

1 **Effects of persistent organic pollutants and mercury in protected**  
2 **area „Obrenovački zabran”**

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9 *Abstract:* This study aims to assess and monitor the health of an urban pro-  
10 tected area by analysing the levels of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and  
11 mercury (Hg) in soil and sediments. Based on the results, the detected concen-  
12 trations of organochlorine pesticides (OCPs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs),  
13 polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and Hg are above the threshold  
14 maximum values for soils and the prescribed target values for sediments. In the  
15 investigated protected area PCBs pose a very high ecological risk. The pre-  
16 sence of 16 priority PAHs in analysed soils and sediments poses a moderate to  
17 high cancer risk and Hg poses a considerable health risk to children. The re-  
18 search suggests that preserving urban protected areas is crucial for environ-  
19 mental and urban sustainability. In urban environments these areas should be  
20 evaluated in terms of their environmental, eco-geochemical, economic and  
21 socio-cultural dimensions. The value of the existence of this natural oasis lies  
22 in its aesthetic and psycho-hydrological impact, local climate regulation, resi-  
23 dential isolation and significant art-architectural and horticultural shaping. The  
24 interconnection between eco-geochemical and management practices, planning,  
25 and urban green spaces policy should become an adopted innovation in the  
26 cities in the future.

27 *Keywords:* mercury; organochlorine pesticides; polybrominated diphenyl ethers;  
28 polychlorinated biphenyls; polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

29 INTRODUCTION

30 Today half of humanity lives in urban areas. According to the prediction, the  
31 urban population will increase to 68 % by 2050.<sup>1</sup> Protected areas with distinct  
32 environmental qualities in urban areas require special protection measures. They

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33 provide ecosystem services such as nutrient cycling, climate regulation, infil-  
34 tration and stabilization of groundwater levels, retention of flood waters and rec-  
35 reational activities.<sup>2</sup>

36 When pollutants reach the environment, the effects on the ecosystems and  
37 their services will depend on a range of factors, such as persistence, mobility, and  
38 their bioavailability. The monitoring of polluting substances can contribute to the  
39 prevention and elimination of the consequences of degradation processes. The  
40 presence of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and mercury (Hg) in the envi-  
41 ronment is of great concern, due to their toxicity and ability to accumulate in org-  
42 anisms.<sup>3</sup> The POPs and Hg can biomagnify in the food chain, leading to the  
43 increased concentrations and potential adverse effects in organisms at the top of  
44 the food chain.<sup>3</sup>

45 Among the most important synthetic POPs, organochlorine pesticides (OCPs)  
46 and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are universal environmental pollutants.<sup>4</sup>  
47 As agricultural chemicals, especially disease control chemicals, OCPs are widely  
48 used worldwide. Due to high toxicity and long-term environmental accumulation,  
49 OCPs are prohibited from use.<sup>5,6</sup> Since the 1930s, PCBs, due to their properties  
50 have found wide application as ideal additives for insulators in electrical equip-  
51 ment.<sup>7</sup> Although PCBs production was banned from the 1970s to the 1980s in  
52 most countries, their environmental concentrations are still high in many areas  
53 worldwide.<sup>8</sup> In the environment PCBs lead to a public health concern and a decli-  
54 ne in wildlife since they are highly persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic.<sup>9-11</sup>  
55 The polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) are industrial chemicals (flame  
56 retardants) that have been used for over 40 years. There are 209 congeneric  
57 PBDEs.<sup>12</sup> PBDEs can cause environmental pollution and human health prob-  
58 lems.<sup>13,14</sup> The polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are of particular con-  
59 cern among pollutants, especially in urban areas. The PAHs have been inten-  
60 sively studied in various parts of the environment as a group of organic pollutants  
61 that are carcinogenic, mutagenic, and teratogenic.<sup>15,16</sup>

62 Hg is released into the environment from natural and anthropogenic  
63 sources.<sup>17</sup> Hg undergoes chemical transformations (primarily by microbiological  
64 processes) in the environment and can be changed from inorganic into methyl-  
65 mercury, which can accumulate in living organisms (bioaccumulation) and con-  
66 centrate up the food chain (biomagnification), especially in the aquatic one.

67 This study aims to assess and monitor the health of an urban protected area  
68 by analysing the levels of POPs and Hg in soil and sediments. The research  
69 hypothesis is that preserving urban protected areas is crucial for environmental  
70 and urban sustainability. This research chose a protected area „Obrenovački zab-  
71 ran” (OZ, Fig. S-1 of Supplementary material to this paper), Serbia, as a case  
72 study.

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## EXPERIMENTAL

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Following a combination of a sieve and sedimentation test determination of particle size distribution was done.<sup>18</sup> Soil organic matter (OM) weight percent was determined using the loss on ignition (LOI) method.<sup>19</sup> Soil OM content with the conventional “Van Bemmelen factor” of 1.724 total organic carbon (TOC) content was calculated.<sup>20</sup>

