Responsible Leadership for Corporate Responsibility[*]

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Abstract

This study analyses the role of leadership on a company's orientation towards corporate responsibility and sustainability. After presenting the theoretical background, this empirical research sheds light on the extent to which the leadership model allows CSR implementation. The case studies of two large companies in different countries (Italy and Romania) led by managers and entrepreneurs with common traits in their sustainable leadership styles emphasize the role of the value-driven and ethical-based construct in forging the sustainable and servant leadership model that influences CSR-driven strategies.

Keyword: Responsible Leadership; Sustainable Leadership; Servant Leadership; Corporate Responsibility; Global Markets

1. Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability: Does Leadership Matter?

Implementing sustainability within the firm means integrating social responsibility into the core business, and orienting enterprises with the aim of creating sustainability (Fischerl, 2014). However, many Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (CSR) policies (Freeman et al., 2010) have failed (and fail) because they are not driven by a coherent leadership model (Mostovicz et al., 2009; Gatti, 2002). In this regard, a challenging approach rests on the assumption that moral-based leadership is a core feature to implement authentic social and sustainability-driven corporate strategies (Visser, 2011; Von Ahsen, 2015; Oreg & Berson, 2011). An authentic CSR leader orients the company towards the common good and respects the "golden rule" of doing unto others as you would have others do unto you (Goffee & Jones, 2009), providing good and safe products and services, openly sharing knowledge and competences, building lasting relationships, being a good citizen and guardian for future generations, nurturing responsible employers, having a purpose that delivers long-term

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sustainable performance (Brondoni, 2003; Alford, 2015; Mosca et al., 2015; Mosca & Civera, 2017). In accordance with these lines of thought, attention shifts to a leadership model that triggers and moulds the organisation's values system starting from the vision, the norms, and the employees' mindset. How does leadership enhance corporate responsibility and sustainability? Which leadership models favour authentic corporate responsibility and sustainability-oriented strategies and practices? The study aims to provide a response to these research questions, highlighting the leadership attributes that enable the development of an authentic CSR-oriented strategy.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces the theoretical framework addressing the sustainable/responsible leadership construct and servant leadership. After introducing the methodological approach, Section 3 presents the empirical research aimed at determining the extent to which leadership allows CSR implementation (Salzmann et al., 2005; Schaltegger et al., 2012). We present and discuss the case studies of two large companies (Geico Spa and OMV Petrom) based in different countries (Italy and Romania) and sectors led by managers and entrepreneurs with common traits in their sustainable leadership styles, and characterized by the implementation of distinctive CSR oriented business models.

The final section discusses the findings and summarises the implications and limitations of the study.

2. Theoretical Framework

Both the style and the leadership model play a key role in driving a company towards implementing responsible, authentic, and sustainable strategies (Du et al., 2013; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Del Baldo, 2017). The strategic commitment of leadership to sustainability and responsibility is fundamental for the effectiveness of CSR practices (Mostovicz et al., 2009; Mosca & Civera, 2017) and to set up processes and business models that are responsible and sustainable at their core, thus ensuring that CSR matters are integrated into corporate objectives for long term value creation (Gorenak & Bobek, 2010).

Leadership is a complex multidimensional phenomena and there exist uncountable classification systems and a variety of definitions developed since the 19th century in trying to figure out what leadership really is (Winston & Patterson, 2006). Despite the vast body of leadership literature generated over the past decades (Yukl, 1989; Day et al., 2014) and the number of attempts to identify individual traits, skills, leader behavior, role relationships and organisational culture, there is no consensually agreed upon definition of leadership (Schein, 1992; Northouse, 2007). However, an understanding has been attained on the conceptualization of its main components, namely: 1) the process of influencing a group of individuals to obtain a common goal and 2) to develop a vision, as coherently summarised: "leadership is the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organisational objectives through changes"; "leadership is the ability of developing and communicating a vision to group of people that will make that vision true" (Lussier & Achua, 2004).

> *Among the most common definitions of leadership the following deserves mention, because it allows us to distinguish between the concept of leadership and the idea of a leader: "leadership is the outcome of the relationship between the leader, his/her followers and the environment - the leader is simply one of those three elements (Klein & House, 1995).*

Leadership is often seen as a position, whereas a leader can actually lead without a formal position (Webb, 2014). In addition, while leadership is concerned to cast vision, inspire others, teach the right things and organise people towards an objective, being a leader respectively implies to be visionary and inspirational; to model how to determine right things and to be influential (Miller, 2006; Bass, 2010).

Leaders aim to create passion to follow their vision (Bennis & Nanus, 2007) and focus on motivation and inspiration (Kotter, 1990a). Research shows that being an effective leader depends upon behaviors and characteristics like: confidence; service mentality; good coaching and listening skills; reliability and honesty; expertise; responsibility; being visionary; realistic; good sense of priorities; willingness to share; strong self esteem; technical or contextual, and recognition. Accordingly, leadership has been defined as "articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished" (Richards & Engle, 1986; Hetland, 2004). It goes beyond routine tasks to cope with change, whereas management is a regular formal responsibility to cope with routine complexity (Kotter, 1987 and 1990b). More recently, leadership has not been conceived as a replacement for management, rather assumed as two distinctive and complementary systems of action because both leadership and management are needed in an organisation (Adair, 1998; Algahtani, 2014).

Theories on leadership can be traced back to three main approaches: the trait/style school (which points out on the characteristics of leaders); the situational/context school (which focuses on how the external environment shapes leadership action) and the contingency school (which deals with the interaction between the individual leader and his/her framing context) (Visser, 2011). While it is not our intention to provide an exhaustive review of these approaches, Table 1 summarises the main outlines of leadership theories and emerging models useful to explain how leaders' behaviours and approaches are tied to CSR and sustainable-oriented strategies. Accordingly, the following sections address attention on responsible and sustainable leadership, as well as on transformational and servant leadership, emphasizing their ethical and moral-based constructs.

Table 1: *Theoretical Constructs of Leaderships for CSR and Leaders' Attributes*

Ethical and moral-based leadership	
Leadership ethics emphasizes leaders' behaviours and values and the benefits deriving from moral-based models (Liu, 2007; Kaptein, 2009; Lloyd & Mey, 2010; Bouckaert, 2011; Hoivik von Weltzien, 2014;Werhane, 1999;	Leaders with moral/behavioral integrity always encourage open and honest communication (Becker, 1998; Gottlieb & Sanzgiri, 1996).

