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*Slow living and the green economy*

**Diana-Eugenia Ionciă**  
**Eva-Cristina Petrescu**



# Slow living and the green economy

*Diana-Eugenia Ionci *

*Eva-Cristina Petrescu*

**Abstract:** The current paper explores the relationship between some relatively new concepts in the field of economics – slow living, slow food, slow writing and the green economy. The goal of the paper is twofold – discussing the possibilities opened by these exciting new concepts, in terms of an increase in the quality of life combined with an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, as well as ascertaining what the concepts may entail in the context in which the effects of the recent economic crisis may make green and slow living seem like a distant dream. It is this holistic view that we shall attempt to enlarge upon in the paper, with the avowed purpose of weighing out the possibilities presented in the complicated, crisis-fraught global context.

**Keywords:** environmental economics, slow design, slow writing, slow food

## Introduction

This paper is concerned with the discussion of the links between relatively novel concepts in the field (or bordering the field) of economics – *slow living*, *slow food*, *slow writing* and the *green economy*. The scope of the paper is double – on the one hand, we are interested in discussing the possibilities opened by these exciting new concepts,

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which might entail an increase in the quality of life combined with an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, and on the other hand, seeing what the concepts may entail in the context in which the effects of the recent economic crisis may make green and slow living seem like a distant dream.

We start from the definition given by Meredith and Storm, who defined slow living in the following manner: 'Slow Living means structuring your life around meaning and fulfilment. Similar to "voluntary simplicity" and "downshifting," it emphasizes a less-is-more approach, focusing on the quality of your life.' (Meredith and Storm, 2009) It is important to notice that this approach is very close to the one proposed by green economists, who underline the marked difference between concepts like 'standard of living' and 'quality of life.' (Holden, 2000) The two concepts are frequently used interchangeably, whereas in fact they are different. Standard of living purely measures economic welfare (satisfaction measured in monetary terms), while quality of life includes concepts like the quality of the environment, levels of cultural activity and religious or spiritual aspects.

While this connection (between *slow living* and the *green economy*) has been noticed before, the clarifying and refining of the ties between the two concepts, as well as the extension of the discussion to the neighbouring fields represented by such concepts as *slow food* and *slow writing* is one of the contributions of this paper. The extension and reinforcing of the conceptual background underpinning the slow living movement, which directly influences the green economics doctrine, is extremely important, and cannot be done without a holistic view on the matter.

Thus, 'Slow Living addresses the desire to lead a more balanced life and to pursue a more holistic sense of well-being in the fullest sense of the word.' (Meredith and Storm, 2009) It is this holistic view that we shall attempt to enlarge upon in the paper, with the avowed purpose of weighing out in further research what the concepts may entail in the context in which the effects of the recent economic crisis may make green and slow living seem like an unattainable dream.

## The concepts defined (1): Slow living

In his article *Slow Living Is Healthy Living*, Michael Finkelstein, MD, (2014) makes an important point about slow living and clears a very common misunderstanding surrounding the concept:

'I think that it would be a misunderstanding of the slow movement to say that it advocates always doing things slow,' elaborated Charles Eisenstein, author of *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible*, in a phone interview. Really what it is advocating is that when it is time to be slow, be slow. And when it is time to be fast, urgent, and forceful, do that, and learn to recognize the difference. I think that in our culture, we are habituated to always be doing things fast and efficiently and forcefully ... So we get into a pattern of urgent action, even when it's not appropriate, even when we realize that the way we are doing things is actually making the problem worse.

Thus, slow living does not necessarily mean doing things slowly, but rather adjusting the speed of your activity to the goal you want to accomplish, and pacing yourself when necessary. The example Finkelstein (2014) gives is quite revealing – he discusses the case of fast food:

Fast food, for example, while obviously convenient, robs us of essential nutrients that our bodies need to function properly. In addition, it eliminates the creativity, love, and community associated with food that is made with fresh ingredients from local farms and that is prepared by people we hold dear. Mass-produced, super-sized burgers, fries, and shakes not only overwhelm our systems with empty and far too many calories, but they also lack the essential 'ingredients' of connection to our neighbours, our land, our loved ones, and ourselves - all critical to our body-mind-spirit wellness.

