

Heinrich Böll Stiftung magazine  
for south-eastern Europe  
N° 4 / 2010

# agenda



# agenda

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imprint

**published by:** Heinrich Böll Stiftung –  
Office for Bosnia and Herzegovina  
ekaluša 42, Sarajevo  
<http://www.boell.ba/>

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not to forget

## Deepwater Horizon - messages of an ecological catastrophe

Igor Matutinovi

*When disasters happen, however, the problems and efforts to repair them change from an issue of the private sphere to one of the public's, as the costs then fall upon taxpayers. The situation could be considered one where decisions are made within the private sphere while the public bears the actual risks.*

The collapse of an offshore oil rig pumping from a depth of almost two kilometers and the biggest environmental disaster in U.S. history raises many questions, a number of which are not irrelevant to Croatia. But let's get to the facts...

The offshore drilling rig Deepwater Horizon, operated and owned by British Petroleum, exploded and sank on April 20, 2010, resulting in the deaths of eleven workers. This also caused, at a depth of 1.5 km, in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico, a dramatic eruption of oil, natural gas and mud, which after a series of unsuccessful attempts was only brought under control three months later, on July 15, 2010, by capping the burst line with a steel dome. In the mean time, 750 million barrels of crude oil spilled into the ocean, causing grave damage to a variety of coastal and marine ecosystems, as well as local tourism and fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. Compared to the average spillage of the Exxon Valdez into Alaskan waters in 1989, when 42 million barrels of crude oil were spilled, the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico is the largest ocean oil spill to date.<sup>1</sup>

What made the disaster unique in an ecological sense was that the oil spill lasted for weeks and occurred along the ocean floor, at a depth of 1.5 km. The disaster raised completely new questions and concerns regarding the potentially harmful impact of oil on marine ecosystems. Scientists have discovered an unexpected, 35 km long oil slick under the ocean's surface moving through the gulf, bringing any organisms in its way into contact with harmful chemicals benzene, toluene, and ethyl benzene.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this toxicity, because of the increased presence and activity of microorganisms that break down oil, entire patches underwater may become dead zones because these areas might lack enough oxygen to support other marine species. Among the familiar effects of oil spills on ecosystems, 2,200 birds and 500 turtles have been killed, and 212 km of the Gulf Coast, in addition to peripheral wetlands around Louisiana, are more or less contaminated with oil.<sup>3</sup> It remains to be seen, however, what effects these toxic chemicals from the oil will have on larval and young marine organisms, or what long-term ecological effects will result from the chemicals first sprayed onto the surface to contain the original spills. The most recent estimates suggest the Gulfs ecosystems will suffer no permanent damage, but the details and extent of the last effects will only be established in years to come.

The case of Deepwater Horizon opens many questions that go beyond BP's corporate responsibility or Barack Obama's decision to place a six-month moratorium on offshore drilling. First, the question concerns the basic social desirability of extracting from ocean depths that prevent quick and efficient repair in case of damage or accident. On one hand, we are dealing with the use of a public space (the ocean) for a public purpose, as all of society makes use of the extracted oil. On the other hand, the entire venture is controlled by private companies who based their decisions on the interests of their shareholders, and in doing so can reveal themselves to be a rather poor protector of public interests. At the very least, short-term profit is placed before possible additional costs for the station's safety, assuming the low probability that a major problem would occur. When disasters happen, however, the problems and efforts to repair them change from an issue of the private sphere into the public's, as the costs then for the most part would fall upon taxpayers. The situation could be considered one where decisions are made within the private sphere while the public bears the actual risks.

Because of concerns over their irresponsibility in the Deepwater Horizon project, BP and its executives justifiably came under pressure from the public and the political leadership of the United States. A number of flaws and mistakes emerged, ranging from the quality of concrete and the

<sup>1</sup> Mascarelli, A. 2010. After the oil, *Nature* Vol. 467:2-24.

<sup>2</sup> BP Oil Spill Leaves a 22-Mile Plume Migrating in Gulf of Mexico, *Boomer.com*, 19.08.2010.

<sup>3</sup> The right spill response: cautious optimism about the Gulf's future, <http://blogs.ft.com/energy-source/2010/07/20/the-right-spill-response-cautious-optimism-about-the-gulfs-future/>

scheduling of safety checks of equipment to the poor design and construction of the rig itself, which was motivated more by cost-cutting than safety.<sup>4</sup> One future precaution could be to require companies to pay a deposit based on an assessment of the maximum possible damage in case of an environmental disaster, which would prompt them to devote more money and attention to safety issues.<sup>5</sup> However, because society as a whole has a vested interest in the benefits of oil extraction, which necessarily bears potential damage risks, this measure is neither economically nor ethically acceptable. In addition, even if the money for such an indemnity were secured in full, it would do little to actually reverse a disaster's possible long-term damage to ecosystems, landscapes, and the loss of the affected population's traditional sources of income.

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*Public risk cannot be fully transferred to the private sector through a system of financial regulations and fines, although both should definitely be strengthened. If our lifestyles in effect support energy exploration using risky methods in environmentally sensitive areas, we must make it a part of our civic responsibilities.*

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## ethics, worldviews and social choices

The two messages pressed upon us by the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico can be formulated into two propositions. The first proposition is that public risk cannot be fully transferred to the private sector through a system of financial regulations and fines, although both should definitely be strengthened. The second is that because our lifestyles in effect support energy exploration using risky methods in environmentally sensitive areas, we must be aware of its possible consequences and consciously make it a part of our civic responsibilities. If we are unwilling to bear these risks, then we must be willing to pay higher prices for energy and change our consumption habits accordingly. By expecting a continuous supply of cheap energy, we effectively transfer the risks and expenses to a private or state company, which is simply not socially ethical.

Therefore, it may be most ethical and socially responsible for the population to hold a referendum in which it would decide whether it wants to bear the environmental and economic risks of offshore drilling or comparable endeavors. In this way the problem of extraction of oil from remote or unconventional sites would shift from one of corporate governance to that of a prevailing worldview and public choice, with the conscious rejection or acceptance of specific risks. This approach could be applied to the extraction of unconventional oil (oil sands, heavy crude oil) in ecologically fragile areas such as northern Alaska or the Amazonian rainforest.

The question becomes whether Western society, with its long tradition of environmental protection, is willing to choose otherwise. Unfortunately, public opinion polls during the Gulf of Mexico crisis reveal the population to be unwilling to change their worldviews even after that environmental disaster: 48% of the population continues to support oil and gas exploration in the coastal areas of the United States, with 36% against, and 15% abstaining. In addition, a majority of respondents (52%) believe it is more important for the United States to be its own energy provider, and hence to increase drilling in coastal areas rather than protecting the environment.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, public opinion polls in the United States show that 94% believe it is very or somewhat important to them that national energy policy leads to low energy prices.<sup>7</sup> How deep, and how widely, must we drill in order to ensure enough oil for low prices? Clearly, there has yet to be a change in our worldview with regard to (excessive) energy consumption and the negative effects it has on ecosystems.

The question remains, however, whether such a shortsighted worldview is rational. Specifically, recent analyses and estimates indicate conventional oil reserves should peak between 2010 and 2014.<sup>8,9,10</sup> Although for a variety

of reasons this estimate is not entirely certain, the fact is that since 1963 there has been decline in the number of new sites, with the number having not risen since 1981.<sup>11</sup> According to recent estimates, the annual rate of decline in global conventional oil production is 4%, meaning that in the absence of new sites global production decreases by 3.4 million barrels a day.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, global demand for oil is predicted to increase 24% by 2030, from approximately 85mb/d in 2008 to 105 mb/d in 2030.<sup>13</sup> In other words, we find ourselves in a situation where our demand for additional oil can only be supplied through unconventional sources and offshore drilling. Given this reality, we cannot reasonably expect that large-scale environmental disasters like that in the Gulf of Mexico won't repeat themselves. And once these unconventional sites become unprofitable both economically and in terms of energy, we will once again find that our demand for oil exceeds available resources, only then our resources will be almost completely exhausted, and many ecosystems largely destroyed.

It can therefore be concluded that the most reasonable ways of seeking solutions for a post-oil civilization lie primarily in changing our worldview, and establishing institutions where public choice can be exercised with regard to energy production, the risks of which will ultimately borne at the level of the community.

## connections to the Druzba Adria project

The recently revamped Druzba Adria proposal can be regarded in this context. The venture involves the creation of an oil pipeline to Omisalj that would load onto tankers for further transport. Above all it is impossible to ignore the possibilities for damage from tankers to the coast, oil leakage at the loading port, or breaks in the pipeline, which passes through an area of karst and rich sources of drinking water. In addition there is the problem of ballast water and its possible adverse effects on the Adriatic ecosystem. Just as no one could have predicted the Gulf of Mexico disaster, so no one can insure in advance that the Adriatic Sea, and the Kvarner Bay in particular, is exempt from the potential for environmental damage. Although the average amount over ten years of oil leakage from tankers has been significantly reduced, there has been a large increase in oil spills from pipelines.<sup>14</sup> In addition, a considerable amount of spillage occurs during technical procedures – loading, ejection of oil sludge, and from the seawater used to wash tanks. Were damage brought, although even if not of huge proportions, it would inflict considerable harm that would affect the majority of us, and have adverse effects on tourism and fishing. Given the importance of the tourism industry in Croatia, the risk of course has social consequences, and citizens would bear both the direct and indirect costs in case a disaster occurred. Recent results of public opinion polls<sup>15</sup> show that 68% are for holding a referendum on oil transport through Omisalj, or the Druzba Adria project. On the basis of these results, it can be assumed that in Croatia there is a significant level of environmental awareness and unwillingness to accept the social risks of permanent pollution of the Adriatic sea, its island and coast, or karst springs.

When it comes to large, long-term projects that inevitably carry significant environmental and social risks, and where the primary costs and benefits are determined not only on an economic basis but include the community's general willingness to accept or reject those risks, a referendum is the best model for responsible social choices. Of course, the issue of a post-oil civilization does not exhaust the range of public areas or methods of extracting oil. Yet thinking and working in this manner can open and cultivate processes for social and political deliberation over the world we live in. As John Robinson put it beautifully, "Sustainability is ultimately an issue of human behavior, and negotiation over preferred futures, under conditions of deep contingency and uncertainty."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Backlash greets BP's internal report, September 8, 2010. *Financial Times*, [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)

<sup>5</sup> Costanza, R., D.Batker, J.Day, R. A. Feagin, M. L. Martinez, J.Roman, 2010. The Perfect Spill: Solutions for Averting the Next Deepwater Horizon. *Solutions*, <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com>

<sup>6</sup> AP-GfK Poll conducted by GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media. Aug. 11-16, 2010. N=1,007 adults nationwide. MoE ± 4.5. <http://www.pollingreport.com/energy.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research/National Journal Congressional Connection Poll, sponsored by the Society for Human Resource Management. July 29-Aug. 1, 2010. N=1 003 adults nationwide. MoE ± 4. [www.pollingreport.com](http://www.pollingreport.com)

<sup>8</sup> Aleklett, K. / Hook, M. / Jakobsson, K. / Lardelli, M. / Snowden, S. / Soderbergh, B., 2010. The Peak of the Oil Age? Analyzing the world oil production Reference Scenario in World Energy Outlook 2008, *Energy Policy*, 38 (3): 1398-1414. Nashawi, Ibrahim S., Adel Malallah, and Mohammed Al-Bisharah, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Forecasting World Crude Oil Production Using Multicyclic Hubbert Model. *Energy Fuels*, 24, 1788–1800 : DOI:10.1021/ef901240p.

<sup>10</sup> Owen, Nick, A., Oliver R. Inderwildi, David A. King, 2010. The status of conventional world oil reserves - Hype or cause for concern? *Energy Policy* doi:10.1016/j.enpol.2010.02.026

<sup>11</sup> M. Downey, Oil 101, Wooden Table Press, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> J. D. Hamilton, "Understanding Crude Oil Prices," *Energy Journal*, 30, no. 2 (2009):179-206.

<sup>13</sup> International Energy Agency (IEA), World Energy Outlook 2009 Fact Sheet, (2009), Available at: [www.iea.org/weo/docs/weo2009/fact\\_sheets\\_WEO\\_2009.pdf](http://www.iea.org/weo/docs/weo2009/fact_sheets_WEO_2009.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Jernel v. Arne, 2010. How to defend again future oil spills. *Nature* 466, 182-183.

<sup>15</sup> GfK Center for Market Research, 2010. Druzba Adria, N=1000, July 2010 [www.gfk.hr](http://www.gfk.hr)

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, J. (2004). Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development. *Ecological Economics*, 48, 369-384.



# spatial relations

## paving over biodiversity

Miodrag Daki \*

*Prenj is not just one of the many mountains in B&H you pass driving along the Sarajevo-Mostar road, and that you learned about in elementary school as one of your homeland's mountains visited by mountaineers and other nature lovers. Prenj is so much more, and has never been in greater danger since the arrival of man to this area.*



photo by: Dino Kasalo

### heart of the Dinaric Alps

Owing to its geographical position and natural heritage, Prenj mountain can be considered the heart of the Dinarides. At the same time, Prenj is the most important mountain in the "Prenj Endemic Center," which encompasses abulja and vrsnica. According to a previous study (Institute for the Protection of the Cultural and Historical Heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2001) 308 species have been registered as endemic to the Dinaric region, of which 44 are found in the area of Prenj- vrsnica-abulja alone.

Its natural wealth, as well the exploration of all of its qualities, was reflected in the September 2009 publication of research confirming the existence of a new subspecies of endemic amphibian, the Prenj Salamander (lat. Salamandra atra prenjensis). While we can only speculate as to how many more species of plant and animal life exist on Prenj, it is certain that Prenj is among the most valuable mountains in the Balkans.

### so why isn't Prenj protected?

All those who are at least partly informed on this issue likely ask themselves this same question. The fact is that those who are making the actual decisions rarely possess adequate information from relevant professional fields, and are rarely willing to listen to advice from independent experts and requests from local citizens, despite the fact that these decisions can have tremendous impact.

It is little-known that in April 2007 a draft law was prepared on the national parks of "Prenj" and " vrsnica- abulja-Vran"; according to many scientific experts, Prenj meets the very strict conditions for protection by UNESCO. The significance of this is that Prenj could be ensured a place in the Natura 2000 network of protected areas in the EU. However, although there are technical and legal grounds to protect this area from further destruction, there is a lack of the oft-mentioned "political will." Yet the lack of political will is not only the consequence of the lack of awareness among decision-makers on the profound importance and benefits of protecting natural treasures; there is also the factor of "force majeure."

### European plan

Under the pretext of spurring economic growth and supporting the creation of a single market in the European Union and its neighboring regions, in 1980 the concept of the Trans-European Transport Network, or TEN-T,<sup>1</sup> as it's commonly known, was created. The transport network was designed as an arterial network to promote the free and faster movement of goods, services and passengers. The transport network encompassed road, rail, river, sea and air transport.

Part of the transport network for South East Europe was defined in a document on transport and energy infrastructure in South East Europe<sup>2</sup> that was adopted in late 2001. The V.c Corridor is part of the Pan-European Corridor and is planned to link Budapest with the port of Ploce, passing through three countries: Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/ten/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/ten/index_en.html)

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/ten/infrastructure/doc/tren\\_se\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/ten/infrastructure/doc/tren_se_en.pdf)

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### "the most important project in B&H" its biggest threat

The total length of the corridor is 710 km, while the section passing through Bosnia and Herzegovina is 330 km. Initial estimates of the total cost of construction is 3.17 billion euros, but given past experiences this amount could increase considerably. According to the estimates, the least expensive sections to construct will be those connecting the Sava River to Doboj, where every kilometer of highway would cost 4.45 million euros, while the most expensive would be from Sarajevo to Mostar, where each kilometer of highway would cost 13.8 million euros. While probably even children in elementary schools in B&H have heard about the planned construction of the V.c highway, very few adults know its importance to B&H, where the planned route will actually go, or its price. Which is surprising, as a series of public hearings have been held on studies on the influence of the V.c highway on the environment and citizenry.

### and what does the public have to do with it?

In addition to various taxes and duties to pay and repay for the construction of the highway, regardless of whether it is in the form of direct-funding, a public-private partnership, the repayment of development and commercial loans or paying concessions, B&H citizens will feel the effects of the highway's construction and the permanent degradation of the areas along with highway's path.

Highways are among the largest infrastructural undertakings, hence the effects for the area along this path will be significant. Because of this, "good practices" were observed in B&H,<sup>3</sup> with analyses conducted on the possible impacts on the environment and populations in these areas, along with proposing measures to prevent or mitigate these impacts.

In theory, the mechanism of environmental impact assessment allows for the identification of negative impacts over time, and the prevention or mitigation of these impacts at the planning stage. In practice, however, it is very rarely the case that analysis reveals the actual situation, or that the correct measures are proposed to minimize negative impacts. This is not only the case in B&H, but in better organized countries as well.

*The clearest example of conflict between unspoiled nature and technological progress in the case of the V.c highway can be found in the region around Prenj. Prenj is an expansive area consisting of inaccessible terrain kilometers away from urban areas, populated only by animals, vegetation and a few old villages that are dying out, and consequently a place lacking the necessary political force to fight for its own future.*

An additional, aggravating factor in B&H is that the investor is required to fund the analysis; given the fact that the investor tends to want to reduce costs and maximize profit, it is clear the investor has a crucial influence over the firm enlisted to conduct the analysis. What makes the situation easier for the investor is that ministries responsible for environmental issues are 'instructed' by governments to interfere as little as possible with the realiza-

<sup>3</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/eia-legalcontext.htm>

tion of investments, while the public lacks adequate familiarity or interest with these issues.

Public debate over the adoption of the impact analysis of the V.c highway is held as a mere formality, rather than a means of identifying the negative effects of the highway's route on the local populations and environment. This is certainly aided by the fact that locals are unfamiliar with the options, albeit limited, that the process offers.

This situation has resulted in protests by citizens of Blagaj and Po itelj over individual sections of the planned highway south of Mostar, culminating in conflicts between Croat and Bosniak politicians in the Federation government, which for a short period resulted in gridlock. The residents of Blagaj and Po itelj rose in defense of agricultural and urban areas, cultural heritage and living standards, all of which are crucial to the development of these communities, and which can be better planned with the involvement of the local population. Meanwhile, the situation reaffirmed once again that people are driven to act only when property and employments rights within a given area come under threat.

However, the clearest example of conflict between unspoiled nature and technological progress in the case of the V.c highway can be found in the region around Prenj. Unlike Blagaj and Po itelj, Prenj is an expansive area consisting of inaccessible terrain kilometers away from urban areas, populated only by animals, vegetation and a few elderly villages that are dying out, and consequently a place lacking the necessary political force to fight for its own future. "Out of sight, out of mind," many would say.

