



University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty in Bor  
29<sup>th</sup> International Conference Ecological Truth  
& Environmental Research



# EcoTER'22

## Proceedings



*Editor*

*Prof. Dr Snežana Šerbula*

*21-24 June 2022, Hotel Sunce, Sokobanja, Serbia*



University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty in Bor  
29<sup>th</sup> International Conference Ecological Truth  
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**PROCEEDINGS**

**29<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**ECOLOGICAL TRUTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH – EcoTER'22**

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**Publisher:** University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty in Bor

**For the Publisher:** Prof. Dr Nada Štrbac, Dean

**Printed:** GRAFIK CENTAR DOO Beograd, 120 copies

**Year of publication:** 2022

ISBN 978-86-6305-123-2

CIP - Каталогizacija u publikaciji  
Narodna biblioteka Srbije, Beograd

502/504(082)(0.034.2)

574(082)(0.034.2)

**INTERNATIONAL Conference Ecological Truth & Environmental Research (29 ; 2022 ; Sokobanja)**

Proceedings [Elektronski izvor] / 29th International Conference Ecological Truth and Environmental Research - EcoTER'22, 21-24 June 2022, Sokobanja, Serbia ; [organized by University of Belgrade, Technical faculty in Bor (Serbia)] ; [co-organizers University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Technology – Banja Luka (B&H) ... [et al.]] ; editor Snežana Šerbula. - Bor : University of Belgrade, Technical faculty, 2022 (Beograd : Grafik centar). - 1 USB fleš memorija ; 5 x 5 x 1 cm

Sistemski zahtevi: Nisu navedeni. - Nasl. sa naslovne strane dokumenta. - Tiraž 120. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad. - Registar.

ISBN 978-86-6305-123-2

a) Животна средина -- Зборници б) Екологија -- Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 69053705

**29<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
Ecological Truth and Environmental Research 2022**

**is organized by:**

**UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE, TECHNICAL FACULTY IN  
BOR (SERBIA)**

**Co-organizers of the Conference:**

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**The Conference is financially supported by  
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## **PREFACE**

*In today's world, the environment has been endangered by the use of outdated technology, fossil fuels and environmental law violations. Therefore, environmental and many other scientists all over the world have been concerned about finding sustainable technology in resolving these issues. That is why environmental research and ecological truth are at the focus of the 29<sup>th</sup> International Conference Ecological Truth & Environmental Research 2022 (EcoTER'22), which will be held in Sokobanja, Serbia, 21–24 June 2022. On behalf of the Organizing Committee, it is a great honor and pleasure to wish all the participants a warm welcome to the Conference.*

*We hope to convey the message of the conference, which is that a transformation of attitudes and behavior would bring the necessary changes. This is also an opportunity for the participants who are experts in this field to exchange their experiences, expertise and ideas, and also to consider the possibilities for their collaborative research.*

*The 29<sup>th</sup> International Conference Ecological Truth & Environmental Research 2022 is organized by the University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty in Bor, and co-organized by the University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Technology, the University of Montenegro, Faculty of Metallurgy and Technology – Podgorica, the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Metallurgy – Sisak, the University of Pristina, Faculty of Technical Sciences – Kosovska Mitrovica and the Association of Young Researchers, Bor.*

*These proceedings include 85 papers from the authors coming from the universities, research institutes and industries in 6 countries: Bulgaria, Italia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.*

*As a part of this year's conference, the 4<sup>th</sup> Student section – EcoTERS'22 is being held. We appreciate the contribution of the students and their mentors who have also participated in the Conference.*

*Financial assistance provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia is gratefully acknowledged by the Organizing Committee of the EcoTER'22 conference.*

*The support of the Platinum donor and their willingness and ability to cooperate have been of great importance for the success of EcoTER'22. The Organizing Committee would like to extend their appreciation and gratitude to the Platinum donor of the Conference for their donation and support.*

*We appreciate the effort of all the authors who have contributed to these Proceedings. We would also like to express our gratitude to the members of the scientific and organizing committees, reviewers, speakers, chairpersons and all the Conference participants for their support to EcoTER'22. Sincere thanks go to all the people who have contributed to the successful organization of EcoTER'22.*

*Prof. Snežana Šerbula,*

*President of the Organizing Committee*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Plenary Lectures

<b><i>Marija Petrović Mihajlović, M. Antonijević</i></b> PURINES AS GREEN CORROSION INHIBITORS	3
<b><i>Milan Radovanović, M. Antonijević</i></b> ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE CORROSION INHIBITORS: AMINO ACIDS	12
<b><i>Hyusein Yemendzhiev, Y. Mersinkova, R. Koleva, G. Peeva, V. Nenov</i></b> BIO-ELECTROCHEMICAL SYSTEMS – STATE OF THE ART: BIOLOGY, ELECTROCHEMISTRY AND APPLICATION IN WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT	25
<b><i>Aleksandar Marinković</i></b> GREEN ORGANIC CHEMISTRY: A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	32

