



University of the  
West of England

## Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Midwestern Wellness Contradictions

- **Format:**

Written paper / Presentation in-person

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

Iowa State University

- **Abstract (300 words):**

Iowa is the so-called “fly-over” state located in the middle of the heartland, the breadbasket of the United States and therefore it is ignored in most conversations about urban concerns. However, it is one of the most industrialized and chemically treated places on earth. 99.9% of the prairie is gone and replaced with production land. Iowa is not the largest state, but almost every square mile is used to feed the world. Either directly or indirectly, what is produced in Iowa lays the foundation for the card-house of the human food cycle.

Often characterized as “clean-living”, Iowa’s reputation persists because there is not the human density in most places and therefore little air pollution – the skies a blue and the grass is green. However, what lies beneath is rich soil that is the fuel for production, but will not last forever. The soil has been tilled to remove the groundwater, chemicals are constantly added to increase yield, and a monoculture has been created from

industrialized seed manufacturers to make the most out of this resource. Much has been written about the problems of corn syrup, but it is the sugar that most food products are built upon. Corn is the source for ethanol that is blended into fuel, and it is the feed for animals.

A breakdown in this system would be catastrophic. I propose that in any discussion about urban health that the foundation provided in a place like Iowa is always present. That interdisciplinary teams work to solve health and wellness questions, and these questions are not always about the urban core, but look at the surrounding and contributing circumstances. If I am chosen to develop this abstract, I will show how these interdisciplinary teams can work to develop projects that address the multiple scales that impact health and wellness.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Cameron Campbell teaches architecture at Iowa State University and is one of the co-teachers in the Health Healing and Wellness interdisciplinary design studio at the university. As associate dean for academic programs, he oversees the strong interdisciplinary programs in the College of Design at Iowa State University. He also extensively photographs health spaces and uses media to critically engage the environment.