## what is the solution?

On the one hand, the V.c highway route was adopted, while on the other hand three years worth of draft laws on the NP Prenj- vrsnica- abulja-Vran remain waiting in a drawer at the Federation Ministry of the Environment and Tourism. If a highway is built along the adopted route, Prenj will not be able to become a national park, nor a UNESCO protected site. Although the route was adopted, the examples of Blagaj and Po itelj suggest it is possible to change the route according to public interest. Experience demonstrates that countries deemed economically advanced have largely depleted their natural resources and destroyed their environments, and are now investing a huge amount of funds in an attempt to halt this destruction, and to rehabilitate compromised areas. B&H has no just reason nor the capacity to remedy poor political decisions, bearing in mind the country's difficult economic situation. It's much cheaper to accept changes to the project during its plan rather than deal with the consequences of poor planning.

Bearing in mind that the project plans and documentation for this section of the highway are still at a conceptual stage, as well as that because of the high construction costs (given the large number of bridges and tunnels) this section will probably be the last one built, re-designing the route for this section of the highway will not significantly affect the budget or timeframe of the project. It should be noted that several conditions should influence the final decision made. Given the global economic crisis, reduced reserves and other unforeseen changes to the price of oil, the future obligations of B&H on reducing greenhouse emissions, the incalculable environmental consequences, unfavorable financing models, etc., the question arises whether there is adequate justification for the construction of the V.c highway, especially this particular section, because the terrain it is planned to traverse will significantly increase the cost of construction.

Regardless of the economic justifications for building the highway through Prenj, there is no justification for the planned destruction of one of the largest natural resources in B&H. For current and future generations, this project would constitute a kind of "eco-cide." The fact that the residents of Blagaj and Po itelj succeeded in opening a formal debate on alternatives to the existing route indicated that organized citizens can still influence policy decisions in B&H, even when it comes to large projects such as the V.c highway.

## Prenj Initiative

The Prenj Initiative is a group of environmental associations, which, in July this year, initiated the "Hearts for Prenj" campaign. The initiative is open to the involvement of all interested legal entities, individuals, formal and informal groups, and non-governmental and governmental organizations. The main objectives of the Prenj Initiative are to urgently designate the areas of Prenj- vrsnica- abulja-Vran as national parks, as well as a public awareness campaign and advocacy, and to open professional and public discussion to find a resolution to the conflict, especially taking into consideration the long-term sustainability of the solutions adopted.

For more information, write to [inicijativa.za.prenj@gmail.com](mailto:inicijativa.za.prenj@gmail.com).

# spatial planning – another privatization plunder

Vjeran Piršič

*The logic of capital is profit maximization. What is controversial is the fact that, in the conflict between public (preservation of resources) and private (profit) interests, the political elites take the side of often speculative capital, thus invariably creating an opportunity for all investors' wishes to be drawn into our zoning plans.*

If only a decade or two ago someone told me that the main focus of my non-professional activities would be spatial planning, I would have called them crazy because, at the time, we considered zoning issues the domain of the dominant policy in 1930's Germany (Lebensraum) that I found so detestable. However, as I leapt headlong into activism trying to implement the "Družba Adria" project, the issue of space started to pop up in various places on the Adriatic coast.

In this article, I will try to elaborate on what Professor Ranko Bon refers to as "another privatization plunder in Croatia". As I live on the Adriatic coast and am involved in activism in that area, my focus will be primarily determined by that fact, though I believe that the analysis of the social pathology around spatial management can be applied to a broader context. Namely, the public is aware of this issue mostly through its manifestations, by seeing its consequences, when it is generally too late for any kind of serious intervention. In this article, I will try to focus on the roots of the problem which is, typically for us, insufficiently discussed. Namely, most discussions about space are limited to two basic levels: actual projects that have been implemented (resulting, for example, in overbuilding), and/or zoning principles and/or solutions. Instead of this, in order to fully comprehend and possibly solve the obvious problem of space management, it is necessary to try to penetrate deeper into this issue and get to the bottom of this problem.

## zoning – for whose benefit?

I personally became aware of the (possible) roots of this problem in autumn 2005, when I became councilor of the municipality Omišalj on the island of Krk. As with many local government units, zoning appeared on our agenda. It is here important to point out that the zoning plan is the single most important document a local government unit issues, the backbone of space management, because it essentially articulates and directs the strategy for the development (or deterioration) of an area for a number of years. Additionally, the zoning plan protects the environment, because every (potential) polluter has to be pointed out in the plan long before the procedure for the evaluation of its impact on the environment is initiated and any permits are issued.

Let us go back to the autumn of 2005. When these discussions started, I asked a basic question: how many of us need to live on the island Krk? Is it 20.000, as is currently the case in winter, is it 125.000, currently the number of people there in the summer, or is it perhaps 425.000, the number of people that quite successfully live on Malta (which is slightly smaller than Krk)? I am still waiting for an answer to this question, because here (in the decision making process) this fundamental step has simply been skipped. Because once this is thought through and this fundamental decision is made through a democratic dialog among all stakeholders (at the policy level), consequently zoning plans for all levels can be developed without many problems (at the strategic level) and the appropriate location, construction and other permits can be issued (at the implementation level). It is important to point out that I failed to find an appropriate Croatian translation for the English word "policy". The word "politika" which is often used is inadequate, because "politika" essentially only implements the "policy". The lack of an adequate translation is not accidental, because we are essentially not familiar with this form of decision making primarily because, in the previous authoritarian society, this was neither appreciated nor stimulated. Instead, in the pre-war regime we (too) often faced the Party's arbitrary decision making with regard to development plans and guidelines, the decisive factor often being that an official was born in a certain area (that would then be envisaged for development) or, if enough enemies of the state came from a certain area, it would then be condemned to decades-long stagnation). Due to the lack of the abovementioned component of policy decision making, investors have insinuated themselves. For the sake of understanding this issue, it is extremely important

to realize that this has resulted in mistaken notions, as it is now already taken for granted that any investment means development (without acknowledging the possibility that an investment of speculative capital, for example, also entails possible expenditures, as well as the destruction of extremely important resources such as space, water, biodiversity...). The current economic crisis, aside from diminishing the potential for investments, has even more so resulted in the fetishizing of any investment, even the most controversial ones in terms of the environment. It is important here to understand the logic of capital and accept that the imperative of any manager (and not just the neoliberal ones) is the maximization of profit. What is controversial in this context is the fact that, in the conflict between public (preservation of resources) and private (profit) interest, the political elites that fully control executive power increasingly often side with capital which is frequently speculative, thus creating an

*Due to the lack of policy decision making, investors have insinuated themselves, presenting every investment as development – although, for example, speculative investments can entail expenditures and even the destruction of extremely important resources like space, water, biodiversity...*

opportunity for investors' wishes to be invariably drawn into our zoning plans. The whole mess is additionally exacerbated by future investors' fully legal (but clearly non-legitimate) financing of election campaigns. It is important to point out that, in our country, public debate has been reduced to a mere joke, as all the complaints of citizens are regularly rejected.

## a democratic deficit in spatial management

Nowadays in Croatia there are more than enough examples to substantiate this claim. But the worst of all is that true space devastation has yet to come, because the new, relatively recent, generation of zoning plans (issued in the past several years) has cleared the way for spatial devastation on a spectacular scale. Namely, according to Joško Belamari, a renowned art historian from Split: "All the generations so far, from the Illyrians to date, have built a total of 850 kilometres of coast and, with these new plans, almost 1,550 kilometres out of a total of 6,000 kilometres of coast will be paved with concrete."

We should once again go back to the policy level and determine what went wrong. For those who have a good insight into how this society works, especially at the local community level, there is no dilemma; it is an inevitable consequence of democratic deficit and the lack of participatory democracy on all levels. In addition to this, the political elites at the lower levels of government are of the opinion that the main motivation for participating in local government is acquiring material gain for oneself and one's family members; here, things that in decent countries would be considered conflict of interest are quite common, so we have an example of a municipality granting their councillor a concession for renting boats on the coast, another councillor getting a concession for maintaining street-lighting etc.

The logical question is: "What can be done about this?" This question was repeatedly brought up on various panels, association meetings and public debates. Essentially, there are two simple, but extremely efficient solutions. First, it is important that a discussion on national level be initiated on what the vital (strategic) resources of the people of this area are (the space itself, water, forests, unpolluted environment...) and how their sustainable management can be achieved. This discussion should be further extended to lower levels, especially in cases where the resource in question is vital because of its quantity/quality. Afterwards, at least for some segments of the space, all available existing tools should be utilized for making as good decisions as possible with the primary goal of achieving an acceptable balance of public and private interest. By this I primarily mean the procedures for implementing strategic evaluations for the impact on the environment. This has been built into our country's legislation (because of the obligations dictated by the EU) but, in practice, the state administration, after the pilot project for the Šibenik general zoning plan, effectively decreased the possibility of its application.

Can these two solutions be implemented in practice? Technically, the answer is yes. But the real question is whether the public, who has been successfully lobotomized by football, reality show programs and soap operas, even wants it (they are clearly not demanding it). The whole thing is exacerbated by the fact that many of our politicians have a very pronounced neo-colonial gene. Because of this, unless there is a revolutionary breakthrough primarily in the minds of people, we can expect that space, one of the most valuable resources, will soon be wastefully

spent not for the benefit of the local population (or even the nation, people, country...), but primarily for the gain of speculative capital which has already clearly indicated interest in specific locations, especially along the Adriatic coast. When this finally becomes clear to a sufficient number of former "self-managers", it will be too late...

## current attitudes towards "space" and environmental protection – sustainable growth in Serbia (1)

Sonja Prodanovi \*

Do you know how to speak to the Land, my brother?  
Do you listen to what it tells you?  
Can you take from it no more than what you need?  
Can you keep its secrets to yourself?  
We pray to all Nature and do it no harm.  
Some part of ourselves  
Is in Earth and Sky and everywhere!

*(Native American chief's song "Hollering Sun")*

*The growing poverty, worsening of living conditions, poor health conditions and illiteracy/lack of training of marginal groups are definitely not foundations upon which a serious and effective environmental protection strategy, that is, economic transition based on "sustainable growth" principles, can be developed.*

## context

Nowadays, in a post-conflict, still inadequately implemented transitional model of society (in terms of economy, property-rights and social aspects), the negative consequences of a decade of destruction between 1988 and 1999, followed by a decade characterized by chaotic attempts at establishing democratic parliamentarism and sovereignty in Serbia have not manifested themselves in socioeconomic turbulences alone (dramatic social and territorial disintegration, increases in poverty, high illiteracy rates and the deterioration of living conditions of at-risk marginalized groups); we are afraid it has visibly taken a physical toll on Serbia's space.

The growth in conurbation along the right bank of the Danube from Novi Sad to Smederevo and down south to Mladenovac, as well as towards Sremska Mitrovica and Šabac, has gathered almost 60% of the population (with a high percentage of refugees and local and repatriated Roma, the actual current population figures remain unknown). The territory today is characterized by the sprawl model and predominantly illegal building (amounting to 100,000 constructions), mostly on agricultural land. Former industrial mid-size and small towns are literally dead with "empty" territory and villages "abandoned or populated by the elderly" between them. The scars of the ruined mega-industrial zones, like Bor, Pančevo and the open-pit lignite mines in Kostolac and Lazarevac still remain Serbia's "ecological black spots" that have yet to be rehabilitated.

We have very little summarized and systematized information of the consequences of Serbia's involvement in wars in the wider region, the NATO bombing, as well as the damages caused by a series of floods in Vojvodina and the valley of the Morava, as well as the great environmental disasters like the one in Romania or, more recently, Hungary. But the combination of these things is visible, as are the damages inflicted by the already forgotten earthquakes Mionica has not yet recovered from, as well as the most recent ones in Kraljevo.

The dysfunctional, "entrapped", centralized and patrimonial state has demonstrated its inability to manage the entirety of its territory, but what is alarming above all is its inability to initiate appropriate social and economic

\* M. Sci. (UCL), dipl.ing. arch.



programs that unemployed workers, youth and the elderly in towns and villages desperately need. The problem of the growing poverty, worsening of living conditions, poor health conditions and illiteracy/lack of training of marginal groups (12% of the population) are definitely not foundations upon which a serious and effective environmental protection strategy, or rather, economic transition based on sustainable growth principles, can be developed.

## the origins of zoning

Serbia had a lot of experience in zoning (as part of ex-Yugoslavia) characterized by a social-realist, centralized zoning system. During this period, Serbia had to deal with all the limitations and difficulties connected to the nature of the specific socio-political state model; the radical ownership rights (the built-in conflicts of confiscation, nationalization and the attempts at collectivization in the countryside), professional arbitrariness and, even at that point, pronounced inequality in the treatment of the center and the periphery (the state capital vs. the capital of individual republics), between towns and rural areas, and the underdeveloped, marginalized areas of the south (there being a pronounced development dichotomy between north and south, developed and undeveloped areas).

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*The general lack of relevant information and strategic planning perspectives, combined with the system's, or rather the state's failure to adequately implement them, has resulted in a boom of chaotic and arbitrary urbanization dictated by "investors' demands."*

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The prevalent zoning pattern at the time was (and remains) of a physicalist-functional nature. Decisions on resource allocation and development plans are often unrealistic, not based on the actual needs, possibilities or limitations of certain locations or social structures. As in the previous regime, they still remain in the hands of the political elite (often unprofessional, now full of tycoons).

Even though issued in such a context, the zoning plans did not play a decisive role in Serbia's spatial development, as illegal building sites would even then spring up (the best example of this is the Kaluđerica neighborhood outside of Belgrade).

Later on, the following social context, with all the changes it brought, failed to instigate radical, reformatory criticism of the previous model. Development is now characterized by the new populist politics that manifest itself in non-transparent privatization and an inconsistent and poorly legally regulated market economy based on the concept of national, ethnic territorial units. The new Zoning Law, effective between 1995 and 2003, failed to make any substantial theoretical breakthroughs, was never even implemented, nor was able to serve as the appropriate framework for the dramatic changes in society and the economy, political positioning in the region or EU integrations.

The Republic of Serbia's Zoning Plan was issued in 1996, after 28 years of meticulous, though overly sector-oriented studies. It was adopted as the "umbrella" legislative document, which laid out attitudes towards space and within it, which was used to regulate the issue of environmental protection and the utilization of natural and artificial resources.

But even at the time, this document was antiquated, missing the relevant, critical new theories and vital transitional reformatory strategies. The development models it proposed were supposed to de facto improve "the quality of life", including "the quality of the living environment," whatever that meant in that pre-transitional period, especially during the war followed by international isolation.

The general lack of relevant information and strategic planning perspectives, combined with the system's, or rather the state's failure to adequately implement them, has resulted in a boom of chaotic and arbitrary urbanization dictated by "investors' demands." This has resulted in a growth of conurbation on a part of the territory and the devastation of the east, south and central parts, followed by a great destruction and overburdening of resources (both urban and natural).

At the time, the term sustainable growth was still not in use, although there were heated arguments among experts whether "protecting the environment" extended to the so-called environmental media: water, air, land, biodiversity and noise, or if it should also embrace the problems synergetically caused by the models of exploitation and living, location and resources (both natural and artificial). The advocates of this holistic approach were even then pointing to the newly created "quality of life

indexes by the UNDP and OECD and the need to include "quality of health" of the "affected" population as well as the quality and models of urbanization, in addition to the issues of protection of identity, natural and artificial (monuments) resources and landscapes. Later there were talks about the new demands and the necessity for ratifying basic international



documents, directives and protocols which is a condition for European integration. (There is still no clear consensus about these issues, so the problem of zoning documents remains neglected)

Serbia's zoning plan is still effective, although it is undergoing revision, with studies carried out for the development of a new zoning plan. Many issues, especially with regard to state borders and the authority and status of Kosovo, as well as the model and legal status of local government units and the decentralization and regionalization of Serbia, remain unresolved.

Preparations and reforms for possible EU integration were initiated as early as 2000. They met great obstacles and were terminated in March 2003. There are still serious stagnations in many areas, not just when it comes to urbanization and zoning, which in the new system is an important sector of the society and economy as a whole. However, even back then the new Zoning and Construction Law was perceived as a serious step towards harmonizing local zoning systems with the relevant EU directives towards meeting their demands.

(the second and final part of the article will be published in the next issue)

# more space for rivers

Kruno Kartus\*

*Construction-related and technical terms dominate the discourse. The beauty of our rivers, the richness of their biodiversity, the authenticity of our scenery, backwaters, meanders, flood forests and the general connection between the nature next to the river with the water within it are deemed less important than the problem that needs to be solved: floods.*

Every time high tidal waves descend on the Danube, Sava or Drava and flood over a settlement or merely frighten the public with their high water level before draining off, Croatian politicians start announcing new hydro-technical construction works, which will cost several billions, or tens, maybe hundreds of millions, it doesn't matter. The citizens concerned for the safety of their property were informed after a cabinet meeting held on October 1st that, by 2013, 380 million kuna would be invested in a flood defense system. Prior to this, according to the media, the director of Croatian Waters, Jadranko Husari, had said that this would take triple the amount, a billion kuna (around 150 million Euro). The following statement was later released in the press: "All in all, finishing the entire flood defense system for the Sava river basin and achieving water regime control would cost more than 6.3 billion kuna." This amounts to six times the sum, only for the Sava basin.

Average, as well as more informed readers who then think of the annual budget of approximately two billion kuna can hardly make sense of these sums, never having seen so much money and hardly being able to picture it. They rarely encounter operations that cost that much, which are performed with construction machinery, excavators and carried out mostly outside cities and villages, in nature, on rivers and canals where only the occasional fisherman sets foot. In the meantime, local commissions in charge of evaluating damages stated that the spring floods in the Osijek-Baranja county have alone swept over a billion kuna worth of property away, and the damages caused by the autumn flooding of the Sava in the vicinity of Zagreb have yet to be calculated.

So how much does a system whose embankments burst twice this year and whose canals spilled over cost? All the media and politicians are now trying to tackle this issue. In the spring, only Croatian Waters were brought up, but as the water came near Zagreb, the Prime Minister, Jadranko Kosor, also faced public censure. "There have been some omissions," she admitted and everyone agreed that more construction work needed to be done. The canals that overflowed the soaked arable lands of Slavonia reminded everyone of the forgotten, now mostly dried up landscape that once consisted of swamps, winding rivers and marshlands. The Croatian Society for the Protection of Birds and Nature, Baobab, the Eco Society, as well as part of the natural-science community flooded the media with letters talking about a big con, skewed logic, antiquated thinking and a flawed system, trying to convey the fact that this big business costs nature the most, and if animals, plants and the environment are not enough, it also impacts people's quality of life. Because those billions have been allocated

for the construction of dams, regulating watercourses, river banks "development", construction of embankments, accumulation, construction work along river banks, redirecting river-beds...

Technical terms dominate this vocabulary, which suits the employees of Croatian Waters. The beauty of our rivers, the richness of their biodiversity, the authenticity of our scenery, backwaters, meanders, flood forests and general connection between the nature next to the river with the water within it are deemed less important than the problem that needs to be solved: floods.

