AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH IN SUSTAINABLE PLANNING: SLOW URBANISM.

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Abstract
The “speed” concept, as being one of the significant phenomena that shaped industrial cities, creates a significant obstacle for sustainability. The speed that was gained with mechanization and industrialization resulted in disintegration in urban environment, disrupted the relation between place and the individual, and caused the rapid transformation of cultural and environmental values that once belonged to the place. At this point, “slowing down” emerges as a significant concept in the quest for sustainability and for regaining the relationship between the urban environment and the individual. This study puts forward Slow Urbanism as an alternative approach in sustainable planning as it forms the antithesis of “speed” and confronts the deformations of global culture shaped by fast consumption. Following a brief discussion of the transformations caused by “speed” in built environments; this study aims to draw attention to new challenges of “Slow Urbanization” model by highlighting its adaptability and flexibility through focusing on three different slow city experiences: Midden-Delfland (The Netherlands), Hersbruck (Germany) and Seferihisar (Turkey). The evaluation of these cases displayed that the adaptability and flexibility of the model makes it unique as it can be implemented in settlements that have different characteristics. The findings also revealed that the model focuses on originality, diversity, heterogeneity, a sense of belonging and appropriation instead of homogeneity, monotony, and uniformity. It replaces the “destroy and construct” philosophy of consumption culture with “re-explore and reconstruct” approach and in this way encourages cities to use and develop their distinctive social, economic and cultural potentials.

Keywords
Sustainable development; slowness; Slow Urbanism; slow city movement.

Introduction
With industrialization and mechanization in the twentieth century, our cities had to face a great number of problems such as noise, pollution, unplanned construction, poverty, crime and many others, and the livability parameters started to be questioned in many cities which have difficulty in developing proper solution proposals. Using the cities’ own potentials for development forms the most basic precondition for the sake of transferring the economic, social and environmental values to future generations, and thus creating sustainable and livable cities. By entering into our life as a result of mechanization and industrial capitalism, and
Carrying its effects into city planning as much as it did into our communal life, the “speed” concept stands ahead as one of the most basic problems that creates an obstacle towards sustainability.

While modern cities of post-industrial revolution era formed the spatial counterpart of fast production, today’s cities undertake a new function as being the place of “fast consumption” in the information age. However, the reality that did not change historically is that the social, cultural and environmental dynamics that shape the cities are determined by the “speed” concept. Increasingly car-dependent urban development, environmental and noise pollution, homogeneity, and the lack of the sense of belonging are closely related to the fact that the “speed” has been shifted to a dominant and a top priority situation in urban planning. Recently, awareness has developed regarding the negative vital and urban effects that point to the instantaneous consumption and rapid transformation arising from speed. First, a “slow” movement regarding to food culture started in socio-cultural sphere, and the developments in question maintained their effects in urban dimension as well. The mentioned effects are the reflections of “Slow Urbanization” that approaches to sustainable planning not only from environmental, but also from economic and social aspects, and attaches importance to preserving the local differences and developing a sense of belonging.

The aim of this study is to put forward Slow Urbanism as an alternative approach in sustainable planning as it forms the antithesis of “speed” and confronts the deformations of global culture shaped by fast consumption. The focus of the study will be initially on the “speed” concept which survived both in industrialization and information ages and the resulting deformations and transformations in socio-cultural and physical spheres such as uniformity, homogenization and loss of sense of belonging, fast consumption of natural sources and global warming. Secondly, the slow concept as the antithesis of speed and slow urbanization will be introduced within the context of the paper as an alternative approach in sustainable planning through examining three cases from different countries. One of the selection criteria of the cases is that they interpret the “Slow” philosophy and “Slow Urbanization” through different practices and the other criterion is that these cases are the very first Slow City of their countries. The motives of the settlements in adopting slow urbanism philosophy differ as:

- Midden-Delfland (The Netherlands), which is located between densely populated cities, adopts the model to conserve its unique values and existing green pattern in coordination with the central government as a response to growth pressures of nearby metropolitan cities.
- Hersbruck (Germany), which is surrounded by traditional pastures that served as green buffers, abandoned by the early 1970s and turned into waste lands, uses the model to protect and rehabilitate these pastures and
- Seferihisar (Turkey), which has a low level of tourism popularity though is a coastal settlement, utilizes the model as a branding strategy in marketing the settlement as a tourist destination as well as a tool for developing local economy.

