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Technical Faculty in Bor

EcoTEK

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Ecological Truth & Environmental Research

Editor

Prof. Dr Snežana Šerbula

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PREFACE

The 31st international conference Ecological Truth & Environmental Research – EcoTER'24 focuses on showing the latest research findings and innovations in the field of ecology, environmental protection and sustainable development. The conference will be held in Sokobanja (Serbia) in hotel Sunce in the period of 18–21 June 2024.

The aim of the conference is to connect the experts in various fields in order to transform attitudes and behaviors in everyday practices, as well as in the industry and economy sector which is essential for achieving the desired changes that our society must undergo.

The 31st international conference Ecological Truth & Environmental Research – EcoTER'24 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 Society of Young Researchers – Bor.

These Proceedings encompass 119 papers from the authors coming from the universities, research institutes and industries in 15 countries: Brazil, Norway, USA, Spain, Austria, Libya, Italy, Israel, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia. It is a great honor and pleasure to cordially wish a warm welcome to all the participants of the conference.

As a part of this year's conference, the 6th Student Section – EcoTERS'24 will be held. We appreciate the contribution of the students and their mentors who have also participated in the conference and hope that students will continue to explore and to be curious, since education is a never-ending process, and knowledge is continuously growing.

The organization of the EcoTER'24 conference has been financially supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

The support of the Donors and their willingness and ability to cooperate has been of great importance for the success of the EcoTER'24 conference. The organizing committee would like to extend their appreciation and gratitude to the Platinum donors of the conference – Serbia ZiJin Copper doo Bor and HBIS SERBIA, to the Gold donor of the conference – Elixir Group, as well as to the Silver donor of the conference – Serbian Chamber of Engineers.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the authors who have contributed to the Proceedings. We would also like to express our gratitude to the members of the scientific, organizing and honorary committees, reviewers, speakers, chairpersons and all the conference participants for their support of the EcoTER'24. Sincere thanks go to all the people who have contributed to the successful organization of the EcoTER'24.

Prof. Snežana Šerbula,

President of the scientific and organizing committee



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Plenary Lectures

Branko Bugarski

ELECTROSTATIC DISPERSION OF POLYMER SOLUTIONS IN THE PRODUCTION OF MICROGEL BEADS CONTAINING BIOCATALYST 1

Anupama Ghosh, M. R. Del Grande, L. T. Teixeira, S. Letichevsky, C. A. Senna, M. D. Carbajal Ccoyllo, J. F. Chaves e Silva, V. C. Gois de Oliveira, R. N. Correia de Siqueira

HEAT TREATMENT OF IRON-ADSORBED FUNCTIONALIZED NANOCELLULOSE FIBERS IN ORDER TO SYNTHESIZE HYBRID INORGANIC-CARBON MATERIAL 8

Alena Bartonova

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: WHY IS EUROPE'S AIR (MOSTLY) SO CLEAN? 14

Invited Lectures

Nevenka Rajić, J. Pavlović

APPLICATION OF NATURAL ZEOLITE – CLINOPTILOLITE IN WATER TREATMENT BY ADSORPTION AND PHOTOCATALYSIS 17

Dušan Nikolić, A. Tasić

THE EUROPEAN PERCH (*Perca fluviatilis*) AS AN INDICATOR OF OCPs POLLUTION IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF RESERVOIRS IN SERBIA 24

Jelena Korać Jačić, M. R. Milenković, D. Bartolić

DEGRADATION OF TETRACYCLINE ANTIBIOTICS IN AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT BY UV IRRADIATION AND FERRIC ION PHOTOLYSIS 30

Conference Papers

Environmental monitoring and impact assessment

Aleksandra Papludis, S. Alagić, S. Milić, J. Nikolić, I. Zlatanović, S. Jevtović, V. Stankov Jovanović

NAPHTALENE SCREENING IN BOR'S MUNICIPALITY BASED ON ITS CONCENTRATIONS IN LEAVES AND STEMS OF *Hedera helix* L. 38

Darko Anđelković, M. Branković

APPLE PEEL AS A BARRIER TO PESTICIDES MIGRATION INTO DEEPER FRUIT PARTS 43

Darko Anđelković, M. Branković PERFORMANCES OF QuEChERS BASED GC-MS AND LC-MS/MS METHODS FOR PESTICIDES ANALYSIS IN APPLES	49
Darko Anđelković, M. Branković COMPARISON OF PESTICIDES STABILITY STORED IN TWO SOLVENTS OF DIFFERENT VISCOSITY	55
Milena Tadić, I. Nikolić, D. Đurović, N. Cupara, J. Vuković TRIHALOMETHANES CONTENT IN HOTEL'S SWIMMING POOLS WATER IN A SOUTH OF MONTENEGRO	61
Jelena Vranković, K. Jovičić, V. Đikanović FIRST LINE DEFENCE ANTIOXIDANT ENZYMES IN <i>Blicca bjoerkna</i> (LINNAEUS, 1758) FROM THE BELGRADE SECTION OF THE DANUBE RIVER	66
Miomir Mikić, R. Marković, V. Marjanović, R. Rajković, M. Jovanović RECUltIVATION OF RTH FLOTATION TAILINGS IN BOR, SERBIA	71
Miomir Mikić, V. Marjanović, R. Marković, M. Jovanović, R. Rajković MINING AND THE ENVIRONMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT MONITORING PROGRAM FOR FLOTATION TAILING RTH-BOR, SERBIA	77
Vesna Obradović, M. Perović, T. Vučković EVALUATING CORROSION AND BIOFOULING POTENTIAL BASED ON GROUNDWATER MICROBIOLOGICAL COMPOSITION	83
Vesna Obradović, M. Perović, J. Lekić EVALUATION OF CORROSION POTENTIAL USING PHYSICO-CHEMICAL WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT	89
Jelena Čanak Atlagić, A. Marić, K. Jovičić, J. Stanković, V. Đikanović, T. Mitić, M. Raković QUESTIONING THE RESILIENCE OF THE DANUBE FISH FAUNA UNDER THE PRESSURE OF BELGRADE WASTEWATERS	95
Vladan Marinković, M. Maksimović, M. Jovanović, S. Trujić MONITORING OF THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE BOR DISTRICT, GIVEN THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF Pb IN THE SOIL LOCATED IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE BOR RIVER	101
Mirjana Ocokoljić, Dj. Petrov, N. Galečić, D. Skočajić, D. Vujičić, J. Čukanović, I. Simović EFFECTIVENESS OF <i>Photinia × Fraseri</i> 'RED ROBIN' IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE: TOWARDS OF CLIMATE CHANGE	106
Mirjana Ocokoljić, Dj. Petrov, N. Galečić, D. Skočajić, D. Vujičić, J. Čukanović, I. Simović <i>Chaenomeles japonica</i> (Thunb.) Lindl. ex Spach IN THE DESIGN OF URBAN PARKS: LEARNING FROM NATURE	113