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For the simultaneous analysis of multiple compounds (OCPs, PCBs, PBDEs and PAHs) QuEChERS analysis was used. Into 50 ml polypropylene centrifugal tubes were weighed 5 g of sample, 10 ml of water, and 10 ml of acetonitrile. CHROMABOND QuEChERS Mix I, Extraction, EN 15662, 6.5 g were added to the suspension. The tube was centrifuged and the aliquot was placed in the freezer. The cold extract was purified by CHROMABOND QuEChERS Mix VI, Clean-up, EN 15662, 1.2 g. The aliquot was evaporated to almost dry and reconstituted with acetone for gas chromatography (GC) analysis and acetonitrile for liquid chromatography (HPLC) analysis. The OCPs and PBDEs were analysed by GC with an electron capture detector (GC-ECD). The analysis of PCBs was performed by GC with a mass spectrometry detector (GC-MS). The PAHs were analysed by HPLC with a diode array detector (HPLC-DAD). The methodology of the sample preparation, quantification of POPs, and quality control assurance was described in detail in a previous publication.<sup>20</sup>

For total Hg content, the samples were analysed using direct mercury analyzer DMA 80 Milestone. The Mercury Atomic Absorption Standard (ref. N: AA34N-1) from AccuStandard manufacturer was used as certified reference material.

To test the differences between studied sites in the content of POPs, TOC values, as well as the particle size distribution principal component analysis (PCA) was performed. A more profound comprehension, of the perspective trend of the POPs content feature profile, was realized by embracing the grouped samples' PCA plot. The unrooted cluster tree was performed to visually investigate the likenesses among various samples. Origin 2021 software (OriginLab Corporation, Northampton, MA, USA) was used for the statistical study of the data.

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*Soil and sediment properties*

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The TOC content ranged from 8.69 to 13.58 % with a mean value of 11.59 % and a median value of 12.16 % in soil samples, and from 4.92 to 5.76 % with a mean value of 5.37 % and a median value of 5.41 % in sediment samples. Particle size data for the 12 sites showed that the majority of samples comprise fine sands ( $\approx 70\%$ ), silt ( $\approx 20\%$ ) and clay ( $\approx 10\%$ ).

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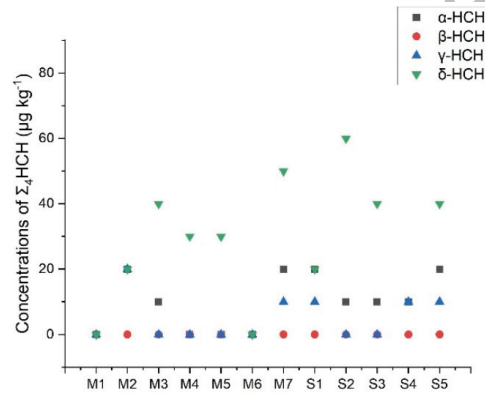
*Organochlorine pesticides (OCPs) in soil and sediments*

The total concentrations of  $\sum_{20}$ OCP in soil samples in the study area range from not detected (n.d.) to  $740 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ , and in sediment samples from 120 to  $330 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ . The coefficient of variation (CV) of  $\sum_{20}$ OCP in soil and sediment samples was 58.82 %, which indicates that there is no considerable variation in the content of OCPs in the OZ region.

Among the total concentrations of  $\sum_{20}$ OCP, endrin aldehyde, and endrin ketone accounted for the largest share. The Endrin aldehyde and the endrin ketone were found in concentrations of n.d. to  $190 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$  and n.d. to  $120 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$  in

115 soil, and of 40 to 180  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$  and n.d. to 70  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$  in sediment samples. The  
 116 endrin aldehyde and the endrin ketone were never commercial products but  
 117 occurred as impurities of endrin or as degradation products.<sup>22</sup> In 1951, endrin  
 118 was first used as a rodenticide, insecticide, and avicide to control voles, cut-  
 119 worms, grasshoppers and other pests on tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, grain and  
 120 apple orchards.<sup>23</sup> However, endrin has never been used for termite proofing or  
 121 other applications in urban areas, unlike aldrin/dieldrin.<sup>23</sup> The main reason for  
 122 discontinuing its use is endrin's toxicity to non-target populations of raptors  
 123 (birds of prey) and migratory birds. The detected concentrations of endrin in the  
 124 samples may indicate their earlier application.<sup>22</sup> Aldrin was determined on sites  
 125 M3 and S5, endrin at site M7, and dieldrin was determined only in soil samples  
 126 (average concentration 70  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ). Aldrin is very easily metabolized into dieldrin,  
 127 as the concentrations of dieldrin in soil samples are higher, the detected concen-  
 128 trations of aldrin in the samples may indicate their earlier application.

129 The OCPs such as HCHs and DDTs were extensively used in agriculture and  
 130 forestry.<sup>24,25</sup> The concentrations of  $\Sigma_4\text{HCH}$  in soil and sediment samples are  
 131 presented in Fig. 1.



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Fig. 1. The concentrations of  $\Sigma_4\text{HCH}$  ( $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ) in sediment samples from the Sava River (S1–S5) and soil samples that are flooded at high Kolubara River groundwater levels (M1–M7).

