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The B Corp:
an international overview and the Italian Case Study

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Index

List of figures .................................................................................................................. 5
Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 7

How to change the core business .................................................................................... 8

1. Moving beyond corporate social responsibility ......................................................... 8
2. Reinventing Capitalism ................................................................................................. 12
   2.1 How to integrate Business and Society ................................................................. 12
   2.2 Creating Shared Value ......................................................................................... 15
3. Integrating sustainability in the core business ............................................................ 22
   3.1 Environmental and social issues coming from the economic system .................... 24
   3.2 The framework of Sustainable Development Goals ............................................. 26
   3.3 How businesses can achieve Global Goals .......................................................... 27
   3.4 The evolution of sustainable businesses ............................................................... 30

The B Corp ......................................................................................................................... 32

1. B Corps redefine success in business .......................................................................... 32
   1.1 From For-Benefit Enterprises to B Corp ............................................................. 33
   1.2 The B Lab foundation ......................................................................................... 36
   1.3 Advantages of becoming a B Corp ....................................................................... 39
2. How to obtain the B Corp certification ....................................................................... 44
   2.1 Steps to become a Certified B Corp ...................................................................... 46
   2.2 The B Impact Assessment .................................................................................... 49
3. The legal framework ................................................................................................. 58
   3.1 The Italian Benefit Corporation Legislation ......................................................... 59
   3.2 Differences between American and Italian Benefit Corporations ....................... 62
The B Corp Movement: the Italian Case Study .......................................................... 63

1. The current situation ........................................................................................................... 63
2. Literature Review .................................................................................................................. 66
   2.1 The legal aspect ............................................................................................................... 66
   2.2 Social and environmental aspects .................................................................................. 70
3. Research Gap ...................................................................................................................... 74
4. Methodologies ..................................................................................................................... 75
   4.1 The Italian B Corps Survey ............................................................................................ 75
   4.2 Performance Analysis of the first Italian B Corps ......................................................... 81
   4.3 Key Informant Interviews .............................................................................................. 87
5. Results .................................................................................................................................. 90
6. Conclusions ........................................................................................................................ 93

Appendix A ............................................................................................................................... 95
Appendix B ............................................................................................................................... 96
Appendix C ............................................................................................................................... 98
Appendix D ............................................................................................................................... 102
References ............................................................................................................................... 108
Online sources ........................................................................................................................ 112
List of figures

Figure 1 The corporate involvement in society. M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2006. ..................13
Figure 2 The Shared Value Initiative Logo. Shared Value Initiative website. ...............................20
Figure 3 CSR and CSV differences. M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2011. .................................21
Figure 4 Sustainable Development as system Venn diagram adapted from Barbier (1987). E.B. Barbier, 2011.........................................................................................................................22
Figure 5 The Top 10 causes of death from environment. WHO literature, 2017. .....................25
Figure 6 The segmentation of SDGs. B. Chakravorti, 2016. ......................................................28
Figure 7 Representation of the Business Sustainability Typology of Dyllick and Muff. Inspired by EY and DNV-GL, 2017. .................................................................31
Figure 8 B the change. People using business as a force for good. B Corp Literature................32
Figure 9 From a good product to a good company. B Corp Literature........................................35
Figure 10 The B Lab key role. B Corp Literature........................................................................38
Figure 11 Comparison between B Corps and other sustainable businesses that conduct the BIA. BCorp Literature. ...........................................................................................................40
Figure 12 Best for the World award symbol. B Corp Literature. ................................................42
Figure 13 Advertising Champaign. To look deeper in products, you buy. B Corp Literature. .......43
Figure 14 The Certified B Corp roadmap. B Corp literature.........................................................44
Figure 15 B Impact Assessment evolution. B Lab Literature..........................................................51
Figure 16 How to measure what matters most. B Corp Literature. ..........................................52
Figure 17 Mightybytes, Inc. summary Impact Area Scores. Mightybytes webpage..................55
Figure 18 Mightybytes, Inc. page. B Corp website. .....................................................................56
Figure 19 Differences between Certified B Corp and Società Benefit. Adapted from Table in the Società Benefit website: http://www.societabenefit.net/b-corp-e-societa-benefit-tabella-comparativa/..................................................................................................................61
Figure 20 Italian B Corps and, respectively, how many of them have adopted the Benefit Corporation status............................................................................................................64
Figure 21 Key Distinguishing factors between Traditional and Hybrid Organizations. N. Haigh, A.J. Hoffman, 2012 .................................................................67

Figure 22 Italian types of organization. The bold text under the line evidences organizations recognized by the Italian legislation. .................................................................69

Figure 23 How advantages proposed by B Lab have been perceived by B Corps. ..................79

Figure 24 Balance sheets of Italian Pioneer B Corps................................................................83

Figure 25 The perspective of a market of Certified B Corp products. B Corp Literature. ...........92
Introduction

Inequalities, high levels of pollution, diseases and the scarcity of resources are only some of the several critical conditions that have underlined the attention to social and environmental issues. The worldwide attention has recently pointed out the necessity to improve the overall conditions proposing Sustainable Development Goals. According to data, the major part of responsibilities that have caused the current situation can be attributed to businesses and production processes. As a consequence, switching to sustainable models of business results as a key objective for future years.

In order to realize this path, Corporate Social Responsibility does not seem to be enough. This dissertation presents thus a certification, the B Corp certification, that promotes the idea of a new sector of the economy. The certification configures a for-profit business that, implementing the sustainability in its core business, aims to have a positive impact on society while it tries to reduce effects on the environment. Thanks to its innovative peculiarities, this model has been introduced in the legal framework of few countries, such as Italy.

After having provided an overview of the international B Corp movement, the aim of the thesis is to investigate why CSR-oriented companies should become B Corps. The recent Italian B Corp movement will be analyzed to understand if the B Corp certification can play a relevant role in a more sustainable growth, solving social and environmental issues as well.
How to change the core business

1st Chapter

1. Moving beyond corporate social responsibility

Business and society are strictly interdependent. Business is part of the society and, thanks to ongoing exchanges, it has as an impact on other activities as well; in the meanwhile, on the other side, government and social actors influence companies directly (A.T. Lawrence and J. Weber, 2013). After the economic and financial crisis of 2008, not only banks but also multinational businesses needed to accept the challenge to gain again the trust of their disappointed consumers. The awareness of their importance in society was extremely clear and a new idea gained ground: corporate social responsibility was not enough (M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2011).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has never been completely voluntarily and probably its objective has been misunderstood over the years. Many companies through that rankings on CSR performance were really influential on public opinion and, above all, could be really attractive for consumers. Obviously, this social concern pushed managers to become more conscious of business responsibilities realizing that they had to do more to improve social and environmental consequences of their activities (M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2006). Initially, to fully meet the demanding consumers’ expectations and the pressure of activist organizations, many multinational corporations introduced CSR departments and published annual sustainability reports to comply with regulation. A sort of “rating game” started: the company that showed the best social performance would be considered the most powerful. Great businesses were challenged to satisfy social and environmental criteria to gain more and more certifications on efficient performance: from reductions in pollution and waste to guaranteeing a minimum wage to employees, from an increase in renewable sources of energy to introducing consumer care offices. They did everything to prove and convince public opinion of their incredible sensitivity to societal issues. However, this competitive race did not reflect the true corporate social consciousness but, rather, sometimes it was a pure example of greenwashing. Indeed, these environmental-friendly activities were more a sort of marketing tool, a strategy, to catch the attention of consumer’ and guide their behaviors.
In 2014, The Economist analyzed this situation and evidenced that being greener was convenient for businesses.\textsuperscript{1} The article considers corporate social responsibility approaches as a first green wave that must be overcome allowing the arrival of a new green wave that really cares about social and environmental matters. The piece commented a survey of 2000 companies made by the MIT Sloan Management Review and the Boston Consulting Group, from which it stood out that only two-thirds of businesspeople judged social and environmental matters as “significant” or “very significant” and, above all, only 10% of them, took actions seriously. Indeed, The Economist drew attention to the so-called sustainability plans. The concept of “doing sustainable” was quietly widespread, especially after the announcement of a future deliberation on Sustainable Development Goals made by the United Nations. Every business, from multinationals to small and medium-sized, decided to turn greener increasing the implementation of eco-friendly activities, such as saving energy or reducing waste. Clearly, those kinds of actions gave the impression that companies were really involved in sustainability issues and, thus, they were respecting the environment. Undoubtedly, these behaviors had a positive impact on all the stakeholders. However, what The Economist wanted to point out the businesses’ behavior: these sustainable measures were nothing more than efficiency policies. Considering the topic under this point of view shed light on the fact that these plans were helpful to improve production performance. Hence, it becomes obvious that companies had an advantage in becoming sustainable: why shouldn’t they adopt methods that lead to costs reduction and an increase in profitability? The truth was that they should have implemented these actions daily, as a normal routine. Therefore, as the title of the article suggested, “a new green wave” that involved businesses in doing better become necessary, promoting sustainability as a core strategy. This was intended as not only taking care of correct business behaviors but also as promoting good practices among stakeholders. For the new green wave, it was not enough if the corporation had applied a corporate social responsibility or had gained multiple international certifications; all its efforts would be in vain if stakeholders did not share the same production criteria and principles. The Economist emphasized the attention of working on the entire supply chain, from suppliers to consumers, and the best way to make others conscious of their actions is to inform all of them. For instance, consumers need to know that sustainability targets do not cut costs but, on the contrary, raise them because they require higher production standards and continuous controls. Even if more expensive, environmental eco-friendly goods should be chosen by responsible knowledgeable consumers, rather than the eco-hostile variety. To conclude, the Economist claimed that businesses and all the society’s actors must change their perspective. They should not focus their attention on short-term profit or quarterly earnings, instead,

they should be more concerned on the long run, looking to the future and asking higher standards for the best of the whole community.

Corporate social responsibility has had (and still has) an important role to make managers focus on ethical obligations that were largely ignored till the beginning of the 21st century. Nevertheless, prevailing approaches to CSR are still fragmented and disconnected from business strategies so they tend to obscure many of the greatest opportunities for companies to benefit society. CSR has a marginal role, it is still secondary to other relevant company activities. It is not involved in the core business. If a company considers achieving ever-growing profits as its main goal, concern for social issues is only seen as a cost, as a necessary expense to improve the firm’s reputation. Fortunately, times are changing and the new global leaders, with different innovative mindsets and much more conscious of the irreversible consequences that business can lead to our planet, are present. Social and environmental responsibility should be seen as a source of opportunity, a sort of guideline that, if well managed, brings to a competitive advantage (M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2011).

Danone is one of the first multinational companies that acted outside the business boundaries, moving beyond corporate social responsibility. It has recognized that the economic and social environment in which it operates is an ecosystem that must be protected. The comparison aims to highlight that the company, exactly as a living being, depends on its surrounding environment, thus, it must respect other agents because it would not be able to survive in a different context. This explains why businesses are not allowed to take advantage of local population, waste resources or do not care about polluting activities. Instead, the company has to act responsibly if it wants to achieve the best result - both for itself and for the society. To address different critical issues, Danone introduced three platforms with the aim of going beyond corporate social responsibility in 2009. The idea was to implement innovative business models that would be able to generate social and environmental values in a sustainable way. For instance, one of the platforms, the Danone Ecosystem Fund, has still the purpose of supporting and managing Danone’s ecosystem, in other words, all the small businesses and partners that cooperate with Danone (small agricultural producers, small suppliers, proximity distributors). Through this initiative, the multinational company assists locals in their daily challenges and provides well-prepared managers from Danone’s business units, furnishing decision-making tools and practical tips to native partners. Thanks to a structured method, the platform allows Danone to know better the different communities in which it operates: comprehending economic, financial and political issues by which they are affected. Through this information, it could promote co-creation

designing programs to boost the whole society, improving its responsibility and its risk management. Nowadays, the Danone Ecosystem Fund collaborates with 47 local communities and over 57 non-profit organizations all over the world. The overall project employs 40,900 people, of which 22,500 are women; 2.9 million of people are estimated to indirectly take advantages from these initiatives.³ In the example provided, it is clear that Danone has deeply evaluated the relevance of the community it affects. Particularly, it has recognized that to have success, the company needs to work together with all its stakeholders, promoting social progress. It does not have to focus only on its own profit but it has to expand its perspective: having a complete overview of the whole situation will permit to easily notice lacks and problems and then act faster to solve them. As already said, business and society are strictly interdependent, thus, it is inconceivable that one can achieve success leaving the other behind. In order to have a profitable business a healthy society is required: education, healthcare, and equal opportunity are necessary factors needed for a productive workforce. It must not be forgotten that workers are also consumers and, if they benefit from a certain well-being, they will be more prompt to increase the demand for the business’ products. At the same time, it is fundamental to create a fair legal and property rights framework to avoid exploitation and to guarantee the same treatment for all. Unfortunately, for a long-time, leaders of both companies and civil society have focused their attention on conflict instead of synergies. Society and companies must learn how to collaborate, they must help each other to achieve a greater performance. For this reason, the principle of shared value is introduced and must be followed in order to benefit both sides (M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2006).

³ Danone Ecosystem Fund website.  
2. Reinventing Capitalism

The increasing public opinion that companies must be more concerned about their social impact led to the idea of changing something in the business structure. In fact, to consider the social perspective during the development of business strategy, a radical change was necessary for the decision-making process. Finding harmony between the core business and the responsibilities towards the community was evaluated as a feasible way to balance social and economic needs. Through this solution, each company would achieve a better improvement in the affected society while it pursues economic profits. This new concept, known as shared value, was initially introduced in 2006 by Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, who analyzed it in depth some years later.

2.1 How to integrate Business and Society

Initially, the main question on which Porter and Kramer (2006) focus their attention is how to integrate business and society. To incorporate the social perspective in the core business is necessary to focus on many business aspects in order to define a successful strategy.

First of all, links between the society and the company’s activity have to be recognized and, as soon as the points of intersection have been detected, they have to be analyzed and subsequently strengthened. Usually, the interdependence relationship between enterprises and society can be easily noticed observing the value chain: obviously, all the business activities that engage citizens have direct and indirect consequences on the whole community. The firm needs to observe carefully and constantly its effects on the surrounding environment because any change can lead to potential modifications that could become dangerous over time. Indeed, if the company is not flexible enough to adapt itself when events occur, the risk of survival will rise. In addition, intersection points can be revealed also investigating the competitive context in which the business acts. Indeed, the enterprise is deeply shaped by its framework: laws, consumer preferences, competitors and all other market actors have an influential power. Of course, all these links that the enterprise creates can be seen as potential sources for corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Secondly, a firm that wants to incorporate CSR principles in its core business has to identify the social issues which it deals with. Clearly, a business cannot solve all of society’s problems but it can easily identify matters related to its own particular business. Indeed, through the kind of activity it conducts, the firm should recognize present opportunities to create shared value and, thus, define CSR actions on them. Generally, social issues can be divided into three different categories: generic social issues,
values chain social impacts and social dimension of competitive context. Keeping into consideration that problems affecting the community do not have the same relevance for each business, the content of each category varies from business to business, industry to industry, and place to place. Location, age target or lack of adequate infrastructure can be some of the aspects that a business evaluates to rank social issues and identify which it can concretely solve. This would allow social issues to be treated by experienced firms in that specific field and, hopefully, it would guarantee a brilliant result. Wherever the social issues involve many companies, the best outcomes may arise from collaborative behaviors.

