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**RESILIENT BUSINESS FOR  
RESILIENT COMMUNITIES**

The Case of the Barilla Group  
in the Italian City of Parma

The Center for Advanced Sustainable Management (CASM) at the CBS International Business School is a unique research institution in Germany in which Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainable Management are further developed from a business perspective.

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**WHITE PAPER RESILIENT BUSINESS FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES 2021**

CBS International Business School, Center for Advanced Sustainable Management (CASM)

Editors: Silvia Damme, Marina Schmitz

We would like to mention a special thank you to all colleagues supporting this report through their input of data and information.

Layout and Design: Celine Bullert

Images: [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com) / Barilla Group [www.barillagroup.com](http://www.barillagroup.com)

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# INTRODUCTION

Current weather and climate trends are presenting a grim outlook ahead of us. An increasing number of communities are facing dramatic events and changing environmental settings. This new global challenge has probably contributed to the fortunes of the resilience paradigm, which has now spread to a countless number of scientific areas. However, a clear trend in resilience to climate change and weather extremes is the growing focus on communities as the real protagonists of this process. Nonetheless, a very limited and partial view of the community is often used, as the term translates to government, civil society, and individuals. But why are business actors always left out of the picture? Is business resilience not a real matter? Why are business and community resilience treated separately? If system thinking is a key to fight climate change and navigating through extreme weather events, then we must include all stakeholders in the picture.

Therefore, this short paper explores the relationship between business actors and community resilience, starting from the assumption that businesses are part of the community, too. To do so, we will take a brief look at the limited research existing on this issue and then we will analyse an interesting case study from Italy regarding the collaboration between the Barilla Group and Civil Protection organisations in the Italian city of Parma.



# FROM STEEL TO DISASTER

## *has resilience become an empty buzzword?*

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Resilience is widely used in the public discourse and in many academic fields, to the extent that some authors referred to it as a buzzword. This widespread usage has produced a plethora of different meanings, which fuels some criticism as the word seems to mean everything and nothing at the same time.<sup>1</sup> Although a concept should not be discounted just because of its flexibility, surely, we ought to agree upon a definition before we dig deep into understanding if, why, and how community resilience matters for business.

The term “resilience” in the academic literature was first used in the engineering field towards the end of the nineteenth century, where it originally referred to the strength and ductility of steel beams.<sup>2</sup> Then, it found good fortune in the psychology realm in the middle of the twentieth century. However, surprisingly enough, the first record of the word being used in connection with disasters and emergencies dates back to 1854, when Americans had observed the resourcefulness of Tokyo inhabitants faced with the effects of a tremendous earthquake. Such use was then revived by the seminal work of Crawford Stanley Holling, which arguably paved the way to the current success that the word is enjoying. In 1973, he applied the idea of resilience to socio-ecological systems and defined it as

„the ability of these systems to absorb changes of state variables, driving variables, and parameters, and still persist.“<sup>3</sup>

This definition bears key aspects that influenced the discourse for years. First of all, resilience is conceived as an ability of the system, that is, something that can be learned and improved over time. Second, it does not regard resilience as a synonym of stability, but points rather towards adaptability, underscoring a dynamic rather than static process. Finally, it departs from the bouncing-back paradigm in favour of the idea that a resilient system bounces forward to a new state to accommodate for altered circumstances and to maintain function.

Holling’s novel approach triggered a wide and growing academic debate in the social sciences. Less than ten years later the concept was applied to the ability of society to cope with climate change.<sup>4</sup> From then on, it became increasingly associated with how humans deal with extreme weather events. Such application is becoming ever more relevant given the rise of climate- and weather-related risks. Quoting the Global Risks Report 2020 by the World Economic Forum, «Climate-related issues dominated all of the top-five long-term risks in terms of likelihood» for the first time since the beginning of the survey.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the concept gained ground in the United Nations Frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).<sup>6</sup> The definition of disaster resilience stated in these agreements has now become by far the most recurrent in the literature and will be adopted in this paper, too. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) defines disaster resilience as:

„The ability of a system, community, or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.“<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Arjen Boin, Louise K. Comfort and Chris C. Demchak. (2010). *The rise of resilience. In Designing resilience: Preparing for extreme events.* Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> David E. Alexander. (2013). *Resilience and disaster risk reduction: an etymological journey. Natural Hazards & Earth System Sciences, 13(11).* 2707-2716.

