
The Wellness Movement Pioneers: New Global Research Findings

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Ogilvy
Health & Wellness

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IV. Somatic spaces

How might we design homes and workplaces if we started with wellness in mind? A new breed of wellness architects are attempting to answer that question, and with good reason.

HG Wells' Time Machine took us to meet the Morlocks, a future self who lived underground. Are we so far behind? Our inner ape yearns to roam free on the plain, and yet Americans spend 90% of their time indoors. This is unhealthy hibernation. A life undercover disrupts our natural circadian rhythms. The endless summer we have created in our buildings baffle our immune systems (designed to cope with seasonality). The air we breathe is worse than the outdoors. Dry air in winter absorbs moisture and in some cases causes respiratory problems. So how do we create the great indoors?

Wellness architects want to design healthy environments. Some use salutogenic design principles, based on the work of Aaron Antonovsky (salutogenesis means healthy origins.) He believed that we must shift our focus from curing disease to managing stress. Stress violates our sense of coherence. Spaces must make life more manageable for us (so we maintain homeostasis); more comprehensible (so we can negotiate circumstances to our benefit); and more meaningful (so we can live with purpose).

Within healthcare architecture, hundreds of studies show how minor design interventions shorten hospital stays. Views of nature, art, single bedrooms, natural lighting and décor reduce stays by 25%. A famous example is the Philip's Mangiagalli Centre, a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit imagined from the perspective of the unborn child. The ward is softly lit and calming like a giant womb. Unlike other obstetric wards, the mother is not separated from the baby. Skin-to-skin connection heals mother and child, so both go home sooner.

Somatic spaces will move beyond healthcare. If we are to spend life indoors, we must design the environments that make us well. Somatic homes and workplaces will emerge. Philips Hue already enables you to use light in your home to help govern your mood. Wellness architects will look beyond traditional constructs of form and function to create compassionate, sociable and purposeful spaces. They will explore how light, air, space, layout and materials seamlessly unite to create havens that promote mind-body connections.

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The Dementia Village

Frank advises on and designs Dementia Villages. They help people with Alzheimer's enjoy their final days in the company of loved ones and caregivers. The flagship village is Hogeweyk, NL, with 23 houses with 152 dementia-suffering seniors. Each house is styled around the period when the residents' short-term memories stopped working, accurate down to the tablecloths.

The residents manage their own households together with a team of staff members. The village has streets, squares, gardens and a park where the residents can roam. 250 geriatric nurses and specialists hold different occupations in the village.

Frank believes the world is small for those with dementia. It's the simple things that make their life worth living: your own home, a safe place, and doing what you like. The village encourages sociability and agency. Traditional nursing homes remind the patients of their dementia, but promoting the idea 'you're normal' makes patients healthier and happier.

Frank's designs are based on salutogenic principles. He envisions 'social network cities'. As we all grow older, we will need to redesign the whole city e.g. re-imagine coffee shops, supermarkets, restaurants.

Interview with Frank Van Dillen, Dementia Village Advisors, architects of Hogeweyk Dementia Village



Frank Van Dillen

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GOCO Wellness Resorts

Ingo and Josephine design spaces that heal people. Their spas and retreats provide guests with a retreat from their busy everyday lives. More than that, they encourage guests to find a 'wellness way of life'. They blend Asian traditions and knowledge with contemporary western medicine.

Their guests journey through different spaces: from bathing pools, to treatment rooms, to library spaces, to clean eating, into outdoor gardens. More than that, they go on a journey of self-discovery. Indoor or outdoor spaces are seamlessly integrated to inspire spiritual connection.

Ingo and Josephine believe design is fundamental to creating healing environments. Every choice – from materials to flow – is carefully considered for its cumulative affect. But wellness designers are rare. They must be sought from other fields and steeped in wellness retreat culture.

A wellness resort is an entirely different experience to a vacation resort. A wellness resort is immersive and transformational. Guests spend almost all of their time in a wellness retreat (unlike a vacation resort). It all must work, if it is to work at all.

Interview with Ingo Schweder, CEO Founder, and Josephine Leung, Director of Design, GOCO Hospitality



Ingo Schweder & Josephine Leung

“Wellness design is very meaningful because beyond what materials or colours you use, lies the art of integrating these choices into healing spaces can spiritually inspire people.”



Ogilvy Health & Wellness Practice

The Ogilvy Health & Wellness Practice sees and solves brand challenges through the lens of culture, technology and behaviour.

Whatever the shape or size of your business, across the spectrum of health & wellness, we Make Brands Matter. In healthcare, from blue chip pharma to biotech, diagnostics, start-ups, hospitals and service suppliers. In wellness, for all things consumer goods & retail. In our Practice, we combine the best-in-class consumer insight, innovation and creativity from Ogilvy, that is well known to all, along with the health, medical & scientific expertise that we have across our global network, working to deliver outstanding business results for our clients.

Our focus is on two key areas:

1. Transformation. Helping our clients transform their brands and businesses to thrive in the new healthcare economy.

2. Wellness. Advancing proactive and personalised health & wellness for all, by defining brand & business propositions for the consumer goods, retail & services sectors.

Why have we built this specialised Practice?

There is major change happening in our society. Everyone wants to live forever... or at least live healthier for longer. And we as consumers are prepared to pay for it and take increasing personal responsibility for it. A major Wellness Movement, driven by consumers, is growing around the world. At a time when governments and private payers say the price is too high. We are entering an age of personalised medicine. And big pharma is taking on the needs of patients 'beyond the pill'. The healthcare ecosystem is transforming.

We are seeing a redefinition of health, from the absence of illness to the fullness of life, a convergence of medical science and holistic health. Also, a changing relationship between food and wellness and technology, improving outcomes and democratising health.

The Ogilvy Health & Wellness Practice has been established to help clients transform and grow in this sector, ensuring their future success.