Thirdly, another aspect that has to be detected is the corporate social agenda. Usually, it is strictly connected with social issues related to the business’ main activities and it aims to satisfy stakeholder expectations. However, to have a successful agenda the company is required to go beyond daily expectations trying to anticipate fruitful possibilities and potential matters. Indeed, if it is well planned, the agenda can be an incredibly useful tool to improve the business strategy. Particularly, to better understand this consideration, it is necessary to distinguish two different approaches to corporate social responsibility: the responsive CSR and the strategic CSR.

![Corporate Involvement in Society: A Strategic Approach](image)

Figure 1 The corporate involvement in society. M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2006.
The responsive type can be associated with the company good practices. It is especially related to acting as a good corporate citizen and mitigating existing or anticipated adverse effects from business activities. Initiatives realized are usually associated with the business principal activity. Those efforts increase the business’s goodwill among its workers and all its stakeholders, reinforcing trust of governmental actors and increasing the mutual partnership with local communities. The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) has become one of the most important guidelines for this kind of approach because it promotes good behaviors and practices, environmental and social standards and auxiliary suggestions to improve the company’s CSR predisposition. Even though this CSR approach is essential for the integration between business and society, the second one is crucial to develop shared value. To comprehend why the strategic CSR is the most important to achieve a competitive advantage, it must be pointed out that it is not only a good practice but it results in a pure strategic trick. If the strategy has a key-role for every company, strategic CSR must be included. This new business strategy configuration leads to a pro-active attitude that tailors internal process, creating the most significant social impacts. The enterprise should promote actions to distinguish itself from competitors, to apply innovative methodologies and to bolster inside-out and outside-in relationships. Proactive business predicts stakeholder concern and its innate flexibility makes them less likely to be blindsided by unexpected negative events. Moreover, it has been noticed that the closer a social issue is to the company’s business, the greater the opportunity to leverage the firm’s resources and benefit the society. Strategic CSR makes shared value reachable.

The fourth noteworthy point that Porter and Kramer (2006) have considered to integrate business and society is the assimilation between inside-out and outside-in practices. Introducing innovations in the value chain and constraints to address social issues can result very challenging to the firm. To facilitate the process, it would be helpful to share these goals with the linked actors. A homogeneous point of view can simplify connections and can remove possible boundaries that could slow down the development process and competitiveness. The power of reducing value chain’s boundaries is given by investments: they are able to create a fully integrated value chain process that would lead greater outcomes in terms of time and quality. Working together promotes integration to such an extent that it could become hard to distinguish strategy from its social impact over time.

The last but not the least reason why the integration between society and business should be reached is to create a social dimension to the value proposition. To make it real, it is necessary to consider the social impact of strategic planning. Being able to engage the community in achieving the value proposition would be profitable for everyone: the local population would increase its well-being while the company could transform this partnership into a competitive advantage. All these highlighted points to establish an integrated approach suggest considering the social impact as any other firm’s
performance. This means that it needs a management, constant checks and adjustments as well. Following this perspective, corporate social responsibility should not be watched as a rating game between businesses. Having a positive effect on the society is not a competition with others but a continuous comparison against itself in order to improve its own capabilities. Indeed, even if a generic strategy could be fulfilled in the short-term, creating shared value is a hard process that requires more much time: the business has to identify its opportunities and choose which of them can be pushed to create competitiveness. Social value creation is a real strategy that would be fundamental for the prosperity of the whole economy. Companies, more than governments and non-profits firms, are able to boost a concrete societal development thanks to its countless connections. This is exactly the characteristic that distinguishes them as proper actors to address social issues (M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2006).

2.2 Creating Shared Value

Businesses are responsible for social, economic and environmental problems but at the same time, they could be the only ones from which the change can begin: they have got the capabilities to modify the current situation. It is time for a new conception of capitalism, a revised one, that does not apply the approach of short-term value creation but rather seeks a right kind of profit: the social benefit. This idea was examined in depth in the article Creating Shared Value, published on Harvard Business Review in 2011. The paper promotes to reinvent capitalism creating economic value by creating societal value. Societal purposes have to be included in the core business not as a philanthropic behavior but as a deeper understanding of competition and economic value creation. Increasing the importance given to the community will open many attractive opportunities to enterprises that would enhance economic performances. With this in mind, it would be possible to collect two different goals: the market will be a healthy competitive environment in which businesses will achieve social benefits by maintaining their economic objectives. Overall interests would be satisfied.

The aim of the Porter and Kramer’s paper is to reconnect company success with social progress: an economic growth involves both entities and, thus, society and business must collaborate for the overall benefit. Although societal needs do not seem to play a primary role in markets, they are defined by preferences and needs of consumers. Obviously, firms are directly affected and must deal with problems, such as increasing internal costs, inadequacies in workers education or technical innovations scarcity. Differently, from a redistribution approach that aims to proportionally divide the value created, the shared value wants to solve the problem from the root. For example, promoting
investments in education, in worker-training programs or in research to develop technical knowledge. Thus, the shared value can be defined as policies and practices applied by companies that promote competitiveness while simultaneously enhance social and economic conditions of affected communities. Shared value focuses on individuating and improving the connections between business and society. Indeed, these two entities go hand in hand and, for this reason, they must cooperate to achieve better results. If firm works properly, employees will receive a fair salary to spend on products rising the demand for those goods and incrementing business manufacturing. It is a virtuous circle.

Porter and Kramer in their second paper have identified three different keyways which companies should adopt to create shared value opportunities. The first one deals with watching products and markets from a different point of view, the second one suggests modifying the production system and the last one to promote the development of the local cluster. These suggestions require businesses to introduce relevant structural changes in their internal organization, but all of them are highly feasible. Each way can be considered as a part of the virtuous cycle of shared value because the business that implements one of them will automatically recognize the importance of the others, trying to implement them over time.

- Reconceiving Product and Markets

The first advice to pursue economic value together with social value is to reconceive products and markets. Even if in last decades the attention was on industry efficiency processes, nowadays, in advanced economies, products and services are better serving societal needs. Health and nutrition, financial stability, housing, and security are huge societal needs that have not received attention till a few years ago while today they are getting an increasing relevance. For instance, food companies are not only proposing just junk food or snacks containing added sugar, but rather healthy and genuine foods to promote a good lifestyle. At the same time, enterprises that produce lights and technological devices are really taking care of power consumption and invests a lot of resources in developing new methods to save energy or to switch to renewable sources. In consideration of this, information has a key role to drive consumer preferences and it has to be bolstered in order to involve citizens in making right choices for the benefit of the whole society. Those are just some examples of how businesses are approaching social necessities, but the road is, however, still long. It is necessary to remember that the greater chances come from disadvantaged communities or developing countries. Indeed, in these case, a small company’s effort would be able to increase the community wellness also leading economic profits. Businesses must recognize weaknesses of these realities and design specific products and services to completely satisfy their needs or lacks. Possibilities that those kinds of actions would have a brilliant success are really high because capitalism has always had an
exponential effect in poorer communities. As a consequence, the intervention of multinational businesses in disadvantaged communities and developing countries would boost economic development and social progress. Monitoring traditional and non-traditional markets constantly is the only way through which it will be possible to identify opportunities and set up new tactical strategies.

- Redefining Productivity in the Value Chain

The second highlighted key way suggests redefining productivity in the value chain. Particularly, the value chain is conceived as a series of activities undertaken by the business that characterize the creation of the product or the service. It is a concept introduced by Porter as a decision support tools. Generally, the company value chain has to face many societal issues, such as non-renewable resource use, employee conditions, health, and safety. All of them need to be accurately managed because they can be transformed in societal value or, in the meanwhile, they can result in higher economic costs. To address these problems, it is necessary to have an overall point of view and consider a longer period of time. For example, it is evident that to develop technologies preventing pollution requires huge investments today, even though this will prevent paying future costs in terms of health and money, as diseases and taxes. These kinds of trade-offs can occur, as already said, in all the different steps of production. For instance, energy is consumed in all phases, from the extraction of resources to the distributional channels, and, for this reason, these processes should be re-examined to observe whether energy efficiency could be implemented. Improvements in energy utilization are feasible principally when investments in technology are done. Equally important are logistical systems. They should be checked as well to get the best performance at the lowest price: for instance, it could be a possibility to switch the plant’s location in a cheaper country. The same relevance must be observed to the resource use. Indeed, the increasing scarcity of non-renewable resources, raw materials, and drinkable water and, on the other hand, the excess of plastic consumption and waste, point out the toned for a wise use of resources. Incrementing recycling processes, reusable goods, and reducing raw materials involved in the production would be possible to go beyond the conception of disposable goods. From an aware use of resources, benefits would not be received only by the current population but it is a project that will involve also future generations. Another aspect of the value chain that should be reconceived is the procurement. If companies initially moved their industries and factories in lower-income countries, today they should get more information on their suppliers to drive down prices. Indeed, knowing them better would be helpful to verify their awareness regarding proper technologies. The introduction of new methodologies or the implementation of advanced and innovative discoveries would boost the supplier quality and productivity. As a natural consequence, this would lead to an increase in the manufactured goods volume, cutting prices drastically. Moreover,
enhancing production processes will also have a positive effect on the environmental impact and on the entire efficiency, creating shared value. Businesses should take care of their suppliers because it helps to create a much more trustful relationship that also involves a more transparent and faster communication of information. A reliable supply is fundamental for a company because it is a source of its inputs and it can highly affect its outcomes. The distribution can be modified wisely as well. The business should study the market looking for the opportunity of new altering products. The most famous example of diversification in the distribution field could be Kindle or Google Scholar. They have found a new solution to provide online books to consumers, reducing the use of paper and plastic. They ingeniously invented a new channel of distribution. In addition to looking at its surroundings, a business has to take care of its employees. The internal business context has to be constantly checked because by improving workers’ conditions it is possible to increase the productivity. Wellness, living wage, safety or opportunity for career advancement are all indicators that can influence worker behavior: giving them responsibility, increasing their involvement in the business activity and challenging them to act better. Employees are a strong potential resource for the productivity and thus the enterprise must recognize it, especially because it is a key point for the shared value. In conclusion, the last aspect that businesses should redefine is where their industries are settled. Considering logistic, information, and markets, the location has a negative influence in the long term. Furthermore, even if hidden costs cannot be predicted, it has to consider that costs of energy, workforce, and resources play an incredible role in the decision of building a new plant because they alter the productivity. Nowadays, developing countries should be chosen to place industry with the purpose of helping the community in developing the society, introducing training courses for workers and services for all locals. Otherwise, if a business decides to maintain plants in its home country, it has to invest many resources in its community because it can gain a competitive advantage. To obtain a global success, it is not necessary to have industries all over the world but to find the right way to value its own resources. It does not matter where the firm decides to establish its production, the shared value can be created everywhere. All the possible changes in the manufacturing process that firms can implement to create economic value could create shared value: it only depends on the entrepreneur’s mindset. Social entrepreneurs, as they are called, take care of the social benefit. They want to adopt feasible and innovative business models, discovering new opportunities in the market.
Enabling Local Cluster Development

The third suggestion that Porter and Kramer provide in order to pursue social and economic values at the same time concerns the local cluster. The reason why they highlight its importance is because it is the context, the surrounding, the environment of the firm. Particularly, it considers all the related actors, other business sectors, service providers, suppliers, but it also comprehends institutions, trade organizations and academic entities, such as schools or universities, but also quality standards or laws that regulate competition. It is the background of the firm and it definitely drives the business behavior in manufacturing, competitiveness, and technologies. Ongoing exchanges between society and business show their interdependence. If the firm promotes the local cluster development, it will be seen positively by the whole community and its production will be prosperous. On the contrary, if in the setting are present some important matters, such as racial or gender discrimination, it is considered probable that they also affect internally the company. Part of the cluster is rooted in the firm. For this reason, applying good practices or equal treatment inside the firm could ease social issues. Another example can be the transparency of markets: banning cheating behaviors creates an environment based on open communications and, also, a fair trade, leading to profitable production. Ensuring a safe atmosphere has a multiplier effect: a prosperous market encourages new actors and increases the request for ancillary services. By strengthening the cluster framework, the business will receive many advantages both in developing countries and advanced economies. In both cases, to achieve the better result, it is necessary to identify weaknesses and gaps present in the system and then try to solve them. Generally, the collaboration with governments is fundamental: they can stimulate the pursuit of the shared value implementing a new regulation that promotes innovation. A proper regulation will be able to get closer social and economic issues encouraging companies to aim both objectives. It should stimulate competitiveness and a continuous challenge to new improvements, creating a comfortable environment for innovation.

Boosting the cluster, reshaping the productivity and redesigning products and markets will drive the creation of shared value. Positive results will be recorded in the whole society, such as a functional network of businesses and a prosperous community. Porter and Kramer claim that this could be the higher form of capitalism because profits involve a social purpose. Indeed, the best way a firm can start to create shared value in looking at its own particular business: it has to excel in its field and, through this, it should detect flourishing opportunities in which to invest. However, creating shared value has not to be watched only as a different and innovative kind of strategy. It involves good practices that became a sort of guideline, a constant inspiration, to the business in addressing decision-making processes and strategic planning. Shared value is a part of the strategy (M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2011).
The consulting firm FSG, that boasts the presence of Porter and Kramer in its team, launched the Shared Value Initiative in 2012. The company, the purpose of which is providing tools to realize social changes, tried to introduce the shared value on a global scale. In only a few years this initiative has grown very fast and now it works with 35 innovative partners, 12000 shared value practitioners that operate across all sectors and it certifies practices in 30 countries. Between the supporters and the associates of this initiative, there are some of the biggest company of the world, such as Enel, The Coca-Cola Company, but also pharmaceutical businesses, such as Bayer, or consulting corporations, like Deloitte and Ernest and Young. All these companies are supporting the creation of a social value that goes beyond the crude profit and their performances are certified. It is a wide community in which global leaders have the possibility to share their experiences, their suggestions and doubts to empower business at its best.

