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Interview

DECOLONIZING SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Interview with Dr. Tshilidzi Ratshitanga (South Africa)

Abstract. Tshilidzi Ratshitanga is a Mitchell Fellow and PhD graduate of the School of Public Policy and Administration, University of Delaware, United States of America. He holds an MPhil and Bachelor's degrees from the University of Port Elizabeth (currently Nelson Mandela University) and RAU (now University of Johannesburg), respectively. Dr. Ratshitanga is also Chairman and Founder of the New Cities New Economies Group and the African Global Consortium.

Dr. Ratshitanga previously worked as a senior manager at the South African government's Government Communications and Information System (GCIS) before joining the private sector and becoming involved with companies in the property development and mining industries. He currently serves on a number of boards, including that of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA). He previously served as the Chairman of both Bokamoso Barona Investment Trust and Kaborona Investment Holdings. He also served as the Chairman of the Housing Development Agency (HDA), Deputy Chairperson of the Gauteng Growth and Development Agency (GGDA), and Chairman of the Innovation Hub (TIH). Dr. Ratshitanga also served as the official Special Advisor to the current South Africa's Deputy President, Mr. Paul Mashatile, and still advises him in a private capacity.

Tshilidzi is a social activist. He is an active member of South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). He previously served as Secretary General of both the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the South African Students' Congress (SASCO), which are both ANC-aligned progressive student movements. Dr. Ratshitanga also served the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) in Gauteng Province and was also a Commissioner of the ANC's 2012 National Congress Elections Commission.

Dr. Ratshitanga is the author of the book "New Cities, New Economies: South Africa and Africa's Grand Plan, A Pan-African Economic Revolution." In his interview he tells his vision about "New cities. New economies" and his opinion on the decolonization of African spatial development.

Keywords: spatial development, urban development, spatial decolonization, industrialization, African economy, social development, South Africa

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– Dear Dr. Ratshitanga, your book on new cities and new economies [Ratshitanga 2019] is truly inspiring and thought-provoking. And although it primarily focuses on South Africa (which, in your terminology, has a special type of democracy (STD) and a special type of capitalism), I am interested in your views on the whole of Africa, albeit through a South African prism.

First of all, what is wrong with African cities founded during the colonial period? What function were they intended to fulfill, and why does this not correspond to modern, post-colonial realities?

– The fact that these cities were founded during the colonial period means that their ideological framework, the basis of their construct, was nothing other than colonialism. The colonial doctrine is a doctrine that was aimed at taking over countries, colonizing them, and ruling them in the best interests of the colonizers, not to develop them to become beaming successes of the local intent. Hence, the cities that were constructed during the colonial period in Africa were designed to extract minerals and other goods and products from African countries to feed the economic expansions and future of the colonizing countries, mainly those of the West.

Examining their locations and make-up, one quickly reveals that some of them were constructed to anchor the ports of logistics and distribution of the goods and products that were earmarked for shipping from these African locations to the West and other destinations where their exploitation would further the development of colonizing empires. The infrastructure was designed to master this intention for extraction; hence, infrastructure mostly in the internal parts of the African countries, away from the ports, remained poor and non-existent for decades. Others were located at the point of extraction of the minerals themselves, with transport connections to the port cities of export of the extracted minerals to the original countries of the colonizers. Few, if any at all, industries aimed at the processing of raw minerals were created at these inland cities.

There was also the intention to transplant the architectural imperatives and designs of foreign cities to these establishments in Africa. There was hardly any interest in incorporating local designs and architectural approaches in the development of African cities during colonial times [Hull 1977; MISTRA 2015]. This had the effect of undermining, at the very least, and annihilating, at worst, the impact of African cultures, traditions, heritage, histories, and customs on spatial configurations.