### Conference Papers

<b><i>Sanja Mrazovac Kurilić, A. Ćirišan, Z. Podražčanin, Lj. Nikolić Bujanović</i></b> SO <sub>2</sub> POLLUTION IN ŠABAC (2009–2020)	39
<b><i>Ana Čučulović, J. Stanojković, R. Čučulović, S. Nestorović, N. Radaković</i></b> THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE MASS CONCENTRATIONS OF K, Th AND U IN THE SOILS OF THE TEKIJIA REGION, THE NP ĐERDAP	43
<b><i>Jovana Bošnjaković, M. Bugarčić, M. Milošević, N. Prlainović, R. Salih, P. Batinić, A. Popović, M. Đolić</i></b> APPLICATION OF NANO- MnO <sub>2</sub> MODIFIED LIGNIN – BASED ADSORBENT FOR REMOVAL OF DICHROMATE IONS AND DICLOFENAC FROM WATER	49
<b><i>Branislava Matić, S. Živković Perišić, D. Jovanović, S. Dejanović, D. Miljuš, L. Kukobat</i></b> MAPPING HEALTH RISKS OF CRITERIA CHEMICAL(S) TO DEMONSTRATE BENEFITS OF RISK ASSESSMENT FOR DECISION- MAKERS	55
<b><i>Violeta Babić, B. Kanjevac, M. Milenković, S. Stajić, M. Vukin, N. Stavretović, M. Račić</i></b> CHARACTERISTICS OF WINTER TEMPERATURE REGIME IN SPRUCE FOREST ON KOPAONIK	62
<b><i>Dragana Pavlović, D. Čakmak, V. Perović, M. Matić, M. Marković, M. Mitrović, P. Pavlović</i></b> ENVIRONMENTAL RISK ASSESSMENT OF PTES IN AGRICULTURAL SOILS AFFECTED BY INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES IN BELGRADE	68
<b><i>Olga Kostić, G. Gajić, S. Jarić, Z. Mataruga, D. Sekulić, N. Radulović, M. Mitrović, P. Pavlović</i></b> ANALYSIS OF As AND Pb ACCUMULATION IN GARDEN SOIL AND VEGETABLE CROPS IN THREE BELGRADE MUNICIPALITIES	75

<b>Marija Ječmenica Dučić, D. Vasić Aničijević, B. Savić, D. Aćimović, M. Simić, D. Maksin, T. Brdarić</b>	NEW STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHLY SELECTIVE MATERIALS FOR CARBON DIOXIDE CAPTURE	81
<b>Miljan Bigović, D. Đurović, I. Nikolić, Lj. Ivanović, B. Bajić</b>	CHARACTERISTIC, SOURCE AND ECOLOGICAL RISK OF PAHs IN AGRICULTURAL SOILS PLJEVLJA MUNICIPALITY (MONTENEGRO)	85
<b>Jelena Vranković, K. Jovičić, V. Đikanović</b>	EFFECT OF DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ON LIPID PEROXIDATION LEVEL IN <i>Rutilus rutilus</i> (ACTINOPTERYGII: CYPRINIDAE)	91
<b>Aurora Bakaj (Čizmja), M. Lika (Čekani)</b>	EVALUATION OF MICROBIAL ENVIRONMENT ON THE BEACH SAND	96
<b>Dragana Randelović, R. Pantović</b>	IMPACT OF THE MINING ACTIVITIES IN THE GOLIJIA NATURE PARK AREAS SITUATED ON THE TERRITORY OF RAŠKA MUNICIPALITY	104
<b>Bojana Tubić, K. Zorić, N. Popović, M. Raković, N. Marinković, M. Paunović</b>	INDICATIVE ECOLOGICAL STATUS ASSESSMENT OF SELECTED STREAMS ON ROGOZNA MOUNTAIN BASED ON AQUATIC MACROINVERTEBRATES	110
<b>Božica Vasiljević, J. Tomović, A. Atanacković, R. Petrović</b>	INDICATIVE ECOLOGICAL STATUS ASSESSMENT BASED ON EPILITHIC DIATOMS OF SMALL RIVERS AT ROGOZNA MOUNTAIN	116
<b>Đuro Čokeša, M. Marković, N. Potkonjak, B. Kaluđerović, S. Radmanović, S. Šerbula</b>	ARSENITE-SOIL HUMIC ACID BINDING BY ISOTHERMAL TITRATION CALORIMETRY: THERMODYNAMICS AND MNIS MODEL	121
<b>Tatjana Anđelković, I. Kostić Kokić, B. Zlatković, D. Anđelković</b>	Cu(II) ACCUMULATION POTENTIAL OF AQUATIC MACROPHYTE <i>PISTIA STRATIOTES</i>	127
<b>Tatjana Anđelković, D. Bogdanović, I. Kostić Kokić, H. Kocić, G. Kocić</b>	PHTHALATES MIGRATION FROM ABSORBABLE SURGICAL SUTURES INTO MODEL SOLUTION	132
<b>Aleksandra Papludis, S. Alagić, S. Milić, I. Zlatanović, M. Filipović, J. Nikolić, V. Stankov Jovanović</b>	THE CONTENT OF DANGEROUS CONTAMINANTS PAHs IN THE SOIL AND ROOTS OF <i>HEDERA HELIX</i> IN SLATINA (BOR'S MUNICIPALITY)	137
<b>Jelena Milosavljević, S. Šerbula, A. Radojević, T. Kalinović, J. Kalinović, B. Spalović</b>	TOXIC METALS BIOACCUMULATION IN <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> FROM ANTHROPOGENICALLY DISRUPTED AREA	142
<b>Mirjana Ocokoljić, Dj. Petrov, N. Galečić, M. Miodrag</b>	ECOLOGICAL AND AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS OF TREES IN "BELGRADE WATERFRONT" PARKING LOTS	149
<b>Mirjana Ocokoljić, Dj. Petrov, A. Tutundžić, D. Skočajić, S. Petrović</b>	STATE, FUNCTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF DENDROFLORA IN THE SCHOOLYARD OF THE MEDICAL SCHOOL IN BELGRADE	154

