

FROM SLOW FOOD TO SLOW TOURISM

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Abstract: *One of the effects of globalization is the faster pace of our lives. This rhythm can be noticed in all aspects of life: travel, work, shopping, etc. and it has serious negative effects. It has become common knowledge that stress and speed generate serious medical issues. Food and eating habits in the modern world have taken their toll on our health. However, some people took a stand and argued for a new kind of lifestyle. It all started in the field of gastronomy, where a new movement emerged – Slow Food, based on the ideas and philosophy of Carlo Petrini. Slow Food represents an important adversary to the concept of fast food, and is promoting local products, enjoyable meals and healthy food. The philosophy of the Slow Food movement developed in several directions: Cittaslow, slow travel and tourism, slow religion and slow money etc. The present paper will account the evolution of the concept and its development during the most recent years. We will present how the philosophy of slow food was applied in all the other fields it reached and some critical points of view. Also we will focus on the presence of the slow movement in Romania, although it is in a very early stage of development. The main objectives of the present paper are: to present the chronological and ideological evolution of the slow movement; to establish a clear separation of slow travel and slow tourism, as many mistake on for the other; to review the presence of the slow movement in Romania. Regarding the research methodology, information was gathered from relevant academic papers and books and also from interviews and discussions with local entrepreneurs. The research is mostly theoretical and empirical, as slow food and slow tourism are emerging research themes in academic circles.*

Keywords: *fast food; slow food; travel; tourism.*

JEL classification: *L66; L83*

1. Introduction

In the second part of the 20th century, there was a revolution in eating based on the emergence of foods that need little or no preparation. According to some authors (Myhrvold et. al. 2011) this revolution started with companies like Coca-Cola, Danone and latter on McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken. The main cause of this revolution was formation of the middle class in the United States, and later in Europe. "Millions of people did not have the time, the skills, or the help to cook for themselves-but they did have enough money to eat well" (Myhrvold et. al. 2011:20).

The downside of this revolution was the fact that although food was available to people, health problems started to appear, which were caused by eating. Both the contents of food and the eating habits had (and still have) a negative impact on the health of individuals.

For example, obesity is considered to be caused, at least partially by the increase in the number of fast-food restaurants in the US (Currie et. al., 2009). Or the high fructose syrup, which was introduced in mass production in the 70s and 80s is linked to diabetes and other metabolic problems (Goran et al, 2012; Parker et.al., 2010). Mass media has not been ignorant to these facts and so, documentaries and magazines have appeared that discuss in detail the problems of food and eating habits (Tabel 1).

Tabel 1: Documentaries regarding food and diet

Title (director)	Year	Themes
Supersize me (Spurllock)	2004	The impact of a McDonald's based diet on the health of an individual
Food Inc. (Kenner R.)	2008	The negative impact of the food industry on farmers, animals, consumers and the environment
Food matters (Colquhoun J.)	2008	The importance of food for the health of the consumers and the implications of the drug industry
The weight of the nation (n/a)	2012	An analysis of the diet and food issues in the USA, during the 12 episodes of the series
Fed Up (Soechtig S.)	2014	New trends in dieting and the health hazards generated by the consumption of sugar

Source: www.imdb.com

Considering all these problems and their effects, a counter-revolution started in Italy, named Slow Food. This new philosophy is based on the concept of slowing down, opposed to the "insidious virus Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods." (Slow Food Manifesto, 1989). The movement started with the Slow Food movement in Italy in the 80s and 90s, but has extended to other countries in Europe and later the world. Slow Food is considered "the gastronomic version of Greenpeace: a defiant determination to preserve unprocessed, time-intensive food from being wiped off the culinary map" (Osborne in Hall, 2012: 109). The concept of slow has been applied later in other fields: travel and tourism, urbanism, fashion, culture and even money and religion.

In the present paper we will follow the history of the Slow Food movement, its evolution and transformation.

