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DEMOCRACY AND THE RIGHTS OF NON-MAJORITY COMMUNITIES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN KOSOVO

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Abstract: Democratic governance has to do with the majority's will, respecting the rights of communities and all citizens' well-being. In Kosovo, the rights of communities are regulated by the constitution and legislation, which guarantee the special rights of minority communities. One of the fundamental policies of governmental institutions was about decentralizing local self-government, designed to facilitate the creation of new municipalities of communities and their integration into the local institutions. Our purpose was to search and analyze the level of representation of communities in the local institutions, legal mechanisms that guarantee their rights, challenges in putting the rights of communities into practice, and the political steps that must be taken to achieve so. The methodology is based on quantitative research with 500 (five hundred) respondents in three municipalities: Pristina, Gracanica, and Dragash, where 59% of respondents are male and 41% are female. The results show that about 55% of the communities are somewhat satisfied with the constitutional guarantees, and 38% are represented in the institutional life of Kosovo. Implementing legal mechanisms has allowed the communities to have higher representation at institutional levels and be part of Kosovo society's integrative processes.

Keywords: Democracy; Local Self-Government; Communities; Institutions; Legislation; Kosovo

INTRODUCTION

Non-majority communities, or, as we call them, minorities, represent groups of people who differ from the rest of the majority in society. This category can be distinguished by ethnicity, language, religion, culture, and other differences. Given these differences, this category is often discriminated against or feels discriminated against. As a new state, Kosovo became independent based on a guarantee to provide rights for its communities. The development of a democratic society, with the rule of law, good and democratic governance, and the realization of the rights of communities as equal to other citizens of the country, remain the priority of the youngest state in Europe.

Given that democracy and especially the rights of the non-majority communities at the local level of government in Kosovo, through special legal mechanisms for the promotion of the rights of non-majority communities, is a unique model of guaranteeing the rights of communities. The international community supports Kosovo in establishing a democratic society

characterized by the rule of law, good governance, and democracy. This commitment to advancing communities' rights enables them to experience equality with other citizens. Undoubtedly, the war's consequences are a challenge that suffocates the necessary developments toward advancing the rights of minority communities. This is aggravated by delayed transition, slow economic development and many other factors.

This paper aims to study the rights of Kosovo's minority communities in light of international norms, which serve as the foundation for the country's constitution and other laws protecting communities' rights. These rights guarantee the communities not only basic human rights but also collective ones, achieving them by participating in political life at all levels of state power. In Kosovo's case, no serious studies have been conducted in this specific and critical field for the future of peace and well-being of the citizens. The Kosovo model of governance is one of the unique types of communities participation in governance, in line with the notion of each community, meaning to design their destiny, which is more crucial to underline in terms of offering assurances for communities. This model represents the type of local autonomy where communities enjoy the right to use and govern the resources of the locality (regional or municipal) where they live. They also enjoy the right to be represented at the local and central levels of government. Building democracy, according to this model, is one of the best forms of developing democracy, which enables the achievement of the essential interest of citizens, and therefore is more important for study. In the framework of this paper, the following were used: literature study method, legal method, and comparison method, and we have surveyed citizens. The sample target number of the survey was 500, and we conducted it in three municipalities with diverse communities, such as Prishtina, Graçanica and Dragash. The Municipality of Prishtina has been our main target because, as the capital city of Kosovo, it is considered a center of multiculturalism; also, Prishtina does have a heterogeneous population structure and leads in terms of the number of inhabitants. Then Graçanica was the second target location due to its ethnical structure, mainly inhabited by the Serb and Roma community. The third and last location was the municipality of Dragash, which has its characteristics in terms of relief as well as its ethnic structure, mainly Gorani and Albanian. The research involved 59% men and 41% women (respondents); the research also contains ethnicity and other research specifications, which we have presented in the results section. The margin of error in the sample is $\pm 3\%$. Some of the research questions presented in this article are: Which community is the most discriminated against in Kosovo? How satisfied are you with the constitutional and legal guarantees for communities in Kosovo? How many of the rights of communities are implemented in Kosovo?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Democracy today, as a concept, as a philosophy and as a more comprehensive view, is understood as the will of the citizens, including freedom and social justice for all citizens. As Manfred (2012) stressed: "democracy understands not only the will of the majority, but also respect for the will of the minority, or rather; it understands the freedom, equality and well-being of all citizens of the country" (p. 34). Democracy as a political-ideological concept is the best possible form or method among other ideologies. Today, democracy "represents a

