



Sharing STORIES for a Just Transition

KOSOVO



From Filmmaker to Force for Change: Unleashing Activism to Transform the Fate and a Coal Town's Destiny

Guxim Klinaku is an environmental filmmaker, founder and Executive Director of the Kosovo based NGO "Keep it Green" and a long-standing advocate for a just transition in the municipality of Obiliq/Obilić, an industrial town highly reliant on coal and where the two coal power plants Kosova A and Kosova B continue operating, contributing to the increased air pollution levels in Kosovo and in Europe.

From organising peaceful protests to directing films about the situation in his hometown shackled by the coal industry, Guxim has been engaged in environmental issues since the end of his university studies, becoming one of the leaders empowering Kosovo's energy generation.

Located just at Kosovo's capital outskirts, and with a population of 21,550 inhabitants spread across the town and its neighbouring villages, the town of Obiliq/Obilić would not be any different from any other small town in the country; However, there's a chilling truth that sets Obiliq/Obilić apart from the rest, and that is detaining the sad record of one of most polluting town in Europe.

In the heart of Obiliq/Obilić, amidst the towering presence of *Kosova A* and *Kosova B* coal power plants, Guxim was born and raised by parents who, like countless others in this town, found employment within these very plants, that to these days continue to hold a steadfast grip of Kosovo's energy landscape, producing over 95 percent of the country's electricity supply.



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Guxim's passion and desire to strive for a better and more sustainable future originated since he was a young adult; as he recalls: *"I remember myself as a curious child, looking up and wondering why the sky over my hometown was always cloudy and gloomy – even during the long awaited summer days of sunshine. As I grew up, I began to understand that that was no natural occurrence. The fog, the clouds, the smell, were not simply the weather, but the result of the emissions from the coal power-plants in the vicinity. That was not the environment that any child should have to grow up in."*

As a teenager, Guxim enrolled at the University of Audio-visual Arts ESRA to pursue a degree in arts, focusing on film direction. With an ardent desire to blend his two passions - the environment and video making - he embarked on a quest to forge a career that would unite his creative aspirations with his dedication to make an impact in changing the future of Obiliq/Obilić.

"My aspiration was to produce films that would ignite a sense of inspiration within viewers, empowering not only the residents of Obiliq/Obilić but also the entire community of Kosovo to take decisive action in the face of an increasingly unsustainable reality that needs to change for the better and for the generations to come that will call Obiliq/Obilić their home".

However, and upon successfully obtaining his degree in filmmaking, Guxim came to the realisation that tangible action was imperative to effect substantial change and actively participate in the climate and environmental movement. This is when he came up with the idea of creating the non-governmental organisation "Keep it Green".

Originally founded with the primary objective of addressing the deteriorating environmental conditions in Obiliq/Obilić, the organisation's mission gradually expanded over time. In fact, Guxim quickly realised that a future away from fossil fuels for his hometown had to be tackled at its very core, and that could only be by implementing a just transition, where no one is left behind. Therefore, the organisation now encompasses this critical topic, recognising its paramount significance in achieving a sustainable and transformative future for the region.



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"Obiliq/Obilic faces significant challenges in transitioning away from coal due to its heavy reliance on the fossil fuel industry from an economic standpoint," he explains. "Similar to my own situation with my parents, numerous families in Obiliq/Obilić are unavoidably intertwined with the power plants, where many individuals are employed and work daily. It's a disheartening reality because the very place that provides their livelihoods also detrimentally affects their health and pollutes their living environment. The economic dependency becomes a barrier that hinders the population from rejecting the power plants, as there are no viable alternative job opportunities offered to them."

It is with this in mind that Guxim figured that the scope of his work in the organisation needed to take into account the issue at a deeper level, focusing both on the pressing issue of environmental pollution caused by the power-plants but also in finding a way forward for those who are currently dependent on them.

