TRUST IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE OMBUDSMAN: THE CASE OF SOFIA

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Summary: The article will present the access points of trust and the role of the Bulgarian ombudsmen in the process of trust generation. Analyzing some examples from the practice of Sofia ombudsman, the article examines the efforts in boosting trust between the local government institutions and wide public in Sofia.

Key words: trust, ombudsman, local governance in Sofia

INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing an interesting paradox – on the one hand, people demand government institutions to solve more and more public problems characterized by a great extent of diversity, and on the other hand, they manifest their mistrust in public authorities by either not taking part in the election process or simply by not showing any interest in the matters concerning the society. This problem is tackled in similar way almost everywhere in the democratic states and organizations – by introducing new mechanisms or institutions for boosting trust, nevertheless the official argumentation for this introduction sometimes is different. The ombudsman institution is such a mechanism, with its task to strengthen the trust in public institutions, while defending citizens' rights by persuading the executive bodies to revise and improve their performance.

In Bulgaria the same objectives for the role of the ombudsman are priority, but there are some implementation barriers. The foundation of ombudsman institution, either on national and/or local level is determined by

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the expectation to rebuild the trust in government agencies, but the representatives of agencies themselves find it difficult to understand that, and they even interact with the ombudsman with mistrust.

Access points of trust

In general, different concepts of trust are associated with various phenomena in public life. Some argue that building and maintaining trust need favorable environment that limits and even neutralize the driving force of all kind of conflicts (Astings, 2005, 262 in Krasteva and Todorov, ed.). Along this line is the idea, that trust grows stronger in these societies, where their members have well developed sense of equality and trust is manifested within the pursuit of the three "Cs" among citizens and between citizens and institutions – compromise, co-operation, and consensus (Elder, 1982). Furthermore, it's indisputably that trust is related with culture, traditions and religion (Krasteva and Todorov, 2005, 10). The distinction between strategic and moralized trust at one hand and particularized and generalized trust at another drives us to presupposition of risk, sharing of common moral values and even helping to connect people, who are different from each other (Uslaner, 2003, 43-48).

A matter of interest is the differentiation between horizontal and vertical manifestation of trust in society, where trust in institutions is vertical, and it has three major directions:

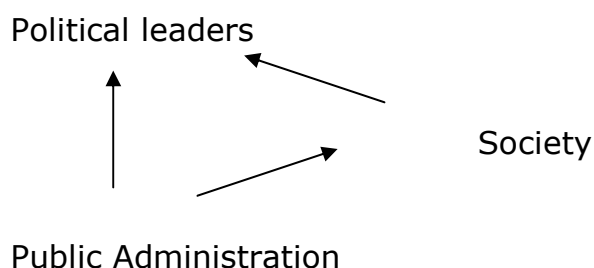Political leaders

Society

Public Administration

Figure 1. Directions of Trust (Carnevale, 1995, 16-17)

Trust or mistrust of the administrators to the political leaders, who govern the respective public institutions, is a matter of organizational management, and the practices associated with this issue are subject of another discussion. Much more important for the scope of this article is the trust which society has in its political leaders and public administration first, and second – the trust among individuals themselves. As far as the idea of abstract systems is suitable for public institutions, dominated by political representatives and administration, here comes the so called "access points" theory. In brief, "the access points are points of connection between lay individuals or collectivities and the representatives of abstract systems. They are places of vulnerability for abstract systems, but also junctions at which trust can be maintained or built up" (Giddens, 1990, 83-88). While the "access points" affects trust in institutions and their representatives, the horizontal trust is among citizens themselves. Despite some arguments that the link between trust and civic engagement is weak (Uslaner, 2002, ch. 5), we agree with one of the common thesis of social capital theory, that people who trust others are all-around good citizens, and those more engaged in community life are both more trusting and more trustworthy (Putnam, 2000, 137).

The above figure does not provide complete explanation on trust and its constituting elements. What is obvious are the three access points of trust: society – political leaders, society – administration, administration – leaders (which is matter of organizational management), and the importance of social capital in the society, as a basis for trustworthy relations. The access points of trust need some operationalization in order to find how trust manifests itself, could be compromised, built or maintained. On the other hand, we need clarification for the social capital, like any other form of capital, what kind of investment it requires to strengthen the trust among the members of the society.