One of the affronts of post-colonial cities in Africa is the extreme inequality between races, classes, and genders. There are places in the current cities that were inherited from

colonial voyages in South Africa, which work well, are full of opulence, have high levels of security, great health facilities, schools and universities, and working spaces; while other spaces, sometimes a stone's throw from the opulent ones, are blighted, bear the stench of extreme poverty, unemployment, degradation, murderous crimes, and abuses of women and children, lack basic services, with sewage flowing down the streets, no electricity or water, and a general aura of hopelessness and failure all round [MISTRA 2013; MISTRA 2014; Piketty 2014].

The colonial structure of the economy, which designed these spaces as nothing more than feeder areas for the extraction of natural resources, means that those who are lucky enough to be involved in such extractive businesses and the civil servants working in government institutions, together with the entrepreneurs supplying goods and services to the state, are the ones most favored to afford a good quality of life in the opulent sections of these cities. The rest are trapped in the slums and blighted sections of the collapsing human settlements in the outskirts of the cities. This type of extreme inequality is a ticking time bomb that needs to be urgently defused with radical transformation of urban spaces in South Africa and the rest of the African continent.

– Africa's major social problem is the precariat, which is concentrated mainly on the outskirts of large cities, with a significant part living in slums. This is a consequence of urbanization without industrialization, or "false urbanization": people left their villages (sometimes several generations ago) and moved to the city in search of a better life but hardly found it. They are the most socially explosive part of society, and the majority of them work in the informal sector of the economy. What should be done? Encourage them to return to their villages? Provide them with social housing? Find them new jobs? Or invest in their education?

– African countries are still suffering from distorted migration patterns, given the limited number of economic magnets, in the form of large cities. For example, the reports on migration statistics show that the population of Gauteng has been growing by 400,000 people per year for the past 15 years, while the government of the Gauteng province has been delivering significantly less housing per annum [Maluleke 2025]. This is the reason why there are thousands of informal settlements that have sprung up around the Gauteng province, which have become hubs of urban poverty and social malaise that we are all grappling with.

The major problem is that, in the absence of multitudes of economic nodes to migrate to, hundreds of thousands of people are arriving and settling at the few existing cities, which were mainly inherited from colonial periods. This is the crux of the matter. It is exactly this phenomenon that has given rise to the argument for the need for African governments to plan and build new cities across their countries, which are anchored by new economic spaces. If the leaders of African countries become genuine about processing our minerals in our own countries instead of shipping them raw to other continents, this could support an industrial revolution and bring about thousands of

factories, providing employment for millions of people and improving urban living conditions [Cox 1987].

Given its good climate, Africa could scale up its agricultural production and not only export food to the rest of the world but also create processing industries to benefit from the value chains that are associated with agro-processing. Then again, many African countries have underdeveloped tourism destinations. If these were modernized with new infrastructure, safety measures, and quality services, they would see millions of visitors coming to spend their holidays there and create much-needed jobs as a result. Some countries, even those with modest tourism destinations to offer compared to many African countries, wholly rely on such tourism industries for their GDPs. African tourism is still virgin territory in many parts of the continent. Once developed and curated for holidaymakers, these areas, now lying dormant from a tourism perspective, could become alternative magnets for migration. They could offer an alternative to the current few cities that people flock to in their millions, even though there are not enough jobs available for everyone.

The indigenous African economy is another avenue for significant economic growth and development on the continent. There are hundreds of thousands of products and foods consumed by indigenous people that have never been developed to modern consumer standards and that could be in high demand in local and international markets. If African countries were to invest in the innovation, modernization, and quality packaging of most indigenous products and foods, a lot of new industries would emerge, boosting Africa's economies and creating new urban spaces.

– Can you cite any successful examples of postcolonial urban planning in Africa? You note that, of the 53 countries on the continent, 46 still use the former colonial capitals [Ratshitanga 2019: 46]. Might the remaining 7 capitals be precisely such success stories?

– It is hard to identify successful examples of postcolonial urban planning. African governments have attempted to manage urbanization challenges by patching new human settlements in and around colonially planned and developed spaces or establishing new settlements. However, their efforts sometimes contradicted their declared principles of inclusivity, sustainability, prosperity, peace, and security, mainly because these new settlements usually were unintegrated spaces. Their dislocation from economic heartlands, or their failure to become new economic nodes, makes them unworkable and sometimes unpleasant places to live.

