

Philanthropy Perception in Lithuania: Attitudes of Civil Servants and Community Leaders

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Abstract. *The article discusses general perception of philanthropy in public policy context analyzing the attitudes of civil servants and community leaders. Analysis of general philanthropy concept employs traditional and modern philanthropy dimensions; meanwhile philanthropic action is conceptualized in altruism vs. egoism perspective. Theoretical view is dwelling on insights of Herbet Simon, Elias L. Khalil, Patrick Rooney and Sarah Nathan, Jenny Harrow, etc.. Some remarks on philanthropy policy traditions and legislation are made as well. The empirical evidence is dwelling on concept map of philanthropy perception among public policy actors: civil servants and community leaders.*

Keywords: *philanthropy, charity, philanthropy policy, public servants, community leaders.*

Raktažodžiai: *filantropija, labdara, filantropijos politika, valstybės tarnautojai, bendruomenės lyderiai*

Introduction

Philanthropy phenomenon as such lies between morality, business and politics. With economic crisis the discussion on social needs and responsibilities in society has gained momentum in political as well as public policy levels. Many authors [11;13; 14, etc.] discuss that philanthropy policy often becomes a relevant part of public policy and determines government relations with private and non-governmental sectors. Harrow [8, p. 121] argues, that government enables, regulates and challenges philanthropy and eventually has a strong impact on philanthropy policy. Public policy often defines philanthropy by the legislation eventually building bridges to or barriers against philanthropic action. Thus, at public administration level, philanthropy indicates trends in public policy, meanwhile in business field it is often used as instrument of marketing, public relations or expression of social responsibility. Perhaps it is an exaggeration to say that there is no philanthropy policy in Lithuania, but comparing with western philanthropy traditions it is definitely not highly developed and employed in public policy context. Thus, the discussion is focused on answering the question: what are the attitudes of public policy actors towards philanthropy and what is community leaders' confidence in philanthropy policy?

The article aims to discuss the possibilities and realities of philanthropy in Lithuania, exposing the challenges and failures of existing theories, analyzing current philanthropy perceptions among philanthropy policy actors. The theoretical insights are illustrated by interviews with civil servants and community leaders conducted in 2010. Public servants are supposed to evaluate the trends in shaping of philanthropy policy, meanwhile community leaders present attitudes of those who are experiencing the results of the governmental.

Paper is dwelling on four paragraphs: first paragraph is devoted to general meaning of philanthropy, second one is focused on the imperatives of philanthropic action, the third section discusses legislation of philanthropy and philanthropy concept in different public policy contexts and the last paragraph presents the empirical evidence.

Philanthropy concept: traditional and modern aspects

Nowadays philanthropy has many faces depending on the light it is discussed in. The semantics of philanthropy concept traces its roots in Greek language and means a love of humankind, however, besides the “love to others” in nowadays it involves much broader scope of meanings and motives. Philanthropy in its basic understanding is often related with Christian tradition and morality. As it is noticed in the earlier publications of the author, traditionally philanthropy, together with the rise of secularization at the end of the 19th century, philanthropy became more organized and professionalized and turned toward government regulation and civic traditions [23, p. 123].

The contemporary dynamics of philanthropy is as diverse as the missions of the sector’s multitude of nonprofit organisations [14, p. 117]. There are many terms that are used interchangeably with philanthropy, such as: charity, benevolence, giving, donation, and others [1]. Various authors [15;16; 22; 23] identify philanthropy itself as *traditional* and *modern*. Traditional philanthropy is mainly based on Christian morality and focused on a relief of social dysfunction, and modern philanthropy is mostly directed toward empowerment of social potentials. Sargeant and Jay [16, p. 2] define traditional philanthropy as charity that is „focused on the poor and is a term drawn from the religious tradition of altruism, compassion and empathy“, meanwhile modern philanthropy is viewed as „impersonal and concentrates on the resolution of the root causes of human issues. Rudich [15, p. 5] argues, that new philanthropy forms have emerged and brought many changes within the field of philanthropy following the advent of new actors and new wealth and the establishment of new institutions and methods of action that represent the preferences and personal value system of new actors. Therefore, modern philanthropy could be defined as a kind of welfare model that combines private initiative, social institutions, markets, and partnership with governmental policy and is oriented toward various results including relief of social misery and social empowerment [23, p. 122].