As a part of the methodology, on-site and
literature surveys were realized in the evaluation of Midden-Delfland and Seferihisar cases while only literature survey was utilized in Hersbruck case.

**Why and How Did We Speed Up?**

**Speed and Speed-Based Transformations**

The speed concept is defined as “swiftness, velocity; the power arising from a movement, force, exertion, power; measuring of distance taken by effort, power, exertion by the time spent” in the Turkish dictionary (Türk Dil Kurumu [TDK], 2010). Within this definition, the fact that speed implies positive as well as negative meanings within itself and also its relationship with time draws the attention. Today, speed and acceleration started to take a more significant place in our lives after the Industrial Revolution and modernization, and despite its affirmative impacts on technological developments it inevitably caused negative transformations on socio-cultural and physical spheres. It is striking that "speed" and socio-cultural, economic and technological fields reciprocally affect each other. Therefore, in order to comprehend the speed and its effects on urban environment better, this relationship will be examined initially, and then the negative outcomes of speeding up which affect the formation of urban environment and life will be sought to be put forward.

One of the most important factors that foster the development of speed within the socio-cultural and psychological contexts is the organic relationship between the "speed" and "pleasure". Kundera (2008) and Honore (2008) emphasized that speed is pleasure-based, and is so easily accepted by the society, because it provided pleasure and it gradually turned into a habit. We cannot ignore the effect of the relationship between speed and pleasure on the adoption and placement of the culture of hastiness, which entered into our society along with industrialization and modernization. On the other hand, speed adopted a very shaping and homogenizing role in cultural sphere as cultures are being easily transferred through the possibilities of information age and the emerging economic patterns between world cities. In this way, cultures have the chance to interact with each other and transform cities into new physical spaces where world cultures meet (Aslanoğlu, 2000).

**Industrialization, Industrial Capitalism, Technology and Speed**

The Industrial Revolution that took place in the 19th century became a significant breaking point that caused speed-based transformations in economic, technological, cultural and urban contexts. Since industrialization and industrial capitalism are based on additional product and profitability, the traditional production types radically changed and were replaced by Fordist production. On the other hand, technological developments accelerated the production-consumption cycle in order to increase the rates of capital return and profitability (Aslanoğlu, 2000). The invention of the modern clock was one of the most fundamental tools in the organization of fast production by increasing the work discipline through an hourly rate policy within Taylorist working practice. Slowness in such a work order was declared as one of the greatest deficiencies while speed and functionality were blessed to a great extent (Honore, 2008).
Technological developments, mechanization, profitability/productivity principles and class divisions of industrial capitalism affected and transformed the design of industrial cities. The emergence of fast transportation modes required for rapid distribution of the manufactured products facilitated spatial zoning. In such an order, commercial areas were located in downtowns and regional segregation between the high- and the upper-middle class and the workers’ housing areas were created. Additionally, the increase in private automobile ownership resulted in the emergence of suburbs (Thorns, 2004). Transformation from a compact structure to a more extended city form led to the disintegration of urban areas and living spaces transformed into dead areas especially during working hours. Thus, small-scale settlements characterized by diversity and liveliness disappeared, and the pleasure brought by speed ironically gave rise to monotony, boringness and lack of communication in urban life. As a result, connection between the environment and place was detached; nature of the relationship between the individual and the place was damaged; and the individual’s sense of belonging was harmed on the most fundamental basis.

**Speed in the Information Age**

Industrial Capitalism and technology have been maintaining to hold the speed in a very significant place in communal life since the Industrial Revolution. The industrial production-based economy in modern age has transformed into an information-based economy in the post-modern era (Thorns, 2004). While the economy mainly based on production and aimed at increasing the production speed in the Industrial era, increasing the consumption speed along with the production speed became important as well in the post-modern era. As a result, despite the fact that the nature of production types and production-consumption cycle is different, speed maintained its importance both in modern and post-modern periods.