Egypt, however, with its recently launched New Administrative Capital city, New Cairo City, and many other new cities in the other regions of the country, can be said to be providing good leadership in terms of the development of new urban planning settlements. Egypt's New Capital City is a modern development that has incorporated designs from Egypt's history. It has been designed and built as an integrated city that caters for the spatial needs of the Egyptian administration while at the same time providing massive housing for the hundreds of thousands of civil servants who will

relocate to this new city. Myriad entertainment spaces and social amenities have been woven into the New Capital City. The rail and road networks that connect the old cities with these new cities are an impressive infrastructure investment that will enable social and economic agglomeration across the country.

What has enabled Egypt to succeed is the political leadership that has been driving these new cities' developments and the upfront state investments in the areas of development. The government has literally led the creation of these new urban spaces by providing the land upon which the new cities are built, investing in the necessary infrastructure thereof, and then inviting the private sector to come on board with the rest of the developments. The provision of sufficient energy sources has also been the bedrock of success for Egypt's new cities. Hopefully, many other African countries will take heed of Egypt's leadership and follow suit to redefine their countries' urban landscapes.

Like true magnets, colonial cities in Africa have influenced migration patterns from the rural hinterlands as people escape ubiquitous poverty for the promise of a better life in the big cities. However, many of these migrants end up living in the slums that adorn the fringes of these big cities. No doubt, after independence from colonial rule, many colonial cities transformed and welcomed a lot of citizens who were previously prevented from living in those cities. However, the challenge is that such changes were not properly planned, resulting in many of these cities quickly becoming blighted and their infrastructure collapsing because of unplanned development and huge population growth.

Success must be based on prosperity. In other words, has the postcolonial urban planning in African cities spawned prosperity for the majority of African countries' citizens? Besides the few islands of extreme opulence for a minority of elites and middle-class citizens, there may be areas of stable living here and there, especially as occasioned by informal economies that have sprung up as a result of these postcolonial migration patterns and the transformation of spaces. However, more can be achieved by deliberately linking urban planning with economic planning, development, and growth, in ways that vastly contradict the colonial intent, which is much about economic domination and extraction. This means that industrialization must underpin the creation of newly transformed economic spaces, whether through the redevelopment of existing economic hubs or the construction of new ones, with new urban settlements planned and developed alongside them.

There is no doubt that the majority of people nowadays are living in urban spaces, and this will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. One of the key questions for the change that Africa requires to move forward as a functional and preferred home for millions of its citizens and the citizens of the world who wish to live in it is how such urban spaces are intertwined with economic growth and development intentions—planning and development that favor the prosperity of African nations.

– In recent years, IT has developed rapidly, and the 4th industrial revolution has begun. The agenda should include a new generation of cities, IT technopoles,

with the Internet of Things (5G and above), data centers, and electric transport. What progress has been made in this regard in Africa?

– African countries and leaders are well aware of the huge technological revolution that is sweeping through the whole world. Hopefully, Africa will not be left out from forming part of this huge change, as it was with the discovery of electricity and the invention of the steam engine. It took a very long time for African countries and people to benefit from those previous scientific revolutions.

This major change has already demonstrated its radical transformative power on economies. New economies are emerging because of the digital transformation of society. Devices are being equipped with abilities and services that will transform the physical ways we live our lives. The nature of work, the manner of movement, the nature of service provision, ways of studying, and even entertainment are all rapidly changing.

Indeed, new cities will emerge out of the evolution of economic patterns and processes that are being brought about by the digital revolution. In terms of the transport sector, although there is currently an emphasis on the emergence of electric cars, the new ways of working that will rely on remote jobs for millions of people mean that there will be actually fewer cars on the roads than currently—whether fuel-based vehicles or electric ones. Spaces that are currently the source of vehicle congestion, such as the roads, parking lots, and homes, will all be transformed in the near future when the car becomes less and less necessary because people will move less.

