

SLOW TIME ON TWO WHEELS: SLOW LIVING RELATED TO ACTIVE URBAN MOBILITY

Danielle Comitre Thomaz
Gheysa Prado

DOI 10.52050/9788579176685.4

Abstract: Moving around using a non-polluting vehicle that takes up little space can be part of the habits adopted by people who want to slow down their daily lives, especially in large cities in Brazil and around the world. This chapter seeks to understand and articulate the relationship between Slow Living and active urban mobility by bicycle. To this end, a combined bibliographic review of databases was carried out, starting with texts related to “slow living” and then “active urban mobility” and “cyclomobility”. As a result, it was possible to identify that as well as being an individual choice with direct impacts on the life of the person who adopts active urban mobility, there are also indirect impacts on others, especially from the point of view of the community. This chapter is part of a master’s thesis entitled “Slow Living: A tool for configuring a lifestyle related to active urban mobility”, and its main objective was to propose a tool for configuring the Slow Living lifestyle in relation to the perspective of active urban mobility.

Keywords: Design; Slow living; active urban mobility.

TEMPO LENTO EM DUAS RODAS: SLOW LIVING RELACIONADO À MOBILIDADE URBANA ATIVA

Resumo: Deslocar-se usando um veículo não poluente que ocupa pouco espaço pode fazer parte dos hábitos adotados por pessoas que desejam desacelerar suas vidas diárias, especialmente em grandes cidades no Brasil e no mundo. Este capítulo busca entender e articular a relação entre Slow Living e a mobilidade urbana ativa por bicicleta. Para isso, foi realizada uma revisão bibliográfica combinada de bases de dados, começando com textos relacionados ao “slow living” e depois “mobilidade urbana ativa” e “ciclomobilidade”. Como resultado, foi possível identificar que, além de ser uma escolha individual com impactos diretos na vida da pessoa que adota a mobilidade urbana ativa, também há impactos indiretos nos outros, especialmente do ponto de vista da comunidade. Este capítulo faz parte de

uma dissertação de mestrado intitulada “Slow Living: Uma ferramenta para configurar um estilo de vida relacionado à mobilidade urbana ativa”, e seu principal objetivo foi propor uma ferramenta para configurar o estilo de vida Slow Living em relação à perspectiva da mobilidade urbana ativa.

Palavras-chave: Design; Slow living; mobilidade urbana ativa.

TIEMPO LENTO EN DOS RUEDAS: SLOW LIVING RELACIONADO CON LA MOVILIDAD URBANA ACTIVA

Resumen: Desplazarse utilizando un vehículo no contaminante que ocupa poco espacio puede formar parte de los hábitos adoptados por personas que desean desacelerar su vida diaria, especialmente en grandes ciudades de Brasil y del mundo. Este capítulo busca comprender y articular la relación entre Slow Living y la movilidad urbana activa en bicicleta. Para ello, se realizó una revisión bibliográfica combinada de bases de datos, comenzando con textos relacionados con “slow living” y luego “movilidad urbana activa” y “ciclomovilidad”. Como resultado, se pudo identificar que, además de ser una elección individual con impactos directos en la vida de la persona que adopta la movilidad urbana activa, también hay impactos indirectos en los demás, especialmente desde el punto de vista de la comunidad. Este capítulo forma parte de una tesis de maestría titulada “Slow Living: Una herramienta para configurar un estilo de vida relacionado con la movilidad urbana activa”, y su principal objetivo fue proponer una herramienta para configurar el estilo de vida Slow Living en relación con la perspectiva de la movilidad urbana activa.

Palabras clave: Diseño; Slow living; movilidad urbana activa.

