

# Corporate Responsibility and/or Liability in the Globalization Context

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## **Abstract**

*We live in times where we have to learn to come together, to join, although the geographical distances between us are great. We owe it (or is due to) the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization affects our lives and, at the same time, challenges us.*

*The process of globalization gives a new challenge for the humanity by the emergence of transnational corporations. How do we handle them? Can they operate on the basis of management only in their own interests or do they have social obligations? But can they operate on the basis of a minimum legal (juridical) code or does it require a deliberate assumption of moral responsibility?*

*It seems that by looking at the specialty literature, we can see that, in the context of globalization, companies should adopt, in addition to those written rules, a minimum standard of non-specific rules (morals) specific to a community at a time. Thus, going beyond legal responsibility to corporate moral responsibility balances the relationship between business and society. Moreover, it helps the business to withstand the market and at the same time to participate in the common good.*

*Research on this topic has resulted in the development of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. The concept could help corporations to develop a management that can meet both the requirements of the economy and the demands of society. The assertion can be argued by the existence of constituent components of the concept of economic, social and ethical domains.*

**Keywords:** *responsibility, liability, globalization, corporate social responsibility (CSR).*

*Introduction*

Over the past 50 years, executives have been faced with a fact, which is *responsibility*, towards their own company, but also towards the society that it activates. This problem, of responsibility, became increasingly important and difficult to address in the context of globalization, because once a decision is meant to activate transnational, companies face multiple legislative, cultural plurality, etc. In this context, a new approach to social and legal accountability is needed. And even if the idea was “that the corporation’s sole responsibility was to provide a maximum financial return to shareholders,”<sup>1</sup> in the early 1970’s “these new governmental bodies established that national public policy now officially recognized the environment, employees, and consumers to be significant and legitimate stakeholders of business”.<sup>2</sup> This fact implies that legal liability and profit-making are no longer the solely corporate goals. Involvement of objectives that go beyond the sphere of economic policies (such as respecting the environment, respecting the employees and the communities in which companies operate) is desirable, and today it is an attempted possibility to reorganize the internal structure of a company based on moral responsibility towards every element that that it comes into contact with – even if it is human or non-human.

This paper proposes a theoretical statement on corporations that are carrying out their transnational activity and they have to assume the respect of both written (legal) and non-written (moral) laws. The need for emphasis on responsibility is given by the process of globalization. Because, through this phenomenon, corporations have the opportunity to work in other societies where, without a minimum moral, chaos would be created and human fundamental rights would be violated (as an appropriate example: the abuses on poor populations through overexploitation, both as a human resource and as a material resource).

Thus, the first part of the paper highlights the fact that in a globalized market economy we are inevitable confronted with the emergence of transnational corporations. In the era of globalization, the existence of these corporations changes the way nations and global order are governed. Changing global governance is manifested through a decentralization of political authorities and

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<sup>1</sup> Archie B. Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders,” *Business Horizons* (July/ August, 1991), 39-48.

<sup>2</sup> Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility.”

power in favor of non-political and non-state actors such as intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and even transnational corporations.<sup>3</sup>

The second part of the paper discusses the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. The importance of the concept in this paper is given by the utility it could have for corporations that operate in a globalized economy. For example, the concept can support the development of a corporate governance strategy, a strategy needed in the context of globalization. Because a governance strategy so developed takes into account both the satisfaction of the economic needs and the expectations that society has from a corporation, because “the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be marked by the necessity for the state and non-state actors, as well as the global actors, to ensure peace, security, prosperity for their nations, for their companies, and for a general state of stability at international level.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, at least at the theoretical level, the corporation in the era of globalization assumes (or at least should) both written and unwritten laws of the community in which it operates.

The present paper is one of statement and information. With informative purpose, it aims to help raise corporate awareness of responsibility and responsibility towards society and the environment. For a proper understanding of terminology, in this paper the term “Liability” is used in the sense “corporate liability<sup>5</sup> for its criminal actions or employee failure,”<sup>6</sup> while “responsibility” has the meaning of moral responsibility of companies.

