



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

*An initiative of
the National Academy of Public Administration,
and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
and the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice,
Princeton University*

Oral History Program

Series:
Interview no.:

Governance Traps
R1

Interviewee: Dritan Agolli

Interviewer: Itumeleng Makgetla

Date of Interview: 24 June 2010

Location: Tirana
Albania

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MAKGETLA: My name is Tumi Makgetla, it is the 24th of June, 2010, I'm in Tirana, Albania with Mr. Dritan Agolli who has served several important positions in the Tirana municipality, first as the General Director of Public Works from 2000 to 2005 and then the General Director of Urban Planning until 2008 when he became the General Administrator in the city municipality. Thank you very much for agreeing to this interview. And can I just confirm that this is a voluntary discussion?

AGOLLI: Yes. I confirm this.

MAKGETLA: Can you begin by giving us a brief overview of your career and explain how you came to be involved working at the municipality?

AGOLLI: *It started in 2000, October 2000, when Mr. Edi Rama became the mayor of the city and he, let's say, had a vision to create another city, another municipality, another administration. So the background, when he became the mayor of the city was Tirana had no public green areas, so every park in the city was occupied by illegal construction, illegal kiosks, illegal buildings, even the main park of the city that we called Parku Rinia, Youth Park. The streetlights—I'll give you some figures—in Tirana there were around 78 streetlights functioning. So only 78 lights on the street, and asphalt was something that just repairing small pieces in huge holes in the streets, and what was, let's say, the importance? Even the citizens of Tirana were hopeless, let's say. So there were used to this atmosphere, saying okay, this is our city and there the usual saying was, okay Tirana could not be.*

Okay, we are in Tirana, this is Tirana. The first thing that Mr. Edi Rama did was he tried to put another spirit inside the municipality, inside the administration. For this he recruited young people from every part of Albania, from abroad. So, he created a team mixed with existing administration and newcomers. So part of this meeting, I became first as a director dealing with green areas, streetlights and facades. And the first challenge was how do—so in the city the expression that had a lot of problems is not correct—so it was a big, all the city was a problem. Problem at all. To start to do something and without having money. So this is a problem to solve, a very difficult problem to solve.

The budget at that time for investment was around 300 million Leke, around 3 million dollars.

MAKGETLA: Okay, for the city's budget?

AGOLLI: *For the city's budget a year, for investment. So this was workers for street cleaning. So the garbage was everywhere, even in front of the Prime Minister's building. You can see the destroyed garbage bins full of garbage. So as I said, he started first with a new spirit, saying okay, now things can happen, even in this city change can come. And we started in two directions. First was with facades. So the first idea, our background of our mayor is being a painter and his idea is with little money, to paint facades of the main streets. And when we started to paint the first road, the color of the buildings were red, orange, white, blue, different colors and a big debate started over that. And it was not from the beginning; it was a city debate and after that it became a national debate, even in the Parliament, everybody discussing, saying color. Half of the people saying no, this is horrible, what are these colors? These are [Indecipherable] color. And the other half saying no, these are nice colors, why not, etcetera. Even in parliament.*

The important thing is that we made a survey in this time. So, let's say, 55% of the people say yes, we like the colors and 45 say no. But to the question "do you want this project to continue?" around 85% say yes, we want this project to continue but with different colors. And what has happened after ten years of transition? It was the first time that people were discussing, were debating—it's like, our mayor had the expression like a person being with sleeping pills, and at a certain moment you shake and wake up and start to discuss and to debate, so they feel life. And after that the second thing was to start to destroy the illegal buildings in public areas, in public parks, and to give the message that—so the colors were a message that we can change with little things, with something small we can make a difference and things can be changed.

The second one is that, okay, the law has come. Now it is not any more something and we should care for the community areas, the public areas. And we started to demolish the buildings of the new park, the youth park, the main park of the city. And the resistance at the beginning was too much resistance.

MAKGETLA: How was the resistance shown?