1. The first step: the emergence of *Slow Food*

There are authors who consider Krippendorf as being the first advocate for slowness: "switch off the time machine. Take off the watch. Get rid of time pressure, the deadline, the agenda. Escape from time" (Krippendorf, quoted by Lumsdon and McGrath, 2011), but it is almost unanimously accepted that the father of the Slow Movement is Carlo Petrini.

The first step took place in 1985, when the Arcigola foundation was established by Petrini and other enthusiasts in the town of Bra, to protest against the opening of the first McDonald's restaurant in Rome (Heitmann et al. 2011). In the last 25 years, Petrini has been considered "the prophet and guiding light of the Slow Food Movement" (Popham 2009).

The *de facto* moment for the emergence of the Slow Food Movement was on the 10th December 1989, when the Slow Food Manifesto was read in Paris in front of delegates from 15 countries: "Our defense should begin at the table with *Slow Food*. Let us rediscover the flavors and savors of regional cooking and banish the degrading effects of *Fast Food*." (Slow Food Manifesto, 1989)

The next year, in 1990, the first Slow Food International Congress was held in Venice, Italy. In the years that followed, the movement has extended to several countries: Germany, Switzerland, Japan, USA, UK etc.

The Slow Food Movement has numerous projects: the Ark of Taste, the University of Gastronomic Sciences and Terra Madre Day etc. which are trying to achieve the main

goals of defending food biodiversity, developing horizontal (consumer-consumer) and vertical (consumer-producer) networks, and enhance information and education in the field of food and gastronomy.

The Ark of Taste was launched in 1996 and it has the following objectives: „To protect the small purveyors of fine food from the deluge of industrial standardization; to ensure the survival of endangered animal breeds, cheeses, cold cuts, edible herbs - both spontaneous and cultivated – cereals and fruit; to promulgate taste education; to make a stand against obsessive worrying about hygienic matters, which kills the specific character of many kinds of production; to protect the right to pleasure.” (Slow Food, 1997) The Ark of Taste consists of a list of products divided into several categories (breads, breeds, cheese, fish, honey, oils, pasta, spirits, and wines).

Table 2: Slow Food International Congresses

No.	Year	Town	Country
1	1990	Venice	Italy
2	1997	Orvieto	Italy
3	1998	Turin	Italy
4	2003	Naples	Italy
5	2007	Puebla	Mexico
6	2012	Turin	Italy

Source: http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/history.lasso

At this moment, Romania has 10 products in the Ark: Cheese from the Bucegi Mountains, red onion of Turda, hearth bread, Saxon villages preserves and several breeds of pigs, sheep and chicken (<http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com/pagine/eng/arca>).

The second project is the founding in 2004 of the University of Gastronomic Science. Its objective is to “create an international research and education center for those working on renewing farming methods, protecting biodiversity, and building an organic relationship between gastronomy and agricultural science.” (<http://www.unisg.it/en/storia-e-missione/>) The University offers undergraduate, graduate and masters programs in English or Italian, focused on food, culture and sustainability.

Terra Madre Day is celebrated each year on the 10th of December. It is a worldwide celebration of local food. In 2013, it was celebrated by over 185.000 people attending 750 events in 130 countries. (<http://www.slowfood.com/terramadreday/>) The day was celebrated in Romania, in Bucharest and Turda, where local dishes were cooked and tasted by participants.

There are several critics of the slow food concept. Firstly, some argue that this concept is not sustainable at a global level. Some authors (Van Der Muelen, 2008; Lindholm and Lie 2013), ask if small-scale local food production systems can solve global problems at hand. Locally grown food by small scale farmers can contribute to the health and well-being of certain regions (towns), this is not a solution for feeding 7 billion people.

Secondly, Laudan (2001) considers that slow food is simply nostalgia for “a time when families and friends met to relax over delicious food and to forget that, far from being an invention of the late 20th century, fast food has been a mainstay of every society”.