The most significant period in terms of the improvement of consumption in modern capitalism was the decade of 1950 during when mass consumption gradually spread from the United States to European countries. Education level, occupation groups, and social stratification in accordance with income level began to determine consumption patterns. With transition from Fordist to flexible production, the product range expanded and brands started to be perceived as an indicator of the individual taste and lifestyles. The expansion of consumption in a way that it encompasses the lifestyles caused every value and commodity to gain a feature of being quickly consumed. In this sense, fast consumption commenced to determine the lifestyles in global scale by turning them into to fast but uniform and monotonous ones (Bocock, 1997; Harvey, 2006).

In parallel to the transformation process emerged in lifestyles, cities lost their identities as a result of consumption, temporality and hastiness culture and began to seek for brand and image for the sake of prestige and competition through a “destroy and construct” approach. As a result, besides problems in cities such as uniformity, homogenization and loss of sense of belonging, fast consumption of natural sources and global warming indicate that slowing down is inevitable for a sustainable world. In this sense, “Slow Urbanization” as an extension of the philosophy of slowness provides us a challenge in the
improvement of sustainable values in cities.

**Why and How Should We Slow Down?**

**Slow Concept as the Antithesis of Speed**

The slow concept is defined as “not fast, sluggish, opposite of quick”, and the slowness as “the state of being slow” in Turkish dictionary (Türk Dil Kurumu [TDK], 2010), while in Western dictionaries, the concept is covered as “not prompt to understand, think and learn; hesitant in doing something, lazy” (http://oxforddictionaries.com, http://www.ldoceonline.com, http://www.oxfordadvancedlearnersdictionary.com). It is clear that a defective and negative meaning is attributed to slowness in Western societies which have been the centre of industrialization. Slowness is also perceived as “a state of idleness to be avoided” in daily life in view of speed and punctuality as the two glorified concepts of the modern era. It is initially necessary to remove the prejudices on the existing perspective towards the slow concept, which has been stated as the antithesis of speed and the solution for speed-originated deformations and to clarify what is really meant by slowness.

Rather than perceiving the slowness as simply the opposite of being fast, it will be useful to define it as a relative concept that represents the reaction to speed and stress phenomena that characterize the modern existence (Parkins & Craig, 2006). Rather than a life model that denies any type of convenience that the technology and modern life bring with, slow movement is in a quest for a balance regarding the maintenance of sustainability in an increasingly accelerating world (Honore, 2008). Slow City Movement replaces the “destroy and construct” philosophy of consumption culture with “explore and reconstruct” approach that mainly focuses on originality, diversity, heterogeneity, sense of belonging and appropriation.

The philosophy of slowness has also inspired some social movements in time that include the slow concept in life practices such as voluntary simplicity, downshifting, slow food, slow city, slow home, slow travel and slow design. Among those trends, “Slow Food” movement has a special place in terms of “Slow City” movement as it aims to protect the local taste from the fast food culture that surrounds the world and from the uniformizing effect of life, and promotes gastronomy, taste education and ecological farming (Pink, 2008).

**Slow Urbanization - Slow City Movement**

Consumption culture and urbanization policies created homogeneous communities with low attachment to local values, landscape, history and culture, and caused the over-consumption of natural ecosystems and local communities (Wheeler, 2004). On the other side, these changes in the social structure led to a reaction in the form of reverting to core values and to the rediscovery of the culture of “place” (Knox, 2005). At this point, as the preliminary stage of Slow Urbanism, a brief focus on New Urbanism will be useful as a movement that emphasizes the distinctive local characteristics of “place”.

New Urbanism movement that aims to deal with problems such as traffic congestion, air pollution, and social segregation in cities is inspired by many various design approaches such as City Beautiful and Garden City (Bressi, 1994). “New Urbanism”, also known as “neo-traditional development”, aims at restoring the social connections that are believed to have disappeared (Parker, 2004) and seeks to create
a city order that might be an alternative for cities where automobiles have the priority (Landry, 2006). Moreover, while opposing to suburban sprawl that characterizes the American residential areas since 1950s, New Urbanism promotes mixed use and aims at improving the suburbs by creating settlements with pedestrian priority (Parker, 2004). However, much criticism occurred given the fact that New Urbanism specifies little about the relationship between the individual and the place, revitalizes neo-traditional styles within the urban patterns (Knox, 2005) and disregards low-income groups by designing living spaces mainly for the high-income groups (Parker, 2004).