Brown & Treviño, 2006). Flynn, 2008; Hoivik von Weltzien & Melé, 2009; Riggio et al., 2010; Dutta & Banerjee, 2011; Collier & Esteban, 2007).	
Virtuous Leadership Virtuous leadership requires specific cardinal virtues which are relevant both at the individual and organisational level (MacIntyre, 1985; Melé, 2009; Ruisi, 2010; Brown, 2011; Del Baldo, 2013; Blok et al., 2015; Johnson, 2009; Sison et al., 2017).	A virtuous leader expresses fortitude, prudence, temperance and justice (Bastons, 2008).
Responsible leadership and CSR leadership A responsible leadership theory broadens the notion of leadership from a traditional leader-subordinate relationship to a leader-stakeholder relationships (Maak & Pless, 2006; Du et al., 2013).	The responsible leader's behavior, is at the core of the good management of a company (Waldman & Siegel, 2008). A CSR leader is someone who inspires and supports action towards a better world (Visser, 2011).
Sustainable leadership Sustainable leadership emphasizes the dimensions of sustainable development (people, planet and profits) and the leadership role in creating a social capital (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011) through inclusive and collaborative processes (Brondoni, 2014; Salvioni & Astori, 2013; Salvioni & Bosetti, 2014; Salvioni & Gennari, 2017).	The sustainable leader's role rests in guiding with the others (Burns, Vaught & Bauman, 2015).
Transformational leadership Transformational leadership stimulates the consciousness of followers by appealing to higher ideals and moral values, such as justice and equality. It concerns the process of building commitment to the organisation's goals and empowering followers in order to fulfil these goals (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985 and 1997; Bass & Avolio 1988, 1990 and 2000; Bass & Bass, 2008; Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Waldman et al., 2006).	Transformational leaders articulate a vision, use lateral or non-traditional thinking, encourage individual development, give regular feedback, use participative decision-making, and promote a cooperative and trusting work environment (Carless, 1998).
Servant Leadership Servant leadership places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader (Laub, 2004; Irving, 2005; Hebert, 2004; Thompson, 2002; Van Tassell, 2006; Errol & Winston, 2005; Patterson, 2003; West & Bocarnea, 2008; Winston, 2003).	Good leaders must first become good servants (Greenleaf, 1977).

Source: our elaboration.

2.1 Responsible and Sustainable Leadership

Among the theoretical leadership constructs, leadership ethics tends to emphasize leaders' behaviours and values, and the benefits deriving from moral-based models (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Liu, 2007; Kaptein, 2009; Lloyd & Mey, 2010; Bouckaert, 2011; Hoivik von Weltzien, 2014). An organisational culture imbued with moral leadership leads to a number of benefits: understanding the interdependence between stakeholders, a learning environment, respect and trust, cooperation and cohesion, transparency and accountability (asking for and giving account of actions and decisions) (Werhane, 1999; Flynn, 2008; Hoivik von Weltzien & Melé, 2009; Riggio et al., 2010; Dutta & Banerjee, 2011; Collier & Esteban, 2007; Del Baldo, 2016). Moral creativity, which fosters dynamic and innovative CSR strategies, is tied to responsible and sustainable leadership (Visser, 2011; Von Ahsen, 2015).

Investigating the nature of CSR leadership Visser pointed out that "without bold and effective leadership - at a political, institutional and individual level - we will fail to resolve our most serious social and environmental crisis". The author defines a CSR leader as "someone who inspires and supports action towards a better world" (Visser, 2011). Drawing from the results of empirical research, he observed a set of key characteristics (traits, styles, skills and knowledge) that were associated with CSR leaders, including:

- systemic understanding (CSR leadership results from the interaction between an organisation's social, environmental and economic context and the characteristics of individual leaders);
- emotional intelligence (the ability and the real inspiration to unlock human potential and motivate people);
- values orientation to shape culture (a values-based approach nurtured by morality and spirituality is critical);
- compelling vision (the ability to effectively communicate a compelling narrative on how their organisations can contribute to creating a better world);
- inclusive style (the leader and the followers working together to get to certain outcomes);
- innovative approach (a willingness to innovate and be radical, stimulating lateral thinking and cross-functional, collaborative problem solving since complex problems require creative solutions);
- a long term perspective (long term thinking on impacts in terms of sustainability).

In addition, Johnson (2009) argued that individual systems aiming to address organisational system change from a humanistic perspective, must embody the virtues of courage, integrity, humility, reverence, optimism, and justice, as well as cardinal virtues (such as temperance, prudence and fortitude).

A framework of "basical" competencies for a manager involved in solving sustainability problems has been further tested by Dentoni et al. (2012) and Lans et al. (2014), including: system thinking competence, foresight-thinking competence, strategic management, embracing diversity and inter-disciplinarity, interpersonal competence, normative competence and action competence (Wiek et al., 2011).

Starting from MacIntyre's (1985) conceptual framework of virtue ethics based on practical wisdom, Blok et al. (2015) conceptualize normative and action competences as virtuous competences for corporate sustainability. Virtuous competence constitutes the good character of the professional and the normative basis for decision making process concerning corporate sustainability, while action competence is the ability based on critical thinking to actively involve oneself in responsible actions to improve the sustainability (Jensen & Schnack, 2006). "Both normative and action competences can be considered moral competences since they concern norms, values and beliefs which define what is right and wrong concerning sustainability, and enable professionals to take the right decision and behave in a responsible way" (Blok et al., 2015). Virtues and competence focus on the individual level, are developed and learned by practicing and widespread by witnessing and imitating professional behavior of others, and by reflecting on one's own behavior (Blok et al., 2015).