### *The corporation in the context of globalization*

Globalization is an actual phenomenon that infuses society as a whole at cultural, economic and political levels. But its effects are most powerful at the economic level. As Frankel argues, “there is no question that economic globalization is one of the most powerful forces to have shaped the post-war

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<sup>3</sup> B. Maragia, “Almost there: Another way of conceptualizing and explaining NGOs’ quest for legitimacy in global politics,” *Non-State Actors and International Law* 2 (2002): 301-332.

<sup>4</sup> M d lina Virginia Antonescu, “From the International Law of Peace to the Global Law of Peace. The Global Order of Peace,” *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Economics & Administrative Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2018), 49, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://lumenpublishing.com/journals/index.php/lumeneas/article/view/425>.

<sup>5</sup> Legal Liability - The duty or obligation to satisfactorily fulfill a task, which receives a penalty accordingly for failure.

<sup>6</sup> corporate liability. BusinessDictionary.com. WebFinance, Inc., accessed October 26, 2017, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/corporate-liability.html>.

world.”<sup>7</sup> The process of globalization has influenced the economy “through two channels: direct and indirect foreign investment and portfolios flow”.<sup>8</sup> For the most part, technology transfer and foreign investment have been made via multinational corporations.

Thus, in the context of globalization, we assist at a spectacular development of such companies. As Saheed argues, “the interconnection of sovereign nations through trade and capital flows, harmonization of economic rules, creation of structural support and facilitate interconnection and the development of a global market, which allow flow to foreign investment, both direct and portfolio”<sup>9</sup> represent key elements determined by globalization, that encourages the presence of huge corporations with subsidiaries in different countries.

We could say that the existence of such companies is beneficial, by infusion of financial capital, new jobs, lower prices etc., but at the same time it can also represent a disadvantage by fierce competition with domestic firms, the exploitation of human capital in poorly developed countries, exploiting the natural resources of a country for the company’s profit etc. Thus, corporate governance “must meet a minimum legal standard regardless of the location where it operates, which requires the need for uniformity and consistency.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, “in an increasingly globalized, interconnected and competitive world, how environmental, social and corporate governance issues are managed is proof of the quality of corporate governance that is so necessary to successfully compete.”<sup>11</sup>

This transnational economy, due to the globalization process, changes “the company’s expectations of a company, which has led to a diversification and increase of its responsibilities towards all stakeholders (investors, creditors, management, employees, customers, communities local, society as a whole, etc.)”<sup>12</sup> That is, “globalization is currently causing a radical change in the corporate landscape because, in order to achieve business success, companies need

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<sup>7</sup> Jeffery Frankel, “What do economists mean by globalization?” Paper presented at *Academic Consultants Meeting*, Washington, 2006, accessed October 26, 2017, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/jfrankel/FRB-Globalzn&InflOct4.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Mirela-Oana Pinte, *Guvernanța corporativă și performanța firmei în contextul globalizării* (Bucharest: ASE, 2015), 8, accessed October 26, 2017, <http://excelenta.ase.ro/Media/Default/Page/pinteamo.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Zakaree S. Saheed, “Impact of Globalization on corporate governance in developing economies: A theoretical approach,” *Journal of Business and Management* 2, no. 1 (2013), 1-10.

<sup>10</sup> Pinte, *Guvernanța corporativă*, 10

<sup>11</sup> UN Global Compact Report (2004), accessed October 26, 2017, [www.unglobalcompact.org/library](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/library).

<sup>12</sup> Pinte, *Guvernanța corporativă*, 12.

to be aware that the social and environmental effects of their activities affects the interested parties and, in particular, stakeholders”.<sup>13</sup>

We see, therefore, how the process of globalization requires an amplification of corporate responsibilities. Because, in addition to complying with a minimum legal standard, corporations are also responsible for the negative effects of their undertaken activities have on society and the environment. The social commitment of companies is increasingly demanded by the company, even in areas that are not directly related to the business or the efficiency of the supply of goods.<sup>14</sup> These developments are reinforced by the globalization process that erodes, primarily at national level, government institutions and processes.<sup>15</sup>

The weakening of government institutions and processes at national level is due to the “encouraged risk taking in number of the failed companies, especially where many of them have lacked board oversight and robust risk management, while the remuneration of boards and senior management remains a thorn issue”<sup>16</sup> which represents a deficiency in corporations arrangement.