1. Introduction

The world population grew from 2.6 billion in 1950 to 8 billion in 2022, with accelerated urbanization starting in 1950 (UN, 2022). In Brazil, 61% of the population lived in urban areas in 2022, reflecting agricultural mechanization and industrialization (IBGE, 2022). The industrialization process promoted values of speed and efficiency, extending beyond the industry itself, impacting urban landscapes and public health. Rapid and disorderly urban growth encouraged individual motorization, increasing pollution levels and chronic

diseases associated with it and sedentary lifestyles (Bauer *et al.*, 2015; Linke, 2015). Furthermore, this acceleration of modern life is linked to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout (McIntosh, 2018; Oliveira *et al.*, 2021). In response, movements like the Slow Movement advocate for more balanced and slower lifestyles (Ionciã and Petrescu, 2016).

The Slow Movement is a new philosophy of life, diffuse but increasingly representative in various cultural aspects of contemporary society. It emerged from one of its branches, Slow Food, from which other branches have developed, incorporating values, actions, and movements that promote deceleration in various areas of life. These branches are based on different realities and contexts and can be used and adopted independently or combined, encouraging and promoting slower and more appreciative lifestyles (Thomaz e Prado, 2023). Their combination forms what is known today as the Slow Movement.

In recent years, this movement has grown and gained visibility, being recognized in various countries due to its thematic authenticity in terms of both ideology and organizational structure. Its main goal is to rescue, recover, and promote lifestyles focused on quality of life through balance in various perspectives, with its central element being a new relationship with temporality (Bauer, Neto, Trigo, 2015). It results from the exhaustion caused by adopting the values of industrial culture in capitalist society, where speed is an end in itself but is also used as a form of economic and cultural domination. It transforms and homogenizes products, services, markets, and consumers, creating a context of hyperconsumption and, consequently, hyperindividualism (Lipovetsky, 2009).

One of its branches, Slow Living, has gained prominence as an alternative to the fast-paced and stressful lifestyle of contemporary societies, especially in the urban context. This branch can be defined as a set of responses in various manifestations to this desire for “time for meaningful things.” Its emphasis is on localism, sustainability, and family and can be seen as an antidote to today’s stressed lifestyle

and globalization. It seeks to reconnect with local traditions in an era of mass culture and is also a reaction to a high-tech and fast-paced world (Botta, 2016).

An important aspect of Slow Living is sustainable urban mobility. Growing urbanization and the increase in individual motorized vehicles have created significant problems of congestion, pollution, and stress in cities. In this context, Slow Living proposes transportation alternatives that reduce these negative impacts. One example is promoting cycling, or using bicycles as a means of transportation, which is a central practice of this branch and the movement. The bicycle is seen not only as an efficient and ecological means of transportation but also as a way to reconnect with the urban environment in a more human and healthy way. Parkins (2004) highlights that practices like walking and cycling promote a deceleration of life's pace, allowing for greater appreciation of urban spaces and more direct interaction with the surrounding community.

For Parkins (2004), Slow Living involves practices that bring pleasure or purpose to daily tasks, such as cooking and sharing meals, growing food, and using active modes of transportation like walking or cycling. These practices build "slow subjects" who invest meaning in everyday life and distinguish themselves from the dominant culture of speed and rampant consumption. Hall (2012) points out that Slow Living is a critical response to excessive consumption and the negative impacts of globalization and contemporary capitalism.

In terms of urban mobility, promoting active and sustainable transportation, such as cycling, is essential. Studies show that adopting bicycles can significantly reduce pollutant emissions, improve public health, and increase social cohesion in cities (Gehl, 2010; Pucher & Buehler, 2012). Adequate cycling infrastructure, such as safe bike lanes and bicycle parking, is crucial to encourage this practice. Additionally, public policies that promote the use of bicycles and efficient public transport are critical for the successful implementation and adoption of Slow Living in urban areas.

Thus, this chapter aims to understand and articulate the relationships between what is understood as Slow Living and active urban mobility by bicycle. To this end, a combined bibliographic review was conducted in databases, starting with texts related to “slow living” and subsequently “active urban mobility” and “cycling mobility.” The results, which will be presented in the following sections, made it possible to understand that Slow Living enables a reconnection with local traditions and a more sustainable and meaningful lifestyle. This branch of the movement not only promotes individual health and well-being but also encourages the creation of more cohesive and environmentally conscious communities. A deeper understanding of the theme of cycling allows us to see that this is a key component of this philosophy, contributing to reducing environmental impact and improving quality of life in cities.

