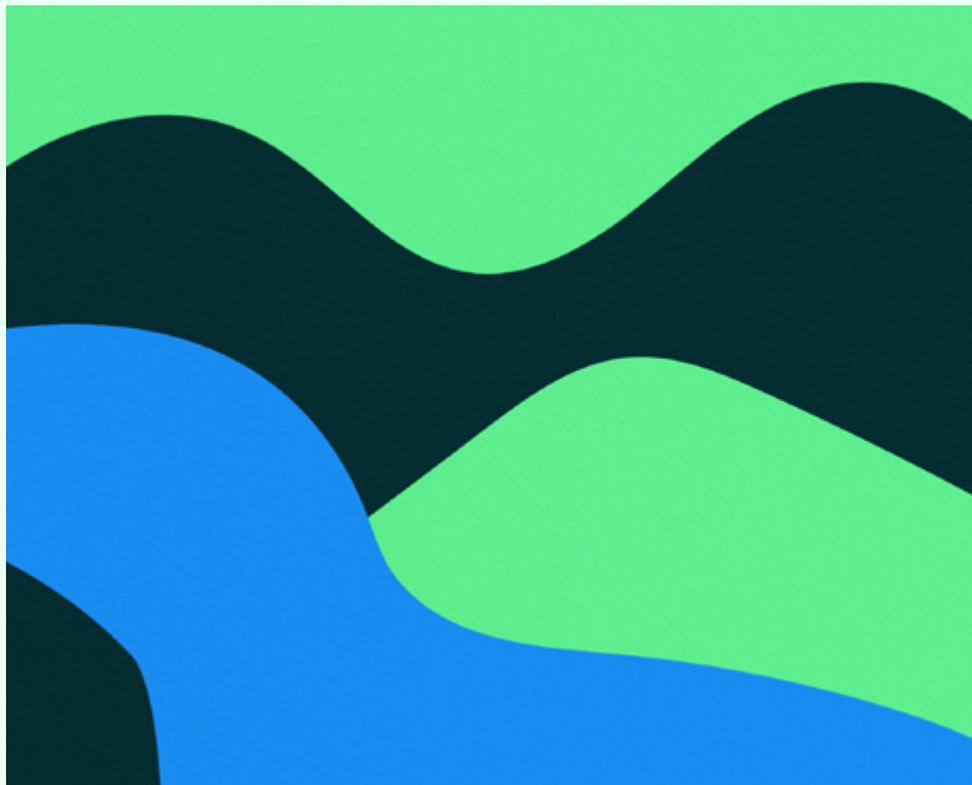


**ACT NOW!**

**GETTING INVOLVED  
IN GREEN ACTIVISM  
IN THE WESTERN  
BALKANS THE REPORT  
ON THE 5-DAYS  
SUMMER SCHOOL**



# INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of the project “The Green Valley” developed by IPSIA Bosnia and Herzegovina, Volonterski Centar Vojvodine and GAIA Kosovo. It is funded by the Western Balkans Fund through the instruments for pre-accession (IPA) and the European Union.

The idea behind the project was to create a network of Civil Society Organizations throughout the Western Balkans that would cooperate on the cross-cutting issues of climate change and environmental activism. While environmental issues are widely discussed worldwide, a need was found to enhance the knowledge and idea exchange of local activists and practitioners in the area.

Climate change is a growing issue that became mainstream in recent years, and environmental activism with a focus on climate change enhanced cooperation and networking between environmental and civil society organizations in different areas of the world. Considering the successful protests against lithium mining that took place in Serbia and the campaign made by GAIA organization concerning mini hydroelectric plants in the area of Sharr National park in Kosovo, a big need for debriefing emerged, the need to create a space in which analysis, and exchange of information on various form of environmental activism could be done at the benefit of activists and CSOs from all of the three countries. While the two aforementioned countries are already engaged in terms of environmental activism, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are currently less mobilizations. Two main needs were identified behind and during the summer school: the need to explore this topic in terms of understanding, sharing and activating new forms of social mobilization on environmental issues in these countries, and the need to give the possibility to people of different ages to participate in a format which is usually reserved and addressed to young people.

This project can be a powerful tool to share innovative ways of changing perceptions and bringing awareness about social change while simultaneously building sustainable partnerships that add value to activism and volunteering. The summer school held in Novi Sad between the 20–26 of July 2022 was the result of such an idea: 13 activists came together to discuss these compelling issues and to exchange ideas and proposals.

This report wants to collect best practices coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo as well as some of the inputs shared by the lecturers during the summer school itself.



## IPSIA BiH

**Place:** Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**FB:** [facebook.com/IPSIA.BIH](https://facebook.com/IPSIA.BIH)

**IG:** [instagram.com/ipsia\\_bih](https://instagram.com/ipsia_bih)

IPSIA is an Italian NGO that has been working in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1997 in particular in Una Sana Canton, with young people and small communities. Our topics are local development, environment, tourism, volunteering, sport, migration. IPSIA BiH is a branch of the Italian NGO IPSIA. It works mainly in the fields of international cooperation, socio-economic development of local communities and environmental awareness.



## GAIA

**Place:** Various

**FB:** [facebook.com/gaiakosovo](https://facebook.com/gaiakosovo)

**IG:** [instagram.com/gaiakosovo](https://instagram.com/gaiakosovo)

GAIA was founded in 2010 in Plemetina, Kosovo. GAIA Kosovo is the official branch of Service Civil International (SCI), one of the world's largest international volunteering organizations founded in 1920 dedicated to promoting a culture of peace through the organization and coordination of voluntary projects all over the world. The organization consists of over 40 branches and groups and an ever-growing number of partner organizations.