Rooney and Nathan [14, p. 118] distinguish a wide range of roles that in general could be defined as follows:

Reduce human suffering – this is one of the most ancient philanthropy role and the one that philanthropy is referred in traditional Christian morality. This role is based on the seek “to make life more comfortable for those who are injured or ill, to aid victims and to assist those not able to sustain themselves” [14, p. 118].

Enhance human potential – nonprofit organisations may enhance human potential through wide range of fields that are often named as philanthropy or charity spheres (religion, education, the arts, culture and humanities).

Promote equity and justice – philanthropy may foster equity and justice funding organisations, structures and programs that provide “human services and advocacy on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves” [14, p. 118].

Provide human fulfillment – opportunity to create and express self image, to raise own satisfaction and self-confidence as “through giving and sharing humans express their ideas and values” [14, p. 118].

Support experimentation and change – philanthropy often support innovations by taking risks, exploring areas that market sector may be unwilling to enter. This practice is not new philanthropic action, but just recently it was named as venture philanthropy.

Foster pluralism – philanthropy empowers parallel structures to perform action that government or business is not willing or not able to do. In this way social issues are receive “multiple responses and, at its best, includes a wide variety of voices” [14, p. 119]. The summary roles of philanthropy typology is shown in Figure 1.

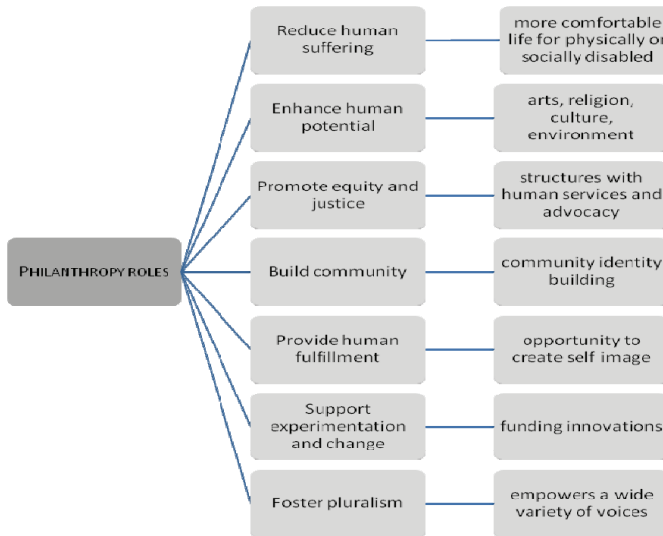


Figure 1. Roles of philanthropy

Sources: formed by authors according to [14, p. 118].

As it might be noticed, philanthropy roles reflect the traditional-modern cleavage of philanthropy perception. Traditional philanthropy usually is oriented towards

reducing human suffering, building community, promote equity and justice, meanwhile modern philanthropy is focused on enhancing human capital, providing human fulfillment, supporting innovations, etc.

It is widely discussed that there is no single theory explaining philanthropy and its action. Rudich [15, p. 7] argues that “there is not even a clear definition demarcating which activities fall within the scope of philanthropy”. Nevertheless, perception of philanthropy action is commonly based on the analysis of its imperatives and attempts to answer the question: why donors donate?

Rather often the answer to this question is dwelling on the idea of altruism that often is directly related to philanthropy, charity and any other benevolence. Simon [18, p. 153] argues that altruism (and eventually philanthropy) is based on bounded rationality as “altruism includes influencing others to behave altruistically”. Sargeant and Jay [16, p.100] argue, that philanthropic action is dwelling on self-interest vs. altruism confrontation. Self-interest includes broad range of factors: self-esteem, recognition, reciprocation, atonement of sins, etc. Empathy, sympathy, guilt, social justice and norms reveal a broad spectrum of philanthropy action as well [16, p. 102–106].

Conceptualizing philanthropy in action perspective: altruism vs. egoism?