2. Slow living

As mentioned in the introduction, some of the concepts that underlie the current way of life are: efficiency, professionalism, speed (Parkins and Craig, 2006), competition, quantity, material consumption fulfilling non-material needs, and having is greater than being (Arins and Van Bellen, 2009). In response to this acceleration, Slow Living expresses a desire to adopt a more balanced and holistic lifestyle (Ionciã and Petrescu, 2016). This involves a conscious negotiation of the various temporalities in our daily lives, with a commitment to using time more mindfully. The practices associated with this lifestyle represent a specific approach to time, where “having time” for something means investing in it with attention and deliberation (Parkins, 2004).

For Heinonen *et al.* (2006), this movement highlights the demand for reserving time for oneself, for private life, and for leisure. It is a lifestyle that prioritizes people’s needs over the relentless pursuit of

money and success, involving a new way of experiencing social life and viewing cities as spaces for fun and socialization.

Moreover, Slow Living can be related to the concept of the green economy according to Ionciă and Petrescu (2016), which refers to an economic model that results in improved human well-being and social equity while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcity. This relationship arises from the holistic approach adopted by both, rejecting the division imposed by traditional economics between humans and the environment on which they depend for survival. Additionally, this philosophy of life contradicts the predominant trend in economics, which has long been dominated by concepts like “economic growth.”

Hall (2012) points out that there is a link between consumption, economic growth, and what he calls the nature of contemporary capitalism. For him, consumption becomes an end in itself, aimed at achieving growth, and is a widespread element of social, economic, and political organization. However, its encouragement has become increasingly problematic, as excessive consumption promotes the unrestrained use of renewable natural resources and has negative cultural and economic effects.

Slow Living, therefore, prioritizes sustainable growth, conscious consumption, focusing on quality, and limitation by the availability of local resources, rather than focusing on quantity (Ionciă and Petrescu, 2016).

Tim Cooper (2005) believes that although sustainability is central to Slow Living, promoting it is not enough; it is necessary to reduce the rate at which raw materials are transformed into products and services, which are eventually discarded as “waste.”

Living in the Slow rhythm requires a conscious differentiation of time in everyday life, aiming to experience time with mindful attention. This differentiation leads to an active change in previous daily practices, such as consumption, eating, and transportation (Klug, 2018).

3. Active urban mobility

Slowing down lifestyles entails reconsidering various areas of life and having the freedom to make choices aligned with this purpose, including urban mobility. Urban mobility relates to the ease of movement for people and goods in cities, encompassing both urban transportation systems and the necessary infrastructure to enable these movements, such as streets, sidewalks, and bike paths. This daily movement is facilitated by vehicles and infrastructure, covering more than just the concept of urban transportation and its various services and means of travel (Brazil, 2012).

For the World Health Organization (WHO) (2018), active urban mobility is defined as “the use of transportation that requires physical effort, such as walking, cycling, or skating, to make daily or recreational trips.” This form of mobility has become increasingly attractive to those seeking a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, promoting health and environmental benefits. This mode of transportation can help reduce traffic congestion, decrease travel time, and, consequently, make cities more sustainable. Active urban mobility can also be seen as a way to make better use of public space, allowing more people to enjoy the city more freely and safely (Pnud, 2013; Gil, 2010).

According to Lee *et al.* (2018), people who adopt a healthy lifestyle are more likely to choose walking as a means of transportation compared to those who do not adopt these healthy habits. The opposite can also be true: promoting active urban mobility as public policy can have a positive impact on the adoption of healthier lifestyles, as physical activities become a regular part of people’s daily routines. Another study by Sallis *et al.* (2016) indicates that people who use active modes of transportation, such as walking or cycling, are more likely to meet the minimum daily physical activity recommendations. The World Health Organization recommends that adults engage in at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical

activity per week, in addition to muscle-strengthening exercises on two or more days (World Health Organization, 2020).