*Croatian Waters is trying to canalize a river similar to the ideal they are trying to achieve in Emscher, an undertaking demanding enormous sums of money, in order to prevent the river bank from imploding at a section where railroad tracks pass. This would surely diminish the dangers of flooding; the only question is how sustainable this system is, who is going to pay for it and for how long, as well as what the nature of the damages that we are now causing is and how much are they going to cost us overall.*

## simple existence of nature instead of "watercourse management"

After two years of research conducted between 2007 and 2009, a team from the German Ministry of the Environment reported that the flood protection system is faultily designed, claiming it was an example of antiquated thinking. A system which perceives nature as an enemy it needs defense from ("defense against floods"), which is so ugly that needs to be managed ("watercourse management"), is a matter of the past for the European Union, and to which this community will never return. It has reached a point in which the very existence of nature can be appreciated without it being harnessed for profit. This new, and for the right bank of the Drava unknown, approach is elaborated in the EU Water Framework Directive. Attempts have been made for years to harmonize local regulations with this directive. The German experts recommended in the project implementation report for this directive that "Croatian Waters must make the protection of waters their priority," openly referring to the ecological message "more space for rivers." Furthermore, they criticized Croatian Waters because "they have to start perceiving water as a natural resource that needs to be protected." The report is a year old and it still has not reached the public in the way the discussion of the floods and Croatian Waters' responsibility for their intensity has. It is easier to make accusations that the current system is not being sufficiently implemented, rather than reconsidering whether it is any good in the first place and replacing it with a more efficient one. That is why this report repeatedly points out the need for changing the mind-set of Croatian Waters and for "integrating ecological aspects" within the flood protection system and that "renaturalization and reactivation of alluvial plains have to be integrated within measures for the protection of waters." Instead of this, Croatian water management is dominated by traditional hydro-technical operations, based on construction works.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Water Management, as the administrative-political controller of this system, does not have a sufficient number of employees or the expertise to monitor on-field developments.

Prirodna obrana od poplava efikasna, jeftina



Obrana od poplava regulacijom. Vrlo skupa, neefikasna. uzrokuje katastrofalne poplave.

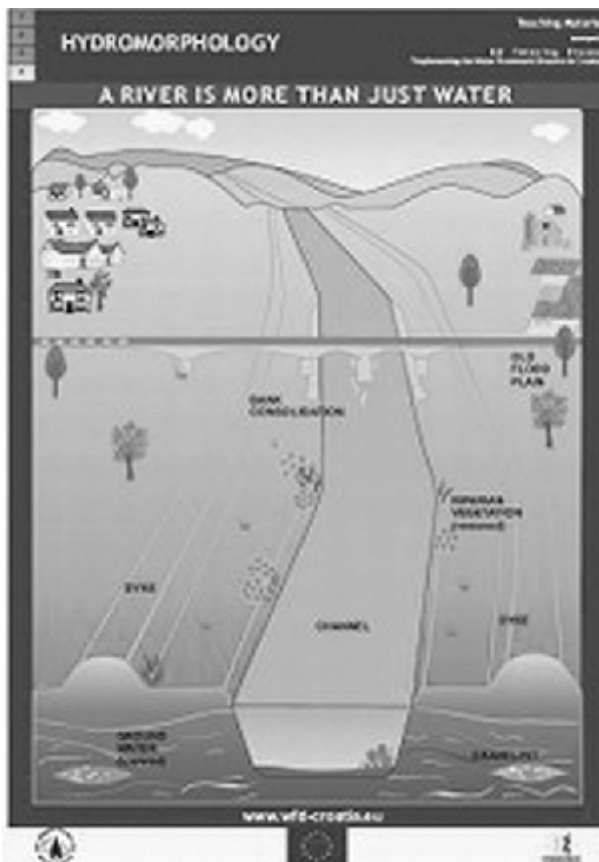


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A



B

How the EU a) envisions its rivers, b) does not envision its rivers:  
[www.wfd-croatia.eu](http://www.wfd-croatia.eu)

The salaries of civil servants are too small, so people opt for jobs in the more generous state or privately owned companies. If they have to operate with an insufficient number of employees there is no need for their authorities to be fragmented, but this is precisely the case when it comes to our ministries in charge of nature. The authorities of water management have been divided among the Ministry of Regional Development, Forestry and Water Management, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (in charge of EU reports, estimations of the impact on the environment, physical planning), the Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure (in charge of coastal waters management), as well as the Ministry of Culture which, for yet unknown reasons, has been assigned to deal with nature protection and management.

In September last year, a symposium on the principle “more space for rivers” was held in Zagreb, where the Austrian Mario Sommerhäuser held a lecture titled “Joining Forces: Protection of Rivers and Flood Management” about the changing trends in Europe. In it, he laid out three challenges: the good ecological status of surface waters, evaluation of biological components, good water quality and hydromorphology. Unlike Croatian waters, 60 to 80 percent of European waters’ hydromorphological status falls short of “good.” This is why they have embarked on restoration projects like that of Emscher in Ruhr in western Germany, where the process of bringing back the natural scenery that was being destroyed by heavy industry the entire last century has been underway for years. Steel and coal, mines and vast settlements have destroyed the enormous swamp, turning the water landscape into an open sewer network. Watercourses that were mapped out with rulers are now being transformed into wide streams meandering between settlements and within them. The green space along the river banks is being expanded and forests, bushes and meadows are being planted. In such new rivers, reconstructed according to their original appearances, the rising water level will flow over the forested area and the increased water area will attract new species of animals and plants.

Croatia is doing the opposite. The fight over whether the Veliki Pažut area, where the Mura flows into the Drava, should be regulated, or whether the project should be abandoned altogether, has been going on for months. Luckily, in the middle of this year, the Ministry of Culture refused Croatian Waters’ proposal of environmental protection measures, because the area in question is the habitat of numerous protected bird species. Croatian Waters is trying to canalize a river similar to the ideal that they are trying to achieve in Emscher, an undertaking demanding enormous sums of money, in order to prevent the river bank from imploding at a section where railroad tracks pass. This would surely diminish the dangers of flooding. So the principle “less space for rivers” can be equally legitimate as long as the same or similar effect is achieved. The only question is how sustainable such a system is, who is going to pay for it and for how long and how much overall the damages that we are now causing will cost us.

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# in search for the alternative

## colours of the alternative – green?

It is a time of crisis – that is now widely known. In reality, it has taken a long time for those leading our countries' politics to make this admission, but now this can no longer be denied. Moreover, awareness of the general crisis has now become a good explanation why things, which generally “do not work” - “do not work”; we do not have a coherent and realistic development strategy – well, it is the time of crisis, and when in crisis, the backbone for longtime perspective does not exist; there are no reliable and socially responsible public services, social protection, as well as many other necessities – but, for heaven's sake, we are in a crisis, so who can expect good and stable conditions; many rights have been threatened, primarily – but not solely – social, and this is one of the main manifestations of the crisis, so what else is there to expect?

The crisis is something overwhelming, bigger and stronger than the forces that run the society, something that leaves an impression of objective necessity and quasi-natural disaster. The crisis seems to be introducing a state of emergency of sorts at the back door, for the circumstances are such that one cannot expect the institutions to have control over the situation and act in accordance with the regular procedures. On the other hand, giving prognoses and promises on when the crisis may end is easy, because many fears and there is a lot of wishful thinking exist, while the criteria have been shattered. Thus, there is a talk on exiting the crisis, but not on overcoming it. We have promises instead of programs for addressing the situation.

Clearly, the fact that the crisis is global goes in favor of the impression that it is immense, that it has a fate-shaping capacity, and that the powers of the local political actors for dealing with it are insufficient, but one should not fall under this impression. Global comparisons show that different countries handle the crisis differently and get by differently. However, this is not conditioned only by their place on the scale of world power; rather, it has something to do with the domestic politicians and with the way in which the entire society approaches the issue. Crisis – when the word is used in different fields, from medicine to economy – is not the same as powerless decline or insurmountable disaster, instead it is the either – or situation: an organism, society or state will either find strength for a change, or it will completely decline. This is why a crisis is a the true context for raising questions concerning the alternative – an alternative to the existing concepts of development (if any exist), an alternative to the prevailing ways of handling social affairs, an alternative to all those who handle the affairs. At the risk of sounding pathetic, one could say that the time of crisis and the critical time are also the right time for engaged criticism and finding solutions and mobilizing the society.

Therefore, a crisis is not a crisis unless there is an alternative, or at least until clashes and divisions within or against the ruling circles have created another side that will seek an alternative. Without that, there is only a decline. It should be noted that the majority of the society did not become aware of the crisis until economic difficulties appeared: when the possibilities of losing a job increased (or never even finding it), when entering new businesses became risky, when those doing business with the state (whatever that may mean) or those depending on its funding, unless they belong to the privileged classes, could no longer rely on the past level of security... However, it remains popular to describe crises as situations of great difficulty without an alternative perspective. In terms of the alternative, the dominant impression is that the existing governments, together with the suite of politicians, experts and others surrounding them, are not capable of making a change.

However, it still remains an open issue whether societies facing an acute crisis merely expect changes to come from the ruling or the opposition establishment, or whether they are capable of engendering an alternative on their own. In the established democracies, in which powerful interest groups exist (the classical division to at least two groups: corporate capital and organized labor and other employees, with further differentiations and regrouping), differences between the most influential political parties have for a long time been significant enough to provide a real, or at least a theoretical possibility for an alternative to the ruling politics. Still, it has



occurred in certain situations of crises that the society has given rise to pressures, far greater than the regular political expression of interests. This happened when (then new) social movements pushed to the agenda issues concerning the menacing spiral of nuclear armament, threats to the natural living conditions and mass threats to life by the global exploitative division of labor. Such movements, besides enabling the constant presence of social actors in the shaping of political will, also enabled some forms of direct intervention into politics, the most lasting and famous being the “green” parties.

Such movements and their followers have in the past few decades, more or less successfully, proven that the contemporary global society is threatened by many other kinds of crisis, apart from economic, but such threats can be understood if seen in longer time periods, longer than the economic cycles, and in the extents wider than the capitalist states, which do not see the suffering their development causes in the poor parts of our planet.\* Post-Yugoslav societies are in a paradoxical situation: they are powerless and dependent on the political power, so they have to expect “more” from their political elites, and, keeping in mind that those elites are not burdened by social responsibility of any kind, the societies can expect from them far less than the capitalist societies in the established democracies.

Is there a need for an alternative? The Agenda has turned for answers to many collocutors, and has asked them several informal questions:

- After several election cycles, a configuration of political parties that control the majority of voters has mainly been set in the political arena. Are there any significant problems, interests or values that have not been covered, that are even invisible to that configuration?
- A cynical attitude prevails towards the established parties, according to which they are not socially responsible (as representatives of interests of different social groups); rather, they have been using the fact that the political sphere still dominates the entire social life. Can one imagine, in the present circumstances, an alternative to such a political establishment, not only in the form of another party, but in the form of alternative politics – a party or parties which would represent certain social groups and their interests, or some important generalizable values like social solidarity, human rights, protection of the environment, etc.?
- What place could what we refer to as “green politics” have in such an alternative? Are issues such as the protection of the environment, human rights (of all “generations”), quality of life... politically relevant? Do they, at least potentially, have the strength of political mobilization – both in terms of social interest and in terms of the abilities and capabilities of the potential leaders?

Answers that follow show a wide spectrum of insights – into the needs, opportunities and difficulties.

*srđan dvornik*

\* *agenda* have already written on the topic. Compare Ž. Puhovski, „Preliminary remarks on the nature of ‘green’ politics”, No. 3/2010.



## a rare opportunity

Žarko Puhovski

*As ethno-political patterns have started to weaken, alternative programs (with the partial exception of certain social programs, spurred by the acute crisis) did not gain that much strength as the ever more popular moralizing, which perceives politicians and “politics” simply as symbols of evil.*

0. Any serious political analysis within the context set by these issues does not allow the “region” to be mentioned in a self-evident way. Simply put, only in Croatia has a party *ikebana* been established, which – at least nominally – reflects the widely accepted standards of “developed democracies”, thus only in Croatia are we able, in principle, to discuss the possibilities for a “green” option compatible with what can be seen – alongside with all the colossal differences – in communities in which parliamentary democracy functions (utter chaos in how parties view themselves has resulted in, for example, the Greens of Serbia officially representing themselves as a party of “social-democratic orientation”).

1. The transition political dynamics (with negligible exceptions) has undoubtedly led to an “overrepresentation” of ethno-political positions in political practice, just as it is entirely evident that awareness in Croatia concerning the issue of the environment has still not become an important integral part of the party-political functioning (partly not even of the party platforms). As ethno-political patterns have started to weaken, alternative programs (with the partial exception of certain social programs, spurred by the acute crisis) did not gain that much strength as the ever more popular moralizing, which perceives politicians and “politics” simply as symbols of evil.

2. This moralizing has allowed a progressive depoliticization of voters and has increased the number of those who are no longer prepared to vote at the elections. An increasing number of citizens view parties as no more than interest groups – in an utterly primitivized material manner which is tirelessly recycled by the formative “media” – profiting both financially and politically from such dealings. What is being sought after as a political “alternative” are certain political platypuses, anti-political politicians (hence the proliferation of “independent intellectuals”, unionists, activists and similar figures who offer their political services to the nation on a daily basis).

3. Under such circumstance, the “green politics” have a serious chance at the next Croatian elections; this to such an extent that at the next elections, unlike the situation we have had so far, “green” issues will be an integral part of practically all election platforms. However, the situation is entirely different regarding a potential “green” party, which, in principle, could exploit this (together with the fact that, by logical assumption, it would gather politicians who have not been tempted by corruption, still, this political option would have to cautiously – if at all – use such popular “leaders”). In terms of organization, the “greens” are significantly weaker, simply by virtue of the fact that only some ten months remain until the next elections, which is not enough for a successful organization of a party, without which it is impossible to achieve success at the parliamentary elections. This is unfortunate because such a set of circumstance will hardly be repeated: approx 30% percent of citizens who are in principle willing to – at least rudimentarily – participate in political life think that they have no one to vote for.

## the greens between needs and reality

Zoran Gavrilovi \*

*If one removes from the image of the Serbian society the layer created by the current transition, one spots the need for a new political force that would bring back integrity to both politics and political action. And this would be the foundation of ideological re-development of political life, now reduced to de-ideologized projects by parties in power.*

A wave of green politics is spreading across (Southeast) Europe. However, just like any other wave, it also hits the shore and leaves it (just) soaked. This metaphor is the best description of the process of creation of a green political community, not only in Serbia, but also in most other countries of the Yugo-sphere. And it is this point that this text will focus on: an analysis of

the encounter of global views and local communities, as well as possibilities for political and party action.

It is easy to see all that social research has shown: in Serbia, it is wrong to equate environmental and green communities, or rather, to be more clear: we want clean streets and parks, but we do not protest discrimination of the Roma, who are mainly those who actually clean those streets and parks. To this, one should add a particular type of environmental conservatism, reflected in equation of ecology, green ideas and the nature cult, which is for many environmentalists a way to preserve ethno-nationalism.

The citizens accept green values in a particular way, from the ego vantage point, since most of them do want justice, fairness, tolerance, non-discrimination and a better environment for themselves, and the other and the different are not seen as having the same rights. Perhaps this ego option is acceptable for making the Serbian society green, since the cumulative ego views may engender green values – if only most of those citizens did not want those rights to be won by someone else but not someone different.

And there's a dilemma now: what is next? The needs are there, since a society that is not part of the global processes becomes their victim. On the other hand, the atmosphere is unfavorable, i.e. it requires responses to the (eternal) dilemma whether to use the means of political culture and structures in discord with the fundamental principles of green ideology, for the sake of the desired change? The history of social development and modernization as the aim of Serbia and the neighboring states are of authoritarian-state type, be it in terms of introduction of the rule of law, party pluralism or the free market (1830-1941; 1990-...), be it in terms of socialist modernization (1945-1990).

In light of all this, what should the 'imaginary green activist' opt for? And this is the dilemma we want to put on the agenda of an 'imaginary green community' in Serbia. If and when possible, what kind of political-party green action may be possible in Serbia, to attain the ideals of green ideology, rather than to become morally questionable?

One of the solutions that this author thinks about rather than advocates is a self-controlled party action based on the respect for political culture and infrastructure, utilizing it in a way that would allow for promotion and implementation of green values, with clear political self-control by the 'imaginary party of green provenance'. The attractiveness of this model rests in the fact that it is based on two simultaneous processes. The first is green politicization, promotion and implementation of green ideology as a relevant subject in the political life of Serbia, and the second is 'political strengthening of a green political actor'. This strengthening would entail resistance to any abuse of privileges and benefits brought by politics and political action in Serbia, considered to be the accepted political methodology. An 'imaginary green political actor' would thus be in a position to use authority to effect change, but also to become authoritarian itself, i.e. if it becomes authoritarian, it must re-socialize itself through the political process.

This type of political asceticism and temptation may trigger the kind of change that society would support. Namely, if one removes from the image of the Serbian society the layer created by the current transition, one spots the need for a new political force that would bring back integrity to both politics and political action. And this would be the foundation of ideological re-development of political life, now reduced to de-ideologized projects by parties in power. And this is the third social dimension of change, which would be the consequence of self-controlled green action of this imaginary party.



\* sociologist



## the compromises of green policies in BiH

Džemila Agi \*

*We can underscore, however cautiously, the positive changes in the areas of respect for human rights and diversity, sustainable management of human, natural and other resources, and we want to believe that this has been the result of global solidarity, which does change each individual and reflects on socio-political processes.*

On one hand, it is unlikely that Bosnia and Herzegovina – established on the basis of the Dayton compromise, comprising two state-like entities with nationally ideologized political parties running them, with limited workspace in the election cycle – would accept or initiate processes leading it towards long-term perspectives of a green policy. And on the other hand, it is exactly this alternative policy that could be an excellent opportunity to create a common party-political front, which could play a prominent role in building a dynamic, democratic future of our state. In their mission statements, civil society organizations declare their dedication to a supposed long-term, flexible and substantive internal change and social action, which is the fundamental strategy of a green option, but they have a hard time implementing it. Some of them are not even aware of their own potentials, whereas others test successfully the nascent green policy programs and act boldly in designing sustainable policies in BiH.

Divided into ethnic categories and burdened by the economic reality, the citizens are beginning to recognize the disastrous impact of state policies on them, as well as the possibilities for creative departures from party-based views, mainly through civil society institutions. Only a more active attitude and participation in the processes taking place around them – which is an individual choice conditioned by many factors – can one influence any improvement in the quality of life and one's own future. Individual politicians, be it of national, liberal or social-democratic orientation, have mitigated their original political radicalism and are now expressing elements of social, economic and environmental awareness, which is encouraging though still far from an alternative green policy.

The Green Parliamentary Group was established in early 2010, comprising state-level MPs. Although from different political options and entities, they expressed a considerable level of agreement in discussions, meetings and articulation of strategies in environment-related issues, which is not all that common at the political arena in BiH. This may mean that they were, for a short time, aware of their avant-garde position and consciously subordinated their classic democratic policies to the principles of a green policy.