Khalil [11, p. 99–103] identifies altruism as charity and distinguishes three major interactional (rationalistic) theories of altruism that could be also defined as imperatives of philanthropic action: egoistic perspective, egocentric perspective and altercentric perspective (see table 1).

Thus, it could be assumed that philanthropic action accordingly is based on three rationales: *egoistic* (philanthropic action is dwelling on reciprocal benefit), *egocentric* (philanthropic action is based on sympathy and sentiments) and *altruistic* (philanthropic action is stemming from moral and value orientation, eliminating reciprocal benefit). Egoistic dimension is interpreted as philanthropic action in expecting benefit; egocentrism presents altruism as ultimately based on vicarious pleasure, sentiments and duty; altruistic perspective is defined as philanthropic action that occurs from moral and value orientations, not for the purpose to get the benefit. Egoistic approach is explicitly oriented towards benefit maximisation and could be illustrated by “firms that donate funds to enhance “goodwill”, or agents helping neighbours from a strategic consideration” [11, p. 100]. Walzer [24, p. 498] notices that “philanthropy or charity happens to be a tactic to buy power and respect”.

This strategy also reflects corporate action where agent strives to gain moral advantage and leaves recipient with the sense of inferiority. The agent who cooperates is actually interested in maximizing his expected utility and it is misleading to identify and call cooperation as altruism [11, p. 100]. However, egoistic perspective is often on the edge of mutual reciprocity and raise an open question where is the margin between egoistic and egocentric perspectives?

Table 1. Theoretical perspectives of philanthropic imperatives

Theoretical perspective	Value orientation	Characteristics	Affiliated authors
Egoistic	Reward seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High direct expectations on future benefit • maximisation of utility • social exchange, • “reciprocal altruism” • strategic philanthropy 	Axelrod (1984), Homans (1958), Blau (1964)
Egocentric	Mutual exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect expectations on future benefit • The enjoyment of watching the pleasure of others exceeds the pleasure of consuming; • does not portray altruism as genuine sympathy. • corporate philanthropy, 	Hochman and Rodgers (1969), Becker (1976)
Altercentric/ altruism	Non-rewards seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No expectations on future benefit • Stemming from a personality trait that arises from artificial selection, • sharing without seek to receive a benefit, • springing from “moral gene” • anonymous philanthropy, 	Frank (1988), Simon (1990, 1993)

Sources: [based on 11 p. 99; 15, p.7].

Egocentric perspective is explained by indirect satisfaction experienced by donor who is imagining the enjoyment of the beneficiary happening to his own person. Thus, egocentric trend of philanthropy is based on vicarious pleasure, as Khalil [11, p. 101] notices: an agent donates to the pool club if the donation allows him to watch the swimmers and imagine how it would feel to swim. Egocentric philanthropic action also reflects donations that are made in a sense of duty or identity (for ex., donation to alumna foundations, hometown, etc.) that is often reduced to altruism.

According to altruistic (or as Khalil [11], names altercentric) view, donor does not stand to receive a benefit or express a sentiment, but donates because of his sense of social justice and “pro-social” trait. In this sense, philanthropy is explained as a “personality trait arising from a moral gene that dictates upon the agent to place himself totally in shoes of potential beneficiary and, hence, to adopt the other’s utility as his own [11, p. 102]. The extreme forms of altruistic philanthropy could be noticed in religion movements, etc. where members extremely devote themselves to the common wealth refusing their own identity and interests. However, in common sense

and surroundings the best example of altruistic trend is anonymous philanthropy. Nevertheless, Walzer [24, p. 500] notices that philanthropist at some extent is always proud of himself. However, if “the scope philanthropic action is higher than personal reward, it does not lead to vanity and false pride” [24, p. 502].

Harrow [8, p. 9] distinguishes three similar strands of theory explaining philanthropic action: altruism, social exchange theory and identification theory that correspond to values of non-rewarding seeking, seeking and receiving gains and creating mutually rewarding relations. These value trends at some extent correspond to above discussed altruistic, egoistic and egocentric perspectives (see table 1).

