life marked by time pressure, leisure, interpersonal relationships, and local culture are undervalued, directly impacting mental health and social well-being (Han, 2015). Studies show that living in dense, noisy, and highly digitalized cities is associated with significant increases in anxiety, depression, and burnout rates (McIntosh, 2018; Oliveira et al., 2021; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). More recently, studies have also indicated that such environments may contribute to diabetes, heart disease, and even dementia (Gallagher, 2025). Additionally, Garhammer (2002) demonstrates that the acceleration of everyday urban life compromises life satisfaction by limiting time for leisure and community interaction.

Although studies on the acceleration of life have mainly focused on large urban centers—directly impacted by globalization and technological transformations (Panait, 2012; Tolley & Tranter, 2022)—these changes also affect smaller cities. In these contexts, the imperative of global competitiveness manifests through

the disruption of local economies and social practices, as well as through cultural and symbolic homogenization (Mayer & Knox, 2010).

According to Hervé Théry (2008), globalization intensifies competition among territories, promoting a process of deterritorialization that, paradoxically, reinforces the need for reterritorialization. This occurs because, by standardizing practices and values on a global scale, many places lose their cultural and economic specificities, leading to a disconnection between communities and their territories. Théry emphasizes that territory is not merely a physical support but a social construction that can be transformed by its inhabitants, becoming both a challenge and an asset in the global context.

Furthermore, Márcio Vieira de Souza (2005), when discussing deterritorialization, highlights that globalization promotes the displacement of individuals and ideas, uprooting them from their original contexts. This process results in a kind of generalized deterritorialization, in which local connections are replaced by distant relationships, often disconnected from local realities and needs.

In response to this logic, several community-based movements have emerged since the 1990s, seeking to recover local specificity and promote well-being and more sustainable lifestyles. In this context, initiatives arise that propose slowing down everyday life as a form of resistance and reconnection with human time and territories.

Among these movements, the Slow Movement stands out, offering a critique of the frenetic pace of modern consumption and valuing quality, time, and local knowledge (Honoré, 2004). It is within this context that the Cittaslow movement emerged, founded in 1999 as an urban branch of this movement, focused on small cities seeking to preserve cultural identity, promote social well-being, and structure sustainable public policies in harmony with local rhythms (Mayer & Knox, 2006; Oliveira, 2021). Cittaslow proposes not only a slowing down of urban life but also a reconnection with the territory and with the singularities that shape the memory, knowledge, and culture of each locality.

In this context, design assumes a fundamental role as an articulating agent between community, territory, and sustainable practices. For Krucken (2009), contemporary design has the potential to strengthen local specificities by promoting collaborative systems of production and consumption, encouraging the valorization of endogenous resources, and contributing to the creation of social and economic networks based on trust and cooperation. By operating at the interface between tradition and innovation, design enables the re-signification of local ways of life and the strengthening of territorial identity. More than a technical tool, it becomes a means of cultural mediation, capable of reconnecting individuals with the place they inhabit and of sustaining, both materially and symbolically, development projects that are more sensitive to diversity and sustainability.

It is in this context that the Cittaslow philosophy gains relevance as a concrete response to contemporary urban challenges. The movement proposes a new way of understanding urban territory: a city that respects the

rhythms of life, values local production, promotes sustainability and well-being, and strengthens community ties. According to Çiçek et al. (2023), cities that adopt Cittaslow principles experience higher levels of resident satisfaction, stronger cultural identity, and a better balance between development and collective well-being.

The so-called “slow cities” do not aim to return to the past but rather to move forward more consciously, becoming places where technology serves coexistence rather than exclusion, and where infrastructure is designed for people rather than merely for economic flows. Thus, Cittaslow emerges as a possible path to rethink urban development in the face of current crises: climate crisis, health crisis, crisis of meaning, and crisis of relationships (Cittaslow, 2025).

This article seeks to understand Cittaslow and its principles, and how they can contribute to urban design by promoting cities more aligned with human rhythms, well-being, and the uniqueness of places. To this end, a narrative literature review was conducted, investigating the movement and the possibilities of integrating its values with design practices that foster more human, sustainable, and collective urban environments.