One more important point we would like to quote from the writing of Dr. Finkelstein (2014):

The word 'health' comes from the Anglo-Saxon root word *haelen*, which means 'whole'. In its essence, health truly is a state of wholeness. Just as we cannot

separate body, mind, and spirit, so can we not separate ourselves from other beings, the world in general, or the universe beyond it. Health is truly the sum total of everything; therefore everything is relevant and important to health.

He reveals an important feature of the slow living movement and its main connection to the concept of green economics – the fact that the two concepts are united by the *holistic* approach taken, by the fact that they both reject the separation traditional economics seems to create between human beings and their surroundings – the environment that they depend on for their very existence.

While it would be difficult to find arguments for the slow living movement by resorting to scholarly articles in the field of economics, we can however try to find a *conceptual basis* in economics for the movement, and we shall do so in the immediately following 'discussion' section.

It would be a challenge to defend the tenets of the movement by resorting to scholarly articles in the field of economics for the very simple reason that concepts such as 'slow economics', though present in conferences and summits [1], are not yet a part of mainstream economics. Quite the contrary, the slow living movement (with its spin-offs, such as 'slow economics', the slow food movement and so on) seem to go against the main trend in the economics domain. This is no surprise, if we take into account the fact that economics has been long dominated by concepts such as 'economic growth', which fundamentally opposes the underlying principles of the slow living movement – which shifts the focus from growth for the sake of growth to sustainable growth, limited by the availability of local resources and favouring *quality* (of food, of life, of education) over *quantity*.

## Discussion

Most of the existing literature in this rather new field of knowledge – related to the slow living movement – seems to add to the strengths of the approach, and works effectively to combat possible counter-arguments that could be brought against the main tenets of the slow living movement. One possible counter-argument could be the fact that such an approach goes against the mainstream trend and strongly opposes

some of the concepts our current way of life is based on: *efficiency, professionalism, speed*. As Parkins and Craig note, this is not an accidental occurrence, and forms the basis of this new philosophy: 'As speed is seemingly equated with efficiency and professionalism, however, slowness can become a way of signalling an alternative set of values or a refusal to privilege the workplace over other domains of life.' (Parkins and Craig, 2006)

According to Michael Hall, 'the Slow Food movement is arguably one of the focal points of the broader interest in slow consumption and lifestyles.' (Hall, 2012) Hall resorts to Cooper's arguments in putting forward that 'for sustainability to be achieved technological improvements alone will not suffice and instead *there is a need to slow the rate at which raw materials are transformed into products and services and eventually discarded as "waste"*' (Cooper, 2005, our highlighting, as seen in Hall, 2012). The thought alone would be a blasphemy for traditional economists, as the italicized phrase can have just one translation – there is a need, Cooper argues, *to slow down economic growth* (this is the only possible way in which the rate at which raw materials are transformed into products waiting to be discarded can be reduced).

Slow consumption was initially focussed on 'more labour-intensive production practices that allowed for the retention and creation of eco-efficient, decentralised, and cultural and natural resource-preserving jobs and products.' (Ax, 2001, as seen in Hall, 2012)

The notions of *economic growth* and *consumption*, as anyone familiar with the phrase 'consumer society' will admit, are inextricably linked. Therefore, we shall examine more closely in the following the views on consumption held by economists, historically as well as currently.

As Hall argues, 'consumption is a pervasive element of social, economic and political organization in the modern world. However, consumption has become increasingly problematic in light of the potential ecological harm of overconsumption of renewable natural resources and the cultural and economic effects of particular consumptive practices.' (Hall, 2012) He goes on to make the connection we noticed earlier in the paper between economic growth and what he terms 'the nature of contemporary capitalism and globalisation', which makes 'consumption become a goal for its own sake.' He says: 'This situation – of the link between ecological degradation,

consumption and the prevailing economic and political institutions in which consumers are unaware of the use of natural resources in the production of goods and services – has been termed *hyperconsumption*.’ (Hall, 2012)

As a reaction to *hyperconsumption*, what follows is the emergence of interest in the notion of *sustainable consumption*. Hall gives some examples of sustainable consumerism practices, which can range from the act of purchasing fair trade coffee to the growth of more systematic forms of anti-consumerism. It is these ‘systematic forms of anti-consumerism’ that we are more interested in, as they are linked (although Hall does not make this connection obvious in his writing) to the slow living movement. The forms of anti-consumerism have developed ‘to counter the excesses of hyperconsumption and work intensified lifestyles that occupy time.’ (Hall, 2012)