<sup>3</sup> Crawford S. Holling. (1973). *Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems. The Future of Nature.* New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 252.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Timmerman. (1981). *Vulnerability, Resilience and the Collapse of Society. A Review of Models and Possible Climatic Applications, Vol. 1.* Toronto, Canada: Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Toronto.

<sup>5</sup> Emilio Granados Franco. (2020). *The Global Risks Report 2020.* Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> UNISDR (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction). (2005). *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.* Geneva, Switzerland: UNISDR; UNISDR. (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.* Geneva, Switzerland: UNISDR.

<sup>7</sup> UNISDR (2015) *Sendai Framework for...*, p. 9.

## FROM STEEL TO DISASTER

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According to some, the mainstreaming of the concept has come at a cost. The term has sometimes been over-generalised. Dynamism and diversity have given way to rhetoric. The concept is often exploited by competing environmental, developmental or socio-economic views, lacking a real common understanding and clear strategy to tackle socio-economic issues that undermine community resilience.<sup>8</sup> To clear the field from generalisation and reification, it might be useful to restart from what differentiates resilience from any other paradigm. Nowadays, resilience is a quality that can be valued in individuals, families, groups, institutions and organisations of any kind. Boon and his colleagues suggested the use of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory to assess how systemic features, structures, organisations, and policies influence resilience at the individual level.<sup>9</sup> This, in turn, led them to explore how individual resilience, interpersonal relationships, and social networks affect community resilience. They highlight the deep interconnection existing between micro- and macro-levels. They stress how community resilience is embedded in socio-economic systems, as it is the result of discreet individual efforts shaped and affected by the structures, networks, and dynamics of the system.<sup>10</sup> Overall, it is important to acknowledge that, on the one hand, resilience cannot be driven only by macro-level dimensions of the system (economic, institutional, infrastructural, etc.). On the other hand, if individuals, organisations, and discrete entities pursue their resilience, this will not necessarily translate to systemic community resilience. Individual and social resilience are essential, but they do need to be underpinned by economic, institutional, and coordination capacity.<sup>11</sup> Another sharp critique has been that the resilience paradigm shifts attention away from other crucial and structural issues such as poverty and inequalities.<sup>12</sup> Even though resilience, by definition, is not in contrast with other pressing socio-economic issues, it is accused of drawing efforts away from tackling root causes of poverty and exclusion, governance failures, and poor service provision, which often lie at the heart of disasters. However, despite the use that some make of the term, resilience arguably bears the potential to bridge the divide between apparently contrasting issues like sustainability, sustainable development, ending poverty and hunger, reducing inequalities and socio-economic imbalances. Tackling these matters contributes towards making a community more resilient to a wide array of risks. The main basis for such a claim has been outlined above: in socio-ecological systems, everything is interconnected.<sup>13</sup> Systemic structures, processes, and trends influence actors within the system and vice versa.<sup>14</sup> The most emblematic example of this comprehensive approach is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which addresses social, health, environmental, identity, and economic issues alike.<sup>15</sup>

The document refers to the concept of resilience several times and across four different goals. The resilience of poverty-affected communities, the resilience of urban systems, and the resilience of marine ecosystems are all put on the same level. Resilience is presented as a quality, a target, and a process to be conducted and pursued anywhere in multiple and diverse ways. Although this may seem confusing, it is arguably the real value-added of resilience, i.e. highlighting the relationship between the micro- and the macro-level, being a transversal feature that brings together seemingly distant issues while still providing multiple avenues to tackle such issues and strengthen the social and economic fabric of a community.

Hence, in today's world resilience is far from being an empty buzzword. It might be true that the public debate is populated by a widespread empty rhetorical use and frequent exploitation of the term. But, in a global society that is increasingly shifting away from complexity in favour of oversimplification, it can be argued that the resilience paradigm offers a harbour for systemic approaches that seek true impact in tackling complex social, economic, and environmental issues.