This research is organized into four main sections. Following this introduction, the methodology chapter presents the adopted approach, focusing on the narrative literature review and the paths taken for the selection and analysis of the consulted material. Next, the results chapter deepens the understanding of the Cittaslow movement, exploring its origins, principles, membership criteria, and global diffusion. The discussion chapter proposes a critical reflection on Cittaslow in light of design contributions, emphasizing the valorization of territory, local identity, and sustainable practices. Finally, the concluding remarks revisit the main findings and point to possible future developments of the topic within the field of urban design.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study adopted a narrative literature review as its main methodological procedure, aiming to deepen the understanding of the Cittaslow movement by investigating its context of emergence, guiding principles, fundamental characteristics, and its interrelations with the field of urban design.

The narrative review was chosen for its flexibility and interpretative nature, allowing for a discursive and critical construction based on existing literature, without following rigid protocols, as is the case with systematic reviews. According to Creswell (2010), this type of review is particularly suitable for qualitative and exploratory research, as it enables the mapping of concepts, the identification of gaps, and the deepening of discussions based on multiple sources.

The literature review was conducted in complementary stages. Initially, an exploratory search was carried out, using the term “Cittaslow” as a starting point. From this, Boolean operators such as AND were applied, combining it with related expressions to broaden the thematic scope of the investigation. Among the combinations used were: “Cittaslow AND Slow Movement”, “Cittaslow AND Design”, “Slow Cities AND

Slow Movement”, and “Slow Cities AND Design”.

In the next stage, inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined. The snowball sampling technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) was used, in which the references of one text lead to the discovery of other relevant sources. This approach proved effective in identifying significant authors and publications, contributing to the deepening of the bibliographic corpus.

The third stage consisted of a systematized search across different academic databases, such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, CAPES Journals, and the official Cittaslow International website. Initially, no filters were applied regarding language or publication period in order to ensure a broad and diverse sample. However, a predominance of studies focused on tourism—particularly “slow tourism”—was observed, which did not align with the focus of this research. These materials were therefore excluded, prioritizing studies that address Cittaslow from the perspectives of urbanism, quality of life, and design.

The selected materials were organized and managed using the Mendeley software, a tool that supported the classification, reading, annotation, and consultation of references throughout the research process (Ferenhof & Fernandes, 2016).

The readings and annotations carried out throughout this process provided the theoretical foundation for the proposed analysis, serving as support for the development of the subsequent sections, including the results, discussion, and final considerations of the research.

In addition to these procedures, particular attention was given to the consistency and coherence of the selected materials, ensuring that the analyzed studies contributed meaningfully to the research objectives. This involved a careful reading process, in which the relevance of each publication was assessed not only in terms of its thematic alignment with Cittaslow, but also regarding its theoretical contributions to discussions on urban design, sustainability, and territorial dynamics. Such an approach allowed for a more refined selection of sources, strengthening the analytical depth of the study.

Moreover, the interpretative nature of the narrative review enabled the identification of convergences and divergences among the analyzed works, highlighting different perspectives on the Cittaslow movement and its applications. This process made it possible to recognize recurring themes, such as the emphasis on quality of life, local identity, and participatory governance, as well as to identify gaps and limitations in the existing literature. These insights were fundamental for structuring the analytical framework of the research and for guiding the critical discussion presented in the subsequent sections.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the methodological approach adopted in this study does not seek to exhaust the topic, but rather to provide a comprehensive and critical overview that can support further investigations. By articulating different sources and perspectives, the narrative review contributes to building a broader understanding of the Cittaslow movement and its potential intersections with urban design. In this sense, the methodology not only serves as a foundation for the present study but also as a starting point for

future research that may explore the theme through other approaches, methods, and empirical contexts.

3 RESULTS

In an increasingly fast-paced world, movements advocating a return to slower, more sustainable, and more human rhythms have been gaining momentum. Cittaslow, originating in Tuscany (Italy) in 1999 by Paolo Saturnini, proposes a new way of thinking about and living in the city—an invitation to slow down, to value local culture, and to build spaces that are more sensitive to everyday needs (Oliveira, 2021). Inspired by the Slow Movement, Cittaslow seeks to transform small cities into places with a higher quality of life, encouraging sustainable practices and a more balanced relationship with the urban environment (Mayer & Knox, 2006).