As is also stated in the paper “Towards a Political Concept of Corporate Responsibility,” the process of economic globalization has provoked various movements of society materialized in the emergence of nongovernmental organizations. And, in this position

*The challenge is to find new forms of democratic will-formation, especially under the conditions of globalization that do not only domesticate economic pressures by democratic control, but furthermore go beyond traditional nation state governance and integrate the new role of business as a legitimate part of these institutions and processes.*<sup>17</sup>

Non-governmental organizations can be seen also as a self-defense response to the pressure waves of multinationals. These reactions force multinationals, to a

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Suresh P. Sethi, “Introduction to AMR’s special topic forum on shifting paradigms: Societal expectations and corporate performance,” *Academy of Management Review* 20 (1995): 18-21; Willis Harman and Maya Porter, eds., *The new business of business: Sharing responsibility for a positive global future* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Inge Kaul, P. Conceição, K. Le Goulven and R. U. Mendoza, eds., *Providing global public goods. Managing globalization* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003); A. G. Scherer and G. Palazzo, “Towards a political conception of corporate responsibility – business and society seen from a habermasian perspective” (Zurich/Lausanne, 2004), accessed September 29, 2017, <http://amr.aom.org/content/32/4/1096.full.pdf+html> .

<sup>16</sup> Saheed, “Impact of Globalization.”

<sup>17</sup> Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception”.

certain extent, to take greater responsibility for their own actions, “exerting direct pressure on corporations.”<sup>18</sup>

These aspects lead to significant changes at the management level. Changing global governance is manifested through a decentralization of political authorities and power in favor of non-political and non-state actors such as NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, and even transnational corporations.<sup>19</sup> Herein we can appreciate that the multinationals, due to their major importance in society (economic development but also influence over the political decision maker), gain a greater responsibility going beyond the legal obligation (liability). Moreover, it was argued that multinationals should align their activities with the local community’s “wider values”<sup>20</sup> (or “act consistently with the moral foundations of that society”<sup>21</sup>) and that their responsibilities derive from social expectations “in at a time”.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, corporations carrying out transnational activities should respect the “basic rules of society”<sup>23</sup> in which they operate. However, corporate responsibility is not a new subject; the existence and scope of this issue have been important issues for decades.<sup>24</sup>

### *Corporate Social Responsibility*

Discussions on the responsibility of large corporations begin with the development of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. This concept has its roots in speeches that refer to social responsibility. Thus, we notice that the definition of corporate social responsibility is approaching on what McGuire (“another major contributor of the definition of social responsibility during the

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<sup>18</sup> J. Gabrielle Klein, N. Craig Smith and Andrew John, “Why we boycott: Consumer motivations for boycott participation,” *Journal of Marketing* 68 (2004): 92-109, accessed October 30, 2017, <http://facultyresearch.london.edu/docs/03-702.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Maragia, “Almost there.”

<sup>20</sup> Diane L. Swanson, “Toward an integrative theory of business and society: A research strategy for corporate social performance,” *Academy of Management Review* 24 (1999): 506-521.

<sup>21</sup> E. M. Epstein and D. Votaw, eds., *Rationality, legitimacy, and responsibility* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Goodyear Publishing Co, University of California, Berkeley. School of Business Administration, 1978), 218.

<sup>22</sup> Archie B. Carroll, “A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate social performance,” *Academy of Management Review* 4 (1979): 497-505.

<sup>23</sup> Milton Friedman, “The social responsibility of business is to increase its profit,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 13 September, 1970, reprint in *Ethical issues in business: A philosophical approach*, eds. T. Donaldson and P. H. Werhane (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall), 217-223.