AGOLLI: *Showing because all of these were not residential buildings. They were restaurants, bars, and motels in the middle of the city and most of them were for drug dealers, for prostitution. So we're the black part of the city and the resistance was threatening, saying you'll not come, we are here, etcetera. I can tell you the story, there is a story that our mayor tells everywhere. The first building that we destroyed is on the Lana River. It was a motel called Titanic, and there were, let's say, three brothers owning this motel. When the paper from the construction police said that within five days you should demolish your building because it is illegal and in a public space, they threatened with death saying "We are going to kill you, mayor, if you come here."*

The mayor said, "Okay, after five days, 12 o'clock midnight, your time will expire and I'll be there." A quarter of an hour before 12 o'clock, with all the place surrounded by police he over showed there and knocked on the door. One of them came out and said, "Okay, you have fifteen minutes now." And the bulldozer engine was on, waiting. He said, "I'm going to kill you." He said, "No, you have no more time now." And he said to the bulldozers, "Hit the building." It went like this and the building was shaking. And you can see people going out and we destroyed this building the next day and from that things were easier.

MAKGETLA: Okay.

AGOLLI: *So that's an unimaginable story for you but this happened. My first task, destroying all these buildings, was to begin this in the park again because it was all concrete, but all concrete. There was even a fountain. I'll find some pictures. We started with our municipal enterprise city workers. We asked for help from NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), there were some NATO soldiers and we asked for two excavators and trucks to help us and they helped us. Within three months we removed all the concrete and we refilled with earth. We put grass, we put flowers, we put benches and we made the roads, we made the fountain function. When we opened the fence, it was surrounded, it was kind of—wow. I remember discussing it with one of the NATO soldiers when he came with the trucks.*

At the beginning he said, "Okay, my duty is to do it within three months. So in three months it should be covered with grass, it will be green." He said "No, this is not possible." He was an Italian soldier—officer, not a soldier. He said, "Are

you crazy? Not even” he said, “a single grass you’ll be happy.” When we finished we had a ceremony giving a certificate of thanks to NATO. I said, “Unimaginable. I couldn’t imagine this.”

So, after that, we continued with the facades, continued with destroying the illegal buildings and saying things are changing. This created business in another climate. We raised our revenues from 300 the first year to 1 point—. From three million dollars to 12 million dollars. Step-by-step we started.

MAKGETLA: From three million in the first year to 12 million in the next year or which year?

AGOLLI: *The next year it was nine million and the next year was 12 million. We started after that with road infrastructure. For the first time we didn’t only put asphalt, but we made all underground infrastructure: sewage, water pipes, sidewalks, streets, and lighting. We are now a normal city, let’s say, with problems like any city in Europe. So that’s how it began.*

MAKGETLA: I’d like to ask you some more questions.

AGOLLI: *We’re happy now, now it is not an expression of people saying, “no this is Tirana, we cannot change it.” People are now asking for air pollution solutions, for traffic solutions, for every normal problem that people in Europe have, we have now. Before we had kind of a ceremony because we are pushing to the public transport too much at this moment. We are working—we are giving license to private operators, so this is how it operates for the public transport, public buses. We worked six months and we put another level of standard now just the first part of new buses. They are 2010 buses in production so with Euro 5 it is high standard of pollution: zero pollution. The mayor just inaugurated the first eleven buses. Until March we will have all the new buses in the main lines of the city with air conditioning, with everything that is in Europe.*

I was thinking when I was at the ceremony, I was thinking, when we began to think about new buses at that time, it was what we were saying like, are you crazy? Now people are asking more and more and we are now in a position what to do.

MAKGETLA: This is something I’d like to ask you about which is the sequencing of these reforms. So you said some of the first things you did were the facades. Can you describe to me a bit more? You said it started somewhere fairly central and then there was a discussion and decision to continue. How many buildings were painted? Was this all using city money? Can you describe a bit more how this happened?

AGOLLI: *Yes. Okay, we started with the first road and after that with some small money from the city and with our enterprises we made the second road. After that, in 2002, it was organized for the first time, the Biennale of Tirana. It was an idea of some well-known artist. They take another segment of the Ring Road and each building was painted by an artist. It was, the Biennale was even, the buildings around the city painted by the artists, the beautiful building with this art, things we were fighting for. I’ll give you the presentation to show. It was done twice. Now we have completed all the main roads of the city, they are painted, are colorful.*

MAKGETLA: Private houses and municipal buildings?