Thirdly, there is a certain interest conflict between on one hand the social goals of the movement and the economic goals (profit) of the entrepreneurs that are part of the movement. This conflict might lead to a fracture between the globalized Slow Food Movement and its creators, the small agriculture businesses in Northern Italy (Van Der Muelen, 2008).

Fourthly, some (Eriksen, 2007:182) argue that the Slow Movement can be criticized for representing an affluent middle class community concerned chiefly with self-realization

and personal well being. So, The slow movement is not radical enough in the fight against globalization.

2. The second step: Cittaslow

The concept of *Cittaslow* is based on Petrini's principles: „pleasure before profit, human beings before head office, Slowness before speed” (Honore 2004). The Movement of Cittaslow was born in 1999 through Paolo Saturnini's, past Mayor of Greve in Chianti, a little town of Tuscany brilliant intuition. The following years more and more cities joined the movement, and by November 2013, the list of slow cities contains over 100 towns from 28 countries. (Table 3). Cittaslow is basically an urban social movement against standardization and also a model for local governance.

The towns on the list have no more than 50.000 inhabitants, as it was argued that small towns offer the best opportunities for easy, enjoyable living (Miella 2008). The CittaSlow manifesto contains numerous pledges for the member cities, such as: cutting noise and reduce traffic; increasing green spaces; supporting local farmers and the shops, markets and restaurants that sell their produce; promoting technology that protects the environment; preserving local aesthetic and culinary traditions; and fostering a spirit of hospitality and neighbourliness. (Honore 2004). The mandatory indicators which have to be met by cities interested to become members have been split into six categories: environmental policies, infrastructure policies, quality of urban life policies, agricultural, touristic and artisan policies, policies for hospitality, awareness and training, social cohesion and partnerships (Cittaslow, 2014).

The advantage of Cittaslow is the fact that designated cities must go through a rigorous certification and periodic reviews, as compared to ecotourism destinations, which lack an international certification system (Lowry & Lee, 2011).

Table 3: Number of towns members in the Cittaslow network

No.	Country	Number of towns
1	Italy	73
2	Germany	12
3	Poland	12
4	South Korea	11
5	Turkey	9
6	France	8
7	Portugal	6
8	Spain	6
9	Great Britain	6
10	Others	37

Source: http://www.cittaslow.org/download/DocumentiUfficiali/CITTASLOW_LIST_november_2013.pdf

Romania is not yet a member of the network, but is considered by many to have a serious potential in order to implement the above mentioned pledges (Crangus)

3. The third step: slow travel and slow tourism

The philosophy of the Slow Food Movement can be easily applied to tourism. „Central to the meaning and concept of Slow Tourism is the shift in focus from achieving a quantity

and volume of experiences while on holiday towards the quality of (generally fewer) experiences.” (Heitmann et al. 2011).

There isn't an exact moment when slow travel emerged, as in the case of slow food, but most academics agree it was first defined in the second part of the 2000s.

Gardner (2009) author of “A manifesto for slow travel” considers that slow travel „is about deceleration rather than speed. The journey becomes a moment to relax, rather than a stressful interlude imposed between home and destination. Slow travel re-engineers time, transforming it into a commodity of abundance rather than scarcity.”

From the perspective of Dickinson (2009), slow tourism consists of fewer vacations and longer stays, air travel is not used, but other forms of transport which are more environmentally friendly, and transport becomes part of the tourist experience.

Table 4: Slow travel v. fast travel comparison

<i>Characteristics</i>				
Mode of travel	Slowness	Travel experience	Environmental Consciousness	Sense of place
Walking/cycling	Unhurried	Travelling through the landscape	Low consumption of fuels	Cultural exchange (attachment)
Airplane	Hurried	Travel corridor	High consumption of fuels	Minimal cultural contact (detachment)

Source: author's adaptation of Lumsdon and McGrath (2011)

Heitmann et al. (2011) believes that slow tourism is characterized by “the enjoyment of discovery, learning and sharing. This ‘slowing’ of the pace of a holiday provides opportunities to interact and connect with local people and places on a deeper level.”