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In the soil samples, the concentration of  $\Sigma_4\text{HCH}$  ranged from n.d. to the highest levels found at the sites M6 100  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ . The sediment samples showed lower  $\Sigma_4\text{HCH}$  concentrations (n.d. – 60  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ). Among the HCH isomers,  $\delta$ -HCH makes up the largest share, while  $\beta$ -HCH was n.d. in the samples (Fig. 2). The residues of  $\delta$ -HCH could be used as indicators of the historical usage of HCHs.<sup>26</sup> The absence of  $\beta$ -HCH in the samples could potentially be explained by

141 the fact that the isomerization of  $\gamma$ - to  $\alpha$ - and then  $\alpha$ - to  $\beta$ -HCH didn't hap-  
 142 pen.<sup>27,28</sup> Lindane and technical HCH are two formulations of the pesticide HCHs  
 143 that are commercially available. The  $\alpha$ -/ $\gamma$ -HCH isomer ratio can be used to dis-  
 144 tinguish the source of HCHs. The  $\alpha$ -/ $\gamma$ -HCH isomer ratio  $< 3$  indicates that HCHs  
 145 mainly originate from the input of lindane. The  $\alpha$ -/ $\gamma$ -HCH isomer ratio  $> 7$  indi-  
 146 cates that HCHs probably originated from industrial HCH and the contaminants  
 147 have been degraded over a long period. In this study, the isomeric HCH compo-  
 148 sition indicates that the main source of HCHs is lindane ( $\alpha$ -/ $\gamma$ -HCH ratio  $< 3$ ).

149 In the soil samples concentration of  $\Sigma_3$ DDT ranges between n.d. to  $70 \mu\text{g}$   
 150  $\text{kg}^{-1}$  (highest level at site M3), and sediment samples between  $10$  to  $50 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$   
 151 (highest level at site S1). The 4,4'-DDT was the predominant compound in soil  
 152 samples, followed by 4,4'-DDE, while 4,4'-DDD was n.d. In sediment samples,  
 153 4,4'-DDE and 4,4'-DDD were n.d. not in any sample. Lower concentrations of  
 154 DDE and DDD and the high concentration of DDT in the samples indicate recent  
 155 use of this pesticide.<sup>29-31</sup> The ratio  $\Sigma\text{DDE} + \Sigma\text{DDD} / \Sigma\text{DDTs} > 0.5$  suggests that  
 156 accumulated DDT has undergone long-term degradation; whereas a lower ratio  
 157 indicates recent DDT input. In this study, the ratio between the transformation  
 158 products ( $\Sigma\text{DDE} + \Sigma\text{DDD}$ ) and  $\Sigma\text{DDTs}$  also indicate recent DDT input. This  
 159 most likely happened due to the illegal use of DDT for agricultural purposes and  
 160 for controlling vector-borne diseases in the region. In the OZ region, DDT was  
 161 not approved for further use in agriculture in the period 1971–1973, and in 1989  
 162 DDT was banned in forestry, until 1994 it was still used in public health.

163 Industrial endosulfan contains two main components  $\alpha$ - and  $\beta$ -endosulfan in  
 164 a ratio of 7:3. Since  $\alpha$ -endosulfan was determined only in soil samples at site M7,  
 165  $\beta$ -endosulfan was detected in soil samples at sites M4, M6, and M7, and endo-  
 166 sulfan sulphate was detected in soil with an average concentration of  $32 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$   
 167 it is suggested that there is no new input of endosulfan in the region, and that the  
 168 detected concentrations mainly originates from the historical use of endosulfan  
 169 that may have been degraded to endosulfan sulphate. The main source of trans  
 170 and cis chlordane in the environment is industrial chlordane. Its main compo-  
 171 nents include 11 % cis chlordane, 13 % trans chlordane, 5 % heptachlor and 5 %  
 172 heptachlor-epoxide. In this study, there is no recent or historical use of chlordane  
 173 since chlordane and metabolites were n.d. In the soil samples, the methoxychlor  
 174 concentrations ranged between n.d. to  $140 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ , and in the sediment samples  
 175 concentrations ranged between n.d. to  $10 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ . Methoxychlor is an OCP that  
 176 has been used as a replacement for DDT.

177 To assess ecotoxicological risks associated with OCP contamination, deter-  
 178 mined concentrations were compared with national soil and sediment quality  
 179 guidelines.<sup>32,33</sup> The detected concentrations of OCPs are above the threshold the  
 180 maximum values for soil, and the prescribed target values for sediments. Due to  
 181 the existence of larger areas under crops near the OZ, it is to be expected that the

Commented [A1]: Meaning "not defined"?

182 increased use and the spreading of herbicides, pesticides, and other protective  
183 chemical agents would occur. Beetles and bats of OZ, as carnivores of the first  
184 order consumers, are particularly sensitive to chemical measures in agriculture  
185 and the use of insecticides. The accumulation of chemicals in the body of con-  
186 sumers can have a lethal effect, which is transmitted through trophic chains to  
187 higher-order consumers.

#### 188 *Polychlorinated biphenyls in soil and sediments*

189 The CV of PCBs in soil and sediment samples was 141.42 %, which indi-  
190 cates that there is considerable variation in the content of PCBs in the OZ region  
191 and a high degree of their local enrichment in soil samples (sites M4 and M7).  
192 The  $\sum_6\text{PCB}$  in soil samples was in the range between n.d. and  $340 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ , peak-  
193 ing at site M4. The results demonstrated the presence of lower PCB congeners  
194 (PCB-28 and PCB-52). Higher concentrations of lower PCB congeners are prob-  
195 ably the result of the atmospheric deposition rates.<sup>34–36</sup> Since they are more  
196 volatile, PCB congeners with lower chlorine content can be transported through  
197 the atmosphere and deposited at long distances from the emission source.<sup>37</sup>

198 Although earlier research has shown that river sediment acts as a sink for  
199 PCBs<sup>38</sup> in this study, PCBs were n.d. in the sediment samples. The reason for not  
200 determining PCBs in sediments from the Sava River can be caused by changes in  
201 river flow rate (small movement), depth, direction, breadth and other morpho-  
202 dynamical factors in the investigated area.<sup>39,40</sup>

203 Considering that PCBs were n.d. in the sediment samples the national soil  
204 quality guideline<sup>33</sup> was used to estimate the contaminants in the OZ region. The  
205  $\sum_6\text{PCB}$  in soil samples are above the threshold maximum values for soil ( $20 \mu\text{g}$   
206  $\text{kg}^{-1}$ ).

