

More humane cities

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THE FRENCH DESIGNER AMÉDÉE SANTALO HAS SIGNED SEVERAL SMART CITY PROJECTS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD. FOR THIS SPECIALIST, THIS SMART MODEL IS THE UNAVOIDABLE SOLUTION FOR SOCIETIES TO BECOME MORE EFFICIENT, MORE HUMANE AND GENERATE GREATER WEALTH - USING THE TECHNOLOGY AT THEIR DISPOSAL, BUT RESPECTING AND BEING INSPIRED BY NATURE.

Texte **Paulo Marmé** / Photos **Marisa Cardoso**

When we talk about smart cities, or intelligent cities, there is still an impulse to think of cities full of technology, with tsunamis of automation and Artificial Intelligence managing the most varied services, leading the mind to imagine metropolises with flying vehicles and scenarios in the style of the film *Minority Report*. Amédée Santalo, designer of intelligent cities, assumes that this was also a bit his idea at the beginning until he had "the luck", as he emphasises in the conversation he had with Forbes during his time in Lisbon, to work with some entrepreneurs from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. "They taught me, in the time we worked together, what real 'development' is. And that development is about the human being, about what we can do better for humanity, for people and for nature. And to achieve this development, "we have to find a solution that has to be intelligent. Therefore, the city has to be intelligent", mentions Amédée Santalo, whose professional career is marked by Sheikh Tarek M. Bin-Laden, someone with whom he worked as an advisor, almost twenty years,





AMÉDÉE SANTALO

Born in 1969, French Citizen, he completed his engineering degree in computer science in 1992. He started his career in Geneva, at CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research. Today, Santalo is a city concept designer with a back-ground in architecture, with his signature on projects in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. He specialises in Smart Cities and the design of skyscrapers using Biomimetics.

-skyscrapers using Biomimicry as inspiration. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has hosted many of his creative projects, with Amédée Santalo being chosen as an advisor to Sheikhs in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

A partner in Swiss Hospitality Holding Geneva SA, a group that owns a new hotel chain brand, Alps Hotel, Santalo has recently been focusing on Smart City projects for Africa and new accommodation concepts.



and whom Santalo regards as "a pioneer in the concept and sign- sign of smart cities: he created the Al Noor concept over 20 years ago, which has been the origin and inspiration of most Smart City developments around the world.

"Following "their recommendations and advice, I dedicate my time to discovering how we can provide simple and effective solutions for a better and more sustainable society", declares Amédée Santalo.

A SMART CITY IS ABOUT PEOPLE

This expert makes it clear that a smart city is about people and how to improve their quality of life", which requires "180° changes", and that the organisation of services and urban planning must seek, in a sustainable way, to fulfil, above all, essential human needs.

Food security. That's the number one priority, and that's not the case today" everywhere, says the expert, giving the example in Europe of the Rungis mega food market on the outskirts of Paris, the largest of its kind in the world and on which millions of people depend. A failure there leaves millions without food.

Also to illustrate this idea, Amédée Santalo looks at Africa, a region of the globe that deserves much interest from this specialist, and gives the example of the metropolis of Kinshasha, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, whose nearly 17 million inhabitants consume 90% of imported products. "Everything comes from outside, with the paradox that these citizens live in the middle of an incredibly fertile land. For Santalo, this logic is wrong and must be reversed: "When there is this massive importation, it means that everything becomes more expensive.

“In the world we may reach 11 billion inhabitants, but managing 11 billion people will not be easy. And when we know what we have done in the last 100 years with resources, this model we have cannot continue”

In his view, each community needs to be able to meet its needs as locally as possible and not be dependent on others and on the export of goods or products, as this makes the community more vulnerable to breaks in the production and supply chain from outside.

"The cornerstone of an intelligent city, for me, is precisely that each city must be secure in its basic needs. And that starts with the fact that the city needs to feed its people.

So we are creating poverty, unemployment and insecurity". All of which is not intended.

In Africa, "the resources are absolutely incredible", which is why, for Santalo, the reality of the entire African cities requires the local creation of infrastructures, wealth, employment and green energy, which also offer local living conditions, putting a brake on the exodus of populations and "avoiding the outflow of natural resources and raw materials abroad, which are

THE VISION THE WORLD

One of Amédée Santalo's most emblematic projects is The World.