The trajectory of Cittaslow begins in the 1980s with the emergence of Slow Food, founded by Carlo Petrini in 1986 in the Piedmont region of Italy. As a reaction to the expansion of fast-food chains and the homogenization of eating habits, Slow Food advocated the pleasure of eating well, valuing local, artisanal foods and reclaiming “time rediscovered” at the table (Petrini, 2007; Mallet, 2018). Slow Food not only recovers traditional food practices but also inspires new ways of organizing urban life, closer to the land, human relationships, and the natural rhythm of things (Petrini, 2011).

The proposal expanded beyond food, inspiring the so-called Slow Movement, which promotes slowing down across various spheres of life—from consumption to education, from design to urbanism. It was in this context that, in 1999, Paolo Saturnini—then mayor of Greve in Chianti—gathered three other mayors from small Italian towns (Orvieto, Bra, and Positano), all already involved with Slow Food, to found Cittaslow. The idea was to bring the values of the movement into urban life, creating more pleasant, healthy environments rooted in local culture (Senetra & Szarek-Iwaniuk, 2020).

Cittaslow—or “slow city”—does not mean the absence of progress or the rejection of technology. On the contrary, it is a model of urban development that prioritizes well-being, sustainability, and local identity over haste, excessive consumption, and standardization. As a counterpoint to the so-called “McDonaldization of society,” slow cities advocate authenticity over imitation, silence over noise, and trees instead of concrete (Grzelak-Kostulska et al., 2011).

Primarily aimed at cities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants, the movement understands that these contexts offer greater openness to citizen participation and to public management that is closer to local realities (Mayer & Knox, 2006; Oliveira, 2021). From this perspective, Cittaslow proposes the creation of an international network of cities committed to a new urban logic that values everyday rhythms, environmental care, and social coexistence (Raco, Durrant & Livingstone, 2018).

Active participation by residents is one of the pillars of Cittaslow and brings the movement closer to concepts such as the “right to the city,” formulated by Henri Lefebvre and strengthened by a series of

international charters, such as the World Charter for the Right to the City (2005), the Leipzig Charter (2007), and the New Urban Agenda (2016). These documents propose guidelines for people-centered urban development, emphasizing social inclusion, sustainability, and democratic governance. By promoting slow deliberative processes that respect the time of listening and collective construction, Cittaslow offers a concrete alternative to the technocratic dynamics that often shape urban centers. By reclaiming public space as a place of encounter, affection, and decision-making, the movement repositions the citizen at the center of urban planning, restoring the connection between people and the places they inhabit (Citego, 2025).

To become part of the Cittaslow International Association, cities must meet or demonstrate commitment to a set of criteria organized into seven main areas (Ak, 2017):

- Environmental policies: Use of renewable energy, reduction of noise and air pollution, encouragement of green areas.
- Infrastructure policies: Promotion of public transport, accessibility, and ecological architecture.
- Urban quality of life: Inclusion of social spaces, control of visual advertising, preservation of architectural heritage.
- Agricultural, tourism, commercial, and artisanal policies: Support for local production, sustainable tourism, and traditional crafts.
- Hospitality and awareness plans: Strategies to engage the community, welcome visitors, and promote environmental and cultural education.
- Social cohesion: Promotion of belonging, inclusion, and citizen participation.
- Awareness: Promotion of the movement's philosophy among the population.

In addition to these criteria, some core characteristics define a Cittaslow city (Ak, 2017; Oliveira, 2021):

- Population under 50,000 inhabitants (with exceptions evaluated by the committee).
- Promotion of Slow Living and participatory governance.
- Valuing local products and traditions.
- Absence of fast-food chains and large supermarkets.
- Restrictions on vehicle traffic in historic centers.
- Encouragement of the restoration of old buildings.
- Creation of green spaces and preservation of the urban environment.
- Encouragement of technological innovation aligned with quality of life.