207 To estimate the ecological risk posed by PCBs Hakanson's potential ecologi-  
208 cal risk index ( $Er^i$ ) was used.<sup>41,42</sup> The  $Er^i$  was calculated normalized concen-  
209 tration using PCB background concentration ( $10 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ) and using a toxicity  
210 factor of 40.<sup>42</sup> Samples with  $Er^i < 40$  have low potential ecological risk,  $40 \leq Er^i$   
211  $< 80$  moderate potential ecological risk,  $80 \leq Er^i < 160$  considerable potential  
212 ecological risk;  $160 \leq Er^i < 320$  high potential ecological risk, and with  $Er^i \geq 320$   
213 have very high ecological risk. In the OZ region, PCBs pose a very high eco-  
214 logical risk.

#### 215 *Polybrominated diphenyl ethers in soil and sediments*

216 The CV of PBDEs in soil and sediment samples was 94.28 %, which indi-  
217 cates that there is considerable variation in the content of PBDEs in the OZ reg-  
218 ion and a high degree of their local enrichment in soil samples (sites M4 and  
219 M7).

220 The concentrations of the  $\Sigma_8$ PBDE in soil samples ranged from 60 to 170  $\mu\text{g}$   
221  $\text{kg}^{-1}$ , and in sediment samples from 10 to 20  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ . The PBDE-209 was the  
222 predominant congener in the soil and sediment samples. This congener is normally  
223 detected in high concentrations in soil in e-waste sites.<sup>3</sup> Environmentally  
224 unsound management of e-waste results in soil contamination and could lead to  
225 the diffusion of PBDEs from the point pollution source to contaminate the sur-  
226 rounding environment about 5 km from the dumpsites.<sup>43</sup> The possibility of PBDEs  
227 from the e-waste recycling area diffusing into the ambient regions could result in  
228 a halo pattern of PBDEs contamination to at least 74 km radius.<sup>44</sup> The influence  
229 of point pollution sources on the surrounding environment has been termed the  
230 "halo effect".<sup>44</sup> The presence of PBDEs in soils from the territory of OZ is prob-  
231 ably the consequence of the uncontrolled disposal of e-waste.

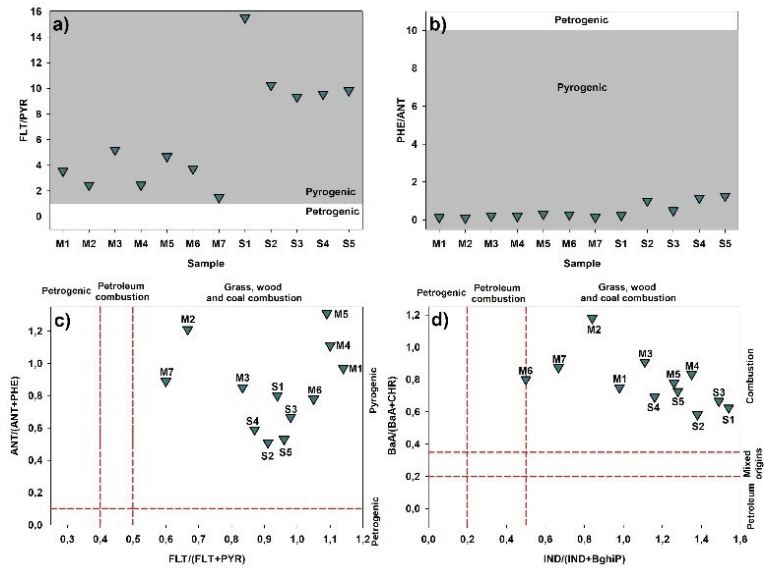
232 National soil and sediment quality guidelines<sup>32,33</sup> do not prescribe threshold  
233 maximum values for soils and the prescribed target values for sediments.

#### 234 *Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in soil and sediments*

235 Sixteen target PAHs were detected in all the samples, suggesting the wide  
236 distribution of PAHs in the urban stream. The CV of PAHs in soil and sediment  
237 samples was 55.19 %, which indicates that there is no considerable variation in  
238 the content of PAHs in the OZ region. The  $\Sigma_{16}$ PAH in soil samples ranged from  
239 850 to 8880  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$  (mean = 44740  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ , median = 3910  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ), and in  
240 sediment samples from 7860 to 14620  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$  (mean = 10202  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ , median =  
241 8780  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ). The sum of 7 probable human carcinogenic PAHs ( $\Sigma_7$ CPAH:  
242 BaA, CHR, BbF, BkF, BaP, IND and dBahA)<sup>45</sup> varied from 100 to 570  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$   
243 (mean = 418  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ , median = 445  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ) indicating moderate contamination  
244 ( $\Sigma_7$ CPAH ranging from 100 to 1000  $\mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ).<sup>46</sup>

245 PAHs are primarily released into the environment from petrogenic, pyro-  
246 genic and biogenic sources.<sup>47</sup> To investigate the potential sources of PAHs diag-  
247 nostic ratios methods have been widely used.<sup>48</sup> Commonly used diagnostic ratios  
248 include ANT/(ANT+PHE), IND/(IND+BghiP), BaA/(BaA+CHR) and FLT/  
249 /(FLT+PYR).<sup>49</sup> In this study, the ratios of IND/(IND+BghiP) were in the range  
250 of 0.5–1 (combustion), the ratios of ANT/(ANT+PHE) were above 0.5 (combust-  
251 ion), the ratios of BaA/(BaA+CHR) were above 0.6 (combustion), and the ratios  
252 of FLT/(FLT+PYR) were above 0.6 (biomass/coal combustion) (Fig. 2).