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4 Shared Value Initiative website.  
http://sharedvalue.org/about-initiative
In conclusion, even if the concept of corporate social responsibility had been already analyzed in the first paper of Porter and Kramer, *Strategy and Society*, some questions still remained unanswered about differences with the shared value. In consideration to this, Kramer decided to avoid any doubts explaining again the concept of creating shared value in greater detail.\(^5\) To the observation that both approaches are oriented to the same thing, “doing well by doing good”, he replied that the difference is deeper: it is in how the business watches and interprets the connection to society. Indeed, whether the shared value is something that drives leaders in making decisions pursuing a higher goal, CSR is seen as a cost, as a responsibility that the business thinks to have. They are two completely different way of thinking about the surrounding of the firm. Creating shared value aims to create a mutual relationship with society, producing a value that is able to enhance both the society and the business. Creating shared value is an advanced step to corporate social responsibility.

![CSR vs CSV diagram](image)

**Figure 3** CSR and CSV differences. M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer, 2011.

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3. Integrating sustainability in the core business

Focusing on social issues is important but is not the only aim to achieve. In fact, this objective has to be watched as a necessary phase to reach a higher goal: the sustainable development. The definition of sustainable development that is quoted by the major part of the scientific community, was published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 in its report *Our Common Future*, also known as Brundtland Report. It was defined as a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” It is clear that the attention is pointed to the future. It is necessary to apply a wise use of resources and avoid wasting them to guarantee a proper lifestyle to next generations. As E. Barbier (1987) underlined, whenever we refer to sustainable development, it must be clear that three systems are involved. Economic, social and environmental systems completely differ in features, issues and, above all, aims. Barbier has evidenced that the maximization of all goals at the same time is not allowed: each system does not take into account other systems, imposing them costs to obtain its own best result. It is that exactly during the pursuit of their own goals that the most important trade-offs arise. For the reason why they are strictly interdependent, it is obvious that to realize a sustainable development intended as already described, a balance between them must be found. Evaluating the willingness to realize the highest number of objectives, it is requested to undertake an *adaptive process of the trade-offs* (E.B. Barbier, 2011). Only this way the
entire system will survive, without compromising any sub-system. It has to be considered that this approach is a little bit different from the Shared Value perspective, whose attention is more focused on the economic and social systems, giving to the environmental one a secondary role.

However, as evidenced by Professor S. Zamagni, an Italian economist, social and environmental spheres are extremely connected. Particularly, explaining the main points of *Laudato Si*, the Encyclical written by Pope Francis in 2015, he has highlighted that they are two sides of the same coin. Social and environmental questions are not separable and, as a consequence, they must be solved together. Professor Zamagni underlines that is the first time these two important matters are considered inseparable. Before the Encyclical *Laudato Si* (2015), there were, in fact, two different schools of thought: anthropocentric and ecologist. Both of them were extremist. The first group would have allowed drastic measures in order to satisfy the global population needs. Between these kinds of practices, environmental losses would be considered though acceptable, such as deforestation or exploitation of natural resources. Instead, on the other side, extremist ecologists would have been able to protect environmental resources even at the cost of many lives. By the new perspective of Pope Francis, it is not possible to maintain these matters apart. It is impossible to safeguard the environment without providing a solution to social issues. This concept it is easy to recognize in the Sustainable Development Goals, that will be observed in depth in the following parts.

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3.1 Environmental and social issues coming from the economic system

The Business and Sustainable Development Commission of United Nations has evidenced the compelling need to shift to a sustainable global economy. Environmental and climate science data are much more worrying and costs of inactions are growing as well. In its recent report, Better Business, Better World (2017), the Commission underlines that if progress will be too slow, it would be too late for any kind of solution. This is the reason why action must be taken immediately. New measures and environmental policies must be developed and implemented as soon as possible, in each part of the world. Estimated data evidence that improvements made in the next 5-15 years will be fundamental to change the future of the planet, otherwise, a tipping point of no return will be reached. Indeed, without significant adjustments in human lifestyle and maintaining the actual rate of production, Earth will become close to uninhabitable as soon as the end of this century.

To clarify, climate change has not only to be intended as an overall increase in the average temperature, it is much more. Even though it is ignored by most all the people, the increase of the temperature leads to environmental changes that directly affect people, species, and plants. Many places have seen changes in rainfall, resulting in more floods, intense rain but also droughts or severe heat wave as well. The worst thing is that they occur more and more frequently showing an increase in their power. Recent researchers have demonstrated that oceans are becoming more acid, caps are melting and the sea level is rising. All these events inevitably ruin ecosystems, leading to losses in the variety of plants and animals. Humans are not an exception to all of this. Famine, scarcity of drinkable water, diseases from polluted air, and also a constant period of war are all feasible terrible scenarios prospected for the future. In addition, environmental factors are considered the main cause of the noncommunicable disease that is the actual largest cause of death and disease worldwide. Furthermore, health-care costs, treatments, and prevention costs are rising while this issue grows. Indeed, with a higher temperature, diseases will find a more comfortable environment to develop and expand all over the world. The World Health Organization (2017) has estimated that 12.6 million of deaths are linked to environmental issues and it corresponds to the 23% share of all global deaths every year. Particularly, 3 million of these deaths come as a result of exposure to fine particulate matter. Therefore, a healthy and sustainable environment is also promoted to prevent potential spreads. Human influence on the climate change is clear.

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Current anthropocentric emissions of CO2, released by industries, transports, agriculture, and households, are increasing the stock of greenhouse gases (GHGs) already present in the atmosphere. This cap traps heat and results in global warming. The only solution available to slow down the increasing temperature is to cut emissions. Everyone can contribute fighting climate change. For instance, even a diet that foresees a high meat consumption can have a negative impact on the CO2 stock. It has been calculated that a percentage of the 26% of the total emission can be associated with the CO2 emissions coming from agriculture, forestry, and other land use cover. The willingness to find a solution has pushed 196 countries to sign The Paris Agreement in 2015 with the promise of reducing GHGs emissions and drive climate change. The Paris Agreement officially commits governments to concretely implement national regulations, tools, and measures trying to maintain the global warming below 2 degrees Celsius; it is a complementary instrument to the Sustainable Development Goals. As of November 2017, signing parties are 195 and they have confirmed their commitment during the UN Climate Change Conference in Bonn, even if the announcement of the withdrawal of the United State is pending.

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3.2 The framework of Sustainable Development Goals

Over the past 30 years, developed countries have privileged the economic system. Investing resources to push ahead the productive sector clearly leads to positive consequences, such as technological discoveries, innovations in the medical and scientific field and, as a result, also to a better social situation. However, negative effects have been huge too. Resource reduction, ecosystem damages and loss of biodiversity have been recorded all over the world. Indeed, during this period of economic and social development, the environmental system has been severely exploited and its conditions have been almost ignored. Moreover, even if globalization has spread a general well-being, it has also caused negative effects from the economic point of view; for instance, economic inequalities. Nowadays, it is time to balance the economic, the social and the environmental systems again, giving the right weight to those that have suffered globalization costs. With this in mind, governments and international institutions have decided to take action. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals, are 17 objectives identified by the United Nation Development Program. Coming into effect in January 2016, they promote universal aims to overcome poverty, protect the planet and ensure a safe life and prosperity for all people. The project is to achieve these goals by 2030 but the challenge seems to be really grueling. There are a lot of conflicts of interests between the market’s actors: economic and technological differences in the world are too huge and, thus, developed countries are asked to support third world countries reaching proper conditions. Indeed, developing countries have still to face to basic needs, like drinking water, healthcare or hunger, and certainly, they would not be able to solve these issues alone. On the other side, being conscious that they have initially exploited natural resources to obtain a wealthy lifestyle and knowing the irreversible consequences that they have already caused in these years, developed countries should be really encouraged to assist poorer countries. Indeed, one of the main problem today is that developing countries can be rich only in natural resources and they are clearly pushed to overuse them trying to change their miserable situation. As a consequence, their inappropriate and unmeasurable use can also lead to the exploitation risk (R. Perman, et al., 2012). This is another reason why richer countries have to collaborate with developing countries, sharing their innovative procedures, technologies and efficient ways of production. Furthermore, if the development of these nations starts in a sustainable way, probably they will maintain the same method in the future, trying to improve it. This would be an achieved goal for the whole world and that is why cooperation among countries is greatly promoted by the UN Agenda.

3.3 How businesses can achieve Global Goals

Given all these points, the overall desire is to make the world sustainable, environmentally safe, socially fair and economically stable. However, to concretely realize this relevant transformation, any institution and business should be inspired by the SDGs, reducing the negative impacts of its activities. As the name of the five Global Goals suggests, the attention to the economy matters: Decent Work and Economic Growth; Sustainable Cities and Communities; Responsible Consumption and Production; Affordable and Clean Energy; Industries, Innovation, and Infrastructure. Introducing these objectives, the United Nations want to recognize that the economic model is a fundamental player in the improvement of the current situation. Indeed, the overall purpose of these goals is to stimulate and achieve a revolutionary long-term model of growth.

Furthermore, the Business and Sustainable Development Commission claims that business people are the only ones who have the power to strike out in new directions to embrace more sustainable and inclusive economic models (2017). The Commission also underlines that, even if they are often associated, sustainable development and corporate social responsibility are divergent. Introducing Global Goals for sustainable development in the company’s strategic agenda is quite different than following them as a sort of inspiration to promote good practices. Indeed, it is expected that more and more businesses will adopt SDGs as guidelines for their internal decisions, joining an increasing network with an ambitious point of view for the future. Moreover, a spread long-term model of growth would lead to powerful incentives for companies, tax reductions and investments from stakeholders and governments, developing a prosperous market. As a consequence, new market opportunities will be opened and those businesses that have not yet joined the global sustainable vision will be penalized observing a reduction in their market share.

Considering the above-expected scenario, a business should apply a sustainable mindset to become a pioneer and to transform this approach in a competitive advantage as soon as possible. With this intention, companies should carefully study SDGs and identify which of them could be able to help them in the realization of this purpose. Indeed, it is unimaginable that they could cover the entire spectrum of Global Goals, considering that many of them are too broad and complicated to be immediately realized, such as “no poverty” or “no hunger”. To get a complete fulfillment of the global objectives, each enterprise must take choices and address its resources to the goals that are closer to its affairs. The success of this behavior has been demonstrated to be the best approach to

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SDGs by a yearlong research conducted on 20 inclusive innovators spanning 10 industries. The study, entitled *The Inclusive Innovators* (B. Chakravorti, 2016), was conducted over the period 2015-2016, as soon as the Global Goals were announced. It acknowledges that SDGs are interdependent but they can still be distinguished on the type of priority: in fact, some of them can be watched as intermediate goals that support the realization of the greater ones. For instance, the first Global Goal, concerning “no poverty”, can be pursued only whether the others would be already partially achieved; indeed, it is clearly an endpoint and, thus, is on the top of the pyramid in figure 6.

In addition to the initial distinction, the research suggests that businesses are characterized by a different degree of leverage on global issues, depending on their particular business. Indeed, they can be more focused on a specific problem than another one, or, rather, huge companies could be able to act on many fields at the same time. Specifically, the study has identified three different macro areas in which enabler and end-state goals can be distinguished: planet, people, and policy. This distinction can be vertically observed in the representation of figure 6. Providing the segmentation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the research gives a helpful tool to businesspeople for easily
recognizing which relevant aims they could involve in their business agenda. To find out the goals, it is necessary to analyze the whole value chain. For instance, the Coca-Cola Company focuses its attention on three different fields: water, women, and well-being. Once individuated the goals, the last step is to make them part of an overall corporate strategy and to extend them in any other activity they plan. However, as suggested both by the research’s title and by the Business and Sustainable Development Commission, the necessary action to achieve the objectives by 2030 is focusing on inclusion. Particularly, the Commission has estimated that at least ¾ of the world’s poorest people are located in the same place where many supply chains begin (2017).

For instance, introducing new technologies in rural areas or paying workers more than the minimum wage are a modest waiver for the corporation but a great improvement for the local community. The company has to study the context in which it operates to detect how to include the unprivileged: while a social and economic development is undertaken, it is necessary that no one is left behind. Considering this point, gender equality seems to be a fundamental milestone for a company that wants to grow. Even if companies can act differently to promote inclusion, it results, in fact, that pursuing gender equality is driving business growth. Removing different wages and guaranteeing the same treatment to all workers introduce an innovation inside the whole company and its entire supply chain. However, from an overall point of view, introducing this approach could mean shaping a new mindset in the society, especially in developing countries. This could positively lead to induce people to ask governments for new gender policies, encouraging the development of the whole society. Step by step, implementing much more connections and reinforcing those already presented, the relationship between business and society will be stronger and a prosperous environment will be created.
3.4 The evolution of sustainable businesses

Finally, after having identified on which issues and goals the business can positively have an impact, it is time to understand how a sustainable behavior can be concretely put into practice. First of all, it is necessary to specify that there is not a singular notion to describe how an enterprise can be defined as sustainable and, hence, there is more than one behavior that could be considered sustainable. However, it is a shared opinion that a sustainable business is strictly linked to the capability to shape its model observing the unstable condition of the market. Therefore, it is a company that improves its capacity to endure. Considering a recent survey conducted on 196 Italian businesses in June 2016, there are many instruments, procedures and initiatives to make a business more sustainable (EY and DNV-GL, 2017). The measures that have been evaluated as the most feasible to be integrated in the business in the following three years are: managing systems (52.7%), such as ISO 9001, 14001, 18001, stakeholder engagement (33.8%), sustainable innovation of goods (29.5%) and environmental footprint (22.7%), as carbon footprint and water footprint. Moreover, the implementation of an ethics code or an integrated report, the development of shared value initiatives and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals are all still considered as potential tools to improve the sustainability integration.

In the meanwhile, to switch toward a more sustainable path of growth, governments are increasing the business regulation concerning social and environmental issues. For instance, the European Commission has introduced the Directive 2014/95/EU that commits large companies to publish reports on non-financial information.12 Consequently, they are required to provide information related to environmental protection, social responsibilities, respect for human rights, anti-corruption and bribery, diversity and inclusion. The interested companies must publish these reports since 2018, publishing information related to the 2017 financial year. Clearly, the implementation of all these kinds of practices requires long periods, especially for huge companies that sometimes are challenged to modify their internal structure.

The introduction of a constant compliance, together with a voluntary approach to sustainable procedures, permits businesses to become more and more sustainable over time. It is possible to consider this process as a continuous improvement of the business sustainability, as a sort of business evolution, that can be classified on different levels of action. According to a recent academic paper, companies can actually be divided into four different typologies considering their concerns, what

12 European Commission website – Non-financial reporting
kind of value they create and how they conceive their organization (Dyllick and Muff, 2015). Particularly, a business is evaluated on how much it does to integrate social, environmental and economic issues. The Business-as-Usual has to pass many stages to improve itself and achieve the last Business Sustainability Typology (BST), that is clearly reputed as the desirable status. The typologies and differences between them can be seen in figure 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Sustainability Typology (TSP)</th>
<th>Concerns (What?)</th>
<th>Value Created (What for?)</th>
<th>Organizational perspective (How?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business -as-usual</td>
<td>Economic concerns</td>
<td>Shareholder value</td>
<td>Inside-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sustainability 1.0</td>
<td>Three-dimentional concerns</td>
<td>Refined sharholders value</td>
<td>Inside-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sustainability 2.0</td>
<td>Three-dimentional concerns</td>
<td>Triple bottom line</td>
<td>Inside-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sustainability 3.0</td>
<td>Starting with sustainability challenges</td>
<td>Creating value for the common good</td>
<td>Outside-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The key shifts involved
- First shift: Broadening the business concern
- Second shift: expanding the value created
- Third shift: changing the perspective

Figure 7 Representation of the Business Sustainability Typology of Dyllick and Muff. Inspired by EY and DNV-GL, 2017.