Of course, this will lead to the need to reimagine how cities are designed and constructed in the future. More emphasis will need to be placed on social relations, as people will spend less and less time at work or on the roads because a lot of things will be possible to do at home or in close proximity to it. As many jobs become obsolete because of this development, new opportunities will emerge, especially in content creation for service platforms and entertainment on gadgets. The disappearance of certain jobs will also spark revolutions in terms of study curriculums and cause misery for those unable to transition into new jobs.

With many things possible to be done from confined spaces, such as one’s home, some social ills will also emerge. Digital crimes will skyrocket, alongside depression and an unhealthy lifestyle caused by these new confinements. African countries have a chance to interrogate these radical changes and their meanings for the societies. They can contribute to defining how life will be shaped by these lifestyle revolutions. There are many African technologies that never saw the light of day because of how Africans reacted to the changes of various epochs. Is this not the time when African citizens, scholars, and leaders should rise up and showcase Africa’s greatness and thus help imagine the new urban settlements that will be brought about by these inevitable changes? *Good luck, Africa!*

– Don’t you think that the existing transport system in Africa largely reflects the preferences of the colonial period, ensuring the “vertical integration” of individual countries of the continent into the world system as suppliers of natural resources?

Meanwhile, the widespread intra-continental routes of the pre-colonial period are still mainly used within the informal sector and are practically underdeveloped. What do you see as the optimal solution in this regard? In your monograph, you discuss the system of dry ports, as well as the concept of "One Africa, One Grid" [Ratshitanga 2019: 122–122; 143–146].

– Indeed, intra-continental trade routes are required to develop the new economies of African countries. One of the conspicuous features of the African continent is how there are too few economic nodes within African countries and thus few cities as a result. As it is known, cities are economic magnets, catalysts of economic activities across spaces. In most developed parts of the world, economic nodes are dispersed and multiplied across regions, thereby enabling people to settle wherever they choose, as economic activities are replicated wherever they settle, allowing them to live full lives without having to migrate to a few centralized city nodes.

The transport grids of such countries spread across the nations to facilitate the movement of goods, products, and people from city to city and from rural areas to cities. Even rural areas are far more economically developed than some of the towns in our continent's countries.

When one argues that economic activities need to be widespread across entire regions of our countries, one is confronted with questions about the kinds of economic activities and how unique they will be compared to the existing economic activities of the few large cities that currently exist. There is a lack of understanding that economic activities do not need to be wholly unique across the regions in order to anchor multiple cities across the country. Cities in developed nations around the world replicate activities from one place to the next and are fueled by infrastructure such as roads, electricity grids, and water and sanitation grids that enable an adequate quality of life across the nations. The decentralization of economic activities across nations is what makes the migration patterns more manageable in those nations.

Africa's population exceeds one billion. This is enough people to define sustainable trade markets that could spread across the continent. If African countries were to establish industries producing the goods and products consumed by this vast population, economic nodes would emerge across the continent, which could anchor new cities, not just in the coastal areas to facilitate trade with the rest of the world but also in the inland parts of the countries of the continent.

In this regard, Africa could be interconnected by a grid of economic nodes that is accompanied by the requisite infrastructure necessary to support it, thereby defining the *One Africa, One Grid* phenomenon. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement is a powerful instrument that could facilitate this advancement. What is required is its implementation.

– In your book, you argue that urban planning in Africa relies on Western-centric theories that do not meet the continent's needs. Could you provide some examples of these concepts and explain their shortcomings?

– “Urban renewal,” “urban redevelopment,” “urban regeneration,” “retrofitting of urban spaces,” and “connected cities” are Western concepts that are aimed at resolving the crises of Western cities [Barbera, Timpe 2025; Garcia 2004; Hersch 2018; Payre 2010]. However, there are vast differences between Western cities and African cities, as it has already been postulated that most African cities share the common image of being colonial cities, constructed simply to ship away African minerals, goods, and products [Bardinet 1977; Santos 1977], whereas Western cities were designed and constructed as economic engines, combining economic and residential spaces. If these concepts were applied in the exact manner as suggested for the resolution of Western urban crises, they would not be meaningful in the African context because the challenges of African cities require radical transformation, an entire overhaul of their make-up.