Firstly, political leaders usually personify moral norms and values of the society. The moral norms and values are the backbone of community customs and traditions, which are associated with *coherence and predictability in political behavior*. Here we should not think of coherence as routine or, at least, not attach a negative meaning to the term "routine". Rather, routine or even indifference is a necessary guarantee against the risk associated with the increasing complexity and multi-functionality of public life and describing trust as a movement towards indifference (Luhmann, 1979, 25) configures one access point of trust.

As next point, the public administration in general is explicitly hostile towards the concept of trust, as it claims that people should trust the legal norms, the procedures and the authorities, and no separate action can create mistrust (Carnevale, 1995, 13). This position explains faceless commitment of administration, and associates trust in modern institutions with trust in expert systems (Giddens, 1990, 83, 84), especially in sense that administration distinguishes itself from political representatives with expert information and knowledge. A problem, emerging from the contemporary information society is that the administration doesn't possess the monopoly of the information and general public sometimes is better acquainted with matters to be settled than the administration. This problem is easily solved when we have active and efficient communication between administration and people, and the decision making process is based on transparency and accountability. Following the last principles of communication, *transparency and accountability*, the administration can maintain and build trust, and thus shapes the second access points of trust.

At last, investments in social capital, or its consumption may influence the trust in public institutions. One of the popular definitions of social capital is that it "is formed by the social networks and norms of reciprocity, associated with them" (Putnam, 2002, 3). The common thesis is that the more intensified and deeper the interactions amongst individuals are within

various manifestations of social networks, as in formal or informal organizations, the stronger the trust among people and between people and institutions is. In this sense, the theoretical examining of bonding and/or bridging social capital and their influence on trust will not help us as much as revealing the practical understanding of institutions about *social capital as a basis of trust among people* and institutional activities, concerning it.

Ombudsman institution and trust

The transparency of public governance, the intensive and comprehensive communication between public institutions and citizens, as well as the encouraging of citizens' participation in the political decision-making processes are fundamental and indivisible part of the functions of contemporary ombudsman. In most cases, the ombudsman is called upon to stimulate and develop pro-active political culture as well as to change the administrative traditions towards behavior in favor of servicing and seeing citizens as customers of public services. In this particular meaning, we can distinguish three functions of the contemporary ombudsman institution: 1) to assist the process of finding solutions to citizens' complaints as the ombudsman exercises some control over the administration and ensures mediation between claimants and the respective administrative units; 2) the ombudsman draws reports, which sends as a feedback to the political representatives, and the conclusions are generated from all the official complaints and constant communication with the citizens; and 3) the ombudsman and its activities facilitates the development of proactive civil society and supports the investments in social capital (Stefanov, 2007, 285 in Yankov, ed.). Broadly speaking, the ombudsman holds a mediating position in Easton's approach to the political process (Easton, 1953) as it serves as ensuring alternative channel, within which separate phases of this process occur (fig.2). It is necessary to stress that the ombudsman

institution is not able to substitute entirely for any of the phases in the political process or its elements. The emergence of new opportunities only serves to prove that politics and public life suffer from some mistrust, and the ombudsman institution is one of the viable solutions.
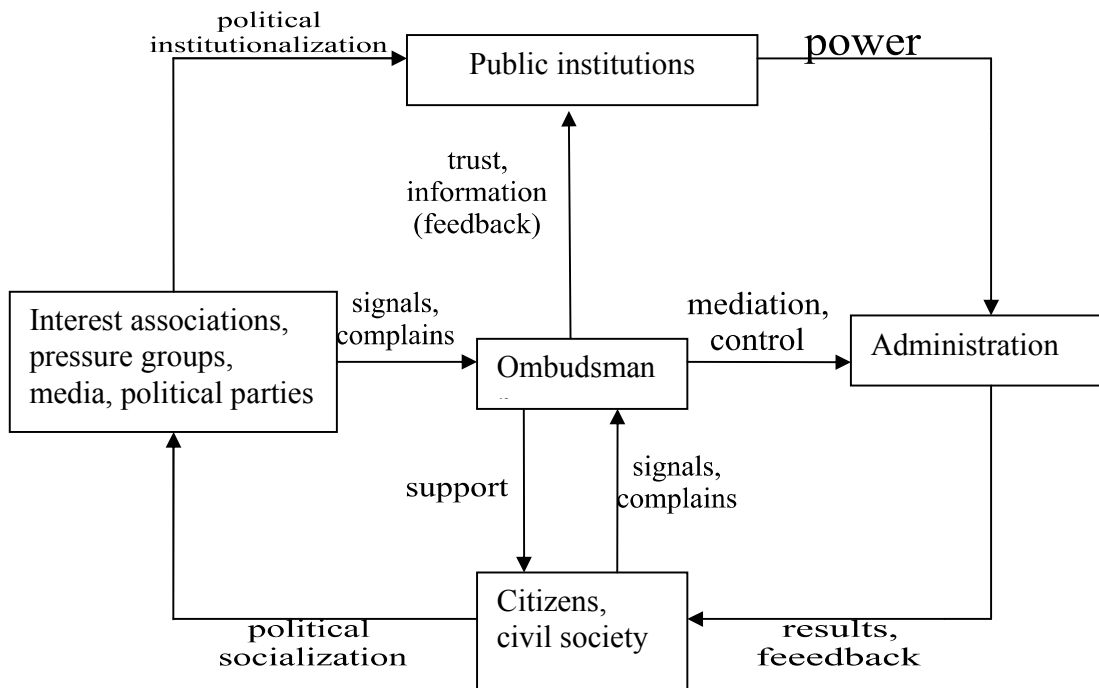

