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## Theme - Wellness by Design

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THEME

# WELLNESS BY DESIGN

Text by Steve Jarvis

Shared Studios | Bakery Simplicity | Street Debater | GreenKayak | GoodGym



This issue of Signed is the second in a series of three exploring the potential for Social Design to build better communities and, by extension, better societies. The first issue concentrated on the principles, processes and strategies used by Social Design organisations to stimulate social change. In this issue we focus on the topic of designing “Wellness” in society. The opposite of crisis management, wellness is a concept that makes sense when understood as a healthy state of being, the actions necessary to maintain this condition, the preventing of destabilising crises, and reducing their impact when they do occur. Just as the degree of an individual’s wellness can be assessed by accounting for their points of weaknesses, with societies, we can gauge a general level of social wellness by considering the circumstances of those most vulnerable within our ranks.

The following stories highlight the work being done within the civil society sector to build better societies by helping those most in need. In their own way each story highlights the power of a simple idea to tackle some of the most serious challenges to be found in modern life. These ideas include: overcoming social isolation with GoodGym; protecting nature with GreenKayak; giving homeless people hope and dignity with Street Debater; creating a basis for communication beyond social divides with Bakery Simplicity; and, overcoming ignorance of the world beyond your experience with Shared Spaces. Although diverse in substance, each of these stories highlights the importance of actually “being social” when designing for wellness in society. Moreover, each story points toward peoples’ capacity and desire to do good if given the opportunity.

Wellness is more than being free from illness, it is a dynamic process of change and growth, encompassing self-awareness and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life—as much for societies as for individuals. In their own ways, each of these stories appeals to people’s basic instincts to want to do good, to feel their time and activities have meaning, and to break down barriers, whether perceived or real. At its core, the message of this issue is that design has the ability to create meaningful experiences and connections and increases our capacity to care. This is the essence of the “Social” part of Social Design and is a fundamental element of designing wellness. We are social animals and fulfilling our innate desire to connect with other humans and our environment is the most effective way for people to achieve balance in their lives and to make a better world.