Mirjana Ocokoljić, J. Čukanović, Dj. Petrov, N. Galečić, D. Skočajić, D. Vujičić, I. Simović <i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i> L.: PHENOMONITORING IN BLUE-GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OF BELGRADE AND NOVI SAD	119
Bojana Tubić, J. Đuknić, K. Zorić, N. Popović, N. Marinković, M. Paunović, M. Raković EFFECTS OF THE IRON GATE DAMS ON THE BENTHIC MACROINVERTEBRATE COMMUNITY	126
Danica Bogdanović, T. Anđelković, I. Kostić Kokić, M. Milovanović GC-MS QUANTITATIVE DETERMINATION OF PHTHALATES IN PVC ARTICLES INTENDED FOR CHILDREN'S USE	132
Danica Bogdanović, T. Anđelković, I. Kostić Kokić, M. Milovanović OPTIMIZATION OF LIQUID-LIQUID PHTHALATES EXTRACTION FROM ARTIFICIAL SALIVA	138
Danica Bogdanović, T. Anđelković, I. Kostić Kokić, M. Milovanović MIGRATION OF DI-2-ETHYLHEXYL PHTHALATE AND DI-N-OCTYL PHTHALATE FROM PVC ARTICLES TO ARTIFICIAL SALIVA	144
Daliborka Stanković, D. Z. Rajković, M. Raković, S. Skorić HAEMOSPORIDIAN PARASITES IN LONG-EARED OWLS WINTERING IN BANAT, SERBIA	150
Nenad Zarić, I. Hotea, A. Lato, M. Zarić, F. Crista UNVEILING PESTICIDE CONTAMINATION IN TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS: A CASE STUDY OF SERBIA AND ROMANIA	156
Nenad Zarić, F. Crista, A. Berbecea, I. Hotea, L. Crista, M. Zarić COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN AGRICULTURAL SOILS OF SERBIA AND ROMANIA	160
Milica Veličković, D. Voza THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PM ₁₀ AND METEOROLOGICAL PARAMETERS CLOSE TO THE MINING AREA	164
Biljana Budzakoska Gjoreska, S. Trajanovski MACROZOOBENTHOS COMMUNITY AND ECOLOGICAL STATUS IN PRESVA LAKE (OTESHEVO, STENJE AND EZERANI) IN SPRING 2022	169
Suzana Patcheva, J. Leshoski, E. Veljanoska Sarafiloska PHYTOPLANKTON COMMUNITY AS BIOINDICATOR OF WATER TROPHIC STATE IN LAKE PRESVA	176
Boris Novaković, M. Raković EARLY, LATE AND OUT-BREEDING SEASON BIRD SINGING – EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE?	183
Boris Novaković, M. Raković THE USE OF HOA (HEMIPTERA-ORTHOPTERA-AVES) INDICATORS TO FORMULATE THE SERBIAN CLIMATE CHANGE INDEX (S _{CCI})	189

<i>Ana Marić, V. Nikolić, D. Škraba Jurlina, V. Sokolović, D. Miličić, T. Karan Žnidaršič, T. Kanjuh, P. Simonović</i>	ASSESSMENT OF NON-NATIVE SPECIES IMPACT ON FISH DIVERSITY IN THE ČELIJE RESERVOIR: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT	194
<i>Ivana Jelić, A. Savić, T. Miljojčić, M. Rajković, M. Janković, N. Sarap, S. Dimović, M. Čurčić, V. Stanić, D. Antonijević, M. Šljivić-Ivanović</i>	THE IMPACTS OF WASTE MATERIALS UTILIZATION IN LIQUID RADIOACTIVE WASTE SOLIDIFICATION BY MORTAR MATRIX	200
<i>Stefan Đorđievski, M. Đukić, A. Petrović, D. Adamović, J. Petrović, Lj. Lekić</i>	INSIGHTS FROM THE DAILY MONITORING OF WATER QUALITY PARAMETERS IN CEROVO RIVER NEAR BOR CITY IN OCTOBER 2023	206
<i>Nataša Kojadinović, S. Đuretanović, A. Milošković, M. Radenković, M. Jakovljević, T. Veličković, M. Nikolić, V. Simić</i>	FISH DIVERSITY ASSESSMENT OF THE IBAR RIVER: A 20-YEAR PERSPECTIVE	212
<i>Milanka Negovanović, L. Kričak, S. Milanović, N. Simić, J. Majstorović</i>	APPLICATION OF EXPANSIVE MORTARS FOR THE FORMATION OF ARTIFICIAL SCREENS DURING BLASTING IN URBAN AREAS	216
<i>Snežana Šerbula, T. Kalinović, A. Radojević, J. Kalinović, J. Jordanović</i>	AIR POLLUTION IN THE BOR REGION FROM 1994 TO 2023	225
<i>Irena Blagajac, I. Samardžić</i>	CAUSES OF FLOODING AND MEASURES TO MITIGATE THE CONSEQUENCES – CASE STUDY OF RAKOVICA MUNICIPALITY (BELGRADE, SERBIA)	231
Urban and industrial ecology		
<i>Žarko Radović, N. Tadić</i>	SIMULATION OF THE EAF DUST RECYCLING	240
<i>Mirko Gojić, S. Kožuh, I. Ivanić, D. Dumenčić</i>	DEVELOPMENT OF METALLURGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA IN THE PERIOD FROM 1900 TO 2020	246
Air, water and soil pollution, prevention and control		
<i>Viša Tasić, T. Apostolovski-Trujić, V. Kamenović, B. Radović, I. Zlatković, N. Ristić, Z. Damnjanović</i>	APPLICATION OF LOW-COST NETWORK FOR URBAN MICROCLIMATE AND AIR QUALITY MONITORING	251

<i>Nebojša Tadić, Ž. Radović, A. Knežević</i>	ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF NATURAL GAS COMPOSITION AND EXCESS AIR COEFFICIENT ON COMBUSTION PRODUCTS	258
<i>Aleksandar Jovanović, N. Knežević, M. Bugarčić, J. Petrović, M. Sokić, M. Stevanović, A. Marinković</i>	INVESTIGATION OF MULTI-CYCLE USAGE OF NANOPHOTOCATALYSTS IN DEGRADATION OF THIOPHANATE-METHYL	265
<i>Vesna Obradović, M. Perović, P. Pajić</i>	PHYSICO-CHEMICAL AND MICROBIAL ANALYSIS IN SELECTED GROUNDWATER IN SERBIA	270
<i>Silvia Dimova, K. Zaharieva, O. Dimitrov, P. D. Petrov, H. Penchev</i>	METHATHESIS SYNTHESIZED OLIGOMERIC POLYPHENYLACETYLENE AS STERIC STABILIZER OF CARBON NANOTUBES/PLANT EXTRACT SYNTHESIZED ZINC OXIDE HYBRIDS	276
<i>Miljan Marković, M. Gorgievski, N. Štrbac, V. Grekulović, M. Marković, K. Božinović, D. Jovanović</i>	EQUILIBRIUM ANALYSIS OF COPPER IONS BIOSORPTION ONTO HAZELNUT SHELLS	282
<i>Vesna M. Marjanović, R. Marković, D. Božić</i>	CALCULATION OF CALCIUM OXIDE CONSUMPTION IN THE MINE WASTEWATER TREATMENT FROM INACTIVE OPEN PITS OF THE COPPER MINE	287
<i>Marina Marković, M. Gorgievski, N. Štrbac, V. Grekulović, M. Marković, M. Zdravković, D. Jovanović</i>	THERMODYNAMIC ANALYSIS AND INFLUENCE OF THE pH VALUE ON THE BIOSORPTION OF COPPER IONS ONTO HAZELNUT SHELLS	294
<i>Jelena Korać Jačić, D. Bartolić, M.R. Milenković</i>	THE IMPACT OF FERROUS AND FERRIC IONS ON DEGRADATION OF ANTIHYPERTENSIVE DRUG DIHYDRALAZINE IN IRON-BASED FLOCCULATION AND COAGULATION METHODS FOR WASTE WATER TREATMENT	299
<i>Berina Sejdinović</i>	OILY WASTEWATER	305
<i>Vesela Radović, S. Krnjajić, S. Stanković, V. Tomić, G. Knežević</i>	ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS CAUSED BY THE POLLUTION FROM AGRICULTURAL PLASTICS – A BRIEF STATE OF ART	311
<i>Marija Koprivica, J. Dimitrijević, J. Petrović, M. Ercegović, M. Simić</i>	COMPARISON BETWEEN HYDROCHAR AND ITS ALKALI MODIFIED FORM IN THE REMOVAL OF Cd(II) IONS FROM AQUEOUS SOLUTION	317