Fig. 2. The Ombudsman in Political Process (Based on Easton's approach to the political process)

With some specifics, the Bulgarian ombudsman model is also designed to execute to mentioned functions. The Ombudsman Act has been in force since January 2004 as the first national ombudsman was elected on 13th April 2005. In 2006, the constitution was amended, as the Ombudsman was given the right to approach the Constitutional court in case he/she finds that any law or other legislative act violates citizens' rights and freedoms grounded on the force of the constitution. The Ombudsman Act does not enforce any limits to the range of the ombudsman's activities as it is

explicitly written that he/she has to exercise control over the local government authorities and the deliverers of public services. However, the Regulations of ombudsman's structure and activities points out, that he/she cannot exercise such over the activities of the President, the National Assembly, the Constitutional Court, the Supreme judicial council, and the Bulgarian national audit office, as he cannot intervene in the work and activities of the judicial system and any matters related to the foreign policy and national security.

During the last decade of the 20th century, local ombudsman offices were established in over 10 municipalities. The Local Governance and Administration Act was amended in 2003, as it gave the opportunity of municipal councils to elect local ombudsmen. This is significant, as the election process requires the unusual for the Bulgarian political practice two-thirds of the overall municipal councilors' votes. Both the dispositive character of the norm and the required two-thirds of the councilors' votes serve as a hindrance towards wider recognition of the local ombudsman institution in the Bulgarian municipalities. In the end of 2008, only 25 municipalities out of 256 have decided to elect local ombudsmen. Nevertheless, positive indication about the spreading of the institution is that most of the biggest cities in Bulgaria, such as Sofia, Plovdiv, Bourgas, Stara Zagora, Blagoevgrad, Shumen, and Pazardzhik, elected local ombudsmen. In some places, the local ombudsman institution enjoys second and even third consecutive mandate.

One of the peculiarities of the ombudsman system in Bulgaria is that the local and national ombudsman institutions share similar responsibilities in relation to exercising control/recommendation functions over the city mayors, as well as municipal councils and administrations. This problem has emerged from the lack of coordination in adoption of the Ombudsman Act and the Local Governance and Administration Act and the overlapping functions of the national and local ombudsmen create a complicated

situation, as the national ombudsman is more sensitive towards the activities of municipal authorities than the national authorities. This problem stems from the fact that the inadequate administrative decentralization in Bulgaria determines the opportunity of the national ombudsman to criticize or direct recommendations to local authorities more often, than towards national political or administrative elite. This focus of the national ombudsman may create mistrust in the ombudsman, because of two reasons. Firstly, it may lead to disproportion of efforts and effects – for example the national ombudsman addresses how municipalities should conduct more participatory budget formation, but not demanding the adoption of the same recommendation during the spending of the national budget surplus, which amounts and sometimes surpasses the calculated sum of all municipalities' annual budgets. Second, this configuration allows national ombudsman and local ones to have different positions on one issue, which can discredit the institutions both on national and local level.