AGOLLI: *All institutions. So if you take a road, all the buildings on the two sides of the road are painted.*

MAKGETLA: How much would you say has that cost? Do you have a figure to associate with it?

AGOLLI: *It was zero point nothing in the beginning but the cost of the color is not too much. I can find the figures in the budget, so the first project was, I don't remember, about \$50,000 for the first roads. It was, because, it was a project with, I think a World Bank project, to make the sidewalk of this road and the mayor insisted and said, "No, I'm going to do even the facades." They said, "Yes". The funny thing was, the supervisor was a French guy and when the mayor said okay, the colors will be like this, he was terrified, "No, no, what is this color?" The mayor would say, "Okay, if you don't like it you can go, but the colors will be like this."*

MAKGETLA: What did you think when it first happened?

AGOLLI: *It was different. So change had come. It was the first reaction and I was very excited about it. I was the person dealing with this to see how the work was going, but it's different. It was not that we had the normal facade, not even that our buildings had any value from architectural point of view, from old buildings, etcetera. In old buildings we had to keep them as they were before. But it was these prefabricated communist buildings and all the facades were terrible: no colors, dusty color, the gray. It was like waking somebody up. We were sleeping and waking up. "What just happened?" That was the reaction.*

MAKGETLA: So you said there was a World Bank project to do sidewalks but then it was the mayor's decision to take it further?

AGOLLI: *Yes, after that we put some money from our budget with our enterprise. After that we started as a project with donors and with a municipality budget.*

MAKGETLA: You also mentioned clearing out illegal buildings starting with the Youth Park and the example of the motel which was first knocked down. That sort of gave the sign to others. Many people have said that at the time it seemed that it would be very politically risky to clear out those buildings because behind each of the kiosks stood a politician or somebody who was very powerful. Can you describe how the municipality was able to take that step of knocking down those buildings? Was there compensation offered? Were they allowed to build elsewhere? What were some of the bargains if there were any?

AGOLLI: *No, there was not compensation. It's true that behind each building was somebody. But, first, they have used public land for ten years paying nothing, not even paying taxes, and they have taken their benefits. Second how we managed: we managed first of all with equality. So it was not that we made differences. We start here and all the buildings will be done. From the moment that they see that, there is no difference. This is my friend, or this is my party, or this is an important person and we cannot destroy this, so the moment they saw that we made no differences they said, okay, this has finished now.*

The third thing was we facilitated the same. All of them, all let's say 95% of these businesses were normal businesses, they were reopened in a legal way, a legal manner. So they hired legal spaces. They started to build with permission. Their businesses were even better. But the first reaction is—people, if you are used to something, it is too hard to change, even to paint your house, make you reactive, saying okay, I'm going to change all the—. So it was hard. But after they saw that this was something that has finished, the resistance was zero. They even started

to destroy themselves, to take materials, to take windows, all that can be reused, etcetera. They started to destroy themselves.

MAKGETLA: Was there a list of people whose properties had been destroyed to say they'll get priority for new building space or they'll get permits so they can open up the new business or anything like that?

AGOLLI: No.

MAKGETLA: And there was no economic compensation for the—?

AGOLLI: No.

MAKGETLA: Just to clarify. It does seem like quite an amazing thing for a municipality to have done in terms of its impact. So you said that after that area was cleaned up and after three months, which year was it completed, the Youth Park?

AGOLLI: *The Youth Park was completed in June of 2001, it was started in March.*

MAKGETLA: After that there were other illegal buildings that were taken down around the city?

AGOLLI: Yes.

MAKGETLA: Can you describe to me?

AGOLLI: *We cleared all the rivers, the branches of the river were covered with, you'll see in photos so it was no—so the river was in between two lines, continuous lines of buildings, illegal, starting from one floor to seven floor buildings. We started with the river until the end of 2002, beginning of 2003 we demolished all of them and we started to work step by step reconstructing the main boulevards on both sides of the river and making the river green areas, planting trees and so. I don't know if you had a chance to see all this. So you cannot imagine, it was covered on both sides, buildings. It was like a channel between buildings.*

MAKGETLA: Were those houses or were those businesses?