<sup>8</sup> Stewart Lockie. (2016). *Beyond resilience and systems theory: reclaiming justice in sustainability discourse*.

*Environmental Sociology*, 2:2, 115-117, p. 115.

<sup>9</sup> Helen J. Boon, Cottrell, A., King, D., Stevenson, R. B., & Millar, J. (2012). *Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory for modelling community resilience to natural disasters*. *Natural Hazards*, 60(2), 381-408.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 396.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 394.

<sup>12</sup> Lockie (2016) *Beyond resilience and...*, p. 115.

<sup>13</sup> See Boon et al. (2012) *Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory...*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 394.

<sup>15</sup> UN GA (United Nations General Assembly). (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York, NY: Division for Economic and Social Affairs.

# COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESS

## *profiting from the common good*

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Communities are usually deemed as social entities that share a common territory and a common faith. One of the most important scholars of community resilience defined them as the “totality of social system interactions within a defined geographic space.”<sup>16</sup> This social and territorial bond is paramount for resilience as it defines the rules of the game: which human, social and material resources are accessible, which challenges are to be addressed, what knowledge is available, etc. From this perspective, nobody — “government, private business, or non-governmental organisation — can create a resilient community on its own,” it must be a “whole-community process.”<sup>17</sup> Additionally, it becomes clear why the community paradigm is the most suited to analyse resilience. On the one hand, a community is big enough to be able to manage physical systems and to mobilise the necessary material and human resources to prepare, respond and overcome an event. On the other hand, a community is small enough to maintain a tight bond with its specific environment and develop a good knowledge of its characteristics. This is the main reason why this paper still focuses on community resilience although enterprises often go beyond this local dimension.

### TERRITORY

Naturally, the ensuing question is why and how can community resilience be connected to business. Especially considering that resilience often plays out locally, while most firms nowadays seem to operate at regional, national, and international levels and are embedded in global value chains. The simplest explanation is that community resilience to climate change and weather extremes depend directly on the members that form the community, which includes business actors. They might be small or medium enterprises, which predominantly operate locally, but also large enterprises and multinational corporations. They are part of the community, too – they are active stakeholders that directly or indirectly influence the life of the community and are exposed to the same risks as everyone else. Over the years, private organisations have gained ground in terms of community risk management, starting from utility companies and all those subjects who have increasingly taken control of critical infrastructures, up to those companies whose operations generate additional risks for the surrounding community.<sup>18</sup> In these fields, cooperation has proven to be crucial. Hence, it is deeply misleading to think that business actors should stand alone and self-organise in this domain. As they benefit from public measures, at the same time, they could be a valuable asset to contribute to community action. Finally, given the complexity and magnitude of climate change, weather extremes, and other major risks, a «whole-community approach» is essential in building resilience to them.<sup>19</sup> This should be envisaged as a variable dependent on the relations between public administration, business actors, and civil society.<sup>20</sup> Weaknesses in these relationships translate into points of vulnerability, as actors that do not contribute towards resilience become a liability for the whole community.