<i>Milena Pijović Radovanović, M. Seović, I. Perović, N. Zdolšek, J. Georgijević, P. Laušević, S. Brković</i>	EFFICIENT REMOVAL OF RHODAMINE B FROM AQUEOUS SOLUTIONS USING CARBONIZED WASTE CAR TIRES: CHARACTERIZATION AND ADSORPTION STUDIES	323
<i>Svetlana Butulija, J. Maletaškić, B. Todorović, G. Branković, A. Krstić, R. Mihailović, B. Matović</i>	SYNTHESIS, CHARACTERIZATION AND ADSORPTION POTENTIAL OF CORN COB-DERIVED ACTIVATED CARBON	329
<i>Vladan Nedelkovski, S. Stanković, D. Medić, D. Buzdugan, I. Hulka, S. Milić, M. Radovanović</i>	PHOTOCATALYTIC PROPERTIES OF C-ZnO NANOPARTICLES SYNTHESIZED <i>via</i> MECHANOCHEMICAL METHOD	335
<i>Aleksandar Zdravković, M. Nikolić, D. Marković Nikolić, D. Stojadinović, G. Petković, T. Nikolić</i>	EQUILIBRIUM AND THERMODYNAMICS OF NITRATE SORPTION BY MODIFIED ZEOLITE FROM AQUEOUS SOLUTION	341
<i>Aleksandar Zdravković, M. Nikolić, D. Marković Nikolić, D. Stojadinović, I. Ristić, T. Nikolić</i>	POTENTIAL USAGE OF OAT STRAW FOR ANIONS REMOVAL FROM WATER: A KINETIC STUDY	348
<i>Aleksandar Zdravković, M. Nikolić, A. Pavlović, D. Marković Nikolić, G. Petković, T. Nikolić</i>	ULTRASOUND-ASSISTED EXTRACTION OF ACETAMIPRID FROM POLLUTED SOIL	354
<i>Katerina Zaharieva, B. Barbov</i>	PLANT-MEDIATED SYNTHESIS AND PHOTOCATALYTIC INVESTIGATIONS OF CeO ₂ -ZnO COMPOSITES	358
<i>Milena Milošević, M. Abdualatif Abduarahman, M. M. Vuksanović, Z. Veličković, N. Knežević, B. Najdanović, A. Marinković</i>	CELLULOSE BASED MEMBRANE FOR CATIONIC POLLUTANTS REMOVAL FROM WATER	363
<i>Milena Milošević, A. Marinković, M. M. Vuksanović, Z. Veličković, I. Đuričković, B. Najdanović, N. Knežević</i>	HEMP MODIFIED WITH BETAINE AS A GREEN AND EFFICIENT ADSORBENT FOR REMOVAL OF ANIONIC DYES FROM WATER	369
<i>Nevena Surudžić, M. Spasojević, M. Crnoglavac Popović, M. Stanišić, R. Prodanović, O. Prodanović</i>	PHENOL REMOVAL FROM WASTEWATER WITH HORSERADISH PEROXIDASE IMMOBILIZED BY PERIODATE METHOD ONTO NOVEL MACROPOROUS POLY(GMA-CO-EGDMA) CARRIERS	375

<i>Miljana Radović Vučić, N. Velinov, J. Mitrović, S. Najdanović, M. Petrović, M. Kostić, A. Bojić</i>	MODIFIED ACTIVATED WOOD SAWDUST AS GREEN ENVIRONMENTAL-FRIENDLY CATALYST FOR TREATMENT OF PHARMACEUTICAL EFFLUENT	381
<i>Jelena Mitrović, M. Radović Vučić, N. Velinov, S. Najdanović, M. Kostić, M. Petrović, A. Bojić</i>	ADVANCE OXIDATION OF TEXTILE DYE BY ACTIVATED HYDROGEN PEROXIDE WITH UV-C LIGHT	387
Protection and preservation of natural resources		
<i>Gordana Šekularac, M. Aksić, T. Dimitrijević, M. Ratknić, N. Gudžić</i>	QUANTIFYING SOIL EROSION OF THE TOM'S BROOK CATCHMENT (WESTERN SERBIA)	393
<i>Gordana Šekularac, M. Aksić, T. Dimitrijević, S. Gudžić, N. Gudžić, D. Gračak, M. Grčak, M. Ratknić</i>	EFFECT OF IRRIGATION RATE ON THE ONSET INTENSITY OF GREY MOULD AND LATE BLIGHT IN GREEN HOUSE TOMATOES	399
<i>Tatjana Dimitrijević, M. Ratknić, G. Šekularac, M. Aksić</i>	INFLUENCE OF SOIL TYPE ON MEAN TREE HEIGHTS OF FIR TREES IN A 40-YEAR PROVENANCE TRIAL	406
<i>Dragana Božić, Lj. Avramović, V. Trifunović, R. Marković, Z. Stevanović, V. Marjanović, E. Požega</i>	AGITATION LEACHING OF FLOTATION TAILINGS AT THE PILOT PLANT	412
<i>Ivana Kerkez Janković, D. Vilić, M. Nonić, J. Devetaković, M. Šijačić-Nikolić</i>	FOREST FRUIT SPECIES OF URBAN FOREST "KOŠUTNJAK" (SERBIA) – GENEPOOL ASSESSMENT AND CONSERVATION	418
<i>Boris Novaković, N. Paskaš, M. Raković</i>	NEW DATA ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF AQUATIC BEETLES IN SERBIA	424
<i>Matej Fike, M. Pezdevšek, A. Roger</i>	COMPARING FROST PROTECTION STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN SLOVENIA	430
<i>Filip Maksimović, M. Nonić, D. Vilotić, I. Kerkez Janković, M. Šijačić-Nikolić</i>	GENE POOL OF FOREST FRUIT TREES IN THE PROTECTED AREA OF THE NATURAL MONUMENT "KOŠUTNJAK FOREST" – THEN AND NOW	435
<i>Dragana Medić, S. Milić, N. Milošević, M. Nujkić, M. Pešić, V. Nedelkovski, S. Stanković</i>	APPLICATION OF THE SHRINKING CORE MODEL IN THE LEACHING PROCESS OF LiNiMnCoO_2	441