Thus, in our view, one of the best ways to oppose what he terms ‘work intensified lifestyles’ is to adopt the principles of slow living, which offer an alternative to the mainstream trend of ‘keeping busy’, and ‘occupying your time’. The better choice, we think, along with the proponents of this alternative lifestyle, is not to occupy your time but rather enjoy it, and to avoid ‘the business of busyness’ (the pun is intended here). Being constantly busy is to our mind one of the greatest problems of our time, as it prevents most people not just from simply enjoying their lives, but also from taking the time off to assess their lives and ‘see the big picture’. You cannot solve a problem, as Einstein said, from the same level of awareness that created it (the exact quotation is ‘Problems cannot be solved by the level of awareness that created them.’) Thus, the fact that people cannot find the time for reflection on their lives might give us a clue to why they often lack the capability to find solutions for the increasingly complex problems they encounter.

A widely used definition of sustainable consumption is that of the 1994 Oslo Symposium on Sustainable Consumption: ‘the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations’ (Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, 1994: Sec.1.2. as seen in Hall, 2012).

As Hall notices, the notion of *sustainable consumption* is not completely new. He says (2012):

Arguably there has been a long history of consumer inspired economic and political responses to consumption ranging from the home economics movement that emerged in the USA in the late nineteenth century ... through to the development of national and international demands for increased consumer rights... Moreover, there is also a wealth of research interest in the implications of consumer action with respect to environmental, political and social causes dating back to the 1960s and 1970s. For example, Webster (1975: 188) defined the socially conscious consumer as 'a consumer who takes into account the public consequences of his or her private consumption or who attempts to use his or her purchasing power to bring about social change.'

Hall also notices that the connection to corporate socially responsible activities is illustrated in Kotler's (1991) *societal marketing concept*, which is doing business in a way that maintains or improves both the customer's and society's well-being.

The refusal to favour work over the other domains of our lives is essential to the slow-living movement, which is at its core 'a lifestyle that helps people slow down their pace and spend more time with their family and friends.' (Siyang, 2014, p. 17) Thus, speed is not to be seen as an advantage that is lost when embracing this new lifestyle choice. Quite the contrary, speed is in this new paradigm a weight that is being lifted off people's shoulders, finally giving them the leisure to enjoy the time they spend with their family or significant others without the guilt that is often encumbered by this 'levity' in our current paradigm. It is very important to acknowledge the fact that placing family life, leisure time activities, time spent with friends, between imaginary 'brackets' and assigning for them a secondary role, always positioned after work, after the fulfilling of the various responsibilities our professional lives entail, is damaging to both the quality of our personal relationships, but also eventually to the quality of our work.

Our current *schizophrenic* view that is resolutely trying to separate our work and personal lives, and our respective personalities and to favour indiscriminately the former to the huge detriment of the latter has been seen to have negative effects on both the professional and personal lives of generations, fact which can be proven when



taking a look at the worrying figures related to the number of stress-associated mental disorders developed societies are currently facing. It is impossible to place an imaginary frontier between the two and it is, moreover, completely unrealistic to expect a work ridden, increasingly isolated individual to perform excellently at his/her workplace, while being deprived of some of the essential elements that make up a healthy personality. Thus, slow living is more than a quick, spur-of-the-moment, reaction to difficulties entailed by an increasingly complex and extremely demanding and competitive socio-economic environment. It is, first and foremost, a *choice*, [...] the choice to live consciously with the goal of enhancing personal, community, and environmental well-being.' (Siyang, 2014, p. 17)

To give just a couple of examples of the effects of the imbalance we mentioned above between our personal and working lives, we shall resort to some figures and quotations from the UK Mental Health Foundation (2016, our highlighting) :

The pressure of an increasingly demanding work culture in the UK is perhaps the biggest and most pressing challenge to the mental health of the general population.

The cumulative effect of increased working hours is having an important effect on the lifestyle of a huge number of people, which is likely to prove damaging to their mental well-being. The Mental Health Foundation is concerned that a sizeable group of people are neglecting the factors in their lives that make them resistant or resilient to mental health problems.

It is estimated that nearly **three in every ten employees will experience a mental health problem in any one year**. However, the recent and dramatic rise in Britain's working hours would suggest this is likely to increase. 13% of the UK working population work 49 hours or more per week.

**Work related stress already costs Britain 10.4 million working days per year.** The human costs of unmanaged work related stress extend far beyond this. A key way to protect your mental health against the potential detrimental effects of work related stress is to ensure you have a healthy work-life balance.