### INVESTMENTS, INCENTIVES, AND NECESSITY

Currently, the academic literature on the connection between business and community resilience is quite limited. This dynamic has often been hinted at but there is still little empirical evidence to support it.<sup>21</sup> This is also due to a relatively recent interest in the topic, which began in 2005 after the tremendous impact of hurricane Katrina on the city of New Orleans, Louisiana<sup>22</sup> when non-profit and private organisations provided the bulk of the first response to the event.<sup>23</sup> Reports of that experience together with sporadic further research have shown that, on the one hand, firms could play a major role in response to events but are generally reluctant to pursue investments in business and community preparedness, because these are financially demanding and are not seen as a priority. On the other hand, when they do make these investments, studies show that they do so due to a mix of necessity and opportunity. Much, though, seems to depend on the business’ size, sector, ownership, supply chain, profitability, and age.<sup>24</sup> While Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) might be more dependent on the community for such matters or might be more inclined to contribute due to a tighter bond to the local context, important incentives exist for large corporations, too. They have more resources than SMEs and they tend to invest mostly in business continuity, as their main worry is to continue to deliver products and services to maintain public confidence. However, their operations and their profits ultimately rely on employees — which are also individuals embedded in the community, on customers, and the overall economy running. If firms invest only in business continuity, the organisation might survive and recover from an event, but all this effort is pointless if the rest of the economy, employees and customers do not.<sup>25</sup> It should be in business leaders’ best interest to get the economy back up and running as quickly as possible and to ensure that employees can get back to work soon enough knowing that their families and their possessions are secure. This is the reason why they should go beyond business continuity and why business resilience is inextricably tied to community resilience. Although this is not a symmetrical relationship, business resilience depends on the actions, decisions, and failures of the whole community, while poor resilience undermines the confidence of citizens and investors delaying economic recovery. Conversely, a resilient community can support firms in overcoming hard times and stabilise a disrupted business environment in the same way in which a resilient firm can lease means, raise funds and continue to employ the community.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Susan L. Cutter et al. (2008). *A Place-Based Model for Understanding Community Resilience to Natural Disasters*. *Global Environmental Change*, 4(18), p. 599.

<sup>17</sup> Warren Edwards & Michael Lesnick. (2013). *Leading the Way in Community Resilience*. *Business Horizon Quarterly*, vol. 8, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Brent McKnight & Martina K. Linnenluecke. (2016). *How firm responses to natural disasters strengthen community resilience: A stakeholder-based perspective*. *Organization & Environment*, 29(3), 290–307, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Edwards and Lesnick (2013) “Leading the Way...”, p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey T. Stewart, Ramesh Kolluru and Mark Smith. (2009). *Leveraging public-private partnerships to improve community resilience in times of disaster*. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, 39(5), 343–364, p. 343.

<sup>21</sup> Josephine Adekola & David Clelland. (2020). *Two sides of the same coin: Business resilience and community resilience*. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 28(1), p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> McKnight & Linnenluecke (2016). *How firm responses...*, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Craig Colten, Robert Kates, and Shirley Laska. (2008). *Community Resilience: Lessons from New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina*. *CARRI Report*, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> McKnight & Linnenluecke (2016) *How firm responses...*, p. 13; Kathleen J. Tierney & Gary R. Webb. (2001). *Business vulnerability to earthquakes and other disasters*. *Preliminary Paper No. 320*. Newark: Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware, p. 9; Stephen Hallett. (2013). *Community Resilience to Extreme Weather—the CREW Project: Final Report*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>25</sup> McKnight & Linnenluecke (2016) *How firm responses...*, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 12–13; and Tierney & Webb (2001) *Business vulnerability to...*, p. 25.

# COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESS

## *profiting from the common good*

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### OPPORTUNITIES AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

Additionally, these actions in support of community resilience constitute a great opportunity for firms to enjoy good publicity, strengthen their brand's position on the market, enhance customers loyalty, and enlarge their customer base.<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, there seems to be what in systems thinking is called a potential positive feedback loop<sup>28</sup> connecting business and community resilience. If firms invest in it, they will arguably improve their image and contribute to the ability of the community — and their own — to remain operational in the event of a shock. This will have a positive effect on their profits and will possibly expand their customer base in the medium and long term. Additionally, in the event of a major shock, a more resilient community will be better equipped to restore services and support firms, and vice versa, firms could support the community while still providing services and employment. These efforts would contribute to getting the economy back up and running in a reduced amount of time. If firms reacted and supported the community before and during the crisis, they will likely have an additional positive impact on the reputation of their brands, on their profits, and the loyalty of their customers. Some of these dynamics were observed in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina in 2005. In the face of government agencies in disarray, the private sector responded positively and quickly.<sup>29</sup> Walmart trucks started distributing aid even before federal relief agencies did, and the company continued to supply essentials in worst-hit neighbourhoods as well as making significant reconstruction commitments to its employees and the rest of the community. This had very positive repercussions on customers' and employees' loyalty as well as on the brand. Additionally, a number of other smaller initiatives originated, from Waffle House deploying mobile generators to feed first responders and shelter people, to coffee shops freeing up space and turning into local first-response coordination centres.<sup>30</sup>

