



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

Tirana, Albania: Reconstructing a City in the Interest of its Children

When Erion Veliaj became mayor of Tirana, Albania, in 2015, he inherited a fast-growing city with unchecked construction and traffic that threatened the health and well-being of all citizens — especially the youngest and most vulnerable. His team saw an opportunity to improve lives and to shape a new generation with positive associations of the city and its government. Children who grew up in a more livable city would be more civic-minded and better socialized to build relationships of trust and mutual obligation, he reasoned.

Although Albania's national government controlled most public services, the cities managed public nurseries (for children from six months to three years in age) and kindergartens, as well as park space and streets. Overcoming public distrust and budgetary shortfalls, the mayor's administration worked with private donors to renovate more than 100 nurseries and kindergartens, build five schools and 48 playgrounds, plant nearly a half-million trees, restore neglected squares into popular civic spaces, and redefine the cityscape with family-friendly improvements to parks and roads. Once gray and moldy, newly refurbished kindergartens received over nine times the number of placement requests they had attracted earlier. Reelected to a second term in June 2019, the mayor and his team were poised to expand the program to marginalized outlying communities.

This case is part of a series on coordinating across municipal departments to improve access to services, especially for families with young children. The previous case focused on [Recife, Brazil](#).

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A renovated playground in Tirana, Albania. Photo: Courtesy of the City of Tirana.

In the News

The World Health Organization recently declared a public health emergency of international concern in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ISS series on the **response to the 2014 West African Ebola outbreak** provides a glimpse of the actions required to curtail the spread of infection. The DRC adds a new challenge—the outbreak happened in a conflict zone—and a new dimension, availability of a vaccine.

In the United States, the problem of heirs' property is back in the news. For more, see the 2018 ISS case study **"A Huge Problem in Plain Sight."**

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