The recent election has shown all the ailments of a new democracy, institutional ambiguities, even abuse; this is not exclusive to BiH, but what is exclusive to this country is the innovative, frontline battle of the NGO sector in the election campaign. A more aggressive involvement of representatives of civil society organizations in the election campaign, by presenting the (lack of) work and irresponsibility of all the political levels, certainly had an impact on the election results. However, we would only be pleased if we were able to confirm that this was the result of not only a negative public opinion (I will vote for those who will do less damage), but also a change in the imposed political views (vote for your own only) achieved through development of an individual awareness of the need for a long-term change of the existing system of governance, for the common good. Civil society organizations have asserted themselves intellectually and morally and demonstrated that they recognize their role, thus influencing at least a higher election turnout and improving the odds for a change. We can underscore, however cautiously, the positive changes in the areas of respect for human rights and diversity, sustainable management of human, natural and other resources, and we want to believe that this has been the result of global solidarity, which does change each individual and reflects on socio-political processes.

On the other hand, we have impacted natural processes on the planet so much that it is evident and striking, and to not politicize such developments is to turn a blind eye: serious political structures should not allow that. We are under the impression that political actors and the citizens and the civil society want to take part in this debate.

BiH has opted for a European path and numerous activities await it in areas

of environmental protection and development and in sustainable development in general. A change in the attitude and in the way political priorities are set will be required in order to fulfill those conditions. And this is the way to open up the possibilities for building alternative green policies, on one hand a basis for a sustainable approach to the process of meeting European requirements, and on the other a factor of cohesion in the work of political parties.

A politically active civil society and conscious citizens are the most important precondition for designing green strategies and policies, and elements of that can be recognized in the current socio-political life in BiH.

## an alternative, no longer just green

Ljiljanka Mitoš Svoboda\*

*It is entirely clear that we urgently need an alternative political option, free of empty phrases, prejudice, hypocrisy and provincialism, with the ability to impose ecological and social standards.*

The only thing we have twenty years after the breakup of Yugoslavia is the inflation of political parties and leaders with no value, and quasi-politicians who have with the aid of training at crash courses in communication learned how to capture the media space.

One portion of the political parties currently operating in Croatia, but in the neighbouring countries as well, has been formed on the foundations of nationalism, spite and defiance, intent to quickly accumulate wealth. The second portion has been formed by the opponents of this first portion, but it too is lacking a meaningful message for the citizens.

Due to the fact that domestic political parties are most active only during the election year, and afterwards close themselves within parliamentary "activism", very little space remains for their public, political or community work. As a result, problems concerning the preservation of natural resources, the protection of the environment, social justice at all levels and related issues remain on the sidelines. There is no doubt that the media largely contribute to this situation, as their owners seek quick profit, support dilettantism, irresponsibility and sensationalism, and increasingly control public opinion, especially in the lead-up to the elections.

It is entirely clear that we urgently need an alternative political option, free of empty phrases, prejudice, hypocrisy and provincialism, with the ability to impose ecological and social standards. Such a political option needs to possess a firm theoretical basis, consisted of contemporary and active intellectuals, sociologists, economists, ethicists, who would have the strength to resist corruption and crime, which are currently provided to the people by the political elite. This would gain them the trust and support of the broader public.

The new political option needs to be proactive, its activities based on the principles of social ecology and moral social values, it needs to include sustainable development education programs, as well as concrete proposals for achieving social justice. In relation to other factors in the society, especially economic factors, the political alternative should be open and possess the ability to impose ecological and social standards.

For it to be alternative and accepted by the broader public, it needs to have a platform which is no longer based on "green values", because the business sector in partnership with the state administration has seized the responsibility for the protection of the environment and is leading the talk of sustainable development, unfortunately without respecting the opinions of ecologically literate partners and without accepting their cooperation. In this alternative political option I see no room for green parties, at least not in the form in which they currently exist in Croatia. Out of the eight existing green political parties that are registered in our country, not a single one has so far demonstrated seriousness and responsibility, neither within (statute, rulebook on the functioning of the party, membership, personal development), nor outside the party (reactions and statements). The political platforms of our "greens" are merely declarative, they match the programs of environmental organizations, even certain segments of projects written a dozen years ago, while their activities are practically indistinguishable from those of the civil society. Not a single of the "green" parties in Croatia has been able to organize a solid intellectual base within its membership that would serve as an intellectual guide to all others and that would position itself towards other political options as a strong and authoritative partner, rather than a splenetic and nervous opponent. This is why the public fails to recognize our green parties and why it does not accept them as a relevant force on the political scene.

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There are many leaders in Croatia, and in the neighbouring countries, who are currently ignored, primarily by the powerful media. However, this too could change if there is a sincere relationship based on respect between such individuals and all social factors within their environment and if real life stories are recognized. Topics such as the protection of the environment, human rights of people of all ages and gender, preservation of natural wealth, protection of animals and quality of life are all strong and politically relevant topics if they are well covered and presented to the public. Then there can be no lack of interest!

Who could show any interest in response to such an impotent and egoistic political presentation that we are witnessing today at all levels – from the local councils to the Parliament and Government? The only thing people can show is anger with misplaced energy towards the destruction of the environment, family and society.

## an alternative to parties as the only merchandise on the market

Miljenko Dereta

*Quality of life, both in the broadest and entirely individual sense, is a topic people want to discuss and something they still have so much hope for. The problem is that the offer needs to be concrete enough for it to gain support*

First of all, I believe this question was posed at the right moment because dissatisfaction with the achievements of the parties currently in power has been on the rise in the entire region, as well as with what the so-called opposition has to offer and the way it operates. The way the editors formulated the poll question “political parties control the electoral body” is true and quite telling. These days, political parties, and I am talking primarily about Serbia, do not represent the public, they rather literally control it as a whole and there is a clearly agreed upon division of the electoral body with very small mobility. The dissatisfaction with what the political scene has to offer has manifested itself through abstention from voting, rather than choosing to vote for another political option. Political parties in Serbia do not represent a certain segment of society or social group, let alone ideological principles or agendas. They survive as the only merchandise on the market, losing members and reputation, yet remaining in power in full harmony with the opposition hidden behind democratic and fair elections.

The current setup neglects most problems citizens find important, but I will primarily point out the issues of economic development and employment and the concern over the rapidly diminishing interest in upholding and promoting human rights. The issues of the rule of law and the safety and protection of citizens hang like a sword above our heads.

Of course, all of the abovementioned imaginable alternatives are needed but, I am afraid, extremely difficult to achieve. Social solidarity and human rights have become topics that can no longer be promoted even in the context of EU accession. Ecological topics are blossoming in Serbia (that is what happens in a land filled with garbage), but they have been hijacked by the state which has actually corrupted the few independent voices from extremely weak non-governmental organizations. The existing parties have formed their own “non-governmental” organizations with which they do business and “clean” Serbia. At this point I do not see the potential for alternative policies, let alone an alternative, new movement which would grow into a party. Even if it happens, it will be a movement of the poor led by populists of all convictions and ideologies. What hinders the emergence of such alternatives is, ironically, the fact that “there is no alternative to entering the EU”! Passing through the gates of Europe offers the only ray of hope that things might get better and no one wants to endanger that path by introducing any “alternatives”.

I think the alternative could hardly be formed around the “green” movement, because the context today is entirely different from the one they were originally created in, and developed from into a movement, later on becoming a relevant political option that has expanded its program so as to include what we refer to as basic values of civic society.

As I have mentioned before, the public has not been made sufficiently aware of environmental protection issues, which are still perceived as a European standard rather than a local need. It is no longer an alternative to the state, it is a part of the system and, in that sense, has low mobilization potential. I believe that the quality of life, both in the broadest and entirely individual sense is a topic people want to discuss and something they still have so much hope for. The problem is that the offer needs to be concrete in order for it to gain support which, in circumstances where people have lost faith in politics, is actually impossible.

Another obstacle of no less importance is the issue of human resources. Potential leaders have, for the most part, already been engaged in parties that guarantee careers or work for international organizations in order to financially secure their futures. There is no quick solution and the only perspective I see will be in a successful “incidental political event” that could give prominence to a certain political leader/group thus opening the road for the long-term development of a political alternative. I think that, in Serbia, the path of the LDP is telling, as it grew from a small alternative political party to a mainstream constructive opposition with the possibility of becoming part of the government.

## not just a party, but an alternative policy

Vladimir Lay

*Viewed from an empirical standpoint, a new alternative policy that would be articulated and functionally organized and practiced by an alternative party can only arise from the need of the people who are not satisfied with the current political and party offer in Croatia, and who are at the same time willing to be politically active and are eager to see a new political framework and method of work.*

The need, in principle, exists. However, the possibilities are meagre, scant, and this for a number of reasons, the largest being the current perceptual and psychological congestion with economic-existential problems (850.000 citizens of Croatia, i.e. every fifth citizen is poor!).

The only clear alternative in the European register is the green party. However, in Croatia, primarily following the 20 years of inefficient work by the political parties on issues of overall social development and the quality of life, there is an urgent need for a systematic initiation and functioning of an alternative policy within the newly created capitalistic context.

What kind of a policy? A policy directed towards productivity, both regarding the wellbeing of the population and profit for the economy, which will in turn create a surplus in value that will be used to support the overall development of the society (which always carries a cost and which always needs to be financed somehow). What we mean under an alternative policy is: a set of political strategies oriented on different – general values, for the common good (social sustainability, protection of people and nature from the devastating effects of profit at all cost, the defence of life from attacks on the life of people and the living world, solidarity (with the hungry, sick, weak, minorities, etc.), human rights, equality of women, protection of the environment, putting under control climate change, ...) and smart development solutions. Nothing of any significance would come out of a potential new green party that would function in a typical partyocratic manner and in accordance with a typical platform.

Since 1990 eight or nine green parties have existed in Croatia, some of them appearing several weeks before the elections, only to fall into oblivion immediately afterwards. The same pattern repeats with every new election, together with the consistent repeat of poor results and a steady level of imperceptibility.

Viewed from an empirical standpoint, a new alternative policy that would be articulated and functionally organized and practiced by an alternative party can only arise from the need of the people who are not satisfied with the current political and party offer in Croatia, and who are at the same time willing to be politically active and are eager to see a new political framework and method of work. Without this nothing can happen, because with this lacking it is impossible to organize motivations and social energies, and if this is not possible, then nothing can come into existence.

Since the day it declared independence Croatia has acted self-destructively – with the grotesque transition process which amounted to the looting of public goods produced over several decades by many generations under socialism. Following the devastations of war and the rule of chauvinism and nationalism, Croatia was governed by widespread corruption of the ruling groups, nepotism, negative selection and an utter disregard of the principles and practice of competence, tribal political actions by members of the ruling HDZ (17 years in power!), accompanied with a notable departure of the educated and alternative people. As a result, Croatia has been gradually falling, both economically and morally, behind other similar countries going through the transition process, while some of its parts have failed entirely (Slavonia has “reached” minus 20% of the GDP from 1990! See: Development Forum, autumn 2010).

In a situation where the rule of law has taken hold, an effective and radical fight against corruption will represent a public political task for the next



twenty years. Without this we shall continue to live in a self-destructive, socially-disintegrative jungle.

I do not see this to be in the focus of interest and activities of the political parties, perhaps with the exception of the small, newly founded labour party. This is the answer to the question concerning the problems and interests which remain unrepresented! This is also the answer to the question of what this new alternative policy should work on through the alternative party. (It does not even have to be called the Green Party. 😊)

In a broader sense, this could be interpreted as a right of all citizens of this country to benefit from overall development. The political eros of the people and its programmed and deliberate growth within this context can be initiated only on matters of great importance, such as the ecological survival, a productive system for producing surplus values for defending (quality) life, instead of its annihilation, and solidarity with the weak in the society.

Incidentally, F. Tudman said in 1990 that HDZ would be in power for 20 years. The end of this period is upon us.

Our position on a potential political alternative and alternative policy can be clearly discerned from what has been stated in the text above. Important side note: this leading "coryphaeus" group of people should under no circumstances include:

- used-up figures from other political parties who have left those political parties and would now to have a go in this project,
- intellectually irrelevant figures,
- ethically suspicious figures, thieves and scoundrels, small and big alike.

It should include:

- people with a background in civil initiatives, associations,
- representatives of minorities,
- socially influential and engaged intellectuals, but without party affiliations so far,
- people from the field of education and science,
- young people, fed up with the existing political offer, eager to see a new framework,
- urban citizens who possess more knowledge and competencies, who are not limited by traditionalistic views.

Leaders need to be intelligent, honest, capable and influential, both on a personal and social level. These leaders need to be able to draw a strong following for the ideas, values and practices they advocate and propose.

The party does not have to be called the Green Party, nor does it have to be a Green Party at all. "Green policy" is fine, but it has to be stressed that it is fine in the sense of the German slogan "we are neither at the left, not at the right, but in front". However, it is insufficient, and, in what may sound as a paradox, it is too "narrow" for our present domestic context.

Let us take a look at the register of "new names" of politically successful parties – be it only for a while – in Europe. There is a whole variety of names, including Justice, Progress, List for..., Olive, Apple...

This alternative political option would have to cover a wide range of issues, among them development issues (environmental, economic and social-cultural sustainability), and not just the typical issues concerning human rights and the environment.

The whole essence of this alternative party in Croatia would be to provide an alternative path regarding objectives in the government of the country and concrete political strategies towards that end.

In terms of its platform and method of functioning, this new party should not aim to be marginal in numbers, to win 7-10% of the votes at the elections (as is the case with the Greens). It needs to have much bigger political ambitions.

## what is the alternative?

*Sr an Puhalo\**

*Ethnic divisions and fear of the other have been paralyzing the development of all new ideas. If one adds to that the existential problems which have been troubling the majority of citizens of this country, it is difficult to expect that the "abstract" ideas on human rights or protection of the environment will mobilize citizens and initiate their activity.*

If we look at opinion polls conducted in the last ten years we will see that the citizens have been stating the same problems time and time again: poverty, unemployment, crime and corruption. However, winning the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina are parties not addressing the problems of the citizens, but parties that are instead able to instill the most confidence to members of their ethnic group at the time of the elections. This mechanism can best be seen among the Bosnian Croats and Serbs, and to a lesser extent among Bosniaks.

At the same time, there are three parallel and autistic public opinions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If a "close encounter" between them takes place, what follows is a conflict leading towards ethnic homogenization.

Because of the ethnic division and existence of the three public opinions, a new political idea has little chance of surviving, be it a party or a movement which will be equally accepted by Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. Also, we should keep in mind that a party striving to succeed in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be at least somewhat nationalistic, which means that it has to side with one of the ethnic groups, which will most certainly cause dissatisfaction of the other two groups.

The issues of ecology and protection of the environment, of a better living standard, education and health are issues that are important within an ethnic group, that is, within a public opinion, but they become completely irrelevant as soon as the "danger" for an ethnic group appears from the other two groups.

This means that we are encountering two issues. The first issue is the very idea around which citizens of all three ethnic backgrounds in Bosnia and Herzegovina may assemble. The second issue has to do with who should be the bearer and promoter of this or these ideas.

Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina do not trust politicians, they do not trust the unions, and they especially do not trust the nongovernmental sector. Religious organizations are trusted the most, but it is difficult to expect that they will be the bearers of new ideas in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ethnic divisions and fear of the other have been paralyzing the development of all new ideas. If one adds to that the existential problems which have been troubling the majority of citizens of this country, it is difficult to expect that the "abstract" ideas on human rights or protection of the environment will mobilize citizens and initiate their activity.

It seems to me that Bosnia and Herzegovina first needs to solve some very important issues related to its organization and functioning, before issues of human rights and protection of the environment can take centre stage. Until that happens, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina will discuss these issues only if they become important to Serbia and Croatia and in that way "contaminate" ethnic public opinions in our country.

## green party in the parliament? an opportunity worth seizing

*Zoran Oštri*

*With a good strategy and efficient team work, a well organized "political wing" may help the development of a progressive civil society. Somebody needs to fill in the empty space on the political stage. If the green party, or a wider civil coalition fail to do that – somebody else will get the votes.*

Highly conservative voting is but one of the peculiar features of the Croatian voters. Even though they place little faith in parties and politicians, they do not give votes to the new forces. Without taking into consideration the parties formed as a result of the dissolution of older parties, the only party present in the Parliament and formed after the year 1990 is the Croatian Pensioners' Party. At the 2007 parliamentary elections, lists of non-

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parliamentary parties rarely exceeded one percent. The green party showed a lack of unity and fared worse than in 2003.

At the 2011 elections, smaller parliamentary parties will ensure their status through joint lists with HDZ and SDP, so the two blocks will together have an overwhelming majority of votes and mandates. However, more representatives of the new groups (parties, coalitions, independent lists)<sup>1</sup> are likely to enter the Parliament this time. Perhaps ten to 15 – this including all political options.

Do the green party and similar political options (parties and independent lists which have sprung up from the progressive civil society) stand a chance? Opinion polls do not even mention them, but a research conducted by the GfK agency showed that there is a potential of some 14% of votes.<sup>2</sup> Can this potential be used? Or, in the words of classical politics: do “subjective forces” capable of using the objective situation exist?

Currently – they do not. They are nothing but dispersed elements. Could they perhaps be created? In my view – it is worth a try.

Currently, there are eight registered parties in Croatia containing the word “green” in the name. Some exist on paper only, although that virtual existence enables them to appear at some elections with their list and create confusion. Few of them act locally, in a town or municipality. The Green Party, active only in Rijeka at the moment, announced expansion from mid-September, as well as initiative for unification of the green political options “Green Together”.<sup>3</sup> There have been similar initiatives in the past, but they failed.

The Green List is by far the strongest, with 25 branch offices in seven municipalities and 19 mandates in the local self-governing bodies gained in May 2009. (Three other parties won four mandates in total.) Only the Green Party has among its members certain distinguished activists of social movements (not only environmental), as well as activists of local civil initiatives. The party has the status of an observer in the European Green Party, but its application for fulltime membership was denied temporarily this year. As I am writing this, internal weaknesses have exploded into a complete dissolution. We do not know how this will end; as I too am taking part in this, both as founder and a member of the party's Main Board, I will write no further on the topic. I will merely express hope that this will prove to be a good basis for rejecting the wrong direction in which the party is heading and will give it a new boost.

The “Green List” has achieved certain results only locally, similar to the independent lists. It is perceived only as “an environmental party”, which is not enough for success at the parliamentary elections (although some of the key program principles include social justice, participatory democracy, human needs-oriented economy, etc, which is also a part of the global green political program). Vast majority of potential green voters do not see a true possibility of voting for the greens.