### PATHS TO RESILIENCE

Brent McKnight and Martina Linnenluecke tried to account for some of several ways that firms have to contribute to community resilience. Overall, they highlighted two main recurrent approaches. On the one hand, they observed firm-centric postures, that is, keeping profitability and competitive advantage as guiding lights, even in times of crisis. The «ultimate goal [...] is a positive financial return for the firm» and seeking «to profit from helping customers recover from a natural disaster.» On the other hand, they report also community-centric approaches, which place the needs of the community at the top of the list. Generally, they focus on a broader array of stakeholders, «assist community members by creating new, or extending existing, products and services» and engage in «meaningful dialogue with a wider array of government agencies and NGOs.»<sup>31</sup>

Business actors adopting different postures have multiple paths to improving business and community resilience. Generally, firms choose two main avenues. The first is philanthropy and charitable giving whereby contributions can entail donations of money, materials, equipment, etc.<sup>32</sup> As hurricane Katrina showed, a particular and growing form of philanthropy is business disaster response, that is, «firms providing products and/or services that help citizens and other firms before, during, and/or following a disaster.»<sup>33</sup> The second avenue is volunteering. This is typical of SMEs, particularly very small firms thanks to their «local ownership and sense of historic “connectivity” to the community.»<sup>34</sup> However, recently, new forms of corporate volunteering have emerged in large firms and multinational corporations, too. Some simply encourage employees to get involved in non-profit organisations and to spend time in favour of the community, while others have structured corporate volunteering programmes, which in some instances have become a strategic tool embedded in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy of the firm. In both cases, positive repercussions have been observed on the ability of NGOs to fulfil their goals and both on the relationship between the firm and the community and between the firm and its employees.<sup>35</sup>

Two pressing issues in such a flourishing environment are the need to incorporate these initiatives into CSR strategies and to invest in public-private partnerships. In fact, on the economic side, if firms want to maximise the impact and the positive economic returns of their contributions, they should elaborate a comprehensive strategy. Only ambitious vision and good planning can transform sporadic initiatives into proper strategies to make businesses and communities more resilient and more sustainable.<sup>36</sup> On the social side, «communities cannot expect uncoordinated efforts to improve functioning and adaptation to the consequences of disasters» – a more systemic approach is urgently needed.<sup>37</sup> Public-private partnerships are widely diffused at all levels of government in several sectors and could bring more stability even in the resilience realm. This would ultimately increase social and economic capital available to the community to face growing environmental risks, establishing flexible but secure relationships between the private sector, government, and civil society.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Miguel Aguirre. (2018). *Why Small Businesses Should Invest in Preparedness*. Zurich, Switzerland: Zurich Insurance Company Ltd, p. 3

<sup>28</sup> For a definition see Donella H. Meadows. (2008). *Thinking in systems: A primer*. London, UK: Earthscan, p. 187.

<sup>29</sup> Colten, Kates & Laska (2008) *CARRI Report*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>30</sup> McKnight & Linnenluecke (2016) *How firm responses...*, pp. 2 and 8-9.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>32</sup> See *ibidem*, p.5; and Aguirre (2018) *Why Small Businesses...*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> McKnight & Linnenluecke (2016) *How firm responses...*, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Adekola and Clelland (2020) *Two sides of...*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed account of corporate volunteering, see Alexandra Zbucea & Carmen Marcu. (2015). *Corporates and NGOs Collaborating for Volunteering*. STRATEGICA International Academic Conference: Local versus Global. Edited by Constantin Brătianu, Alexandra Zbucea, Florina Pinzaru, Elena-Mădălina Vătămănescu and Ramona-Diana Leon. Bucharest, Romania: SNSPA, Faculty of Management. 580-588.