## Volunteers' Centre of Vojvodina

**Place:** Various

**FB:** <https://www.facebook.com/vcvrbija>

**IG:** [instagram.com/volonterski\\_centar\\_vojvodine](https://www.instagram.com/volonterski_centar_vojvodine)

Volunteers' Centre of Vojvodina is an association of citizens established in Novi Sad, Serbia, in 2005. Volunteers' Centre of Vojvodina strives for the promotion and recognition of voluntary work as a tool for development of individuals as well as society through organizing volunteer actions and promoting volunteering, its values and benefits to different groups in society.

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# REPRESENTING THE NON-HUMAN WORLD IN ACTIVISM

BY MILJA  
VUKOVIĆ



**Milja Vuković**

Art historian, environmental activist  
and founder of Wild Belgrade and for  
Less Waste and More Happiness –  
Zero and Low Waste Serbia Initiatives.

# REPRESENTING THE NON-HUMAN WORLD IN ACTIVISM

BY MILJA VUKOVIĆ

When there is a dialogue about ecology and sustainability – from whichever angle: urbanism, culture, environmentalism, economy, energy transition.... – I have noticed that persistently one voice is missing, it is ignored, it is not represented: the voice of the non-human world. We are regularly the only species mentioned, represented: our future, our rights, our problems, our health, our wealth, our resources.... All the other beings – their rights, their influence, their contribution, their beauty, their health – are constantly being ignored. How can we work on improvement of nature protection, water quality, food production, air pollution, microplastic pollution, zero waste... without ignoring the presence and importance of the precious non-human world? All the ferns and dandelions, oaks and birch trees, moulds and ants, frogs and deers, wolves and kestrels... beings known and

unknown to us. How can we tell the whole story if only one species is represented? How can we make right changes and find good solutions if we are not perceiving a huge part of the reality, if we are not considering it at all? How can we learn to step out of our anthropocentrism, our speciesism?

For example, when we speak about microplastic pollution and its destructive influence on the health of many generations, we are thinking and taking into consideration, we are mentioning, only the health of present and future beings of our species. Or, another example: beings who are actively and continuously producing oxygen and providing life on this planet – they are not receiving our gratitude or protection and support. We are not thinking about old forests or about plankton and whales that are together creating a tremendous amount of oxygen on our planet (almost 50%) – but they still continue to do so.

There is a whole network of life that we are not seeing and not participating in. So it is actually about perception: what we do not perceive, does not exist for us. It is still there, but we are not aware of it. And what does not exist we do not have a relationship with. And what we do not have a relationship with we do not care about, we do not protect, we do not fight for, we do not enjoy the beauty of it. And not seeing something is actually not neutral. Ignoring something that is alive is same as hurting it. When we ignore something or someone who is alive, we are hurting that, it is a destructive activity.

The language that we use treats the natural world as a thing, matter, resource, as something to be used and governed, dominated... not as something alive, something that feels pain and joy and something that wants to live, just like we do. There is a question of otherness of the natural world, mystery of it, all the things we cannot even imagine. Can we, without humanising the natural world, without projecting our own values and characteristics on it, can we still find the way to respect it, recognise its right to live and thrive?

We view the world as a sum of fragmented, isolated pieces. We regularly fail to perceive the relationships, the connectedness of it all. It is also important that we regularly deny the fact that rivers, linden trees, wild bees, cows, fungi, wheat – it is all alive. We are a part of, we belong to a dynamic, living network. When we do something it always affects hundreds and thousands of beings throughout space and time. That is where many of our problems emerge: we think that we can separate things. Nothing exists separately. We, at every moment of our life, are part of a living dynamic system. Everything that we do is linked with everything that exists.

As an activist: check your perception, check your storyline – are numerous other beings represented in your agenda or does it all begin and end with only one species, yours? Being a city planner, trying to plan better, resilient cities or being a farmer, trying to grow food in a just and regenerative way, or being an activist fighting for cleaner air, or fighting for climate justice... ask yourself: how can we all start perceiving better, how can we deepen our relationship with the non-human world, how can we be in an intimate relationship with the living world, world that is alive, and how can we then give voice and rights to the living network that supports all Life, including ours.

# ECOFEMINISM

BY LAURA  
PEJAK





**Laura Pejak**

Activist from Novi Sad. Her main points of interest are currently anti-nationalism and peace-building, queer liberation as well as Green politics. She is currently working in Group COME OUT – a locally based LGBT+ organization – as a coordinator of the community work program, as well as in CK13 as part of the team running the social center's activist library and infoshop.

# ECO FEMINISM

## BY LAURA PEJAK

As the awareness of environmental issues affecting our planet has grown over the past 60 years, various perspectives have arisen on how to address them. From simple conservationist efforts to perspectives criticizing our very view of the natural world as deeply anthropocentric. One aspect that tends to be present in Green politics in general, however, is the ever-expanding view that dealing with environmental issues needs to go hand in hand with addressing issues of social justice. There are basically two ways through which the environmental movement tends to come to this conclusion.

One is the opposition to environmental action by certain marginalized groups whose lives are directly dependent on activities that have negative effects on the environment. For example, workers in coal power plants and their trade unions may be opposed to the government closing these plants in the transition to renewable energy. Dealing with this opposition necessarily forces Green activists to include

social justice in their demands in order to make sure that nobody gets left behind and that there is a consensus among all actors in society when it comes to moving towards a more sustainable future.

The other way that Green movements come to be linked to social struggles is through the simple fact that environmental degradation not only harms the environment, but also often directly negatively affects marginalized groups in our societies, and these groups can actually end up forming the backbone of the environmental struggle.