movement that is a dream of the people. Its practical functionality is still full of unknowns and insecurities. It is a model of social regulation, toward which regulation all countries are aiming, after fall/collapse of socialist government models" (Bajrami 2010, 31). Thus, the central theme of democracy "has to be found in the meaning of political power, like the citizen and their role in society and political institutions. It is the opposition between the individual/citizen and the exercise of power which gave rise to the evolution of the concept of democracy" (Arenilla 2010, 15-30). Therefore, we can genuinely say that democracy can never have whole meaning, as long as there is no promotion and protection of the rights of minorities. In fact, "the rights of minorities, in particular their political rights, which rights are present in many decisions of international law in democratic states, have been introduced into the framework of national policies, mainly through legal provisions" (Midgaard 2004, 132).

In the Kosovo context, moreover, "modern democracy necessarily understands the respect for the rights of non-majority communities" (The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo 2008) through a "model of state and territorial organization (decentralized power) or legislation that provides guarantees for special rights related to the characteristics of communities" (Morina 2021, 15). The non-majority communities "need to be treated with special affirmative action, for this category of citizens to feel equal" (Law No. 05/L-021 on Protection from Discrimination 2015). In this regard, we can say that the rights of communities are an integral part of democracy, or in a few words - the beauty of democracy. A satisfactory level of democracy in a country is reached only when its citizens are treated equally regardless of ethnicity, language, religion or other affiliation. Even these are the essential demands which derive from the international declarations, which preliminary relate to human rights, especially Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which highlights that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or another opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or another status" (UN 1948).

Based on their characteristics, minorities should enjoy special rights, guaranteeing full rights to participate in public life and to be part of decision-making. In the practice of many democratic states, some special institutional democratic mechanisms have been established to guarantee the rights of minorities. We can say that in order to achieve their rights, the minority communities have to participate in decision-making bodies as per the election system; they have guaranteed reserved seats at the central and local government level, as well in the executive bodies and ethnic employment quotes regulated by law (Civilian Service Law No. 03/L-149). In Kosovo, minorities have "twenty (20) seats guaranteed for representation of communities that are not in the majority in the Republic of Kosovo, based on the total number of valid votes received by each political entity, irrespective of the number of seats already allocated from the hundred (100) seats" (Law No. 03/L-073 on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo 2008). Also, "in municipalities where at least ten percent (10%) of the residents belong to communities, not in the majority in those municipalities, a post of Vice-President of the Municipal Assembly for Communities shall be renewed for a representative of these communities. The position of Vice-President should be held by the non-majority candidate who received the most votes on the open list of candidates for election to the Municipal Assembly" (UN-SC 2007, 1-9). These are some examples from Kosovo and some other countries in the region. Even though some

countries now have advanced legislation on democratic governance, its implementation and the commitment to the necessary measures to protect and promote the rights of communities are not satisfactory. Even though nowadays, many countries have already advanced democratic governance in place, implementing the democratic system, particularly the necessary measures in protecting and promoting the rights of communities, still needs improvement. This is due to challenges and different issues, including transition challenges, lack of implementation of laws, corruption, organized crime, migration, fragile relations between countries in the region, etc., which are followed by the dissatisfaction of citizens, which can be serious challenges for the democratic legitimacy of states we are talking about.

In countries still facing transition challenges, such as building genuine democratic institutions, implementing legislation is challenging. Non-implementation of the law, corruption and organized crime are hindering economic development and harming citizens' well-being.

Such a situation, "which is more specific for countries with delayed transition, such as the Kosovo case, and manifested with an expression of dissatisfaction from the people and for the non-majority communities, remains a great concern" (Myrtezani *et al.* 2015, 94). In these countries, minorities (non-majority communities) are at risk of securing their status and creating a sense of uncertainty about their existence as communities. The mass displacement or migration of non-majority communities to their home countries due to conflicts in the Balkans in the XX century was a severe concern. In these situations, democracy loses its true meaning and poses a problem for the development of open democratic societies as well as multi-ethnic societies. On the other hand, "the lack of readiness of nation states to provide rights to the non-majority community, intolerance and dissatisfaction of the non-majority community for not exercising their rights, are the main source of political crises and conflicts even within a society or even with other states" (Myrtezani 2014, 271).