For example, the apartheid city model gave spatial expression to the Group Areas Act of 1950, legislation that was created to separate people in spaces according to racial groups. Thus, different racial groups were assigned to separate residential areas of the city, with black people especially located far away from the city core (the so-called townships), requiring them to have to travel long distances between their homes and the city cores. Moreover, the authorities ensured that services were unevenly provided, with a bias towards white residential areas.

We all know how incorrigible constructed spaces are. Hence, despite the repeal of the laws in South Africa after the attainment of democracy and political freedom, which allowed people to move freely between spaces, the majority of black people cannot afford to relocate from the so-called townships, where they had been trapped by apartheid laws and practices. Even those who have jobs in the cities still spend significant amounts of their salaries on transport between their “township” homes and their workspaces, just as it was during apartheid. The lack of ownership of land by the government within and around South African cities has also meant that where they have implemented housing development for the needy citizens, houses have been built far away from the cities, which has all but cemented apartheid spatial distortions.

In reality, it is not possible to rely on Western concepts designed for addressing Western city crises to easily address the myriad challenges of apartheid colonial cities without dealing with the fundamental structural fissures of apartheid-anchored spatial legacies.

Of course, one consequence of the transition to democracy was that a significant number of black people moved into the city centers, after what has been described as white flight took place, the phenomenon where white people move away from spaces when they become inhabited by their fellow black citizens. This has mainly led to the blighting of these city spaces, because unlike their erstwhile fellow white citizens who had lived in these areas, the black people who moved in could not afford the basic means to maintain their stay there, as most of them were unemployed. Coupled with the lack of enforcement of bylaws, this has led to a significant deterioration in the status and appearance of these areas. The solution lies in not merely fixing the broken infrastructure, as urban renewal may suggest, for instance, but in turning many of the spaces within

these cities into economic spaces where the citizens who have moved into them can find jobs to sustain their livelihood.

The argument here is not that these concepts are useless. Rather, the protest is against their uncritical application without consideration of the African context [Jones 2010]. These imported Western concepts need to address African realities rooted in the history of colonial spatial development and the lack of spatial changes after independence and the transition to democracy.

– Could you provide some examples of African concepts of urban planning that take into account African realities? What are the challenges in implementing these approaches?

– There are indeed African ways of imagining the kinds of spaces that need to be defined in new cities or how colonially built cities can be transformed into truly African ones. Part of this involves curating spaces in such a way that they assert what Africa truly is. Africa needs spaces that stand as edifices of the myriad realities and mythologies that make up its identity. This is not a novel idea. Many nations around the world construct spaces in the images of who they are. It is a way of asserting and reminding everyone what those spaces are about. It is a way of bringing the stories embedded deep inside books or folklore for the whole world to absorb with their eyes and minds and through the conversations they hold with the people of those places.

Why is this so important? Because African spaces have become a sort of structural palimpsest. The superimposition of colonial images on the existing African landscape has almost completely eradicated the Africa of the old, which is not old at all, because millions of Africans still hold it in their hearts and souls, without the pride to express themselves accordingly, as the spaces they live in heavily contradict this.

Therefore, part of the process involves delving into the histories, heritage, cultures, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the various corners of the continent to conceive designs of spaces and structures that resonate with the truths inherent in them. But history cannot be exclusive; it would be incomplete if it only reflected certain truths and not others. For example, the designs that do not reflect the terrible pains of slavery, colonization, imperialism, betrayal, and inherent conflicts would be incomplete, as these are also true expressions of Africa’s civilization and its tumultuous evolution.

What about the undeniable scientific fact that humanity emerged from Africa? That Africa is the cradle of humankind. If Africa neglects to incorporate the cosmopolitan views of the rest of humanity into the design of urban spaces, then the design will not be final, because Africa is clearly intertwined with the rest of the global community.