Furthermore, the national ombudsman has published a guide titled "Citizens' rights, the good governance and the local authority," where specific recommendations concerning citizens' rights are addressed towards the local authorities. The guide draws on some principles of good governance, as the major ones are the rule of law, responsibility, reliability, predictability, accountability, efficiency, efficacy, collaboration, and coherence. Those principles are recognized by the local ombudsmen as a necessary commitment during a working session with the national ombudsman. However, a further discussion is still needed to reconcile the differing opinions on what principles and procedures good governance should be based on. The "White Paper on European Governance", that serves as a basis of all projects for European constitutions, recognizes the following principles of good governance: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. There is a significant overlapping of the European principles of good governance and those recognized by the

Bulgarian national ombudsman. Nevertheless, the European White Paper draws on two additional ones: subsidiarity and relevance of the invested efforts against the planned goals. On one side, the lack of the last two principles in the guide published by the national ombudsman proves the necessity of wider public debate for their clarification and adoption in the Bulgarian public governance setting. But on the other side, it also shows that it is not appropriate to distinguish between levels of governance where the principles of good governance are concerned, because subsidiarity concerns all levels of public governance.

Despite that, the principles of good governance outline the access points of trust. In this sense we will point out the omissions in the work of local authorities in Sofia with some practical examples, when the trust in municipal institutions is compromised or threatened, and the intervention of ombudsman (either national or local one) in these cases is an attempt to restore trust.

Access points of trust: coherence and predictability

As mentioned above, shared values and norms are essential prerequisites for nurturing trust in political leaders, and their manifestation in practice is coherence and predictability of public governance. The right time for the establishment of such predictable governance in the Sofia municipality, as a basis for trustworthy attitudes towards the local authorities, probably was in 2005, when partial elections were conducted just for new mayor, and not for council. The new mayor was supposed to work for two years with previously elected municipal council, as in Bulgaria the council is the body, which takes most important decisions, defines local legislation and strategies, and the mayor and the administration are just the executives of the council's decisions. This situation allowed new governance courses to be set, without resorting to radical ones, because the mayor could

not rely on his own political support group in the Sofia municipal council. Thus, during the two years left of the mandate, the mayor emphasized on development of his own anti-corruption strategy and counteractions. Some of the measures in the field of anti-corruption helped him earn very high political rating, and his political party was able to win the majority of the municipal councils' seats in the next elections. But not all of the mayor's actions are coherent in relation to fighting corruption. As an example, the mayor has appointed twice interdepartmental anti-corruption commission (with representatives from the municipal council, the municipal administration, and the Ministry of Interior, among others) in order to counteract the corruption – first, during the partial mandate 2005-2007 and second, right after the elections in 2007. Unfortunately, this commission was suspended by the mayor in 2008 after some political pressure coming mainly from the opposition. Sofia ombudsman had active communication and good interaction with the anti-corruption commission while it was functioning, but the ombudsman refrained from official commentary on its suspension, because part of the commission's functions coincided with his own. The main problem with the termination of the commission's activities was that significant number of citizens' cases and complaints were suspended without possibility these cases to be redirected to the ombudsman's office. This incoherence led to a great disappointment and most probably these citizens irreversibly lost their trust in the local government authority.

Another example for the lack of coherence, therefore lack of trust to the political institutions is related to the real estate development in one of the biggest neighborhoods in Sofia – ''Mladost''. This part of Sofia has a background of widely-shared public resistance against the over-development of the area at the expense of disappearing recreational spaces, the delay of the infrastructure development, which is supposed to serve the needs of the growing neighborhood. In this case, the generated public pressure led to a formal prohibition against the housing and offices development, which

restrained the investment plans of land owners. At the same time, the authorities announced their intentions to develop two skyscrapers on its own land in the neighborhood and even started a selection procedure for investor. The land owners' response was very strong as they raised the argument that the property rights are equal and that the official prohibition should apply not only to private property owners, but also to the municipal real-estate development intentions. After an official recommendation by the local ombudsman, the selection procedure for investor was held, and the public announces related to the case on the part of Sofia mayor and the one who governs the neighborhood became very limited. Unfortunately, this step does not settle the matter definitely, but at least it helped for the time being, as it assures that the municipal authorities will treat equally the private and public real-estate development in Sofia.