Cities wishing to become members may fall into three categories:

- Cittaslow Town: fewer than 50,000 inhabitants;
 - Cittaslow Supporter: more than 50,000 inhabitants;
 - Cittaslow Friend: individuals and families who support the movement.
-

The Cittaslow manifesto contains seventy recommendations and obligations, including the following (Citego, 2025):

- Valuing historic urban heritage and avoiding new construction.
- Reducing energy consumption.
- Promoting ecological technologies.
- Expanding green spaces and leisure areas.
- Improving urban cleanliness.
- Prioritizing public transport and non-polluting mobility.
- Reducing waste and developing recycling programs.
- Increasing pedestrian areas.
- Supporting local commerce.
- Developing community infrastructure accessible to people with disabilities and different age groups.
- Promoting participatory democracy.
- Preserving and developing local customs and regional products.
- Excluding genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

It is important to note that no city is required to meet all criteria immediately. What is expected is the presentation of a plan with goals and concrete actions for gradual implementation (Karabağ et al., 2012). This model allows adaptation to local realities, avoiding homogenization and promoting cultural and urban diversity among network members (Ak, 2017).

Since its founding, the movement has expanded significantly. Today, there are more than 280 certified cities in over 30 countries, including Italy, Germany, South Korea, Poland, Norway, Turkey, Japan, and Canada. Each country has a national network that adapts Cittaslow principles to its territorial and cultural specificities, forming a global community of cities committed to urban slowing and well-being (Radstrom, 2014).

In Brazil, there is only one city certified as Cittaslow: Socorro, in the interior of São Paulo. Recognized in 2015, Socorro has invested in community-based tourism, inclusion of people with disabilities, and actions focused on sustainability and strengthening local identity—demonstrating its alignment with the movement's values (Cittaslow, 2025).

Although tourism is not the main focus of the Cittaslow movement, it is undeniably connected to sustainable and community-based tourism practices, especially in small cities. The official network website even includes a section dedicated to tourism services and experiences, demonstrating its openness to such practices. Studies such as Park and Kim (2015) show that the implementation of Cittaslow can strengthen the

sense of local belonging and foster community empowerment through tourism activities rooted in cultural identity, gastronomy, and local ways of life. In this context, tourism becomes a driver for territorial valorization and income generation without compromising sustainability and the movement's principles. It is, therefore, an approach that integrates hospitality and belonging, offering visitors a meaningful and situated experience—and providing communities with a sense of agency.

In the case of Goolwa, in Australia—the first city outside Europe to obtain certification—the implementation of Cittaslow resulted in a series of community-led initiatives, such as food festivals, cultural events, and projects to valorize local heritage. These initiatives fostered community-based tourism and, more importantly, strengthened the bonds between residents, territory, and collective identity (Park & Kim, 2015). This process aligns with the approach proposed by Krucken (2009), which understands design as a territorial mediator capable of articulating the symbolic, social, and productive resources of a place through collaborative and situated practices. In this sense, Cittaslow should not be understood merely as a label or tourism promotion strategy, but as a broader proposal for reorganizing urban space based on listening, belonging, and the valorization of everyday life. Its strength lies precisely in activating local capacities and inviting the collective construction of a new urban imaginary.

Furthermore, according to Thomaz and Prado (2023), Cittaslow is strongly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDGs 11 and 13. By promoting more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities, the movement contributes to the creation of urban spaces that prioritize well-being, environmental preservation, and the reduction of carbon footprints. Its practices foster closer relationships between people and territory, strengthening community bonds and encouraging local action in response to global climate challenges.

4 DISCUSSION

This article seeks to understand Cittaslow and its principles, and how they can contribute to urban design by promoting cities more connected to human rhythms, fostering well-being, and valuing the uniqueness of places. The discussion of the Cittaslow movement in light of design and territory reveals an approach that goes beyond spatial organization or urban management. It is an invitation to rethink everyday relationships, the scale of urban processes, and the ways in which places are experienced. By examining the articulation between design and territory, it becomes possible to understand that urban spaces are not merely physical, but also symbolic, cultural, and affective constructions (Krucken, 2009). In this sense, design, as a situated practice, can act as a catalyst for processes of reterritorialization that promote the valorization of local knowledge, community strengthening, and the re-signification of everyday practices.

Cittaslow, as an urban unfolding of the Slow Movement, presents itself as an alternative to the hegemonic logic of urban development based on acceleration, competitiveness, and the homogenization of

spaces. Its principles—which range from valuing local production to encouraging citizen participation—are grounded in an expanded conception of quality of life rooted in place-based identity. This brings the movement closer to contemporary notions of territorial design, which, according to Krucken (2009), understand territory as a system in constant negotiation between culture, environment, and social practices.