Philanthropy concept in public policy context

The early twenty-first century has introduced new views of the role of government in public policy: it performs fewer functions on its own and more in partnership with other actors [3, p. 4]. Denhardt and Denhardt [6, p. 373] notice that government agencies, nonprofits and funders must begin a substantive dialogue as a way of bringing a level of consistency and coordination to an increasingly fragmented public policy process. Eventually, several groups of elements defining philanthropy in public policy context could be crystallized: political factors, economic factors, socio/cultural factors, technological factors [16, p. 23].

Political factors include government attitudes to the nonprofit sector and recent or forthcoming legislative or regulatory changes that might affect philanthropy environment.

Economic factors demonstrate trends in wealth, employment, tax, consumption and disposable income impact on all categories of funders.

Socio/cultural factors include data on demographics and social attitudes, as well as evidence of likely behavioural changes or significant shifts in societal values.

Technological factors define impact of development in technology on the philanthropy policy.

Nevertheless all groups of above mentioned factors are relevant to philanthropy, political determinants appear as dominating in the context of public policy. All over the world philanthropy and government share a specific relationship starting with general meanings of philanthropy and charity concepts and finishing with legislation. Lithuanian legal framework includes two laws related to charity and philanthropy: the Law on Charity and Sponsorship and the Law on Charity and Sponsorship Foundations. The Law on Charity and Sponsorship distinguishes two concepts of benevolence: charity and sponsorship, however, the term philanthropy is missing [12]. Analysing the law, it could be noticed that term charity is mostly oriented towards relief of human suffering and social dysfunction, meanwhile term sponsorship employs rather modern aspects of philanthropy and is oriented towards institutional level⁷.

Adam [1, p. 4] remarks that “on both sides of Atlantic, scholars have failed to develop a united theoretical concept of philanthropy”, thus, several trends in

⁷ In 2012 some corrections in the Law on Charity and Sponsorship were passed. However, it is not relevant to the analysis context in this article.

philanthropy policy could be crystallized: European, American, Scandinavian. European philanthropy policy is mainly based on UK philanthropy traditions and demonstrates no specific distinction between philanthropy and charity concepts; rather, philanthropy is often described in traditional meanings of public benevolence and the main focus is on charity traditions. Charity is a distinctive legal form of organization that has series of tax advantages enshrined in law [16, p. 2]. The American approach on opposite to European dimension understands philanthropy as a civil obligation and sees a rather obvious distinction between charity and philanthropy. American philanthropy policy is more evident and sophisticated than the European one. In the American tradition, charity is a response to a problem, and over time philanthropy should eliminate the source of the problem [23, p. 122]. Whereas charity aims to provide immediate relief and focuses on the poor and the needy, institutional philanthropy aims to prevent and correct social and environmental problems and to improve the quality of life of society as a whole [15]. Philanthropy adopts long-term goals and strives to provide fundamental, core solutions to social problems [8]. Nevertheless, speaking about philanthropy in Lithuania the discussion about post-communist settings should not be ignored as well. It is widely debated, ‘the surprise of post-communist transition’ is that Western economic, political and social theories and practices often experience a failure in the post-communist settings [13]. A specific post-communist philanthropy type could be distinguished. This type includes some characteristics of all three philanthropy policies discussed above: one can detect the prevailing definition of the philanthropy and charity concepts that is typical of the European philanthropy perception, as well as expectations of state social governance and business social responsibility that are characteristic to the Scandinavian tradition [see more 23].

Defining philanthropy: approach of civil servants and community leaders

As it was discussed above, the definition and understanding of philanthropy that “we care for those who need our existence is old as the land in which we live” [14, p. 119]. Nevertheless, the contemporary perception of philanthropy and its action has many aspects depending on the social, historical and political settings. Sulek [21, p. 194] argues, that philanthropy as a word is a “multifaceted term, with many layers of meaning in both its historical and its contemporary usage”.

This section of the paper is based on the qualitative analysis revealing philanthropy perception among civil servants and community leaders in Lithuania. The qualitative research was conducted in spring 2010 and includes 6 semi-structured interviews with civil servants at local government level and 4 semi structured interviews with community leaders. The analysis is structured on the following questions in Lithuanian context: what is general perception of philanthropy: traditional or modern? What is understanding of philanthropic action and its imperatives? What should be the role of the government in philanthropic action? The analysis is illustrated by concept mapping.