The above examples have provoked additional mistrust in the local government authorities. The next example shows how the interests of all people living in Sofia are affected even if not having immediate effect. On the 24th of July 2008, the Sofia municipal council adopted a general plan for development of Sofia, which goals are supposed to be reached until 2013. One of the leading strategic goals of the plan aims to "achieve accelerated economic growth, high standard of living, and a sustainable and balanced development, while preserving the nature and the development of the urban environment." Defined as it is, the strategic goal of the plan includes two mutually incompatible development concepts – the accelerated economic growth and the sustainable development followed-up by contradicting objectives and tasks, which do not have tangible and consistent implementation plan. At best, they are just unspecified and general measures. The question does not concern whether such strategy would impress potential donors and investors, but rather how the municipal authority will simultaneously implement the declared goals of accelerated economic growth while guaranteeing sustainable and environmentally

healthy urban environment. It is clear that if the plan did not follow one of the extremes, the implementation mechanisms would be incoherent, dictated by transitory attitudes and circumstances, while the results of this plan would remain highly unpredictable. The Sofia ombudsman in 2006 declared his acute disagreement with the definition of the strategic goals, as he pointed out the lack of guarantees, including financial ones, for the realization of the plan. This is especially in the context of disproportionate implementation capacity of the municipal authority compared to the sheer magnitude of the strategically planned goals. As a result of his objection, as well as the ongoing criticisms coming from other people and organizations, the plan was suspended for further revision. The insignificant revision of the text and the rash adoption of the strategic plan by the Sofia municipal council in 2008 showed that this document had only a declarative character. The real principles of governance should be sought somewhere else or one can think that the incompetency was a leading factor during the planning process of the general development plan. In both cases those, who have conformed their future activities to this strategic document - which is normal and logical conduct, will loose trust in local governance authorities.

The Sofia general development plan not only provokes incoherence and unpredictability of the municipal council's and administration's actions regarding the development of the city, but also, it is a result of incompetency or even backstage governance maneuvers. In this sense the plan also affects the second access point of trust – communication, transparency, and accountability of the municipal governance. The transparency and accountability of collective government institutions is of crucial importance, because it secures the option for the wide public to follow the policy making process from the genesis to the evolution of particular decisions. Nevertheless, the legal acts guarantee the citizens' right to attend the municipal council's sessions, it was one of the top priorities of Sofia ombudsman to secure the transparency and publicity of these sessions, and

they started to be broadcasted live on the Internet. It is still a unique practice for Bulgaria both with the public archive of all sessions, also available on the Internet. The local ombudsman tried to get further, with emphasizing on the transparency and accountability as he recommended the implementation of the same practice for the commissions of the council and the acts and records of the administration. However, on this topic neither the commissions nor administration agreed to give online access to their work and this brought mistrust, because people evaluated the political aspects of transparency and accountability, but not the transparency on expert and administrative level.

Access points of trust: transparency

Furthermore, it is necessary to secure a public access to the work and activities of the Sofia expert council of territory lay-out as a result of ombudsman work on some citizens' complaints. In practice, this council makes all the decisions concerning the urban planning and development of Sofia, and the Sofia municipal council only legalizes the decisions made by the expert council. In this regard, Sofia ombudsman insisted, the official order with which the members of the expert council are appointed and the main principles of work to become public as the day, the place, the hour, and the agenda of its official sessions are to be announced on the Internet site of Sofia municipality two days before each session. As a next step, the ombudsman made a suggestion for additional rules regulating the citizens' access to the sessions of the expert council and for publishing of the sessions' protocols on the Internet. These ideas are mainly motivated by the public opinion that significant part of all decisions concerning the urban territory development is made underhanded as the corruption in this field is rampant. Similar proposals we may find in the annual reports of Sofia ombudsman, as in the last two consecutive years most of the citizens'

complains are about urban planning procedures. In addition, the requirements of the complain-handlers for the realization of alternative development plans have been increasing. Currently, the attitudes toward this suggestion are positive but still there are not any formal proceedings to make it a tangible and routine practice.