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN KOSOVO

Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008. Although the "Albanians majority constitutes 92% of the population of this country" (ASK/KAS 2011, 60), Kosovo is still treated as a "multi-ethnic society" (The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo 2008, Article 3). Kosovo has undergone two essential phases in the history of institution building.

The first phase started in 1999 and is the phase of building institutions administered by the international community. The second phase is institution building after declaring independence in 2008 (UNHCR 2008). In the first phase of building democratic institutions at the central and local levels, governance was "established through free and democratic elections. Still, the institutions that emerged from this process had limited powers" (UNMIK 1999). The competencies of these institutions were limited as some of the critical issues of exercising power were at the hands of the Interim International Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK). The first phase of government was characterized by the construction of the first democratic state institutions at the central and local levels and the construction and reconstruction of the country from the devastation of war.

In contrast, the second phase, or the post-independence phase, is the continuation of the decentralization process as an essential chain in the continual development of local

democracy. However, in the first phase of building Kosovo's institutions and the second phase after the declaration of independence, special attention was paid to the rights of communities and their members. Since 1999, so since Kosovo has been under international administration. During this period of institutional development, continuous efforts have been made to build democratic institutions. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, the Constitutional Framework of Kosovo, as the highest normative act and regulations of the United Nations Administration (UNMIK), was the legislation based on which the self-governing institutions in Kosovo were built up to 2008.

The first self-governing bodies in Kosovo were established in 2000 and operated under UNMIK Regulation 2000/45 on the Self-Government of Kosovo Municipalities (UNMIK, Regulation No. 2000/45, Municipal Self-Government in Kosovo 2000). This regulation lays the foundations of the administrative and territorial organization of local self-government in Kosovo, following the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Council of Europe 2010). With this regulation, the municipality represents the basic territorial unit of Kosovo. This act "defines the responsibilities and power of municipalities. Below the municipal level, they may exercise cooperation links for the exercise of municipal competencies with villages, settlements and urban quarters" (UNMIK, Regulation No. 2000/45, Municipal Self-Government in Kosovo 2000, Section 5), but which does not represent a separate territorial unit of the municipality. In this period, although local and central government bodies have emerged from democratic electoral processes, their mandate in decision-making has been limited, as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General exercises some state responsibilities. There was a UNMIK administration in each municipality, with a municipal administrator in charge of this administration (UNMIK, On the Authorizations of the Temporary Administration in Kosovo 1999). On 16 October 2007, UNMIK adopted Regulation No. 2007/30 on Amending Regulation No. 2000/45 on the Self-Government of Kosovo Municipalities (UNMIK, Regulation No. 2007/30 Amending UNMIK Regulation No. 2000/45 on Self-Government of Municipalities in Kosovo 2007). This amendment to the regulation mentioned above defines the competencies of the municipalities (17 competencies and 6 activities) with the right to be delegated additional competencies by the central authorities (Article 3). At the same time, the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) exercises the right to supervise the observance of the legality of the work of municipalities. Even at this governance stage, the rights of members of non-majority communities were guaranteed through local self-government institutions.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN KOSOVO AFTER 2008

In democratic societies, "the functioning of self-governing systems is important for the overall development of democracy. Such systems are based on principles and values that benefit local communities, seeing them as part of the partnership" (Vejseli 2021, 74-75). A political system cannot be accepted without the involvement of local self-government. According to Selimi (2008), local self-government is about "governing all aspects of things which are in the common interest of all citizens and who extend their activities and governance in local level, defined within states territory" (p. 10). In the case of Kosovo, we can see that local democracy in Kosovo is exercised by municipal bodies, as defined by the Law on Local Self-Government in

Kosovo. This law was drafted based on the principles set out in the 'package' of the former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari as a proposal for the resolution of the status of Kosovo arising from the talks between Kosovo and Serbia organized in Vienna (Austria). Law on Local Self-Government defines "the municipality as the only unit for local self-government in Kosovo" (Law No. 03/L-040 on Local Self-Government 2008). This law defines the legal status of municipalities, competencies and general principles of municipal finances, organization and functioning of municipal bodies, intra-municipal relations and inter-municipal cooperation, including cross-border cooperation and relations between municipalities and the central government.