Discussing about general perception of philanthropy, civil servants have rather philosophical definition of philanthropy oriented towards modern dimension.

Civil servants rather often distinguish philanthropy and charity as two different concepts that is typical to American philanthropy policy. Examples of American philanthropy is often mentioned as well.

“The only true philanthropist in Lithuania is American Lithuanian Kazickas⁸”...[civil servant 1, head of municipality department].

Real philanthropy is in America... traditions, culture ...”...[civil servant 3].

Nevertheless, civil servants remark that traditional charity is more appropriate to current situation in Lithuania.

First of all I would not say that philanthropy is popular in Lithuania. Probably... according to the current situation in Lithuania, it is more likely a charity than philanthropy. Philanthropy is much more broad concept related to millionaires [civil servant 1, head of municipality department].

Charity itself I understand as it is mentioned in the law. But philanthropy... philanthropy in Lithuania is very strategic... I have not met true philanthropist in Lithuania yet... [civil servant 2, head of municipality department]

Sponsorship and charity are synonymous. Philanthropy actually is a different thing... [civil servant 6, head of municipality department].

Speaking about philanthropy concept, civil servants emphasize empowerment, support for cultural potential, typical to modern philanthropy.

Speaking about philanthropy first of all I think about culture, politics, philanthropy development... Social projects should be supported by the state [civil servant 4, head of municipality department].

Philanthropy is ability to share your quality of life with others. Quality of life consists of material welfare and enjoyment of sharing... [civil servant 3].

Community leaders demonstrate less sophisticated philanthropy perception, more oriented towards traditional concept and practice. It should be noticed that community leaders identify philanthropy and charity as synonymous concepts.

Philanthropy is an aid. It could be money, books, other things... I think that charity is very close to philanthropy... [community leader 1]

All the concepts are equally important – sponsorship, charity, altruism. Most related to philanthropy is altruism, because philanthropy is a sacrifice... [community leader 2]

Philanthropy is just a wish to help others without reward. However, sometimes you are not understood in society if you do so.... [community leader 4].

The summary of the discussion is reflected in Figure 2. Civil servants perceive philanthropy in American philanthropy policy tradition, meanwhile community leaders support European philanthropy perception. On the other hand, community leaders have rather traditional understanding of philanthropy that emerges from their

⁸ Juozas Petras Kazickas or Joseph P. Kazickas (born in 1918) is a Lithuanian-American businessman, self-made multi-billionaire and philanthropist. With assets estimated worth over 3 billion litas, he was considered to be the wealthiest Lithuanian in 2006.

philanthropy experience and civil servants tend to perceive philanthropy in its philosophical meanings.

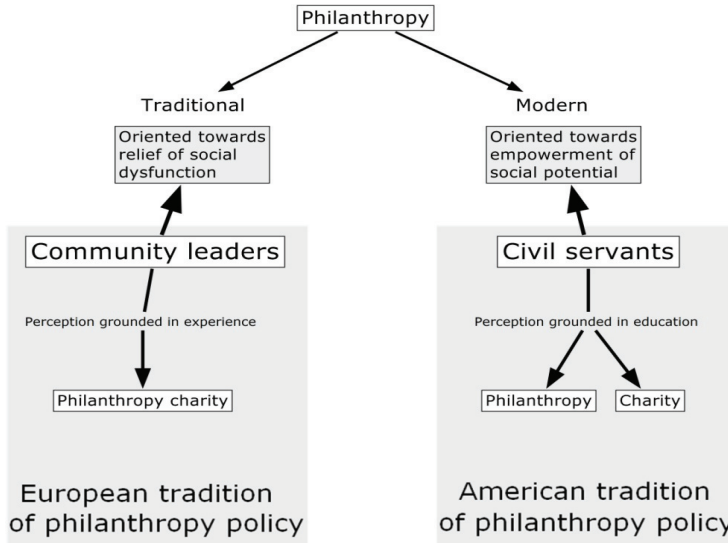


Figure 2. Concept map of respondents' philanthropy perception

Discussing about philanthropy motives and imperatives, some challenging contradiction between understanding of philanthropy and its action could be noticed. At concept level respondents often identify philanthropy with altruism. However, speaking about philanthropic action, philanthropy is often mentioned as investment or social duty.

