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Abstract:

In 1999 the International Association of Livable Cities, “Cittaslow: Rete internazionale delle città del buon vivere”, was founded in Italy. To date, there are 176 member cities in 27 countries around the world, all of them smaller cities of less than 50,000 inhabitants. Twelve German cities are now members in the network. Based on an examination of the member cities of Cittaslow Germany, insight was gained into the system of requirements for excellence that is binding for Cittaslow cities, into its implementation in participating cities as well as into the viability and transferability of the overall concept.

Small cities are ideally equipped to achieve an orientation towards a comprehensive sustainability approach, while in the process emphasizing categories of quality over quantity. These cities assume important roles as anchor points for regional development. Not only do they provide technological as well as social infrastructure, they also carry out private supply services for rural, often sparsely populated areas. At stake is more than just the preservation of quantifiable standards of living, but rather the overall improvement of the quality of life. As explained in the article, Cittaslow provides new stimuli, against the background of debates on shrinking processes, for further reflection on the functions and viability of small cities. At the same time Cittaslow became a brand standing for high quality of life in smaller cities.