## The concepts defined (2): Green economics

According to Andrew Holden, traditional models of economics are based upon the concept of continued growth, and on the assumption that this will bring benefits to society. (Holden, 2000) The realisation that the increasing use of the environment for purposes including, in the majority of cases, economic development can have negative effects both on human health and on ecosystems has led to the questioning of the concept of economic growth, as a modality of improving human welfare (Holden, 2000).

As we have mentioned in the introduction, the notions of *standard of living* and *quality of living* are frequently used interchangeably. We think it is important to emphasize the fact that the concepts are in actuality totally different. Standard of living is used as a measure of economic welfare (therefore assesses satisfaction purely in monetary terms), while quality of life is a much wider concept, as it includes such factors as quality of the environment, as well as cultural, religious or spiritual aspects.

Thus, doubts over the purpose of economic growth and the pursuit of an increase in the standard of living which may bear little connection to the quality of life has led some economists to question how economic success can be best evaluated. (Holden, 2000) These developments led to the appearance of a new concept in the field of economics, green economics. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) defines green economy as 'an economy in which economic growth and responsibility towards the environment work together and support each other, while sustaining social development.' (International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), 2012)

In the context of the Green Economy Initiative, the Environmental Program of the United Nations (UNEP) further defines green economy as 'one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.' (UNEP, 2016)

Molly Scott Cato makes the difference between the concept of green economics and the concept of ecological economics, thus: 'Ecological economics tries to connect the separate subjects of economy and ecology. Ecological economics has therefore roots in

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ecology, just as green economics. However, it continues to stress assessment and evaluation, and sees itself as a scientific subject, taking over many of the concepts and techniques of traditional economics.' (Scott Cato, 2012)

As a final point related to the history of green and ecological economics, we think it is worth mentioning Georgescu-Roegen, who was the first economist to say that all of Earth's mineral resources will eventually be exhausted at some point. (Boulding, 1981) As he brought the flow of natural resources into economic modelling, Georgescu-Roegen's work was crucial in establishing ecological economics, so he may be seen as one of the founding fathers of the discipline.

## Discussion

It is important to note the fact that green economies are not based on the demand for sacrifice, but on the idea of qualitative growth. The idea of *qualitative growth* implies the use of low-carbon and environmentally friendly technologies, as well as the need for international cooperation. (UNEP, 2016)

The appearance of worldwide markets of green technology and products is seen by the majority as an opportunity. However, others fear a new, green protectionism. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, in *Green Economy - A Sustainable Concept?* also expressed fears related to the idea that the Green New Deal will cement the North-South dependency, due to the gap in economic performance and innovation between the two regions. (FES, 2016)

'Green economy and inclusive growth' are fast becoming buzzwords. There are arguments, however, that poorer countries (such as India) cannot afford not to move towards a green economy. 'The traditional form of economy has so far helped India perform well in the economic sector and amass wealth, but failed to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor', a young environment and development journalist, Stella Paul, argues. She goes on by saying that: 'In fact, increasing industrialization has led to an increasing number of conflicts of different types. The most alarming of them is the conflict between farmers/forest dwellers and industrialists, especially the miners.' (Paul, 2016)

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There are arguments on both sides (the party supporting the sustainability of green economies and the party opposing the view) when it comes to the green economy and the debate on whether the concept is sustainable or not continues. The arguments favouring the concept, in our view, however, outweigh by far the ones given by those challenging the benefits brought by the idea. The need for a paradigm shift is obvious, in our opinion, for the very simple reason that the old one (the paradigm offered by the economy centred on the concept of uncontrolled growth) simply is not working. As, in the words of Edward Abbey, 'growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.' (Abbey, 1991)

### **The concepts defined (3): Slow food**

In this part, we shall look briefly at the history of a concept related to both of the concepts described above: the concept of slow food. The Slow Food movement emerged from the turbulent political and social environment of Italy in the 1970s. The concept of Slow Food reflects the energies and commitments of its principal founder, Carlo Petrini. Named a 2004 European Hero by *Time* magazine, Petrini has insisted for over thirty years on the role of pleasure and taste as a means of preserving distinctive local cultures from the homogenizing effects of industrialization and globalization. From its origins in the Italian Left to its current work in defence of small-scale food producers and biodiversity, Slow Food has similarly retained a local focus while aspiring to a more global reach. (Schneider, 2008)