Ecofeminism is one perspective that attempts to analyze the way environmental issues intersect with gender-based marginalization. The term encompasses both approaches that are coming from a more social-historical lens, which analyze how patriarchal relations necessarily give rise to environmental exploitation; as well as those coming from a more concrete perspective, that show how women (and other marginalized groups) in the world are acutely affected by the degradation of their environment.

To people coming from a European perspective, it may not be immediately obvious how women are uniquely affected by environmental degradation. For some of those living in developing countries, however, it may be much clearer how these issues are related. The interplay of ecology with other societal issues is quite complex and very rarely relates to just one aspect of the mechanisms of domination; that's why ecofeminism, despite having a primary focus on gender issues, necessarily also deals with problems such as colonialism, poverty, racism, capitalism and many others.

For example – women in sub-Saharan Africa tend to perform most of the day-to-day agricultural labor in their communities. They are not only responsible for 80% of activities related to food production for their families and communities, but they also perform 60% of all agricultural labor, including production of cash crops that are then sold on the world market for profit. At the same time, women in these societies rarely own the land or have control over the profits from their

labor, both of which tend to be controlled by men or by international corporations. This basically means that droughts, soil degradation, extreme weather events and so on, affect these women – who are marginalized not only through patriarchal oppression, but also through their place in the globalized capitalist system – in much more severe ways than other members of their communities, who don't have to perform additional labor to compensate for these losses, and who may have other monetary reserves to fall back on in times of such crises. Women in many parts of the developing world also directly depend on their local natural resources for food, water, firewood, building materials and many other uses necessary for daily life.

Preservation of forests, fields, waterways, etc. from privatization and exploitation by multinational corporations isn't just a matter of a romanticized "love of nature"; for them – their survival quite literally depends on the continued existence of these natural resources. At the same time however, women (and people falling outside binary gender norms) in general tend to make up quite a disproportionate number of environmental activists – even within the developed world, where the above-mentioned link isn't always so clear. You can probably think of some examples right off the top of your head – Greta Thunberg, Petra Kelly, Anuna de Wever, Xiye Bastida, Vandana Shiva... you could probably also think of some more examples from your own local community. This may appear strange at first – there is no immediately obvious reason why environmental activists and leaders of environmental movements wouldn't be found equally among people of all genders.

However, this is where more "abstract" feminist theoretical analyses can help us gain insight into the mechanisms behind the way our society works. Women are, generally speaking, more encouraged to be caring, nurturing and socially aware; in contrast with men who are encouraged to be more oriented towards disinterested rationality, violence, as well as personal success. Of course, this division is far from being an ironclad rule and there are lots of deviations from it – many men can be quite caring, while a lot of women can be very asocial or even cruel. But we can identify a general trend in the way these behaviours are instilled within our

society. As a result of that, women have a tendency to be more motivated to act on their empathy and thus more often go into fields such as social work, advocacy or activism. This can also include empathy with animals and non-human life as well – the domain of environmentalism.

Ecofeminist theorists take this connection between women and the environment to an even higher level. They analyze how the patriarchal way our global society is structured necessarily leads to the devastation of the environment, as well as other forms of oppression. Different thinkers focus on different aspects of this connection, depending on the specific point of view that they are coming from. For example, ecofeminists who are informed by more Marxist ways of thinking tend to locate this link in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, which required the rationalization of resource use – and thus lead to privatization of lands which had previously been held in common. This transition led to displacement of people from their lands, leading to the rise of the urban working class, which (at least initially) tied women much more firmly into their roles as domestic servants for the men in their households. It also led to more intensive agriculture, clearing of forests, and created the conditions necessary for industrialization – all of which began the modern destruction of the environment.

Other ecofeminist theorists take this view even further back, arguing that the very transition towards agriculture some 10,000 years ago is what caused the shift in mentality both when it comes to the way society views women and the way it views the environment. The idea of owning and controlling – both the land as well as women's bodies – is argued to have started in this process. Ecofeminists that argue this view note the transition away from worship of goddesses and cults of motherhood and fertility, which were present in hunter-gatherer and early agricultural societies, towards a worship of a kingly sky god, who controls nature as his property, as one of the proofs that this shift is critical.

The tradition of ecofeminism is very rich and varied, and unfortunately there isn't enough space to delve deeper into the topic here. However, hopefully it has been made at least a little bit more clear as to why the environmental and feminist

struggles need to be connected, as well as how these connections can be made. In the Balkan cultural-political space, a lot of environmental activism is led by men (despite the fact that the majority of activists in these movements tend to be women), who can even be quite conservative and dismissive of other progressive issues. Thus, it is crucial that we understand how addressing the issues of our environment means we will have to completely restructure the way our societies work – including the very patriarchal basis they are built upon.

Authors to read for those who wish to engage more with this topic: Silvia Federici, Carolyn Merchant, Vandana Shiva, Françoise d'Eaubonne, Rosemary Ruether, Starhawk, Mary Daly, Baeddan journal, and many many others.

# CLIMATE CHANGE — AN OVERVIEW

BY ELENA  
PETROVSKA



**Elena Petrovska**

Environmental analyst and an activist involved with the Green Eastern European Youth network (CDNEE) and a local Green Youth organization for the past 5 years. Her interests lie under an umbrella of intertwined topics: climate and social justice. Her sole wish is to contribute to leaving this world a bit more just and safe place for everyone.

# CLIMATE CHANGE – AN OVERVIEW

BY ELENA PETROVSKA

Global warming, climate change and climate crisis are some of the terms used to describe increasingly obvious climate changes, more extreme weather conditions and ecological disasters resulting from these changes, which put all living species on planet Earth at risk. Climate change, as opposed to the weather, refers to long-term changes in climate conditions and patterns.