<sup>24</sup> W. Bill Donham, “The social significance of business,” *Harvard Business Review* 4, no. 4 (1927): 406-419; Raymond C. Baumhart, “How ethical are businessmen?” *Harvard Business Review* 39, no. 4 (1961): 6-31; David A. Whetten, Gordon Rands and Paul Godfrey, “What are the responsibilities of business to society?” in *Handbook of strategy and management*, eds. A. Pettigrew, H. Thomas and R. Whittington (London: Sage, 2002), 373-408.

1960's"<sup>25</sup>) in *Business and Society* in 1963 defined it, as “the idea of social responsibilities supposes that the corporation has not only economic and legal obligations but also certain responsibilities to society which extended beyond these obligations”<sup>26</sup> that is “somewhat more precise than previous ones in that he defined it as extending beyond economic and legal obligations.”<sup>27</sup> Also, the fact that Corporate Social Responsibility has its roots in the concept of Social Responsibility can also be seen in the “definition of Davis and Blomstrom: social responsibility refers to a person’s obligation to consider the effects of his decisions and actions on the whole social system. Business people apply social responsibility when considering the needs and interests of those who may be affected by their business. By doing so they look beyond the economic and technical limits of their firm”,<sup>28</sup> thus implying ethics, if not even morality, in the managerial process. Even in business policy, which deals in particular with economic issues, the ethical responsibilities of companies have been recognized,<sup>29</sup> although these obligations are marginalized in the strategy *manuals* that are used at large-scale today.<sup>30</sup>

Even if evidence of social responsibility for business man could be also found in Bowen’s<sup>31</sup> writings, it is argued that only in the 2000’s the situation becomes clear, with explicit aims and with a changed organizational culture and based on an active management about the general and social good.<sup>32</sup> The ambiguity of the concept also results from what Votaw wrote about 50 years ago:

*The term [social responsibility] is a brilliant one; it means something, but not always the same thing, to everybody. To some it conveys the idea of legal responsibility or liability; to others, it means socially responsible behavior in an ethical sense; to still others, the meaning transmitted is that of “responsible for,” in a causal mode; many simply equate it with a charitable contribution; some take it to mean socially conscious; many of those who embrace it most fervently see it as a mere synonym for*

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<sup>25</sup> Archie B. Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct,” *Business & Society* 38, no. 3 (Sage Publications, 1999): 268-295.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> E. P. Learned, C. R. Christensen, K. R. Andrews and W. D. Guth, *Business policy: Text and cases* (Homewood, Ill.: R. D. Irwin, 1965); Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

<sup>30</sup> D. R. Gilbert, “Corporate strategy and ethics, as corporate strategy comes of age,” in *The Blackwell handbook of strategic management*, eds. M. A. Hitt, E. Freeman and J. S. Harrison (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001), 564-582; Scott J. Reynolds, “A single framework for strategic and ethical behavior in the international context,” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 13 (2003): 361-379; Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

<sup>31</sup> See Howard R. Bowen, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Antonia Gawel, *Corporate Social Responsibility: Standards and Objectives Driving Corporate Initiatives* (Ottawa: Pollution Probe, 2006), 10.

«legitimacy,» in the context of “belonging” or being proper or valid; a few see it as a sort of fiduciary duty imposing higher standards of behavior on businessmen than on citizens at large.<sup>33</sup>

Even today, the concept does not enjoy a well-defined framework, yet. Although “over the years, many have tried to define it, some definitions have remained vague and ambiguous.”<sup>34</sup> But it is becoming increasingly clear that the main objective of the concept is to establish an appropriate relationship between business and society in such a way that fundamental human rights are not violated, nor do they go beyond philanthropy. The term “philanthropy is used as a form of public relations or advertising, promoting a company’s image or brand through cause-related marketing or other high-profile sponsorships”.<sup>35</sup> Because, let’s not forget that the main purpose of businesses is to obtain material goods (both for the company and for the citizens). However, as Kant states, “man and generally any rational being exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will, but in all his actions, whether they concern himself or other rational beings, must be always regarded at the same time as an end.”<sup>36</sup> As such, obtaining material goods (whether for companies or for citizens) must be in accordance with respect for man, and even for all living beings. And how else would it be possible if not by adopting a minimum morale in the business environment.