He describes the core of his work at the organisation as one that places utmost importance on environmental preservation, while embracing the concept of “social protection”, ensuring that the preservation of the environment naturally follows as an inherent consequence of a synergy between the preservation of our planet and the welfare of all its inhabitants. As he describes it: *“My work at Keep it Green is built on the foundation of environmental preservation, but the organisation's grassroots work goes far beyond that, giving adequate space to the profound connection between social protection and the well-being of our planet. And this is where for me the concept of just transition needs to play a role, with the goal of finding viable ways to ensure and implement a socially just transition. In a challenging place like Obiliq/Obilic, my work and the one of Keep it Green is dedicated to the pursuit of a better future. Through projects, the focus is on one main pillar: achieving climate targets for Kosovo while fostering a just transition. Despite the obstacles, we at Keep it Green are committed to working towards these goals, making a positive impact in our community.”*

Being personally affected and actively engaged in the just transition of his hometown, Guxim recognised the importance of his efforts through Keep it Green. He swiftly realised the need for a dual approach: engaging in social dialogue with the local community and advocating for governance and policy changes.

Envisioning a comprehensive transformation that would uplift the entire community on multiple fronts, Guxim's determination became the catalyst for his advocacy efforts. Recognising that change unfolds gradually and requires persistent and well-structured advocacy, Guxim channelled his work into a project aimed at the righteous and just enforcement of the "Law on the environmentally endangered zone of Obiliq/Obilić and its surroundings". By advocating for the law's just implementation and by providing correct and complete information about the law itself to the Obiliq/Obilić's residents, this initiative soon laid the groundwork for Keep it Green to lead the charge and ignite a wave of positive change throughout his hometown.

" Including the citizenry in the advocacy process and informing the residents of Obilic/Obiliq about their rights is one of the ways we can and we want to work concretely towards a transition. By knowing their rights, their legal instruments, citizens are informed about the rights and responsibilities that come from this law. This allows us to finally have a bridge between the law, the institutions responsible for implementing it, and the community whose interest it is to cherish the rights that this law provides. However, this work represents just a fraction of the journey towards achieving a truly equitable transition. What I strive for is to actively assist those whose livelihoods are intertwined with power plants, in navigating a just and balanced shift towards alternative employment opportunities in a world where power plants no longer exist, coal is phased out, and work is not detrimental to the well-being of employees or the environment we inhabit".

With unwavering determination, Guxim is going the extra mile in paving the way for a rapid and righteous transition towards climate targets in Kosovo. His tireless advocacy with local institutions serves as a clarion call for change, while the organisation's innovative initiatives, specially crafted for Kosovo's vibrant youth, equip and empower the young generation to shape the green world they will soon inherit and proudly inhabit; According to his words, everything begins with education - that's where it all starts. And it is with this mantra in mind that their "Solar Camp" activity became one of the most successful projects of the organisation, where more than 30 youngsters from the whole country met to camp in Kosovo's outskirts on a camping site completely powered by solar energy. Being among one of Keep it Green most successful projects so far, the *Solar Camp Project* appealed to the youngest citizens to be the element of change in the renewable energy deployment in Kosovo, a sector full of potential but where progress has been slow due to the country's high reliance on its coal reserves.

"Kosovo's vast clean energy potential necessitates a shift towards renewables as our sole path forward. To raise awareness and promote solar energy as a valuable investment for our future, we must educate our citizens. Through the solar camp, we wanted to invest in our youth, training them on renewables, empowering them to embrace alternative energy options for their careers and daily lives. This step forward brings us closer to the world we aspire to live in."

Despite many challenges, Guxim is relentless in the pursuit of transforming Kosovo's energy and climate landscape. Talking to Guxim, it's easy to understand that he has found his true purpose and now eagerly wants to make a difference in society: *"How I see it is that I want and we all need to promote and foster change in Kosovo with concrete actions; I do it passionately, because my vision in light of what is happening to our world is to contribute to the transition from coal dependency and fight against environmental injustice."*



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With this mantra in mind, Guxim and *Keep it Green* have fostered numerous partnerships and alliances with many other organisations across the country throughout the years, with the joint aim to cultivate a dynamic network of climate and policy advocates for change.

Together, they form a formidable force, driven by a shared vision to create the world they aspire to see—a world that thrives on sustainable principles and embodies a harmonious relationship between humanity and the environment. These synergistic partnerships serve as the cornerstone of a new generation of changemakers, passionately advocating for a brighter future and leaving their indelible mark on the world *we all want, need and deserve to live in.*