

# Astonishment and Plexiglass

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For the more privileged among us, lockdown will have been a time of astonishment. Whether Bruno Latour aficionados, advocates of degrowth or simply supporters of everyday ecology, we thought we already knew that mankind's meddling with nature would one day blow up in our faces. Well that bomb has fallen sooner than expected, it has a name – COVID-19 – and brings with it the end of the world as we knew it before 2020. So what now? What would be the role for architects in a world where nature has taken repossession of some of its rights, where public services are better equipped, where world organisations have a truly international remit, where the spaces we live in are indeed designed for living rather than just containing? Who else but architects to rethink our housing, our places for meeting, for culture, for celebration, as well as our workspaces?

This issue of AA reviews recent developments in tertiary programmes, a topic that had been chosen before the pandemic and the lockdown. The models in force have since been widely questioned, particularly on the sidelines of a new injunction: 'social distancing'. We are done with open spaces: COVID-19 has already rehabilitated the partitioned office. Who could have imagined that the famous scene from *Playtime*, the movie directed by Jacques Tati in 1967, populated by workers trapped in cubicles, was in fact prophetic? Plastic partitions, integrated hydroalcoholic gels and ventilation appendages are part of the solutions, and new standards, which are proliferating. More than ever, we need architects, interior designers and designers to think further than the standardisation of DIY solutions in favour of long-term projects (as space mutualisation and reversibility) that have more to do with innovation than sanitary urgency. Such innovation comes out from, in the words of a team of researchers led by philosopher Bernard Stiegler, "surprising new paths which will enrich reality in a manner that cannot be reduced to simple algorithms. Consequently, from now on it will be about developing an economic and accountable model that is able to recognise the positive value of these new paths". To work!