> *Accordingly, the theoretical construct of responsible leadership places the leader's behavior, attitudes and choices at the core of the good management of a company, a division or a team (Waldman & Siegel, 2008). Responsible leadership has been conceived as "an ethical and socio-relational phenomenon that occurs in social interaction processes" (Maak & Pless, 2006), emphasizing the importance of approaching leadership in the context of stakeholder theory (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011). "A responsible leadership theory broadens the notion of leadership from a traditional leader-subordinate relationship to a leader-stakeholder relationships" (Du et al., 2013) assuming that "building and cultivating ethically sound relations towards different stakeholders is an important responsibility of leaders" (Maak & Pless, 2006). The responsible leadership model rests on stakeholder consideration and ethical climate; integrity and climate oriented towards justice; role modeling and empowerment; climate geared towards diversity and inclusion, and long-term orientation.*

The competencies of a responsible leader are centred on communication, involvement of people and nurture a corporate culture based on values and moral convictions. Key factors of the leadership style are the people strategy (the human resources management) and the culture (which enhances the basic values, such as accountability and transparency).

Responsible leadership is supported by the idea that the person must have flexible thinking (i.e., strategic and systematic), which includes the dimensions of logic (to sort, select and plan), ethics (foresight, transparency and perseverance) and aesthetics. Therefore, it requires specific cardinal virtues, such as prudence and courage (Melé, 2009) which are relevant in the business context, both at the individual and organisational level (Ruisi, 2010; Del Baldo, 2013)[i]. "Virtue ethics assumes that good actions come from good persons and therefore that ethical behavior will be undertaken by actors with virtuous characters (Blok et al., 2015).

Such virtues are fundamental ("cardinal") because they are tied to the human faculties affecting the decision-making process. In this sense, fortitude (courage) is the competence to handle decisions; prudence (practical wisdom) is the ability to predict; temperance (moderation) (the habit of self-control) is the capability to evaluate; justice (friendship) is integrity for action (Bastons, 2008). From a virtue ethics perspective, action competence can be conceptualized as the practical wisdom to apply the virtues needed to realize sustainability followed by appropriate action (Blok et al., 2015).

Finally, the theoretical construct of sustainable leadership emphasizes the dimensions of sustainable development (people, planet and profits) and the leadership role in creating a social capital (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011) through inclusive and collaborative processes (Brondoni, 2014; Salvioni & Astori, 2013; Salvioni & Bosetti, 2014; Salvioni & Gennari, 2017). Therefore, the leader's role does not rest in guiding others, but in guiding with the others (Burns, Vaught & Bauman, 2015) as a result of sharing the values of sustainability inside and outside of the company and leading change.

2.2 Transformational and Servant Leadership

In the last few decades, awareness of the components of both virtues-based leadership and transformational leadership has grown. Using Bass and Avolio's components (2000), transformational leadership was measured according to three major dimensions (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Waldman et al., 2006): (1) charisma, which ''provides followers with a clear sense of purpose that is energising, a role model for ethical conduct, and builds identification with the leader and his or her articulated vision''; (2) intellectual stimulation, which ''gets followers to question the tried and true ways of solving problems, and encourages them to question the methods they use to improve upon them''; and (3) individualised consideration, which "focuses on understanding the needs of each follower and works continuously to get them to develop to their full potential" (Avolio et al. 1999). Transformational leadership emphasizes vision, the development and empowerment of the individual, challenging traditional assumptions. Transformational leaders are highly ethical and focused on values (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The extent to which a leader is transformational is primarily measured by the leader's effect on followers in terms of trust, admiration, loyalty and respect, often displayed in their motivation to do more than they thought possible (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 1999).

Servant leadership is part of this theoretical construct and has established a solid foundation in theory and practice (Greenleaf, 1977; Page & Wong, 2000; Spears, 1995; Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003). While the transformational leader's focus is directed towards the organisation, and his/her behavior builds follower commitment towards organisational objectives, the servant leader's focus is on the followers and the achievement of organisational objectives is a subordinate outcome (Stone et al., 2004).

Laub defines servant leadership as "an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader" (Laub, 2004). Typical servant leadership behaviours are: valuing and developing people, building

communities, displaying authenticity, providing leadership and sharing leadership. West and Bocarnea (2008) found that the servant leadership constructs of service, humility and vision contributed to organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Irving, 2005, Hebert, 2004; Thompson, 2002; Van Tassell, 2006; Errol & Winston, 2005). These assumptions lead to placing servant leadership in the field of ethical leadership, as they are centred on ethical values (such as sharing, participation, trust and solidarity) that recall specific virtues and values which positively affect the sustainability of the business model.

In summary, drawing from the aforementioned theoretical constructs, we can formulate the following propositions: Proposition 1: Moral and virtues-based leadership represents a key driver in implementing CSR strategies; Proposition 2: Transformational and servant leadership positively affects the implementation of CSR.

According to such propositions the empirical analysis below presented points out how such leadership models concretely affect CSR strategies.

3. Leadership Model and CSR Approach in Action

3.1 Methodology

The empirical research has been developed using a qualitative approach (Bailey, 2007) based on a case-study method (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) that has been widely used in the CSR field and detected in recent leadership literature (McNeff & Irving, 2017).

Two companies have been considered: Geico Spa (Italy) and OMV Petrom (Romania), respectively belonging to the mechanical industry and oil and gas sector. Both the companies are representative of an intrinsic CSR approach in their respective countries. Namely, CSR strategies are triggered by leaders driven by intrinsic motives, derived from their personal and community-based values (Graafland &Van de Ven, 2006; Graafland & Mazereeuw-Van der Duijn Schouten, 2012; Fifka 2012; Story & Neves 2015, Baldo, 2013b and 2014; Looser & Wehrmeyer, 2015).

Geico spa (Italy) is part of a multi-stakeholder network (involving scholars, academics, practitioners, managers and entrepreneurs) in collaboration with ISVI in discussing and implementing responsible governance principles and sustainability-oriented strategies. The company has been recently included among Italian excellent medium sized enterprises monitored by ISVI (Institute for Corporate Values[ii]) which successfully combine financial, social, environmental and ethical objectives. Data have been collected from multiple sources. First, we performed a document analysis of documents downloaded from the company website (Dec 2016-Feb 2017) including: annual and infra annual reports; press releases and information on the company's principles posted on the website. Secondly, a document analysis of books and articles focused on Geico published in newspapers in the last five years (2012-2016) (national and international newspapers downloaded by the company corporate website) has been carried out. Information has been selected in order to cover the following topics: mission and basic values of

the company; strategies; stakeholders engagement initiatives. Finally, a participant observation was carried out by the researcher involved in two focus group held at the University of Bocconi (Milan) during the ISVI round tables in 2016 and 2017, aimed to share best practices of a selected number of Italian managers and entrepreneurs. In those occasions, open interviews were conducted with Geico's President and direct speeches and quotes noted. A manual coding of the texts and managers/entrepreneurs statements and speeches has been carried out.