<b>Mirjana Ocokoljić, Dj. Petrov</b> TRACHYCARPUS FORTUNEI (HOOK.) H. WENDL. IN THE CONDITIONS OF CHANGED TEMPERATE CONTINENTAL CLIMATE IN BELGRADE	159
<b>Marija Perkunić, S. Vukić, Z. Živković, V. Stupar, M. Saulić</b> GREEN OASIS EFFECT ON URBAN ENVIRONMENT	164
<b>Anđela Stojić, D. Tanikić</b> APPLICATION OF GREEN AREAS AND GREEN ROOFS IN URBAN AREAS	169
<b>Gordana Šekularac, T. Ratknić, M. Aksić, N. Gudžić, M. Vranešević, M. Ratknić</b> SOIL EROSION ASSESSMENT USING EPM: A CASE STUDY IN THE CATCHMENT AREA OF THE TURKISH BROOK, WESTERN SERBIA	174
<b>Nataša Knežević, A. Jovanović, R. Salih, Z. Veličković, A. Popović, P. Batinić, A. Marinković, J. Gržetić</b> MODIFIED LIGNIN-BASED MICROSPHERES AS A GREEN SORBENT FOR THE REMOVAL OF CHROMIUM IONS	180
<b>Aleksandar Jovanović, N. Knežević, N. Čutović, M. Đolić, N. Prlainović, Z. Veličković, M. Vuksanović</b> IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY FOR PRODUCTION OF PE AND PP REGRANULATES	186
<b>Jasmina Dedić, M. Mojsić, D. Lazarević, B. Stojčetočić, Ž. Šarkoćević</b> A SHORT REVIEW OF TREPČA MINING WASTE IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENT	190
<b>Senad Čeragić, H. Husić, V. Aganović</b> INFLUENCE OF UNDERGROUND MINING WORKS OF THE OMAZIĆI BROWN COAL MINE BANOVIĆI ON THE SURFACE TERRAIN	195
<b>Snežana Šerbula, J. Milosavljević, T. Kalinović, A. Radojević, J. Kalinović</b> ARSENIC IN PARTICULATE MATTER ORIGINATED FROM MINING- METALLURGICAL PROCESSES	202
<b>Nevena Ristić, M. Veličković, D. Voza</b> THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SHORT-TERM EXPOSURE TO SO <sub>2</sub> AND EMERGENCY ROOM ADMISSIONS IN URBAN AREA. CASE STUDY SERBIA	208
<b>Miljan Marković, M. Gorgievski, N. Štrbac, K. Božinović, V. Grekulović, A. Mitovski, M. Zdravković</b> ADSORPTION ISOTHERMS FOR COPPER IONS BIOSORPTION ONTO WALNUT SHELLS	214
<b>Tanja Kalinović, J. Kalinović, S. Šerbula, J. Milosavljević, A. Radojević</b> DETECTION OF THE TRAFFIC-RELATED POLLUTION BY THE ROADSIDE SOIL AND PLANT MATERIAL	219
<b>Vladan Nedelkovski, S. Stanković, M. Radovanović, M. Antonijević</b> SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERISATION OF Ti/SnO <sub>2</sub> -Sb-TYPE DSA ANODES FOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT	226
<b>Maja Radić, M. Avdagić, B. Marković, K. Ademović, S. Avdagić, S. Avdagić</b> PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES	233
<b>Mihajlo Stanković</b> Annex 2: FAUNA OF MACROCRUSTACEA (INVERTEBRATA- ARTHROPODA) IN PERMANENT AND EPHEMERAL WATERS OF ZASAVICA WETLAND (SPECIAL NATURE RESERVES)	239