Local self-government competencies in Kosovo are of three types: "Own competencies of municipalities, Delegated competencies, and Extended competencies/Enhanced municipal competencies" (Law No. 03/L-040 on Local Self-Government 2008, Articles 17-19).

Through their competencies, the municipalities can benefit from extended government autonomy. These competencies include; local economic development, urban and rural planning, land use and development, health, education and many other competencies which in most countries are exercised by the central level of government. Delegated competencies include cadastral records, business registers, social assistance payments, civil registry, forest protection, etc. Extended competencies are, in principle, exercised by the central level of government, such as university education, secondary health, culture, and appointment of police commanders. These competencies are envisaged for the non-majority Serbian community as the largest non-majority community in Kosovo. Among other vital issues closely related to the development of local self-government in Kosovo after 2008 was the process of decentralization. Decentralization is "a complex phenomenon involving many geographic entities, societal actors and social sectors. The geographic entities include the international, national, subnational, and local" (UNDP 1999). In this context, we can say there are three forms of decentralization that are implemented in the Kosovo case:

Fiscal decentralization, entailing the transfer of financial resources in the form of grants and tax-raising powers to sub-national units of government; Administrative decentralization (sometimes referred to as deconcentration), where the functions performed by central government are transferred to geographically distinct administrative units; Political decentralization where powers and responsibilities are devolved to elected local governments. This form of decentralization is synonymous with democratic decentralization or devolution (Dalipi 2016, 8).

In Kosovo, the process and scope of decentralization, as derived from Ahtisaari Plan, intended to bring the Serbian minority into the parameters of Kosovo legislation. Decentralization of power in Kosovo as a process has developed in two dimensions; decentralization of competencies through the exercise of essential state responsibilities by local government bodies, as well as decentralization as a territorial organization, which has occurred with the establishment of many municipalities as basic units of local government (Law No. 03/L-040 on Local Self-Government 2008, Article 17-23). Therefore decentralization of competencies in Kosovo is done so that the local level of government, through its own delegated and

expanded competencies, gains a high level of autonomy in governance. This moment marks a turning point in the reform of local government and the beginning of the establishment of new municipalities as a path to the complete decentralization of competencies and the creation of conditions for the participation of non-majority communities, especially the Serbian community in local government. With the gaining of complete autonomy of the local self-government through decentralization and the establishment of new municipalities, "the Serb community took over the administration of the territory where they live and operate. The purpose of these administrative-territorial changes was to ensure the extended rights and political and administrative independence of Serbs in the Republic of Kosovo" (Bajrami 2011, 424).

REPRESENTATION OF THE NON-MAJORITY COMMUNITIES AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL IN KOSOVO

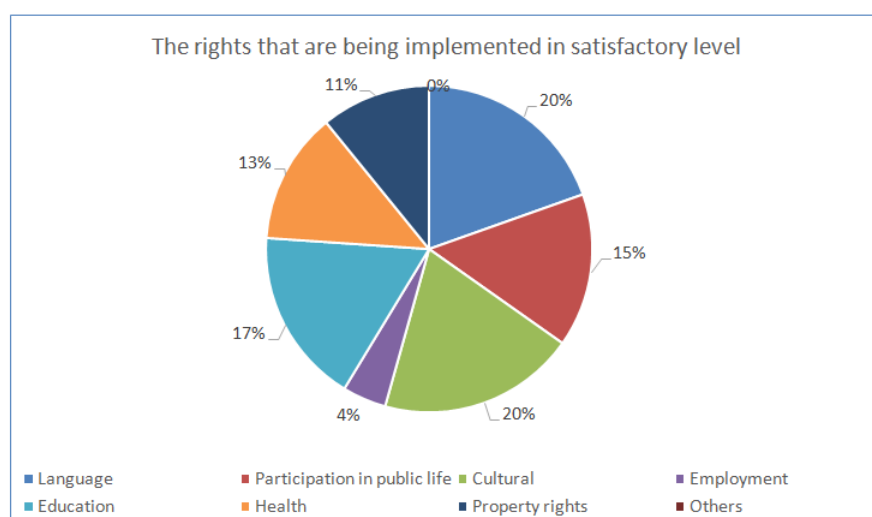
The participation of communities in public life, through local government bodies, is considered an effective legal" (Law No. 03/L-047a on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and Their Members in Kosovo 2008) and constitutional mechanism for the direct realization of their interests. The organization of government in Kosovo is a form of decentralized government, which means that essential responsibilities are transferred from the central level to the local level of government, especially in the field of education, culture, health, and local economic development (Law No. 03/L-040 on Local Self-Government 2008, Article 17), etc. The local level of government exercises responsibilities in the form of its competencies, delegated competencies, while for Serb-majority municipalities, it has also provided extended competencies. The law defines local competencies in Kosovo based on the 'Ahtisaari package', and respects the principles set out by the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities.