Most of Africa’s current architectural images are, in any case, already mimicking the images of the societies of other world nations. With slavery and imperialism also came the dispersal of people of African descent all over the world. There, they were forced to create new forms of lives, cultures, and overall expressions of their being. That, too, is now part of the African story and contains truths that need to be woven into the designs of our new settlements.

The need for a church was a defining feature of the center of colonial cities, as set out in the common classic plans. These religious monuments were built with the strongest materials so that even when many other buildings in erstwhile colonial cities have dilapidated, the colonial churches remain stubbornly erect. There was a huge effort to crush the belief systems of Africans during the period of colonial oppression in Africa. There are no structural signs of African religions and spiritual practices in many colonial cities in Africa[1]. It is very unfortunate that the new cities have continued this trajectory and failed to elevate the spiritual centers of African belief systems, even when they were constructed by a free and independent African government.

African people who wish to practice their spirituality do not have designated places to go and do so in the cities. They must navigate in painful ways around very rigid spaces that are not flexible enough to accommodate their needs. Some have to wait until they get a chance to go back to their rural areas to practice their spiritual beliefs freely, without being stigmatized and harassed. Even the rites of passage within the African family, which affect males, females, and children, cannot be fulfilled within the confines of current structures of cities, as the requisite environments are unavailable. These are some of the things that the new cities need to deal with in order to be truly African in character, form, and content.

In Africa, traditional authority is still respected, working side by side with the modern governments to meet the needs of the people. In previous African cities, the capitals of traditional authority—the palaces of kings and queens—were important landmarks. Current cities do not reflect this aspect of African people's lives, treating it as if it no longer exists. This is another element of the designs and architectural poetry of our cities that needs to be improved.

The above critique highlights the challenges posed by narrow definitions of some of the urban development concepts, such as the "connected city." While the concept of a connected city is sound in terms of the technological infrastructure and the transport systems that should connect people and businesses to facilitate smooth movement and transactions, it can also be defined more broadly in the African context. The above submissions have demonstrated that the new African city needs to also be connected to its people's ways of life, including their histories, cultures, heritage, traditions, customs, pains, contradictions, civilizations, and myriad other factors that have hitherto defined life in Africa.

– In your opinion, who should take the lead in decolonizing African spatial development? Should it be a developmental state or perhaps a nationally oriented, non-comprador business? As far as I can see, such a one is emerging in Africa, for example, the company of Aliko Dangote from Nigeria. What regulatory framework should the continent's governments form to make it profitable to implement spatial

[1] Issue 1 2025 of the Journal of the Institute for African Studies is devoted to religions of Africa / religions in Africa (*Editorial note*).

decolonization strategies? And how can they be implemented at the regional (for example, SADC) or continental (African Union) levels?

– The radical changes to spatial development in Africa have to come from a collective of different actors. The state has the leverage of creating laws, policies, and regulations that can be favorable for such radical spatial changes to African cities. As the book argues, for new cities or urban creations in Africa to be sustainable, they must be accompanied by new economic spaces. Human settlements that are not integrated with economic activities quickly mutate into crime-infested zones and unmanageable spaces where the quality of life is compromised. Hence, the private sector has to play a significant role in defining such economically integrated developments. Civil society must also be at the heart of the planning and evolving of these new spaces, as it is ultimately people who will live and interact with all else in these newly created settlements and economic spaces.

These new urban spaces are to be constructed on land that either belongs to the state, the private sector, or even the traditional authorities. All need to be involved in the process of releasing their lands for the developments to happen harmoniously. The African developmental state should take the lead [Reinert 2008]. Most of the spatial legacies of the past that are stubbornly refusing to wither were dreamed up, planned, and developed by the states of those times. The principles and laws of existence in those spaces were enforced by those states. Hence, the state has a pivotal role to play in coordinating a mutual spatial transformation in Africa.