Climate is a product of the climate system, which is a complex, dynamic system defined by the environmental subsystems: atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, cryosphere and their mutual interactions. Taking out of balance only one of these subsystems can affect the climate system. Although we know that the climate has been changing significantly throughout history, with periods of great cooling (ice age) and warming, such changes occurred in longer time intervals than today and were caused by certain natural factors that can define the climate.

Natural factors that can shape and change the climate system (besides individual events such as volcanic eruptions and asteroid impacts, and short-term variations in ocean-atmosphere interactions) are solar activity, Milankovic cycles, plate tectonics, and other climate and weather oscillations. Paleoclimatology, a science that observes climate in the past, indicates how changes of the present are incomparable to those of the past. While in the previous 7000 years the average global temperature fell by an average of 0.01 °C, after the year of 1880 the temperature started to rise by an average of 0.08 °C per decade, and from 1981 by 0.18 °C. Since the pre-industrial era the average global temperature has increased by about 1.1 °C. In the period 2013–2021, are among the 10 warmest recorded years, while in 2021 every month was warmer than average for previous years. According to the aforementioned Milankovic cycles, such temperature increases should not occur. During this period, the planet should be in the process of cooling, and not warming, as it is the case. Knowing there are no natural factors explaining the current trends in climate change, we are brought back to human activities and the question where the responsibility lies.

Something that follows the increase in temperature are the intensified human activities in the previous century, in terms of industrialization, burning of fossil fuels, urbanization, capitalist economies, etc.

Since the beginning of the industrial revolution humanity has recorded great technological advances, which, among other things, contributed to a better quality of life for many, and subsequently led to a historic increase in the number of people on the planet. Mentioned progress however, has not followed all the countries of the world equally, so even today there is an uneven distribution of resources and a big gap between developed and underdeveloped countries.

This progress recorded greater and faster changes in the economics, science, law, and in the environment. Human activities have begun to take on a large scale and, as such, to affect the change and pollution of various natural ecosystems. Great power and monetary resources begin to be concentrated in individuals which only led to a greater discord and injustice in terms of the redistribution of goods in the world. These individual interests, among other things, influenced a somewhat belated reaction to the changing environment on which humanity and all other living organisms depend.

Anthropogenic drivers of the climate change are linked primarily to the burning of fossil fuels (for electricity, transportation, different industries, urbanization-residences, agriculture, etc.) that powered development after the industrial revolution. Certain elements and compounds began to multiply in the atmosphere and some completely new ones appeared, which upset the balance and enhanced the greenhouse effect.

Solar radiation is what drives the entire climate system on planet Earth. Depending on the ratio of received solar radiation and emitted heat radiation back into space, the temperature on Earth can rise or fall. That phenomenon describes the energy budget of the Earth, which is in a state of equilibrium when the mentioned radiations are equal.

Certain amount of solar radiation reaches the top of the atmosphere, which is then absorbed, scattered and/or reflected back into space (about 50%). Of the remaining radiation that reaches the Earth's surface, about 3% gets reflected back into space and 47% gets absorbed. Absorbed solar radiation is then converted to infrared and emitted back into the atmosphere as heat. Part of that radiation is captured by certain gasses in the atmosphere, absorbed and emitted back to the Earth's surface.

This phenomenon is known as the **greenhouse effect**, without which the average air temperature would be 33 °C lower than the current one.

**The higher the concentration of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, the more heat is trapped and the planet gets warmer.**

One of the most important by-products of burning fossil fuels that contributes the most to the greenhouse effect is carbon dioxide, a gas that, once emitted, can remain in the atmosphere for up to 500 years. The consequences of climate change that we are witnessing today are, in addition to the rise in temperature, changes in atmospheric constituents, changes in precipitation patterns, melting of polar caps and glaciers, rise in sea levels, increase in ocean acidity (acidification) and more frequent or more intense occurrence of weather disasters such as floods, droughts and heat waves. Due to the interconnectedness, all these phenomena can have a number of other consequences on the global, regional or local environment.

The consequences of climate change are linked to the accelerated mass extinction of species in the Anthropocene. Current, sixth mass extinction is taking place 25 times faster than any of the previous mass extinctions of species. Human civilization is also at risk – listed phenomena inevitably leads to endangerment of drinking water resources, food productions, health of the population, human habitats and maintenance of peace policies. Mentioned and numerous other challenges we face speak of the urgency with which we should act towards finding solutions and mitigating the consequences of climate change.

## What next?

With the awakening of awareness about the negative impacts that people leave on the planet and the risks that we put the entire living world and future generations under, climate change finds its place in supranational political discussions, and finally in laws, strategies and other documents that define the actions that need to be taken for the sake of achieving a safer future. In recent years numerous strategic decisions in the direction of energy transition took place. For example, the European Union decides to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Nevertheless, coal (biggest polluter) still covers most of the electricity needs at the world level.

We can:

- hold decision-makers accountable: call upon respecting the supranational agreements in regards to mitigating climate change (e.g. Paris Agreement);
- do individual and collective action: take steps towards lowering our carbon footprint and act through collectives to educate and advocate for changes in the local context.

### See more for ideas on climate action:

- [How to reduce my carbon footprint?](#)
- [Tackling climate action at the local level: education for sustainable development projects from the Global RCE Network](#)

# THE CLIMATE CHANGE, LIMITS OF GROWTH AND DEGROWTH

BY PREDRAG  
MOMČILOVIĆ



**Predrag Momčilović**

Researcher, journalist, and political activist from Belgrade. He is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Geography in Belgrade focusing on political ecology, degrowth, social aspects of climate change, food production, and just energy transition. He is also a member and co-founder of Zajedničko, a platform for the theory and practice of commons.