Ecotoxicology and environmental safety

Branko Matovic, J. Maletaskic, S. Butulija, S. Petrovic, B. Todorovic	
IMMOBILIZATION OF LEAD USING CERIA CRYSTAL STRUCTURE	448
Dragana Medić, S. Milić, N. Milošević, M. Nujkić, S. Alagić, A. Cvetković, A. Papludis	
CAUSES AND POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THERMAL RUNAWAY IN LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES	454
Nena Velinov, M. Radović Vučić, J. Mitrović, M. Petrović, S. Najdanović, D. Bojić, A. Bojić	
KINETIC AND EQUILIBRIUM STUDIES OF CHROMIUM SORPTION USING ULTRASONICALLY MODIFIED WOOD SAWDUST BY ALUMINA	460
Hazardous materials and green technologies	
Uroš Stamenković, I. Marković, V. Čosović, B. Markoli	
THE INFLUENCE OF AGEING PARAMETERS ON MICROHARDNESS, ELECTRICAL CONDUCTIVITY AND MICROSTRUCTURE OF SOME Al-Mg-Si ALLOYS	466
Marija Simić, D. Aćimović, B. Savić Rosić, M. Ječmenica Dučić, K. Stojanović, D. Maksin, T. Brdarić	
KINETIC STUDY OF DEGRADATION BISPHENOL A BY FENTON PROCESS	472
Danka Aćimović, K. Stojanović, M. Simić, B. Savić Rosić, Z. Vranješ, M. Ječmenica Dučić, T. Brdarić	
DETECTION OF BISPHENOL A INTERMEDIATES DURING FENTON PROCESS AND PREDICTION OF REACTION PATHWAYS	476
Tanja Brdarić, D. Aćimović, B. Savić Rosić, K. Stojanović, M. Simić, Z. Vranješ, M. Ječmenica Dučić	
ADVANCED OXIDATION PROCESSES (AOPs) FOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT: BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY	480
Vanja Trifunović, S. Milić, Lj. Avramović	
POSSIBILITY OF ZINC AND CADMIUM RECOVERY FROM HAZARDOUS INDUSTRIAL WASTE – EAF DUST	486
Sandra Bulatović, N. Nedić, T. Tadić, B. Marković, A. Nastasović	
MAGNETIC BIOSORBENT BASED ON THE <i>Ambrosia arthemisiifolia</i> FOR ADSORPTION OF MALACHITE GREEN FROM WATER	491
Milan Nedeljković, S. Mladenović, J. Petrović, M. Mitrović	
STUDIES OF THE INFLUENCE OF GRAPHENE NANOSHEETS ON THE WETTABILITY OF ECO-FRIENDLY SOLDER ALLOYS	497

<i>Ana Simonović, M. Petrović Mihajlović, M. Radovanović, Ž. Tasić, M. Antonijević</i> ELECTROCHEMICAL SENSORS FOR DETERMINATION OF ANTIBIOTICS	502
<i>Sonja Stanković, V. Nedelkovski, D. Buzdugan, I. Hulka, M. Gorgievski, S. Milić, M. Radovanović</i> INFLUENCE OF CALCINATION TEMPERATURE ON THE MORPHOLOGY, CHEMICAL COMPOSITION, AND STRUCTURE OF ZnO NANOPARTICLES	508
Human and ecological risk assessment	
<i>Milena Tadić, I. Nikolić, D. Đurović, J. Vuković, N. Cupara</i> CHILDREN HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT OF TRIHALOMETHANES CONTENT IN HOTEL'S SWIMMING POOL WATER IN MONTENEGRO	515
<i>Miljan Bigović, D. Đurović, Lj. Ivanović, M. Blagojević, A. Orahovac</i> HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT OF ACRYLAMIDE IN POTATO CHIPS FROM MONTENEGRIN MARKET	520
<i>Vesna Djikanović, K. Jovičić, J. S. Vranković, M. Dimitrijević, S. Kovačević, N. Pankov, B. Miljanović</i> ACCUMULATION OF HEAVY METALS AND HUMAN HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT <i>via</i> THE CONSUMPTION OF FRESHWATER FISH <i>Esox lucius</i>	524
Agriculture: nutrition, organic food and health impacts	
<i>Vitaly Erukhimovitch, M. Huleihel</i> OPTIMIZATION OF PREPARATION PROCEDURES FOR FUNGAL INFECTED PLANTS BY FTIR ANALYSES	531
<i>Mahmoud Huleihel, V. Erukhimovitch</i> POSSIBLE USE OF FOURIER–TRANSFORM INFRARED (FTIR) MICROSCOPY FOR IDENTIFICATION OF FUNGAL PHYTO–PATHOGENS	536
<i>Ana Čučulović, J. Stanojković, R. Čučulović</i> RADIOACTIVITY IN SAMPLES OF IMPORTED MINERAL FERTILIZER ANALYZED IN THE PERIOD 2020–2022	541
<i>Nenad Zarić, M. Zarić</i> METAL CONTENTS IN VEGETABLES ORIGINATING FROM COAL FIRED THERMAL POWER PLANTS REGION	547
Alternative energy: efficiency and environmental policy	
<i>Snežana Brković, N. Zdolšek, I. Perović, M. Seović, P. Laušević, J. Georgijević, M. Čebela</i> ENHANCING OXYGEN EVOLUTION: THE ELECTROCATALYTIC POWER OF Ag-DOPED BISMUTH FERRITE	552

<i>Nebojša Potkonjak, Đ. Čokeša, M. Marković</i>	NONLINERA PHENOMENA DURING VOLTAMMETRIC MEASUREMENT OF COPPER CORROSION	558
<i>Mirjana Marković, Đ. Čokeša, N. Potkonjak</i>	EVALUATION OF THE HYDROGEN DIFFUSION COEFFICIENT IN METAL HYDRIDE BATTERIES	562
Greenhouse effect and global climate change		
<i>Slobodan Milutinović, T. Radenović, S. Živković</i>	FORESTS UNDER THREAT: IMPLICATIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SERBIAN WOODLANDS	566
<i>Danijela Nikolić, S. Jovanović, Z. Đorđević, D. Končalović, V. Vukašinić</i>	GLOBAL WARMING – TREND ANALYSIS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA	574
Sustainable development and green economy		
<i>Dragana Randelović, A. Jovanović, B. Marković, M. Sokić</i>	CONTRIBUTION OF THE INSTITUTE FOR TECHNOLOGY OF NUCLEAR AND OTHER MINERAL RAW MATERIALS TO THE SDGs – TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	580
<i>Veljko V. Savić, J. D. Nikolić, V. Topalović, M. S. Djošić, M. Marković, S. Matijašević, S. Grujić</i>	CHEMICAL DURABILITY EVALUATION OF SINTERED FLY ASH BASED GLASS	586
<i>Stefan Mitrović, S. Brković, M. Seović, N. Zdolšek, P. Laušević, J. Georgijević, I. Perović</i>	RECYCLING ELECTRONIC WASTE CPUs FOR ENHANCED HYDROGEN AND OXYGEN EVOLUTION: AN ECO-FRIENDLY LEACHING APPROACH	593
<i>Adrijana Jevtić, D. Riznić, M. Vuković</i>	BRAND MANAGEMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGES	598
<i>Ana Radojević, J. Jordanović, T. Kalinović, J. Kalinović, S. Šerbula</i>	PROSPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF FOOD WASTE	606
<i>Maja Bogdanović, I. Blagajac</i>	DECENTRALIZATION OF THE URBAN TOURIST ZONE OF ZLATIBOR	613