The importance played by the transparency in the work of local government's collective organs, has the same function as the desire and the ability of the mayor to communicate with the broad public in relation to maintaining and generating trust. In view of this categorization, those informed about the governance dynamics of Sofia and the qualities and deeds of its mayor would most probably agree that the mayor's communication and interaction with citizens has a priority value. And in reality, the mayor is the most cited by the media politician in Bulgaria as the broad public seems to be always informed with his principal position and subsequent actions regarding each important public matter, as far as they are correctly reflected by the media. Besides, some of mayor's arguments with major political opponents are played out directly at the media stage that in turn makes the broad public firsthand witness to the political and governance debates. And else – the personal charisma of the mayor ensures him convincing and impressive meetings with the citizens, when new development projects are inaugurating, new events and initiatives take place or when crisis situations are inspected on the spot. But in view of the fact that the communication and interaction with the broad public have to serve nurturing trust function rather than seeking only temporary public relation's effect, the peoples' feedback about political decisions being undertaken or about to be made, plays an important role. Despite that, the mayor of Sofia underestimates the standard forms of peoples' feedback, especially the feedback about the conducted municipal policies. One of the biggest deficiencies of the current mayor's governing style is the absence of scheduled personal meetings with citizens in the opening hours of his office,

his non-participation in the public discussions about adoption and amendments of the Master plan and municipal budget, and the insufficient interaction with Sofia ombudsman. Not only does the last affect the process of nurturing trust in the mayor, but it also affects the trust in Sofia ombudsman institution that in turn questions the quality of his work.

The public discussions with citizens that the municipality has to initiate and participate in are another prerequisite for having an institutional transparency, effective communication with and accountable municipal governance. Such an example is the discussion in regards of the budgetary process that has a four-year tradition, which started after the local ombudsman made a formal suggestion. With the co-operation of citizens' organizations, a brochure is published every year to inform the broad public in clear and concise way on the income and expenditure parameters of the municipal budget. The ombudsman has made further formal suggestions to improve on the participatory budget process as citizens are regularly informed on the last budget execution, and as the municipal administration could initiate public discussions with people living in different districts of the city in regard of the new budgetary framework. For an effective participatory budget is needed to mark off which citizens' recommendations are considered and taken into account, so people participating in this process feel encouraged and important to contribute best to their knowledge and abilities.

The public discussions in relation to the general urban development plan have a long history but in practice, the first significant public discussions took place in 2006 after the National ombudsman had started such initiative. In this connection, provided public discussions up to that moment proved to be of minor significance, because their public reach was rather limited. On one hand, the initiative of the National ombudsman opened the opportunity for transparent public discussions but on the other hand, it slowed down the adoption of the general urban development plan with more than one year.

This delay was the reason for which local ombudsman expressed some caveats to the 2006 discussions, despite his professional aspirations towards transparency and citizens' participation in public decision-making process. During this period of delay, some partial corrections were introduced, but that in turn brought into question the whole initiative because most of them were in strong contradiction with the public interest. The analysis of all effects of the provided discussions, expressed in the annual reports of Sofia ombudsman, showed that not all measures associated with transparency and citizens' participation in public decision-making process can generate trust and should be applied in practice after profound consideration.

Access points of trust: interaction among individuals and social capital

The initiation of public discussions and their positive result is in close connection with the concept of social capital, respectively with trust. In contrast with the smaller municipalities where their sheer scale is useful for applying some mechanisms strengthening the social capital, the situation in Sofia is far from being satisfactory. One of the major problems hindering the creation of suitable environment to boost the social capital and trust between the individuals could be attributed to the imposition of a tax affecting the activities of the neighborhood cultural centers – so called "chitalishta". They have always played a strong historical role for development and strengthening the beneficial contacts and interactions within the local communities, which role couldn't be replaced even by the increasing importance of social networks in Internet because of the scale level. This decision pushed away many people from these centers, diminishing their role for the social capital strengthening process but unfortunately, it turned to be just one of the problem's aspects. Because Sofia is the biggest and most dynamic city in Bulgaria living at a frenetic pace, most of the customary

practices, even such related to the education and upbringing of people, are insufficient in every day's behavior of the people. This calls for a special treatment on the part of the institutions towards the process of investment and development of chitalishta's infrastructure and activities, as with different initiatives the municipal council and administration may achieve better environment for generating social capital and trust, and at the same time actions, which require the usage of already accumulated social capital, need serious correctives.