“Lista za Rijeku” should also be mentioned as a successful party with some ten elected representatives in the local governing bodies in the area of Primorsko-goranska County and a full member of the European Free Alliance (EFA). EFA representatives in the European Parliament are in the same caucus with the greens. Lista za Rijeku and Akcija mladih signed a cooperation agreement with “Ladonja” from Istra, which is an association-movement of independent lists headed by a charismatic tycoon Plinio Cuccurin. Opinion polls show that this alliance can rely on at least one mandate in the eighth electoral unit, perhaps even two. Ladonja is characteristic for the rhetoric and initiatives which are very similar to those of the greens, with the emphasis being placed on the protection of the environment, but also on participatory democracy, practiced in an interesting way in the Bale municipality and in the election of the association leader. Their controversial leader is the source of strength, but also of weakness, for he instills mistrust in the real goals (he has acquired his wealth in the transition process, he has clashed with the unions and is linked to the tobacco industry).

The last, but also the most important are the numerous local civil initiatives, among them “Pravo na grad” and “Zelena akcija”, which have performed well on organizing hundreds of dedicated activists during the protests in Cvjetni trg and Varšavska Street in Zagreb, with the active support of about a thousand citizens, and have gained the sympathies of the majority of Zagreb citizens, as well as public recognition for their leaders. Several other local associations and civil initiatives exist and cooperate (“Zeleni forum”, “Plavi forum”, “Dravska liga”, etc.), and that, in my opinion (as a

social activist) is still insufficient. Not much has been done to create a personal identity of the social movement and of other actors. A serious structural deficiency is the division between a smaller number of the “established”, professional associations and a number of weak associations and ad-hoc civil initiatives.

There is also a potential for participation in the elections, which was partially exploited at the 2009 elections, but also before that, through the independent lists (Kvarner, Zagreb); also, some activists have appeared on the tickets of larger parties (for example, Koprivnica). There have been some disappointments as well. Prominent activists in Zagreb have supported Velimir Sri a's independent list, as well as Josip Kregar, an independent candidate running for mayor, and as a result Vera Šimek of Zelena akcija became a councilor. Early this year, however, Sri a joined HSLS and has rejected in principle the idea of “independent lists”. The “Moj glas” association, which supported Kregar and Sri e's list, has been completely inactive until recently. It is now renewing its activities in preparation for the upcoming local, and perhaps even the parliamentary elections.

Lack of ability for strategic planning, building team work, balancing often opposing personalities, interests and ideas is taking prominence. Many actors have known each other for a long time, hence, apart from conceptual differences, we witness personal arguments which undermine cooperation. Vanities should not even be mentioned at this point (the author included). The relationship between the parties (mostly the Green List) and associations, civil initiatives and social movements is confusing and chaotic, I would even say “neurotic” (the situation I personally suffer, for I am part of “both worlds”). There have been many instances of mutual mistrust and a priori rejection, as well as cooperation. One such example was the arrest of some 150 protester on July 15 in Varšavska Street, including at least seven members of the Green List. With good cooperation and efficient team work, a well-organized “political wing” may help the development of a progressive civil society.

There is space on the political stage and it should be filled by someone. If the greens do not do that (perhaps a new force, such as “A Different Kind of Politics Is Possible” in Hungary), or a wider civil coalition – others will capture those votes.

## the green option – an imperative of maturity of the political scene

*Alma Džinovi*

*Today, to run environmental policy is not a matter of trend; it is a need. The “green politics” is at the top of the world's priority list. BiH needs such a political option, a party which will think and act ecologically, which will advocate the protection, promotion and preservation of the natural resources, sustainable development and a quality and healthy life in the community.*

Protection of the environment and sustainable development have become issues of survival and the future; issues treated as priorities in developed societies. Today, initiatives presented in the platforms and statutes of the green parties stand as proof of a community's responsibility, i.e. as proof of civilized maturity of a society.

Green politics in BiH is still idle and is in an unfavorable position. Green policies continue to be underestimated and pushed to the margins of social events in the platforms of political parties because of a lack of knowledge on this matter – influence of the environment on life and development. Creators of such policies are focused solely on social and economic issues, thus degrading, due to their ignorance, vital issues which they should ultimately view in the context of the economy, but in the context of other issues as well.

If one takes into consideration the whole range of arguments, for example, the fact that we are among the few countries that still have a healthy, beautiful, preserved nature, that certain areas of our country are considered “endemic centers”, that our country is rich in water – the blue oil over which wars will be fought according to futurists, that our soil is up to seven times less contaminated compared to many European soils, then we are not aware of the fundamental components of our environment to say the least. These components are the most reliable indicator of the condition of our country and the potential for its development, but also of the civil right to life in a healthy environment.

Running an environmental policy is not a matter of trend; it is a need. “Green policy” is a top priority globally. BiH needs such a political option, a party which will think and act ecologically, in accordance with the EU

<sup>1</sup> see: “Alternative u Saboru 2011.?”, <http://zoranostriczelenalista.blog.hr/2010/10/1628340864/alternative-u-saboru-2011.html>

<sup>2</sup> Miroslav Ambruš Kiš: „Zeleni spremni za 14 posto“, in: Ve ernji list, section Obzor, September 25, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> see: [http://www.zelenastranka.hr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=147:zeleni-zajedno&catid=1:najnovije-vijesti&Itemid=50](http://www.zelenastranka.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=147:zeleni-zajedno&catid=1:najnovije-vijesti&Itemid=50)

standards of "green policy", which advocates the protection, promotion and preservation of the natural resources, sustainable development and a quality and healthy life in the community.

Once the political scene in BiH realizes that environmental issues represent an imperative in the world today, the road towards membership in EU structures will be significantly shortened. In that sense, BiH undoubtedly needs an alternative, such forces and political leaders need to be mobilized not only to make the road shorter, but also to show that we are a responsible society, that we are responsible towards ourselves and towards the environment.

## on 'old' and 'new' politics in Serbia

Milan Podunavac

*Despite all the differences, particularly those between the modernizing block and other political parties, the key feature of the political field in Serbia is that it is stuck in the imperatives of the 'old politics' (security, sovereignty, borders, collective identity etc.).*

In a paper reminiscent of a political testament, Zoran Đinđić reflected the normative force of the political idea of Europe on the political space of Serbia and the Balkans. His diagnosis was quite unfavorable. In the political field, Serbia had no ideas. On the contrary, it was dominated by non-liberal, non-modern and non-democratic political formulae. Considering the nature of the political field in Serbia within the general process of European approximation, in i arrived to a conclusion that the political idea of Europe could be the axis that might integrate and mobilize the powers of modernization in Serbia. To this position in i added yet another important political idea. It is a response to the articulated political strategies which, following the collapse of the 'old regime' and the October revolution, came to be shaped as the response to the question as to which principles to use to design the new political order in Serbia.

Contrary to the strategies of restoration, advocated by the supporters of the 'old regime' and 'enemies of democracy', as well as advocates of the ideology of legalism, with a desire to 'cut shorter' the path to a democratic political consolidation, in i opted for the strategy of political radicalism. Relying on the mobilized (republic-focused) field of 'constitutional politics' and an pronounced civic sensitivity to the nature of the principles of the new constitutional and political order, in i sought answers to Elster's game theory for the political society of Serbia (how to resolve the complex issues of state and nation building, democratic legitimacy, rule of law and market efficiency, all at the same time). Zoran in i 's political program relied on the 'new politics' of a new political class and a strong democratic potential of civic democratic activism.

The political field in Serbia is somehow marked by this basic political crystallization. in i 's political legacy is fought over by the Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party, along with several parties from Vojvodina (Social-democrats League); the political ideology of legalism is the political motto of the Democratic Party of Serbia, and marks of the 'old regime' are still borne by the Serb Radical Party, the 'new radicals', and even the Socialist Party, still swinging between modernized leadership and a conservative constituency. Despite all the differences, particularly those between the modernizing block and other political parties, the key feature of the political field in Serbia is that it is stuck in the imperatives of the 'old politics' (security, sovereignty, borders, collective identity etc.). This type of politics still determines the negative political legacy (war, dictatorship, nationalism, political restatement of a defeated society). The field of 'old' politics is further strengthened by the incomplete process of state and nation building, openness of the 'constitutional identity' of Serbia, demobilized civil society, growth and expansion of non-civil civil society, strong reservoirs of policies of instability and violence, as well as a particular form of globalization of fear and terrorism, which revives the international Hobbes-Smith-type state security and strengthens the political formulae of the 'enemy' and the 'foreigner'. Both these formulae are the very foundation of the 'old' politics and the negative consensus of political societies.

These are important factors that restrict the shaping of 'new' politics. All this causes an entire field of 'post-materialist values' and values focused on the quality of life (poverty, education, marginalized groups, environment, energy, climate) not to be politically articulated. The political field in Serbia has no clear political answers to the requirements and the sensitivities of the youth, the students, the new middle class, and the pauperized workers. This is the type of space that seeks its own political articulation and creates the likelihood that in a stable political environment (as Serbia gradually

moves towards a solution to the basic problems of its political identity) a space may open up for the non-articulated political energies and forms of direct action to be expressed in a modern party, whose political temperament would share philosophy of the 'greens'.

## an alternative, even a green one

ur a Knežević

*The commotion by current political parties trying to win the entire political space – thanks to their vague and eclectic so-called programs – brings with it a paradox that may present a potential threat to democracy: they thus expand the margin for those who are not satisfied with such policies, those who do not recognize their own interests in such 'programs'.*

In light of the well-established political parties in Croatia and their (in)action, it is hardly necessary to elaborate the need for an alternative political party. Consistent party programs with their own ideas are notoriously non-existent. Or rather, what they now call political programs are, in fact, sets of vague phrases aimed at covering, if at all possible, the entire political spectrum in the narrow sense, and all the aspects of public life in general. This eclectic approach instead of a firm and clear program, this political 'positioning', can do nothing other than give promises to the citizens, with no guaranteed implementation of such 'programs' – event their individual parts, let alone the entire sets.

The commotion by current political parties trying to win the entire political space – thanks to their vague and eclectic so-called programs – brings with it a paradox that may present a potential threat to democracy. Namely, they thus expand the margin for those who are not satisfied with such policies, those who do not recognize their own interests in such 'programs'. As the country is undergoing a serious crisis at the same time, and in light of the actually bad (and deteriorating) living conditions for most people, accompanied by considerable frustration, this combination is even more favorable for mobilization towards a right-of-centre option and further growth of right-wing programs (and parties).

In such circumstances, the need for a left-oriented alternative in form of a party – even a green one, as opposed to not only the well established parties, but also to the possible rise of a right-wing option, is indeed a necessity. At the same time, the issue is how feasible it really is in the given conditions in Croatia and the so-called alternative scene.

All who wish for such development will have to take several things into account. First, how much have the existing actors organized themselves into a host of small though disunited NGO's and parties, and how well can they devise a consistent political program not directed towards mechanical unification of the existing programs of small organizations and parties. Also, one should bear in mind the historical position of Croatia in relation to developed countries, requiring not necessarily different themes, but certainly a different process of setting priorities. I would therefore like to say that it is far more important for Croatian men and women to resolve the standard political issues, such as social justice, solidarity and human rights. This, of course, does not exclude the themes specific to classic "green policy", such as environmental protection, quality of life, etc, but it will certainly take more effort to convince voters of their importance.

## "green values" as the generator of political change

Pavle Dimitrijević \*

*This new political option would undoubtedly stand a good chance to become 'green'. In addition to the growing world trend of dealing with 'green policies' and attempts to compensate decades of unsustainable development and capital investment with short-term advocacy of 'green' measures, the actual 'green values' are the closest response to 'fill' the above described void in the political arena.*

There is a pronounced need for an alternative political party/movement to be profilled with a 'public expression' different from any other existing political party in Serbia, or indeed the region of Western Balkans.

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The current political parties are mainly characterized by outdated models of internal decision-making (parallel, centralized decision-making systems, with the decisive voice of a single leader/president, while formal, statute-defined mechanisms are treated as mere formalities), absence of any strategic planning in defining political programs and measures (instead of change, short-term points are presented as goals), as well as total absence of continuity in their implementation (major shifts in attitudes and – for want of a better word – policies deprive the parties of any real profile, creating an impression that 'anything can be expected from anyone', thus creating an illusion that all the parties in Serbia are, in fact, exactly the same).

The main feature common to all the political players is the absence of continuous and real communication with the citizens (not only with the grassroots level, which is a phrase often used in the in-party vocabulary) and definition of policies/goals on the basis of values and principles that are supposed to be the basic framework for further action. The work of the existing parties depreciates the value-based framework that should define their work, in terms of strategy as well as at the 'practical' level (daily politics). If this assessment is considered to be relevant, then the question is whether political parties represent certain programs because their implementation leads to the implementation of certain values and changes, or is the aim of political programs to use the excuse of values and changes to reach short-term objectives – i.e. votes, and thus secure or improve their position in the political arena. As it turned out, the alleged 'general values' such as human rights and (accession and adoption of the values of) the EU have become nothing but pawns in the political games designed daily and weekly.

All these elements of work of the current political parties define a wide, yet not filled space for a new political option, that would enjoy two advantages at the very onset of its (serious) work: a clearly defined distance from the method of operation, decisions and values of the current political parties and a clearly identifiable system of work and communications with the citizens, based on the value-model incorporated into the party itself. At the same time, this new political option would undoubtedly stand a good chance to become 'green'. In addition to the growing world trend of dealing with 'green policies' and attempts to compensate decades of unsustainable development and capital investment with short-term advocacy of 'green' measures, the actual 'green values' are the closest response to 'fill' the above described void in the political arena. The 'green values' define in themselves a framework not foreign to the current political parties, though with considerably different realization, i.e. the method of implementation deployed by the current parties and by the new, green option.

As examples have shown, 'green political action' (since it is not yet possible to talk about organized and continuous green political options in Serbia) should present 'green values' by rising the level of culture of political action, ensuring consistency in party programs and position, and ensuring open and continuous communication with the public, since this is the generator of change, not only on election day (through election results), but also by changing perceptions and advocating certain values from the point of view of an individual citizen. Experience has shown that there are entire groups (civil society organizations in general, organizations of marginalized and those who were disenfranchised through privatization, trade unions, etc.) of social actors with no political expression or representation in the political arena. On the other hand, the growing social tensions and the policy of ensuring social peace by stimulating public spending in order to defuse the crises in the short run, such groups grow bigger and create new ones, always in search for an alternative to the current political system (not only political, but also societal). These groups are not easy to identify locally or regionally, but they are also difficult to reach, due to their unstable action and pre-conceived mistrust towards anyone defining themselves as 'political actor' or 'future political actor'. The effect of 'failed expectations' has taken its toll among most of the citizens and social groups, which is certainly a considerable obstacle to any new political option (which must struggle to be identified as something totally new, and not just new in comparison with the existing political party system).

The future political option, clearly needed, must focus its attention on issues such as environmental protection, human rights, quality of life of all the citizens and social justice. Such issues can be promoted only through clear action, since the current parties appropriate these themes as their own. The actual difference will be in the method of implementation of the proclaimed political positions and the actual distance from the current method of operation of other political parties. This certainly requires a lot more work than in the case of established political parties whose goals and methods did not differ from what is already on offer. This is, however, the fundamental element of any substantive change – it is difficult to reach and it 'happens' only once: still a challenge for those who do not feel that well in the existing system.

## alternative now!

Miroslav Ambruš Kiš

*A new political party should be founded on a strong environmental axis, human rights of the fourth generation, political, economic and electronic democracy. It must perceive knowledge and the environment as the only true resources we have. It must celebrate life in diversity as the goal achieved at every step.*

First of all, clearly and unambiguously: to the question "is there a need and possibility for a (green) political alternative", the answer is yes! Now!

We live in the time when the established politocracy has closed itself off and separated itself from the reality of the state and the society it is supposed to lead – and serve.

An observer may say: 'It is to be expected of a state with no more than 20 years of life after the first democratic elections and just one living president who has been succeeded by another'.

We who live in this country are not mere observers. The aporia that politocracy has driven this country and this society into is certainly our business. Four years of anyone's life are important. Not just for us, whose lives are marked by four years of solitude between election cycles, as well as the misery and hopelessness of the situation where there is no real election, but rather just voting for one of the names from the uniform, inactive, parasitic political caste.

In this country, this separate class is content with its total lack of appeal, since each side may count on the inertia of its smaller but still certain pool of voters, happy to see the rest of the public away from it. This situation is an ideal starting position for a new round of separation of politics from the public, and for new, more sophisticated forms of clandestine distribution of power, which is, in turn, the nourishment for a new round of even more subtle corruption of political life.

Yes, Croatia needs a party with strong green foundations.

By demonstrating that we care for the environment, we demonstrate that we care for the next generation and for quality of life.

Even if there were any, growth is not synonymous with progress.

And this country is interested in progress.

This political ruling group is short-sited and self-absorbed, incapable of even copying from others the basic prescriptions for progress.

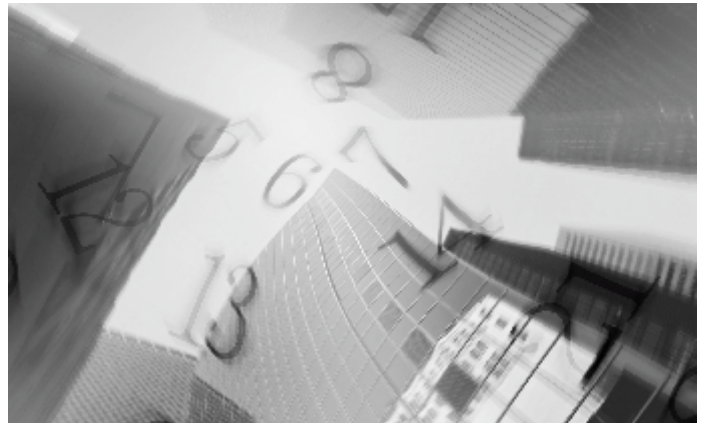
This political ruling group is nominally in favor of European integration, but at the same time it is reluctant and insincere in accepting real progress by accepting the best legacies, for the sake of its own survival, which it does with real resistance and, if at all possible, in a diabolically distorted form.

This political ruling group is interested in nothing but power, and political democracy is a mere screen for non-democratic practices, within political parties as well as in the society in general.

Openness, a true vision and normality need to confront this.

A new political party should be founded on a strong environmental axis, human rights of the fourth generation, political, economic and electronic democracy. It must perceive knowledge and the environment as the only true resources we have. It must celebrate life in diversity as the goal achieved at every step.

I would join such a party immediately. If needed, I would work on its establishment.





## participatory, not representative democracy

Milan Medi

*The key issue of the late 20th and early 21st century is the introduction of mechanisms of direct participatory democracy. In that respect, political parties have proved themselves to be outdated and inappropriate forms of organization.*

### do we need new parties?

In principle, I believe we do not. In my opinion, political parties are an expression of political organization in capitalism; a form of organization designed for representative, rather than participatory democracy. As the societal product of the 19th century (in the narrow sense of the word and seen from our vantage point), it may exist, but it no longer satisfies the needs of a modern society to develop participatory democracy.

I believe that the key issue of the late 20th and early 21st century is the introduction of mechanisms of direct participatory democracy. In that respect, political parties have proved themselves to be outdated and inappropriate forms of organization. They have been and will continue to be part of representative democracy. That is why this time has brought with it further development of civil society organizations, social movements and campaigns, rather than political organizations and parliamentary struggle.