At this point, a fundamental question emerges: is Cittaslow a local or global movement? The answer may lie in the very complexity of the concept of the “glocal.” According to Robertson (1995), the “glocal” refers to the simultaneity of universalization and particularization—that is, the ability to integrate local values into global dynamics without implying a loss of identity. Cittaslow operates precisely within this threshold: it promotes international networks of cities that share common principles, but whose application is specific to each territory. It is a global movement with local actions, in which small scale is not synonymous with isolation, but rather with qualified connection.

However, this glocal proposal also raises criticisms. One of them concerns the very name “Cittaslow.” The use of terms from different languages—“città” (city, in Italian) and “slow” (in English)—may seem contradictory within a movement that strongly advocates the valorization of local culture. It is even more curious that the official name of the movement does not include the accent in “città,” despite this being the correct spelling in Italian. This choice is not merely typographic but symbolic: it suggests a certain concession to the dominant global language (English), which may weaken the movement’s own discursive coherence. By adopting a hybrid linguistic brand, Cittaslow engages with the world, but also opens space for questioning the true centrality of local culture in its communicational structure.

Another relevant critique concerns the population restriction for joining the movement. According to official criteria, only cities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants can become members of the Cittaslow network (Cittaslow, 2025). Although this choice seeks to ensure an urban scale more conducive to human interaction and participatory governance, it excludes complex territorial realities, such as neighborhoods or districts of large cities that present characteristics and demands aligned with the movement’s principles. One might imagine, for instance, a neighborhood in a metropolis such as São Paulo or Belo Horizonte implementing slow city practices. After all, as Lefebvre (1999) argues, the right to the city is also the right to urban experimentation, even in fragmented contexts.

This leads to the importance of thinking about Cittaslow not only as an institutional label but as a philosophy applicable at different scales. In this context, design can act as a means of adapting the movement’s principles to territories not formally recognized as “slow cities,” but that seek to restore the relationship between time, space, and urban life. Community design practices, participatory interventions, and projects guided by active listening to communities can contribute to establishing slower and more sensitive dynamics even in peripheral areas or densely populated neighborhoods (Manzini, 2008).

Furthermore, although tourism is not the central focus of the movement, it appears as a recurring

strategy in Cittaslow cities. The official website, for example, offers tourism packages focused on authenticity, traditional knowledge, and local gastronomy. This proposal aligns with what is known as “Slow Tourism,” which values immersive, sustainable experiences connected to the daily lives of host communities (Fullagar, Wilson & Markwell, 2012). In the context of small cities, where economic opportunities may be limited, community-based tourism can represent a viable source of income, provided it is structured in an ethical and participatory manner.

However, caution is needed: there are risks that slow tourism, if poorly implemented, may become a new form of symbolic exploitation of territories. The romanticization of the “slow,” the “traditional,” and the “authentic” can fuel dynamics of rural gentrification or the folklorization of local cultures (Salazar, 2012). In this case, the role of design is fundamental in avoiding such pitfalls, acting as a sensitive mediator between visitors and communities, and ensuring that tourism processes respect local dynamics and promote fair and reciprocal relationships.

Finally, it is important to recognize that although Cittaslow originated in Italy and maintains a strong presence in Europe, there is enormous potential for critical and creative expansion in countries of the Global South. Latin American cities, for example, face profound challenges related to inequality, urban precarity, and environmental crises—but they are also territories of resistance, social innovation, and community solidarity. As highlighted by Acselrad (2013) and Haesbaert (2014), territory is also a space of conflict and possibility. Thus, thinking about Cittaslow and its principles from the perspective of design, territory, and the Latin American context is also a way of reimagining the movement, incorporating new voices, practices, and knowledge that can enrich its application and make it more inclusive and plural.

In this perspective, it is also important to reflect on the temporal dimension embedded in urban practices and how it shapes everyday experiences. The emphasis on slowing down is not merely about reducing speed, but about reconfiguring how time is perceived, organized, and lived within urban environments. Time, in this sense, becomes a design material—something that can be structured, mediated, and experienced through spatial configurations, services, and social interactions. By acknowledging time as a qualitative dimension rather than a purely quantitative one, Cittaslow opens possibilities for designing cities that prioritize continuity, care, and lived experience over efficiency and immediacy.