We could say that the involvement of ethics in the business environment could balance the aforementioned relationship (business-society environment). In this respect, we see that ethics is an important component in the structure of the CSR concept. This is quite well-highlighted in Carroll’s writings.

Archie B. Carroll is one of the most reputable scientists in the field of CSR. His efforts culminated with the exposition of a definition and graphic representation of the components of the definition, represented in a “CSR Pyramid”.<sup>37</sup> Since 1991, Carroll says: “Corporate Social Responsibility companies

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<sup>33</sup> Dow Votaw, “Genius Became Rare: A Comment on the Doctrine of Social Responsibility,” *California Management Review* 15, no. 2 (1972): 25-31 quoted in Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility,” 268.

<sup>34</sup> Joel Makower, *Beyond the Bottom Line* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> M. E. Porter and M. R. Kramer, “The Competitive Advantage of Corporate Philanthropy,” *Harvard Business Review* (December 2002), <https://hbr.org/2002/12/the-competitive-advantage-of-corporate-philanthropy>.

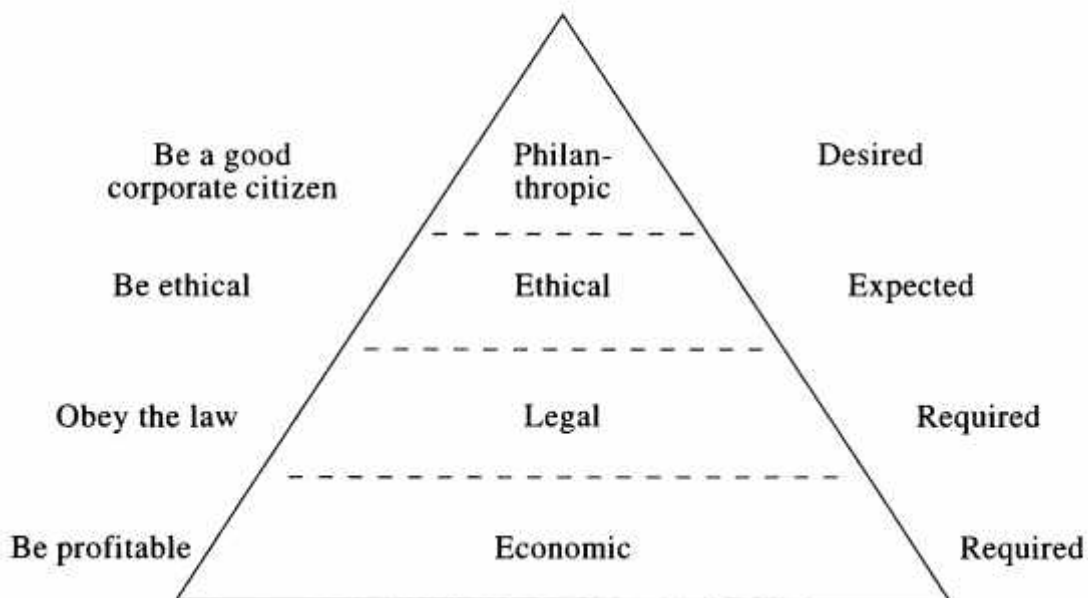
<sup>36</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Fundamental principles of the Metaphysics of Morals,” in *Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics* (London: Kongmans, Green and Co., 1889), 46.

<sup>37</sup> Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility.”



should strive to make profit, respect the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen,”<sup>38</sup> thus structuring the definition into four constituent elements (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**Carroll's (1991) Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility**



Source: Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility”.

