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A global callout for innovative new designs has attracted over 500 entries addressing the great challenges of our time, from flooding and traffic congestion to aging societies and remote working.

The initiative, dubbed "Design in an Age of Crisis," welcomed a range of proposals -- including pop-up gardens and musical instruments made of trash -- from over 50 countries.

Arranged by the London Design Biennale and Chatham House, a British policy institute, the initiative called for "radical design ideas to tackle critical issues facing society," according to a press release.

Entries span four categories: health, environment, society and work. And while not all proposals directly responded to Covid-19, each category's brief reflected "problems created or exacerbated by the pandemic," organizers said.

A selection of designs is being presented online and at a physical exhibition during the biennale in June. For now, here are six of the most eye-catching proposals.

Social distancing, a term once rarely used outside public health circles, has entered common parlance during the Covid-19 pandemic. But old habits die hard.

To help us keep our distance when in public, conceptual fashion designer Anna-Sophie Dienemann has produced a range of colorful accessories that protect the wearer's personal space while preventing them from encroaching on others'.

Artist and designer Andrew Scott has designed a series of musical instruments using trash and other found materials. By extending the lifespan of waste products and turning them into cheap string and wind instruments, he hopes to simultaneously address problems of pollution and a lack of access to arts education.

Indian designer Mayuri Sisodia has proposed a new form of low-cost housing that helps mitigate the dangers of seasonal flooding in Sonbarsa, a village in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Made from brick, bamboo and terracotta, the dwellings are comparatively cheap and easy to assemble. They are arranged into residential plots dubbed "aqueous communes,"

with each comprising a cluster of six interconnect homes.

The idea is aimed at the village's migrant communities, for whom flooding often brings the most danger and disruption. But unlike the stilted houses found in other low-lying areas, the design aims to maintain a relationship between the occupants and life at ground level, by attempting to "make peace" between land and water, according to the project description.

The brainchild of London design consultancy PriestmanGoode, the Turf Growers Pack contains everything needed to start producing food on window ledges and other unused surfaces. The recycled cardboard packaging, which holds containers, markers and seed bombs, doubles up as a plant pot and is biodegradable.

This small-scale approach may not meet your household's food needs, but it forms part of a wider manifesto aiming to "re-establish the lost connection between the production and consumption of food, and strong local communities."

Designed to improve mental health and well being during -- and after -- the pandemic, these pop-up miniature ecosystems attach to existing buildings, offering urban apartment-dwellers access to nature. Constructed using bamboo poles, the suspended gardens would, in theory, be cultivated by automated drones that spray seeds onto a 3D-knitted fabric.

The companies behind the concept, AirLab and MuDD Architects, say the relationship between garden and host would be symbiotic, comparing their pop-ups to epiphytes -- organisms that, unlike parasites, add to the health of the overall ecosystem when they attach themselves to larger plants.