Environmental biology

- Sladana Popović, N. Nikolić, Ž. Savković, M. Stupar, D. Predojević, A. Anđelković, O. Jakovljević**
ISOLATION AND CULTIVATION OF CHROOCOCCUS (CYANOBACTERIA) FROM AEROPHYTIC BIOFILM IN STOPIĆ CAVE 621
- Tamara Mitić, J. Čanak Atlagić, J. Tomović, J. Stanković, D. Mrdak, D. Škraba Jurlina, A. Marić**
MORPHOMETRIC STUDY OF EUROPEAN BULLHEAD *Cottus gobio* FROM DIFFERENT DRAINAGE POPULATIONS 626
- Jelena Đuknić, N. Popović, B. Vasiljević, B. Tubić, S. Andjus, M. Ilić, M. Paunović**
ECOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE DANUBE RIVER THROUGH SERBIA BASED ON BIOLOGICAL QUALITY ELEMENTS 632
- Sladana Popović, G. Subakov Simić, S. Stanković, D. Lazić**
Chlorella vulgaris GROWTH IN SMALL OPEN CULTIVATION SYSTEMS 638
- Olga Jakovljević, S. Popović, D. Predojević**
EPIPHYTIC DIATOMS AS TOOL IN BIOINDICATION OF LAKE PALIĆ 643
- Mihailo Jovanović, J. Paunković**
IMPROVING PALEOENVIRONMENTAL RECONSTRUCTIONS BASED ON SMALL VERTEBRATES IN THE BALKANS 648
- Jovana Damjanović, M. Milković, A. Mišćević, M. Šćiban, V. Lakušić, M. Stanković**
SUPPLEMENT TO THE LIST OF ENTOMOFAUNA FROM THE RESEARCH ACTIONS AND CAMPS OF SRSBE “JOSIF PANČIĆ” AT SRN ZASAVICA 654
- Mihajlo Stanković**
“LIVING FOSSILS” IN THE CRASH FAUNA OF THE ZASAVICA SPECIAL NATURE RESERVE 662

Environmental and material flow management

- Nataša Knežević, A. Jovanović, M. Vuksanović, M. Savić, M. Milošević, A. Marinković**
DEGRADATION OF DYE CRYSTAL VIOLET RELEASED FROM THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY 669
- Milenko Jovanović, D. Kržanović, E. Požega, V. Marinković, M. Mikić**
APPLICATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUITABILITY OF HYBRID GEOGRIDS 674
- Miroslav Drljača**
MODERN APPROACH TO SUPPLY CHAIN BASED ON CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES 681

<i>Isidora Berežni, T. Marinković, N. Stanisavljević, M. Muhadinović, B. Batinić</i> ASSESSMENT OF THE MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT – CASE STUDY: NOVI SAD (SERBIA)	687
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<i>Ljubiša Balanović, D. Manasijević, I. Marković, U. Stamenković, K. Božinović</i> CALCULATION OF THERMODYNAMIC PROPERTIES Al-Ga-Sn TERNARY ALLOY USING GENERAL SOLUTION MODEL	693
---	-----

Life-Cycle-Analysis (LCA)

<i>Danijela Nikolić, S. Jovanović, D. Mikić, Z. Đorđević</i> LIFE CYCLE ASSESMENT OF THE HAIR DRYER WITH ECO-it SOFTWARE	701
--	-----

Student Section – EcoTERS'24

<i>Students: Sofija Kostić, Aleksa Marjanović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Maja Nujkić (Serbia)</i> SOME ASPECTS OF THE APPLICATION OF METAL-ORGANIC FRAMEWORKS	709
---	-----

<i>Student: Jelena Janković (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Maja Nujkić (Serbia)</i> MECHANISMS OF CADMIUM UPTAKE INTO THE PLANT	711
--	-----

<i>Student: Jovana Kumbrijanović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Maja Nujkić, Sonja Stanković (Serbia)</i> COAGULATION PROCESS AND APPLICATION OF NEW ECOLOGICAL COAGULANTS	713
---	-----

<i>Student: Lazar Cvetković (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Maja Nujkić, Tanja Kalinović, Jelena Kalinović (Serbia)</i> SOME APPLICATION ASPECTS OF THE MATERIALS BASED ON THE GREEN MAGNESIUM OXIDE ECOLOGICAL COAGULANTS	715
--	-----

<i>Students: Milena Radivojević, Kristina Konstadinović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Maja Nujkić, Dragana Medić (Serbia)</i> RECYCLING OF USED LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES	717
--	-----

<i>Student: Milica Denić (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Ana Radojević (Serbia)</i> MEDICAL WASTE ISSUES RELATED TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC	719
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<i>Student: Sara M. Pantović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Enisa S. Selimović (Serbia)</i> PRESENCE OF TOXIC AND POTENTIALLY TOXIC ELEMENTS IN SOME DOMESTIC FRUIT FROM THE PEŠTER PLATEAU, SJENICA, SERBIA	721
---	-----