AGOLLI: *All businesses, bars, pubs, cafés, shops, all of this.*

MAKGETLA: One thing that someone has mentioned to me is that there were a few reasons there was so much construction—first, it was after the transition and there had never been private restaurants and bars before. But also, people were coming into Tirana from other parts of the city and especially the north. Was there a sense that it would be politically difficult in terms of creating division amongst certain groups of people by knocking down those buildings? Was there any sort of concern about that?

AGOLLI: *No. Our problems that we had—we were having a difficult transition because we were still in transition. This is our problem: its been twenty years and we are still in transition. Tirana in 1991 had 220,000 inhabitants and now Tirana has around 750,000 inhabitants. So within twenty years it has multiplied by four, let's say. It is something. Huge. All this immigration, coming from the north, from the south, and every part of Albania is because Tirana offered opportunities and maybe even mentality, because in the communist system we were not allowed to move freely from one city to another. We needed permission. You should have a ward, you should have everything.*

Now democracy came here, everybody wanted to go to Tirana and for sure we had a lot of problems. We had a lot of illegal buildings, residential, around the city. We are dealing with those areas by having the process to legalize them and also having a process of integration, to have infrastructure to be integrated into the city—social infrastructure, public infrastructure, road infrastructure. But the areas that I'm speaking of demolition were not residential areas; these were just businesses that were using public land, green areas most of them, squares for their personal profits.

MAKGETLA: So those were some of the earlier reforms. You then said that you worked on developing road infrastructure, laying down pipes and water lines and some lighting. Can you describe more how those reforms were carried out?

AGOLLI: *With the first budget we did some roads, three roads, reconstruction, reconstructed everything. So our philosophy is to do it—not to do it like in Albania, make a road for Albania, but to do the road like in Paris, like in Belgium, like in London. So the mayor said "I want the road to be the—the tiles of the sidewalk to be the best tile, all the quality to be there. Because otherwise we are not going to Europe." We did the first three roads and people were enthusiastic and shocked, having a road, with a sidewalk, with some new streetlights coming from Italy, modern ones, with trees, with new pipes of water, and the sewage and everything, even the sign marks.*

At that time we applied to the central government even for some funds. We did projects, too many projects. We were financed for this project. As I said, so the city entered into a normal way of functioning. Businesses had a boom, we had a boom of tax collections. Without—so we multiplied by four the tax collection within three years without raising any taxes, just because nobody was paying taxes here.

But people now start to think differently; even businesses say I should pay the tax because I want the road to be paved in front of my shop. So the change is not to make roads, the change is not to make college [Indecipherable], it is to change the people's minds. People's minds, people's behavior, people's inspiration.

After that, as I said, now our budget for investment is about 35 million euros. We now are thinking about big projects but big projects need big support, financial support from the government. As you may know, we are now even politically under government attack. Five years now to block the municipality because our mayor is the head of the opposition. But we are working, we're still working.

MAKGETLA: I'd like to ask you some more about that but before I do, you said that initially you built three roads, which roads were those? How did you select which roads you would build first?

AGOLLI: *It was the Michelim-Cherie Road. It was the road in front of the Parliament and even this road was enlarged. It was a one-way road with two lanes and we made a six-lane road with a sidewalk in the middle. In front of the Parliament, the road that goes to the river was the second, and the third road is Chamaria Road. It is the road here. It is the smaller road that we wanted to make a pedestrian road for pedestrians.*

MAKGETLA: How did you select those roads?

AGOLLI: *Pardon?*

MAKGETLA: Why did you choose those roads?

AGOLLI: *The Michelim-Cherie road is one of the main roads of the city and it was a road with businesses and they wanted to give value. The road in front of the Parliament is part of the inner ring road and it was crucial for traffic because we have congestion. This is in the center, this road, and we wanted to implement even the pedestrian areas, pedestrian ideas. So that was the reason. Having all the roads destroyed, to choose three of them is okay, we picked three of them. We thought like this and we chose those roads. We proposed it in the city council because according to our laws the council approves the projects that we are going to do with our budget. We proposed those roads. We did projects for those roads.*

MAKGETLA: Why were the roads so destroyed by this stage?