OMV Petrom has been selected since it represents an "extreme" case (Yin, 2009) with regard to the prevailing CSR extrinsic approach performed by Romanian companies (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Castelló & Lozano, 2011).

In the study "CSR Trends and Realities in Romania" Ernst & Young, interviewed 113 top managers from Romania (Ernest & Young, 2014). Most respondents (74%) felt that CSR practices are developed especially for recognition, raising the visibility and notoriety. CSR is not an end in itself or an independent strategy but is a part of the public relations strategy. Ernest & Young (2014) concludes that in Romania CSR practices aim at commercial reasons and not ethic reasons, rooted in the company's responsible behavior. Romanian companies focus their efforts particularly towards meeting the needs of external stakeholders to ensure their better visibility in the market. These CSR market characteristics make companies develop rather formal CSR activities that do not have sustainable and significant effects.

Obrad and others (2011) show that CSR practices have been implemented in Romanian corporate environment as an import of values and principles because of integration into the European business environment. Local companies, particularly subsidiaries of multinational companies have begun to adopt similar practices and have adapted them to the specific local organisational culture (Obrad & Gherheş, 2018).

The Romanian companies, developed by Romanian entrepreneurs, usually do not have a strategy in social responsibility, but only one-off actions, focusing mainly on two stakeholder categories: shareholders and consumers. That is why, to illustrate the sustainable and servant leadership model, we chose OMV Petrom, a company whose leader has a sustainable leadership style and which implements distinctive CSR oriented business models. Data have been mainly derived from secondary sources, due to difficulty accessing primary sources. We performed a documented analysis of OMV Petrom website content. The documents include: investor reports and presentations; Strategy Update 2021+; Sustainability Report; press releases; information about guiding principles, code of conduct and other relevant information. Also, we performed a document analysis of articles relating to the company and their managers published in magazines and newspapers.

3.2 GeicoTaikisha (Italy)

Company profile
Geico is the second world player in the design and manufacturing of automated turnkey vehicle painting plants with headquarters in Cinisello Balsamo, in the province of Milan (Italy). Geico's history spans 50 years. Founded by G. Neri and G. Mandelli, since its beginning the company has developed important partnerships

with foreign international industry giants (Drysys Carrier and Haden). In the 1970s, the oil crisis and the tense political climate upset the balance: Haden Drysys sold its shares to Gecofin SpA, a newCo set up in 1976 through a management buyout by G. Neri. In the meantime Geico's group subsidiaries were expanding: Arabnia Ali Reza, son-in-law of G. Neri, managed the Nigerian branch and was later appointed to manage an Italian company of the group specialised in manufacturing car painting systems. When the founder, G. Neri, died in 1994 and Arabnia and his wife Laura took control of the company (Zattoni, 2016). Despite the economic downturn due to the 2009 economic crisis, Arabnia decided to stake everything on research and innovation. In 2011, an alliance was entered into with Taikisha, a Japanese large public company specialised in the construction of car painting systems. The partnership aimed at achieving a sustainable size and financial stability. Currently, Geico Spa and Taikisha Ltd count over 5,000 employees, have a joint presence in 28 countries and form a network of over 52 offices and 6 manufacturing units, with annual turnover of $1.8 billion (customers include car manufacturers such as Audi, BMW, Ford, GM, Honda, Hyundai, Mercedes, Mitsubishi and Nissan).

The fundamentals of the business model

Geico's mission is "to understand and pursue customer expectations with respect for people, the local community and the environment". The corporate philosophy is aimed to "establish a company that can perpetually grow and contribute to the society" (Geico Annual Report, 2015).

Geico is a company "made by people for people" that strongly believes in human relations, and people's well-being: "We believe in innovation and passion: our true edge. It is our people who inject fuel into our engines, who allow us to continuously improve our performance and who guide us towards our next stop - the Energy Independence Day: 16 June 2020 - to produce zero environmental impact painting systems and be completely energy self-sufficient". Geico believes in people and their well-being. "Only when rationality and creativity combine can unimaginable results be achieved. We believe in excellence and continuous improvement". Accordingly, Geico corporate strategies focus on human resources development and continuous innovation (Table 2). Today Geico is the most innovative centre in the world in its sector, with peaks of excellence that led the company to obtain several awards, including a prize for a study on the balance between emotional and analytical intelligence.

Table 2: *Pillars of Geico Business Model*

Business model pillars	Values
Respect for the past	Loyalty
Passion for the present	Transparency
Great confidence for the future	Consistency
Focus on the growth and development of individuals	Determination and Passion

Source: our elaboration from corporate website (2018) *www.taikisha-group.com.*

The aforementioned values are the soul of Geico, whose excellence rests on people, customers, employees, suppliers and partners, respecting their differences, encouraging honest, dignified and respectful behaviour and triggering their passions in order to create a healthy and challenging work environment.

The Leadership Model

Geico's board of directors comprises 7 members including Ali Reza Arabnia, the current Chairman and past Chief Executive Officer[iii]; the board of statutory auditors is made up of 5 member. The company adopts an organisational model in compliance with the Italian Law[iv].

Reza Arabnia (born in Theiran in 1955) started to lead the company when he was twenty-nine, after a brilliant education and professional background as CEO of large companies in several countries around the world. He joined the company at a critical time, marked by generational change and a backdrop of severe financial situations, both for the company and the automotive and engineering sector.

"At the helm of the company, I adopted both an analytical and emotional approach. The latter, not based on rational calculations, prevailed when I decided to buy back the family business, founded by my father-in-law, to ensure a professional future to the employees. People thought my choice was 'crazy'. I was in a difficult financial situation, but extremely happy. Just a few years earlier, after having managed the listing of a company on the American Stock Exchange, I was rich but also very sad because I knew that I had no autonomy' (A.R. Arabnia, January 27th, 2016).

In Geico, Arabnia founded an in-house school, a working group for innovation, and started intensive training activities. "I believe that every leader, every CEO will not forget that when success comes, his/her responsibility is towards the society and the community inside and outside the company" (A.R. Arabnia, April 23rd, 2017).

