



## MAKING THE SHIFT

The 2019 SHIFT Infrastructure/Architecture Challenge asks the architecture profession to propose new ways to understand, create or support physical or social infrastructure that links communities. The goal is to show how architectural thinking promotes social equity, reduces isolation or embodies social justice, but the possibilities are limitless.

As a guide—in no way meant to be prescriptive—the SHIFT 2019 Task Group has selected a handful of projects reflecting the spirit of the challenge. One example is **BLUE: Architecture of UN Peacekeeping Missions**, the Netherlands' exhibition in the 2016 Venice Biennale, curated by architect Malkit Shoshan. The broad exhibition explores the role of UN peacekeeping missions in the Sahel—a conflict-prone area between the Sahara and the Sudanian Savanna.

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## BLUE: ARCHITECTURE OF UN PEACEKEEPING



*Setting up Camp Castor in Gao, Mali. (Click on the photo for a closer look.) Photo courtesy of the Dutch Ministry of Defense.*

UN peacekeeping bases, especially those in urban environments, are normally designed to be separate from the local community. Walls are built to protect UN staff from harm, and community infrastructure like sewage and electricity are kept separate to avoid burdening local infrastructure.

The UN's guidelines focus on three key components for deployment to an area: Defence, Diplomacy, and Development. To benefit the communities in which they operate, the BLUE team took it upon themselves to add a fourth component: Design. This comprised four categories.

### 1. Sharing Space

Examples of ways a base can be more integrated with the larger community include:

- Exchange: During initial construction, the team interacted with the community to gain knowledge and begin economic interaction, including local sourcing of goods;
- Interface: The periphery of the base can serve as a secure area with additional levels of local interaction;
- Shared Space: This is a space in which UN personnel and the community collaborate to build up a commonly shared space; and
- Post-mission: Build with legacy in mind so the base—and its infrastructure—can be handed over to the population for their use.

### 2. Financial and Socio-economic Model

Operating in conflict zones, the UN base is often an island of economic prosperity in a sea of need. In working to secure economic security as well as physical security, future UN bases could provide a model of economic development. They could drive the local economy by providing market space and using their purchasing power to buy local and also commit to a Local Development Fund that invests in the local economy the difference between budgeted and actual expenses.

### 3. Anthropological Context

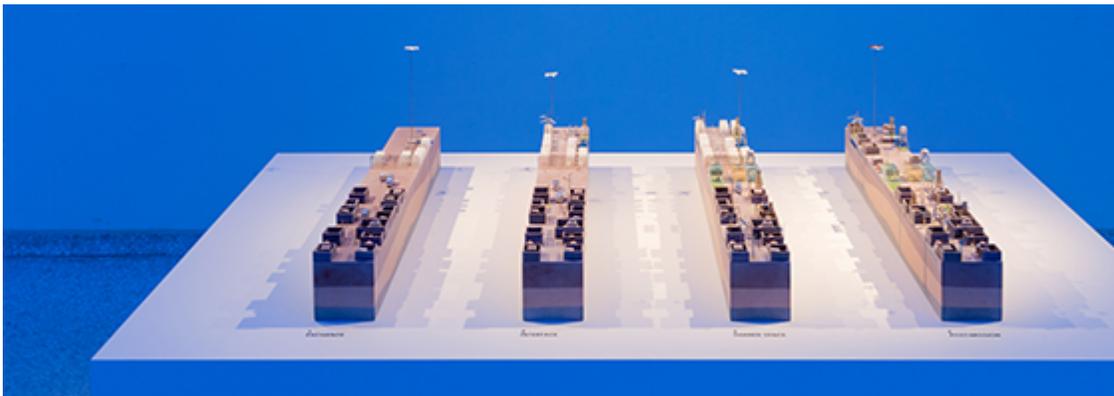
The presence of a UN peacekeeping mission denotes a significant conflict that affects different participants in different ways. The presence of an international force may also be perceived differently by different members in the community. The context of the intervention is critical to how development efforts are understood—it must be a key component of considerations as the projects develop.

### 4. Food and Ecological Security

The team identified the practice of urban agriculture combined with agroecology as a way to improve food security in the Sahel. In looking at the specific example of Camp Castor in Gao, Mali, the team identified the base as a source of technology and labour that use sustainable land management techniques to create parkland agroforestry that would help prevent desertification and act as a nursery for plants.

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## WHY IS THIS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF SHIFT?



*BLUE: Architecture of UN Peacekeeping Missions was part of the Dutch entry for the 15th edition of the Architecture Biennale Venice, curated by architect Malkit Shoshan. Click on the photo above for further information. Photo © Iwan Baan*

- It addresses a societal need related to infrastructure and connections within a broader global context relevant to Canada (UN peacekeeping is part of Canadian history).
- It has applications beyond the specific project (e.g. it could be used in other areas of conflict).
- It provokes a dialogue on how we address international development, while also addressing challenging questions related to colonial legacies.
- The idea is realizable and practical, and elevates society by creating a more equitable, engaged, culturally sensitive solution to infrastructure problems.

As a 2019 Shift Challenge submission, **in addition to drawings and other images**, the submission could include **text explaining the thesis of the idea**, and a short video presenting the project.

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## CONTACT US

We'd love to hear from you! Whether you have questions you need answered or want to share stories or examples that relate to the infrastructure topic, please drop us a line at [shiftchallenge@oaa.on.ca](mailto:shiftchallenge@oaa.on.ca).

For more information about SHIFT Challenge, [click here](#).

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