253 In the OZ region according to the results, PAHs in soil and sediments mainly  
254 come from pyrogenic sources. In the wider surroundings of the observed area,  
255 there is a high number of pollution sources. Here, above all, we mean the thermal  
256 power plant, which is located about 500 m southeast of OZ and the centre of the  
257 urban area. Since most sources of PAHs are located in, or near urban centres,  
258 PAHs are usually found in high concentrations in aquatic sediments<sup>50,51</sup>, which  
259 is also the case in this research.



260  
261 Fig. 2. Molecular relations used for identifying sources of PAH emissions in sediment  
262 samples from the Sava River (S1–S5) and soil samples that are flooded at high Kolubara  
263 River groundwater levels (M1–M7).

264 To assess ecotoxicological risks associated with PAHs contamination, the  
265 determined concentrations were compared with the national soil and sediment  
266 quality guidelines.<sup>32,33</sup> The detected concentrations of PAHs are above the thresh-  
267 hold maximum values for soils, and the prescribed target values for sediments  
268 ( $1000 \mu\text{g kg}^{-1}$ ).

269 Health risk induced by the presence of PAH congeners in the soils can be  
270 estimated by calculation of incremental lifetime cancer risk (*ILCR*) associated  
271 with three pathways of exposure: oral ingestion – *ILCR*<sub>ing</sub>, dermal contact –  
272 *ILCR*<sub>derm</sub> and inhalation – *ILCR*<sub>inh</sub>.<sup>52–54</sup> All the parameters used for *ILCR*s  
273 calculation are given in Table S-I.

274 Table S-II presents *ILCR*s and total cancer risks (*TCR*<sub>PAH</sub>) for children and  
275 adults. *TCR*<sub>PAH</sub> in soils ranged from  $6.1 \times 10^{-4}$  to  $2.9 \times 10^{-3}$  for adults and from  
276  $6.9 \times 10^{-4}$  to  $3.3 \times 10^{-3}$  for children. The *ILCR* values can be interpreted as fol-  
277 lows: *ILCR*s  $\leq 10^{-6}$  indicate negligible risk, *ILCR*s in the range of  $10^{-6}$ – $10^{-4}$  are  
278 treated as low risk, *ILCR*s from  $10^{-4}$  to  $10^{-3}$  are considered moderate, and the  
279 values between  $10^{-3}$  and  $10^{-1}$  indicate a high health risk to the population.<sup>54</sup> The



280 presence of 16 priority PAHs in analysed soils and sediments poses moderate to  
281 high cancer risk to the population (Table S-II).

#### 282 *Total Hg in soil and sediments*

283 Total Hg concentrations ranged from 0.29 to 3.20 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> (mean 2.20 mg  
284 kg<sup>-1</sup>, median 2.26 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) in soil samples, and from 2.78 to 3.24 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>  
285 (mean 3.05 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>, median 3.12 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) in sediment samples. The results  
286 demonstrated a relatively high Hg concentration in the study area. However, the  
287 distribution of Hg in sediments of the Sava River was studied in more detail. The  
288 elevated Hg concentration is partly the consequence of a geological anomaly, that  
289 is, a natural Hg enrichment of the upstream Slovenian drainage basins of the  
290 Sava River.<sup>60</sup> Earlier research found a 100-fold Hg enrichment in deep overbank  
291 sediments, as compared to the surface sediment, and attributed this to an even  
292 higher Hg input from the Slovenian catchment area in the past. As the number of  
293 samples taken during this screening is limited, definite conclusions on Hg con-  
294 tamination levels will have to wait for more detailed research.

295 Health risks induced by Hg in soils were estimated by applying the model  
296 proposed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).<sup>61</sup>  
297 Three possible mechanisms of exposure were considered (ingestion, inhalation  
298 and dermal contact) to assess carcinogenic and non-carcinogenic risks from Hg.  
299 The methodology of risk determination was described in detail in a previous  
300 publication.<sup>62</sup>

301 Non-carcinogenic risk was estimated through hazard quotients (*HQ*) for ing-  
302 estion (*HQ*<sub>ing</sub>), inhalation (*HQ*<sub>inh</sub>) and dermal exposure (*HQ*<sub>der</sub>). The descrip-  
303 tive statistics of these quotients are shown in Table S-III for both children and  
304 adults.

305 The effect of soil Hg pollution intake through inhalation is negligible com-  
306 pared to ingestion and dermal exposure. Summing up *HQ*s from all three expo-  
307 sure pathways' hazard indexes *HI* were obtained. A hazard index higher than 1  
308 implies an increased possibility of incidence of non-carcinogenic harmful health  
309 effects.<sup>61</sup> Hg in the analysed soil poses a considerable health risk to children who  
310 are generally more sensitive to environmental pollution than adults.