It consists of a Smart city concept, designed for an area of over two thousand hectares, laid out according to the design of a Mandala flower, whose six petals correspond to the various continents. The area corresponding to each continent will be an expression of that continent's culture. At the centre of this vision is a 650-metre high Vortex Tower, inspired by water, with a luxury hotel, business centre and a panoramic point at the top.



then transformed by other countries and later arrive in Africa as expensive products that, if produced locally, would generate wealth and employment.

OPPORTUNITY FOR AFRICA

And Amédée emphasises: "If we do nothing in Africa, given the rate of population growth, we will have a serious problem to manage."

That is why it is extremely important to have an ordered policy and the right bases in Africa". Even timber for construction, he says, could come from new purpose-built plantations, which would help preserve valuable old-growth and local forests.

For Santalo, Africa therefore has much to gain by moving towards smart city models, thus being able to show the world all the potential and quality of life that well-planned and well-built cities can effectively provide for their populations.

Amédée says that Africa is ready for this issue, with some African presidents making the development of smart cities projects a priority, as is the case of Kitoko, in Congo. Also in Quigali, capital of Rwanda, President Paul Kagame initiated the smart Africa programme a few years ago, which has already been signed by 27 heads of state. "We can say that there are 27 countries in Africa that are moving in the direction of smart cities," comments Amédée. "There is a dynamic in Africa to move in this direction, even if in Europe this reality is not perceived - but it is real," he stresses, while indicating that The World, his project for a smart city integrated into the environment, has already motivated interest in Tanzania.

THE 7 PILLARS OF THE DEVELOPMENT THAT A CITY MUST DEVOTE ITSELF TO

ACCORDING TO AMÉDÉE SANTALO

1

Food safety

2

Infrastructure and affordable
housing

3

Industries and free zones

4

Health

5

Education

6

Energy

7

A driving force that propels the economy





129,02

Billion USD by 2021
REVENUE FORECAST
GENERATED BY COMPANIES IN
SMART CITY PROJECTS
AROUND THE WORLD BY 2021

65%

PERCENTAGEM OF PEOPLE
LIVING IN CITIES BY 2040

The size of the global
Smart Cities market
will grow from
around 410,8

One Billion USD, in 2020,
versus 820,7
billions USD in 2025, with
annual growth rate of 14,8%

Globally, technology
spending on Smart City
initiatives are expected to
more than double: from
81 billion USD in 2018 to
189,5 billion USD in 2023



25 YEARS PLAN

Amédée Santalo, who has built prototypes of smart societies throughout his career (such as the Green Belt project), emphasises that, to work, the design of a smart city needs to follow a development plan for a minimum of 25 years that integrates a holistic vision: "It is necessary to know the existing resources, the existing population and what we can have tied to the region. The city will be smart because it will be integrated into that vision, respecting nature".

An aspect that this expert makes clear is that smart city projects must have a timetable for their construction and implementation phases, which must be scrupulously complied with:

"You need to know the existing resources, the existing population and what we can have linked to the region. The city will be intelligent because it will be integrated into this vision".

"Maintaining the master plan, not skipping stages and not mixing phases is vital, otherwise the project has a 100% chance of being compromised and interrupted," says Santalo.

The designer believes that this concept of smart cities is unavoidable, given that "we have reached a limit" due to the exploitation of the planet's resources and the global demographic explosion. "Definitely, the current model cannot continue. And that is the challenge of the smart city", whose inhabitants should be able to find everything they need in fifteen minutes on foot. In this new, more harmonious paradigm of society, Santalo seeks solutions that are as closely linked as possible to nature: "I have been studying biomimicry, because I really want to find solutions inspired by nature. In the natural environment

there is nobody who does not have a role to play. There is no waste. We humans are the ones who invent waste. We have to be inspired by nature".

RESPECT FOR NATURE

Considering that respect for nature is fundamental when building cities, Santalo once again underlined the potential that the African continent has in this area, as "Africa is very close to nature".

In the archetype idealised by this expert, despite all the focus on nature, technology also has a place "to improve our efficiency, being an important tool of the smart city".

But technology is only useful if we are working on the right development model: "Then technology is really useful, with computers helping us to do better management. Our model will be optimised. And there, too, the African continent is well placed, believes Amédée: "The development of technology in Africa today is incredible", he indicates.

And Portugal, in this model of intelligent cities, how can it position itself, we ask Amédée: "The more I think about Portugal, the more I believe in Portugal, because of the protection and importance of nature that has been done. If the government moves in the direction of boosting tourism with smart cities - and tourism is very important for the economy - Portugal will be able to attract tourists, particularly European tourists, with a very environmentally friendly model. 