Further societal development will take the course of participatory democracy, both in terms of the society itself, and in terms of economy. I believe that the issue of economic democracy (participation of employees and local community members in managing companies and distributing profits) will be pronounced. In that respect, it is becoming evident that no political party is an expression of this kind of social will. At the moment, no party in Croatia or anywhere else is a party of labor. All the parties are parties of capital, including the green parties in EU member states, which have won parliamentary seats. I personally do not believe in any political party.

### do we need green values?

Yes, definitely! But they will not be promoted through political parties. As economic democracy movements develop, the issue of introduction of public participation (participation of employees, consumers, local representatives) in strategic company decisions will become even more pronounced. Even the initial experiences have shown that green values rank high on the scale of local needs. This environmental priority is equally important for communities that do not (yet) have the practice of economic democracy, as well as those (few) that have won this right in our time. The difference is that the former are struggling to introduce it into the public discourse, and the latter have already started to take certain encouraging measures in order to implement very high standards of environmental protection in areas where communities manage business policies and have the possibility to influence green technology investments.

The issue of the environment is, in fact, one of the most prominent areas where interests and needs of the oligarchic capitalist groups collide with those of the majority of disenfranchised citizens who have been economically and socially excluded. That is why environmental requirements are among the first to be raised by the communities that have won their right to an economic democracy. However, these values are not promoted by green parties, but rather by green movement and green civil society organizations. To be precise, by social movements, i.e. movements for social and economic justice, though with a clear and emphasized environmental component in their social demands. This confirms our initial hypothesis, that political parties are an outdated form of political organization and that they do not meet the needs of modern social movements for participatory democracy, so that in future developments they will play neither a decisive nor an important role.

### what is the place of political parties?

Examples of social movements in South America illustrate that new movements for social, environmental and economic justice have even introduced changes in government in some countries. This trend can soon be expected in other parts of the world. Leaders of social movements have

become the new political leaders. The differences I can observe in the process are as follows:

It is civil society, rather than political parties, that creates a social environment conducive to the development of participatory democracy. Economic and social crises (stock exchange collapse, dropping value of money, etc.) mobilize national movements to demand fairer distribution of economic, social and political power. New societal movements come into power through more or less peaceful and democratic processes. The democratic parliamentary system is not abolished, but it does lose its importance. In addition to elections as a form of appointment of political representatives, all the states where the new social justice movements have taken power are introducing numerous supplementary mechanisms of direct participatory democracy (referenda, advisory bodies without which parliamentary bodies cannot make final decisions, etc.). Old (and new) political parties are still in the parliamentary game, but along with the representative system, there is an entire network of supplementary mechanism of participatory democracy. This trend will continue to develop in this direction, through the introduction of mechanisms of economic democracy, and the government will continue to lose its power over economic management.

Even if the leaders of new social movements do establish new parties and compete for parliamentary bodies, systems of parallel democratic mechanisms ensuring participatory democracy have been introduced permanently. The most important trend is evident in the fact that numerous local leaders in those communities never enter the political sphere and opt for the civil society as the movement that shares political power with the parliamentary parties.

Conclusion: green and other parties may continue to exist but they will not play an important social or political role. This space will be taken by new social movements for social, economic and environmental justice. Only those political parties that may be engendered by those new social movements (green, socialist... any, but created as a form of articulation of the aims of those movements) will stand a chance of winning political power. But in the new circumstances even those parties will not be the only – or the principal – actors in the political arena. In any case, they must count on permanent power sharing, not only with other political parties, but even more so with the civil society and other actors representing new social movements for social, economic and environmental justice, which, in fact, engendered them in the first place.

## political pluralism brought back to the initial position

Jelena Mi ovi \*

*Can the green political idea – which is not reduced solely to the ecological program – live and survive in the current political culture? I doubt it. What would give birth to it? Civil society which has for a long time been living in another, that is, parallel dimension to the state and to the society itself?*

The political field in Serbia is deficient, but firmly divided between the existing political parties which have decided to continue nourishing standard forms of the country's political culture, which are seen in sustaining the authoritarian and in that sense patriarchal matrix (we need a leader, or at least "a firm hand"), in combining the political and personal issues, in sudden changes of programs in accordance with the daily-political needs and unnatural alliances and, if needed, in the generous sale of consciousness. Last year's passing of the Law on Political Parties in such an ambiance, preceded by a long brainwashing public campaign, which supported the fable that there are too many political parties in Serbia which have, allegedly, cost our (spiritually?) poor society, reduced the political spectrum, practically and formally, to the Radical, Progressive and "Liberal" parties, thus returning the country's state of politics to the very beginnings of pluralism in Serbia which was established in 1881.

The extent to which there are no clear and consistent programs of the political parties in Serbia is best seen in the fact that what remained of the working class that got lost in the period of transition, will mainly vote for the conservative and right-wing parties, while the so-called transitional winners vote for the party which will best help them realize their interests, even if that party is more left-wing and liberal.

Is there any space, will and enthusiasm in this atmosphere for introducing a new political option? Are a small number of us who have grown a bit tired of

\* Agenda correspondent for Serbia

fighting for our ideals ready for another round of “I will vote for you when you win the elections”? Can the green political idea – which is not reduced solely to the ecological program – live and survive in the current political culture? I doubt it. What would give birth to it? Civil society which has for a long time been living in another, that is, parallel dimension to the state and to the society itself? In the best case – thanks to global trends and warming – it may happen that one of the “two still friendly eyes in the head”, for example, DS or LDP, heads the green way. That reminds me of a Sunday lunch with my extended family when my sister stated that a time will come when we will have no other option but to vote for *eda Jovanovi* .

## a green alternative to politics with no content

*Darijo erepinko*

*The preconditions for success of a green political option are there: all the EU 2020 aims are, in fact, 'green', the current political practice has proved itself disastrous and a quality alternative is needed, and the 'green scene' has a lot to offer. But are there people to do it?*

Croatian politicians of all types have perfected their media and other public presentation skills. They have an appropriate statement, a sound bite for any parliamentary address and any road opening, any flats already occupied or factories already working, bound to be shown by the central news program or at least by local papers. The production of witty and memorable phrases that illustrate problems, mislead political opponents or avoid answers to key questions is the skill that Croatian politicians have plenty of. In fact, it seems that in the past 20 years of 'democracy', they have well developed the methods of presenting their thoughts and acts. The national media go hand in hand, always ready to note a tricky moment or a statement that will continue to entertain the public for the next few hours or days. Communication tricks are so important that, for example, Sanader's appearance before the parliamentary investigations committee, the color of his necktie and his non-verbal communication (or an unwilling revelation of his true feelings) become more important than the actual content of his testimony. Adding to that the disappointing unpreparedness of opposition members of the committee, the image of Croatian politics becomes sad, not to use a harsher word. For the image of the parliamentary investigations committee is a reflection of the democratic deficit of the Croatian society (just like someone described the last presidential election). If members of this committee are the very top of the Croatian political establishment (as they should be, since we should make sure that one of the most important committees in the modern history of Croatia should not comprise political nobodies and marginal characters), if Croatian MP's are the top layer of the political elite (with notable exceptions), all we can do is cry bitter tears.

The European Union recently adopted another ten-year strategy that may easily be off-mark, just like the Lisbon one, but that is the smaller part of the problem. At least the EU is trying to set its strategic goals, such as improving the level of employment in the 20 to 64 age group to 75 percent, improving the R&D investment level to 3 percent of the EU GDP, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and improving renewable energy sources and energy efficiency (by 20 percent each), increasing the number of qualified professionals and reducing poverty and social exclusion: the EU knows where it wants to be in 2020 and even if it doesn't get there, at least it will be moving in the right direction. Croatia, on the other hand, is like Alice in Wonderland: it has no idea where it is going and where it wants to be in 2020 – other than the fact that we all know we want to be part of the EU. What this brings with it – that is something many do not understand. And when you don't know where you're going, just like Fat Cat tells Alice, it doesn't matter which road you'll take.

There is currently no party in Croatia that thinks about its political decisions professionally, competently and factually, in order to devise any sound political strategy. The current parliamentary parties are equally unable to overcome the narrow interest of their leaders and funders, nor is there at the political arena any remotely relevant non-parliamentary party that may offer a strategically sound policy. Political action in Croatia is reduced to covering up one's own and emphasizing other people's corruption and other scandals, along with the generation of the aforementioned sound bites, which is something that local politicians excel in. But, there is no content. It is all merely a shell. If this were different, laws and decisions

would not be adopted and then withdrawn, and political figures such as Ivo Josipovi would not have to explain that 'constructively abstained' in fact means no. So, in such a situation, who can secure that criteria will be reached by '2020'?

Just like other countries in the region, Croatia needs a political option capable of thinking strategically and deciding on the basis of long-term interests and societal, i.e. common benefits. It needs politicians who can think in several dimensions, and not just in the dimension of an office. And finally, it needs politicians who know where they're going and where they want to end up. That is why the citizens are right to be disgusted by politics and political institutions. A change in political action seems to be badly needed, and the public is asking for an alternative. In light of that, good individuals may open up the space for a stronger engagement by a green political option. However, that category seems to be totally absent from the political arena, unlike the civil society, which is the only clear articulation of firm views and approaches, but with constant refusal to become actively involved in the political life. It thus seem that the Croatian green political option is caught in a web difficult to escape from. And all the preconditions for success of a green political option are there: all the EU 2020 aims are, in fact, 'green', the current political practice has proved itself disastrous and a quality alternative is needed, and the 'green scene' has a lot to offer.

## we can't go on with parties like these

*Nenad Nikoli \**

*Serbian citizens need a new party and new leaders, since the political oligarchy (in power as well as in opposition) are unable to make the necessary cuts across the society in order to facilitate state transformation.*

Over the past 5-6 years, the citizens of Serbia have developed the need for a new political party or new political leaders of existing parties – who would be bale to introduce some kind of change among the political elite (or rather the oligarchy), because the current one has spent the past ten years unable to reach the aims proclaimed in the 10/5\*\* changes.

This inability of the political oligarchy (the one in power as well as the opposition) to introduce the necessary cuts across the society to facilitate the transformation (or transition) of the state within the rules of the EU is the consequence of a single fact – lack of quality of personnel in those parties.

The quality of party personnel and the actual personnel policy of those parties has been the weak spot of the political life in Serbia since the 19th century, i.e. since the beginning of recorded political history of the country. Most of the parties have been autocratic, with an undisputed leader (the father figure) and a pyramid of lap dogs – 'courtiers' who never question the authority of the 'father'.

This kind of organization allows 'courtiers' to attend to 'less important' party or state duties without involving the 'father', who is then free to deal only with 'issues and policies of the highest level' or with 'rulings' over in-house disputes. On the other hand, with his non-interference in the work of the party, the leader separates himself from 'real life', leaving the responsibility for party functioning to other party officials – the 'courtiers'. Unfortunately, they transfer the same methods to the state apparatus, thus making the party susceptible to all kinds of financial and in-kind corruption.

This kind of centralized party organization includes no exchange of opinions and experiences, and it is like a puddle with stale water, releasing nothing but stench from time to time.

This 'stench' is felt from numerous political organizations and it is highly demotivating for the few members still willing to try and change the organization or – heaven forbid – the society. In most cases they are marginalized by the 'courtiers', since the very possibility of reforming the party may erode the reputation of the 'father'.

Since these party systems are reflected on the society in general, this is the cause of all the other problems that we as the society have had in the past few centuries.

\* Local Agenda 21, Kostolac.

\*\* 5 October 2000 (editor's note)

## it's a hard road to an alternative

Mile Sokoli

*The key problem of any political alternative is not in the need for one, but rather in the possibility to organize it in the actual social climate. An alternative political organization should have sufficient determination, public and institutional support and economically independent actors, to be able to persist in its intention to change the existing political model.*

Since the political parties in states covered by this survey have not been focused on structural or organizational changes in their societies, their existence has brought nothing new, other than more trouble for their citizens. Their current configuration is still based on the '1990's conflict and there are no serious attempts to change that. The national pride of the 'great deeds' they had participated in is societal racketeering of sorts, ensuring different benefits for the privileged groups and the political actors who use the system to manipulate public spending. Any challenge to the right of the political actors to act in this way is identified as an attack against the very foundations of national sovereignty, and as the political crisis deepens, so do the excesses that revive old tensions and dissatisfaction with the general living standards, though directed at the old enemies (scapegoats). There is, of course, a host of societal problems not being treated and a host of interests not represented and with no right to any political presence. They all influence the general living standards and the level of freedom that, despite the declared promotion of democracy, continue to shrink. So do the possibilities for the society in general to live in dignity, off their own work. This means that their political representatives, who have asserted themselves as political monopolists, simply do not do their basic job. And that is why it is necessary to advocate a thorough reexamination of the organizational and legal foundations of the current political parties, as well as the real reason for their existence in their present form.

The key problem of any political alternative is not in the need for one, but rather in the possibility to organize it in the actual social climate. An alternative political organization should have sufficient determination, public and institutional support and economically independent actors, to be able to persist in its intention to change the existing political model. In the Balkans, political determination is inevitably linked to some kind of violence. Namely, most of the current political actors have built their governance on the use of violence (internal conflict, war, struggle for property, election manipulation, etc.). They will not cede power without a similar approach. The current political alternative is not prepared for such action and this is not likely to change. On the other hand, the general population does not display the kind of political culture that would punish those who have failed to honor their election commitments. On the contrary, although politically irresponsible parties do receive public criticism, very few people would be prepared for a radical change of their political preferences. First, due to a sense that in the current conditions, this would be a futile attempt with uncertain prospects for success. Moreover, historical experiences indicate that it is better to side with a deceitful and dishonest winner, than with a fair and honest loser.

Finally, the political force of an alternative depends on the economic independence of its leaders. And in this region, there are almost none. Economic freedom is not great enough to allow individuals to enter politics with no consequences for their income – be it private businessmen, intellectuals or ordinary citizens. And that is why most of them are skeptical about any alternative. They are far more open towards the ruling option. As the state is still the most favorable employer, any position taken and any challenge to state leadership means a challenge to one's own means of subsistence. Perhaps some of the economically independent individuals are in the NGO sector, but this is a difficult issue, since most of the prominent intellectuals in this sector are rather cautious when it comes to any political affiliation, and often end up as various government advisors, which is also a good way to buy their silence or win the approval of a particular community. Conclusion: yes, one can imagine an alternative to the current political establishment, but its realization will take much more than good will and intellectual contemplation.

Even in the so-called countries in transition, the green political doctrine is becoming the basis for mobilization of a large number of supporters. Understanding the need to become more responsible towards the environment has launched considerable political support for parties that

define themselves as green and are primarily focused on better quality of life. In light of the global climate changes and greater awareness of the actual responsibility for nature, and thus for one's own health and future, the green issues and the green political movements will continue to grow. Still, a green political alternative in countries in transition must include the issue of structural political reforms necessary if one wishes to ensure a qualitative step forward. They relate to a host of issues that remained unresolved after the so-called democratic changes of the 1990's. Most of those issues can be summarized in a statement that the individual human being is at risk both societally and socially, from the very system that is not being reformed positively, thus creating a series of problems such as slow development, unemployment, low living standards, xenophobia, lack of environmental care, and so on. At this moment, the green parties in Croatia and elsewhere in the region are a kind of political shelter that allows for some political activism but poses no serious threat to the ruling elite. And this will remain so, unless there is a serious organizational and political redefinition of the principles of political action of the greens in Croatia and beyond. That is the only way for them to become a serious alternative that may engender new quality in the political arena of the so-called Western Balkans. This alternative will have the necessary political weight to impose issues such as responsible environmental protection, universal human rights and quality of life with dignity.

## a party or a movement for a thorough change

Dražen Nikoli \*

*Due to the fragmentation of the scene and the fact that most of the existing green parties have been compromised, such a movement does not have to be 'green' in its name, but rather in its content, its aims and its alternative methods of political action.*

There is a need in the current political arena for a clear message for the well-established parties as well as for the demoralized political abstainers, about the need for a thorough change in the dominant political decision-making practice. This message may be sent by a political movement or a political party of an alternative model of organization, based primarily on models of direct or more direct democracy, and with easy communication with a wide spectrum of NGO's.

Due to the fragmentation of the scene and the fact that most of the existing green parties have been compromised, I tend to believe that such a movement does not have to be 'green' in its name, but rather in its content, its aims and its alternative methods of political action.

The platform that such a movement may be created on, at least initially, with a likely transformation into one or more political parties at a later stage, is, in my opinion, first and foremost, economic democracy. This area is the source of deep and widespread frustration, and answers to the current challenges include all the key political issues – ethics in politics, role of the state in preserving public goods, socially responsible business, quality of life, the exercise of human rights (of all generations) and environmental protection.

The typically 'green issues', when presented through the lens of economic democracy, can bring together not only the existing conscientious representatives of the green scene, but also of the disappointed social groups such as the young, the pensioners, the unemployed, the informally employed, and the employed whose living standards depend directly on the environment and the quality of life, such as farmers, fishermen, small tourist business operators and so on – all those who may find the 'green issues' stereotype somewhat cold and distant.

This kind of inclusive policy, 'green' in the content but not necessarily in the name, must avoid the existing stereotypes about the 'greens' and replace them with new images. Vocal obsession with issues related to the biological element of green policies has created the stereotype of preachers of the 'global doomsday', which people do not like to even listen to, let alone support or follow. It is very important that any policy of such a movement is devised as 'funky', i.e. not based on any fear from the future.

Winning the support and participation of these 'resigned' groups in such a movement and/or party is the key to its establishment and subsequent

\* A green activist.



sustainable work.

The potential for such a movement and/or party exists already, but its realization is burdened by reluctance towards classic models of political leadership of the current 'green in content' policies, while individual potentials to adopt such responsibilities.

My personal view is that the deficit is not in the area of competent individuals with leadership potentials, but rather in the area of personal courage to start the inevitable 'long march' through the institutions.

## a challenge – how to succeed in the political arena

Vjeran Piršić

*Despite all the reservations, it seems that now is the time for political activism of the green type. Right now, more and more citizens (voters) believe that the current political parties and their models of functioning are, in fact, the principal source of societal pathology in this region. It is necessary to stop being a passive observer of this cruel (and essentially tragic) political reality.*

My personal problem with any type of party is their basic motivation, which is to represent the interests of a particular part of society. Thus, for example, the liberals should defend the interests of capital, the social democrats those of the workers, the peasants those of the peasants etc. I personally have a problem with participating in any process (including political) that defends any partial interests, as opposed to public ones. This is further emphasized in the case of our political parties, since for most of them representation of interests of a particular segment of the society has been reduced to defending personal interests of the party oligarchy.

Another problem with political parties is their chronic lack of internal democracy, and this is something that even green parties are not immune to.