The inspiring principles and some resulting projects that characterise the leadership model triggered by Arabnia (Table 3).

Table 3: Arabnia's Principles and Geico's Projects

Laura's Garden of Thoughts	On occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, Gecofin inaugurated "Laura's Garden of Thoughts, 2,000 square metres of beauty and well-being devoted to the physical and mental well-being of its employees and collaborators. A meditation space, equipped with corporate gym, bistro area and cultural and entertainment area comprising an amphitheatre and a photo gallery make up the Zen garden. "Rationality follows a straight line. Creativity moves along unpredictable curves. Emotion consists of exploring and at the same time creating emotions". Laura's Garden of Thoughts is the soul of Geico and the physical place that Arabnia dedicated to his wife Laura and to his extended family: the employees.
The Pardis Innovation Centre	In 2013 the most important R&D centre in the car painting sector in the world was inaugurated.

The G. Neri Campus	"For us, growth is a value. Always, at every age and with every experience". The Campus has been created to develop ongoing training and knowledge sharing, balance among experience and technology, because "technological innovation can only be achieved through cultural innovation". The Campus consists in five rooms dedicated to the company's founder and reserved to enhance the culture and training of employees.
Training Fridays	"At Geico professionalism and culture merge into a harmonious balance. That's what Training Fridays are for". This project allows collaborators to take part in courses and explore areas that are only partly known or yet to be discovered, with a growth at both a business and personal level.
School and University training	"For us, every failure can and must be turned into an opportunity for growth, for oneself and for the company". For Geico, training starts with schools and universities, through conferences and lectures delivered by the Chairman. Students "get a taste" of Geico and can visit the company through open days. The educational curriculum expand in many ways, including the possibility of curricular or extra-curricular corporate dissertations and internships.
J-Next	"We believe in young people and in the passion that drives them. Even the best drivers need a good co-pilot in the passenger seat. That place could be yours!" This project aims to provide an opportunity for young people to gain direct employment with the company through dedicated integration paths and constructive coaching for different business areas.
New Gate-Bridge New Bridge	"New Gate-Bridge is a project created for young people who want to work but cannot find the way, involving companies available to give them a chance". "New Bridge is addressed to people over 55 years old, out of work and having difficulty in finding it. We support them with information; we introduce them to the businesses and pay their salaries for three months"(AR Arabnia, January 27th, 2016).

Source: our elaboration.

To the questions "What does it mean to do the good of the enterprise?" Ali Reza Arabnia's answers that: "There are no particular secrets, rather simple correct and honest behaviors towards others. The command of an ancient Persian religion inspired by Zoroaster was: 'think good, tell good and act good'. I believe that every leader must follow such principles. If I'm doing my role well, I'm doing well with my employees who do not have to bring home malaise and problems, rather they have to transfer positiveness. By contrast, if I create a Darwinian environment, putting one against each other, treating employees as subjects, this will hinder the possibility to give the best of themselves. The productivity of the company is a consequence of the climate that one breathes in the company. A cynical working environment, based on fear, paralyzes intelligence, enthusiasm and creativity. The quarterly growth obsession is the enemy of the company's good. Bad periods can

happen, even ugly years, but this must not touch the company spirit. I'm not saying that just because I'm the business owner. I had the same opinion when I served as a manager in other companies. Companies operating in the automotive sector often experience dark moments. You have to be psychologically prepared and the reaction must be both rational and spiritual. Geico slogan is 'living by resilience': We must convey the sense of difficulty, but also confidence and optimism to overcome it!" (AR. Arabnia, Geico President, I April 23rd, 2017).

As we acknowledged drawing from interviews, Arabnia frequently speaks of spirit, a shared sense of responsibility and values . The leader's values have been transmitted to his son, the current CEO: "Geico will be based on these values for as long as our family remains at the helm" (Zattoni, 2016).

3.3 OMV Petrom

Company profile

OMV Petrom is the largest oil and gas integrated group in South-eastern Europe, with activities in the segments of exploration, production, transportation and sale of fuels. Since 2006, OMV Petrom has undergone one of the most complex and successful transformation processes of state-owned companies in Romania into a competitive private company that is a major player in the European energy market. Following a responsible approach regarding restructuring, massive investment, efforts to boost competitiveness and sustainable development, OMV Petrom has developed into a leading company in terms of performance and corporate governance, which generates value for all stakeholders (OMV Petrom, 2011). OMV Petrom Group is organized into three segments of operational integrated activity: Upstream, Downstream Oil and Downstream Gas. Petrom is an important player on the Romanian natural gas market, with focus on providing them to industrial customers.

At the end of 2016, OMV Petrom had the following shareholders: 51.0%-OMV Aktiengesellschaft, 20.6%-the Romanian State (through the Ministry of Energy), 12.6% - Proprietatea S.A. fund, 15.8% shall be traded freely as shares in the Premium category of the Bucharest Stock Exchange (BVB) and as GDR in the Standard category on the main market of the London Stock Exchange (LSE). At the end of 2016, about 520 legal entities from Romania and abroad owned about 13.8% of the shares freely traded, while the remainder (2%) were owned by nearly 456,600 individuals (OMV Petrom, 2016).

Concerning social responsibility OMV Petrom is a pioneer in Romania. Since 2007, the company has integrated the principles of corporate responsibility in its business strategy and has allocated more than 40 mil. euros for the communities' development in Romania, focusing on environmental protection, education, health and local development. Since 2009, 'Andrei's Country' has become a platform for community involvement of OMV Petrom and best-known CSR program in Romania (OMV Petrom, 2017). In 2012, OMV Petrom has passed from CSR concept to sustainability concept and introduced the "resourcefulness" in its business strategy, a concept that encourages the organisation to profitable growth through responsible use of natural, human and financial resources. Year 2014 marks the eighth year of social and community involvement, during which OMV

Petrom developed community projects that targeted one million people. OMV Petrom received recognition from both the public and key leaders of opinion as the most involved company in Romania in social and environmental issues (OMV Petrom, 2017).

The fundamentals of the business model

OMV Petrom aims to deliver sustainable value creation and attractive shareholder returns. OMV Petrom strategy has three key pillars: 1) enhancing competitiveness in the existing portfolio; 2) developing growth options and 3) regional expansion.