This shift also implies a transformation in how success is measured in urban contexts. Instead of relying solely on indicators such as economic growth, productivity, or infrastructural expansion, the Cittaslow approach suggests the need to consider less tangible dimensions, such as well-being, sense of belonging, social cohesion, and cultural vitality. These aspects, although harder to quantify, are central to the construction of meaningful urban life. In this regard, design plays a crucial role in making these dimensions visible and tangible, translating abstract values into concrete interventions that can be experienced in daily life.

Furthermore, the relationship between scale and perception becomes particularly relevant when

discussing slow cities. Smaller urban scales tend to facilitate proximity, encounter, and recognition, enabling stronger connections between individuals and their surroundings. However, as previously discussed, the principles of Cittaslow should not be restricted to small cities alone. Rather, they can inspire micro-scale interventions within larger urban contexts, such as neighborhoods, streets, or even specific public spaces. These localized actions can function as “islands of slowness” within accelerated environments, demonstrating that alternative ways of inhabiting the city are possible even under dominant urban logics.

Another key aspect concerns the role of everyday practices in shaping urban transformation. While large-scale planning and policy-making are important, the Cittaslow philosophy highlights the significance of small, incremental changes rooted in daily life. Practices such as walking, gathering in public spaces, engaging with local commerce, or participating in community activities contribute to the construction of a more human-centered urban experience. Design, in this context, can support and amplify these practices by creating conditions that encourage interaction, accessibility, and inclusivity, reinforcing the idea that meaningful change often emerges from the ordinary rather than the exceptional.

Finally, it is essential to consider that the adoption of Cittaslow principles requires not only technical and spatial adjustments, but also cultural and behavioral shifts. Slowing down challenges deeply ingrained values associated with speed, efficiency, and constant productivity, which are widely normalized in contemporary society. Therefore, implementing such a paradigm involves a process of collective learning and unlearning, in which both institutions and individuals renegotiate their relationship with time, space, and consumption. In this sense, design can act as a pedagogical tool, fostering awareness and enabling new forms of engagement with urban life that are more aligned with sustainability, care, and coexistence.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATION

The Cittaslow movement proposes a model of urban development that can significantly contribute to design on multiple fronts. Whether in the conception of more human and sustainable urban spaces, in strengthening local production, in mediating more interactive and efficient participatory processes, or in building more coherent visual identities, its guidelines directly align with the principles of design. By incorporating these perspectives, it becomes possible to conceive cities that are more livable, inclusive, and aligned with a vision of a sustainable future.

The metaphor “where time dwells” does not refer only to the slowing down of urban rhythms, but to the conception of spaces where the act of inhabiting gains depth, presence, and meaning. In this context, the poetics of design emerges as a sensitive way of perceiving and transforming the city—not merely as a technical practice, but as an attentive listening to human experience, as proposed by Avendaño (2010). Grounded in careful observation and emotion, design transforms everyday life into meaningful experiences.

Thus, urban design inspired by the Cittaslow philosophy moves away from standardized, rushed, and

generic solutions, embracing instead a more intuitive, interpretative, and symbolic approach—a poetic practice. Living in a Cittaslow city is also a way of relating to the world that values time, affection, and belonging, evoking the philosophical notion of dwelling developed by Heidegger (2001), for whom this act is closely tied to the construction of meaning and to how human beings poetically inhabit the world. The poetics of design, in this scenario, is therefore an invitation to create with time and presence, fostering more sensitive and humanized urban experiences.

In this sense, design can be understood not only as a tool for spatial transformation, but as a critical and cultural practice that operates within the symbolic dimension of urban life. The intersection between Cittaslow, design, and territory points to the possibility of achievable utopias aimed at a more committed urban future—one that values everyday life, sustainability, and the diversity of ways of living. Rather than applying a ready-made model, it is about adapting its principles to the reality of each place, recognizing the creative and political potential of situated design.

Finally, the approach proposed in this study is not intended as an endpoint. On the contrary, it opens pathways for future research that further explores the role of design in processes of reterritorialization, collaborative practices, and the construction of alternative urban imaginaries. In the face of contemporary challenges, rethinking time and the ways of inhabiting cities is urgent. In this context, Cittaslow emerges as a provocation: what if slowing down is, in fact, the best and fastest way to move forward?

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