# THE CLIMATE CHANGE, LIMITS OF GROWTH AND DEGROWTH

BY PREDRAG  
MOMČILOVIĆ

The consequences of climate change are already being felt and the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rapidly approaching the point of collapse. We live in a time where the gap between the small number of rich and the vast number of poor is greater than ever before. Our age is witnessing a new mass extinction of species and the fastest decline in biodiversity in history, we have reached the limits of global capitalist growth and are staring into an open abyss.

New research from Oxfam and the Stockholm Environment Institute reveals the extreme inequality in carbon emissions that have brought the world to the brink of climate disaster. This research states that the richest 10% (about 630 million) are

responsible for 52% of total global carbon emissions in the period from 1990 to 2015. While the richest 1%, who own a total of 44% of global wealth, are responsible for 15% of total carbon emissions.

On the other side of the spectrum, the poorest 50% (over 3.1 billion) in the period 1990–2015 contributed only 7% of total carbon emissions. This research clearly shows that most of the emissions of the richest 10% come from the USA and the EU, while the emissions of the richest 1% come primarily from the USA, but also from China and the oil-rich countries of the Middle East. We need new alternative and progressive solutions, and part of that can be degrowth. This new theoretical concept is born on the margins of the ecological, social and economic crisis of recent decades, and draws its ideas from various leftist and progressive policies, primarily eco-socialist and eco-anarchist, and as such, ideologically, it de facto belongs to the new left policies.

Economic growth, interpreted differently, but still growth, has become a kind of dogma of the new age.

Rethinking and rejecting the idea of exponential growth based on profit and extraction, also thinking about social and economic alternatives is at the core of the degrowth movement itself. According to one of the definitions, degrowth is based on a change in the way natural resources are used, but also a change in attitudes towards work, capital, care, money, as well as the question of ownership, along with the radical democratization of society, with the aim of creating a new economy and society in harmony with nature.

The term degrowth is relatively new and its exact definition is still being worked on. In the French-speaking world, degrowth appeared for the first time in 1972, when the term *decroissance* was used by Andre Gorz. After that, other Francophone authors used this term in academic and activist discussions that remain closed within the French scene. The English name degrowth was officially used for the first

time only in 2008 at a conference in Paris, and since then the term has become more widely accepted in academic and activist circles and soon became known around the world.

Growth In the capitalist system, it is simply not possible to reverse economic growth. Capitalism is structurally based on the constant imperative of growth through the exploitation of people and natural resources. In addition, it is mathematically impossible to have constant growth in a physically limited system such as planet Earth.

The alleged success in achieved growth is usually shown through the growth of GDP (gross national product), which in itself is a very problematic indicator and does not take many facts into account. Thus, every expense is seen as a positive thing that raises GDP, so, for example, funds invested in cleaning up previously created pollution can increase GDP growth, while different productive things are not counted (example: different observation of the performance of labor and machines in profit and non-profit sector, unpaid housework).

Apart from the physical impossibility of realizing the idea of continuous growth, capitalist production is uneconomic and only a small number of people benefit from it. The consequences of forcing continuous growth include psychophysical disorders in people due to long working hours, as well as environmental pollution. Constant growth is unfair and its levers rely on unpaid domestic work, which is based on gender discrimination of women.

If viewed from a global geo-political perspective, the imposition of capitalist growth always implies the forced extraction of profits from the periphery for the center, thereby creating new colonial relations, class and geographic polarization of society based on political-economic dependence. Therefore, only the politically

and economically powerful benefit from growth, while the costs are shifted to the account of the marginalized majority. The constant need for expansion and growth leads to the constant commodification of new spheres and goods.

If it is possible to imagine a capitalist society in which growth stagnates, then such a dystopian society of poverty, repression, exploitation and pollution would actually be very close to the system in which we still live today with even more pronounced differences.

It is often heard that a certain country is currently facing a decline in economic growth. Due to potentially misleading comparisons, it is necessary to make an accurate distinction between degrowth and recession.

As long as a community/state is based on the imperative of growth, regardless of whether it is realized in a quantitative sense, similar problems arise since the whole society is organized on this imperative and strives towards it. Thus, even during the period of economic recession, there is no increase in social equality, but the exact opposite. States, mainly under the pressure of international financial institutions and big capital, turn to austerity measures that cause even greater class differences with growing environmental and social consequences. That is why economic recessions should be seen exclusively as crises of capitalism, and not as a transition to some alternative forms of economy. On the contrary, in the assumed future of degrowth, we would have a complete socio-economic-ecological transformation towards an ecologically sustainable, egalitarian and democratic society.

Under the pressure of several decades of environmental protests and the spread of knowledge about the consequences of global warming, but also with the partial co-optation of green movements, the phrase sustainable development has become the new mantra of capitalism. This coin has been used for different purposes so many times that it has become washed of all meaning. It can even be considered a kind of oxymoron where growth and development are placed right next to sustainability. Sustainable development, green growth and other similar projects are not really sustainable, because they are still based on growth that only gets

a “human” or “green” face. The transition to green and renewable technologies alone will not solve the problems society is currently facing, from climate change to growing social inequality. That technological progress alone cannot be the solution to current problems is also evident from current practice. The more technologically advanced an economy becomes, the more resources it consumes, because resources become cheaper (Jevons paradox).

Re-politicization of sustainability is needed, which today has been emptied of politics and has almost lost its meaning due to greenwashing. We need real sustainability in the physical and social sense; not only in the form of enough food and energy with undisturbed natural cycles, but also that sustainability that describes a quality of life worth living for everyone. The apolitical, technocratic discourse of sustainable development and sustainability is an expression of the broader process of depoliticization of public discussion in neoliberalism, which reduces politics to the search for technocratic solutions to a pre-formed problem, instead of a true antagonistic struggle between alternative visions.