<i>Student: Milena Stanković (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Ljiljana Stanojević (Serbia)</i>	CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF ESSENTIAL OIL ISOLATED FROM FRESH AND DRY LEAVES OF <i>Geranium robertianum</i> L.	723
<i>Student: Nikola Petrović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Ana Simonović (Serbia)</i>	TOXIC EFFECTS OF PETROLEUM DERIVATIVES ON LIVING ORGANISMS FROM CONTAMINATED SOILS	725
<i>Students: Anja Antanasković, Nevena Ilić (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Milan Miliwojević, Suzana Dimitrijević-Branković, Zorica Lopičić, Nikola Vuković (Serbia)</i>	ENZYME IMMOBILIZATION ON MODIFIED BIOMASS: OPTIMIZATION AND CHARACTERIZATION	727
<i>Student: Milena Balabanović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Ana Radojević (Serbia)</i>	BIOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF THE BIODEGRADABLE WASTE	729
<i>Student: Natalija Stojanović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Maja Nujkić, Vladan Nedelkovski (Serbia)</i>	ADSORPTION MATERIALS BASED ON NANOPARTICLES FOR THE REMOVAL OF ARSENIC FROM WASTEWATER	731
<i>Student: Jelena Vesković (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Antonije Onjia (Serbia)</i>	HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT OF RARE EARTH ELEMENTS IN GROUNDWATER NEAR A THERMAL POWER PLANT	733
<i>Students: Vladimir Topalović, Anja Antanasković, Veljko Savić (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Marija Djošić, Zorica Lopičić, Ana Vujošević, Jelena Nikolić (Serbia)</i>	EFFECT OF PHOSPHATE GLASS AND BIOCHAR ON ROSE GROWTH	735
<i>Student: Aleksandra Milenković (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Ljiljana Stanojević (Serbia)</i>	THE REDUCING POWER OF BLACK PEPPER (<i>Piper nigrum</i> L.) ESSENTIAL OIL HYDRODISTILLATION FRACTIONS	737
<i>Student: Marija Tasić (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Dragan Cvetković (Serbia)</i>	ENVIRONMENTAL METHOD OF GOLD NANOPARTICLES SYNTHESIS AND THEIR CHARACTERIZATION	739
<i>Student: Marija Stanković (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Jelena Kalinović (Serbia)</i>	PURIFICATION METHODS FOR POLLUTED AIR	741
<i>Student: Marija Stanković (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Jelena Kalinović (Serbia)</i>	PURIFICATION OF INDUSTRIAL WASTEWATER	743

<i>Students: Željka Nikolić, Nebojša Radović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Olga Tešović (Serbia)</i>	
RISKS OF CHLORINE EXPOSURE IN HOUSEHOLD CLEANING: A CALL FOR AWARENESS AND PREVENTION	745
<i>Students: Željka Nikolić, Nebojša Radović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Olga Tešović (Serbia)</i>	
IS THERE A NEED TO INFORM CITIZENS MORE DIRECTLY ABOUT THE HANDLING OF HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE?	747
<i>Students: Nataša Simonović, Tamara Milosavljević (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Jelena Stanojević, Ljiljana Stanojević, Jelena Zvezdanović, Dragan Cvetković (Serbia)</i>	
SOLID WASTE FROM HYDRODISTILLATION OF HERNIARIAE HERBA (<i>Herniaria glabra</i> L.) AS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF ANTIOXIDANTS	749
<i>Students: Aleksa Vizi, Nebojša Radović, Željka Nikolić, Stefan Lekić (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Goran Roglić, Ksenija Stojanović, Vele Tešević (Serbia)</i>	
SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS IN ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY: COMBINING OF INSTRUMENTAL TECHNIQUES AND ENVIRONMENTAL-FRIENDLY NATURAL INDICATORS FOR CLASSICAL VOLUMETRY	751
<i>Students: Aleksa Vizi, Nebojša Radović, Željka Nikolić (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Ivan Kojić, Ksenija Stojanović (Serbia)</i>	
EFFICIENT DETERMINATION OF UNDECYLENIC ACID CONTENT IN PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS: A NOVEL SIMPLE APPROACH	753
<i>Student: Andrijana Miletić (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Antonije Onjia (Serbia)</i>	
HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIALLY TOXIC ELEMENTS IN AGRICULTURAL SOIL OF BRANIČEVO DISTRICT	755
<i>Student: Jelena Obradovic (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Antonije Onjia (Serbia)</i>	
DISTRIBUTION OF PM _{2.5} , CO ₂ , HCHO, AND TVOC IN AIR IN A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM	757
<i>Student: Gordan Mišić (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentors: Ana Radojević, Jelena Jordanović (Serbia)</i>	
TOXICOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF MICRO- AND NANO-PLASTICS ON HUMAN HEALTH	759
<i>Student: Anđela Bogdanović (Serbia)</i> <i>Mentor: Marija Petrović Mihajlović (Serbia)</i>	
MAGNESIUM AND ITS ALLOYS	761
Author index	763



PHOTOCATALYTIC PROPERTIES OF C-ZnO NANOPARTICLES SYNTHESIZED via MECHANOCHEMICAL METHOD

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Abstract

Escalating water pollution necessitates the development of efficient and sustainable photocatalytic materials for the degradation of organic pollutants. In this work, the photocatalytic properties of carbon-doped zinc oxide (C-ZnO) nanoparticles synthesized by a novel mechanochemical method are investigated. The unique approach of doping ZnO nanoparticles with carbon not only increases the absorption of visible light but also improves the efficiency of charge separation, leading to a significant increase in photocatalytic activity. Experimental analytical methods such as X-ray diffraction (XRD), scanning electron microscopy (SEM), and UV-Vis spectroscopy are used to elucidate the structural, morphological, and photocatalytic properties of the synthesized C-ZnO nanoparticles. The photocatalytic performance of C-ZnO nanoparticles is evaluated by their ability to degrade methyl orange at a concentration of 5 ppm under UV light irradiation with and without mixing the solution for 60 minutes in the dark before exposure to UV light. The influence of the photocatalysis time on the degradation efficiency was investigated. The results show that the photocatalysis time has a strong influence on the degradation efficiency.

Keywords: photocatalysis, nanomaterials, doping, mechanochemical, synthesis.

INTRODUCTION

Zinc oxide nanoparticles (ZnO-NP) have attracted considerable attention in the field of photocatalysis due to their excellent optical properties, high electron mobility, and environmental friendliness. As a wide bandgap semiconductor (approximately 3.37 eV), ZnO inherently has strong absorption of ultraviolet (UV) light, but limited activity in visible light, which makes up the majority of the solar spectrum. This limitation has led to extensive research into the modification of ZnO to harness the broader spectrum of solar energy for photocatalytic applications, including the degradation of organic pollutants [1,2].

Among various strategies to extend the photocatalytic efficiency of ZnO NPs into the visible light range, doping with atoms of different elements has been identified as a particularly effective method. Doping introduces impurity levels within the bandgap of ZnO, which can facilitate the absorption of visible light by narrowing the bandgap or creating

mid-gap states that act as stepping stones for electron transition from the valence to the conduction band. In particular, carbon doping has proven to be a promising approach, as carbon can introduce p-type conductivity into ZnO, thereby improving charge separation and reducing the electron-hole recombination rate [3,4].

Carbon-doped ZnO nanoparticles (C-ZnO NP) exhibit significantly improved photocatalytic activity under visible light compared to their undoped counterparts. The incorporation of carbon into the ZnO lattice or the ZnO surface can lead to the formation of C-O-Zn bonds, which are believed to contribute to the generation of active sites for photocatalytic reactions. Furthermore, carbon doping can enhance the adsorption of pollutants on the catalyst surface, facilitating their subsequent degradation [4].

Recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of C-ZnO NPs in degrading various organic pollutants, under UV and/or visible light irradiation. For instance, the carbon doping of ZnO using natural precursors such as glucose or other similar chemicals offers an environmentally and cost-effective way to synthesize photocatalysts with enhanced activity and stability [5].