<b>Mihajlo Stanković</b>	OVERVIEW OF GALIS FAUNA (DIPTERA, HOMOPTER AND HYMENOPTER) – ZASAVICA RESERVE	246
<b>Vanja Marković, M. Božanić, O. Arapović, V. Gojšina, A. Tatović, K. Stojanović</b>	AQUATIC INSECTS DIVERSITY IN THE PART OF NERETVA RIVER DRAINAGE (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA): PRELIMINARY RESULTS	253
<b>Aleksandar Savić, I. Jelić, M. Šljivić-Ivanović, S. Dimović</b>	RECYCLED CONCRETE AGGREGATE EFFECT ON SELF-COMPACTING CONCRETE AT LOW TEMPERATURES	258
<b>Ivana Bjedov, D. Obratov-Petković, V. Stojanović, M. Nešić, D. Marisavljević</b>	INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES IN SERBIA: LEGISLATION, STRATEGY, AND PLANS	264
<b>Jelena Majstorovic, M. Korac, S. Savkovic</b>	THE EFFECTS OF GEOMECHANICAL RESEARCH “ <i>IN SITU</i> ” ON THE EXPLOITATION CONDITIONS OF THE OPEN PIT BAUXITE MINE “ZAGRAD”	271
<b>Isidora Berezni, T. Marinković, V. Bežanović, M. Živančev, B. Batinić</b>	ANALYSIS OF HOUSEHOLD'S E-WASTE AWARENESS, AND DISPOSAL BEHAVIOR IN NOVI SAD	276
<b>Maja Radić, M. Avdagić, B. Markovic, K. Ademović, S. Avdagić, S. Avdagić</b>	ECOLOGICAL ETHICS AND ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION	284
<b>Vanja Marković, K. Zorić, M. Ilić, S. Đuretanović, M. Smederevac-Lalić</b>	STONE CRAYFISH <i>AUSTROPOTAMOBIVUS TORRENTIUM</i> (Schrank, 1803) IN SOUTH-EASTERN SERBIA: CHILDREN KNOWLEDGE SURVEY	290
<b>Ana Radojević, J. Milosavljević, T. Kalinović, J. Kalinović, S. Šerbula</b>	THE IMPACT OF TEXTILE AND CLOTHES PRODUCTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT – PART I: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	295
<b>Ana Radojević, J. Milosavljević, T. Kalinović, J. Kalinović, S. Šerbula</b>	THE IMPACT OF TEXTILE AND CLOTHES PRODUCTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT – PART II: WHAT CAN WE DO?	301
<b>Giorgia Santini, V. Memoli, L. Santorufo, G. Di Natale, G. Maisto</b>	EFFECTS OF UN-BIODEGRADABLE AND BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC SHEETS ON ABIOTIC SOIL PROPERTIES	307
<b>Milica Rajačić, D. Todorović, J. Krneta Nikolić, I. Vukanac, N. Sarap, M. Janković</b>	RADIONUCLIDE CONTENT IN SAMPLES OF BERRIES	313
<b>Ivana Mikavica, D. Randelović, J. Stojanović, J. Mutić</b>	MICROPLASTIC OCCURRENCE IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN SOILS OF BOR, EASTERN SERBIA	319
<b>Maja Nujkić, V. Stiklić, Ž. Tasić, S. Milić, D. Medić, A. Papludis, I. Đorđević</b>	BIOSORPTION OF METAL IONS FROM SYNTHETIC SOLUTIONS USING DIFFERENT PARTS OF PLANT MATERIAL – A REVIEW	325
<b>Nataša Đorđević, S. Mihajlović</b>	ANALYSIS OF CHANGES OF MECHANICALLY ACTIVATED SODIUM CARBONATE SAMPLE	331
<b>Vanja Trifunović, S. Milić, Lj. Avramović, R. Jonović, S. Đorđievski</b>	ELECTRIC ARC FURNACE DUST – HAZARDOUS INDUSTRIAL WASTE WHOSE TREATMENT IS UNAVOIDABLE	336

<b>Goran Milentijević, T. Marinković, M. Rančić, M. Milošević, I. Đuričković, A. D. Marinković, M. M. Milosavljević</b>	OPTIMIZATION OF ZINC DIMETHYLDITHIOCARBAMATE SYNTHESIS PROCESS (ZIRAM)	343
<b>Miloš Prokopijević, D. Spasojević, O. Prodanović, N. Pantić, D. Bartolić, K. Radotić, R. Prodanović</b>	STABILITY OF SOYBEAN PEROXIDASE IMMOBILIZED ONTO HYDROGEL MICRO-BEADS FROM TYRAMINE-PECTIN	350
<b>Nevena Pantić, M. Spasojević, M. Prokopijević, D. Spasojević, A. M. Balaž, R. Prodanović, O. Prodanović</b>	COVALENT IMMOBILIZATION OF HORSERADISH PEROXIDASE ON NOVEL MACROPOROUS POLY(GMA-CO-EGDMA) FOR PHENOL REMOVAL	354
<b>Dragica Spasojević, M. Prokopijević, O. Prodanović, N. Pantić, M. Stanković, K. Radotić, R. Prodanović</b>	PREPARATION OF CROSSLINKED TYRAMINE-ALGINATE HYDROGEL USING EDC/NHS WITH SELF-IMMOBILIZED HRP	360
<b>Jelena Mitrović, M. Radović Vučić, N. Velinov, S. Najdanović, M. Kostić, M. Petrović, A. Bojić</b>	THE ROLE OF HYDROXYL AND SULFATE RADICALS IN THE UV ACTIVATED PERSULFATE DEGRADATION OF TEXTILE DYE RO16	364
<b>Milica Petrović, T. Jovanović, S. Rančev, M. Radović Vučić, J. Mitrović, S. Najdanović, A. Bojić</b>	ELECTROSYNTHESIZED CERIUM OXIDE CATALYST FOR ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURE PULSATING CORONA PLASMA DEGRADATION OF RB 5	369
<b>Slobodan Najdanović, M. Petrović, M. Kostić, N. Velinov, J. Mitrović, D. Bojić, A. Bojić</b>	PHOTOCATALYTIC DEGRADATION OF RANITIDINE BY BISMUTH OXO CITRATE	375
<b>Ana Simonović, Ž. Tasić, M. Radovanović, M. Petrović Mihajlović, M. Antonijević</b>	CAFFEINE AS A GREEN CORROSION INHIBITOR FOR COPPER IN SYNTHETIC BLOOD PLASMA SOLUTION	381
<b>Dragana Medić, S. Milić, S. Alagić, M. Nujkić, A. Papludis, S. Đordjević, S. Dimitrijević</b>	RECYCLING GOLD FROM WASTE PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARDS	387
<b>Uroš Stamenković, S. Ivanov, I. Marković</b>	CHARACTERIZATION OF CARBON AND LOW-ALLOY STEEL AFTER DIFFERENT HEAT TREATMENTS	393
<b>Violeta Babić, M. Milenković, Z. Govedar, S. Stajić, B. Kanjevac</b>	THE FOREST FIRES IN BULGARIA: THE TRENDS AND THE INFLUENCE OF TELECONNECTIONS	400
<b>Martina Petković, M. Božović, A. Klikovac, D. Knežević</b>	THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRE PROTECTION ON SHIPS	406
<b>Darko Stojićević, Z. Živković, M. Saulić, T. Sekulić, V. Stupar</b>	PESTICIDES – IMPACT ON HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT	413
<b>Zlata Živković, M. Saulić, D. Stojićević, M. Jevtić Đorović, V. Stupar</b>	ORGANIC AGRICULTURE: POTENTIAL OF THE FUTURE	419