The latter typology, known as the Business Sustainability 3.0 or the Truly Sustainable Business, is a company that has found an excellent balance between social, environmental and economic systems. In this final phase, the business has reconceived the idea of using its resources and capabilities to produce goods and services in order to have a positive role in addressing global challenges, such as global warming, migration, water or poverty. It has compared all these challenges to what it would be able to do, transforming them into opportunities. This kind of approach is called “outside-in” and, differently from that of a Business-as-Usual one, characterizes a business for an active role in contributing to societal and planetary challenges. The BST 3.0 is a business conscious of its possibilities and aware of what it can really do for itself and the society, keeping always under consideration the respect for the environment. Therefore, it is the sustainable model of business at which current enterprises should desire to become. The realization of this kind of business is not definitely simple to realize, however, there is a new actor in the market that would satisfy all these requirements: The Certified B Corporation.
1. B Corps redefine success in business

To have a positive impact on the society, it is necessary to manage businesses as a force for good. This is the idea that drives an increasing number of business people all over the world. These ambitious entrepreneurs have decided to voluntarily fulfill rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. A Certified B Corporation, also known as B Corp, go beyond the common idea of making a profit, they claim businesses can do much more. They definitely believe that using business in a certain way, it will be possible to positively affect the community and the whole environment that surrounds them. Indeed, they are firmly convinced that the key point is no longer competing to be the best in the world, but to be the best for the world. Furthermore, these business people add that improving and strengthening environmental and social performances will result in profitability and in a higher value creation. B Corp certification helps consumers and investors to identify these changemakers that serve society and stakeholders.

The B Corp movement has become global. Actually, the community is made of 2358 B Corps, spread in more than 50 countries. They operate in different sectors, offering a variegated set of services and goods, but they are unified by a single goal: redefine success in business. Italy has 69 Certified B Corps and is the country that boasts the higher number in Europe (December 2017).

Figure 8 B the change. People using business as a force for good. B Corp Literature.

13 B Corporation website. 
https://www.bcorporation.net/
1.1 From *For-Benefit* Enterprises to B Corp

Even if it has generated a wide-spread prosperity, the present model of capitalism has some lacks. Indeed, as already mentioned in the first chapter, pushing ahead the economic system has led to social and environmental consequences that, in the worst cases, cannot be restored. However, under the current circumstances, these weaknesses would not be solved. The only solution is to change the actual situation providing a different configuration of capitalism. For instance, by trying to design a hybrid approach that could find a balance between for-profit and non-profit organizations. The creation of a new model of enterprise would satisfy the willingness of entrepreneurs aware of social issues: this was the framework in which the B Corp idea took shape (C. Maquis, A. Klaber, B. Thomason, 2010).

A new kind of health insurance entity was established in the USA as a result of the debate on the 2009 health care reform. Named COOP, it was aimed to foster quality of care, improve cost efficiency, but, above all, to create a broader access to health care system, that is principally private in the United States. This entity was a perfect mix between for-profit, non-profit, cooperative and public models. It resulted really attractive for many advantages: fiscal cuts, charge premiums or well regarded by customers. Particularly, this latter reason comes out because COOP directed the greatest part of its profit toward its social mission, improving performances precisely in favor of its clients. This new entity, that pushed health of members before profit maximization, caught the interest of many fields, especially the economic one. Indeed, in many mature economies, the idea of a *for-benefit* enterprise emerged. The intention was to build up a traditional business that would be funded primarily to seek social benefits rather than to maximize financial returns. To accomplish this lofty goal, it was obviously fundamental a supportive ecosystem, made by actors and rules, because entrepreneurs were facing with a legislation lack: as non-profits, they wanted to pursue a social mission, but in the meanwhile, as for-profits, they still wanted to create goods and services.

Considering this issue, it is generally recognized that the definition of the business structure is fundamental: a proper structure does not only run the success, it also dictates the capital access. For-profit and non-profit entities actually have different sources of funding: the first one, can be supported by private investments, such as bank or shareholders’ loans, on the contrary, non-profits can enjoy philanthropic funds. However, no one of these two kinds of organization reflected the willingness of social entrepreneur. For this reason, it was necessary a new legal form that could assist this new methodology of doing business. Indeed, combining social and economic aims was clearly not a new matter but, it had never been officially introduced in any legal framework. Therefore, to define the
legal structure of a *for-benefit* enterprise, it was fundamental to include two characteristics: an embedded purpose and earned income. Social concern required the same weight as profit maximization; it would become a mission for the business as well. However, the profit generation could not be ignored for an increasing prosperity of the business. These two features were considered the crucial characteristics or a sort of prerequisites for creating the *for-benefit* enterprise. Anyway, the legal structure could be better defined considering others elements, such as inclusive ownership, transparency, fair compensation or stakeholder governance (H. Sabeti, 2011).

As a predictable consequence, setting a new entity in the legal framework leads to a new sector in the real market. In the literature, this new sector is known as the fourth sector and it is likely to reshape the future of capitalism. To be more specific, it comprehends all the activities concerning corporate social responsibility, sustainability, social investing, microfinance, cause-oriented marketing and purchasing, venture philanthropy and, civic and municipal enterprise. It is very important to highlight that *for-benefits* cannot replace the other three sectors but they aim to fill the gaps that they have left. Sabeti (2011) claimed that for a resilient and competitive 21st Century economy all the four sectors are necessary. Both governments and markets must recognize the importance of the fourth sector.

The non-profit organization B Lab has defined the infrastructure for this new sector of the economy designing B Corps in 2010. The B Lab has drawn the road for a new economy. Indeed, it is not a case that the B stands for Benefit. The B Corp community wants to become a promoter of this new sector, driving its development. B Corporations want to foster competitiveness not to be the best in the world, but rather to be the best *for* the world. Redefining the success of business means be aware of what it really matters. It is time to be conscious that the profit maximization is still not the unique value a company is able to create. In the current society, in which governments and non-profits are too weak to compensate increasing social issues, business is required to do much more (C. Maquis, *et al.*, 2010).

Differently, from non-profits, B Corporations have the power to attract talents because they are also motivated by market challenges and they are not addicted to philanthropic fundings and, thus, they do not depend on donations. B Corps are hence companies that want to excel in their market sector, while never forgetting their social mission. They constantly act using their business as a force for good because they are in a position of improving the well-being of the entire community. These enterprises want to provide a material positive impact on the society and the environment, maintaining to perform in a competitive and efficient market. By boosting long-period sustainable objectives than short-term profit, these businessmen, also known as changemakers, permit to accelerate the capitalism evolution, giving the right value to aspects that have been overlooked till now. It is time to switch from the stakeholder value maximization, that was deeply encouraged over the 20th Century, to a shared value maximization. The businesses of the 21st Century are not allowed to avoid social and
environmental issues. Their surroundings require the highest concern and companies are challenged to take decisions in the name of sustainability. The whole planet needs new leaders that finally take care of the entire global situation, not limiting their responsibility to the business affairs. Redefine success in business is a global challenge to reappraise the significance of communities and natural resources and, according to the B Lab, these are the values that must be evaluated because they represent what really matters. This is the great innovation of B Corps: to assign worth to elements that have never been considered till now. Indeed, through the B Impact Assessment, it is possible to quantify theoretical concepts, such as environmental awareness or social responsibility. Previously, business assessments were disgregated and focused only on particular elements, especially the economic ones. Thanks to the B Corp certification it is possible to evaluate the company as a whole, considering all its aspects at the same time. Indeed, the certification meets social and environmental standards, legal accountability and public transparency. It is similar to the Fair-Trade certification for the coffee production, but, differently, it comprehends in the evaluation all the areas the business deals with. The B Impact Assessment, the tool used to measure the performances, has been inspired by Global Reporting Initiative, Wiser Earth, and other well-known specific certification. The B Corp certification, thus, helps customers to easily recognize the really good companies in the market. B Corps are the best companies in the world and they are identified as leaders of a global movement that has a positive approach to business in order to drive global issues in a future economy (R. Honeyman, 2016).

Figure 9 From a good product to a good company. B Corp Literature.
1.2 The B Lab foundation

Jay Coen Gilbert, Bart Houlahan, and Andrew Kassoy are the three creators of the B Corp certification. They met for the first time in the 1980s, as schoolmates at Stanford University. They have been friends until that moment, even if they had different working experiences. Particularly, two of them, Coen Gilbert and Bart Houlahan, founded an athletic footwear company, AND 1, in 1993. This business was really cutting-edge because it had already adopted socially responsible behaviors, long before this concept was widespread. Indeed, workers had many different advantages: they had the possibility to join yoga lessons or to play in a private basketball court, they benefited from parental leave and the property of some company’s shares as well. Moreover, the business donated the 5% of profit each year to local organizations. It was clearly a forward-thinking business that took care of its workers and its surrounding environment. The enterprise was really profitable and, in many years, it was preceded only by Nike. However, after having taken wrong internal decisions and being penalized by external conditions, AND 1 recorded a reduction in selling that lead a critical situation for the whole enterprise. Fixed the account balance, the co-founders decided to sell the company in 2005 (R. Honeyman, 2016).

Observing all their efforts were vanishing, Gilbert and Houlahan understood that profit is only one of the many values business is able to generate. They noticed that some other companies, such as Patagonia or Ben & Jerry’s, were sharing the same point of view: they were really involved in having a positive impact on the society, applying methodologies and practices similar to those implemented by AND 1. Therefore, together with their friend Andrew Kassoy, that in the meanwhile had a successful private equity career in Wall Street, decided to build up a new enterprise with the same modus operandi. The aim was to design a new organization that would have had the specific duty to measure and prove other businesses on their capability to create social benefit. Over the course of time, they realized that an enterprise or an investment fund would not be the best solution to solve social issues on large scale.

To concretely promote social sensibility, they figured out that business people needed two fundamental infrastructural components: a regulatory framework and reference standards to follow. Specifically, rules would have helped them to grow, keeping in consideration their mission and original values, while standards would have been useful to certify business’s real commitment from other companies in the market. Then, to draw up these conditions, Gilbert, Houlahan, and Kassoy founded B Lab, an independent nonprofit organization. It was created in June 2006 with the purpose of creating a new sector of the economy. Indeed, the three founders wanted to promote a systemic
change, giving greater weight to social and environmental systems. They strongly believed that combining the purpose of the civil society and the power of the market, they would have led an acceleration in the economic growth. B Lab has three main functions since it was founded, however, a new one has been recently added (R. Honeyman, 2016).

First of all, B Lab has aimed to build a community of business people that share the same ideas of doing good.\textsuperscript{14} They believe that business capability of producing profitable value must be used also to address social and environmental issues. Identifying corporations that belong to this global community is possible because they proudly expose the B Corp symbol: indeed, they are recognized as Certified B Corporation. This certification proves the respect of social and environmental standards, public transparency, and legal accountability.

Secondly, B Lab has the objective of promoting the mission alignment. Indeed, it encourages innovative corporate structures that try to find a balance between corporate and social interests. A company should not absorb resources from the community in which it operates, but instead, it should forward a positive energy to boost its progress. The proposal of this new kind of business that wants to serve social development is quite unconventional in a capitalistic economy and, for this reason, companies need a reference point, such as it could be B Lab. It helps to focus issues related to business activities and how to carry out higher fruitful actions.

Moreover, the third important function of the B Lab is providing assistance and suggestions to businesses, investors, and institution. In fact, B Lab has developed two different tools, the B Impact Assessment and the B Analytics, to measure the business positive impact. Indeed, even if these instruments are required to be conducted in order to successfully gain the B Corp certification, they are freely available to each business as a measurement tool for their performances. They will be analyzed in depth during this chapter.

In addition, B Lab has also launched a story-telling platform in the last few years. Several business stories and examples are available on the official website to let changemakers know each other experiences, with the purpose of providing advice and stimulating new ideas. The global platform is named B the Change and it is a source of inspiration for all B Corps around the world. Through social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, or subscribing the newsletter mailing list, it is really easy to be always updated.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} B Lab website. 
https://b-lab.uservoice.com/  
\textsuperscript{15} B the Change website. 
https://bthechange.com/
To summarize, B Lab deals with financial sustainability, certification, and related services, creating the road for a new economy. Being a non-profit organization, it has been calculated that the 30% of B Lab is funded by certification revenues, while the remainder is provided by philanthropic support. It can be consulted online the entire list of supporters. Therefore, even if corporations pay a share for the B Corp certification, this amount covers only a part of the full value of certification.

The first B Lab was born in the USA and it is currently set in Berwyn, Pennsylvania, even if it has offices in San Francisco, New York, and Colorado. Moreover, each geographic area has its own B Lab. Indeed, over the American one, there are other five B Labs: B Lab Europe, B Lab United Kingdom, Sistema B, for South America countries, B Lab Australia and New Zealand and, finally, B Lab Portugal and Africa. Italian corporations, for instance, make references to B Lab Europe, that is actually headquartered in Amsterdam. It has also developed a team of experts, called European B Lawyers Group, in collaboration with ELSA, the European Social Enterprise Law Association. Having a deep knowledge of the legislation concerning the Benefit Corporation, this Group is a reference point for the whole European B Corp movement, providing advice and legal assistance.

The B Lab performances are controlled by the Board of Directors that checks its strategy and observes the management of financial budgets and operations. The aim of Directors is to guarantee a transparent multi-stakeholder engagement. In addition, they have also two extremely important tasks. Firstly, they have the authority of forming the Advisory Councils, oversight of their activities and approve their recommendations. Secondly, the Board of Directors has to look for potential philanthropic donors and investors to permit an excellent B Lab functionality.
1.3 Advantages of becoming a B Corp

It is true that deciding of becoming a B Corp requires exceeding a rigorous certification process and a lot of efforts over time, but, there are also many advantages. Clearly, the B Corp community gathers together companies that differ in size, activity, and maturity, however, all of them can gain some profit. For instance, those at the beginning of their evolution, such as start-ups, can benefit from shareholders investments because, thanks to the B Corp certification, have increased their reputation. On the other side, for those enterprises that have already confirmed their placement in the market, such as Ben & Jerry’s or Numi Organic Tea, could be attracted to pursue the certification principally for marketing edges. Consequently, advantages concretely depend on the current situation in which the business is and how much it wants to utilize its certification. The B Corp community has nonetheless evidenced some important features that can be founded joining the movement (R. Honeyman, 2016).