## **Degrowth**

Degrowing is based on a comprehensive social, economic and environmental transformation. At the core of this theory is the need to dismantle current social relations, and the nature-society relationship. To get to all this it is first necessary to deconstruct the current global distribution of wealth and power. Degrowth foresees a radical democratization of society in which decisions are made directly democratically and lead to redistribution and equal availability of all kinds of resources.

Is this vision of another “great transformation” unrealistic? No, because its solutions are already being applied to some extent around the world. It works and tends to spread, despite the barrage of apologists for the old model, who still occupy leading positions. Many convincing examples can be seen – in India, Latin America, Africa, the USA and Europe.

When thinking at the local level, the question is what can be done in a semi-peripheral country. For example, in Eastern Europe there are still a lot of people who produce healthy food for their own needs and this could be one of the opportunities, local autonomy in food production is a good starting position at a time when we have large fields of monoculture and multinational corporations trying to establish monopoly over seeds and thus over food. However, in order for healthy food produced according to the principles of sustainability to be truly available to everyone, a change is needed that will neutralize the influence of large companies and give the real control over production and distribution to the hands of producers – workers.

Of course, dealing with climate change and other manifestations of the ecological crisis requires huge investments in renewable energy sources, in building insulation, energy efficiency, agroecology, sustainable transport, etc., and thus enables growth. But, by focusing on specific sectors whose expansion is desirable, unpleasant issues are silently passed over. Exactly what activities and what kind of production must necessarily be reduced, taking into account their negative impact on the climate, biodiversity, human health and the like?

And while economic growth still remains the unique dogma of the ruling system, perhaps now more than ever we need a new degrowth movement coming from the periphery that would look for new alternative ways and influence the change of the dominant narrative at the international level.

**PERMACULTURE  
DESIGN:  
THE WAY  
THINGS  
SHOULD BE**

BY DUŠAN  
PETROVIĆ



**Dušan Petrović**

Farmer, educator and  
permaculture designer.

# PERMACULTURE DESIGN: THE WAY THINGS SHOULD BE

BY DUŠAN PETROVIĆ

Design. The first thing that makes you excited about permaculture design is exactly that – the design. Because when you come from the world of media, arrangement of lines, colors, textures and shapes, and then sound and image, movement – immediately you will see how much the elements that you can work with in your ideas have multiplied. If you design any system that includes living beings, in addition to everything listed, you have to count on microorganisms, circulation of matter, osmosis, frost, gravity, time, entropy, behavior, relationships...

It sounds complicated, but it really isn't. On the contrary. It's brilliantly simple. Creators of Permaculture, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren offered a series of principles that should be followed when designing, a kind of "protocols for decision-making", so as not to get lost in countless possibilities.

Permaculture is the design, creation and maintenance of estates, settlements, cities, human settlements, undertakings such as in agriculture or business, while respecting the rules on the basis of which the various elements in nature unite into a unique system.

And already when trying to plan and plant an herb garden, which is often the first practical "exercise", you discover the following delight: you are an integral part of your own design! Equal participant. Try to plant mint where you decided – next spring it will grow everywhere, just not in that place. Oh yes, you are not God the Creator! In order to be a successful gardener, it is necessary to start your work from the humility of creation, not arrogance, as we are used to.

Permaculture is not the only school of designing unified, whole systems. There is also a school of biodynamics by Rudolf Steiner, and holistic management by the South African Allen Savory, the regenerative agriculture of Yeomans from Australia, and the authentic experiment of Sepp Holzer in Austria. In various parts of the world, people who come from different cultural and social backgrounds, from different agricultural traditions, even people coming from sciences that have no contact with agriculture, they realized the same thing: you can't redefine a civilization that is based on agriculture, without first redesigning agriculture.

Need. Discovering why it is necessary to redefine agriculture in general, and even the civilization in which we live itself is a small exploratory descent into hell. When you really want to find out how a world of 7 billions people works, you find that half of them do not produce the food they eat, and half do not produce the energy they consume. Yes, the basic foods that you are used to every day, come from the other end of the world. And that some people always suffer because of it. For example, to get one cup of coffee, the inevitable morning ones, it is necessary to consume 126 liters of water to grow and process that coffee, and it is necessary to use up water in those parts of the planet that are terribly short of water. And obviously such knowledge will depress you, and you will begin to observe the world through darkened lenses, but.. possibilities.

In the comfort of the first morning coffee, at a pleasant 20 and a half degrees Celsius you can easily forget your true nature. We homo sapiens sapiens are a species that bridges obstacles, a species that started from the African savannah, along the way invented the needle and learned how to sew, dressed itself, inhabited the frozen steppes of Eurasia and hunted mammoths there. At one point, due to that comfortable pampering, we started to call obstacles problems, as we perceive them as unsolvable, and sometimes we see them where they actually don't exist. Someone complains about the service of an airplane, while not realizing that not only was he flying at an altitude of 10,000m, while he was sitting in the armchair, they also brought juice to his lap. Permaculture opens your eyes to that species' own stupidities and limitations. You learn that the only real way to improve the world is to first improve yourself, you improve relationships with people and that obstacles are natural stimuli for us sapiens. We discover new depths of our own creation when we overcome obstacles, we discover how it makes us stronger and more resilient and we discover an innate desire to cooperate with other people.

There is one laconic definition of permaculture which, like all other laconic definitions, doesn't say much but that's why it explains a lot: "Permaculture is the way things should be".

We all live in houses and those houses use a huge amount of energy for heating, cooling, cooking, maintenance of food, maintenance of hygiene. We forget that a system that ends with a switch and with a light bulb in our room, starts with the dam and the hydroelectric plant on Djerdap. We love to hoot at the manic nature of the industry, and we forget that the ultimate destination of the material that gigantic trucks pull out from the bowels of the earth is actually human's homes. Now imagine a house that doesn't "eat" energy, but which "hunts" for it.