<sup>36</sup> Iskandar Zainuddin Rela, Abd Hair Awang, Zaimah Ramli, Yani Taufik, Sarmila Sum and Mahazan Mubammad. (2020). *Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on Community Resilience: Empirical Evidence in the Nickel Mining Industry in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia*. *Sustainability*, 12(4), p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Stewart, Kolluru and Smith (2009). *Leveraging public-private partnerships...*, p. 354.

<sup>38</sup> For a detailed analysis of how public-private partnerships could be

# FEEDING RESILIENCE

## *the Barilla Group and the City of Parma*

One interesting case of resilience is the one provided by the Barilla Group, the Italian food company which produces pasta, bread, and other food products in several countries across the globe. Their business was born in 1877 in the city of Parma and started as a small bakery and fresh-pasta shop in the town centre. Then it slowly developed until, in the 1990s, it became a multi-national corporation now present in one-hundred countries across four continents.<sup>39</sup> However, their identity has remained strongly anchored to Parma, where the headquarters are still located.

### **PASTA ANGELS: A NEW APPROACH TO CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING**

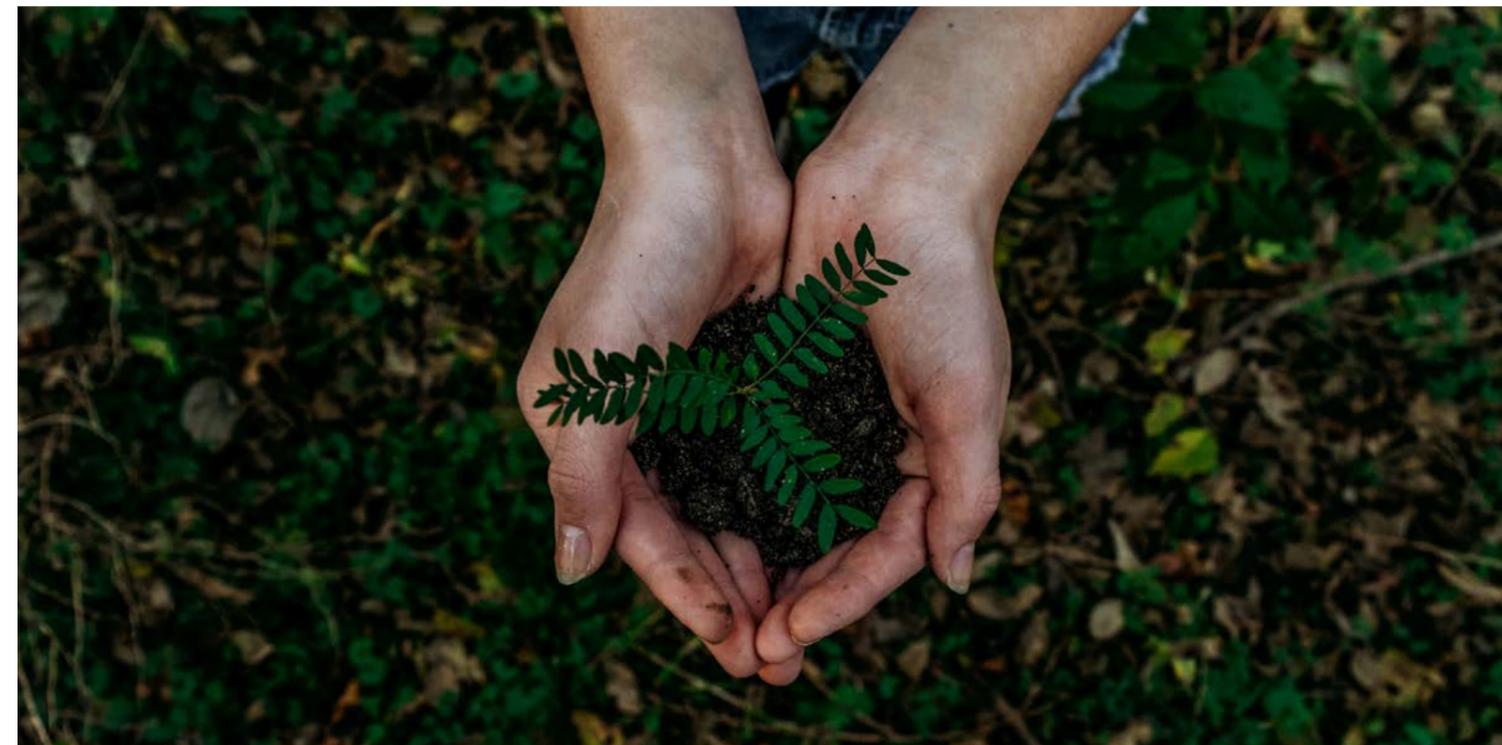
Over the years the Group has developed an intense relationship with civil society and with the Provincial Board of Civil Protection Voluntary Associations, in particular with the Italian Red Cross Committee of Parma.<sup>40</sup> Such joint effort culminated in 2014 when the Group commissioned and donated to the City's Civil Protection Department a mobile kitchen truck deployable in four hours and capable of distributing five hundred hot meals per hour. This was the result of a well-established and trustful ad-hoc collaboration between the Group, local non-profit organisations, and the National and Municipal Civil Protection Mechanism that had started as early as 1994 when Barilla provided support to the Piemonte Region hit by devastating floods.<sup>41</sup> In 2012, when the eastern part of the Emilia region — the same where Parma is located — was hit by a series of earthquakes, the Group distributed in the first week over eighty-two tonnes of food supplies, raised funds across the country, and equipped one of the emergency camps with a kitchen and a mess tent with a capacity of two-hundred people.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in 2016 when another earthquake hit central Italy, the new mobile kitchen truck was deployed in the early hours of the emergency in one of the camps and the Group supplied food products to the people hosted there throughout the whole emergency.<sup>43</sup> The most remarkable aspect of this last project and its development is represented by the team that operates the mobile kitchen. It is constituted by one-hundred Barilla employees, the so-called “Pasta Angels,” who voluntarily trained as Civil Protection Volunteers and are activated and deployed in case of emergency.<sup>44</sup> This makes it arguably one of the most remarkable and successful examples of corporate volunteering.