While the state acts in the interest of all, businesses usually act in their own specific interests. It is not common for businesses to invest in and build large-scale infrastructure, such as roads, water supplies, sanitation systems, electricity networks, and social amenities such as hospitals, clinics, schools, and religious spaces for the benefit of larger communities beyond where their businesses are located. This responsibility is delegated by citizens and the businesses that pay taxes for this purpose to the state. The state must do its job, after canvassing the designs and plans of such new urban spaces with all affected, so that once the enabling infrastructure and amenities are in place, the rest can fall into place as it happens now in Egypt.

Indeed, the typical business leaders who will support the development of spaces in ways that radically redefine how the private sector does business in Africa will be the progressive and patriotic businessmen and women who understand that things must change. They must have their hearts etched in the pride of seeing an economically sustainable Africa, beyond making profits. Aliko Dangote is undoubtedly one such patriotic and progressive businessman, inspiring the rise of similar business leaders in various countries in Africa.

The African Free Trade Area has already paved the way for massive industrialization, which could anchor new trade areas and trade routes within the Southern Africa region and throughout the entire continent. Regional economic frameworks and nation-to-nation bilateral agreements also exist between African nations that can facilitate trade infrastructure investment at regional and continental levels. What

is needed are more effective collective planning processes so that what one country does by way of investment in industrial infrastructure and urban development matches with what the others are also doing, and the sharing of market offtakes and even collective funding of projects.

Patterns of consumption have to be thoroughly scrutinized to emerge with alternative supplies that are spawned by import substitution industrialization and the broadening of local markets to the rest of the continent. The point is not to boycott the world's products for the sake of it, but to come up with substitutes that are more relevant to the local markets, cheaper to produce and buy, and anchor employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the millions of currently poverty-stricken people all over the continent.

Once Africa masters the development of quality products through efficient productive systems and processes, soon it will be exporting to the rest of the world and reverse the market domination curse. There are many countries around the world that have declared their commitment to partnering with African countries to achieve this new industrialization. All that African governments must do is to create the conducive environments for such sincere and genuine partnerships to thrive.

– In the approach outlined in your book, you seem determined not only to be an "organic intellectual," according to A. Gramsci, but also to act proactively, to change the world around you, implementing in practice the concept of "New cities. New economies." To what extent is this successful? Can an African intellectual successfully bring about social change?

– All over the world, it is ideas that have informed the development of things and, *inter alia*, the changes towards existing things. Certainly, intellectuals, organic ones and those trained within the walls of universities and colleges, have contributed significantly to the development of new things. However, it is not enough to develop new ideas, even if they are published, as they may easily waste away on the dusty shelves of libraries. The point is that of activism, to become active agents of change, to agitate and influence those with the powers to legislate new ways of life, new policies and regulations, as well as those who allocate budgets to new projects, to all support the paradigm shifts that are being postulated by such scholars and intellectuals.

The reality is that the world is changing rapidly, and Africa should proclaim its stake in such current and upcoming developments. African citizens need to demand of their leaders to become intellectually rigorous in terms of what they offer their countries and the world. Asking the simple question, "What is the African perspective on such and such a subject of discourse?" can unlock huge innovations in the minds of both citizens and leaders. The main requirement for leaders is to have the political will to embrace the diverse and varied perspectives that will arise as a result of entertaining dialogues of this nature.

– The Russian Federation is currently paying great attention to urban development, both at the level of world-class flagship cities (Moscow and

St. Petersburg) and, for example, at the level of new territories (Crimea and Donbass), some of which are being restored after fierce military actions (for example, Mariupol). In Moscow, large-scale reconstruction projects are being carried out in city blocks that were built back in Soviet times—people are being resettled into new social housing. What do you think is the most effective form of cooperation between the municipalities of the Russian Federation and South Africa, and more broadly—between municipalities and city mayors' offices of the Russian Federation and African countries?

– It is worth noting that both South Africa and Russia were the founding partners of the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) global political and economic alliance, which has since expanded to include many other countries. It is correct for these countries to collaborate across many areas of mutual development to support one another as the global balance of power is rapidly shifting. South Africa is also well poised to collaborate with Russia because such cooperation is not contradicted by the pain of unhealing wounds of colonial oppression since Russia never colonized South Africa. The Soviet Union, the mother of Russia, in fact played a very crucial role in supporting the struggle against apartheid and colonization in South Africa. South Africa, thus, holds the dear and friendly people of Russia in great reverence for their contributions to its freedom.