Lumsdon and McGrath (2011) consider that slow tourism “in essence is about slowing down, travelling shorter distances and enriching the travel experience both en route to and at the destination.”

Hall (2011) views slow tourism as a macroeconomic concept and it compares it to steady-state tourism, rather than a form of tourism.

Also, slow travel can reduce the pressure on climate change, as it “could help create a modal shift in transport to the least polluting systems. Given that one such modality is rail, shifts may not be as difficult as imagined”. (Burns and Bigging, 2009)

From the start we have to notice that travel and tourism are used simultaneously, but the reality is quite different. Travel involves the shift from point A(home) to point B(destination). So, the slow component is mainly observed in the means of transportation: avoiding air travel, and insisting on walking, hiking, cycling.

This is not the case of tourism. Because of its complexity, the slow component in tourism can be observed in several fields: transportation, accommodation (using small scale guest-houses), food (respecting the principles of slow food) and culture (engaging with the local culture and traditions).

So, slow travel is essentially a part of slow tourism, related to the means of transportation used in order to get to and from the destination. From a statistical perspective, slow tourism represent 10% of the European tourism market and is on the rise (Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011)

Slow tourism in Romania benefits from the image of former Olympic champion Ivan Patzaichin, who has become the promoter of this form of tourism practiced in the Danube Delta. Other destinations for tourists are Sibiu, Brasov, Dobrogea and the George Enescu music festival. Impressions about Romania are mostly positive, but

significant difference can be noticed between Bucharest and rural areas of the province (<http://slowtalk.com/groupee/forums/a/tpc/f/>).

4. Conclusions

We consider sustainable development, in general, and sustainable tourism, in particular, to be mainly theoretical concepts, with a small number of examples, coming from the field of practice. In this scarcity, we have identified a new philosophy and an adjacent movement which try to reduce the crevasse between sustainability and everyday consumers.

As we could notice, the Slow Movement has spread throughout the world and is finding more and more supporters and fans that put its principles into practice. By respecting its principles, people learn to get back in touch with nature, they try to reduce the fast pace of life and enjoy social interactions.

Unfortunately, the slow philosophy has a few flaws. Firstly, through *Slow Food*, we will not be able to feed 7 or 8 billion people. Although it represents a healthy alternative to industrialized agriculture, *slow food* can only be a choice for people in the developed world. At the same time, by consuming local products, consumers avoid imports from developing countries, for which agriculture might represent the only economic activity.

Secondly, the Cittaslow concept eliminates from the start cities with population over 50.000 inhabitants, so it is not suitable for large human settlements. A second problem is the high level of concentration of the member cities (more than 50% of the members come from Italy).

Thirdly, slow travel and tourism are increasing, but by avoiding air transport, several destinations (the Maldives, and other Small Island States) will have to face a decrease of the number of tourists, which will reduce the economic benefits for these countries (most of which are also developing). Also from an international point of view "among policy-makers there is little sign of acceptance of a developing alternative sustainability paradigm based on ideas such as degrowth, steady state tourism and slow tourism." (Bramwell and Lane 2011)

In academic books, the forms of tourism are classified according to several criteria (motivation, destination etc.). In the case of slow tourism, and other forms (ecotourism, volunteer tourism, pro-poor tourism) we have to admit that there is a secondary motivation – promoting sustainable tourism. Either through protecting the environment, helping the needy or supporting local businesses and traditions sustainable tourists get a higher level of satisfaction from their holiday experience.

Nevertheless, slowness in general and slow tourism in particular can be beneficial as means of implementing sustainable development principles, at least partially. Because of its complexity, we can't hope to find a single solution or a "wonder-remedy" for all the issues in the world, but slowness might be the start.

In conclusion, we consider that the slow movement with all its components represents one of the few actions of individuals towards a sustainable civilization. But, it is not *the solution* for all of the world's problems and it cannot be applied worldwide.

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