The most basic difference of Slow City movement from New Urbanism approach is that it replaces the seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing and touching experiences brought by global capitalism with the authentic ones. The Slow City is not a purely conservation movement, but rather asks the question of how cities can make progress without losing their spirit in their journey towards modernization and globalization (Miele, 2008). The Italy-based movement attracted great attention on international scale and gained recognition in many European countries such as Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium and Poland as well as overseas countries such as New Zealand, Australia, South Korea, and the United States and turned into a network of 135 members by November 2010 (Cittaslow International, 2010a).

**How to Become a Slow City?**

Slow City membership is an international accreditation given to settlements with less than 50.000 inhabitants, which provide top quality in protecting the environment, infrastructure, culture and identity in living environments, landscape and local products. For membership; at least half of near 60 criteria that are categorized under environmental policies, infrastructure policies, technologies and facilities for urban quality, safeguarding autochthonous production, hospitality and awareness are required to be fulfilled (Cittaslow International, 2010b).

Environmental policies include issues such as verification of the quality of air, water and soil, development of systems for the dissemination of refuse collection and composting, use of alternative sources of energy, and programs for reducing light, noise and electromagnetic pollution. Infrastructure policies mainly include criteria regarding conservation and improvement of cultural and historical values, support of sustainable transportation forms, development of programs that facilitate family and social life, and improvement of green areas. Technologies and facilities for urban quality include topics such as encouraging bio-architecture, reorganizing infrastructural systems that create visual pollution, taking measures for controlling noise, and using plants that are peculiar to region in landscape architecture in public and private areas. Policies regarding the criterion of safeguarding autochthonous production include the improvement of local and organic farming, organizing educational programs in taste and nutrition in collaboration with Slow Food and cooperation with educational institutions, creation of market places where local products are sold, preserving and improving the cultural activities and festivals. Under hospitality heading, the criteria include the organization of training courses regarding hospitality, development of reception methods to facilitate the arrival of guests and their access
to information, service and other activities. The awareness heading includes informing the public about the aims and procedures of being a Slow City, encouraging the adoption of “slow” philosophy (Cittaslow International, 2010b).

The general framework outlined by “Slow City” movement offers a general theme for settlements which adopt “Slow Urbanization”, but how and based on which weight the criteria would be interpreted depend on the potentials of the settlements. The adaptability and flexibility of “Slow City” movement enable the settlements to draw a road map that is peculiar to them.

**Slow City Experiences**

In this part of the study, “Slow Urbanization” policies are evaluated through different urban experiences, which emphasize distinctive local features by basing on the aforementioned qualities of Slow City movement. The common characteristics of the cases are that they were the first Slow Cities of their countries, which were accepted to the CittaSlow network. In this context, Midden-Delfland from the Netherlands, Hersbruck from Germany, and Seferihisar from Turkey are the selected cases (Figure 1).

Midden-Delfland: Located in the most densely populated Randstad area with 1.3 million inhabitants, the city has a population of 18,000, and was accepted to Slow City network in June 2008 (Cittaslow The Netherlands, 2010). The city located between Delft and Rotterdam, has been under intense urbanization pressure and hence has been losing its green areas in the last 20 years. Therefore, it was given the task of preserving and improving the current green areas by the central government. The basic principles of “Slow City” Movement overlapped with the planning vision of Midden-Delfland and

![Figure 1: The locations of three Slow Cities selected as cases (Source: adapted from http://mapsof.net/).](image-url)
naturally, the “slowness” policy was based on the mission of preserving and improving the existing green areas. This mission has meant preserving the agricultural character of the settlement and improving its tourism potential by allowing for more recreational activities such as canal tours (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Including Midden-Delfland in “Slow City” membership network was not limited to the preservation of the green patterns; it also provided a significant motivation for making the hallmark architectural pattern and local values sustainable (Municipality of Midden-Delfland, 2009).