The changes that are sweeping through the cities of Russia, both the older ones and more recent ones, bear important lessons for our own cities' transformation in South Africa. Harmony, prosperity, peace and security, ecologically friendly environments, economically viable and sustainable industrial nodes and human settlements are some of the issues both countries can grapple with together as they create better spaces for living, working, and entertainment of their citizens.

Russia has notably developed advanced knowledge systems and technologies in various sectors that can be beneficial for South Africa's own development. City-to-city and province-to-province exchange programs can, therefore, be arranged to facilitate mutual learnings on both sides. Economic diplomacy is the bedrock of sustaining long-lasting relations between friendly nations. Cultural diplomacy is similarly encouraged to cement the bonds of friendship between the citizens of both countries. Knowledge exchange programs can also be developed to match South African urban scholars with Russian scholars who can co-author journal papers that expand the body of knowledge on the development of existing cities, as well as the building of new cities *ex nihilo*.

Without discarding relations with other countries, South Africa and Russia have many threads with which to formidably weave their lasting relationships, sooner rather than later.

Spasibo!

Interviewed by Denis A. Degterev

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Интервью

ДЕКОЛОНИЗАЦИЯ ПРОСТРАНСТВЕННОГО РАЗВИТИЯ АФРИКИ

Интервью с профессором Тшилидзи Ратшитанга (ЮАР)

Профессор Тшилидзи Ратшитанга – стипендиат программы Джорджа Дж. Митчелла, доктор наук факультета государственной политики и администрирования Университета Делавэра (США), магистр Университета Порт-Элизабет (ныне Университет Нельсона Манделы), бакалавр Университета Ранд Африкаанс (ныне Университет Йоханнесбурга).

Профессор. Ратшитанга также является председателем и основателем группы «Новые города, новые экономики» и Африканского глобального консорциума.

Ранее профессор Ратшитанга занимал должность старшего менеджера в Правительственной системе коммуникаций и информации (*GCIS*) ЮАР, а затем перешел в частный сектор, где сотрудничал с компаниями в сфере девелопмента недвижимости и горнодобывающей промышленности. В настоящее время он входит в состав ряда советов директоров, в том числе Института стратегического анализа Мапунгубве (*MISTRA*) (ЮАР). Ранее он занимал посты председателя *Bokamoso Barona Investment Trust* и *Kaborona Investment Holdings*. Он также был председателем Агентства жилищного строительства (*HDA*) в правительстве ЮАР, заместителем председателя Агентства роста и развития южноафриканской провинции Хаутенг (*GGDA*) и председателем Инновационного центра (*TIH*) при этом агентстве. Тшилидзи Ратшитанга также занимал должность официального специального советника нынешнего вице-президента Южной Африки Пола Машатиле, которого он до сих пор консультирует в частном порядке

Профессор Ратшитанга является видным общественным деятелем. Он активный член правящей партии ЮАР, Африканского национального конгресса (*ANC*). Ранее занимал посты генерального секретаря Конгресса южноафриканских студентов (*COSAS*) и Южноафриканского студенческого конгресса (*SASCO*), которые являются прогрессивными студенческими движениями, связанными с Африканским национальным конгрессом. Ратшитанга также работал в Молодежной лиге Африканского национального конгресса (*ANCYL*) в провинции Хаутенг и был членом избирательной комиссии Национального конгресса в 2012 г.

Профессор Ратшитанга – автор книги «Новые города, новые экономики: Южная Африка и Великий план Африки, панафриканская экономическая революция». В интервью он рассказывает о своем видении «новых городов» и «новых экономик» и делится своим мнением о деколонизации пространственного развития Африки.

Ключевые слова: пространственное развитие, городское развитие, пространственная деколонизация, индустриализация, африканская экономика, социальное развитие, Южная Африка

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