According to Stephen Schneider in *Good, Clean, Fair: The Rhetoric of the Slow Food Movement*, one can see the emergence of Slow Food as a materialization of the Italian left's energies. (Schneider, 2008) Petrini and other members of the movement remained anxious about being seen as nothing more than 'a bunch of good-timers interested only in stuffing ourselves' by the left and as 'incompetent intruders with an ideological agenda' by more conservative gastronomes. (Schneider, 2008)

A significant decision for Petrini was that taken by McDonald's to open a restaurant in Rome, at the Piazza di Spagna. Petrini and his group protested the opening of the restaurant and called instead for a culture of 'slow food,' a phrase the group circulated in English. Petrini remarks on the rhetorical felicity of the phrase: the choice to keep the phrase 'Slow Food' in its English-language form in Italy was an ingenious twist.

Those two words, a reaction to the Big Mac phenomenon, became the best way to spread the group's philosophy. Another kind of food could exist, another way to eat, another way to comprehend the pleasures of life. Slow Food went international in 1989, with the inaugural meeting of the International Slow Food movement held in Paris from December 8 to 10. (Schneider, 2008)

## Slow living and the academia: in defence of slow writing

In the above, we have defined three related concepts: *slow living*, *slow food* and *green economics*. In what follows, we would like to introduce a further concept, that of *slow writing*, which is just another facet of the holistic view reuniting the three concepts already described. The extremely fast pace of living pervading all aspects of our life can be seen, in its effects, in academic life as well, and in one part of it which we are all interested in – academic writing.

In Lewis Carroll's (1968) tale of 'Alice Through the Looking Glass', Alice finds herself a pawn in a giant chess game and is taken on a race by the Red Queen. Pausing, Alice is surprised to find herself both out of breath and in exactly the same place as before they started sprinting. "Well, in our country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else – if you run very fast for a long time, as we've been doing." "A slow sort of country!" said the Queen. "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" (Mendick, 2014). In her paper, Mendick (2014) uses the quotation given above to make a parallel with the situation in academic life, in which, nowadays, one seems to work twice as hard just to maintain the current state of affairs, the amount of energy needed to actually move things forward being too big to describe. In the same paper, we find this extract taken from a *Manifesto for Slow Scholarship*

Slow scholarship, is thoughtful, reflective, and the product of rumination - a kind of field testing against other ideas. It is carefully prepared, with fresh ideas, local when possible, and is best enjoyed leisurely, on one's own or as part of a dialogue around a table with friends, family and colleagues. Like food, it often goes better with wine.

In the desire to publish instead of perish, many scholars at some point in their careers, send a conference paper off to a journal which may still be half-baked, may only have a spark of originality, may be a slight variation on something they or others have published, may rely on data that is still preliminary. This is hasty scholarship.

Other scholars send out their quick responses to a talk they have heard, an article they read, an email they have received, to the world via a Tweet or Blog. This is fast scholarship. Quick, off the cuff, fresh – but not the product of much cogitation, comparison, or contextualization. The Tweetscape and Blogosphere brim over with sometimes idle, sometimes angry, sometimes scurrilous, always hasty, first impressions.)

We think that most of those involved in academic life would find much in common with the state of affairs described in the above. Our haste to get promoted – or sometimes just to maintain our current positions – often leads to those *half-baked* publications, in which time for rumination is limited, and the results are often less than what they could have been, given more time and a little patience. We use this opportunity to write a few lines in defense of slow writing, the only kind of writing that readers would actually benefit from, as it would contain – in a distilled form – the ideas of the writer, as well as other ideas prevailing in the atmosphere of the time, but in the best of forms and at their clearest.

On her website dedicated to slow writing ([www.slowwriting.com](http://www.slowwriting.com)), Julia Alvarez reminds us of Robert Frost's poem, 'The Pasture'. She says: 'I've always loved that little poem by Robert Frost, "The Pasture," in which he describes the chores he's about to do and then ends each of the two stanzas with an invitation, "You come, too."' She uses the lines from Robert Frost to make a parallel with the situation one would encounter when reading a piece of text that is the result of 'slow writing'. The essential thing about such a text, she finds – and we couldn't agree more – is the fact that it involves the reader. There is absolutely no point in writing a paper – of any kind – to which the reader cannot connect. The lessons that we can extract from the slow writing theory cannot be limited just to poetry, or to the literary text, but apply nicely to the kind of writing most of us in the academia do in the majority of instances – that is, writing scientific articles or books. Julia Alvarez beautifully develops this point, by resorting to yet another citation, this time from Pablo Milanés. In Pablo Milanés' beautiful love song, 'Yolanda,' he writes about how now that he has found his great love, 'mi soledad

se siente acompañada, 'my solitude feels accompanied. (Alvarez, 2009) She goes on to clearly spell out the connection with slow writing:

When we are engaged in a piece of writing, either as author or reader, our great mortal solitude which began with that first rupture from our mothers, a rupture and disruption that never totally heals, our solitude feels accompanied. Slow writing heals that rift, albeit temporarily. What Frost said about poetry is true of all good writing, it offers a momentary stay against confusion, against our isolation, that sense that we are ultimately alone and adrift in a terrifying chaotic meaningless universe.

It is interesting and useful to notice that Julia Alvarez makes no difference between the roles of author and reader, and sees both parties as participants in a common process. To further this idea, we would say that slow writing – which will hopefully result in good pieces of writing, texts that are articulate, convincing and meaningful – is, by definition, a shared process, involving a sort of complicity between the reader and the writer. We would say that this kind of writing selects its own audience – the patience entailed in the slow and elaborate production of a meaningful text is mirrored in the time and patience the readers put in when savouring the result of the writer's toil.

So, what is the result of slow writing? A product (be it literary or scientific) which makes the reader feel it was worth it to peruse it. To put the matter in economic terms, we could see time (the time the reader puts in when involved in going through the text) as a currency (money) and the text as the finished product. Simply put, slow writing is the manufacturing of a 'commodity' that is 'good value for money'. We think that we have all, unfortunately all too often, been in the situation when after finishing reading a book, or an article, we felt cheated, as the writer robbed us of our most precious currency (time) only to offer a second hand product. We would define a second hand product as one that was hastily crafted, so as to satisfy the immediate needs of the writer – as we have hinted at previously, needs that are often unrelated to the scientific goals declared in the 'advertisement' (in our case, the abstract of the article, or the summary of the book), but rather related to more practical needs, as getting promoted, or achieving the correct number of 'credits' for tenure – thus promoting quantity, at the expense of quality.

This commentary argues for the urgent need for a change in the kind of writing we produce, which calls, in turn, for a change in our system of thought. Rather than focusing on churning out as many articles as we can, in more or less reputed journals, we think we should focus on nurturing and extending our complicity with the readers, by making them part of our journey. We should write by always keeping in mind the need to respect the readers' time and honour their thirst for knowledge.

Readers who find the force to break from the increasing pressures of the modern world are rare as it is. Most of us, lured by the ease granted by the new technology, unknowingly fall into the trap of the 'five minutes reading' scheme. Thus, in our haste to get as much done in as short a time as possible, we contribute to a dangerous process of lowering our attention spans to worrying levels, a process easily observable especially in the young. We no longer take the time to carefully read and think over the things we have read. We become 'butterfly readers,' swiftly going from website to website, and never satisfied. We rarely give our time completely over to a text that would demand our full attention, and abandon quickly.

We think it is extremely important, for us, as producers of scientific texts, in any domain, to acknowledge the fact that our readership has changed. We no longer address patient readers, with time to spare, but readers with fleeting minds, busy multitasking, and overly demanding. Thus, we face a difficult task, as we need not only to present our ideas as clearly and concisely as possible, but also to try to go against the tide and *educate our readers*, in an attempt to turn things around and get them to slow down and adjust to a pattern they are no longer accustomed to, but one that they desperately need – the model of slow living, mirrored in slow writing and careful and attentive reading. It takes time to find the best solution to any academic pursuit. The concept of 'slow writing', therefore, could offer us a way out of the 'rat race' in which we are forced by an insanely accelerated speed of life in a complicated, globalized, world.