However, despite the known benefits of adopting active urban mobility, this does not depend solely on individual and conscious lifestyle choices but essentially on the surrounding conditions for its realization (Prado, 2019). For example, the existence of safe spaces in cities, both in terms of traffic safety (sidewalks with adequate paving and extensive and connected cycling infrastructure) and public safety, is fundamental in allowing people to see this form of mobility as a feasible choice (Lobo, 2018).

4. Cyclomobility

Cyclomobility is a form of urban mobility that involves using bicycles as a means of transportation in cities (Buehler and Pucher, 2021). It has garnered increasing attention worldwide due to its environmental, social, and economic benefits (Gössling *et al.*, 2019). Using bicycles as a means of transportation can be seen as a healthy, sustainable, and well-being-promoting lifestyle, as it encourages physical activity, reduces air and noise pollution, and helps to alleviate traffic congestion in cities (Buehler and Pucher, 2012).

People who choose cyclomobility as their mode of transportation tend to lead more active and sustainable lifestyles and are generally more satisfied with their means of travel compared to other modes of transport (Willis, Manaugh, and El-Geneidy, 2013). They also tend to prioritize healthy food choices, adopt more eco-friendly habits at home, and seek outdoor physical activities (Rocha, 2017).

Cyclomobility can also enhance traffic safety, as bicycles are a safer means of transportation compared to cars and motorcycles in terms of traffic accident risks and injury severity (Elvik, 2009). This is due to bicycles' lower speed and mass, resulting in less severe impacts in case of collisions, especially in scenarios with more bicycles where accidents would predominantly involve bicycles.

Regarding the reduction of air and noise pollution in cities, bicycles do not emit pollutants, release rubber particles from asphalt friction, or generate excessive noise from engines or vehicle weight from pavement friction. This brings public health benefits by reducing the incidence of respiratory, cardiovascular, and neurological diseases (Bajerski, 2016). Additionally, reducing pollution can improve the quality of life for city residents, making urban areas more pleasant and healthy to live in.

Thus, bicycles are an efficient, economical, low-space-occupying, non-polluting means of transportation with numerous health and social benefits. According to Gehl (2013), adopting cyclomobility as an essential part of improving social equity in urban areas requires both adequate spaces for safe cyclists' circulation and behavioral changes among traffic users. Gehl (2013) emphasizes that equal opportunities to access public spaces and mobility in the city are fundamental to social sustainability. The author argues that the ability to move on foot, by bicycle, or via public transport is a significant advancement in this regard.

An adequate infrastructure with safe and well-signposted bike lanes, in addition to ensuring the safety and comfort of cyclists, facilitates efficient integration with other modes of transport (Araújo, 2019). Other measures that can be adopted for the effective implementation of cyclomobility among urban residents include the implementation of bicycle-sharing systems and the promotion of tax incentives for bicycle industries (Oliveira *et al.*, 2021; Estratégia, 2023).

5. Slow living related to active urban mobility

As mentioned earlier, Slow Living is a lifestyle philosophy that values quality of life, simplicity, connection with nature, and community life. According to Honoré (2004), the Slow Movement encourages a conscious slowdown and the resumption of everyday

activities that have been forgotten due to the fast pace of modern life. Among these activities, we can include active urban mobility, which encompasses walking, cycling, and using other non-motorized means of transportation.

As pointed out in previous sections, it is understood that Slow Living and active urban mobility are directly related, as adopting both aims for more sustainable and healthier daily practices. The benefits are both individual for those who incorporate and adopt the lifestyle and active mobility, and collective, as the reduction in noise and air pollution, and health problems stemming from a sedentary lifestyle and respiratory issues, have positive impacts on society as a whole (Jacobsen *et al.* 2009).

Slow Living, as a promoter of healthier habits in general, can enhance the adoption of active modes of transportation. However, the environment also needs to support this process through infrastructure and public policies related to the topic.