That is why my answer to the survey question is a simple one: yes, Croatia badly needs a quality green party, though only provided it really deals with green issues and functions in a way totally different from the current parties, i.e. that it should promote in-party pluralism as one of its fundamental values. I know that this immediately opens the issue of party functioning (like with the anarchists), but I believe that even this problem can be resolved effectively.

An additional problem is the activity of the current green and 'green' political parties, and their successes (or failures). The fact is that in many areas, individuals and groups who at least call themselves green have built a very bad public status, and in some instances the public perceives them as seriously as members of marginal religious sects (of the 'Hare Krishna' type), which is particularly dangerous in Dalmatia, where it is very easy to gain (and difficult to shed) the status of a 'public ridicule'.

Despite all this, it seems to me that this is the time for political activism of the green type, for it is right now that more and more citizens (voters) believe that the current political parties and their models of functioning are, in fact, the principal source of societal pathology in this region. From my vantage point of a civil society activist, there is in the area of environmental protection a clear need for activating a political wing, which has already engendered multiple successes, in form of independent election lists. The challenge now is how to succeed in the political arena, not only nationally, but also regionally.

How does one do that? There are two dominant forms: to establish a party at the national level and expect its hard work to multiply in all the areas where there is interest in this (green) political alternative, or create an union of the existing and sometimes well profiled points of resistance to human stupidity. Perhaps the solution is in a combination of the two? I do not have the wisdom or the expertise to assess which of the two would be the optimum, but I am certain that it is time to stop being a passive observer of this cruel (and essentially tragic) political reality, since the decadence of the society has advanced so much that some very dangerous processes may easily become irreversible. There is a totally different issue: are former self-managers, who vote at elections the same way as they support football clubs (which ones are mine) ready to recognize something like that at the moment when they're about to cast their ballot...

## a change is necessary, a green option is possible

Mak ukan

*Croatia needs a party that will be the voice of excellence, science and fairness. It needs a political party that will propose ideas based on the real needs of the society, rather than private interests.*

I believe that my opinion is similar to that of most of the youth in Croatia, desperate for a change. Croatia certainly needs a new political party that may or may not be green. It is important for someone new to appear in the political arena, someone who can awaken Croatia from the trance it is currently in. The Croatian society has been so tortured by scandals that fill its papers, that people simply stop paying attention and pretend as if everything is just fine. Unfortunately, most people in Croatia accept this conformism. Croatians have agreed to a society where it is acceptable to buy an exam, to appoint a relative to a steering board, or to allow all kinds of scandals that shake the ruling political parties almost daily. This situation is the consequence of neglect of the decision-makers, who want to maintain the status quo, as it gives them personal gains. How can it be that a person who receives letters from relatives who have been promised a seat in the steering board of a state-owned company is still the speaker of the parliament? How can it be that people with no qualifications for a particular job end up in senior positions? It can be, for someone allows it to be.

I believe that Croatia needs a party that will be the voice of excellence, science and fairness. I believe that such a party should be liberal and should serve as the counter-balance to the ruling structures. Such a party should be based on young individuals who have never had an opportunity to participate actively in the political life of the country, and who find all the other options repulsive due to their links with corruptions and individuals of questionable morals. Croatia is in dire need of a new voice, to represent all those who vote just because they don't want to waste their vote, but are forced to vote for the worn-out, discredited political options. After all the scandals and the economic crisis, Croatia needs a political party that will propose ideas based on the real needs of the society, rather than private interests. I simply do not believe that there is any party in Croatia at the moment capable of offering acceptable and (economically, socially and environmentally) sound solutions. A green party with all its values is one of the options that can offer such an alternative.

## a key place for green policies

Hana opi \*

• *Are there any significant problems, interests or values that remain unrepresented and even invisible in the current political party configuration?*

I believe there are. Namely, even the issues that are mentioned sporadically in election campaigns (almost like election commitments) never see the moment of implementation, whereas the inevitably populist political game focuses on the nationalist issues, thus calling to some kind of camaraderie in co-misery. In this configuration, nothing essential changes (in terms of value or policy) – there is no clear determination to create life 'to human measure'.

• *In the current circumstances, is it possible to imagine an alternative to the political party establishment?*

I believe that it is necessary to have an alternative policy in the public arena in the fashion as described above, as this is a matter of a responsible attitude toward the community and the society in general.

• *What kind of place may a 'green policy' occupy in such an alternative? Are issues such as environmental protection, human rights (of all generations), and the quality of life... politically relevant... and do they have the strength to mobilize politically?*

A key place. I believe that these are the ideas with mobilizing potential and that they would allow numerous citizens to find their own political interests and/or action, in light of a wide spectrum of opportunities. However, since there is no green tradition, or at least not in the way as it exists in the West,

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I believe that there is no true understanding of 'green policies', i.e. of all that they can entail. In that sense, I am also skeptical about the leaders (I think that many current leaders believe that anything 'green' means nothing other than the environment!) – we need a serious level of dedication and enlightenment, to reach a sufficient number of people, to create the critical mass for (potential) mobilization.



## chances for the green alternative but with new faces

Paola Petri \*

Almost all positions have been taken on the political stage in Serbia and one gets the impression that the established parties have gained an overwhelming majority of voters. Here I primarily refer to the two most dominant parties (DS and SNS). Other parties group around these two, in accordance with their ideological/interest determinations, so the impression is that currently there is no space on the political stage of Serbia for a new political option! At the same time, one can feel the increasing dissatisfaction of citizens with the concrete reforms and results of the ruling parties' policies. Such a situation signals the need for a new alternative to the existing political orientations in Serbia. However, the question that arises is who could be the bearers of this new alternative and in what way should it be formulated in order to succeed in gaining the trust of the disappointed voters, as well as those who have given in to the complete political apathy. Such an alternative, which would treat the issues of social solidarity, human rights, quality of life and protection of the environment – together with all other political positions that can be considered as green policy – would certainly receive a positive response from the public, but only if completely new faces with full professional and personal credibility appear as bearers of the new politics.

\* Project Coordinator, Heinrich Böll Foundation Belgrade

## does the success of the Hungarian LMP signal a new opportunity for the Green movement in Eastern Europe and the Balkans?

## the Greens – politics of necessity or entertainment?

Vedran Horvat\*

*The LMP has succeeded in forging an anti-establishment position, not only on the street, but in parliament as well. It has capitalized on the potential of protest, as well as the longstanding underrepresentation of segments of the population that hitherto have lacked a “spokesperson” within the political sphere.*

While the fact that the Greens have enjoyed their greatest success in recent years in France and Germany has brought little surprise, the entry this year of the Hungarian LMP (Lehet Más a Politika!, or Politics Can Be Different) into the national parliament has revived dormant doubts over whether the Greens can enjoy political success within the former Soviet Bloc. With the Czech Green Party having only a few years ago lost seats in the government, the success of the Estonian Green Party several years ago in securing enough support to enter parliament, the promising, although unstable Bosnian-Herzegovinian Naša stranka (Our Party), which has recorded some success at the local level, as well as liberal-progressive Green political platforms like that of the LMP, experience has confirmed that, despite the suspicions of the greatest skeptics, space exists for these options in the political spheres of countries that have endured two decades of agonizing post-communist transition. In the majority of these countries, where political pluralism has achieved some success, but which underwent greater problems at the start of the nineties, Green parties have been unable to carve out their own niche among the political choices available to the public. The reasons for this are numerous, and include the outspoken ambitions of local companies and consumerism, (unrestricted) economic growth (which attempted to compensate for the period of “poverty” and material deprivation in most socialist countries), the ethno-religious definition of political communities (leaving no room for post-modern identities), the lack of basic foundations in terms of social structure, and the fundamental fight to free civil society actors from government influence. Although facing difficult resistance, parties that have set as their program the limiting of economic growth (especially control through the equation of capital with the state), as well as the responsible management of natural resources (through equal distribution and access) have slowly achieved success. In fact, not only do the political agendas of these parties and movements correspond with sensibilities recently discovered by voters; on the basis of political ecology they have formed a valuable platform in formulating a new kind of policy, and a politics of the future (Zukunftspolitik) that, at least for now, is essentially different from the political agendas of mainstream parties. The relevant question raised here is the extent to which the encouraging experiences of the Green political program in Central-Eastern Europe are possible in our region, and whether it would be a useful or even feasible model for our own social framework.

At the outset it must be made clear that the best answer to this question in the end has to concern direct political action, rather than theoretical discussion, which proverbially delays, if not eliminates, this possibility. In addition, because we lack the space for a comparative analysis of transitional societies in order to track the development and eventual political rise of Green party movements, we will instead try to determine the reasons for their slow and gradual success, and the driving forces, or impetuses behind them. The closest and most recent example for our region, and perhaps the most stimulating, is that of the aforementioned Hungarian LMP. First, it is not the typical small and weak Green political group that takes years in finding its way towards political success (like those typically found in Eastern Europe); on the contrary, we are talking

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*The protest potential of dissatisfied and excluded groups, the apolitical population (abstainers), as well the social invisibility of underrepresented groups (often on the basis of post-modern identity) can be capitalized on through a political and moral platform with a clear message that creates the opportunity for solidarity and joint action against inequality.*

about an extremely vibrant movement<sup>1</sup> which only two years ago defined its party's framework and capitalized on its many years of civic and social activism and expert experience. Reckoning with widespread corruption and dubious privatization, widespread measures at exclusion (towards the Roma) in an exceptionally deficient democracy, phenomena which during a period of economic crisis have become intolerable, and noting the closed, narrow circle of individuals granted viable access to political influence, all gave the impetus to launch a framework for the party demonstrated in the conviction that politics must and can change. With this sharp and uncompromising demand guised in a temperate, almost post-modern call for a new kind of politics, the movement succeeded in mobilizing the population. However, perhaps the most important incentive in the party's consolidation was the growing popularity of the extreme right (Jobbik), which through its parliamentary groups – as well as by its public discourse and assemblies – has had an increasingly important influence over the political scene in Hungary. The LMP party won 7.5% of the vote and 16 seats in the national parliament, unfortunately failing to demonstrate greater strength than Jobbik, but nevertheless now offering opposition within the political sphere to the dangerous trends of poverty and lack of education in the country which have been successfully exploited through the politics of exclusion, xenophobia and political violence against the Other. These days LMP faces no easy challenges in parliament. What LMP has succeeded in doing in this case is to forge an anti-establishment position, not only in the street, but in parliament as well. It has capitalized on the potential of protests, and responded to the longstanding underrepresentation of segments of the population that hitherto have lacked a “spokesperson” within the political sphere. This experience of the LMP model is possible in other neighboring countries, including those of our own region, where discontent and protest have undoubtedly grown, recently becoming more visible and justified in their expression. At the same time, a large number of people who “abstain” from political participation could be attracted in this way to new forms of political expression with credible points corresponding to the challenges of the future, from alternative solutions to the economic crisis, ensuring the safety of sources of food and energy, and safeguarding the environment and climate, to improving the organization of urban life, insuring a fairer distribution of responsibilities and improving educational systems.



LMP, a young party which is currently far from consolidating a majority in the Hungarian parliamentary system, nevertheless demonstrates the need for those well-established within the ‘business as usual’ system of inter-party ‘division of labor’ to constantly question the distribution of resources, and protect the public interest, which must be addressed, and not only through non-institutional forms of protest that have ultimately shown limited impact. On the contrary, the protest potential of dissatisfied and excluded groups, the apolitical population (abstainers), as well the social invisibility of underrepresented groups (often on the basis of post-modern identity) can be capitalized on through a similar political and moral platform with a clear and unequivocal message that creates the opportunity for solidarity and joint action against the series of obstacles responsible for inequality.

Second, the constitution of a political entity at its core must have a similar understanding of the urgency of change and intolerance of a situation which is characterized by parties that are deeply corrupt or the clientelistic networks that surround and serve them. As the abovementioned parties realize that new movements are opposing them, they apparently attempt to prevent their political consolidation, and to discredit them by any means possible. Insofar as there is deep concern over the current situation and the political crisis, and rejection of both, these demonstrate the ultimate basis for further political actions, which by virtue of their confrontational features may represent a new model for the actions of the opposition and set new standards for political behavior. With this intention, a progressive/Green political platform may show that entering the party sphere is inevitable; in the Balkans it can transcend the mere anti-parties which the Green parties had existed as in the West during their formative years in the eighties. It is also clear that there will be a certain amount of resistance to the creation of a new political entity, since every inch of party space in parliaments bears the marks of past political fights amongst the old guard. New political momentum will be faced with a difficult fight against such entrenchment. However, in most countries in the region such momentum will not necessarily have to fight, since already the majority of mainstream parties have shown they are unable to responsibly represent the interests of their citizens, that confidence in them has eroded, and their credibility deeply damaged. In this context, a progressive Green-liberal platform uniting the potential of political protest with post-modern identity may represent an added value to the political spectrum, not least by influencing the parties around it.

To conclude, the situations facing countries in the region and the deep political crisis facing its parties leaves no room for Green party policies defined as idle post-modern politics, a politics of entertainment. On the contrary, collective unease, anxiety and the inherent motivation to act urgently to counteract the array of crises to which the region's been led by it political elites has shown that the region's Green parties in their formative years must of necessity formulate politics as a progressive response to regressive and authoritarian elements, as a corrective against a series of obstacles that have destroyed the confidence and capacity for justice in these societies. This is why the appearance of the Green movement in countries of this region can prove to be a political option coming at the right time, despite skeptics' beliefs that it is too late. It will offer new opportunities for the opposition to closely watch the government's every movement and ‘meddle with affairs of the state’, but this time in Parliament, not in the streets. There will be no more standing aside...



## lessons to be learned?

How then can the Hungarian experience prove relevant for countries in our region? Although models can never be simply transplanted, this case in several respects indicates significant points that could be useful for movements with similar aspirations in South East Europe. First, the case of

<sup>1</sup> A similar example can be found in Europe Ecologie, a French Green movement, which was extremely successful in the last European Parliament elections in 2009, in part owing to its transcending (and integrating) the party framework of the Green Party (Les Verts), which had been relatively negligible.



# events and actions

## twenty five years of fighting for Drava

*Since multidisciplinary activities are lacking in all segments of the state strategy, relevant bodies have been passing rushed, confusing and contradictory decisions, depending on the lobbies dominating the scene at the time.*

In their flow through Croatia, the Mura and Drava rivers have been a stage for clashes between opposing interests and strategies for a quarter of a century. Commercial interests of electric and water utilities on the one hand, collided with interests of sustaining the environment, biological diversity and ecosystem on the other. Europe, including the neighboring Hungary with which Croatia shares the much of the rivers' flow, has significantly changed its attitude in that period. In Croatia – forces advocating the primacy of short-term economic profit (power sector, construction and water management) are still very strong. The approaching accession of Croatia to the EU further intensifies this fight.

In the upper course, a total of 27 dams and hydropower plants have been built on Drava and 15 on Mura. In that part of the flow, the rivers are characterized as mountainous with a steep drop, hence the negative impact on the environment is reduced, as well as the expenses. However, a change in the ecological thinking has led to efforts to partially return the rivers to their natural condition.<sup>1</sup> Since the beginning of the 1980s, protests against the construction of a chain of seven new hydroelectric power plants on Mura have marked the beginning of the environmental movement.

In the lower rivers, both the expenses and the environmental impact are greater. Accumulations are enormous and vast areas of agricultural and forest terrain have been sacrificed; the water regime changes in the wider area. Forestry and agriculture have been adjusted to the present situation and the influence is negative, with it being even more negative as we move downstream. The same problem is observed also in the lower Danube and Tisa, where the collision of interests also exists.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, some experts from the electric and water utilities admit the negative effect of the three hydroelectric power plants constructed on the lower Drava in Croatia, and have proposed a solution – the construction of new dams!

The construction of the existing dams was completed in the late 1980s. The Plan for the Complete Hydropower Exploitation of the Drava River from 1985 foresaw the construction of four more dams downstream. However, the construction of the “ur evac” hydroelectric power plant was fiercely opposed by the local residents, the first environmental associations and environmental and forestry experts.<sup>3</sup>

Experts from the Croatian Electric Utility (HEP) and the Croatian Water Utility have consistently refused any dialogue, not only with laymen, but also with other experts. That became evident especially in 1998, when almost all power sector representatives banned the printing of their articles in the conference proceedings at the international conference “Sustainable Economical Management of the Lower Rivers and Protection of Nature and the Environment”. There is no multidisciplinary work; there are no attempts of any kind to jointly estimate the situation and reach a compromise, which is a common practice in mature democracies (“deliberative democracy”).

The conflict remains: political fight, both in public and secretly. In order to fight the powerful lobbies, environmental associations have formed the “Dravska liga”. This fall, they have organized the 10th “Dani Drave” event. They also organize scientific and tourist activities, etc.

Since the ecologically enlightened Hungary blocked the construction of the “ur evac” hydroelectric power plant (in 1991), as well as the modified project Novo Virje hydroelectric power plant (2007), HEP has developed a project for the construction of two hydroelectric power plants, namely Molva 1 and Molva 2. The Dravska liga claims that nothing has changed significantly and that the project is still ecologically unacceptable.

Principles of the EU Water Framework Directive from 2000 go in favor of the environmentalists, for return to nature and protection of the environment are set as the primary goals. In that directive, the Danube River Basin Management Plan, signed by all the Danube river flow countries including Croatia, is outlined among 170 river basin management plans in Europe. This year, the final report on EU Twinning Project on Implementation of the Framework Directive was published. The conclusion is that the present water management system in Croatia is outdated, hazardous for the environment, too expensive and causes many negative consequences, including the destruction of the many useful benefits of rivers.<sup>4</sup>

Power games between many lobbies and their representatives in the ministries have been taking place behind the scenes. Since multidisciplinary activities are lacking in all segments of the state strategy, relevant bodies have been passing rushed, confusing and contradictory decisions, depending on lobbies dominating the scene at the time. The Ministry of Culture (which has jurisdiction over the protection of nature) has declared in February 2009 the “preventive protection” of the Mura – Drava corridor in the regional park category. HEP fought back by an official demand to exempt all their existing and planned objects from the National Eco-Network, which will enter the European network Natura 2000, as soon as Croatia joins the EU. In September 2009, our Prime Minister and the Hungarian Prime Minister signed the Declaration on the Formation of the Cross-Border Nature Reserve of the Mura-Drava Biosphere. The EURONATUR European network has been working on that program since 1996 and, after all this has happened, in April 2010, the government listed the Molva 1 and Molva 2 hydroelectric power plants as priority electric energy facilities. However, Croatia did not partake in the agreement on formation of the natural reserve, signed in October 2010 by Austria, Slovenia and Serbia, and Minister of Economy uro Popija had the key role in that.

Environmental associations have also been fighting the battle against the plans of Croatian Water Utility to canalize the Mura river delta, which would lead to the destruction of Veliki Pažut, a natural jewel, also known as the Amazon of Croatia. Advocates of that project want to create a completely new, geometrically perfect flow of the river, a practice long abandoned by the European countries.\* Ecological associations claim that these construction activities have but one goal – seizing tax payers' money to finance the most expensive projects, prior to the formation of the new protected areas and adoption of new laws which would disable that intention.