It collects rainwater, uses the Sun for heating and the Earth for cooling. Imagine a biochemical wastewater treatment system that looks like a botanical garden; imagine a hedge of fruit and berries that you planted just so the neighbors could pick fruit from your property; imagine neighborhoods of cities that collectively compost their own organic and kitchen waste and use the methane that is released for cooking. Permaculture designers are those who imagine how to build such systems, manage them and maintain them. How to live in them. They imagine and successfully execute, because permaculture design is not only a ravishing utopian concept but a very precise tool that has been in use for 40 years. So, shall we?

# CONTACTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## **Centar za održivi razvoj „COR“ The Center for Sustainable Development**

**Place:** Bihac, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**W:** [cor-bih.org](http://cor-bih.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/corbih](https://facebook.com/corbih)

**IG:** [instagram.com/cor.bihac](https://instagram.com/cor.bihac)

The Center for Sustainable Development “COR” – Bihać – Bosnia and Herzegovina is a non-governmental organization founded in 2016 with the aim of improving the sustainability of the local community through the implementation of projects of importance for local and regional development.

## **Koalicija za zaštitu rijeka Bosne i Hercegovine The Coalition for the Protection of the Rivers of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Place:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

**W:** [rijekebih.org](http://rijekebih.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/koalicijazazastiturijekabih](https://facebook.com/koalicijazazastiturijekabih)

The Coalition for the Protection of the Rivers of Bosnia and Herzegovina was founded in June 2016 by civil society organizations and individual nature lovers.

## Centar za životnu sredinu Center for environment

**Place:** Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**W:** [czzs.org](http://czzs.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/CentarZaZivotnuSredinu](https://facebook.com/CentarZaZivotnuSredinu)

**IG:** [instagram.com/centar\\_za\\_zivotnu\\_sredinu](https://instagram.com/centar_za_zivotnu_sredinu)

The Center for the Environment is a non-profit, non-governmental and non-partisan organization of professionals and activists dedicated to the protection and improvement of the environment.

## Ekološko udruženje Eko Put Eco Way

**Place:** Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**FB:** [facebook.com/ekoputbijeljina](https://facebook.com/ekoputbijeljina)

Eco Way is an association from Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It promotes ecology, awareness, networking and cooperation.

## Nešto više

**Place:** Banja Luka, Mostar, Sarajevo

**W:** [nestovise.org](http://nestovise.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/nestovise](https://facebook.com/nestovise)

**IG:** [instagram.com/ug\\_nestovise](https://instagram.com/ug_nestovise)

Nešto više works towards a society that is morally responsible and tolerant, encouraging competence, security and togetherness through mutual care of the individual and the community. Their programmes are based on permaculture, social entrepreneurship and education.

## Farma transforma

**Place:** Boškovići

**W:** [farmatransforma.jimdofree.com](http://farmatransforma.jimdofree.com)

**FB:** [facebook.com/farmatransforma](https://facebook.com/farmatransforma)

FARMA TRANSFORMA is a permaculture estate, a museum of temporary art and a workshop for inner and outer peace.

## Solarna Pecka

**Place:** Pecka

**FB:** [facebook.com/solarnaPecka](https://facebook.com/solarnaPecka)

**IG:** [instagram.com/visitorcenter.pecka](https://instagram.com/visitorcenter.pecka)

“Solarna Pecka” is an initiative whose goal is to bring solar energy to the village of Pecka near the town of Mrkonjić, within the “Pecka Visitor Center”, through a model of civic participation and joint investment.

# CONTACTS IN SERBIA

## **Pravo na vodu** **Right to the water**

**Place:** Various

**W:** [pravonavodu.weebly.com](http://pravonavodu.weebly.com)

**FB:** [facebook.com/pravonavodu](https://facebook.com/pravonavodu)

**IG:** [instagram.com/pravonavodu](https://instagram.com/pravonavodu)

Initiative for the protection of water assets of Serbia threatened by pollution, privatization and unsustainable exploitation. We stand for the preservation of the environment and the right to drinking water. We believe that water should be and remain a public good.

## **POLEKOL— Inicijativa za političku ekologiju** **Initiative for political ecology**

**Place:** Belgrade

**W:** [polekol.org](http://polekol.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/polekolorg](https://facebook.com/polekolorg)

**IG:** [instagram.com/polekol](https://instagram.com/polekol)

The Organization for Political Ecology Polekol engages in advocacy and activism, gathers initiatives for the protection of the environment and natural resources, and promotes green values aimed at the well-being of people and nature.

## **Odbranimo reke Stare Planine** **Let's preserve the rivers of Stara Planina**

**Place:** Stara Planina Mountain

**FB:** [facebook.com/OdbranimorekeStareplanineorsp](https://facebook.com/OdbranimorekeStareplanineorsp)

Ecological organization fighting against hydropower plants.

## **Ekološki front Novi Sad** **Ecological Front of Novi Sad**

**Place:** Novi Sad

**FB:** [facebook.com/ekoloskifrontns](https://facebook.com/ekoloskifrontns)

**IG:** [instagram.com/ekoloskifrontns](https://instagram.com/ekoloskifrontns)

Ecological Front Novi Sad is a self-organized and informal movement that gathers and unites individuals, non-governmental organizations and institutions in the fight for environmental protection.

## **Neformalna građanska inicijativa Dunavac-Šodroš** **Informal civic initiative Dunavac-Šodroš**

**Place:** Novi Sad

**W:** [svetidunav.blogspot.com](https://svetidunav.blogspot.com)

**FB:** [facebook.com/DunavacSodros001](https://facebook.com/DunavacSodros001)

Initiative for the protection of the natural public good of Kamenička ada, Dunavac, Šodroš and the Fisherman's Peninsula in Novi Sad.