Philanthropy is just a goodwill, but this understanding comes with certain philanthropic culture... [civil servant 1, head of municipality department].

Philanthropist is an altruist, who being rich feels social duty to donate for other social groups... [civil servant 2, head of municipality department]

Philanthropy is an altruism, unselfish help to others [community leader 3].

However, samples of philanthropic action are painted in the light of egoism or egocentrism. Respondents emphasize honor, enjoyment and direct reward as marketing.

The best example of philanthropy in Lithuania is Rostropovich⁹ Foundation. The foundation supports talented in music children.. philanthropy should care about talents. [civil servant 1, head of municipality department]

Philanthropy is better developed in other countries because donors receive some benefits from the government [community leader 2].

⁹ The Rostropovich Foundation was created in honor of Mstislav Rostropovich, a world renowned cellist and conductor, originally from Russia.

My philanthropic experience is participating in various events, communicating with various social groups... [civil servant 2, head of municipality department].

It all over the world the same... the one who has money needs honor, wishes to appear nice, supports art, luxurious events... [civil servant 3, head of municipality department].

Summarizing the discussion it could be noticed, that common belief that philanthropy is altruism is typical for all respondents. However, the motives for philanthropic action are not altruistic (see Figure 3).

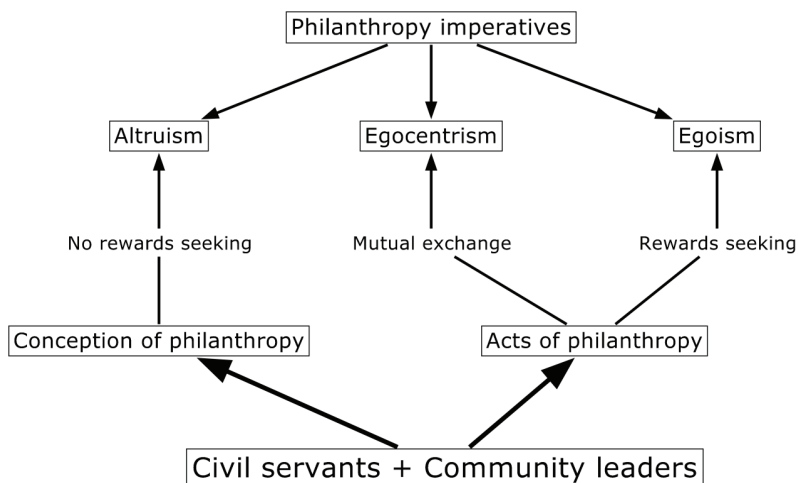


Figure 3. Concept map of respondents' approach towards philanthropy imperatives

Speaking about philanthropy and public policy, discussion focus mainly on legislation. Community leaders appear rather critical about current government role in philanthropy development.

Government definitely has the biggest impact on philanthropy development via governmental institutions, legislation... We often ask business for support and receive an answer: "I already paid for government big taxes, VAT..." Thus, government has to motivate donors, boost giving and this should be determined by law..." [community leader 1].

Neither government nor parliament do not boost philanthropy. Lithuanian legislation should determine tax exemption, etc.[community leader 2].

I would like to see bigger initiative from the government. Should be some kind of promotion...[community leader 3].

Civil servants were more moderate criticizing the legislation, however, declared that philanthropy policy and development is highly dependent on government.

I think that legal basis of philanthropy is deficient in Lithuania. Why do I think so? I think that philanthropy is not popular in Lithuania, philanthropist are not enough honoured by government, specific positive government approach towards philanthropy is missing [civil servant 1, head of municipality department].

I do not see any obstacles for philanthropy in Lithuania. There is legal basis on philanthropic action. I think the reason of low philanthropy level is weak civil society tradition, postcommunist legacies... [civil servant 2, head of municipality department].

It is government duty to take care of socially disabled people. Fostering philanthropy is one of the best way to do so... [civil servant 3, head of municipality department].

However, the same respondent/ civil servant defining groups that need philanthropy most remarks:

I think that first of all philanthropy is needed by artists, people in the art... [civil servant 3, head of municipality department].