Within the scope of “Slow Urbanization”, local youth were provided with educational and recreational resources, authentic city centers were created, and various regulations were made regarding the use, preservation and improvement of the characteristics of local products such as grapes, cheese and honey that are already present in the culture and tradition of the settlement. Accessibility has been increased with the help of international sign systems, and the tourism potential has been improved through the organization of canal tours in the region. Furthermore, new routes have been created for bicycle access and walking activities that are widely used in the transportation practice of the Netherlands. Moreover, environmental sustainability potential of the area has been improved via the suggestion of various systems.
for the recycle of environmental waste and use of renewable energy sources in lighting. Contribution margin provided to building owners facilitated the maintenance and improvement of historical and cultural environment and in this sense paved the way for cultural sustainability (Municipality of Midden-Delfland, 2009)

As a result, it is obvious that Midden-Delfland, as the very first Slow City of the Netherlands, has adopted the "Slow Urbanization" approach in order to preserve its green pattern and unique values as a response to the growth pressures of nearby metropolitan cities. The settlement has been focusing on the criteria particularly regarding the improvement of tourism and environmental quality in accordance with its planning policies. In this sense, it is striking that the city has been following a route that conserves and improves the existing cultural, historical, social and landscape values which also may be defined as “protecting by improving”.

Hersbruck: The very first Slow City outside of Italy is historical Hersbruck which was accepted as a member in May 2001. Located in the south of Germany, the city holds a population of 12,500 and has the characteristics of a medieval city with squares and narrow tree-lined roads. Traditional pastures have been serving as green buffers between the city borders and agricultural areas and therefore hold a special

Figure 3: The environmental quality in Midden-Delfland is enhanced by improving landscape in residential areas (Source: Doğrusoy Archive, 2009).
importance since they provide an open area for nearby locations (Figure 4). However, those pastures had been abandoned by the early 1970s and had been either used for construction facilities or transformed into waste lands in time. Consequently, not only environmental quality, but also the information regarding the traditional use of the land disappeared on a large scale. In the beginning of 1980s, a local environmental group aroused awareness in society in regards to the importance of pastures and collaborated with farmers, local governments, and small businesses to protect these areas and orchards. In this context, “Slow Urbanization” practices

Figure 4: Hersbruck developed its Slow City concept through protecting its traditional pastures along the city borders (Source: http://www.frankentourismus.de/orte/hersbruck).
intertwined with the aim of improving and strengthening the local economy in the region.

As for encouraging the region-specific food, local products, farmers and producers have become the suppliers of restaurants as the first step and a collaboration network of farmers and restaurants was created. Education of nutrition and raising awareness for the improvement of local food were initiated and prohibiting the cultivation of genetically modified organisms and products within city limits were aimed at. In addition to improving local products and food, alternative energy systems have been utilized in the region and studies in order to protect the historical environment still continue (Mayer & Knox, 2006; Mayer & Knox, 2009).

The town of Hersbruck has adopted the “Slow Urbanization” through social awareness and sensitivity regarding to environmental protection that was formed by non-governmental organizations in the region. Improving the environmental quality and protecting the pastures were placed special importance due to both ecological reasons and the significance of these areas in urban memory as well as their positive contributions to the sense of belonging and local identity. Moreover, efforts to improve the local economy for the sake of economic sustainability form the “Slow” policies peculiar to the town of Hersbruck. The approach of the settlement, which considers the environmental quality as a whole with the development of the local economy, has encouraged many
other cities in the country in the direction of developing similar models.

Seferihisar: The settlement of Seferihisar is located in the southwest axis of Izmir which is the third largest city located in the west part of Turkey. Seferihisar was accepted to the Slow City network in December 2009 and became the first slow city of Turkey. The city is a coastal settlement with approximately 27,000 inhabitants and has geothermal water resources as well as rich cultural and historical values. Agriculture, animal husbandry and tourism are among the main economic activities in the settlement.

Seferihisar’s city centre has lost its original architectural characteristics on a large scale due to global architectural trends and unplanned developments that constitute a major problem in many other cities in Turkey as well. However, Sigacik district, located 5 km. away from the city on the settlement’s coastal fringe, stands out as a place which maintains its strong historical and architectural identity on the contrary to the city centre (Figures 5 and 6).

“Slow Urbanization” practices implemented in Seferihisar were initiated by the local government and took its motivation from its will to vitalize the local economy and increase its tourism potential. In this sense, the international recognition of “Slow City” logo corresponds with the tourism goals and branding strategies of the city. During the course of “Slow City” candidacy,

Figure 6: A view through the entrance of Sigacik city walls (Source: Doğrusoy Archive, 2009).
the local government organized communal meetings and raised the awareness of inhabitants about the philosophy of “slowness”. Furthermore, making the citizens a part of the “Slow Urbanization” process and eliminating the negative meaning attached to “slow” concept were the major goals of the movement.