• Lead a movement
By achieving the B Corp certification, the business recognizes to be part of a group of leaders with the same vision. In fact, even if a businessman has a positive behavior and acts considering its own principles, it could be heart-warming to know that others operate in the same manner. Businessmen are not alone in trying to fix social and environmental problems. Indeed, the necessity of measuring not only financial performances has to be spread all over the world and the B Corp movement is the promoter of this new idea of economy. The certification permits to give the right attention to environmental and social issues that must be enhanced in order to guarantee a prosperous future for next generations.
• Benchmark performance

Thanks to the B Impact Assessment, all companies have the possibility to freely measure their social and environmental impact. Particularly, it helps to evaluate the performances, giving a score on a 200-range scale. Usually, the first B Impact Assessment results really strict, however, it is extremely useful because it readily evidences weaknesses to fix for the benefit of a whole range of stakeholders. As a consequence, a B Corp that knows its own lacks, it is able to set future decisions in order to address its strategy and improve itself. Moreover, the tool permits to compare company’s skills and capabilities to other businesses that belong to the same market sector. Some companies, such as Fratelli Carli and Ben & Jerry’s, use the same instrument also to calculate the benchmark of their principal suppliers.

![Figure 11 Comparison between B Corps and other sustainable businesses that conduct the BIA.](image)

• Attract investors

Improving its own activities through the B Impact Assessment, the business is more easily directed to pursue positive economic results. Obviously, increasing earnings lead to a higher company’s attractiveness. The B Corp obtains thus a positive credit between investors, especially those who take into consideration social and environmental criteria in the same ways as financial ones. The certification guarantee investments through legal and performance standards. Indeed, for instance, B Corps have the possibility to get a free GIIRS Ratings (Global Impact Investments Rating System), the gold standard for funds, enhancing their financial trust and reputation.
• Be part of a collective voice
B Corps create a solid network that wants people to know about their mission and how they use the business. It is easy to understand that working together, with a collective voice, it is more powerful. Indeed, being part of a structured and well-organized movement can have a more concrete impact than whichever company that acts alone. Operating as a compact entity to spread the idea of using business as a good force is, with no doubt, more effective. Above all, it also permits to easily reach some goals, such as standards adoptions, legal implementation or modifications in consumer’s behavior. Of course, the greater is the movement, the higher will be the influence on the society.

• Partner with peers
By taking part in the B Corp community opens many opportunities. Businesses can establish closer connections with other B Corps. Precisely, the certification provides the opportunity to develop collaborations with companies that are set in the identical geographic area, that operate in the same market segment or that share interests. These partnerships and networks can be really profitable for companies and, thus, national and international meetings are usually organized to make businesspeople know each other personally. Building new relationships helps the community to become more and more straight. Thanks to an efficient and active network, new ideas take shape and B Corp movement grows on a global scale.

• Attract and engage talent
According to Harvard Business Review, millennials are searching job positions that provide more than an economic livelihood. They are looking for enterprises that share their same personal values to find a balance between private and working life. They want a work that constantly creates new challenges, that catches their attention and motivates their curiosity. Moreover, letting people know how much their job is fundamental for the enterprise, it will increase their passion and creativity. Indeed, involving employees in business aims it is fundamental to the success of the entire company. People need to recognize themselves as a part of something bigger, that share the same point of view. B Corp provides a framework of ethical and social values largely spreads around the world, giving the possibility of being part of a great community. This situation creates, thus, the basis to attract young and proactive talent, attracted more by a social mission than a merely economic gain. Clearly, involving new mindsets inside the business could likely lead positive consequences in terms of innovative ideas and improvements.
• Generate press
Promoting themselves as positive businesses that take care of social and environmental issues, Certified B Corps explicitly attract the media interest. The B Corp global movement is gaining more and more relevance and it has been mentioned in many of the most important newspaper and scientific journals, such as The Financial Times and The Economists. Smaller B Corps have gained the same attention as the greater ones. A huge support to all the B Corp movement is given by the B Lab that takes care of public relationships and strategic marketing operations. In fact, it has raised awareness of the B Corp movement promoting, together with Fast Company, the publication of Rockstar of the New Economy, an annual collection in order to present twelve B Corps. And not least, the B Lab has established the Best for the World, an annual award for the best 10% B Corps, that receives great emphasis on Forbes, The Guardian and Bloomberg Businessweek.

Figure 12 Best for the World award symbol. B Corp Literature.

• Protect mission
The B Corp certification swells business trust and transparency reputation thanks to the incorporation of social and environmental concern in the company decisions. The introduction of these tight criteria in the business legal configuration modifies its DNA, addressing its mission and performances. In this way, even founders will retire or the company will be sold to other owners, the core business will have to remain the same because the B Corp certification preserves and guarantees societal values over time. Indeed, being part of the business mission, social and environmental values are granted by law. From this, it follows that the mission of founders will survive to other management. When new CEOs or investors will hereby make decisions, they would have to keep into consideration both shareholders and stakeholders, exactly as it has been planned in the statue. The values conservation in the long period was one of the main advantages that convinced Patagonia to join the B Corp movement.
• Strengthen the brand and differentiate from pretenders
Sinek aims that consumers are not attracted by goods but by businesses conscious of their purposes and believes or, in other words, by those companies that know why they are creating their products. People are willing to spend much more if they recognize themselves in the business values. The B Corp certification testifies that social and environmental matters are effectively pursued and they are not only greenwashing marketing strategies. A Certified B Corp concretely acts and, thus it differs from competitors. The certification can become a competitive advantage because it guarantees consumers transparency, credibility and, trust. Moreover, clients can consult online the B Impact Report, a chart that shows the company’s score of each area evaluated.

Figure 13 Advertising Champaign. To look deeper in products, you buy. B Corp Literature.

• Save money
Saving money is not usually the main purpose of becoming a Certified B Corp, however, some companies have joyfully recorded also this advantage. Economic benefits result from discounts related to partnerships with other Certified B Corps. Businesses, by using the B Corp network, are able to save make savings helping each other on office management, consultancy or funding loans. Companies are able to market trade services as well as goods. At a municipal level, B Corps have received also fiscal cuts and privileges in calls for tender in the USA (R. Honeyman, 2016).

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2. How to obtain the B Corp certification

After having exposed all the advantages of becoming a Certified B Corp, it is necessary to explain how to join the global community and, thus, to take part in the movement. The possibility of managing a business as a force for good is possible whether the corporation is an ordinary business, a start-up or a multinational company. Obviously, the process differs a little bit, but, the main steps remain the same: enterprises have to comply with performance and legal requirements.

As the green labels of the figure below shows, the procedure can start from two different initial points. A company can spontaneously decide to test its skills or otherwise, in the countries where the legal framework foresees the possibility, it can start modifying its legal form to protect its mission. In both cases, the business is required to undertake a free online tool, called B Impact Assessment (BIA), that helps corporations to measure their positive impact. This confidential tool is available for every business but it is necessary to get at least 80 points on 200 in order to obtain the certification. After having obtained this minimum score and having presented all the necessary information, the B Lab concludes whether the business complies with social and environmental requirements to become a Certified B Corp. Considering the overall score earned on the B Impact Assessment, only the 10% of the Certified B Corp will be raked in the annual “B Corp Best for the World” list.

Figure 14 The Certified B Corp roadmap. B Corp literature.
Even if the certification lasts two years, the 10% of the Certified B Corporations are yearly subjected to a control. They are randomly selected in order to keep monitoring the situation and make sure companies are respecting requirements. To maintain the certification after the two-year period, the business has to renovate the assessment, providing additional documentation. Usually, it scores higher than the first BIA because it has had time to improve its relationships with stakeholders. However, the compulsory edge of 80 points remains. This process is known as Recertification.

Usually, the certification process is detected in those companies that have been in operation for more than twelve months because the B Impact Assessment takes into consideration performances and policies conducted over the past year. However, nowadays, start-ups have the possibility to undertake the B Impact Assessment and gain a temporary Certification Pending designation. Displaying the Certification Pending logo on all goods and services shall forward reputation of the new corporation between the stakeholders. It communicates the start-up wants to operate acting in the respect of the highest standards for socially responsible businesses. Indeed, performing the assessment, an enterprise can learn the guidelines and the criteria considered in the evaluation, shaping its evolution on them. Furthermore, with the Pending Certification, the start-up can gain all the advantages of being part of the B Corp community. Clearly, it will receive a preferential treatment compared to other start-ups and, wherever it is possible, it will be assisted by the skilled B Corps. First of all, to earn the Pending status is claimed to meet the legal requirement and, after having completed the prospective B Impact Assessment, it has to be sign the Pending Certification Term Sheet. After the first year of life, every enterprise would be able to regularly conduct the B Impact Assessment, irrespective of when it had gained the Pending Certification.

On the opposite side, the number of multinational companies that are becoming interested in the B Corp certification is rising. Danone, Unilever, and Ban Colombia can be mentioned between them. The fact that international businesses are interested in engaging with the B Corp movement reflects that the certification is getting known and its value is recognized. Enterprises of each size are becoming aware of their own responsibilities. However, assessing huge business is much more complicated, both for the institutional and practical barriers and also for the B Lab supervision. The current requirements are not suited for the impact and complex structure of multinationals. For this reason, B Lab, together with these companies, has established a Multinationals and Public Markets Advisory Council (MPMAC) in order to design a clear path to B Corp Certification for multinational and public companies. The project was launched in 2015 and it was supposed to last till 2017. In the meanwhile, multinationals of limited size are eligible to conduct the B Impact Assessment. Particularly, they have to earn less than $5 billion in revenues, operate in less than 10 countries or have less than 5 industries and, further, have less than 50 subsidiaries. Multinationals that, on the
contrary, exceed these parameters are encouraged to take engagement opportunities in four different ways: they can help their subsidiaries to gain the B Corp certification, they can start measuring their social and environmental performances or trying to define a mission-aligned governance structure, or, in addition, they can actively participate to the B Corp movement. All these kinds of actions are planned to get a faster certification process once the MPM Advisory Council’s work will be finished (B Lab, 2015). Danone, for instance, has joined the MPMAC in 2015 and, after having gained the B Corp certification for Happy Family Brands in 2011, it has committed to using the B Impact Assessment for other 10 Group Danone subsidiaries since 2016.\(^{17}\) Different is the case of public companies because they have to meet additional transparency and validation requirements. Compared to all the other companies that have to publish their B Impact Report with the final areas score, they must make transparent their complete B Impact Assessment. Moreover, B Lab has to validate performances of public companies and companies with more than $1 billion revenue each of the two-year certification.

In any case, the B Lab staff and members of the B Corp community have developed detailed webinars and interactive explanations available on the B Corp website, to provide all the necessary explanations of the certification process. The major part of the information provided in this chapter has been retrieved from *Il Manuale delle B Corp* (R. Honeyman, 2016) and the B Corp website.\(^{18}\)

### 2.1 Steps to become a Certified B Corp

To become a Certified B Corp, three fundamentals steps are mandatory: to meet performance requirements, to meet legal requirements and, finally, to make it official. Specifically, they are:

**Step 1: Meet Performance Requirement**

The characteristic of the B Corp certification is that measuring business performances does not take into account only traditional aspects, as the economic and financial ones, but, gives high relevance to social and environmental areas. As already mentioned in the introduction of the second chapter, all businesses that are intended to gain the B Corp certification, are required to undertake the B Impact Assessment (BIA). It measures the overall business performance and varies on the company’s size, sector, and location of primary operation. It is a particular instrument and, for this reason, it has been


\(^{18}\) B Corporation website. https://www.bcorporation.net/
decided to dedicate the next subchapter as its focus. Anyway, after having completed the BIA, the business receives a B Impact Report that contains an overall score. However, to definitely make the BIA official, it is necessary to support data with a proper documentation. Subsequently, an Assessment Review is scheduled and 6-8 randomly questions will be accurately analyzed thanks to the upload of the respective information. The documentation provided will be strictly confidential and used by B Lab just to check what declared in the BIA. The documentation has to be listed within 48 hours or otherwise, the review will be scheduled again. The process is considered complete when a B Lab staff member takes part in the Assessment Review, going over every unclear answer or doubt. In this phase, information must be investigated to comprehend more about the company’s performances. Once obtained a score higher or equal to 80 points, the Assessment requires going deeper into the Impact Business Model by asking the enterprise to demonstrate more details concerning this field. These documents will be added to the documentation already provided, and the staff also reserve the right to ask for additional clarifying documents. In any case, the staff is always available to furnish all the suggestions and indications to successfully conclude the first step. In order to satisfy any doubts of the B Lab, the business has to fill in and sign the Disclosure Questionnaire. This document allows the company to confidentially disclose any sensitive practices, fines, and sanctions related to the enterprise or its partners. In this circumstance, wherever the Disclosure Questionnaire highlights further items, the business will be invited to submit again other documents to prove its transparency. The cases in which the certification is denied or revoke are really rare, however, the participation in the B Corp community is at the sole discretion of the Standards Advisory Council and the B Lab’s Board of Directors. Finally, to definitely complete the performance requirement, it is included the background checks by the B Lab staff. Particularly, it controls all the sources dealing with the business, such as news, public records, information about the founders and executives, and other relevant matters. The aim is to better know the institution; it is a sort of double-check to verify if the enterprise is worthy enough to have obtained the B Corp certification.

Step 2: Meet Legal Requirement

This requirement basically asks companies to officially recognize a new criterion in their DNA: the sustainability. By adding this further main objective, the concern to sustainable issues becomes more than a reason of interest to the business, it becomes a mission to pursue. Sustainability results to be a guideline to follow during each decision-making process. Indeed, comply the legal requirement ensures the business to preserve its mission wherever it comes a new management, new investors, or even new ownership. Particularly, the legal requirement guarantees a legal protection to directors and officers in order to let them free to operate, keeping in consideration all stakeholders. Through this
way, also shareholders have the possibility to obtain additional rights in order to be more considered during the company’s decisions. However, even if their concern is guarded, they are not allowed to limit decisions and, thus, their exclusivity is reduced. Meeting the legal requirements is probably the only step that can differ around the world in the B Corp certification process because it depends on the legislation of the country in which the enterprise is set. Only two countries in the world possess a specific legislation for the benefit enterprise and, precisely, they are many of the U.S.A. countries and Italy. These particular situations will be studied below. In all the other countries, the business has to adopt governing documents which include a commitment to a “triple bottom line” approach to business. The principal aim is to choose the closer business structure to the benefit enterprise, that legal configuration that could be able to protect the innovative mission of the enterprise. In the governing documents must be declared that the board members of the company have to take into account all the stakeholders interests in making decisions. Moreover, beyond the usual stakeholders (shareholders, suppliers, and employees), also society and environment must be mentioned. To better clarify, shareholders do not have a higher relevance than all the other stakeholders. After having identified the proper legal corporate structure and having known all the consequences coming from this amend, the enterprise can ask the B Corp certification. Then, it is necessary to obtain the approval by the board and the shareholders of the planned amendment. Finally, in case of a corporation, it has to be submitted the amended articles to the Secretary of State within one year. It is available online the accurate Legal Roadmap for the main countries.