OMV Petrom approach of sustainability is designed to establish mutually beneficial relationships between the company and its stakeholders. It brings together all responsibility commitments related to the management of environmental issues, new energy sources, education and development, health and safety, diversity, business ethics, human rights and relationships with community stakeholders, all combined in a unique and comprehensive strategy. OMV Petrom commitments are organized around three key areas (the three E – Fig.1): eco-efficiency - limiting environmental impact; eco-innovation - the adoption of alternative energy sources and opportunities to generate sustainable innovations; and education for development - encouraging skills that people need to succeed.

Figure 1: *Key Areas and Topics of OMV Petrom Social Responsibility Strategy*
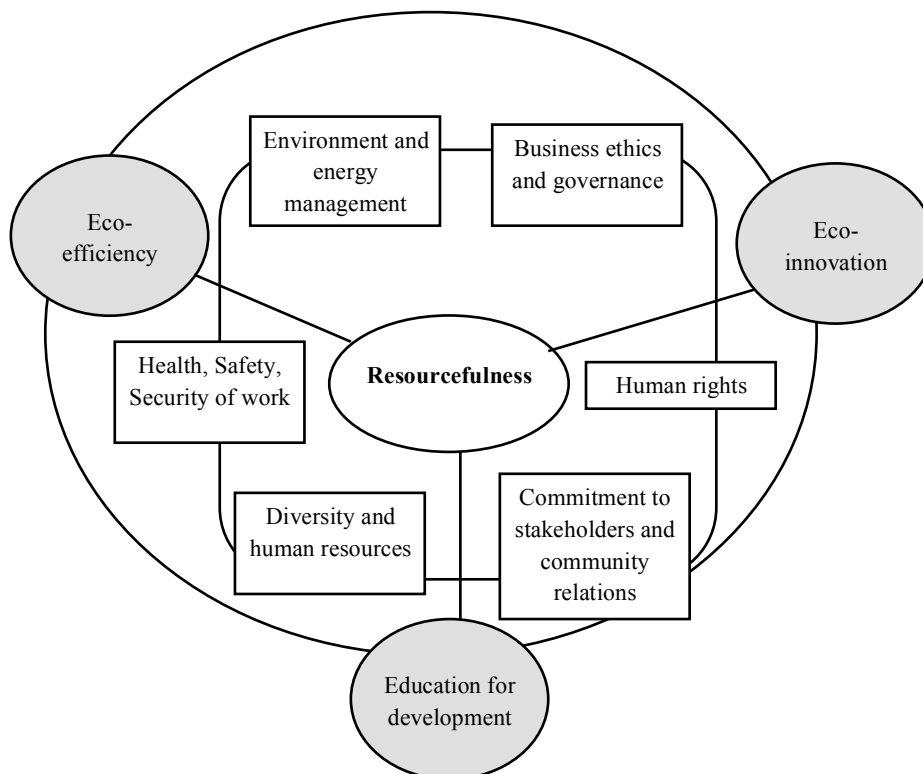
Source: Adapted from OMV Petrom corporate website (2017).

In 2014, OMV Petrom set up the Steering Committee for the concept of 'resourcefulness', an internal body with the objective to conduct, inform and align all functions and business units in all efforts related to sustainable development. This committee is held every quarter and is led by CEO of OMV Petrom (OMV Petrom, 2017).

OMV Petrom has identified the following key topics of social responsibility that influence performance and that are of great interest to stakeholders (OMV Petrom, 2017): environment and energy management; health, safety, safety of work; human rights; diversity and human resources; business ethics and governance; commitment to stakeholders and community relations. 'Resourcefulness' sustainability strategy brings together all the company's commitments on social responsibility, being the way OMV Petrom targets profitable growth in a sustainable and responsible way (OMV Petrom, 2018). The implementation of 'Resourcefulness' strategy is managed and run by a committee whose main task is to maximize performance in terms of sustainability. The Committee also acts as a body for alignment and approval for sustainability projects within the company, being the main body providing a general sustainability plan, which will be approved by the Director at the beginning of every year. Sustainability is integrated into development programs addressed to employees: in training classes for new employees, for technical skills or leadership skills. Also, to involve employees in 'Resourcefulness' OMV Petrom annually organizes volunteer programs.

The Leadership Model

OMV Petrom governance system provides the opportunity to address all economic, social and environmental issues that influence success and relationship with stakeholders. About the management system, since 2007, OMV Petrom has implemented a dualistic governance system, composed of a supervisory board, designated for a 4-year term by the general meeting of shareholders and a Directorate. The Directorate manages the company's daily operations, while the supervisory board monitors and controls the work of the Directorate. The Directorate shall comply with the decisions of the general meeting of shareholders, the decisions of the supervisory board, as well as its own decisions, while implementing the internal procedures in accordance with the legal provisions.

The OMV Petrom Directorate is composed of five members. CEO and Chairman of the Directorate is Mariana Gheorghe, the first female CEO in Romania to take over the reins of a company of such magnitude. She worked for various companies in Romania and for the Ministry of Finance. Between 1993 and 2006, she worked for the EBRD in London, where she held various positions on the geographic area of South-eastern Europe and the Caspian region, the last position held being Senior banker. After the privatisation of Petrom in 2004, on the EBRD's proposal, she became a member of the Management Board of Petrom until June 15, 2006, when she was appointed CEO of Petrom. As of April 17, 2007, she also holds the position of President of the Petrom Directorate, following the adoption, by Petrom, of a dualistic

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> *system of governance. Since acquiring the leadership of the largest company in Romania, Mariana Gheorghe has applied most of the privatisation plan proposed by the mother company, which meant restructuring the company, investments of nearly 4 billion euros, especially in the production of hydrocarbons, but also in refining and marketing, changing the operating system of gas stations, building new headquarters in which all employees of the company can work, but, above all, the change of Petrom into a renewed and, most of all, profitable company.*

OMV Petrom, managed by Mariana Gheorghe, was the first company to which the Romanian state is a shareholder and which, in 2013, exceeded the 1 billion euro net profit threshold.

In 2012 and 2013, she was named by Forbes Romania "the most influential woman in Romania" and is the first Romanian executive director and the only manager in Southeast Europe who has entered the ranking of the most powerful women in the international world of business, in 27th place, in the top league of Fortune magazine.