### **“GOOD FOR YOU, GOOD FOR THE PLANET”**

Such actions seem to depict a very community-oriented posture assumed by the Group towards both its local community and the whole Italian society. These ambitious endeavours are reinforced by a constant stream of donations to charitable organisations. The most recent examples have been the donation of a new fully equipped emergency ambulance to the Italian Red Cross Committee of Parma as well as a generous two-million euros boost to the Red Cross and to Parma General Hospital to support the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>45</sup> Besides, these efforts are inscribed within a broader and overarching strategy which the Group reports on through its annual Sustainability Report.

These documents highlight a systematic mission to improve the sustainability of the brand, captured by the slogan “Good for you, good for the planet.” Indeed, according to the 2020 Sustainability Report, in 2019 the Barilla Group has implemented an array of policies that encompassed a wide spectrum of sectors and issues, such as risk management, fighting corruption, nutrition, food quality and safety, responsible marketing, food education, the sustainability of supply chains, animal welfare, packaging sustainability and so on.<sup>46</sup> The Group's objectives have also been certified as part of the Science-Based Targets Initiative to be in line with the commitment to keep global temperature rise below 2°C.<sup>47</sup> Finally, it ought to be noted, first, that the Report revolves around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and dedicates a fair amount of space to linking the Group's strategy to the SDGs.<sup>48</sup> Second, a whole section is dedicated to people and communities, which reports about actions and strategies in favour of employees, customers, and the several communities across the world where the Barilla Group has planted roots.<sup>49</sup>

Overall, it is impressive to see the wide array of endeavours that the Group is implementing worldwide in the fields of sustainability and resilience, including some strong commitments and some very original projects. Nonetheless, it seems that Barilla's involvement in the Italian Civil Protection Mechanism is still based on voluntary contributions and philanthropy. There is no sight of more robust public-private partnerships, and the Italian case seems to be an exception in the Group's landscape. Additionally, the community resilience paradigm is still far from being integrated into the sustainability discourse. Although the concept recurs several times in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Report never mentions it.