<b>Tatjana Anđelković, K. Kitanović, I. Kostić Kokić, B. Zlatković, D. Bogdanović</b> CHANGES IN NITRATE AND NITRITE CONTENT IN FOR LETTUCE, CHARD AND SPINACH AFTER FREEZING	425
<b>Ivana Perović, S. Brković, N. Zdošek, G. Tasić, M. Seović, S. Mitrović, J. Ciganović</b> CAN LASER MODIFICATION OF COATED ELECTRODES IMPROVE THE HYDROGEN EVOLUTION REACTION IN ALKALINE ELECTROLYSERS?	430
<b>Nikola Zdošek, S. Brković, I. Perović, M. Čurčić, S. Dimović, M. Vujković</b> NEW GENERATION OF ELECTROCHEMICAL SUPERCAPACITORS	436
<b>Nebojša Potkonjak, Đ. Čokeša, M. Marković</b> THE HYDROGEN PRODUCTION ON Ni ELECTRODE CO-DEPOSITED WITH $\text{Co}+\text{V}_2\text{O}_5$ : THE ELECTROCALYTIC SYNERGETIC EFFECT	441
<b>Tatjana Ratknić, G. Šekularac, M. Ratknić, Z. Poduška, M. Aksić</b> EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHARACTERISTICS ON THE DIAMETER INCREMENT OF CEDAR IN THE CITY OF BELGRADE (SERBIA)	446
<b>Natalija Čutović, M. Vuksanović, M. Milošević, M. Bugarčić, J. Bošnjaković, J. Gržetić, A. Marinković</b> RECYCLED POLY(ETHYLENE TEREPHTHALATE) BASED- PLASTICIZER FOR PVC REGRANULATES PRODUCTION	452
<b>Robert Vigi, G. Štrbac, D. Štrbac, M. Novaković</b> SYNTHESIS OF NEW Ag DOPED CHALCOGENIDE GLASS FOR APPLICATION IN ENERGY CONVERSION AND MEMORY STORAGE	459
<b>Tatjana Miljojčić, I. Jelić, M. Šljivić-Ivanović, S. Dimović, U. Ramadani</b> SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF CATHODE-RAY TUBE WASTE GLASS IN CEMENTITIOUS MATERIALS – A REVIEW	465
<b>Dejan Riznić, A. Fedajev, A. Jevtić</b> ECOTURISM AS A FORM OF GREEN ECONOMY	471
<b>Vesna Đikanović, J. Vranković, K. Jovičić</b> DIET OF TWO CYPRINID SPECIES, WHITE BREAM (BLICCA BJOERKNA) AND COMMON ROACH (RUTILUS RUTILUS) IN THE DANUBE RIVER, BELGRADE	477
<b>Aleksandra Radić, D. Voza, Đ. Nikolić, M. Vuković</b> ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CLASSIFICATION OF BALKAN COUNTRIES BASED ON TOPSIS-SORT METHODOLOGY	483
<b>Marijana Pantić, T. Maričić, S. Milijić</b> CITIZEN PARTICIPATION OFFERS LESSONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT	489
<b>Tanja Brdarić, D. Aćimović, B. Savić, N. Abazović, M. Čomor, M. Ječmenica Dučić, D. Maksin</b> INVESTIGATION OF $\text{ZrO}_2$ AND $\text{ZrO}_2/\text{TiO}_2$ ELECTRODES BY CYCLIC VOLTAMMETRY	495
<b>Branislava Savić, D. Aćimović, T. Brdarić, M. Ognjanović, D. Vasić Aničijević, M. Ječmenica Dučić, M. Simić</b> TESTING THE ELECTROCHEMICAL BEHAVIOR OF BPA ON GC, $\text{WO}_3$ AND MWCNT ELECTRODES	499
<b>Marijola Božović, M. Petković, S. Marković, B. Stojčetočić</b> DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK	504
<b>Author Index</b>	510

## SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERISATION OF Ti/SnO<sub>2</sub>-Sb-TYPE DSA ANODES FOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT

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### Abstract

*In this paper, two Ti/SnO<sub>2</sub>-Sb-type anodes were synthesised via thermal decomposition method, one of which was doped with Mn and Cr in order to achieve increased number of active sites and prolonged service life of said anodes. Six layers of precursor solution were applied on the titanium substrate before the final step of calcination at 550 °C. The characterisation of synthesised anodes comprised of different electrochemical techniques: measurement of oxygen evolution potential (OER), cyclic voltammetry (CV), electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS) and accelerated lifetime test (ALT). Higher oxygen overpotential, electrocatalytic specific area and service life were achieved with non-doped anode, while possible formation of nonconducting passivating layer and insufficient oxide layer compactness may have caused short service life of doped DSA anode. In comparison with other commercial DSA anodes, synthesised anodes are required to have longer service life for their potential application in industrial processing plants.*

**Keywords:** DSA anodes, electrochemical oxidation, wastewater treatment, thermochemical decomposition

### INTRODUCTION

In electrochemical oxidation (EO)—a promising alternative for wastewater treatment, the oxidation of toxic, recalcitrant and bio-refractory pollutants can be achieved through direct electron transfer or indirect mediated oxidation in the bulk solution. Ti/SnO<sub>2</sub>-Sb-type anodes as the most studied non-active anodes, represent the low cost and high overpotential anodes for the oxygen evolution reaction in which •OH radicals are generated [1]. However, amount of •OH radicals responsible for oxidation of toxic compounds is dependant upon the number of active sites on DSA anodes which is further affected by oxide layer composition and structure [2]. Ti/SnO<sub>2</sub>-Sb-type anodes have proven as very efficient in electrochemical oxidation of highly toxic organic pollutants as p-chlorophenol, acid orange and perfluorooctanic acid [3–5]. Doping SnO<sub>2</sub> oxide layer with antimony, enhanced dielectric properties by forming essential oxygen vacancies [6,7]. Positive effect of Mn doping on DSA service life was reported by Li *et al.* [2] and Massa *et al.* [8], while positive effect of Cr doping on crystallinity and grain size of oxide layer was previously researched by Shao *et al.* [9].

## EXPERIMENTAL

Titanium substrate (3.9 cm×1 cm×0.01 cm) was polished (grits 150 and 1500) in order to remove oxide layer and other surface impurities, washed by distilled water and degreased in ethanol for 10 minutes. Further, metallic substrate was etched in 10% oxalic acid for 60 minutes at 85°C. Substrate was additionally washed by distilled water and dried at 105°C.

Precursor solutions were prepared by dissolving SnCl<sub>4</sub>·5H<sub>2</sub>O and Sb<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in 25 ml ethanol with addition of 2 ml conc. HCl. In one of those solutions, CrCl<sub>3</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O and MnCl<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O were additionally added. The composition of precursor solutions is shown in Table 1.

*Table 1 Composition of precursor solutions*

Component	Mass (g)	
	Precursor 1	Precursor 2
SnCl <sub>4</sub> ·5H <sub>2</sub> O	5.6413	5.6413
Sb <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	0.2186	0.2186
CrCl <sub>3</sub> ·6H <sub>2</sub> O	0.2665	/
MnCl <sub>2</sub> ·4H <sub>2</sub> O	0.2118	/

Prepared precursor solutions were then applied by brush until titanium substrate surface was fully covered. Substrate was dried at 105°C for 5 minutes, and heated in furnace at 550°C for 5 minutes. This process was repeated 5 times with the final layer being calcined at 550°C for 1 hour. Substrate mass was measured throughout the whole process in order to determine the oxide loading, which is shown in Table 2.

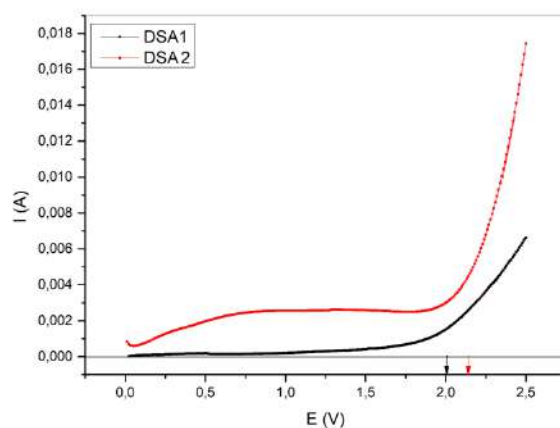
*Table 2 Substrate mass throughout preparation and oxide loading of synthesised anodes*

Anode	Substrate mass (g)			Mass DSA (g)	Oxide layer mass (g)	Oxide loading (mg/cm <sup>2</sup> )
	Initial	After polishing	After etching			
DSA1	1.4713	1.4520	1.4040	1.4144	0.0104	1.23
DSA2	1.5160	1.4893	1.4140	1.4865	0.0725	7.97