The leadership model of OMV Petrom is underlined by the principles stated, the actions undertaken and the projects carried out, as set out in the CEO Mariana Gheorghe's statement in the Sustainability report (Table 4).

Table 4: OMV Petrom Principles and Projects by CEO Mariana Gheorghe

Economic sustainability	"We are operating in a dynamic and volatile environment that, during recent years, has made us face major challenges that have tested our ability to maintain and improve our long-term sustainability. In 2016, the context in which we operated was characterised by the lowering of prices and refining margins that affected the entire oil and gas industry. In these circumstances, OMV Petrom demonstrated sufficiently stable results due to the cost savings and improved contribution of all activities"
Strategy	"We have initiated a process of revising our strategy, setting ambitious goals for the 2021 horizon. According to the updated strategy 2021+, we propose investing around 1 billion euros on average annually for 2017 – 2021".
Social Responsibility	"Over the last 10 years, we have addressed the needs of the community in which we operate, investing in 2016 only, more than 4 million euros, developing an effective mix of major social responsibility projects in the field of professional and entrepreneurial education, as well as infrastructure projects, voluntary programs and environmental initiatives".
"Țara lui Andrei" Project (Andrew's country)	"We continued to provide the community with reference projects, to train more than 5,000 people and to support more than 100 communities with a high degree of interest within the social responsibility platform of OMV Petrom 'Țara lui Andrei'".

Health, safety, security and environment	"In all operations we have established a strong and well-structured management system of HSSE, which opens the way to a better performance, ensuring safer working conditions for all our employees and contractors and, finally, reducing environmental impact by using the most efficient natural resources. OMV Petrom is concerned about the prevention of losses, appealing to best practices in the industry in drafting and managing projects, and reducing spills and oil spills through the implementation of maintenance programmes to improve pipeline integrity".
Creating value	"OMV Petrom is able to create value for shareholders and the community, even in difficult conditions, by implementing robust strategies leading to performance. We undertake to continue operating responsibly and integrating sustainability along the entire value chain".

Source: our elaboration.

Mariana Gheorghe should have led OMV by the Spring of 2019, after accepting a third term in 2015. Therefore, the decision of the supervisory board of OMV Petrom to replace her as Director-General of the company, who "gave up her mandate", came as a surprise. "After 12 extremely intense years at OMV Petrom, I think it is time to give up this function and that Christina Verchere and a new generation of leaders to continue building a strong company". The supervisory board of OMV Petrom S.A. appointed Christina Verchere as Chairman of the Directorate and CEO of OMV Petrom (Ziarul Financiar Enghlish, 2018). She accepted the nomination and will take up the position according to availability, at the latest from 21 May 2018. Between March and May 2018, Christina Verchere and Mariana Gheorghe will work closely for a smooth transition, to achieve company's ambitious goals and its growth potential.

The question is whether OMV Petrom, under the leadership of Christina Verchere, will try to use as many innovative technologies as possible, if she will bring her own staff and if she will change various aspects, including the recruitment and selection process of employees. In other words, it will be interesting to analyse the change of leadership style and the effects on the organisation's sustainability strategy.

4. Discussion

In both examined cases different traits that are typical of the servant and responsible/sustainable leadership models emerged (Maak & Pless, 2006; Greenleaf, 1977; Laub, 2004). Responsible leadership is in fact conceived as an ethical and socio-relational phenomenon that occurs in social interaction processes (Maak & Pless 2006) triggered by the leaders with internal and external stakeholders. Drawing from OMV Petrom and Geico-Taikisha's experiences, the following synthesis can be traced (Table 5).

Table 5: *Geico Taikisha and OMV Petrom Leadership Features*

Pillars of Leadership	Contents	A.R. Arabnia – Geico	Mariana Gheorghe – OMV Petrom
Valuing people	Leaders take interest in each/all employee as people not just as an asset. Leaders make decisions for the company with their employee's best interests in mind.	"When things started to go well, I decided to return what employees had lost. For me it was a moral debt. (A.R. Arabnia, President of Geico, January 27th, 2016). "Money was returned in payroll by unemployment insurance (Geico Project Manager). An award was also given, thus we received much more than what was taken" (Geico Communication Manager).	"For me, as CEO, human capital is one of the most important assets. It is true at both micro and macro levels for a nation." (Ziarul Financiar English, 2015).
Developing people	Leaders treat everyone/employees and collaborators with great respect and help them to feel that their work is greatly valued. Leaders favour opportunities for personal and professional growth and change within the organisation.	"In the midst of difficulties, we started working hard with the elders of the company, with whom I made a deal: in two years, they would have to find people within the company 'to take their place'. 18 months later, they found a pool of great young engineers. Together we decided to 'have fun'. I invited them to focus on the things they wanted to do because their experience is a precious asset to this company" (A.R. Arabnia, April 23rd, 2017).	"We admit that one of our main responsibilities is to stimulate sustainable economic growth in the communities in which we operate. In this respect, we are committed to providing people with the necessary skills and developing the local economy" (OMV Petrom, 2017).
Building community	Leaders built a sense of community within the organisation by always nurturing the growth of personal and community culture and socio-economic environment.	"Geico's project is the result of Cinisello's work, and this is the reason why one should choose to stay in Italy despite offers of subsidies to create plants abroad" (April 23rd, 2017).	"My role is to understand their needs – of the business community, employees, authorities, the media, the general public –and to answer them in the way we make decisions" (Ziarul Financiar English, 2017).

| Displaying authenticity | Leaders display authenticity in personal and professional choices. Leaders are generous people and great to work for. | "I had a Maserati that I sold straight away because I was ashamed to arrive at the office with it. It was a matter of respect during a time of crisis. Only four months before I was used to travelling the world by private jet; I then started travelling at a low cost. I was telling the truth to everyone, using complete transparency. We started to make sacrifices following a top-down logic But even in time of crisis, we spent one day a week doing research and development. In the most difficult period in the life of the company (2009), we invested more than ever in our entire history (A.R. Arabnia, April 23rd, 2017). | "I consider a few key ingredients contribute to the success in business, such as passion for what you do and the desire to do things differently" (Ziarul Financiar English, 2017). |
| Providing and sharing leadership | Leaders continue to innovate stimulate challenges for their employees. They lead by example and show an inspiring vision of the organisation's future. | "I brought up the boys who were in the company until they became leaders and we have become number one in our industry worldwide with the ability to understand the expectations of the end users of the product and to develop a product that did not exist" (A.R. Arabnia, January 27th, 2016). | "A leader combines behavior, vision and values to achieve a common goal and inspire those around him to achieve that goal" (Ziarul Financiar English, 2015). |

Source: our elaboration.