AGOLLI: *Because in ten years nobody cared about them. In ten years you can have— what is this—?*

MAKGETLA: Like a digger?

AGOLLI: *Yes, you can have a digger. If you have a problem connecting the water you can dig the road, connect the water without permission, and leave the road like this. The roads were done by communists, and even last year the communist economy was so bad, and they don't invest and maintain and things like that. But in ten years if you don't make anything, the roads will—. The roads were narrow because in communism the private cars were not allowed, we had only state-owned cars. So in the city of Tirana it was said to be a paradise of pedestrian people. Only twenty cars coming around in the city. So even the roads were too narrow. Now with traffic problems we should widen the roads, we should have new sidewalks, we should have streetlights. That was why they were so destroyed.*

MAKGETLA: Why did the former administration not maintain them?

AGOLLI: *The first day that the mayor entered the municipality, he was surprised because of these things. There were a lot of televisions inside the offices. More televisions than computers. And ashtrays, a lot of ashtrays. We put in orders. He removed all the televisions and he said this is a smoke-free area. No smoking inside the municipality and hundreds of ashtrays coming. So those two examples you can imagine why. They were seeing television all day.*

The funny thing is that in this city or in this country if you do something you will be a target to be attacked. Some will say yes, some will say no. If you do nothing they will say good guy, you're doing nothing. They were all good guys. The mayor was now saying he is a good guy. He did nothing but he is a good guy because he did nothing. Why to work? Because, why be in the middle of debate, in parliament, the opposition at times saying you are destroying the city. What are these perverse colors and this is not our city. You know?

MAKGETLA: Yes.

AGOLLI: *Do nothing.*

MAKGETLA: How did he respond when the people started to complain about the colors and the action?

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- AGOLLI: *So for this reason we did the survey, people wanted this to continue.*
- MAKGETLA: How many people were surveyed?
- AGOLLI: *Now we can go around Albania and see in other cities paintings of buildings or even on new buildings, or new applications for new buildings, the facades were colorful. It became like a mode. Every building with colors.*
- MAKGETLA: So if the mayor came in here and changed the way you people were working did they resist? What was their reaction?
- AGOLLI: *No. I said this is how you orient people and how they will sit with you if you are determined to do this thing. Okay, you can do it, this is something—people are psychologically, they test you. Is he serious or not? So is something for one month? Okay, they will start to have one month, waiting until you forget about this. If they see that you continue to do so, they change. We have now, say, half of the administration still working because one of the things Edi Rama did is that he didn't make selections from political. In Albania when a party comes in power they change all administration and put their party people and these things go on forever. He said no, only people who can do the work. Half of them were even accused by the Socialist Party at the time because the municipality that was warned by the Socialist Party, more than half of the people were Democrats voting for the mayor. Mayor saying yes, I don't care. If they are doing their work they are fine with me.*
- So even this was something that motivated people because they were waiting. Now that Edi Rama has come we will be fired because we have worked with the Democratic Party mayor. When he said, "I don't care," they were motivated. This created a group of people working and believing in something, that party was not Edi Rama, it was the project. The project would change the city. So we believed it really, and we believe in this project and we have changed the city. Now we are, our project is to make the city a European city.*
- MAKGETLA: Was there anything else that he did to build the support amongst the staff to motivate them to work and fulfill his vision?
- AGOLLI: *There were a lot of small things, small details, starting from the regulation that every man in the building should have a tie and be serious, organizing those end of new year party with administration or for the women's day, all the women. I remember in 2002, we made kind of a big event with all the women's day of the municipality. He put all the men directors with a tie, a tie like this, the waiters.*
- MAKGETLA: Like a bow tie?
- AGOLLI: *The waiters, serving. So they were serving to the women, being the waiters. So these are small details. The fact that people who had no idea, or people who wanted to work, he motivated, making directors. So motivated people to work more.*
- MAKGETLA: So how many, did he get rid of any of the staff when he arrived? Did he bring in new people?
- AGOLLI: *Sure, yes, he brought new people. The first year it was even changing. A lot of new people who came after one year left because they were not successful. So it was really a change until he created this—*

MAKGETLA: You were saying that this was a period where after the first year some people left who had been brought in and it was a period where things were changing a lot.

