



TASTING THE  
LANDSCAPE  
**IFLA 2016**  
53<sup>rd</sup> IFLA WORLD CONGRESS  
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APRIL • 20<sup>th</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> • 2016 • TORINO • ITALY



MINISTERO  
PER I BENI E  
LE ATTIVITÀ  
CULTURALI



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## Improving the Resilience of Small Towns using Cittaslow Principles

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As the growth of urban populations, megacities and the effects of globalization continue to rise, many of the world's small towns and cities have been greatly impacted by the loss of both natural and cultural heritage. The industrialization and standardization of urban landscapes have damaged the hearts, souls and identities of towns and cities, while the desire of many residents to move to larger cities or suburbs has caused urban shrinkage in many smaller urban centers. Issues of balancing modern needs of urban residents, while improving the quality of life and protecting important heritage sites are also seen as management issues that need to be resolved. Such diverse concerns, combined with an increasingly fast pace of life, have prompted urban designers, governing bodies and communities to seek alternative methods of planning and living to help foster or perhaps return to a simpler and healthier way of life. This study considers the philosophy and principles of the international association of Cittaslow as a possible solution to help strengthen citizens' sense of place, which helps increase the demand for local products and expand citizens' awareness in places where they live. By engaging with communities, supporting the local economy and adopting green practices, the world's Slow Cities are also considered among the world's most resilient cities.

Cittaslow—the International Network of Cities Where Living is Easy, was established in response to the loss of the urban and natural landscape as well as agricultural and cultural traditions that had defined small Italian towns for many centuries. Influenced by the Slow Food movement, Cittaslow applies the concept of eco-gastronomy to an alternative method of urban planning and everyday life and has been recognized for its ability to successfully integrate the 3E's of sustainability—economy, ecology and equity—into a concrete development program. Since its establishment in 1999, over 200 small towns and cities across the globe have responded to Cittaslow's call for small towns and cities rich in culture and traditions to engage their citizens and improve the quality of urban life.

Slow Cities are places where both visitors and citizens can easily see and experience the urban identity and local culture of a place through enjoying the tastes of the landscape, participating in environmentally friendly practices, actively using public spaces and supporting local products, including organic food and handicrafts. As one of the founding towns of the Cittaslow network, Orvieto, in the Umbrian region of Italy, serves as an excellent interpreter of the Cittaslow philosophy. Though elevated high on top of volcanic tuff, the town of Orvieto remains well connected to the surrounding countryside and it serves as an excellent model of a historic town that embraces new technologies while honoring its history, culture and traditions.

As explained in an interview with an employee of Orvieto's tourism office, the town has experienced a revival of crafts and farming because of interested young people through the support of the town and its residents. The Slow City has successfully integrated local artists and artistic traditions into their landscape designs. For instance, the craftsmanship of a local artisan's workshop is proudly displayed in public and private spaces throughout the city. Cittaslow has also aided Orvieto's urban and natural environment through stimulating the re-use of older buildings, reducing energy usage, and recycling. The historic center has furthermore remained virtually traffic free through its alternative transportation methods. Orvieto, like other Slow Cities, emphasizes pedestrian areas in its urban design and planning schemes (ibid). In addition, Cittaslow's efforts to promote local agriculture led to a mandate in which school cafeterias must serve fresh, local produce (ibid). The town's restaurants and shops also offer many products and food that are locally sourced.

As host to the International Headquarters of Cittaslow, Orvieto continues to explore the benefits of strengthened sense of place to help preserve and enhance its landscape and urban identity while communicating this with its local community. As a Slow City, Orvieto's local governing bodies and residents have committed to the preservation of their urban identity and cultural heritage. Yet, the focus on preservation has not isolated the town or its residents, nor has it limited Orvieto to purely touristic ventures. On the contrary, Orvieto's pledge as a Slow City has helped keep the town alive and strengthened its resilience, promoted the enjoyment of its surroundings and improved the quality of life for its residents and visitors. Indeed, for many small towns and cities, Cittaslow can be the answer to centers at risk of "museumification" or urban blight.

1. Orvieto and the surrounding countryside. Orvieto's restaurants, markets and stores proudly offer many prodotti a chilometri zero, indicating that they are locally sourced.