Taking into consideration the international and national legislation, Kosovo guarantees "effective participation for all communities in public life, similar to the Lund Recommendations" (OSCE 1999) for the participation of minorities in public life, as one recommendation among others that are in enhancing the participation of communities in government institutions at both central and local levels. In decision-making bodies, such as the municipal assembly, "non-majority communities represented by their elected representatives in the municipal assembly, as well as in the communities committee as part of the decision-making body. Courses in the executive bodies represented by the deputy mayor for communities, as well as in some cases managing a municipal section/directorate" (OSCE, Community Rights Assessment Report 2021). In administrative bodies, members of non-majority communities lead the Office for Returns and Communities (Regulation No. 02/2010 for the Municipal Offices for Communities and Return 2010), as well as eventual positions in which may be "heads of various sectors up to employees in the municipal administration, positions guaranteed by the law on civil servants of Kosovo" (OSCE, Community Rights Assessment Report 2021, 20).

DEMOCRATIC MECHANISMS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT FOR THE REALIZATION OF THE RIGHTS OF NON-MAJORITY COMMUNITIES IN KOSOVO

Besides the constitution and other laws, the rights of non-majority communities in Kosovo are also regulated by legislation for local self-government as a vital part of the system. Thus, the Law on Local Self-Government (Law No. 03/L-040 on Local Self-Government 2008) ensures a high degree of democracy at the local level of government, where through special governing mechanisms, the non-majority community becomes an influential part of local government within a municipality. Some of the governing mechanisms provided by this law directly impact the realization and implementation of the rights of communities, while others have an indirect impact. In the direct mechanisms, representative bodies in decision-making bodies are the municipal assembly as a decision-making body, the communities committee and the position of the deputy chairman of the municipal assembly (Law No. 03/L-040 on Local Self-Government 2008).

The mechanisms by which communities exercise executive power in the executive bodies are: Deputy Mayor for Communities and the Local Office for Communities and Return. However, from the conducted surveys, we have derived specific results.



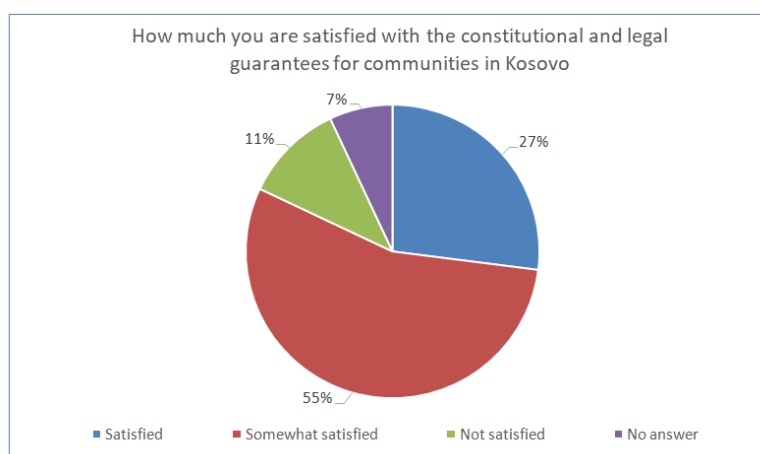
Graph 1: The Rights Being Implemented (Source: Authors' research)

As shown in Graph 1, the research results show that we have a higher level/percentage of satisfaction with the rights of use of native language and cultural rights. At the same time, property and employment rights are rated with the lowest level or percentage of satisfaction. The highest level of satisfaction on rights of language and cultural rights is because of two main reasons: a) first, these rights are the rights that the state of Kosovo has had the most accessible realization of these rights, and b) second, these rights have less impact on the daily lives of communities compared to the rights of employment and property rights.