Step 3: Make it Official

The certification procedure can be considered concluded after having signed the B Corp Declaration of Interdependence and Term Sheet. The Declaration of Interdependence (Appendix A) claims that the business belongs to a global movement that believes in a new sector of the economy. It specifies that it has become a Benefit Corporation and wants to promote this emerging economy by using business as a force for good. On the Declaration, there are all the goals and acknowledge that B Corp movement hopes to put into practice. Instead, the Term Sheet specifies that the certification has a two-years duration and, after that period, the company can be recertified. It declares that both performances and legal requirements are satisfied and that the company will accept a review if randomly selected. To conclude, the business has to pay the annual certification fee, that is calculated on the revenues and subsists the B Lab functioning.
2.2 The B Impact Assessment

The B Impact Assessment, known also as BIA, is a crucial part to conduct in order to obtain the B Corp certification. It gives the possibility to measure social and environmental performances online, without any cost. The tool is particularly helpful because it allows business to evaluate their positive impact on stakeholders, giving the proper relevance to people and environment. It measures what matters. Indeed, to effectively calculate the overall impact on the society, it necessary to step forward and, thus, go beyond the mere quantification of profit. Differently, from other certification’s assessment, BIA evaluates the corporation as a whole, taking into account five fields: Governance, Workers, Community, Environment, and Consumers. This latter aspect is considered only for businesses that can get feedback on their products and services from users. Each area gets a score and it is necessary to reach at least 80 points on a 200-range scale to obtain the certification. This confidential tool has been used by over 50000 companies.

During the assessment, it is possible to compare the business characteristics with those of companies that operate in the same sector or have similar characteristics. In this way, the enterprise becomes aware of its weaknesses, understanding which are the aspects to improve. Indeed, the BIA is a practical and extremely useful tool because it evidences how the business is set in the market and provides suggestions on how to get better performances to maintain, or also enhance, its placement in the market. The B Impact Assessment is a standardized tool and, thus, it can fit any kind of business. It is applied by companies that present completely different features: from multinational businesses to individual enterprise, from a specialized consultancy to a retail firm. The BIA is able to shape any kind of enterprise because it focuses its evaluation on the positive impact and, so, it comprehends many areas at the same time. The only requirement is that the business must have been in operation in the previous year because the system evaluates past activities. Even if it is possible a comparison with other enterprises, it is necessary to specify that all data and sensitive information concerning the business strategy are reserved and privacy is guaranteed. B Lab gathers disclosure anonymously and findings are only statistically used to create a benchmark with which compare results. To use the BIA, it is only necessary to sign in on the official website and start the evaluation.

Usually, the process is conducted by a CEO or another intern member that has an overall awareness of the company. It has been calculated that a speedy B Impact Assessment requires almost 90 minutes and, during the first measurement, it is suggested to go ahead in order to have a better idea of the whole evaluation process. B Lab recommends to not lose hope if a good score is not gained because more than one efforts are often necessary to get the certification. Indeed, at the end of the process, a
PDF version of the Assessment is provided and, it could be a helpful instrument to address future business policies. Considering the score, every time it is superior to zero, it means that the business is creating a positive value for the society or the environment, then, the key point is keeping to implement sustainable practices again and again. Initially, enterprises are usual to gain a mark between 40 and 60 points. However, those that are interested in gain the B Corp certification, implementing some measures, will be ready to reach the edge of 80 points. The average score of Certified B Corps is 95.

The B Lab is a standards-based organization and aims to develop the best standards to maintain the highest level of effectiveness, fairness, and credibility of the B Impact Assessment. The Standard Advisory Council (SAC) is an independent governance body that develops and update the B Impact Assessment Standards. It is made up of 20 members that usually are businessmen from sustainable enterprises, impact investing, government and academia. The BIA has been designed considering many certifications, feedbacks from entrepreneurs and best practice guide, such as books published by Patagonia, Ben & Jerry’s and Mal Warwick. Many standards have been taken into account: GRI IRIS, Wiser Earth, Fair Trade, Organic, LEED, ISO, STFLA, 1% for the Planet and others. These standards have been a sort of inspiration because they ensure credibility, transparency, and comprehensiveness of measures. However, it is necessary to specify that their competence is limited to determine which is the best practice to communicate information. Indeed, they are platforms which define specific methodologies to report impact metrics and not tools to evaluate whether a company has improved or has got worse performances. This is the great difference between the BIA and all the standards. The B Lab, with its tool, aims to address business leaders not only to report data in the best way but, in the meanwhile, to evaluate their impact. This allows for an objective measurement of the business that evidences the areas on which entrepreneurs should concentrate their attention to increase performance quality and effectiveness.

Thanks to businesses feedbacks and suggestions, the BIA has been regularly modified over time, as it can be seen in figure 10. The current version is the fifth and it was implemented in 2016. It has 72 different configurations because it is shaped by the business features. Indeed, businesses received questions tailored to their size (number of employees), their type (sector) and their market (geography). For instance, the model can assume six different patterns just considering the size, even if the major part of the companies that conduct the assessment have between zero and 50 employees. The assessment can be conducted even if the enterprise is completely virtual, such as greenApes, an Italian social network. The sixth BIA version is in process and, after an initial testing planned for summer 2018, it would be officially launched in January 2019. The new version will comprehend many individual metrics changes but, probably the most important transition will concern the updates.
Indeed, it has been recognized that as standards mature, the system requires fewer updates and more continuity between users (B Lab, 2017a). For this reason, it will be modified every three years rather than two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Alpha, Beta, Official Launch of Version 1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Version 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>including first addenda – real estate &amp; design/build, financial services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Version 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Launch of Emerging Markets Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First translations of assessment (Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment moves to Salesforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Version 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Launch of Developed Markets – Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes EM financial services addendum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Version 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New easy to use platform</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher education addendum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15 B Impact Assessment evolution. B Lab Literature.

Moreover, it was also introduced the Quick Impact Assessment (QIA) in 2015. It is made by questions selected from the original BIA and, for this reason, it can be considered as a shorter version that compares answers with the average. Its peculiarity is that it does not provide a numerical score on the company’s performance. However, it introduces companies to the core concepts of sustainability and encourages them to undertake the real B Impact Assessment, highlighting the key opportunities. Moreover, this tool is frequently used by Certified B Corps to invite their stakeholders to join the B Corp movement. The QIA was a success and it was uploaded both in 2016 and 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Impact Assessment (QIA)</th>
<th>Full B Impact Assessment (BIA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Approximately 20 minutes to complete</td>
<td>• Approximately 90 minutes (or more)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Between 20 and 30 questions</td>
<td>• Between 50 and 150 questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides benchmarking for specific questions but does not give overall score</td>
<td>• Provides overall score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A sample of best practices from full BIA</td>
<td>• Comprehensive stakeholder assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intended for companies first starting to measure impact</td>
<td>• For companies interested in comprehensive impact measurement framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Completion counts towards completion of BIA</td>
<td>• Necessary for GIIRS Ratings/ B Corp Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Free at <a href="http://www.bimpactassessment.net">www.bimpactassessment.net</a></td>
<td>• Free at <a href="http://www.bimpactassessment.net">www.bimpactassessment.net</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11 Differences between the Quick Impact Assessment and The Full B Impact Assessment. B Lab Literature.
The B Impact Assessment has its own website where businesses can start their measure whenever they want.\textsuperscript{19} It is available another identical platform, known as B Analytics, with the same process and questions that evaluates the business without aiming to the B Corp Certification.\textsuperscript{20} Both tools present the same three passages: Assess, Compare and Improve.

Step 1: Assess
During the first stage, the CEO or the business representative has to conduct the BIA to measure the positive impact. To successfully have a reliable result, questions involve five impact areas: Governance, Workers, Community, Environment, and Customers. The figure below shows how the evaluation is carried out.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure16.png}
\caption{How to measure what matters most. B Corp Literature.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{19} B Impact Assessment website. \newline
https://bimpactassessment.net/  
\textsuperscript{20} B Analytics website. \newline
http://www.b-analytics.net/
- Governance

The measurement of this area takes into account three different aspects: corporate accountability, transparency and governance metrics. Considering the category of the corporate accountability, the tool proposes questions related to the business mission, the ethics code and detailed documents concerning the Board of Directors and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), such as outcomes. The aim is to know better how the company is managed and which are the guidelines or the criteria considered during the decision-making process. Moreover, to obtain a score to the second category, the transparency, it is necessary to provide the economic and financial disclosure present in the public annual reports. Finally, to completely fulfill the evaluation of the governance area’s impact, it is necessary to give details concerning revenues and metrics for the previous fiscal year. It must be also declared the legal form of the company to inform whether it has already updated its mission in the statute.

- Workers

The second area is aimed to check the relevance that the enterprise confers to its employees. It focuses its attention on compensation, benefits, and training. It takes into considerations also the worker metrics, such as the characteristics of the employment contracts (such as full time or part time, contractor or temporary), and whether any kind of stock option is offered to workers. The environment of the workplace is evaluated as well: for instance, the opportunity of being able to rely on a flexible schedule or having a health or safety coverage. The questions seek to investigate the relationship between workers and their managers. The B Corp wants to evidence that employees are not only workers but, first of all, they are humans and thus they must be treated as such.

- Community

To quantify the positive impact that business has on the whole community are evaluated parameters concerning job opportunities creations in the surrounding or the implementation of diversity measures, such as employment of women, ethnic minority or people with disabilities. Companies should help to relive unemployed categories all over the entire supply chain. Moreover, maintaining the focus on the supply chain, it is important that the enterprise gives priority to the community development choosing local suppliers and distributors, and preferring domestic products as well. In addition, the assessment evaluates also donations to charity institutions, civic engagement and voluntary service promoted among employees. For instance, the evaluation rewards those enterprises that offer one or two paid days each year to be spent in volunteering.
• Environment

Each business action has consequences on the environment. The measurement of all the impacts is pursued through questions dealing with input and output. Particularly, they are focused on energy use and renewable sources, quantification of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), type of packaging, emissions production, implementation of measures to reduce water and waste use. It is also investigated whether the plants are green buildings or whether there are being introduced particular precaution to create sustainable offices, such as recycling practices, energy-efficient printings and lights, or the adoption of the Environmental Management System (EMS). The assessment requires information relative to environmental practices applied in the entire supply chain, among which emission data relative to transportation and distribution. Finally, the company has to provide details concerning what it is doing for the environment. For instance, actions that demonstrate that it takes care of the environmental restoration or it has redesigned the production process to reduce its impacts (Impact Business Model).

• Customers

This field is actually present only for those enterprises that have the possibility of receiving a feedback on the impact of products and services provided. Indeed, the Customers Impact Area is designed to measure the business positive direct impact on customers, especially whether the company is aimed to address a particular social issue. For instance, it quantifies how the customers’ health or wellness has been improved, or how the enterprise has promoted the education or the preservation of artistic, cultural and civic engagement. Furthermore, the evaluation of this area deals with the creation of new entrances to the market, such as building infrastructures or generating activities to assist underserved in the provision of income.

It must be considered that the B Impact Assessment is constantly uploaded and, moreover, it is specially shaped by the features of the business that conducts the impact. Therefore, the evaluation differs from company to company. To have a better idea of the topic considered, it is suggested to consult the website B Analytics, in which it is available the BIA Standards Navigator, an intuitive platform that gives examples of the possible questions. At the end of the assessment, each impact area has got points and, summed up all points, the total score will indicate whether the company can have the B Corp certification. Then, the company receives the B Impact Report that summarizes points gained; it is published on the B Corp official website, that dedicates a page to each Certified B Corp. An example of BIA summary, and its respective B Impact Report, is shown in figure 12 and 13.

21 B Impact Assessment Standards Navigator website.
http://b-analytics.net/content/standards-navigator
In the figure is easy to notice how it is organized the B Impact Assessment or the B Analytics as well. The graph shows the impact of Mightybites, Inc., an American B Corp. On the top, it is shown the total score and the business position in the B Corp road to reach the peak of 200 points. There is also some information that characterizes the configuration of BIA applied, as, in this case, an ordinary business with 1-9 employees. Below the overall B Impact score, there are the five areas of impact, which one indicates its own specific score. By clicking on these lines, it would be possible to check how the score results from the subcategories of each area. The system automatically saves data in the cloud, giving the opportunity to complete the assessment many sessions. B Lab team results always available to help users. The complete B Impact Report of Mightybytes, Ind. is provided in the Appendix B.

22 Mightybytes webpage. 
https://www.mightybytes.com/blog/one-month-two-great-b-corp-milestones/
Step 2: Compare

The B Impact Assessment, together with B Analytics, has collected anonymous information to create benchmarks of portfolio’s performances. Indeed, thanks to over 40000 private companies all over the world, it has been created the largest feasible database of social and environmental performances. Through this way, businesses are able to contextualize their BIA results to companies with same characteristics and operating in the same sector. After having chosen criteria that matter to the business, key performance indicators and graphs concerning aggregated performances are freely available. Observing the B Impact Report in figure 13, it can be noticed that the enterprise’s score is next to the average score of other businesses. This permits to evidence in which areas the company excels or, on the contrary, whether it needs to concentrate its efforts. The B Impact Report of each Certified B Corp is available to all on the B Corp. Moreover, thanks to the publicity, the B Impact Report gives the opportunity to involve employees in the improvement process, challenging them to collaborate in enhancing the overall score already made. It must be also underlined that a median score for the Customers Impact Area is not available because it is a parameter that cannot be calculated for all businesses.

Figure 18 Mightybytes, Inc. page. B Corp website.
Step 3: Improve

Comparing its values to benchmark data, the business can set future targets in order to raise the overall score. The BIA and the B Analytics permit to track performance over time and give suggestions on how to improve the business impact. Indeed, the system automatically designs customized improvements report using data collected during the assessment. Through this instrument, companies will easily structure how to draw up better practices. Moreover, B Lab provides many case studies to advise businesses how to introduce new practices or policies into their management.

An article published by B Lab describes the most successful and effective measures that bosses should upgrade to enhance their business situation.\(^{23}\) Indeed, to become one of *The Best for the World* it is necessary a constant effort to create a more positive impact. According to many witnesses, there are three kinds of policy implementations that lead a better score. First of all, it is crucial to switch to greener source of energy, such as renewable sources. In addition, the business should incorporate good practices and suggest to all its employees to adopt them: reduce, reuse and recycle are three keywords that should become ordinary in the entire company. By introducing these measures, there are high possibilities that people employed will undertake these sustainable practices in their normal routine, applying this approach also outside the workplace. Promoting the reduction of materials, goods, and waste will benefit the enterprise in the short period but, above all, will serve the whole society in the long-term. Secondly, it is useful to prioritize employee wellness, for instance, by promoting their passions and hobbies or paying them more than the average salary. Moreover, the business can offer paid time to spend in activities or voluntary organizations of the surrounding community in order to stimulate sensibility and awareness to local problems. The last suggestion noticed to concretely get more point, it consists in formalizing policies. In fact, bosses must transmit their willingness about future objectives to employees. Only by letting the team know what are the expected goals, it will involve their willingness to collaborate, making the achievement easy.

