

A mother of two young children and climate advocate, Anuela Ristani is the Deputy Mayor of Tirana Albania, for Sustainable Development and International Relations. Prior to joining local government, she established the National Youth Service and opened the first youth centers in Albania's major cities.

# Anuela Ristani

Anuela Ristani describes herself as unapologetic. She will not apologize for disrupting the status quo and building a Tirana that puts children and women first. She stands confidently beside Erion Veliaj, the Mayor of Tirana, in his assertion, "If Tirana was a gender, it would be a woman."

Identifying the city as a woman inspires a vision of a place that caters to all citizens, not just the typical male commuter moving quickly from A to B. It caters to women who have more complex trip patterns that often involve multiple stops on the way to and from work. It caters to caregivers and children who do not fit neatly into a 9-to-5 schedule.

"A feminist transport system is not necessarily about women or gender – it's about human rights. It's about how fairly we treat people. By not designing in a feminist way, you are not just shutting women out, you're excluding the whole of society who do not meet the profile of the average male commuter."

Anuela has made it her personal goal to positively transform walking in the city. As a part of this goal, Tirana has widened sidewalks for strollers and mothers with children, narrowed main streets for cars, removed on-street parking for bike lanes, increased off-peak services, installed on-street lighting, and is building more playgrounds and green spaces so that everyone can experience enjoyment and feel secure on their walk or bike ride home. "I have yet to find one action we have taken that can be labelled as 'feminist'

that hasn't been good for the entire city," she says.

In her own words, Anuela's biggest achievement has been the transformation of the city's central square, a shift from a roundabout centered on cars to one open to people. "It was not a destination; it was a place to get around. The heart was aching. Within minutes of opening up the plaza, you saw how it was populated with kids, women and their babies, bikes. The city was thirsty for a long time and now there is an oasis. Life was given back to people."

Anuela pinpoints social and feminist activist Gloria Steinem as her role model:

"Every day I try to approach life and work with empathy. As Gloria Steinem said, 'It's the most revolutionary form of human emotions.' A feminist transport system should be grounded on empathy and the way we build public services should be founded on it. The bigger your vehicle, the more road space you take, the less empathetic you are. In that sense, empathy as a core human sentiment moves past genders, roles, stereotypes – it's about how we level down to be empathetic with one another and how we can do that in a city which is so diverse and dynamic."

Anuela is proud to work in a city with a women majority in office and is confident that their voices will continue to shape Tirana into a city of radical empathy where no matter an individual's background, age, or ability, they will enjoy an equal right to the city.

DEPUTY MAYOR  
OF TIRANA

ALBANIA