Despite the progress in the synthesis of C-ZnO NP, the challenge is to optimize the doping level, understand the exact mechanisms of photocatalytic enhancement and increase production for practical applications.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample preparation

ZnO NPs, both undoped and carbon-doped, were produced using a mechanochemical method followed by a calcination process. The synthesis of undoped and carbon-doped ZnO nanoparticles involved mixing zinc acetate dihydrate (Sigma-Aldrich) with oxalic acid dihydrate (Sigma-Aldrich) and grinding them in an agate mortar for 10 minutes, resulting in a gel composed of zinc oxalate dihydrate and acetic acid. For the synthesis of C-ZnO NP, glucose (Merck) was additionally incorporated into the gel, with the grinding extended for another 10 minutes to form the precursor. The final undoped and C-ZnO NP were then produced by calcining this mixture at 500°C for 3 hours.

Characterization methods

SEM photograph was obtained via QUANTA FEG 250 SEM microscope. The X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns of the C-ZnO NP were recorded using an X'Pert³ Powder X-ray diffractometer for a range of 2θ from 20–90°. The photocatalytic activity of synthesized nanomaterial was accessed via UV/VIS spectrometry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SEM photograph is presented in Figure 1. The SEM image shows a closer look at the nanorods, which differ in shape, size, and surface roughness, which can be related to the growth conditions and carbon concentration during the synthesis process [6,7]. The diameter and length of the smallest nanorods are about 30 nm.

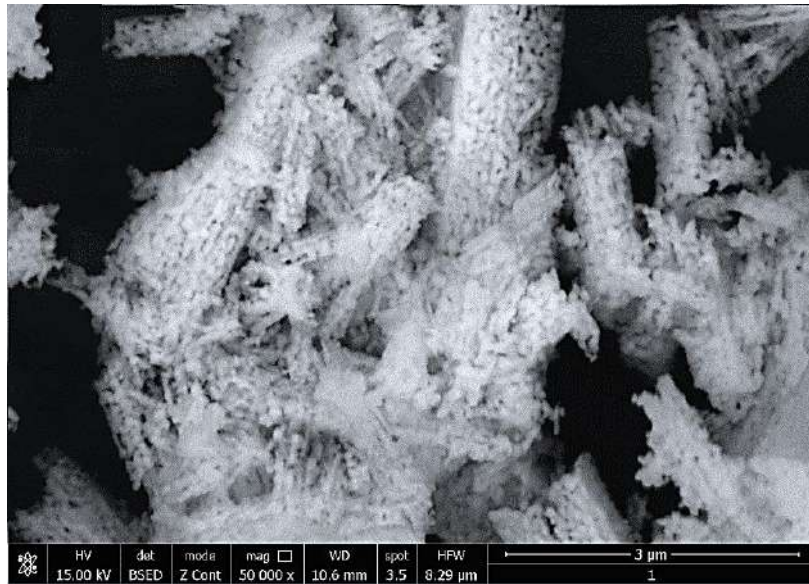


Figure 1 SEM image of synthesized carbon-doped ZnO NP

The XRD pattern of the synthesized doped nanoparticles is presented in Figure 2. The X-ray diffraction pattern (XRD) image shows the crystalline structure of zinc oxide doped with 5% carbon compared to undoped ZnO as defined by the Joint Committee on Powder Diffraction Standards (JCPDS) [8]. The presence of distinct peaks at angles of 33.48° , 36.10° , 37.92° and 58.07° , which align with the undoped ZnO (JCPDS no. 36–1451), confirms the hexagonal wurtzite structure of ZnO without secondary phases. For the C-ZnO NP, there is an observed shift of the (002) peak towards higher angles compared to the ZnO NP JCPDS data. This indicates a decrease in the lattice constant “c” due to carbon doping, which is expected due to the incorporation of smaller carbon ions into the oxygen sites of the ZnO lattice [9].

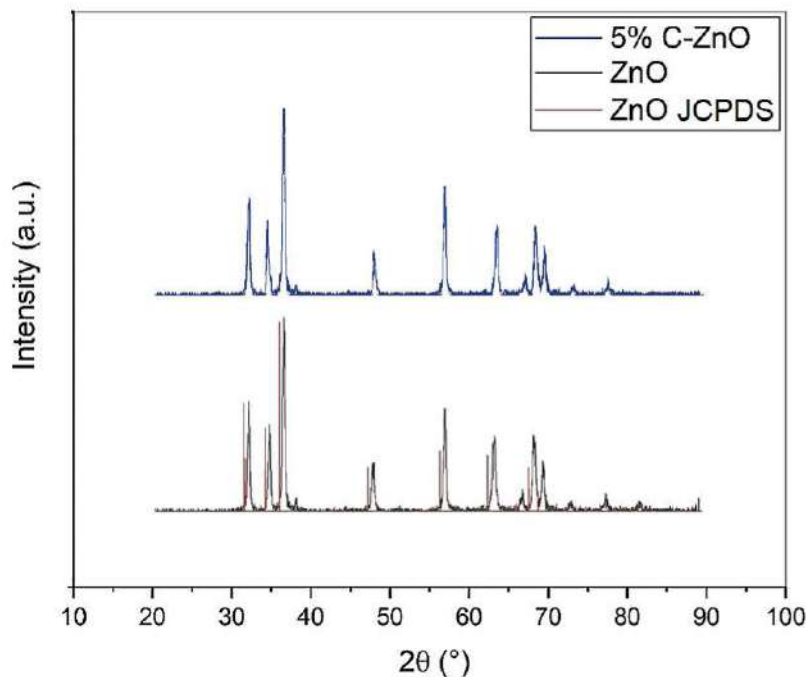


Figure 2 XRD pattern of synthesized samples

Based on XRD analysis and calculations, data was obtained on crystallite parameters a and c), c/a ratio, the crystallite size (D), interplanar distance (d), unit cell volume (V), Atomic packing fraction (APF), dislocation density (δ), atomic displacements (u), micro-strain (ϵ), number of unit cells contained in a grain (n), stacking fault (α^*), stress (σ), Young's modulus (Y) and lattice volume (U). Data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Structural parameters of the analyzed NP samples

Sample	a (Å)	c (Å)	c/a	D (nm)	d (nm)	V (Å ³)	APF (%)	$\delta \cdot 10^{-3}$ (nm ⁻²)
ZnO	3.24	5.2	1.47	68.05	0.27	55.92	0.59	0.21
5%C-ZnO	3.09	4.97	1.61	25.32	0.25	41.06	0.53	1.56
Sample	u	$\epsilon \cdot 10^{-3}$	$n \cdot 10^6$	α^*	$\sigma \cdot 10^7$ (Pa)	$Y \cdot 10^{10}$ (Pa)	$U \cdot 10^4$ (J/m ³)	
ZnO	0.4	1.2	31.6	0.0012	4.37	3.75	2.55	
5%C-ZnO	0.38	1.2	2.19	0.0011	4.37	3.75	2.55	

Table 1 presents the structural parameters of ZnO and 5% carbon-doped ZnO (5%C-ZnO) nanoparticle samples. Key differences between the samples highlight the impact of carbon doping on the structural and physical properties. Notably, doping reduces the crystallite size (D) from 68.05 nm in pure ZnO to 25.32 nm in 5%C-ZnO, which can enhance surface area and reactivity. Moreover, the unit cell volume (V) decreases from 55.92 Å³ to 41.06 Å³, suggesting a more compact structure. The higher dislocation density (δ) in 5%C-ZnO ($1.56 \cdot 10^{-3}$ nm⁻²) compared to pure ZnO ($0.21 \cdot 10^{-3}$ nm⁻²) indicates increased lattice imperfections, which can facilitate charge separation and improve photocatalytic activity [10,11].