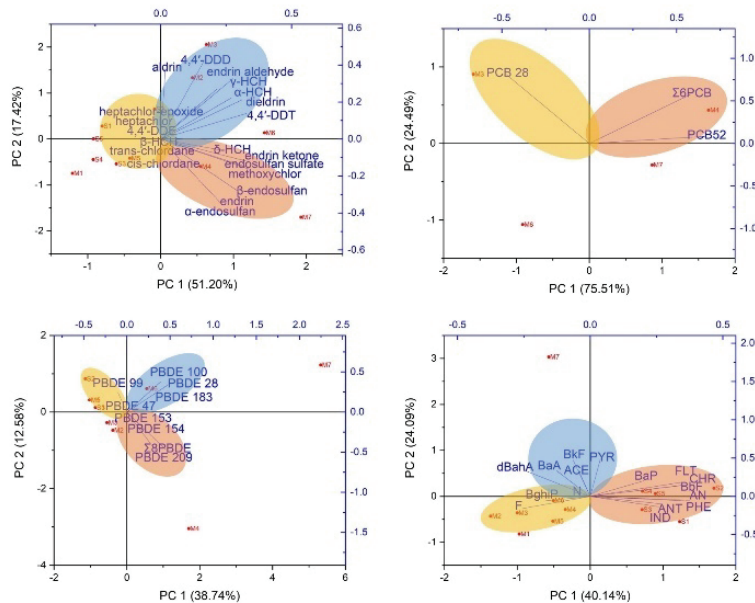
311 To assess ecotoxicological risks associated with Hg contamination, deter-  
312 mined concentrations were compared with national soil and sediment quality guide-  
313 lines.<sup>31,33</sup> The detected Hg concentrations are above the threshold maximum  
314 values for soils, and the prescribed target values for sediments (0.3 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>).

#### 315 *Differences between studied sites*

316 The cluster analysis engaged the complete linkage algorithm and the City  
317 block (Manhattan) distances to estimate the proximity of the samples (Fig. S-2 of  
318 the Supplementary material). The linkage distance, between the main clusters

319 was substantial, approximately 8500. Samples M4 and M5 were the most similar,  
 320 as the samples M6 and M7. Furthermore, the height of the dendrogram indicates  
 321 the order in which the clusters were joined. The dendrogram shows the big differ-  
 322 ence between the cluster of soil (M1–M7) and sediment (S1–S5) samples, indi-  
 323 cating that the two groups of samples differ in chemical properties, particularly  
 324 different POP concentrations.

325 The parting within samples can be seen from the PCA analysis (Fig. 3A–D).  
 326 Samples M4 and M7 are separated according to the highest concentrations of  
 327 OCPs. Predominant congener PCB-52 and PBDE-209 were in soil sample M4.  
 328 The sediment samples were differentiated by PAH concentrations.



329  
 330 Fig. 3. The PCA biplot diagram describes the relations between the contents of POPs, Hg, soil  
 331 and sediment properties in sediment samples from the Sava River (S1–S5) and soil samples  
 332 that are flooded at high Kolubara River groundwater levels (M1–M7).

### 333 CONCLUSION

334 Based on the results, the detected concentrations of OCPs, PCBs, PAHs and  
 335 Hg are above the threshold maximum values and the prescribed target values for  
 336 sediments for the soils analysed in this research. In the OZ region, PCBs pose a  
 337 very high ecological risk. The presence of 16 priority PAHs in analysed soils and

338 sediments poses a moderate to high cancer risk to the population, and Hg poses a  
 339 considerable health risk to children who are generally more sensitive to environ-  
 340 mental pollution than adults. Based on the results, the protected areas in urban  
 341 environments should receive special attention and should be evaluated regarding  
 342 their environmental, eco-geochemical, economic and socio-cultural dimension.  
 343 One of the reasons for this is that the protected area is particularly affected by  
 344 human action most often due to inferior decision making. The management strat-  
 345 egies that incorporate socio-economic activities and the protection of urban pro-  
 346 tected areas are required for future demands. This should primarily include the  
 347 valuation of ecosystem services that protected areas provide and the assessment  
 348 of the pollution status. Urbanization and pollution in general can influence the  
 349 ability of ecosystems to support the human population. The interconnection  
 350 between management, planning, policy and overall urban green spaces policy  
 351 represents a new future innovation in the cities.

#### 352 SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

353 Additional data and information are available electronically at the pages of journal  
 354 website: <https://www.shd-pub.org.rs/index.php/JSCS/article/view/13034>, or from the corres-  
 355 ponding author on request.

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 360 /200026, 451-03-66/2024-03/200378).

#### 361 И З В О Д

362 УТИЦАЈ ДУГОТРАЈНИХ ОРГАНСКИХ ЗАГАЂУЈУЋИХ СУПСТАНЦИ И ЖИВЕ НА  
 363 ЗАШТИЂЕНО ПОДРУЧЈЕ „ОБРЕНОВАЧКИ ЗАБРАН“

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369 Ова студија има за циљ да процени и прати стање урбаног заштићеног подручја  
 370 анализом нивоа дуготрајних органских загађујућих супстанци (POPs) и живе (Hg) у  
 371 земљишту и седиментима. На основу резултата, детектоване концентрације оргохлор-  
 372 них пестицида (ОСР), полихлорованих бифенила (РСВ), полицикличних ароматичних  
 373 угљоводоника (РАН) и Hg су изнад граничних максималних вредности за земљиште и  
 374 прописаних циљних вредности за седименте. У истраживаном подручју концентрације  
 375 РСВ представљају веома висок еколошки ризик. Укупна концентрација 16 приоритетних  
 376 РАН у анализираном земљишту и седиментима представља умерен до висок ризик од  
 377 рака, а концентрације Hg представљају значајан здравствени ризик за децу. Истра-  
 378 живање је показало да је очување урбаних заштићених подручја кључно за одрживост  
 379 животне средине. У урбаним срединама ове области треба вредновати у смислу њихових  
 380 еколошких, еко-геохемијских, економских и социо-културних димензија. Вредност