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3. The legal framework

For every time B Corp has been mentioned in this thesis, it must be intended an enterprise that has successfully conducted the B Impact Assessment, obtaining the B Corp certification from the B Lab. This statement could seem obvious but it needs a clarification. Indeed, it is present an important distinction in the real world: B Corp, known also as B Corporation, and Benefit Corporation are not the same entity. First of all, it is necessary to specify that this misunderstanding could rise only whether it is present a legislative framework that foresees a legal form for those enterprises that integrate social aims to their mission. Indeed, in all the other countries of the world, the problem does not exist. They only present the B Corp: a for-profit organization that is globally recognized as a responsible business thanks to the certification gained.

On the contrary, in some U.S. countries and Italy, it has been introduced a legal status for those companies that do not act with the purpose of maximising the profit but, however, aim to have a positive impact to all their stakeholders. The name with which this new kind of business has been introduced in the U.S. legal framework is Benefit Corporation. Through this specific legal form, entrepreneurs are able to permanently modify the business DNA, introducing social and environmental concern in their mission. Social, environmental and economic aspects have the same weigh in driving the business in its decisions, keeping always in consideration a long-run perspective. Indeed, thanks to the institutional acknowledge, the enterprise will be able to maintain this integrated mission even if new owners or investors come (R. Honeyman, 2016).

In April 2010, Maryland has become the first U.S. state that implemented the Benefit Corporation status that, differently from traditional businesses, must create by law a material positive impact on society. The law for the same innovative legal form has been passed in 34 countries of the United States of America and other six of them are currently working on the future implementation. After having passed the legislation approval, B Corps and Benefit Corporations gained relevance also in the Anglo-Saxon countries, such as Australia and U.K. However, the second B Corp community that actively began to work for a legal framework that could ensure the protection of a mixed mission was in Italy.

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3.1 The Italian Benefit Corporation Legislation

Italy has been the second country in the world and the first European sovereign state that officially introduced the Benefit Corporation in its legal framework. Activists started to push the idea of introducing a new legal form in fall 2014 but the law was approved only in December 2015. The Italian B Corp Community, B Lab, and its country partner in Italy, Nativa (that actually is the first Certified B Corp in Italy) had an important role in the roadmap towards the legal acknowledge of this business model.26 Through the approval of the 2016 Stability Law, Act No 208/2015, the Italian Parliament implemented the new legal status (Appendix C). The rule defines the characteristics of the Società Benefit, that is the Italian name with which the legislation defines the Benefit Corporation. A Società Benefit is neither a social enterprise nor a non-profit organization, but rather an evolution of the concept of for-profit business that wants to serve society.27 The idea is to introduce in the Italian legal framework an innovative model of business that, while it makes profits, it constantly looks for the common benefit, where, for the common benefit has to be intended a positive impact on the society. A Società Benefit pursues long-term objectives, operating in a responsible, sustainable and transparent way. For some Italian experts, the implementation of Law 208/2005 can be interpreted as the legal acknowledgment of the fourth sector.28 29

As the same as U.S. countries, Società Benefit and B Corp are not always the same entity but, they are complementary (G. Castellani, D. De Rossi, A. Rampa, May 2016). Società Benefit is the same as Benefit Corporation and, thus, it is still different to those organizations that have pursued the B Corp certification. Considering the Law 208/2015, Italian Certified B Corps are forced to modify their legal status into Società Benefit within two years or, otherwise, within four years (1 January 2020) whether their first certification was gained before the law.30 On the other side, all the other Italian companies have the possibility to register as Società Benefit, abbreviated by the acronym SB, since January 2016.

It is necessary to clarify again that Italian Certified B Corp must become Società Benefit but, on the other side, a Società Benefit is not required to necessarily become a Certified B Corp. The main differences between the certification and the legal form are listed in Figure 19. However, for new enterprises that want to become Certified B Corp, it is widely suggested to adopt the recent legal status because it is positively considered during the B Impact Assessment. Anyway, all Società Benefit, as all other types of enterprises, are invited to freely conduct the B Impact Assessment because, whether the score will reach the 80 points, the B Corp certification could be helpful to comply with annual mandatory reports (G. Nigri, 2017).

As suggested, Law 208/2015, article 5, specifies that the Benefit Corporation must produce an annual report concerning the pursuit of common benefit. Particularly, it has to describe what kind of measures and how they are implemented to pursue positive impacts, how those impacts are evaluated and, finally, the complete report has to be published on the business website. This report should be attached to the annual financial statements. It is important to notice that the company’s impacts can be certified by any third party that satisfies the requirements listed under the Annex A; it is not necessary that the third part is the B Lab through the BIA. Other international standards that can be used are the Global Reporting Initiative or the ISO 26000 – International Standardization Organization (Redazione Plus Plus24 Diritto, May 2017). The entire Law 208/2015 can be consulted in the Appendix.

Becoming a Benefit Corporation actually has no fiscal cuts both for Italian and U.S. enterprises. The legal status only affects the business mission and requirements regarding accountability and transparency.
### Definition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFIED B CORP</th>
<th>SOCIETÀ BENEFIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B Corporation is a company that has been certified by B Lab and proves to have met rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency (short-term).</td>
<td>A Benefit Corporation is a juridical entity that voluntarily meets higher standards of corporate purpose, accountability and transparency (medium-long term).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFIED B CORP</th>
<th>SOCIETÀ BENEFIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator keep into consideration both shareholders and stakeholders in decision processes.</td>
<td>Same as Certified B Corp.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transparency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFIED B CORP</th>
<th>SOCIETÀ BENEFIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The corporation must publish a report on the overall impact, drawn up by an independent standard.</td>
<td>Same as Certified B Corp.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFIED B CORP</th>
<th>SOCIETÀ BENEFIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performances must be verified and certified by B Lab through the B Impact Assessment, achieving at least 80 points.</td>
<td>Self-reported.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFIED B CORP</th>
<th>SOCIETÀ BENEFIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To renew every two years.</td>
<td>Only transparency requirements are mandatory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFIED B CORP</th>
<th>SOCIETÀ BENEFIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Available for each private corporation.</td>
<td>For all Italian enterprises that want to pursue, in addition to the aim of distributing profits, one or more aims of common benefit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assistance and use of the Brand “Certified B Corp®”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFIED B CORP</th>
<th>SOCIETÀ BENEFIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to services and support by B Lab. B Corps can use the brand and the logo in all products and communications.</td>
<td>No aid from B Lab. They cannot use the brand B Lab®.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFIED B CORP</th>
<th>SOCIETÀ BENEFIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The annual certification fee is between 500€ and 50000€, depending on business annual turnover.</td>
<td>Costs depend on charges in changing the company statute.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 19 Differences between Certified B Corp and Società Benefit. Adapted from Table in the Società Benefit website: [http://www.societabenefit.net/b-corp-e-societa-benefit-tabella-comparativa/](http://www.societabenefit.net/b-corp-e-societa-benefit-tabella-comparativa/)

61
3.2 Differences between American and Italian Benefit Corporations

Even if Italy and many U.S. Countries have implemented a regulation for the Benefit Corporation in their legal framework, there have several peculiarities. Specifically, R. Valsan, comparing Italian and American Benefit Corporations, has individuated three main differences. First of all, the Italian legislation requires that a Società Benefit specifies its own scopes and how it intends to concretely achieve them. This seems to ensure the transparency of the company’s actions because, whether the common benefits declared are not pursued, the directors will be subjected to the Italian Consumer Code rules on misleading advertising. On the contrary, the Model Benefit Corporation Legislation (MBCL), that is the American model, does not ask to explicitly list the public benefits the company pursues. Thus, as a consequence, stakeholders are the only constituency with a right of action against the directors whether they failure in pursuing aims. Secondly, still considering the business’ directors, Italian ones seem to have more responsibilities. They have to protect the non-shareholder interests and, moreover, it is necessary to nominee an “impact director” in the Società Benefit constitution act. This figure will be responsible for the pursuit and the realization of the common benefits declared and he has the duty of identifying and defining how can be achieved future objectives. The contravention, at least, of one of these requirements constitutes a breach of fiduciary duty and makes a director personally liable under the Italian Consumer Code penalties. Instead, American directors are not considered personally responsible whether an action fails or whether the public benefit is not created. The last point that differs between the American and the Italian models, concerns the legal status. In the U.S. only traditional for-profit corporations can become Benefit Corporation. This leads that the possibility of becoming Benefit Corporation is denied to hybrids and charitable businesses are denied. In the Italian context, however, any kind of business, from for-profit to low-profit, have the possibility to switch the legal status becoming Società Benefit, and adding SB next to the business’ name. The Italian low-profit enterprises, that are cooperatives, limited companies, and mutual companies, are allowed to change their legal form because the Italian Legislation foresees boundaries on profit distribution to shareholders.

http://www.ecclblog.law.ed.ac.uk/2017/03/31/the-legacy-of-b-lab-italys-societa-benefit/
The B Corp Movement: the Italian Case Study

3rd Chapter

1. The current situation

The United State Declaration of Independence is the statement adopted in 1776 to affirm that all humans are created equal. The aim of the Congress was to spread of freedom as never before. Similarly, after more than 200 years ago, United States was the first Nation to adopt the Declaration of Interdependence to underline that all humans are connected. Through this document, the B Corp Community wants to spread of prosperity and security as never before.32

It has already been more than ten years from the first Declaration of Interdependence, signed in 2007, and the B Corp movement is growing faster and faster. Born principally from small businesses convinced to work for everyone, nowadays the B Corp idea has reached a growing number of business leaders all over the world. This success received also comes from the B Impact Assessment that, thanks to the improvements made, has increasingly gained credibility. Indeed, it has become a reference tool for all companies that desire to quantify their overall performances. Generally speaking, B Lab actually has two main goals to achieve: the first one is aimed to foster the Certified B Corp Community, while the second concerns the legal acknowledge of a new form of corporation worldwide, the Benefit Corporation.33

Considering the first objective, it necessary to mention that B Lab constantly introduces improvements in its practices and develops innovative projects for the whole B Corp Community. For instance, as well as developing the BIA for multinational companies that should be available in 2018, the nonprofit organization has launched the Inclusive Economy Challenge. Implemented in 2017, this project calls to action the Community of Certified B Corporations to improve the collective impact and move toward an inclusive economy based on awareness of diversity and inclusion issues. To promote a shared and durable prosperity, B Lab has designed a particular Inclusive Metric Set

that, inspired by the B Impact Assessment, provides businesses 25 metrics to target for improvements. Fields keep into consideration concern inclusive governance structures, board diversity, workforce diversity, supply chain screening, scheduling flexibility, worker ownership, a living wage, and primary caregiver leave. 2017 was the pilot year for the Inclusive Economy Challenge, that involved 175 companies; 154 of these companies, notably, have successfully recorded at least one improvement. However, even if the official report of this initiative proudly shows achieved goals, it underlines that an inclusive economy cannot be built in just a year and, thus, it renews the call to all Certified B Corps (B Lab, 2017. b). Projects like this one, worldwide meetings, and initiatives organized by B Lab allow B Corporations to get involved and feel part of a community and, in addition, at the same time, they motivate other companies to join the movement.

It is equally important the second goal. Indeed, the introduction of the Benefit Corporation in the legal framework is crucial to the development of the B Corp Community. Particularly, focusing the attention on the Italian situation, it can be easily noticed that the number of B Corp has registered a huge increase in the years following the law’s implementation. It seems that the adoption of the Benefit Corporation as a new legal form leads companies to be more willing to get the B Corp certification. This could probably be a consequence of the fact the Benefit Corporation legal status is highly weighted in the B Impact Assessment. Then, it follows that results much easier to achieve the necessary score in order to get the certification.

![Figure 20 Italian B Corps and, respectively, how many of them have adopted the Benefit Corporation status.](image)
Observing the graph, it is evident that the pick of B Corp certifications has been recorded only after the law approval, in 2016. This significant increase is not clearly casual and, for sure, it will be really interesting to analyze how the phenomenon will evolve in future years. Even if the certifications assigned in 2017 are lower than the previous year, their number must be considered incredibly significant respect to those collected before 2016. Comparing the numbers of B Corps and Società Benefit, it can be noticed a considerable gap in the last two columns of the table. However, it must be remembered that this discrepancy will disappear in the next years because all Certified B Corps should comply the law becoming Società Benefit.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide a correct number of how many Società Benefit are currently present in Italy. Consulting Aida, an online platform available on Italian enterprises, and looking for the business status, it appears that there are 148 Società Benefit. This data actually reflects the number of business that has adopted the legal status during 2016 because available data are based on the 2016 balance sheet data. The system, in fact, does not provide information after 2016. For this reason, this number it cannot be considered updated. Moreover, even if the Società Benefit website could seem to have more recent data, it mentions only 144 enterprises. Furthermore, as unfortunately confirmed by Nativa, it has not be kept track of the year in which they become Benefit Corporation. Although this number is updated to the end of January 2018, it does not seem reliable. In fact, it must be considered that in the provided list are present only those enterprises that have spontaneously fulfilled the online registration. As a result, even this number cannot be considered acceptable to have a clear idea of how many Benefit Corporation have been set up since the law approval.

To conclude, available data on Italian Certified B Corps are very few for the recent outgrowth and, whether they are present, they are not always complete. To better understand this still-unknown movement, in this last chapter, we will investigate which are the relevant considerations that could convince Italian CSR-oriented companies to become Certified B Corps. After having mentioned the advantages proposed by B Lab, it will be newsworthy to focus on the Italian case study and keep into consideration more accurate witnesses. Particularly, it will be taken into consideration key informant remarks, accounts of Italian pioneer B Corps and, above all, entrepreneurs and business leaders’ opinions.