Although these four categories pyramidal model established by Carroll have been used by many theories<sup>39</sup> and empirical research proving a high degree of usefulness, it has not been uncriticized. As consequences, Carroll himself returns to his own study and adds to the specialty literature another work, elaborated in collaboration with Schwartz,<sup>40</sup> designed to bring about improvements in the field. The main criticisms of the CSR pyramidal model are: “The pyramid suggests a

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

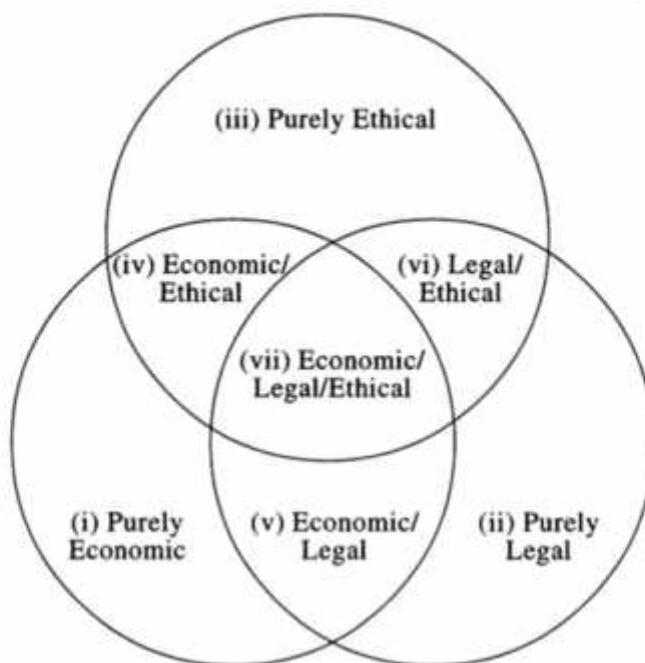
<sup>39</sup> The four categories are used by: Steven L. Wartick and Philip L. Cochran, “The Evolution of the Corporate Social Performance Model,” *Academy of Management Review* 10, no. 4 (1985): 758-769; Diane L. Swanson, “Addressing a Theoretical Problem by Reorienting the Corporate Social Performance Model,” *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 1 (1995): 43-64; Diane L. Swanson, “Toward an Integrative Theory of Business and Society: A Research Strategy for Corporate Social Performance,” *Academy of Management review* 24, no. 3 (1999): 506-521.

<sup>40</sup> Mark S. Schwartz and Archie B. Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility: A Three-Domain Approach,” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (2003): 503-530.

hierarchy of the domains”, respectively, that “a pyramidal framework cannot fully cover the *overlapping* of the domains”.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, from the pyramidal model of CSR, they have switched to another, namely, the Three-Dimensional Model of CSR. If the first involves the pyramidal exposure of four areas (economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic), the CSR three-tier model uses a Venn chart to expose the domains.

**Figure 2:**  
**The Three-Domain Model of Corporate Social Responsibility**



*Source:* Schwartz and Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility”

The three-pronged CSR model eliminates the philanthropic field from its structure, stating that this category “can be included in the area of ethical and / or economic responsibility, reflecting the possible different motivations of such activities”<sup>42</sup> (philanthropic activities may be motivated to improve the image of the firm and thus to attract more profits, or philanthropic activities may have purely ethical motivation).

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<sup>41</sup> Schwartz and Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem.*

We can think that the two CSR models can be a basis for developing and adopting a strategy for the development of transnational companies, strategies that meet both economic and social expectations. Moreover, these strategies come with responsibilities, given that “responsibilities are linked to six major social issues: consumerism, environment, discrimination, product safety, occupational safety, and shareholders,”<sup>43</sup> and we can conclude that in the context of globalization, corporations tend to assume greater responsibility.

*The existence of the RCS concept as proof of the accountability and responsibility of corporations in the context of globalization*

Amplifying corporate responsibility is due to “no convincing arguments for submitting economic activities to higher ethical standards than those of the political system itself”<sup>44</sup> which also implies the social activities. And, in the globalization era, the ability of the national regulatory state in the economic activities is decreasing,<sup>45</sup> while corporations have new roles.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, “business firms are not so much private institutions that operate under the rules of a particular legal system... multinational corporations today are able to choose among various legal systems, applying economic criteria to their choice of which set of labor, social, and environmental regulations under which they will operate”.<sup>47</sup> This option is justified economically but not socially. Then, “what about those cases of human rights violations, environmental pollution, or other ethically questionable activities that are not covered by local laws and/or not enforced by state agencies?”<sup>48</sup> In such a reality, a corporation that operates transnationally should adhere to normative standards that go beyond legal.