It is important to highlight that adopting active urban mobility does not imply completely abandoning the use of cars and other motorized means. In many situations, the use of motorized transport is necessary, whether for covering longer distances or in specific circumstances. However, the Slow Living proposal is to reconsider how we use these means of transport and seek more sustainable and healthier alternatives whenever possible. The table below illustrates the similarities between the two (Table 1).

Table 1 – Relationship between Slow Living and Active Urban Mobility

ASPECT	SLOW LIVING	ACTIVE URBAN MOBILITY
Philosophy and Objectives	It values quality of life, simplicity, connection with nature and community life (Botta, 2016).	It encourages walking, cycling and other non-motorized means of transport (Lee <i>et al.</i> 2018).
Deceleration	It promotes conscious deceleration and the resumption of forgotten daily activities (Honoré, 2004; Jacobsen <i>et al.</i> 2009; Ionciță e Petrescu, 2016).	It offers the opportunity to slow down and enjoy the urban environment in a more conscious and peaceful way (Pnud, 2013; Gil, 2010; Thompson <i>et al.</i> , 2013).
Individual Benefits	Improved health and personal well-being (Rocha, 2017).	Reduction of health problems related to a sedentary lifestyle (Buehler e Pucher, 2012).
Collective Benefits	Positive impacts on society, such as the reduction of public health problems (Parkins, 2004).	It contributes to public health and the quality of urban life (Sallis <i>et al.</i> 2016; Buehler e Pucher, 2012).
Promotion of Healthy Habits	Promoting healthy practices in general (Rocha, 2017; Parkins, 2004).	Encouraging daily physical exercise and contact with the environment (Pnud, 2013; Gil, 2010).
Sustainability	It focuses on more sustainable and healthy everyday practices (Botta, 2016; Honoré, 2004; Thomaz e Prado, 2023).	It reduces noise and air pollution, contributing to a more sustainable urban environment (Buehler e Pucher, 2012; Willis, Manaugh e El-Geneidy, 2013).

Source: Authors (2024)

Also, by opting for active urban mobility, people also have the chance to slow down and appreciate the urban environment around them in a more conscious and peaceful way. This allows them to observe details that would go unnoticed on a motorized journey, as well as promoting social interaction and contact with nature within the urban environment (Thompson *et al.*, 2013).

6. Final considerations

Slow Living in relation to active urban mobility reveals a significant approach between the pursuit of quality of life and the promotion of sustainable practices in the urban environment. This movement emerges as a critical response to the adverse effects of accelerated industrialization and urbanization, advocating a return to values of deceleration and appreciation of daily life, countering a culture of speed and frenetic consumption.

Active urban mobility, focusing on cycling, stands out as an important element of this philosophy. The use of bicycles not only promotes an efficient, accessible, and ecological form of transportation but also facilitates greater connection with the urban environment and contributes to the reduction of pollutants, congestion, and stress (Buehler & Pucher, 2012). Studies indicate that adopting practices such as walking and cycling can not only improve public health but also reinforce social cohesion and the sustainability of cities (Gehl, 2013; Pucher & Buehler, 2012).

For Slow Living, the use of bicycles goes beyond mere transportation alternatives; it represents a revival of local values, sustainability, and community well-being (Parkins, 2004). The creation of adequate infrastructure, such as safe cycle paths and public policies for encouragement, is essential to enable this transition (Araújo, 2019).

By researching and better understanding this lifestyle, it is possible to grasp the characteristics of the people involved and facilitate the design of products and services tailored to this audience. This not only meets the needs of these individuals but also promotes more suitable solutions aligned with the values of Slow Living, contributing to a more conscious and sustainable approach in design and society at large.

As the next step in this research, field research is planned to comparatively analyze Slow Living practices in different cultural and geographical contexts, identifying regional variations and adaptations of this lifestyle, particularly concerning active urban mobility.

Promoting slower and more meaningful lifestyles, coupled with sustainable mobility practices, may be a crucial key to a more harmonious and sustainable urban future.

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