In the aspect of social capital strengthening, the municipal authorities and even the state ones are in great duty to the society. The interaction between people having apartments in large-storey blocks is a specific relation, which directly affects the lives of many people as well the social capital dynamics in these local communities. Unfortunately, almost all of the public institutions have failed to perform in relation of formal regulation of the social dynamics and interactions occurring among the inhabitants, what directly generated mistrust. Depending on the character of the variety of problems occurring in the large-storey blocks numerous institutions are concerned. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for observing the public order applying to the dwellers; the municipalities are responsible for the construction maintenance of the buildings; the environmental and health district inspectorate is concerned with the maintenance of proper hygiene and other related regulations; the judicial system has also some responsibilities when it comes to formal disputes regarding the shared parts of the storey buildings. Some of the problems stem from the state regulated urbanization during the years of communist regime, and the expectations of people that the institutions have to cope with the consequences of this urbanization. Other aspects come from the inflexibility of the legislation, the main part of which was adopted 50 years ago. Even the new Condominium Ownership Management Act, enacted in 2009 does not give satisfactory solution to the accumulated problems. New forms as "owners' association"

were introduced, but there aren't enough stimulating mechanisms for their establishment, while the interests of the water, energy and central heating supplying companies are guaranteed. The multitude of situations and problems occurring in the local communities of inhabitants are recognized as a suitable niche where the ombudsman institution is able to offer some useful help. As a result, Sofia ombudsman has published a guide of the house manager which is distributed free of charge and where patterns for solving different problems are proposed. The ombudsman has also began a registration campaign of the apartment buildings' management in the respective district administration and some workshops were conducted with the participation of interested house managers. At later stage, the National ombudsman organized broad public discussion when the new Condominium Ownership Management Act was proposed, but neither in the Act, nor in practice were all of the good ideas implemented.

A possible way for generating social capital and trust is the creation of consultancy and public councils to help the work of local government authorities in relation to different problems. This practice is still heavily underdeveloped as such examples could be found only in few spheres of the public life no matter of the numerous declarations of the authorities for its need. The ombudsman of Sofia participates in two public councils treating the problems of disabled peoples' integration, and the persistent problem with the insufficient capacity of the kindergartens. His position is that these councils play certain role only in crisis situations when hard and unpopular decisions have to be made. This practice needs revision as more intensive and collaborative interaction is needed with the respective public officers of the municipal departments.

Another activity, which could possibly strengthen the social capital and trust, is the variety of financing mechanisms to different projects and initiatives proposed by citizens' organizations. In this regard, the oldest operating program of the municipality is in the field of youth and sport, as

local ombudsman's specific recommendation is to increase the publicity when new program's priorities, criteria and guidelines are adopted. In 2005, it was announced the idea for the set-up of two new programs – "Culture" and "Green Sofia" but the initiative was halted because of ongoing contradiction between the municipal council and the administration. After many months of persistent pressure coming from a coalition of non-profit organizations and after the mediation function that the ombudsman office assumed, the contradictions were settled down and the first financially supported projects in the framework of the "Culture" program happened in 2007. Despite some of the shortcomings witnessed during the first session between municipal officials and organizations working in the sphere of culture, the effect was generally positive in sense of increasing mutual trust between the NGOs and municipal institutions. This successful attempt could not be achieved in the "Green Sofia" program despite the ombudsman's efforts to mediate the interaction between green organizations and the respective municipal officials. Thus, in a whole sector of the civil society in Sofia is missed the opportunity to generate trust in the interaction between civic organizations and the municipal institutions.

Conclusion

The ombudsman institution everywhere is claimed to be a guarantee for good governance. As far as the good governance principles outline the access points of trust, the ombudsman has a leading role in the process of building trust. In Bulgaria, the ombudsman institution still can be characterized as newly established, and is active mainly in two spheres - defining objectives and strategy, and at the same time introducing models of interaction with institutions, to enable the realization of ombudsman's main functions. These tasks are relevant to the process of building trust in institutions, but before all, their aim is to make the ombudsman's activities trustworthy for citizens and public institutions either. The presented

examples for Sofia municipality emphasize that both the local and the national ombudsman still have some difficulties in convincing authorities and politicians to trust more in their recommendations, especially in those ones, which affect the trust in addressee of the recommendations. The efforts to overcome these difficulties, either in legislation or in practice, or what refers to simple coordination, are worthy, because every implemented ombudsman's recommendation strengthen trust not only in concerned public body, but also in ombudsman institution itself.

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