For electrochemical testing of synthesised anodes, potentiostat (IVIUM XRE, IVIUM Technologies) was used, with the appropriate software. The surface redox behaviour of the coatings was characterized in 0.25 M aqueous Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> solution by cyclic voltammetry at 20 mV/s, 50 mV/s and 100 mV/s, with the electrode potential being scanned between 0 and 1 V. The oxygen evolution reaction (OER) was studied via linear voltammetry under potentiostatic control in the same electrolyte between 0.5 and 2.5 V. Applied scan rate was 10 mV/s. EIS measurements were conducted in same solution in the frequency range of 100 kHz–1 Hz. ALT test was conducted in 0.5M H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, at constant current density of 500 mA/cm<sup>2</sup>, until potential of 10 V was reached. All measurements were conducted at room temperature in naturally aerated solutions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

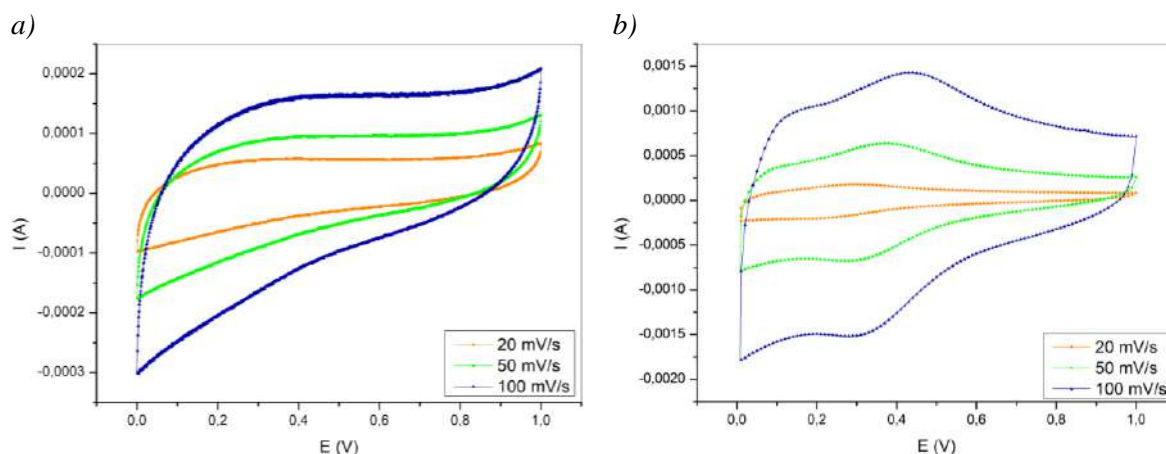
OER potential values for DSA1 and DSA2, as a direct indicator of electrocatalytic activity of DSA anodes [10], were determined at the intersection point of the tangent and the horizontal line at 0 V potential shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Linear sweep voltammetry (LSV) of synthesized DSA anodes in 0.25 M  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$

Higher oxygen evolution potential (OEP) values are related to high electrocatalytic activity and better performance of anodes in electrochemical oxidation of recalcitrant organic compounds in water. Lower OEP values indicate shorter service life due to passivation of substrate and degradation of oxide layer; which would lead to higher consumption of electric energy in electrochemical oxidation [11]. OEP for DSA2 was estimated to be 2.14 V, while for DSA1 OEP was 2.01 V, which indicates that non-doped DSA2 anode has better catalytic properties. It is assumed that lower crystallinity, lower number of active sites and specific crystal structure could be the cause of lower OEP of DSA1 [12]. However, according to the estimated OEP values are considered to be relatively high and would indicate that synthesised anodes could be used for the processes of electrochemical oxidation [13].

Cyclic voltammetry curves shown in Figure 2, were obtained in potential range from 0 V to 1 V, considered to be optimal for determination of capacitivity in aqueous solutions.



**Figure 2** Cyclic voltammetry curves for a) DSA1 and b) DSA2 anodes at different scan rates

According to the CV plots shown in Figure 2, the decrease of cathodic current at potentials lower than 0.1 V indicates the reduction of SnO<sub>2</sub> might occur which could further cause degradation of oxide layer [14]. Voltammetric profiles indicate that capacitance rises with the increase in scan rate, and that higher capacitance is observed for DSA2 anode [15]. No noticeable redox peaks were observed. However, the increase of current at potentials higher than 1.7 V due to intensified oxygen evolution. According to this phenomenon, synthesised anodes are considered non-active anodes [14]. Current peaks noticed at CV curves shown in Figure 2 b), are considered to be due to adsorption (0.4–0.45 V) and desorption (0.35 V) of sulfate ions on the surface of anode [16].

In order for roughness factor ( $R_f$ ) and voltammetric charge ( $q^*$ ) to be determined and for additional investigation of catalytic activity, specific capacitance ( $C_m$ ) of synthesised anodes was calculated using the following equation [15]:

$$C_m = \frac{Q}{2 \cdot \Delta V \cdot m} \text{ (F/g)} \quad (1)$$

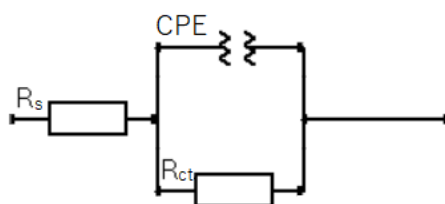
Here  $Q$  represents voltammetric charge (C)—obtained by integrating the area of voltammetric profiles,  $\Delta V$  is the potential range in which the curves are positioned and  $m$  is oxide layer mass.  $R_f$  of examined anodes was determined by dividing their calculated capacitance (given in mF/cm<sup>2</sup>) with the capacitance of rutile type TiO<sub>2</sub> (approximately 60 μF/cm<sup>2</sup>). The calculated parameters are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3** Oxide layer capacitance, roughness factor and voltammetric charge of synthesised DSA anodes