The most important local project realized was the transformation of the open area facing the old municipal building into a village market where local producers and craftsmen can sell their products (Figure 7). Organizing local festivals about local products such as tangerine and grape, and documenting the local cuisine through oral history are among the attempts

Figure 7: The old municipal building allocated to village market (Source: Doğrusoy Archive, 2009).
in protecting and maintaining the settlement-peculiar cultural and economic heritage. The rehabilitation of Sigacik Castle in a way that it enables the hosting of cultural activities, organization of another village market within the castle where handcrafts, organic and home-made food are sold, and the enactment of conservation plan for Sigacik are crucial steps taken towards the protection and improvement of the historical heritage. Providing gastronomy and organic farming in educational institutions, opening of two Slow Food restaurants in Sigacik, establishing “Women Centers” and “Youth Centers” for social solidarity, economic contribution and individual development are the recent implementations of the local government (Dalgakiran & Doğrusoy, 2009). Moreover, increasing the number of avenues closed to traffic within certain hours, and promoting the use of phaetons and solar energy-powered bicycles in transportation are among the short term plans for enhancing sustainable transportation as part of Slow Urbanization policies (http://www.seferihisar.bel.tr).

It should be emphasized that all slow urbanization practices must be developed in accordance with upper scale planning decisions. It is clear that interventions that function independently from planning decisions and concentrate only on “Slow City” principles are inadequate for sustainable urbanization. Plan revisions and legal regulations in order to prevent unplanned construction developments in the city are necessary promptly. Additionally, rehabilitation of Sigacik Castle and the inner bailey traditional residential pattern is very important. Improving public places and environmental quality through introducing urban equipments, appropriate street furniture, signs and direction systems are also recommended in the settlement.

Additionally, thermal reserves located in the coastal line of Seferihisar hold a significant potential in the integration of health tourism into the prevailing tourism activities. Using the thermal reserve as an alternative energy source in heating systems will be vital in achieving environmental sustainability as well. Planning small-scaled tourist facilities along the coastline in the form of boutique hotels would be consistent with the settlement’s natural and architectural characteristics. Increasing the incentives for offering region-specific food prepared by organic products in those facilities and restaurants may contribute to sustainability of cultural values.

Concluding Remarks
This study was put together with the assumption that modern urban development models characterized by fast consumption culture create a significant obstacle in achieving sustainability. In this sense, slowing down seems inevitable for the sake of regaining the relationship between the urban environment and the individual, protecting the local values, improving the environmental, cultural and social potentials, and transferring them to future generations. The Slow Movement that emphasizes the use of alternative and renewable energy sources and improvement of the local producers, local products and their production techniques, adopts the social, economic and environmental sustainability principles. In this context, Slow Urbanization brought about by Slow City Movement emerges as an alternative model in sustainable planning as it replaces the “destroy and construct” philosophy of
consumption culture with “re-explore and reconstruct” approach.

Slow Urbanization mainly focuses on originality, diversity, heterogeneity, sense of belonging and appropriation instead of homogeneity, monotony, and uniformity. In this way, it serves for the re-exploration of local values, which have been forgotten or disregarded for a long time, and uses these values as a tool in economic development. With the new lifestyle it envisages, it also resists the global culture expansionism that assimilates and homogenizes the “places” and cultures (Dalgakiran & Doğrusoy, 2009). Additionally, “Slow City” movement does not exclude the current technological developments; in fact, it uses technology as a tool in protecting and improving the existing values. The three different slow city practices mentioned within the study have revealed that slow urbanization is a unique model by being flexible and hence can be easily adaptable to settlements that have different characteristics.

Globalization trends and consumption culture that affect the entire world inevitably bring the risk of using the “Slow City” membership as a branding strategy in order to increase the tourism potential and competitiveness of cities. However, the different and distinctive quality of the movement is that it focuses on sustainability, local experience and also on production rather than consumption. The most basic point that creates hesitation though is that, in a situation where tourism potential grows uncontrolled, “Slow Cities” specifically in developing countries may have the risk of transforming into “Fast Cities” that lose their characteristic qualities and quiet lives, and struggle to cope with problems such as noise, pollution and crowdedness.

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References


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