Table 1: Which Community in Kosovo Is Most Discriminated Against, According to Respondents?
(Source: Authors' research)

	Number of Cases	Percent
a) Serb community	95	19%
b) Bosnian community	45	9%
c) Turk community	35	7%
d) Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community	215	43%
e) Montenegrin community	15	3%
f) Croat community	15	3%
g) Goran community	65	13%
h) Other	15	3%
Total	500	100%

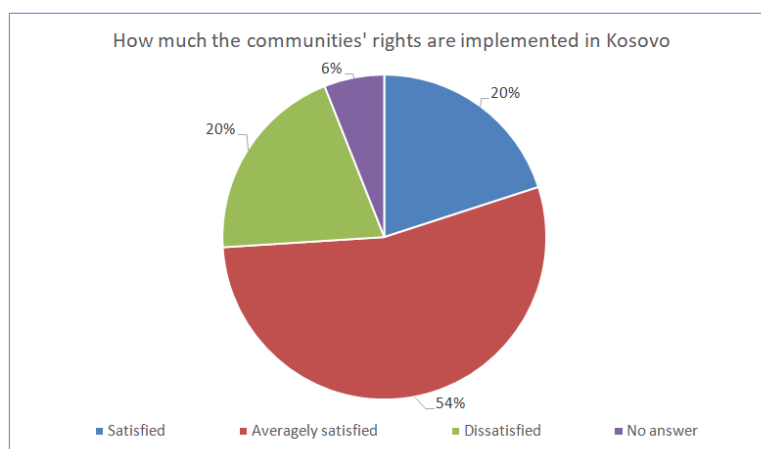
As we can see from the survey results that 43% of the respondents answered that the RAE community is the most discriminated against in other communities in Kosovo. In comparison, 19% of the respondents claimed that the Serb community is more discriminated against. 13% responded that the most discriminated against are Goran, 9% answered that the Bosniak community is most discriminated and 7% of the respondents said the Turk community is most discriminated against others (see Table 1). Based on the research data reflected in Table 1, it resulted out that the most discriminated communities are Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE), followed by the Serb community, Gorani and others. Our analysis also supports these figures during our research, that Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are the most discriminated community. We cannot tell the same for the Gorani community; as per our study, they live mainly in the Municipality of Dragash/Dragas, some of them are defined as Bosniaks, and both of them are treated equally by the municipality officials and also state institutions in terms of education, cultural rights, as well as the language use, etc. It shows that Serbs have expressed that they feel discriminated against for some rights, especially regarding the implementation of legislation about minorities, especially in those areas which have to do with property rights and returning to their homes where they lived before.



Graph 2: Constitutional and Legal Guarantees for Communities in Kosovo (Source: Authors' research)

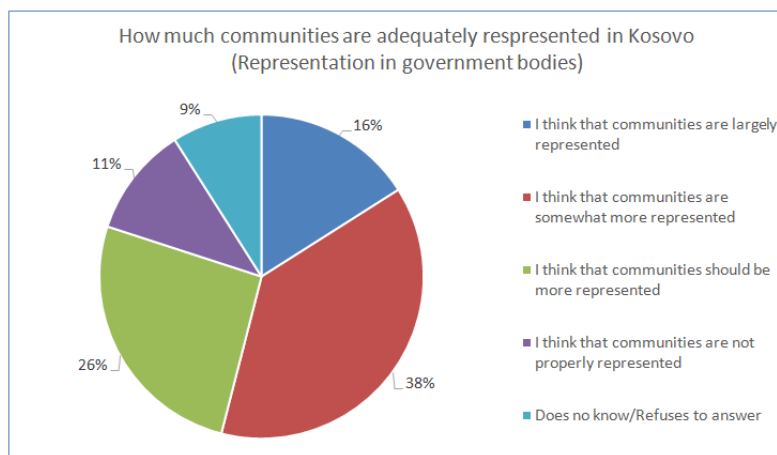
The reflection of the opinion of target groups regarding the question “How much you are satisfied with the constitutional and legal guarantees for communities in Kosovo?”, we got the following answers: 27% of respondents are satisfied, 55% of them are somewhat satisfied (average), 11% are not satisfied, and 7% did not provide any answer. This graph reflects the opinion of the target groups on the question, “How satisfied are you with the constitutional and legal guarantees of the communities in Kosovo?”, we received the following answers: 27% of respondents answered that they are satisfied, 55% of them responded that are moderately satisfied, 11% of them are not satisfied, and 7% have no answer. On the other hand, in terms of legal and constitutional guarantees, as we have emphasized previously, Kosovo has many legal and constitutional mechanisms to guarantee communities’ rights.