Summing up, it could be assumed that all respondents evaluate philanthropy development in Lithuania as deficient (see Figure 4). Community leaders who ground

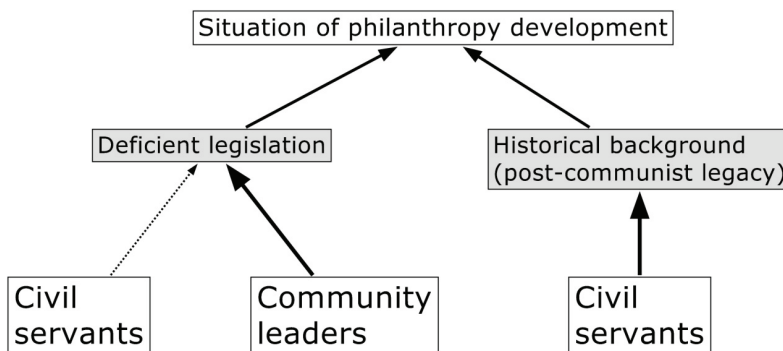


Figure 4. Concept map of respondents' approach towards philanthropy development

their attitudes on their personal practise place main emphasis of critics on philanthropy legislation. Meanwhile, civil servants identify philanthropy legislation in Lithuania as deficient, however, present more broad and sophisticated approach towards the issue. Civil servants declare that rather weak philanthropy development in Lithuania is not just the result of legislation, but also the outcome of philanthropy culture historical background in Lithuania, and especially post-communist legacy as well

Conclusions

1. Philanthropy concept has a broad nature, thus, eventually its perception is highly depending on the historical, political and economic surroundings. Changing political and economic context as well as facing crisis produce a pressure on government to enable and challenge philanthropy. In academic and political discussion philanthropy policy is identified as a complex and complicated part of state public policy indicating the level of democracy. Nevertheless, philanthropy policy in Lithuania is still at the margins of public policy, though some steps towards philanthropy development could be noticed.

2. Summarizing the empirical evidence it could be noticed that the most often identified philanthropy roles in Lithuanian public policy are *to reduce human suffering*

and *enhance human potential* that reflect typical traditional and modern forms philanthropy. However, other relevant modern philanthropy roles as *to support experimentation and change, provide human fulfillment* is not mentioned at all.

3. Philanthropy perception among civil servants and community leaders is dwelling on twofold approach. Civil servants present rather idealistic picture of philanthropy, based rather on their education than real experience. Altruism is mentioned as the main the main imperative of philanthropy, meanwhile any sign of self-interest is excluded from philanthropy scope. Civil servants tend to separate philanthropy and charity concepts, demonstrating philanthropy perception more appropriate to American tradition. Meanwhile community leaders who meet philanthropy in their everyday life more often than civil servants, identify charity as the main servant of philanthropy in Lithuania. Their perception of philanthropy is mostly based on their experience and demonstrate features typical to European philanthropy policy.

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Filantropija Lietuvoje: valstybės tarnautojų ir bendruomenės lyderių požiūris

Anotacija

Akademinėje ir politinėje diskusijoje filantropijos politika pateikiama kaip svarbi viešosios politikos dedamoji, atskleidžia valstybės demokratijos lygmenį. Straipsnyje aptariama filantropijos koncepcija viešosios politikos kontekste. Analizuojamas valstybės tarnautojų ir vietos bendruomenių lyderių požiūris. Filantropijos koncepcijos analizė grindžiama tradicinės ir moderniosios filantropijos takoskyra, o filantropijos veiksmo imperatyvai aptariami egoizmo ir altruizmo požiūriais. Teorinė analizė grindžiama Herbert Simon, Elias L. Khalil, Patrick Rooney ir Sarah Nathan, Jenny Harrow ir kt. autorių įžvalgomis. Taip pat apžvelgiamos filantropijos politikos tradicijos, filantropijos teisinis reglamentavimas. Teorinė analizė iliustruojama žemėlapiais, nubraižytais remiantis atliktais interviu su valstybės tarnautojais ir bendruomenės lyderiais.

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