Anode	Oxide loading (g)	Scan rate (mV/s)	$C_m$ (F/g)	$C$ (mF/cm <sup>2</sup> )	$R_f$	$q^*$ (mC/cm <sup>2</sup> )
DSA1	0.01	20	0.1999	0.2368	3.95	0.47
		50	0.1321	0.1565	2.61	0.31
		100	0.1160	0.1374	2.29	0.27
DSA2	0.07	20	0.0700	0.5584	9.31	1.12
		50	0.1065	0.8488	14.15	1.70
		100	0.1332	1.0624	17.71	2.12

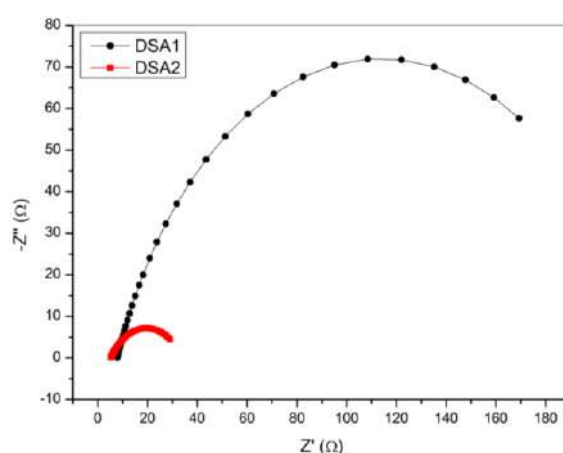
Considering the results shown in Table 3, it can be concluded that DSA1 has less active sites on the oxide layer surface, and therefore being less effective than DSA2 anode in terms of electrocatalytic activity [17]. Main cause of larger electrocatalytic active area of DSA2 might be the formation of larger number of smaller-sized crystals [18].

EIS measurements were conducted according to the determined OEP values of synthesised anodes, at which the most dominant process is oxygen evolution. Fitting results were obtained via proposed equivalent circuit model shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3** Equivalent circuit model used for fitting EIS data

In Figure 3, Randles' circuit model is composed of  $R_s$ -resistance of electrolyte solution,  $R_{ct}$ -charge transfer resistance during OER, and CPE which is a constant phase element that is usually used instead of a double layer capacitance to account for the non-ideal capacitive response of the interface [19]. Nyquist plots for examined anodes are shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4** Nyquist plots for DSA1 and DSA2

Specific shape of curves shown in Figure 4, is distinctive for anodes with pronounced roughness, synthesised by thermal decomposition method. The size of half-circle shaped curve is related to the charge transfer resistance, which further shows that better catalytic properties are observed for DSA2 anode [12]. Parameters of equivalent circuit were further determined, and are given in Table 4.

**Table 4** Equivalent circuit parameters

Anode	$R_s$ ( $\Omega$ )	$R_{ct}$ ( $\Omega$ )	CPE	
			$Q_{dl}$	$n$
DSA1	7.89	$2.12 \cdot 10^2$	$4.79 \cdot 10^{-5}$	0.76
DSA2	5.18	28.8	$5.76 \cdot 10^{-5}$	0.58

It is assumed that higher charge transfer resistance reported for DSA1 anode, might be due to formation of low-conducting  $TiO_2$  during the synthesis procedure or prolonged contact with electrolyte solution [20]. Relatively low  $n$  values for DSA1 and DSA2 indicate the existence highly porous and rough oxide layer surface [17]. Finally, ALT test was conducted to estimate real service life. In EO processes, it is desired for anode to have long service life

[20]. ALT test was conducted until potential of 10 V was reached, at which anodes were presumed to be deactivated. ALT test results are shown in Table 5.

*Table 5 ALT test results*

Anode	Service life (h)	Real service life (h) – at 100 mA/cm <sup>2</sup>	Real service life (h) – at 10 mA/cm <sup>2</sup>
DSA1	0.01	0.23	2.3
DSA2	0.64	16.1	161

Obtained ALT test results indicate that DSA2 anode has significantly longer real service life, while the low service life of DSA1 anode is considered to be the cause of formation of TiO<sub>2</sub> layer and degradation of oxide layer [21].

## CONCLUSION

Linear potentiodynamic measurements confirmed that both DSA1 and DSA2 have relatively high OEP, further proving that the synthesised anodes have electrocatalytic properties. These anodes are considered to be a non-active DSA anode type, due to lack of redox peaks on cyclic voltammograms. Better catalytic properties were confirmed for non-doped DSA2 anode in terms of higher values of OEP, capacitance, voltametric charge and roughness factor. This indicates that intensified hydroxyl radical formation would lead to more effective electrochemical oxidation of organic compounds. Relatively fast deactivation of DSA1 is considered to be due to passivation of substrate and erosion of oxide layer.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*The authors would like to acknowledge financial support from Ministry of Education, Science and Technological development of the Republic of Serbia (Agreement No 451-03-68/2022-14/200131).*

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ISBN 978-86-6305-123-2