

Tirana: Colour and Art on the Way to Utopia

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Abstract

"Greening and Painting" was presented by the creator Edi Rama as a political intervention, involving the painting of several façades of the Albanian capital, among other actions in the public space. This innovative *Colour Manifesto* announced the end of the old oppressive times, an affirmation of a new political regime, a change from gray to vibrant colours.

Today, paintings on façades have become a widespread practice all over urban public spaces, giving exposure to many renowned artists, as well as social art and design activist projects, some of which also *aspiring* to promote social change. Thus, the study of this forerunner project, due to its complex process and context, grounded in a visionary ideal of recovery for the city, can not only provide inspiration, but can also generate insights, questions, and improve critical reflection on processes and achievements.

After a bibliographic review, field research and an interview with Edi Rama in 2010, throughout the present paper, we will revisit the three main phases of the city transformation by colours: firstly, by Edi Rama's project creation (2000-2005); secondly, by invited artists from the Architecture Biennial (2003 and 2009); and finally, by municipality architects' drawings. Its imagery and results will be presented and discussed, as well as some consequences on the public space. By doing so, we will analyze, in the author's words, a path to achieve a Utopia: "Tirana: not a place of fate but of choice" (SALA, 2003)

Keywords: Tirana, façade painting, city renewal, social change, aspiration.