**Zoran Oštri**

### Links

Zaštitarsko-ekološka udruga „Senjar“ (Donja Dubrava), <http://www.senjar.hr/>  
Udruga „Baobab“ (Koprivnica), <http://udrugabaobab.blog.hr/>  
Sutok Mure i Drave, [www.uscemure.org](http://www.uscemure.org)

## a visa free regime for BiH citizens

*After numerous difficulties, political games, usurpation of the entity voting mechanism, with occasional international interventions, the lifting of the visa regime marked the end of a regime which had made travelling abroad difficult, painstaking, oftentimes at the verge of human dignity.*

Good news finally reached BiH citizens on November 8: This country, together with Albania, has been put on the so-called white Schengen list, which means that BiH citizens may travel to 27 EU member countries, as well as to Island, Norway and Switzerland from December 15, without visas, without having to wait in queues outside embassies, without the procedure which had prevented them all these years to travel through much of the European continent.

Citizens had had to plan their travels long in advance; the visa issuing process was at times difficult, painstaking and at the verge of human dignity.

This act was preceded by the fulfillment of 176 conditions outlined in the

<sup>1</sup> „The Upper Drava: Efforts to Restore a River“, Danube Watch br. 2/2002, [http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr/static/dw2002\\_2/dw0202p04.htm](http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr/static/dw2002_2/dw0202p04.htm)

<sup>2</sup> „Power from the Danube – Can it be sustainable?“, Danube Watch br. 2/2010. [http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/dw1002\\_p\\_06.htm](http://www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/dw1002_p_06.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Zoran Oštri : „Selja ka buna na obalama Drave“, Start, br 548, 2. rujna 1989., <http://www.scribd.com/doc/41466402/Selja%20ka%20buna-na-obalama-Drave-1989>

<sup>4</sup> (European Union Twinning Project - Implementing the Water Framework Directive in the Republic of Croatia, Rezultati projekta, [http://www.wfd-croatia.eu/userfiles/file/Activity%20reports%20final/Rezultati\\_projekta\\_HRV.pdf](http://www.wfd-croatia.eu/userfiles/file/Activity%20reports%20final/Rezultati_projekta_HRV.pdf)

\* more about this in the article by Kruno Kartus in this issue of *agenda*

Visa Free Regime Roadmap, which was often accompanied with numerous difficulties, political games and the usurpation of the entity voting mechanism, with occasional international interventions, especially against the RS authorities, which were largely responsible for delays in the fulfillment of BiH obligations, defined in the aforementioned document.

Also, there was an overwhelming impression, in many cases entirely justifiable, that BiH had bigger and more demanding tasks in this field compared with other countries, primarily with Serbia and Montenegro.

At the same time, even Brussels lacked a unanimous attitude related to the visa regime liberalization for BiH citizens. France, Germany, Holland doubted for a long time the capability of BiH authorities to implement the fulfilled criteria in practice. Whether or not they were right remains to be seen in the following months.

Brussels emphasizes that it is important to inform BiH citizens in the following period about the importance of visa liberalization.

"This is not a ticket to residence permits or asylum. Visa liberalization means the possibility for people with biometric passports to travel to the Schengen countries and remain there up to three months. If any abuses occur, there is a possibility of re-introducing the visa regime. That would bring the citizens into a very difficult and serious situation. That is something we certainly do not want to happen", Tanja Fajon, European Parliament Rapporteur for visa liberalization stated.

Because of this, Monitoring the Process of Visa Liberalization has been introduced for all countries of the region, including BiH. The first report is due in six months.

In any case, this decision has been welcomed by BiH citizens who are now, after almost 20 years, allowed to travel freely.

**Adnan Rondi**

## on yugoslavianism these days, or, how to divorce one's own socialization?

*Perhaps the time has really come for us to start living like other normal people? I would prefer had we all, as by some act of magic, grown mature after everything that had happened, and that we have come to a realization that nothing can be done without remorse and reconciliation.*

The play Born in YU premiered October 12 this year at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre was an important event for Belgrade and for all of us born in Yugoslavia – wherever we may live.

Dino Mustafic, author and director of the play, assembled a drama team which included Mira Bogavac, Maja Pelevi, Filip Vujoševi, Božo Koprivica, Miloš Krekovi and Biserka Savi, who, together with actors Mirjana Karanovi, Predrag Ejdus, Branka Petri, Marko Babić, Slobodan Bešlić, Anita Manić, Goran Jevtić, Anelka Simić, Rašo Vujović and Milena Vasić have set this play.

Actors do not have specific roles. Instead, they appear as themselves, under their own names and even with their own identification number. "Denuded" in such a way, they give a personal touch to the play, filling it with personal memories, emotions and evocation of the young days and growing up in the Country-Whose-Name-Was-Banned-From-Mentioning-For-A-Long-Time, of all that could remind of the beautiful things from that period, but also of the symptoms of the future dissolution of that country and its bloody and disgraceful demise.

Although, in the meantime, historiography (even our own!) has abandoned the opinion that the Serbian leadership had been against the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, while other republics had favored it, there is a prevailing feeling among us, the citizens of Serbia, that we are more Yugoslav than anybody else, and that we cannot give up the former country. That is why we somehow feel ashamed and we do not like talking about it much. Cognitively, we understand everything; emotionally, we are silent.

It was perhaps necessary for someone from outside to come, perhaps exactly from Sarajevo, and show with their international drama team that we are not the only ones who feel an impulse to rise every time Hej Sloveni anthem is played, or to remind us that we still know all the words of the Pioneer Vow. Or simply to show us that it is okay that we used to both love and hate the country and also that the time has come to put an end to this story in a way. This play does have that cathartic effect.

A public debate entitled Born in YU, held on Wednesday, October 27, at the Center for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade, shows that the play has triggered a wide reaction. "Cultural workers" from the region (Želimir Žilnik, Mirjana Karanović, Ante Tomić, Miljenko Jergović and Muharem Bazdulj) discussed before a capacity audience issues of identity and deconstruction

of Yugoslavianism. Was it a coincidence that the play premiered only 20 days prior to the first unofficial visit and apology of Serbian President to Vukovar? Perhaps the time has really come for us to start living like other normal people? Hmmm. I would prefer had we all, as by some act of magic, grown mature after everything that had happened, and that we have come to a realization that nothing can be done without remorse and reconciliation.

In any case, I recommend every Yugoslav child who still remembers the country of birth and who accidentally comes to Belgrade, to spare some time to see the play Born in YU. After every divorce, especially the violent ones, a lot of time needs to pass to recall the good moments from the life once lived together. Such moments undoubtedly existed.

**Jelena Mićević**

## system blocked – election results blocked

*The complex structure of BiH has been once again fully displayed: slow implementation of the election results is the main feature of this post-election period as well.*

The last general election in BiH was held on October 3 and has brought about partial changes to the country's political scene. In this moment, we can speak of quantitative changes, but in order to speak of true, quality changes, we will have to wait for the establishment of the new authorities at all levels: including the cantonal, entity and the state level.

In short: SDP BiH has come out of the elections as the strongest party, SNSD did not fail the expectations and is still a sovereign ruler of the RS, SDA received slightly less support from the voters, but they have a Presidency member.

The biggest surprise was a fairly good result of Fahrudin Radončić's Party for a Better Future, while Silajdžić and his Party for BiH saw a debacle.

The majority of Croat votes went to HDZ BiH, a smaller number of votes went to HDZ 1990.

In the past few weeks, we witnessed numerous meetings of the political leaders, negotiations and talks on possible coalitions, creation of national blocks, attempts of gaining time and the best start positions possible.

Meetings of leaders of the two strongest political parties, SDP BiH and SNSD caused the biggest interest of the BiH public. This meeting confirmed the old proverb "never say never". Although Milorad Dodik had sworn he would never speak with Zlatko Lagumdžija for purely profane reasons, it has become obvious that the carrot and stick, which have been in the possession of the international community for the past two decades, played their part again.

The complex structure of BiH has been once again fully displayed: slow implementation of the election results is the main feature of this post-election period as well.

It needs to be said that the task has been partly completed in the RS: the RS National Assembly has been established and we know at this moment that the former Finance Minister, Aleksandar Džombić, is the new Prime Minister. Other appointments are still being discussed, and January now seems the most likely time for the establishment of Džombić's cabinet.

In the Federation BiH, the process of establishing cantonal assemblies is coming to an end. The FBiH House of Representatives has been established, but not the House of Peoples.

At the state level, although members of BiH Parliamentary Assembly's House of Representatives are known, negotiations are still in progress regarding the Parliament management, while there is little hope that there will be any real discussion concerning the establishment of the Council of Ministers, i.e. the state government, before early next year.

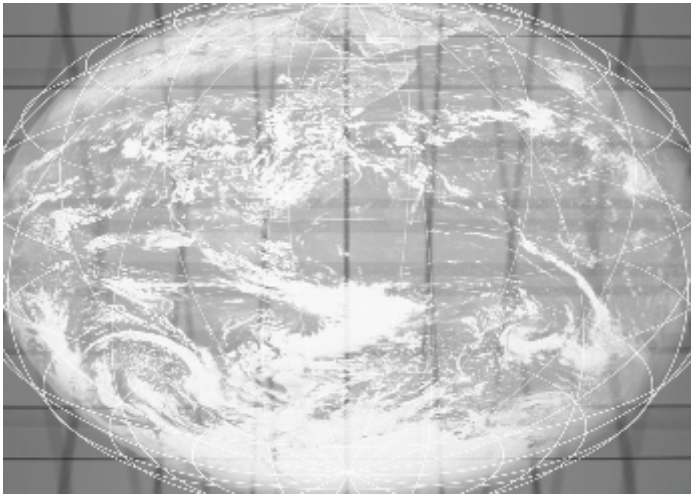
The new-old government in BiH will have the same tasks it has been faced with for the past fifteen years. Constitutional changes are a top priority. For the time being, a consensus has only been reached related to the implementation of the court decision in the Sejdić-Finci case.

However, an impasse has occurred immediately after the start of talks on modalities for the implementation of this decision.

It is now on the international community to make the next move, and perhaps employ secret diplomacy methods.

Public diplomacy, employed by the international community in BiH, is either out of order, or is unable to provide concrete results.

**Adnan Rondi**



## turbulent days

*Even the recent earthquake and the ban on smoking in public premises in Serbia indicate that the deepest divides exist between regulations and their implementation.*

The Kraljevo earthquake that occurred in early November, and which was felt all the way to Novi Sad, caused not only casualties and material damage, but also quakes in the construction industry – because of the use of inadequate materials and failure to implement the current construction regulations. A 5.4 Richter earthquake, which is a daily occurrence in Japan without any significant consequences, has made a number of Kraljevo citizens homeless.

Implementation of the Law on Banning Smoking in Public Premises seems to have caused an even bigger quake. Serbia waited for the last deadline possible to introduce the smoking ban, while the transitional adjustment period expires November 11 2010, exactly when we are to move from the open café gardens into closed spaces. All hell broke loose, even with liberal fundamentalists – nonsmokers. I do not understand why – as if any ban in Serbia has been efficient by now. Even the ones passing those laws have already publicly stated that they will not act in accordance to them. Serb Radical Party MP Lidija Vukićević, otherwise known from the TV series “Bolji život”, stated standing at the gates of the assembly: “I will act as in high school, I will go to the toilet, so if I get caught – I get caught. There isn’t a smoker who would not pay a fine only for the possibility of lighting up whenever he feels like it.”

Our MPs are the best indication of how the law will be implemented.

**Jelena Mićević**

## what killed the two workers?

*The death of two workers, which occurred most probably because of poisoning by an unidentified gas, revealed just how little attention is being paid to the danger of illegal waste dumping and how slow the reaction is to this threat.*

At about noon on Saturday, June 18, a worker entered the basement of a building belonging to a metal trade company. The building in Jankomir (western Zagreb) is near the river Sava, which had swollen and burst the bank. He was about to change his clothes and while he was climbing down the stairs, he fell suddenly and without a sound. Another worker heard a blow and rushed down in an attempt to help. He also fell. They were both dead in minutes. They were both killed by a gas which had accumulated in the past several hours. Another worker and two police officers who responded to the call felt minor consequences. The bodies were taken out only after two days.

What was that gas? Where did it come from? Experts of the Institute for Judicial Medicine and Criminology, the Institute for Public Health and the Croatian Institute for Toxicology initiated an investigation while speculations appeared in the media and the public. Inevitably, one of the hypotheses was that the underground water levels had risen and

moved some dangerous waste buried nearby, thus triggering a chemical reaction which created poisonous steam that reached the basement under immense pressure through the wall pores. There, the gas concentrated. That hypothesis was proposed, among others, by the most competent expert – Franjo Plavšić, PhD, Head of the Institute for Toxicology.<sup>1</sup>

How did the dangerous waste come so near the facilities where people change their clothes? Sadly, all those who monitor the protection and absence of environment protection in Croatia, experts and activists, have inevitably come to the same conclusion: “it is most probably the consequence of two ecological disasters, which have been taking place for decades: illegal gravel digging and dangerous waste dumping.”<sup>2</sup>

In the past twenty years, millions cubic meters of gravel were dug illegally along the Sava and Drava rivers. Occasional protests by the local population never had any effect.

In such cases, witnesses would regularly speak of mysterious trucks which unloaded suspicious material into the holes that would later be covered only provisionally. In that period, residents of Jankomir spoke of that as well. Nobody knows where half of the dangerous waste in Croatia ends; temporarily, some suspicions arise that it could have been illegally imported from abroad. Corroded barrels slowly poison the underground waters.

Pavle Kalinić, Head of the City Office for Emergency Management unexpectedly and fiercely supported this thesis after four days of silence. “The mafia know well who is to blame for the deaths of workers”, Kalinić said. “Throughout Croatia, as well as in other countries of East Europe, there are thousands locations where dangerous waste is being illegally dumped. (...)”

We have already been informed anonymously about some locations which we have cleared, while the ministry has a large number of information for the entire country.”<sup>3</sup>

However, his office was informed too late and they have no jurisdiction over such issues – perhaps they are not “urgent enough” – Kalinić also did not comment on whether anyone had taken any action in relation to that “large number of information” and mafia activities.

After about ten days, postmortem results were announced. Dimethyl Disulfide, a smelly, dangerous gas was discovered in the tissue. However, the gas alone was not lethal. Methane was also present in the basement air, carbon monoxide (constantly confused in the media with carbon dioxide), but, according to Plavšić, “a deadly gas yet to be identified” had to have been present as well.

A commission was established to discover the true cause of the deaths, which is a good method, according to an old saying, if one does not want to solve the problem. The public also learned that the reaction to the “urgent situation” was very slow, with the usual tossing of the hot potato. The first samples of air were taken from the basement only at 11 p.m., the time by which the gas that had killed the workers could have disappeared.

A month had passed before the final conclusions of the police investigation were announced: the workers died of “a too heavy concentration of the carbon monoxide”<sup>5</sup> (again confused by the journalist with carbon dioxide) and the company which was in charge of the ventilation system construction is to blame. We also learned that the basement was built illegally, outside the project plans.

In the conclusions, there was no mention of other deadly gases. What about carbon monoxide, where did it come from? It does not generate on its own; it had appeared in the basement as a result of incomplete burning or a chemical reaction. Was anything on fire? Had an amateur been practicing chemistry? Had the authorities been digging around in search of some suspicious barrels? Perhaps someone spoke to the citizens who had told the press about the secret trucks?

We do not know. Sadly, we will most probably never find out.

**Zoran Oštrić**

<sup>1</sup> Jutarnji list, September 30 2010. <http://www.jutarnji.hr/jankomir--metan-i-co2-izbili-kisik-iz-skladista-i-usmrtili-radnike/891132/>

<sup>2</sup> Zelena lista announcement, [http://www.zelenizagreb.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=239&Itemid=43](http://www.zelenizagreb.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=239&Itemid=43)

<sup>3</sup> The article published September 23 at the dnevno.hr portal, [http://www.dnevno.hr/vijesti/zagreb/\\_kalinic\\_kriminalci\\_koji\\_su\\_zakopali\\_opasni\\_otpad\\_krivi\\_su\\_zasmrtili\\_trovanjem/118713.html](http://www.dnevno.hr/vijesti/zagreb/_kalinic_kriminalci_koji_su_zakopali_opasni_otpad_krivi_su_zasmrtili_trovanjem/118713.html)

<sup>4</sup> Text published in Jutarnji list, September 29 2010, <http://www.jutarnji.hr/jankomir--metan-i-co2-izbili-kisik-iz-skladista-i-usmrtili-radnike/891132/>

<sup>5</sup> Text published in Jutarnji list, <http://www.jutarnji.hr/u-ilegalnom-podrumu-poduzeca-portun-ferrum-na-jankomiru-ih-ubio-plin-i-losa-ventilacija/900238/>



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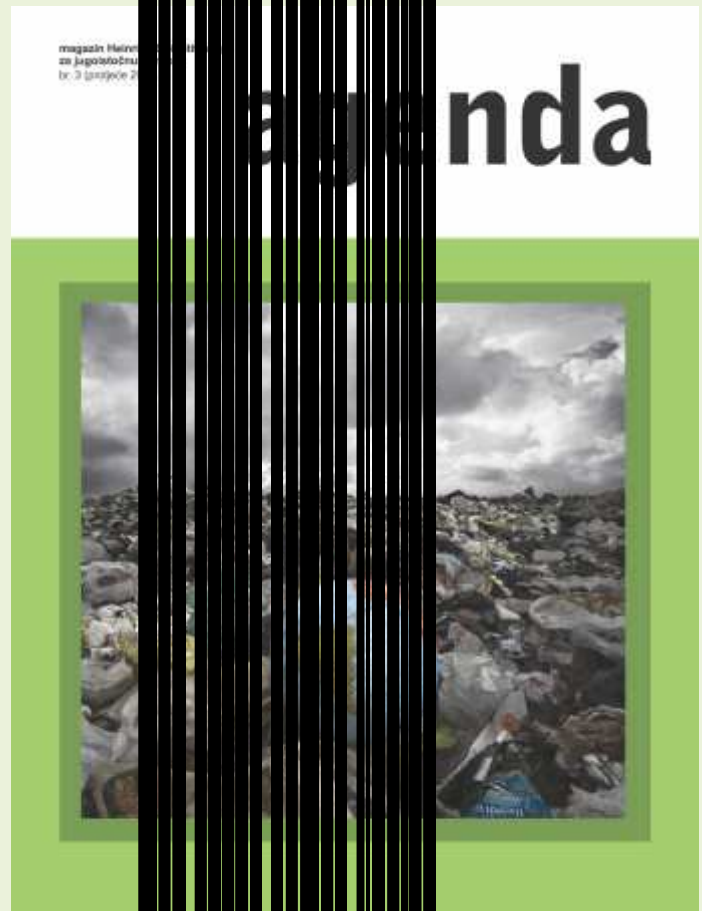
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