AGOLLI: *Pardon?*

MAKGETLA: You said in the first year there had been some new people that came but that also some of them left after that first year.

AGOLLI: Yes.

MAKGETLA: Did you know the mayor before you joined, and how did you get involved? What had you been doing before?

AGOLLI: *No, I had been in another city until 2000, in the city of Fier. I have worked for the municipality of Fier, I was cleaning supervisor for three years. No, I didn't know the mayor at all. I have been even right, politically the right party. So even political connection, there was no political connection. A friend of mine that started to work in the municipality knew me, and he proposed "There is this new guy, we can test him with new ideas." I started and started first with facades and things like that. The mayor saw me and after one year, the guy that proposed me was the General Director of Public Works. After one year he left and I became the General Director of Public Works.*

MAKGETLA: How big was the team that you worked with on some of these projects? How big was the team, your directorate?

AGOLLI: *As the small director, or as the general director? As the small director there were three sectors with, let's say, 12 people. As the general director it was about 50 people, 54 I think, but also, even the municipal enterprises were under our responsibility at the time, so the cleaning of the city and maintenance of the roads.*

MAKGETLA: I've heard that the mayor introduced the idea of working in sort of public-private partnerships. Can you describe that a bit to me? Is that true?

AGOLLI: *Yes. The concept of public-private partnership. One thing that this public-private partnership did was public transport. So in 2002 we changed. Because until 2001 it was all offered by the municipality service. There were a few buses in very bad condition. We changed the way. There were about five lines in the city. We left only one line to the municipality operator. The other four lines, and after that we made, now we have twelve lines. We opened two new ones, it will be fourteen.*

We started cooperation with the private sector, offering the private operator, saying "We have no capacity to invest in new buses or in buses. We will give you"—the first license was one year's license repeating every year. This year we are giving five years licenses now. The changes—so with private partnership, with private money, we offered the public service, like public transport to the city. This is a big difference. So this is a way of public-private partnership.

Also, how to say, even in construction. We started collaboration with an association of builders, construction. Construction boomed during all these years. It was connected, new construction, offering new public spaces to make things more attractive even for the private investors.

MAKGETLA: How have you introduced any measures to ensure that you can monitor the performance of these private contractors that are providing public services?

AGOLLI: *We have our inspectors. We have a directory now. There is a directory of monitoring and controlling the territory. One sector is focused on the inspectors that control the public transport, frequency, lines, the condition of the buses, everything. So we have our inspectors. We have the right to remove the license if we see that the service is not offered at the level that we are asking.*

MAKGETLA: Have you changed the license or removed the license in any of these cases?

AGOLLI: *One of them. Because you know we are supporting, even now, I am discussing because with all these new buses that we're asking for, sure all of them, there is a really big investment for them. We're offering to be partner with them, to negotiate with the banks, with institutions. We had the meeting with [Indecipherable] Bank and I was talking with the deputy mayor. I was asking and they say we're in the middle, this is public services. We want to offer a good package, a finance package to these operators. We are negotiating with them to support, to have, lower interest and better offers from them. So even being partner with a business, as the municipality gives them, say, better opportunities for their businesses.*

MAKGETLA: You said there was a case where you did take the license back from one of the contractors?

AGOLLI: *It was a case where we take the license back and give to the others but we are supping this because it started from nothing. So there was nothing. We want these services, this operator to be bigger and to raise, they're now big. So some of them work even internationally. They have applied and they have even taken international transport lines. So we want to—our mission is how to force them, to make them bigger, and to offer—not just coming with an inspector, you have not done this, you have not done this and remove this. No license.*

Being in a new business like this, having a lot of investment even for the operator, so they cannot offer bad service because it is risky for them, they can lose their license.

MAKGETLA: Okay, you mentioned the legalization of informal buildings. Can you tell me about that process?