## Summary of arguments and discussion

The previous 'defence of slow writing' was aimed at introducing the rather novel concept of slow writing and presenting some of the most important arguments which



can be brought in defence of the concept, while not losing sight of the connection we are trying to make with the overall philosophy of 'slow living'. As seen from the arguments presented above, *slow writing* is defined by the following traits:

- It is the product of rumination, that is, it needs time to be produced and acts as a synthesis of experience and thought. This entails it goes against the current trend of hasty scholarship, so it might favour more 'abstract' academic purposes, i.e., promoting a philosophy of *value* as opposed to just meeting the practical needs involved in academic life (getting promoted, finalizing a given number of scholarly articles etc.) One might wonder if 'value' is necessarily the end-result of slow-producing. While admitting that in some cases value (i.e., *valuable academic products*) could emerge as a result of fast scholarship (for instance, a spark-of-genius idea, or a new method that could suddenly occur to someone 'out of the blue') we think that we can agree on the fact that, more often than not, value is the product of endless hours of work and cogitation. Yes, the ever-so-lucky scholar could get at some point the million-dollar idea – but aren't we neglecting something when we speak of ideas that 'just come' to you? We think that the 'detail' we are neglecting is the groundwork that needs to be done in order to 'prepare the field' for the 'great idea'. A stroke of genius idea is, by definition, better than the rest, so it must add to what is already known in a field, or find a way to do things differently, and more efficiently. Thus, the lucky owner of the idea must have gone previously through the strenuous process of mastering the field (and as we all know, most fields of knowledge have the unpleasant habit of changing continuously), and thus be able to make that 'quantum leap' in knowledge. So the 'stroke of genius' idea is hard work after all.
- It *involves the reader*, and makes him part of the creative process, assuming a certain complicity with the reader and a shared set of values.
- It *respects and values the reader's time*, by providing a quality product that would contribute to the education of the reader, while promoting the traditional academic values of honesty and transparency that all academic pursuits should uphold.

While we think it would be difficult to dispute the arguments presented above, and while firmly believing that there is no contest when it comes to choosing whether to

align with these values and ideas, or the opposite set, promoting quantity instead of quality, we should however mention some of the *constraints* we as writers face when trying to meet the requirements set before us by the 'guardians' of academic proficiency, be them fellow colleagues challenging our assumptions during conferences or in discussions of our writing, or editors and peer reviewers who may accept or reject a piece of writing we produced.

We can do that by trying to answer a question previously posed by other researchers (Boice and Jones, 1984), namely *why academicians don't write*. Among the arguments they mention, we can note: the fact that 'writing for publication is laborious and slow,' the fact that it 'might engender aversion,' to which we would add the sheer bulk of the requirements one has to meet (in terms of length, quality of arguments, width of the research etc.). Thus, aligning with the features of slow writing involves hard work and quite a lot of time, which is hard to find in the midst of our busy lives. So, how can this problem be solved? The answer, we think, lies in the dimension of the *reward* one gets when they manage to do that. Again, according to Boice and Jones, 'you will only get to know a field only if you contribute to it' (Boice and Jones, 1984). Consequently, the reward lies in the activity itself, and the prize that you get by writing slowly but convincingly can be summed up in one word: knowledge.

## **Instead of conclusions: what holds the concepts together?**

A question that might have arisen after reading these lines could be: what holds the concepts of *slow living*, *green economics*, *slow food* and *slow writing* together? Are these just separate concepts, forcefully associated in the paper? We think the answer to this question is negative, and we shall resort to the same argument we have used throughout the paper: the concepts are united by the fact that they have a common source and a common vision – the holistic approach which opposes the traditional dichotomist view embedded in traditional economics. While traditional economic sciences use the concepts of standard of living or various indicators with a view to quantifying happiness, to measuring wellbeing, these (relatively) new concepts accept a reality which we think can hardly be denied – we cannot really measure such abstract things, we cannot put a price tag on quality of life, or use the same terms when we talk about human beings as when we refer to products. Such concepts do not view human beings as 'resources', or human life as something to be quantified and labelled. In

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opposition to the consumerist and much too pragmatic view held by many economists today, this new movement states a simple fact: the focus in 'slow living' is on the second term, a term that most of us, busy producing, have very little time for nowadays.

## Endnotes

[1] For instance, 'The Slow Living Summit', organized since 2011, and featuring well-known personalities from various domains – one example would be the presidential candidate in the current US elections Bernie Sanders (<http://www.slowlivingsummit.org>).

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Diana-Eugenia Ionciă is an Associate Professor at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (BUES). She has a doctoral degree in Philology and is currently a doctoral student in 'Green Economics' at the BUES ([diana\\_ioncica@yahoo.com](mailto:diana_ioncica@yahoo.com)).

Eva-Cristina Petrescu is a Full Professor at the Marketing Faculty of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies ([eva\\_petrescu@yahoo.com](mailto:eva_petrescu@yahoo.com)).