In the slow lane

Reading (Paper 1 Part 2)

Before you read

1. Look at the title and subheading of the article below. What do you think the globalisation of urban life means?
2. Why do you think the members of the ‘League of Slow Cities’ are against it? What do you think they want to put in its place?
3. In what ways do you think they might achieve their goals?

Reading

Read the main text to find the answers to the questions in Exercise 1. (Ignore the missing paragraphs for the moment.) How accurate were your predictions?

Life in the slow lane

Members of the League of Slow Cities are fighting against the globalisation of urban life. Carl Honore reports.

Even on a normal working day, Bra seems like the perfect place to get away from it all. Locals linger over coffee at pavement tables, watching the world drift by. Everyone has time to say a warm ‘Buongiorno’. And no wonder. Bra and three other Italian towns signed a pledge in 1999 to turn themselves into havens from the high-speed frenzy of the modern world.

The movement was first seen as an idea for a few people who liked to eat and drink well, but now it has become a much broader cultural discussion about the benefits of doing things in a more human, less frenetic way. Yet true to their culinary roots, Slow Cities place great emphasis on the enjoyment of food and wine, the fostering of conviviality and the promotion of unique, high-quality and specialist foods.

An old town on a hillside, Bra lies just outside the area where Italy’s finest wine is produced. As such, it might be considered of marginal interest, but here is where the concept of Slow Cities comes into its own. While neighbouring towns enjoy exalted reputations for wine and white truffles, Bra’s celebrity is founded on more down-to-earth things like fresh vegetables, local cheese and sausage. It is all about developing local specialities and improving the quality of life, epitomised by their symbol, the snail, which is slow and tastes good. And just as Slow Food’s seal of approval has been a badge of distinction in Italy for some time, the designation Città Slow has also become a mark of quality.

Slowly but surely, Bra is working through the 55 manifesto pledges. In its historic centre, the city has closed some streets to traffic and banned supermarket chains and lurid neon signs. Small family-run businesses — among them shops selling handwoven fabrics and specialty meats — are granted the best commercial real estate. City Hall subsidises building renovations that use building materials typical of the region. Hospital and school canteens now serve traditional dishes made from local organic fruit and vegetables instead of processed meals and produce from distant suppliers. It is quality, not quantity that counts.

Despite their longing for kinder, gentler times, though, Slow City campaigners are anxious not to come across as regressive. Yes, the movement aims to preserve traditional architecture, crafts and cuisine. But it also celebrates the best of the modern world. A Slow City asks: Does this improve our quality of life? If the answer is yes, then the city embraces it. And that includes the very latest technology. ‘Being a Slow City does not mean turning the clock back,’ explains Sibille. ‘We want to strike a balance between the modern and the traditional that promotes good living.’

Nevertheless, the Slow City movement still has a long way to go. Efforts to curb noise pollution in Bra are thwarted by people’s fondness for shouting into mobile phones and disturbing the peace. As in other Slow Cities, cars and scooters speed through the streets of Bra that are still open to them. ‘I’m afraid people continue to drive badly here,’ sighs Sibille. This is the area of life where it is hard to make people slow down.

In the town hall in Bra, Sibille is in high spirits. ‘It’s a long-term process, but bit by bit we are making Bra into a better place to live,’ she says. ‘When we are finished, everyone will want to live in a Slow City.’ This may be going a little too far. Città Slow, after all, is not for everyone.

Nevertheless, the movement’s core idea — that we need to take some of the speed and stress out of urban living — is feeding into a global trend.
Gapped text

For questions 1–6, you must choose which of the paragraphs A–G below fit into the numbered gaps in the article. There is one extra paragraph which does not fit in any of the gaps.

a Read the text on each side of question 1. Mark pronouns and other words that could refer to items in the missing paragraph.
- What could The movement refer back to?
- What do you expect to read about in the missing paragraph?

Look through the extracted paragraphs to find the one that fits in terms of topic and language links.

b Continue in the same way and complete the task. Check the task strategies on page 168 and use the Help clues below if necessary.

A The people of Bra certainly seem happy to work towards this ideal combination of two worlds. Even the young are responding. The pool hall in Bra has turned down the pop music in deference to the Slow ethos. 'Instead of gulping down a Coke in a loud bar, some of my young customers are learning how nice it can be to sip local wine in a place where the music is low,' says the owner.

B They were inspired by the Slow Food crusade, which began a rearguard action against fast food in Italy in the mid-1980s, with little expectation of success. But people soon cottoned on to the idea that traditional products were being displaced by cheap, mass-marketed food, and they gathered to the 'Slow' banner in droves.

C To win it, aspiring cities and their mayors are required to implement specific plans, such as cutting noise and traffic; increasing green spaces and pedestrian zones; backing 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.

D At the very least, though, Citta Slow has opened up another front in the worldwide battle against the culture of speed. By 2003, 28 Italian towns were officially designated Slow Cities, with another 26 working towards certification.

E There are others. Even as life gets sweeter in Bra, many locals still find work too hectic. 'It's all very well for politicians to talk about slow this and slow that,' says the owner of a leather-goods shop. 'But if I want a decent standard of living, I have to work very, very hard.'