381 postojaња ove prirodne oaze je u њеном естетском и хидролошком утицају, локалној  
 382 регулацији климе, стамбеној изолованости и значајном уметничко-архитектонском и  
 383 хортикултурном обликовању. Повезаност између еко-геохемијских и управљачких  
 384 пракси, планирања и политике урбаних зелених површина требало би да постане усво-  
 385 јена иновација у градовима у будућности.

386 (Примљено 4. септембра, ревидирано 18. новембра, прихваћено 2. децембра 2024)

387

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Supplementary material

528 SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL TO  
529 **Effects of persistent organic pollutants and mercury in protected**  
530 **area „Obrenovački zabran”**

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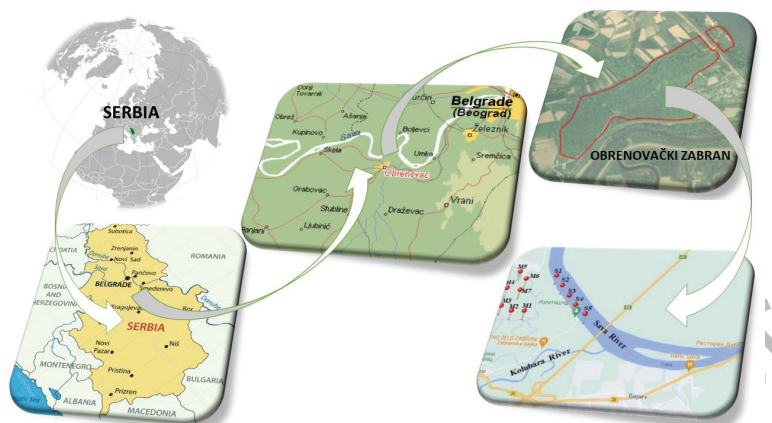
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537 STUDY AREA

538 The protected area „Obrenovački zabran” (OZ) is located between the Sava  
539 and Kolubara Rivers in northwest Serbia (Fig. S-1). More precisely, with its  
540 extreme north-eastern border, OZ reaches the right bank of the Sava River, and in  
541 the south and east, it almost abuts the left bank of the Kolubara River. The OZ is  
542 located 1.5 km east of the city of Obrenovac and 12 km southwest of the suburbs  
543 of the city of Belgrade (the capital of Serbia). The total protected area is 47,77.18  
544 ha. The whole location is specific by its hydrological, morphological, and  
545 geological characteristics. The protected area belongs to the plain terrain, i.e., the  
546 alluvial plains of the Sava and Kolubara Rivers above, which is a river terrace  
547 Lower Pliocene age, marly clay are dark gray to gray, and underlying river  
548 terrace sediments. Due to the meandering of the Sava and Kolubara Rivers  
549 during the Holocene, the formed terrace represents a common terrace for both  
550 Rivers. Five sediment samples (S1 – S5) and 7 soil samples (M1 – M7) were  
551 taken from the protected area OZ. The surface sediments and the soil were taken  
552 at a depth of 0 – 10 cm. The sediment samples were taken from the Sava River  
553 and soil samples were taken from the area that is flooded at high Kolubara River  
554 groundwater levels. The collected samples were immediately transferred into  
555 dark glass bottles and transported to the laboratory.

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Fig. S-1. Study area of „Obrenovački zabran” with sampling locations (S1 – S5 are sediment samples, M1 – M7 soil samples).

559 TABLE S-I. Parameters used for incremental lifetime cancer risk (ILCR) calculation

Parameter	Description	Unit	Adults	Children	Reference
CSF <sub>ing</sub>	Ingestion carcinogenic slope factor	kg d mg <sup>-1</sup>	7.3	7.3	56
IR <sub>ing</sub>	Ingestion rate	mg d <sup>-1</sup>	100	200	57
EF	Exposure frequency	d y <sup>-1</sup>	350	350	57
ED	Exposure duration	y	24	6	58
BW	Body weight	kg	70	15	59
AT	Average life span	d	25550	25550	58
CSF <sub>derm</sub>	Dermal carcinogenic slope factor	kg d mg <sup>-1</sup>	25	25	56
SA	Dermal surface exposure	cm <sup>2</sup> d <sup>-1</sup>	5700	2800	57
AF	Dermal adherence factor	mg cm <sup>-2</sup>	0.07	0.2	57
ABS	Dermal adsorption fraction	Unitless	0.13	0.13	57
CSF <sub>inh</sub>	Inhalation carcinogenic slope factor	kg d mg <sup>-1</sup>	3.85	3.85	56
IR <sub>inh</sub>	Inhalation rate	m <sup>3</sup> d <sup>-1</sup>	20	10	56
PEF	Particle emission factor	m <sup>3</sup> kg <sup>-1</sup>	1.36×10 <sup>9</sup>	1.36×10 <sup>9</sup>	57

