

Today's Age-Friendly Cities, Tomorrow's Longevity Valleys

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One of the most decisive and disruptive trends that will shape the global economy in the next decade is longevity industrialization: the accelerating development of technologies and approaches aimed at maintaining and prolonging healthy longevity, wellness (medical, social, psychological and financial), and performance.

The convergence of many sectors of the longevity industry (Advanced Biomedicine, AgeTech, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the Longevity Financial Industry) is rapidly making this prospect an imminent reality, providing new tools for individuals to increase their quality of life, social activity, mental wellness, financial stability, and overall functionality for longer than ever before.

[Deep Knowledge Group](#) has long maintained that the continued industrialization of longevity will foster the realizations that healthy longevity is a fundamentally new (and precious) asset class in and of itself, and that health is a new, more important, form of wealth.

The past decade has seen this new reality [gain recognition](#) among high-net-worth individuals and the trend of health as the new wealth in the 21st century has been rising. More than 50% of wealthy investors now [expect to live past the age of 100](#) and are arranging their financial affairs accordingly.

The notion of health as an asset is also evident at the level of national economies. A rising number of governments are [formulating and executing national longevity industrial strategies](#) to develop the industry's major sectors.

As such, it is clear that [the age of longevity politics has already begun](#). Moreover, it is now indisputable that the longevity industry has reached a critical inflection point where politics has become the most important driver of longevity industrialization.

Comfortable retirement versus empowered lifelong activity

Today we can already see the early fruits of governmental on-boarding of National Healthy Longevity as a strategic development priority in the form of so-called ‘age-friendly’ cities and towns.

However, the metropolises whose municipal authorities have made this commitment currently amount to little more than high-end retirement communities: namely, lifestyle and fitness programs such as Japan’s plans for an Ageless Society, AgeTech programs such as the Singapore Government’s smart-homes initiatives, and residential master plans such as the Seoul metropolitan government’s ‘2020 Master Plan for the Aged Society’.

The transition from age-friendly cities to longevity-friendly cities

Beyond social care and cultivating biotech clusters, governments must also be held responsible for driving forward the remaining sectors of the longevity industry. Financial reforms and developing and supporting additional technological synergies, such as integrating big data and healthcare, are necessary steps for further industry growth.

When this happens, ‘age-friendly’ cities will be superseded by ‘longevity-friendly’ cities, also known as ‘longevity valleys’ — areas that combine all facets of the longevity industry, empowering elderly and middle-aged individuals physically, mentally, socially, and financially. Whereas age-friendly cities are good places to retire to, longevity-friendly cities will be ideal locations to remain professionally, mentally, socially, and economically active for as long as possible.

The longevity hubs of today (where industrialization is a major component of economic vision) are likely candidates for longevity valleys of tomorrow and stand to reap the benefits of residence planning. The 21st century will see ultra-high-net-worth families and investors seeking out such valleys to optimize their individual health and wealth.

Global opportunities

The UK (home to London, ranked 1st in the Best Residence-by-Investment Cities for Business Index) is the nation that has most actively embraced longevity industrialization and optimized national healthy longevity from a policy and governance standpoint. In 2017, the government named the ‘Ageing Society’ as one of its four Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges. It established the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Healthy Ageing Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund in 2018, formed the world’s first All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Longevity in 2019, and in late 2019, announced its commitment to add five extra years Health-adjusted Life Expectancy (HALE) to all citizens by 2035. Manchester holds the distinction of being the first municipality internationally to establish a [municipal Healthy Ageing Industrial Strategy](#), which was formulated decisively, realistically, and progressively.

The USA could quickly establish itself as an international leader in longevity governance, but has not yet taken the explicit policy steps to do so. This is clear in its uncompetitive levels of healthcare efficiency, national healthy longevity, and the gap between average healthspan and life expectancy. It has potent resources for strategy execution and policy leadership, including an enormous healthcare budget, a competitive economy, strong governmental prioritization of AI industrialization (the number-one accelerator of longevity industrialization), and by far the largest proportion of companies and investors within the global longevity industry. California (home to Los Angeles, ranked 6th in the Best Residence-by-Investment Cities for Business Index), the birthplace of biotechnology, may be a strong contender for longevity valley status. Its capital and institutions fuel innovation and give rise to the latest discoveries in the scientific, technology, and medical sectors, its public policy implementations contribute enormously towards life science support through government funds, and its investment-led incentives back the use of advanced science and technology to discover and treat diseases.

Europe is home to several longevity hubs and longevity-progressive nations. The continent has the potential to leverage cross-border synergies and cooperation to position itself as a major nexus of longevity politics in the next decade. [Switzerland](#) (home to Zurich, ranked 5th in the Best Residence-by-Investment Cities for Business Index) is highly likely to emerge as a major European longevity hub in the next few years. It is an extremely wealthy country with a strong, internationally renowned, and progressive financial system and sector, as well as strong precision health and preventive medicine resources. Europe stands out as the region with perhaps the greatest prospects for establishing the first [longevity financial industry](#) hub and for creating a fully-integrated ‘Healthspan–Wealthspan’ ecosystem. It is, however, impeded by the lack of a definitive and decisive industrial strategy.

[Asia](#) is likely to feel the impact of demographic aging before any other region. As such, there is a great demand among governments and industry for industrial solutions to the looming ‘silver tsunami’. Asian technological innovations have long outpaced those in the West. Products that seem to be recent or even futuristic innovations to most Westerners have been available for decades in Asia, particularly in Japan. Long-established financial centers such as Singapore (ranked 4th in the Best Residence-by-Investment Cities for Business Index) have become leading start-up hubs in Southeast Asia thanks to a mix of ready capital and government policies, as well as major leaders in longevity governance (the region also has the [highest levels of national healthy longevity in the world](#)). With so much at stake, from Singapore to Ho Chi Minh City, there is fierce competition to become the next Silicon Valley — home not only to successful start-ups but also the mentors, investors, and institutions that support them.

The Gulf and MENA regions (home to Dubai, ranked 11th in the Best Residence-by-Investment Cities for Business Index) have a larger-than-average window of longevity opportunity given their comparatively lower rates of population aging. Substantial economic reserves, the shift towards digital and innovation economy sectors, and strong prioritization of AI place Gulf and MENA territories at a strategic advantage above many others. The widespread focus and support of the concept of ‘Healthtech Smart Cities’ in many Gulf and MENA territories could very quickly and rapidly transition to AI-driven longevity valleys as soon as 2025 if the requisite paradigm shift occurs.

Longevity a key driver of investor residence planning by 2030

As explained in greater detail in my forthcoming book, “[*Longevity Politics: Longevity Technocracy, Modern Approaches to Policy, Governance & National Industrial Strategies, & Longevity as the New Political Priority of the 21st Century*](#),” the longevity hubs of today are most likely to develop into the longevity valleys of tomorrow. Furthermore, the countries that actively support the development of longevity valleys stand the greatest chance of becoming the first longevity states of the 2030s.

Cities that lead the pack in terms of longevity industrialization, and that provide the greatest opportunities for optimizing citizen-level healthy longevity, will become dual ‘health and wealth havens’ of the future, capitalizing on a key new driver of institutional and individual residence and citizenship planning.

These regions will benefit not only by tapping into the next big pull factor for investor and ultra-high-net-worth relocation and residence planning — also one of the most lucrative, ethical, and socially-impactful sectors of the 21st-century global economy (namely, the longevity industry). They will also witness unprecedented levels of economic growth and stability by proactively neutralizing the economic shortfall of their aging populations and embracing the health and wealth of their citizens as a fundamental national priority and economic asset.

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