F Again in keeping with Italian custom, and to guard against overwork, every small food shop in Bra closes on Thursdays and Sundays. City Hall now opens Saturday mornings, to allow people to deal with bureaucratic tasks in a more leisurely pace. 'We are slowly recreating a more traditional way of looking at life,' says Bruna Sibille, deputy mayor of Bra. 'But we think the best way to administer a city is with the slow philosophy.'

G It's about much more than long lunches, though. Every aspect of urban life is now recast – pleasure before profit, human beings before head office, slowness before speed. 'It is not easy to swim against the tide,' says Bruna Sibille, deputy mayor of Bra. 'But we think the best way to administer a city is with the slow philosophy.'

HELP
- Question 2
  Look for a paragraph that links back to the enjoyment of food.
- Question 3
  Look at the sentences on each side of the gap. Which paragraph fits the topic and contains examples of manifesto pledges?
- Question 4
  Look for a paragraph that refers back to traditional ways of doing things.

Task analysis

4 Compare and justify your answers. What grammatical or lexical links helped you?

Discussion

5 a List all the Slow City manifesto pledges mentioned in the article. Which ideas have been or are being implemented in your town/city? Which ones would you like to see implemented?

b Find expressions in the text that relate to these categories. Then explain the benefits of the slow life, using some of the expressions to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Slow City way of life</th>
<th>The globalisation of urban life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>linger over coffee</td>
<td>high-speed frenzy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Vocabulary**

**Idiomatic expressions**

1. a Mark the idiomatic expressions in this extract from the text on pages 72–73. What do they mean?
   - ‘Being a Slow City does not mean turning the clock back,’ explains Sibille. ‘We want to strike a balance between the modern and the traditional that promotes good living.’

   b Match the sentence halves and mark the idiomatic expressions. They are all used in the text.
   1. It’s important to relax and get away... 
   2. The police should arrest people who disturb... 
   3. Governments have a long way... 
   4. ot many people are ready to swim... 
   5. The concept of healthy eating is slowly... 
   6. For most things in life, it is quality,... 
   7. Summer is terrible because tourists come... 
   8. It’s hard to strike the right... 

   a the peace by having noisy parties. 
   b but surely catching on with the public. 
   c against the tide and refuse to buy cars. 
   d not quantity that counts. 
   e balance between work and life. 
   f from it all on a regular basis. 
   g in droves to visit my town. 
   h to go before they achieve equality for all.

   c How far do you agree with the statements in Exercise 1b?

**Choosing the correct word**

2. a Mark the correct verb in each set.
   1. As part of its campaign to proceed / promote / provoke a healthy lifestyle, the government is getting tough on smoking.
   2. They have decided / wished / pledged to reduce the number of smoking-related illnesses within ten years.
   3. Some organisations want them to censor / ban / bar smoking in all public places.
   4. However, this would be a difficult policy to implement / do / carry off.
   5. In addition, everything the government does to bring down / curb / crack down smoking reduces the income they receive from tax on cigarettes.
   6. This equalises / epitomises / expands the type of dilemma many governments face.
   7. On the one hand, they must protect citizens and cut / slice / chop health-care costs.
   8. On the other hand, they need to serve / reserve / preserve people’s rights and freedoms and maintain tax income.

   b What is your opinion on this issue?

**Expressions that are easily confused**

3. Complete the sentences in each pair with the correct expression. What is the difference in meaning?
   1. standard of living / cost of living
      a. It is high rents that make the ................................ so high in this city.
      b. The ................................ in this country has improved dramatically over the last few decades.
   2. lifestyle / way of life
      a. The traditional ................................ in some villages hasn’t changed for years.
      b. Living in the city, I had a very hectic
   3. living (n.) / livelihood
      a. He was a taxi driver who lost his ................................ when cars were banned from the city centre.
      b. He makes his ................................ as a tour guide.
   4. alive / living (adj.)
      a. He’s had so many accidents, he’s lucky to be .................................
      b. He is one of our greatest ................................ poets.
   5. lifetime / lifelong
      a. William hasn’t been the same since the death of his ................................ friend.
      b. He has spent his ................................ fighting against injustice.
   6. outlive / live out
      a. After Jack retired, he decided to ................................ the rest of his days in a quiet country village.
      b. Jack is so fit and healthy I’m sure he’ll ................................ the rest of his family.

**Words for eating and drinking**

4. a Look at this extract from the text and mark the verbs that describe ways of drinking. What is the difference in meaning?
   - Instead of gulping down a Coke in a loud bar, some of my young customers are learning how nice it can be to sip local wine in a place where the music is low.

   b Match the verbs on the left to appropriate completions on the right. When might you eat or drink in these ways?
   1. munch
   2. suck
   3. swig
   4. wolf down
   5. nibble at
   6. pick at
   7. guzzle
   8. chew
   9. drain
   a. a biscuit/sandwich
   b. a fizzy drink from the bottle
   c. a drink through a straw
   d. a glass of water in one go
   e. an apple
   f. food or drink quickly and greedily
   g. your food
   h. your dinner
   i. your food carefully before swallowing