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<sup>43</sup> Vincent Lefebvre and Miruna Radu Lefebvre, “Integrating Corporate Social Responsibility at the Start-up level: Constraint or Catalyst for Opportunity Identification?” *International Business Research* 5, no. 7 (2012), <https://hal-audencia.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00836856/document>.

<sup>44</sup> Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

<sup>45</sup> Susan Strange, *The retreat of the state: The diffusion of power in the world economy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jürgen Habermas, *The postnational constellation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> Andreas G. Scherer and Mark Smid, “The downward spiral and the U.S. Model Principles. Why MNEs should take responsibility for the improvement of world-wide social and environmental conditions,” *Management International Review* 40 (2000): 351-371; I. Marion Young, “Responsibility and global labor justice,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12 (2004): 365-388.

<sup>47</sup> Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

Thus, we can say that CSR is helping companies to adapt a strategy that strikes a balance between the economy and society, or a strategy that will allow them to take on more responsibility.

It is also obvious (at least if we look at the constituent elements of the CSR concept - economic, legal and ethical) that, in the age of globalization, corporations, theoretically, are increasingly responsible for their own actions. However, if the reason for such a responsibility is of an economic nature (for a better image or to withstand market competition) or purely moral assumption (companies want to participate in the common good) is not clear enough and probably not even we will succeed to establish it.

We can, however, accept that today the interest of corporations has exceeded the boundaries of profit, and that it seeks to adapt to the economic environment but also to existing resources, to attaining legal and political objectives, but at the same time also to social integration on the issues of culture and moral values.

Respecting the moral values of a society, at a certain time, is a great challenge. The challenge is given by the attempt to provide a “universal, disinterested and impartial ethical view,”<sup>49</sup> “a view that is morally binding even though our world is characterized by a pluralism of cultures, rules, and values”.<sup>50</sup>

Today, business ethics is based on a philosophical basis of considerable value.

*In search of ethical principles, philosophers have considered virtues that should guide actions (Aristotle), have attempted to identify universal duties as the preconditions of social life (Kant), have reasoned about the consequences of moral behavior (Bentham, Mill), and have discussed the conditions of a social contract to which all members of society might subscribe (Hobbes, Rawls, Rousseau).*<sup>51</sup>

And yet it is not possible to establish universally valid business conduct rules.

All these concerns about the role of corporations in societies show us that, in the era of globalization, legal liability is not sufficient (given the conditions of legislative, cultural, etc.) and that the passage of the threshold to moral responsibility is desirable and even attempted (regardless of motivation); proving the preoccupations regarding the research of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility.

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<sup>49</sup> Thomas Donaldson and Thomas W. Dunfee, *Ties that bind: A social contracts approach to business ethics* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>50</sup> Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

*Conclusions*

Contemporary world is facing a phenomenon called globalization that influences our lives and forces us to manage it. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, as a measure for managing globalization, is developed to balance the relationship between the economy and society. We can see that the globalization process gives the economy new responsibilities. In the era of globalization, businesses have not only economic obligations (profit and supply of material goods), and cannot be limited to legal liability. Therefore it is a need for moral responsibility in a world characterized by plurality but still a world conveying together.

Today, the obligation to respond to the law goes beyond the responsibility for the good of the other. The evidence of this state of affairs is the existence of concerns about Corporate Social Responsibility. Through its constitutive components (economic, legal, ethical) it shows that a corporation that works transnationally has the obligation to respond to the law, but also to society for its actions.

We could, therefore, argue that, in the context of globalization of corporations, it assumes, at least theoretically, compliance with legislation (liability) but also respecting a minimum moral code (accountability).

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