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562 TABLE S-II. Incremental lifetime cancer risk (ILCR) and total cancer risk (TCR<sub>PAH</sub>) from  
563 PAHs

Samples	ADULTS				CHILDREN				
	ILCR <sub>ing</sub>	ILCR <sub>der</sub>	ILCR <sub>inh</sub>	TCR <sub>PAH</sub>	ILCR <sub>ing</sub>	ILCR <sub>der</sub>	ILCR <sub>inh</sub>	TCR <sub>PAH</sub>	
M1	2.2E-04	3.9E-04	1.7E-08	6.1E-04	3.1E-04	3.8E-04	5.9E-09	6.9E-04	
M2	4.7E-04	8.3E-04	3.6E-08	1.3E-03	6.6E-04	8.2E-04	1.3E-08	1.5E-03	
M3	5.9E-04	1.0E-03	4.6E-08	1.6E-03	8.2E-04	1.0E-03	1.6E-08	1.8E-03	
M4	3.5E-04	6.3E-04	2.8E-08	9.9E-04	5.0E-04	6.2E-04	9.6E-09	1.1E-03	
M5	5.1E-04	9.0E-04	3.9E-08	1.4E-03	7.1E-04	8.8E-04	1.4E-08	1.6E-03	
M6	2.2E-04	3.9E-04	1.7E-08	6.1E-04	3.0E-04	3.8E-04	5.9E-09	6.9E-04	
M7	1.0E-03	1.9E-03	8.1E-08	2.9E-03	1.5E-03	1.8E-03	2.8E-08	3.3E-03	
S1	3.1E-04	5.5E-04	2.4E-08	8.6E-04	4.3E-04	5.4E-04	8.4E-09	9.7E-04	
S2	4.1E-04	7.2E-04	3.2E-08	1.1E-03	5.7E-04	7.1E-04	1.1E-08	1.3E-03	
S3	3.3E-04	5.8E-04	2.5E-08	9.0E-04	4.5E-04	5.7E-04	8.8E-09	1.0E-03	
S4	5.7E-04	1.0E-03	4.4E-08	1.6E-03	8.0E-04	1.0E-03	1.5E-08	1.8E-03	
S5	6.4E-04	1.1E-03	5.0E-08	1.8E-03	9.0E-04	1.1E-03	1.7E-08	2.0E-03	
Soil	Min	2.2E-04	3.9E-04	1.7E-08	6.1E-04	3.0E-04	3.8E-04	5.9E-09	6.9E-04
	MAX	1.0E-03	1.9E-03	8.1E-08	2.9E-03	1.5E-03	1.8E-03	2.8E-08	3.3E-03
	Average	4.9E-04	8.6E-04	3.8E-08	1.3E-03	6.8E-04	8.5E-04	1.3E-08	1.5E-03
	SD	2.8E-04	5.0E-04	2.2E-08	7.9E-04	4.0E-04	4.9E-04	7.7E-09	8.9E-04
	Median	4.7E-04	8.3E-04	3.6E-08	1.3E-03	6.6E-04	8.2E-04	1.3E-08	1.5E-03
Sediment	Min	3.1E-04	5.5E-04	2.4E-08	8.6E-04	4.3E-04	5.4E-04	8.4E-09	9.7E-04
	MAX	6.4E-04	1.1E-03	5.0E-08	1.8E-03	9.0E-04	1.1E-03	1.7E-08	2.0E-03
	Average	4.5E-04	8.0E-04	3.5E-08	1.3E-03	6.3E-04	7.9E-04	1.2E-08	1.4E-03
	SD	1.5E-04	2.7E-04	1.2E-08	4.2E-04	2.1E-04	2.6E-04	4.0E-09	4.7E-04
	Median	4.1E-04	7.2E-04	3.2E-08	1.1E-03	5.7E-04	7.1E-04	1.1E-08	1.3E-03

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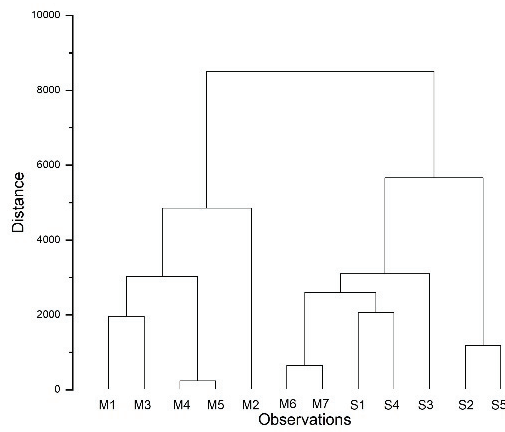
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566 TABLE S-III. Non-cancer and cancer health risks from Hg in soil (samples M1 – M7)

		NON-CANCER RISK							
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		Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult
Hg	Mean	9.4E-02	1.0E-02	9.2E-06	2.7E-05	5.8E-02	7.7E-03	1.5E-01	1.8E-02
	Min	1.2E-02	1.3E-03	1.2E-06	2.3E-05	7.6E-03	1.0E-03	2.0E-02	2.4E-03
	Max	1.4E-01	1.5E-02	1.3E-05	3.3E-05	8.4E-02	1.1E-02	2.2E-01	2.6E-02



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Fig. S-2. Cluster analysis of observed sediment samples from the Sava River (S1 – S5) and soil samples (M1 – M7) that are flooded at high Kolubara River groundwater levels.