Even the legal guarantees provided for the rights of communities are significantly different from those provided by other states. However, in the data reflected in Graph 2, when asked how satisfied you are with the constitutional and legal guarantees for the communities in Kosovo, it turns out that the satisfaction, in terms of legal and constitutional guarantees, is average. These data do not reflect the accurate assessment of the situation in terms of mechanisms that guarantee the strengthening of the rights of communities.



Graph 3: Implementation of the Communities’ Rights in Kosovo (Source: Authors’ research)

Graph 3 depicts the answers to the question: “How much are you satisfied with implementing the rights of communities in Kosovo?”, implying that 20% of the respondents said they were satisfied, 54% of them were averagely satisfied, and 20% are dissatisfied and 6% no answer. Regarding the survey and the answers to the question, “How much communities are adequately represented in Kosovo?. We have received the expected results and consider that they are very much in line with reality. This is because Kosovo has advanced legislation regarding communities’ rights. However, implementing this legislation has been difficult and continues to challenge the country’s institutions.



Graph 4: Representation of Communities in Government Bodies (Source: Authors' research)

Graph 4 reflects respondents' opinions on "How much are the communities adequately represented in Kosovo?". We see that 38% of them claimed that they are somewhat represented, 26% stated that communities should be more represented, 16% believe that communities are primarily represented, 11% of respondents pointed out that communities are not adequately represented, and 9% did not know or refused to answer. Based on constitutional and legal guarantees for the representation of communities in public life, "communities are represented at the central level of government, as legislative, executive and administrative bodies. At the local level, they are also represented in decision-making bodies, executive and administrative. This representation of the non-majority community is not the same for all communities. It is not the same in all institutions" (Myrtezani *et al.* 2015, 87). The most represented non-majority community are Serbs, "while other communities such as Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Croat and Montenegrin are less represented. Although communities today have a greater representation than before, the data show that this representation is not as satisfactory" (OSCE, Community Rights Assessment Report 2021, 55). What we can say is that the perception of citizens regarding the implementation of the rights of communities is in line with the general state of implementation of legislation in Kosovo. As we have assessed during the paper, in countries with delayed transition, such as Kosovo, the impossibility of full implementation of legislation and the provision of services to citizens based on their needs is a problem not only for the non-majority communities but for all citizens. However, these rights are more advanced now than in the past, which is seen as progress.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that democracy and local self-government are closely related. This is because democracy would not make sense if it were a state with centralized power. Only a decentralized government with strong competencies at the local level of government will be understood as a democratic government. Therefore, we cannot talk about genuine democracy if

we do not have the provision of services as close as possible to the citizens, and the expression of their will through elected representatives gives the meaning of true democracy.

Local self-government development in Kosovo is an important democratic development for the country. This process has been developed through the decentralization of power, transforming local self-government as the most crucial organization of the state administration. Local self-government in Kosovo has developed in two dimensions; one as a service closer to the citizens and the other as a political solution for the realization of special interests for non-majority communities with particular emphasis on the Serb community.

Decentralization, as a process, has been developed by strengthening and increasing local governance competencies and by increasing the number of local self-government units. It is also more important to say that the participation of non-majority communities in public life is significant for the democratic functioning of the state of Kosovo. Through the participation of communities in public life, communities contribute to the representation of their interests, as well as the interests of Kosovo, becoming a vital part of the democratic potential of the country.

As mentioned above, Kosovo has established special mechanisms that serve as effective mechanisms for protecting the rights of communities. Such institutions are established both within the central level of government, such as the Assembly of Kosovo, the President, and the Government, and in local self-government bodies, such as municipal assemblies and other executive bodies. Such unique mechanisms for securing the rights of communities do not yet exist in certain other countries. These affirmative policies ('positive discrimination') of Kosovo institutions concerning communities' representation are essential for integrating communities into social life, which can serve as an example for other countries.

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This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any authors.

Statement on the Welfare of Animals:

This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any authors.

Informed Consent:

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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