To gain insight into photocatalytic properties, model compound degradation experiments were conducted with the previously prepared 5 ppm methyl orange stock solution. Experiments were conducted with and without mixing in the dark for 60 minutes before exposing to UV light irradiation ($\lambda=395$ nm), since it has been reported that in this step equilibrium for the adsorption and desorption of dye molecules is achieved. For the collected data, a pseudo-first-order model was employed and is expressed as [12,13]:

$$\ln\left(\frac{C_0}{C_t}\right) = kt \quad (1)$$

Where C_0 and C_t represent model compound concentration values at zeroth and time “ t ”, while “ k ” represents the reaction rate constant. Figure 3a shows the degradation efficiency of synthesized nanoparticles, with and without mixing step in the dark for 60 minutes. The plot of $\ln(C_0/C_t)$ vs irradiation time “ t ” is depicted in Figure 3b and a linear relationship is observed. Reaction rate constants are evaluated from the slopes of $\ln(C_0/C_t)$ vs time plot.

The degradation efficiency of undoped and carbon-doped ZnO NPs can reach 78.93% and 89.10% in 60 minutes, which is higher than the degradation efficiency values determined for experiments without mixing in the dark. Figure 3b shows the k values for degradation

experiments. The rate constants (k) are highest for the 5%C-ZnO 500°C sample in an experiment with ($k_4=0.0360 \text{ min}^{-1}$), and without mixing in the dark for 60 minutes before the ($k_3=0.0316 \text{ min}^{-1}$). The pure ZnO samples have lower rate constants ($k_1=0.0235 \text{ min}^{-1}$ and $k_2=0.0243 \text{ min}^{-1}$ for experiments with and without mixing in the dark, respectively). This indicates faster degradation kinetics for the carbon-doped samples, corroborating their superior photocatalytic activity.

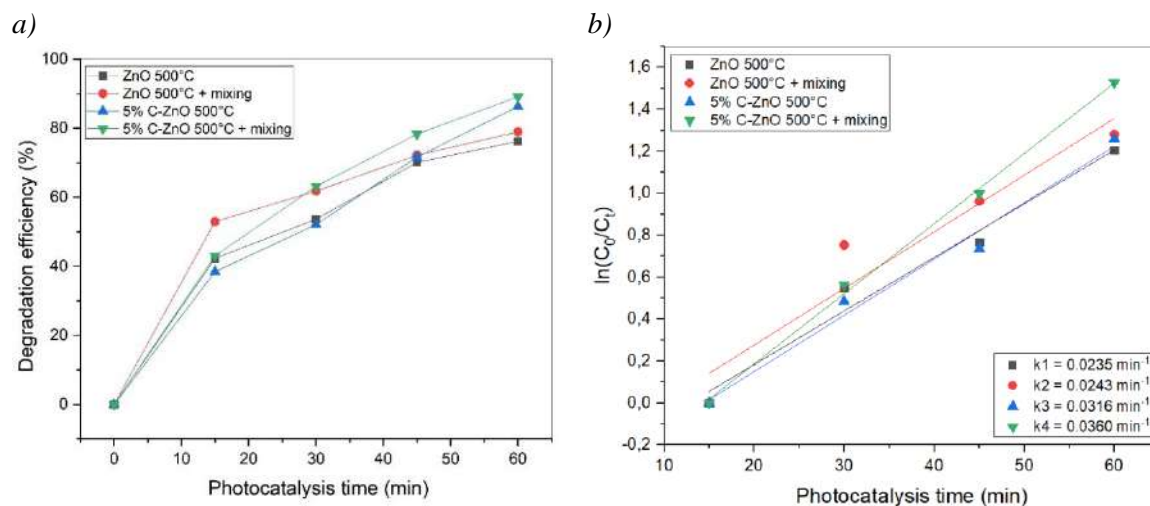


Figure 3 a) Photocatalytic degradation efficiencies of synthesized nanoparticles; b) Kinetics curves of samples

Overall, the enhanced performance of 5%C-ZnO can be attributed to the structural modifications and increased surface area resulting from carbon doping, which improves the efficiency and rate of photocatalytic degradation.

CONCLUSION

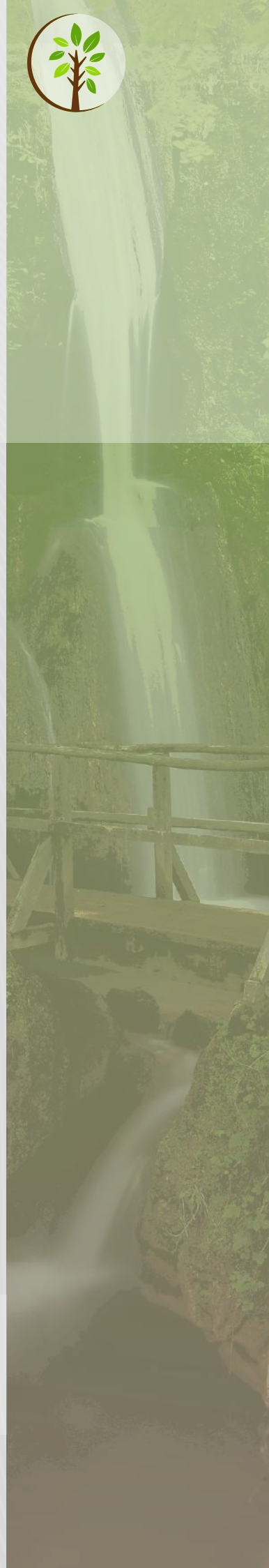
Facile and cost-effective mechanochemical synthesis of pure and C-doped ZnO nanoparticles was performed, and the prepared photocatalysts were used for photocatalytic degradation of methyl orange dye as a model pollutant. The results of the SEM and XRD studies were in agreement and showed that both samples were composed of nanoparticles. The XRD patterns illustrated that the C-ZnO-NP had a lower average crystallite size than the crystallite size of the pure ZnO-NPs, which indicates that the C-ZnO-NPs have a larger specific surface area as well as a larger number of defects, resulting in better overall photocatalytic properties. These alterations are more than just morphological; they confer enhanced photocatalytic efficiency to the C-ZnO-NP. Remarkably, a doping concentration of 5 wt% carbon enables the nanoparticles to achieve an 89.10% degradation rate of a 5 ppm methyl orange solution within the span of an hour, under neutral pH conditions. This efficiency not only underlines the potential for practical application in wastewater treatment but also makes the doped nanoparticles excellent candidates for environmental remediation.

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