**Zeleno DOBA – Centar za samoodrživi rast i razvoj**  
**GREEN AGE – Center for self-sustainable development and growth**

**Place:** Various

**FB:** [facebook.com/Zelenodoba](https://facebook.com/Zelenodoba)

**IG:** [instagram.com/zeleno\\_doba](https://instagram.com/zeleno_doba)

Zeleno Doba (Green age) is a group of individuals who come from different fields, different ages, united by a common desire and need to create a training ground for research, empowerment and connecting the community through informal education.

# CONTACTS IN KOSOVO

## GAIA

**Place:** Boževce/Bozhevc, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë

**W:** [gaiakosovo.org](http://gaiakosovo.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/gaiakosovo](https://facebook.com/gaiakosovo)

**IG:** [instagram.com/gaiakosovo](https://instagram.com/gaiakosovo)

GAIA, the branch of Service Civil International in Kosovo, is a peace organization working in the field of peace building, solidarity between people, social justice and environmental protection. GAIA is also promoting cultural diversity and works on education and integration of marginalized and minority groups in society. The organization is developing an educational space for permaculture in Boževce/Bozhevc, in order to discover and share ideas for solutions for climate change as well as other crises the society is facing.

## Balkan Green Foundation

**Place:** Prishtina/Priština

**W:** [balkangreenfoundation.org](http://balkangreenfoundation.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/balkangf](https://facebook.com/balkangf)

**IG:** [instagram.com/balkangreenfoundation](https://instagram.com/balkangreenfoundation)

Balkan Green Foundation is a regional initiative established to advocate and promote sustainable development in the Western Balkans, specifically concentrating on a number of key topics such as sustainable economic development, environmental protection, energy development, and climate change. BGF works to advance sustainable development practices as ways to ensure and maximize opportunities for all people through policy advocacy and project developments in the region.

## ERA group

**Place:** Peja/Peć

**FB:** [facebook.com/eragroup](https://facebook.com/eragroup)

**IG:** [instagram.com/eragroupofficial](https://instagram.com/eragroupofficial)

ERA group is a non-governmental organization working in the field of nature conservation, as well as in research on the state of nature and protection of the endemic species of Balkan lynx. They run educational activities for the public on various topics related to the environment.

## Bear Sanctuary Prishtina (Vier Pforten)

**Place:** Mramor

**W:** [bearsanctuary-prishtina.org](https://bearsanctuary-prishtina.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/PylliiArinjvePrishtina](https://facebook.com/PylliiArinjvePrishtina)

**IG:** [instagram.com/bear\\_sanctuary\\_prishtina](https://instagram.com/bear_sanctuary_prishtina)

Bear Sanctuary Prishtina is part of Vier Pforten, a global animal welfare organization for animals under direct human influence, which reveals suffering, rescues animals in need and protects them. In Kosovo, the organization runs a Bear Sanctuary, as well as an Environmental Education Center with a mission to educate and raise awareness for animal welfare and environmental protection.

## Institute for Development Policy (INDEP)

**Place:** Prishtina/Priština

**W:** [indep.info](http://indep.info)

**FB:** [facebook.com/InstitutiINDEP](https://facebook.com/InstitutiINDEP)

**IG:** [instagram.com/indepofficial](https://instagram.com/indepofficial)

Established in 2011 as an association of policy analysts, researchers and civil society activists, INDEP looks at regional policies, aiming to guide countries of South-East Europe on their path to Euro-Atlantic integration. In Kosovo, the institute focuses on strengthening democratic governance, promoting sustainable development and playing the role of public policy watchdog.

## EcoZ

**Place:** Prishtina/Priština

**FB:** [facebook.com/Yecozone](https://facebook.com/Yecozone)

EcoZ is an organization that implements activities to protect and improve the environment as a valuable asset for the people in Kosovo. Their mission is to protect the people and the environment from harmful effects of pollution. The non-governmental organization is advocating for environment protection and raising awareness for water resource management, as well as advocating to national and international institutions for climate change mitigation and nature conservation. It aims to connect community members and decision-making institutions for nature protection.

## Let's Do It Peja

**Place:** Peja/Peć

**FB:** [facebook.com/LetsDoltPeja](https://facebook.com/LetsDoltPeja)

**IG:** [instagram.com/letsdoitpeja](https://instagram.com/letsdoitpeja)

Let's Do It Peja is an organization that is focusing on the waste management challenges. The organization is running clean up actions all around Kosovo, organizing educational activities about the environment and organizing activities to raise awareness on environmental issues.

## Organizata për mbrojtjen e mjedisit Gjethi

**Place:** Kaçanik/Kaçanik

**FB:** [facebook.com/ommgjethi](https://facebook.com/ommgjethi)

Organization that deals with raising awareness and protection of the environment. It is active in the Sharr Mountain with the protection of the National Park against the small-hydropower plants that are destroying the ecosystem of Lepenac river.

## EC Ma Ndryshe

**Place:** Prizren/Prizren

**W:** [ecmandryshe.org](https://ecmandryshe.org)

**FB:** [facebook.com/ecmandryshe](https://facebook.com/ecmandryshe)

**IG:** [instagram.com/ecmandryshe](https://instagram.com/ecmandryshe)

EC is engaged for a democratic governance and sustainable economy at the local level (as well as regional) through community mobilization, overseeing public decision-making and partnership in the implementation of development programs and policies. At the core of democratic governance lies the openness and involvement of all in decision-making aimed at the common good, while development planning requires the rational use of territorial resources, without compromising their usability by future generations.



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