<sup>39</sup> Barilla Group. (2020). *Good For You, Good For The Planet: 2020 Sustainability Report*. Parma, Italy: Barilla Group, pp. 10-13.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 173-177.

<sup>41</sup> Barilla Group. (2017). “Buono Per Te, Buono Per il Pianeta” 10 Storie di Sostenibilità Firmate Barilla. Press Briefing (8 June) <https://www.barillagroup.com/en/node/1554>

<sup>42</sup> Barilla Group. (2012). *Ondata Sismica Di Maggio 2012 In Emilia Romagna E Nord Italia*. Press Briefing (31 May) <https://www.barillagroup.com/en/node/340>

<sup>43</sup> Barilla Group. (2016). *Intervento della Colonna Mobile Barilla A Favore Delle Persone Colpite Dal Terremoto*. Press Briefing (30 August) <https://www.barillagroup.com/en/node/1088>

<sup>44</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>45</sup> Barilla Group (2020) *Good For You...*, pp. 177-185.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 144.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 35-65.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 146-185.

## CONCLUSION

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The experience of the Barilla Group paints a clear representation of the efforts that several business actors are making to become more sustainable and to partner up with public administrations and civil society organisations. It provides a great example of how a firm can offer its human and material resources as well as its knowledge to strengthen community preparedness and, in turn, resilience. In fact, the specificity of the Barilla Group was translated into an asset that has proven to be crucial in responding to emergencies where people have to be evacuated from their homes or where personnel has to be deployed. This is only one of many examples out there of how business actors can be an active part of the community in fighting climate change and strengthening community resilience. This is not a new dynamic but it does need better systematisation and better reporting. Given the challenges ahead, there is a compelling need to move away from occasional philanthropy based on goodwill. A shift towards integrated overarching strategies that have the concept of resilience at their core and that rely on stronger commitments, better relationships, and institutionalised public-private partnerships are needed. Otherwise, all these projects will remain sporadic best practices, isolated in time and space. The Agenda 2030 explicitly calls on business actors to become part of the solution.<sup>50</sup> Thus, it is time that their resources and expertise are taken fully into account in terms of community resilience to climate change and extreme weather events.



<sup>50</sup> UNGA (2015) *Transforming our world...*, p. 12

## IN A NUTSHELL

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STEP

1

**LOOK AROUND**

Map the socio-economic and ecological system the company is located in. Identify pressing issues and pay particular attention to interconnections, causal links, and feedback loops. Explore how the company's activity is linked to the system. Think about how the Sustainable Development Goals apply to your system.

STEP

2

**DRAW A PLAN**

Choose where and how to act. Think of how you imagine your company and the system in 2030. Starting from a desirable future, draw the steps that will take your company, its stakeholders, and your community there (i.e. backcasting).

STEP

3

**PARTNER UP**

Once you have an idea of which strategy and actions you would implement, find partners. Explore among other business actors, government, and civil society organisations and try to find someone that is already active in the sector where you aim to intervene. Adjust your plans in collaboration with your partners and try to maximise your impact together.

STEP

4

**ACT!**

Implement your plan, paying great attention to adjust it and update it. Try to reach as many stakeholders as possible and diversify your target to reach maximum impact. Your goal should be to trigger systemic change.

STEP

5

**ENGAGE**

Engage with the community and your stakeholders, starting from your employees. Do not leave anyone out of the picture and do not be afraid of breaking barriers and trying innovative approaches. Build a narrative on what you are implementing and try to get as many actors involved as possible.

STEP

6

**REPORT**

Constantly update your plans and your targets. Evaluate your results to understand if you achieved systemic change or not. Make sure that reporting is adherent to the SDGs and accessible to all.

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Ettore Lancelotti is a graduate in Cooperation and Development Studies from Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. His main academic and professional interests are resilience to climate change, risk and emergency management as well as development economics and migration. His work experience includes a number of different positions in the Emilia-Romagna regional branch of the Italian Red Cross. He continues to work in the international development sector on sustainability and resilience. Ettore has been writing this paper during his placement as part of the 2020 ClimateKIC Pioneers into Practice program at the Center for Advanced Sustainable Management (CASM) at CBS International Business School.