AGOLLI: *Okay yes, this is one of the main problems that we had. We have around 40% of the city area with illegal buildings, mostly around the city, like all the areas around the city coming from all parts of the building over there. The legalization law was approved in 2004 and after that, modified in 2005, that all these buildings should be legalized with some conditions. What we have done is, it's not only a problem of legalization of a building and having a house or an apartment. The problem is to legalize their social—because being in the area like ghettos, without roads, without electricity—because they have built everywhere in this area in spaces that were mostly empty areas—buffer zone of the city—with no infrastructure at all, with no school, with no kindergarten, like dormitories. We thought from the beginning that we would face real problems, social problems in these areas. What we were focusing on was offering basic infrastructure and offering even social infrastructure, schools, kindergarten, playgrounds.*

I remember in 2002, yes, in 2002, a new, first project that we did, not only a single road but an area. All the roads in the area. The mayor wanted to do it, the most peripheral area. Mostly people were coming from north of Albania, and we made a project that we were going to construct all the roads, all of the

infrastructure. We construct a school and there we created—how to say the, not the garden— the area, the empty area in the front of the school.

MAKGETLA: Like a park? No, not a park.

AGOLLI: *The area where the sport facilities and where the children put in the lines. We made mini soccer, mini football fields, but with artificial grass. No artificial grass fields were in Tirana [Indecipherable] we did it there. The high quality with basketball, with artificial grass, the deputy of the member of the parliament of this area was the head of the Democratic Party of Tirana, Willie Minarole [Indecipherable] now, he is ambassador in Greece or—. To imagine how difficult it were. He started to say to the people that this football field was done by Edi Rama and he is going to take you 1000 Leke to play this and we cannot allow it, because it was kind of his area, we will not allow Edi Rama to build a field here and saying to people you should burn.*

I had a problem. I was the General Director of Public Works there. The company that is making the [Indecipherable] okay, please, I have finished the work, come and take it, because I cannot, I'm putting my guards but I don't know, maybe in the middle of the night somebody will come and put a fire to those fields and I will be responsible for it and I should do the work from the beginning. It was crazy, crazy to say that this would be, Edi Rama is going to ask your children 1000 Leke for playing in this. This is a private business of Edi Rama and his staff, just to think so, all lies, it is horrible.

After that, children were playing, children were happy. Nothing happened. They forget about this lie. So you should imagine. We did this in the most peripheral area because our philosophy is if we are not going to integrate those people into the city, it would always be like a disease for all the city. So this is the process now, not just to legalize, but to even have integration. We have invested a lot in these areas.

MAKGETLA: With that integration, what is the strategy? Are you going to do area by area or all of the areas try to do different service levels at a time?

AGOLLI: *Both of these. So we have offered a minimum of infrastructure to all of them. But when we had a big project in a certain area, we did everything: roads, sidewalks, trees, streetlights, new school, and kindergarten. In some cases even to say it, everything. This is where we were totally transformed.*

MAKGETLA: Great, well thank you. This has been a very helpful discussion. Is there anything else you'd like to add? This program is supposed to help people in other countries, in other circumstances learn about how you address some of the challenges that you face to reform, to run a municipality. Is there anything you'd like to add in that context?

AGOLLI: *I was saying that if you believe in something, and if you desire something, everything can happen. Everything can happen. I will give you, you can even have a photo. You can see kind of a roof garden. We have two terraces here, they were empty terraces. People, for smokers. Within three days we transformed them into roof garden with fruits. You know, fruit trees, olive, oranges, apple. I don't know. This is a project taken by some of our staff, one of the specialists from internet. This is an idea. With our enterprises we bought the trees, we put in some benches, and you can see now it is a roof garden. It is for the environment. Our staff is happy. They are happy because they were staying in a roof garden, smoking, five minutes, a cigarette, having fresh air.*

What I was saying in the meeting with the general directors on Friday, so this happened this Friday, was that we were going to make the roof garden and Monday it would be ready. All four of them said "No, it is not possible. You are joking now. Okay. Enough is enough." I said "Okay, you'll see." On Monday it was ready. Me personally, I went, people painting, fixing the things. Okay, if you believe, if you desire something, everything can happen. So that is what I have learned with all these ten years in this municipality.

MAKGETLA: Thank you for sharing that. Can I ask two quick questions? One, what is the name of the place—? [interruption]

AGOLLI: *You can continue with one of our architects and she will provide you with CDs of the presentations or project or even the story of our city. You can have these, there were several presentations, even the difference on how it was before and how it changed.*