Both companies, although very different with regard to their business sector, the country (thus characterized by a different institutional framework), as well as the professional and cultural path of their leaders (and leader's gender), pursue sustainable-oriented business models marked by an authentic attention to human beings, the environment and the stakeholders' needs. Moreover, although one of them is the owner of the business, while the other is a simple employee, both treat the company, its people, values and ideals with the same faith and wish to fulfil needs of others according to high standard moral criteria (Brown & Treviño, 2006). They articulates a vision of the future that is shared with followers, intellectually stimulates them, and pays attention to individual differences among employees (Du et al., 2013). Responsible leadership is in fact conceived as an ethical and socio-

relational phenomenon that occurs in social interaction processes (Maak & Pless, 2006) triggered by the leaders with internal and external stakeholders.

Despite cultural and gender differences, the leaders show a proactive and learning behavior that facilitates the orientation towards CSR (Visser, 2011; Du et al., 2013) and sustainability (Osagie et al., 2017). In this regards, a number of authors have speculated on possible gender differences in the use of transformational leadership (Carless, 1998; Eagly & Johnson's, 1990) and empirical assessed that women used a more participative and inclusive style of leadership, whereas men were more likely to adopt a directive, controlling style. In addition, a substantial amount of empirical research (Houseet al., 1997 and 2004) pointed out culturally contingent aspects of leadership (i.e., to what extent leadership styles vary in accordance with culturally specific values and expectations, tied to cultural forces in the countries /regions in which the leaders function) and demonstrated that societal and cultural values and practices affect what leaders do. In particular, claiming for a better understanding of cultural influences on leadership and organisational practices, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE) - aimed at inquiring behaviors that contribute or impede effective leadership - identified nine dimensions of cultures that differentiate societies and organisations (Hofstede, 1980) and six global leadership dimensions of culturally endorsed implicit theories of leadership. Among the relevant results of this broad study the hypothesis that value-based leadership is universally endorsed was supported: team-oriented leadership was strongly correlated with charismatic and value-based leadership, as well as humane and participative leadership dimensions. Similarly, the results of our analysis point out that notwithstanding cultural and gender differences, the leaders behaviors do not differ in orienting them towards a servant and ethical-driven style that drives CSR and sustainability-based strategy and manifests in a responsible and sustainable leadership.

5. Emerging Issues

What animates organisations driving them to achieve a sustainable development through a "good management" is the leadership style which lies on: a "passion" for the good of company – stronger than the attachment to one's self and personal interests – ; an inexhaustible desire that people flourish; and a sincere wish to develop the company in harmony with that of all its interlocutors and its surrounding territory (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1995; Solomon, 1992). Organisations perceived as servant-led exhibited higher levels of both leader trust and organisational trust than those perceived as non-servant-led (Errol & Winston, 2005).

Servant and responsible/sustainable-led leaders, being ethically anchored, enhance employees' enthusiasm and creativity, propagate inside and outside the company and generate an attitude of willingness to take care of the social, ethical and environmental aspects involved in the 'internal and external' life of the enterprise, such as the welfare of employees, a good working environment, the work-life balance and relationships with the territory (ISVI, 2017). Coherently, the leadership model is centered on moral and action competencies which manifests in the

attention to people and their human and professional growth, enhancing trust, justice, inducing to find out courage and strength to overcome the difficulties, positively face challenges, promote change and manages successes (Kaptein, 2009; Lloyd & Mey, 2010; Blok et al, 2015). As a consequence, it drives the company's growth across all dimensions (economic, financial, competitive, social, environmental and ethical), preserving the dangers of a short view orientation (Huang, 2013; McNeff, & Irving, 2017).

The empirical analysis allows us to concretely acknowledge leaders' engagement in corporate sustainable behavior (action competence) since they are personally involved in their perfection of the good life (Jensen & Schnack, 2006) at the individual and organisational and system level. This presupposes the competence to challenge established ways of working, explore new and more sustainable ways of living and working, deal with resistance in the application of virtues according to practical wisdom (Blok et al., 2015). Accordingly, we can provide a positive reply to the research questions posited in our study assuming that corporate sustainable behavior and business model orientation towards sustainability originates from the sustainable and responsible-led leadership model.

We are aware that the present work is affected by limitations, some of which can be overcome in future research steps. First, the number of cases is limited to two companies and should be improved. Secondly, we partially used secondary data to grasp information, because it was not always possible to directly access primary sources which are necessary to deepen the analysis. Finally, the qualitative approach does not give the opportunity to generalize results and could be improved through a qualitative comparative analysis approach to generate modest generalization (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009; Gerring, 2006). Despite its limitations, the work has both scientific and managerial implications. On the one hand it contributes to understanding the relationship between leadership and CSR, which is still little explored. Because of the limited evidence of this positive correlation within the literature on CSR, it would be helpful to develop additional qualitative studies in a variety of organisational sectors (Stubbs & Cockin, 2008; Boons & Lüdeke-Freund 2013; Schaltegger et al., 2012) and in different cultural and gender settings, in order to enhance both CSR and cross-cultural and gender leadership theory and research (Dickson et al., 2003). On the other hand, results can be useful both for education and practice because the study points out a set of values and leaders' behaviours that can be developed in different countries. As such, the research project helps to increase knowledge and open new trajectories for a fruitful convergence of theory and practice.

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[i] Virtues are characteristics of a person that enable him/ her to lead a good life, and include intellectual virtues (i.e., practical wisdom) and moral virtues (i.e. courage, friendship and modesty; see: Solomon, 1992).

[ii] www.isvi.org

[iii] As it had been planned, Arabnia's son became CEO of Geico in 2017, with a management team whose values are aligned with the values share by the entrepreneurial family.

[iv] Legislative Decree no. 231 of June 8, 2001 on corporate liability; Legislative Decree no. 61 of April 11, 2002 on the reform of corporate offences and security.