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34 Aida – Analisi Informatizzata delle Aziende Italiane
35 Società Benefit website.
http://www.societabenefit.net/registro-ufficiale-societa-benefit/
2. Literature Review

The B Corp certification has been recognized for its relevance thanks to several positive feedbacks in few years. Indeed, in just ten years it has obtained the approval by entrepreneurs, politicians, and economists, among which Robert Shiller, the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2014. Specifically, Shiller aimed that adding additional purposes for the company would be the key choice to make more profit in the future. Part of the great success of the B Corp certification comes from the conception that businesses must expand their point of view trying to pursue the benefit for much more categories of beneficiaries than usual. Particularly, it must be remembered that switching the focus from shareholders to stakeholders does not mean that shareholders are not considered at all but, rather, that they are included as stakeholders as well. The idea of expanding the list of business beneficiaries is not new: it has been already spread by Corporate Social Responsibility. Besides, it is no coincidence that the Benefit Corporation has been defined as a “Corporate Social Responsibility enterprise with commitment” (G. Castellani et al., 2016. a). At first sight, a CSR-oriented company and a B Corp certified enterprise actually seem to be really similar, however, they are not. Principally, they differ in two important aspects. First of all, they are different from the legal point and, secondly, it is different the approach that they have toward the society and environmental interest. Knowing better the discrepancies between these two types of enterprise would make easier to understand the reasons to switch a CSR-oriented company into a Certified B Corp.

2.1 The legal aspect

Traditional models of business do not cover the concern to social issues, limiting the willingness of social entrepreneurs. Furthermore, these business models are principally for-profit companies and hence they have been conceived to make money and create value just for themselves and shareholders. Then, as a consequence, the need to introduce a new legal status for enterprises that share the B Corp principles has been clear in U.S.A. and Italy. Especially, the importance of introducing the Benefit Corporation legal status is that it designs the business DNA: it configures the long-term structure of the firm. A legal form, in fact, defines boundaries that business has to follow. The Benefit Corporation status identifies thus an enterprise that shall adopt, according to the law, particular behaviors to create high social values. Consequently, wherever the company does not comply with its expected duties, it

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would have legal consequences. Contrary to what B Lab affirms, the only certification is therefore not able to ensure the business mission in the long term because it lasts only two years and, after this period, the decision makers can decide to not extend it. Consequently, the certification is an escrow just for the short-period that even requires a legal support wherever the mission wants to be guaranteed over time.

Countries that have not yet introduced a legal framework for the B Corp define this innovative business model as a hybrid form. Particularly, the term hybrid is used for those enterprises that base their model on the alleviation of a particular social and environmental issue. They are private enterprises with a public mission. They can exist as a for-profit organization, non-profits, or both (N. Haigh et al, 2015). In fact, the hybrid term refers to all enterprises that cover the distance between for-profit and non-profit organizations, thus it comprehends companies with several features. Generally, it is also known as hybridization process for assuming different nuances: non-profits are shifting toward entrepreneurial business models and, on the opposite side, the for-profits are moving toward social value creation through a higher level of corporate social responsibility (D.F. Kuratko, et al., 2017). However, hybrids are built because neither traditional for-profit business or non-profit models adequately address current problems. Therefore, seeking to create social and environmental improvements through their practices and products, hybrids forms are also termed “sustainability-driven” (N. Haigh, A.J. Hoffman, 2012). The table below highlights three fields in which traditional and hybrid organization differ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship of Social/Environmental Issues to Organizational Objectives</th>
<th>Relationships with Suppliers, Employees, and Customers</th>
<th>Interaction with Market, Competitors and Industry Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional organizations</strong></td>
<td>Social/environmental issues are addressed only if the organization has the organizational slack (e.g., resources, profit) and a strong business case</td>
<td>Relationships with suppliers, employees, customers, and suppliers primarily functional and transactional in nature. Cost factors are primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hybrid organizations</strong></td>
<td>The business model is configured to address explicit social/environmental issues; organizational slack and the business case are secondary</td>
<td>Relationships with suppliers, employees and customers are based on mutual benefit and sustainability outcomes. Costs are considered but only after social and environmental outcomes are met.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 21 Key Distinguishing factors between Traditional and Hybrid Organizations. N. Haigh, A.J. Hoffman, 2012
A growing number of hybrid organizations have been developed over years and the legislation needs to introduce legislative innovations. For instance, the first hybrid organization that has been recognized in many countries is the social enterprise. This business model can assume different configurations, such as a for-profit or non-profit organization, but even a cooperative and charity organization: its structure depends on the legal framework of each country. For instance, keeping into consideration the Italian legislation, the social enterprise is defined as a non-profit organization that, conducting a lasting economic activity, aims to generate goods and services for the social utility. For this reason, social enterprises usually operate in marginal markets or those not chosen by for-profit organizations for the risk of not covering all the production costs. Nevertheless, a social enterprise can be competitive thanks to its non-profit status: it can boast volunteer work and particular funding conditions. Differently from a non-profit configuration that is independently managed, the governance of a social enterprise is principally driven by stakeholders and not by capital owners. Considering stakeholders in the decision-making process allows people to be involved, reaching a higher number of interests and needs (F. Bandini, 2013).

Given these points, it is more comprehensible to understand why a Benefit Corporation is considered a hybrid organization. However, even if hybrids generally share a social mission, they still have many relevant differences. Consequently, as it happened for the social enterprise, it appears necessary to establish a regulation in order to safeguard the multipurpose mission of the Benefit Corporation, that is not yet legally recognized all over the world. According to R. Robson (2015), the law could play a fundamental role because it would influence the behavior of market participants in cases like this. Through the game theory, she explains that the Benefit Corporation, as a legal status, becomes a focal point in a coordination game. Indeed, by using focal points, parties recognize each other, aligning their behaviors and coordinating their strategies. Thanks to this mutual recognition, it is possible to create a solid system characterized by open communication, transparency, and trust. Finally, this framework allows participants, that actually would be entrepreneurs, to collaborate in order to get the best game’s output: the social benefit. Moreover, the Benefit Corporation can be considered also as a norm catalyst because, defining the game changers, it drives the economic change. Under these circumstances, the Benefit Corporation could have a key role in the future and, hence, it is expected that its legal framework would be implemented in a growing number of countries.

In the last decades, the Italian third sector has been moving from a welfare state model to a welfare society model. In this particular framework, the social enterprise has not gained a great success after its introduction as a legal form in 2006. The unsuccess of this organization probably results from not satisfying the necessities of the current social-economic scenario. On the contrary, also remembering Robson’s considerations, it seems the Benefit Corporation could perform a significant role thanks for
being a for-profit enterprise that takes care of the society. It exactly reflects the present convergence of the economic system to create profit and a positive impact on the whole ecosystem. Hybrids are thus business models required by the existing global economy because they go beyond of net boundaries between State, market, and civil society. Thanks to its flexibility, hybrids lead a cooperation between these fields, creating a widespread value. Particularly, this peculiarity reaches a pick in Società Benefit where the multipurpose mission permits to seize new opportunities and contrast several challenges. The non-profit configuration of the social enterprise was perhaps too much confining, reducing its operational activity and evolution. This is probably the reason why the social enterprise has never gain the success it could have (G. Castellani et al., 2016).

![Diagram of Italian types of organization](image.png)

**Figure 22** Italian types of organization. The bold text under the line evidences organizations recognized by the Italian legislation.

The graph above provides a graphic representation of the hybridization process. Particularly, it focuses the attention on Italian types of organization, among which the Benefit Corporation has been introduced by the Parliament in December 2015. Bold text underlines organizations recognized by the Italian legislation. The figure emphasizes the value on which enterprises want to focus their efforts: on the left, for-profit organizations aim to maximize the economic objective while, on the right, non-profits take care of the social improvement. As it is shown, there are different types of business between these two extremes: those are the so-called hybrid models. Thanks to their concern to social and environmental issues, they can be considered as socially responsible business (N. Haigh, A.J. Hoffman, 2012). Observing the graph, it can be noticed that the social enterprise has been set in the right side of the graph: in fact, as already mentioned, it is a non-profit enterprise in the Italian legal framework. While all CSR-oriented companies are depicted on the opposite part of the line because they basically are for-profit organizations. Exactly in the middle of the hybridization process, there can be represented Certified B Corps and Benefit Corporations. Particularly, it has been
evidenced that some Italian Certified B Corp are not yet Benefit Corporations: they are identified as *for-profit organizations with a B Corp certification*. Moreover, it must be noticed the distinction between a *Società Benefit* and a *Società Benefit with a B Corp certification*. These two entities are almost identical – they have the same legal form and, thus, they are measured in the same areas – and for this reason they are very close in Figure 22. However, it has been decided to represent them separately because the B Corp certification reflects a voluntarily decision and then it could be seen as a self-regulation. The introduction of the Benefit Corporation legal status has definitely had a direct influence on the numbers of enterprises that have become Certified B Corps, probably because the certification is really useful to comply with the Benefit Corporation requirements. Nevertheless, achieving the B Corp certification still remains a voluntarily commitment: the enterprise independently and spontaneously decides to have its performances checked both by the Italian Government and the B Lab. For this reason, *Società Benefit with a B Corp certification* identifies an organization which willingness to create a positive impact goes beyond the legislation, the certification should witness its real commitment. As a consequence, it is important to underline that Italian Benefit Corporations and Italian B Corps do not need to coincide. Indeed, even if it is true that Certified B Corps are required to become Benefit Corporations by law, it is also notable that not all Benefit Corporations pursue the B Corp certification. A Benefit Corporation must score at least 80 points in the B Impact Assessment to get the certification. Moreover, contrary to the Italian social enterprise, the Benefit Corporation is represented more on the left side because it is structured as a for-profit organization. In addition, compared to a traditional CSR-oriented company, that is also a for-profit firm, a *Società Benefit* is characterized to not only strive for profitability: its legal status incorporates a social purpose as well.

### 2.2 Social and environmental aspects

Social and environmental matters are taken into account both by CSR-oriented companies and Certified B Corps, however, their approaches result to be really different. A Certified B Corp, as well as a Benefit Corporation, includes the concern to these issues inside its business mission and keeps them into account during daily decisions. In addition, a B Corp concentrates its efforts towards its surrounding with the aim of creating a positive impact. Specifically, the interest in these topics and actions is required by law for the Benefit Corporation. On the other side, a CSR-oriented company is organized as a for-profit enterprise that voluntarily decides to act responsibly.
Corporate Social Responsibility has been depicted with several statements over years and, so, it is considered appropriate to provide a general and objective definition of the concept. For this reason, in this chapter, it will be assumed the explanation given by the Business Dictionary. Particularly, it defines the CSR as *A company's sense of responsibility towards the community and environment (both ecological and social) in which it operates. Companies express this citizenship through their waste and pollution reduction processes, by contributing educational and social programs, and by earning adequate returns on the employed resources.* The Financial Times adds that this broad concept can be differently interpreted and implemented in each company and country. However, generally speaking, CSR encourages companies to be more aware of their impacts on society and, whatever the definition is, it aims to drive change towards sustainability.

Given these points, it is remarkable that for-profit businesses make responsible choices helping their surrounding environment. For instance, it has been verified that firms, through CSR activities, would be able to overcome institutional voids in countries with weaker market institutions (S.E. Ghoul *et al.*, 2017). Anyway, above all, it must be remembered that we are still talking about for-profit enterprises that, conscious of the power of CSR, could hide drawbacks behind these practices. Indeed, CSR can have a direct and positive influence both on corporate image and customer satisfaction, while it does not have a direct significant effect on customer loyalty. Although, customer loyalty is a consequence because it is obtained by corporate image and customer satisfaction improvements. The result is therefore that CSR practices indirectly affect customer loyalty (I.P.A.A. Putra and N.N.K. Yasa, 2017). Observing an influence on the customer behavior, many companies have decided to implement CSR practices. Indeed, CSR, in addition to being an optimal managerial tool because coordinates multiple corporate identities (e.g. internal, external), has a relevant role in effective corporate marketing (D. Hildebrand *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, according to several types of research, there is a straight connection between CSR and financial performances. Particularly, this linkage results heterogeneous in ten industry sectors despite financial performances returns differ on the types of CSR conducted. After all, thanks to multiple uses, CSR can affect stakeholders in different ways, obtaining various outcome (M. Feng *et al.*, 2017). Thus, CSR practices can be considered as a long-term investment because, depending on how they are managed, they would be able to affect corporate efficiency both in short and long-term as well (S. Yang, 2016).

For the relevant role that CSR could have in the corporation marketing, consumers must understand whether they are facing green marketing or, otherwise, greenwashing. The attention to misleading

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37 Business Dictionary.

38 Financial Times Lexicon.
advertising started in 1972 when the veteran environmental campaigner Jerry Mander proposed the term eco-pornography. Subsequently, the concept of greenwashing was introduced at the end of the last century, when Greenpeace published the Book of Greenwash in 1992. Ironically, it demonstrated that exactly those companies that had a responsible use of resources and conscious purchases at the center of their communications were the same with the lower green credentials. CSR, then, has been often seen and uses only as a communication tool, a great marketing instrument to attract customers and increase sales. Some companies, in fact, seem to use greenwashing in order to show what they actually want to point out while obscuring the rest. In other words, they promote a particular image through which they depict themselves, their products and services as environmentally safe or friendly.

Undoubtedly, this phenomenon has created confusion in the market, spreading green consumer skepticism, perceived consumer skepticism and green perceived risk. All of these variables are negatively affecting green trust (H.M. Aji, and B. Sutikno, 2015). Simultaneously, greenwashing, therefore, is not always a beneficial strategy for organizations because it could drastically cut business credibility, leading a reduced consumer purchases (M.D.T. De Jong et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, businesses have increasingly adopted CSR policies because they enhance business reputation and financial performances. On the other side, it notably rises the stakeholder concern about the truth of these actions. Standards, such as LEED, Energy Star or FSC, have then been introduced to tamp down the greenwashing and help consumers in recognizing the truly responsible companies. These certifications evaluate corporations in various fields, using accurate measurements and criteria on codes of good practices, such as those of the International Organisation of Standards (ISO). Eco-labelling is reliable because it is credible, independent and market-value (Green Leaf Sustainability Services paper). Thanks exactly to reducing the threat of greenwashing, certifications by an independent third party are able to regain the betrayed trust of consumers and benefit corporate performance (Y. Wang and Y. Chen, 2017).

Naturally, the B Corp certification can be considered as one of these certifications. However, it differs from all the others because it measures the overall business activity, not only a particular field. The B Lab publicly recognizes a social enterprise that incorporates the interests of all stakeholders into the fiduciary duties of directors and officers. The certification especially helps a firm to communicate its values and how it works: in fact, it is characterized by pursuing both shareholder and stakeholder success. This peculiarity makes a Certified B Corp different from all other traditional market actors, becoming really attractive to consumers, investors and partners. Indeed, a research conducted by M. Karlesky evidences how these categories of people, the so-called firm’s audience, rank a business

https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/green-wash-marketing-sustainable-products
according to their similarities and differences. In other words, people are more willing to choose products and services provided by companies with which they share values and principles.\textsuperscript{40} A recent article aims that there are principally two major understanding reasons that convince corporations to achieve the B Corp certification. The first one concern the willingness of creating a different kind of economy in which the people redefine the perception of success in order to avoid those mistakes that led to past economic crisis. Second but not least, the certification distinguishes businesses and products that are truly socially and environmentally responsible (S. Kim and T. Schifeling, 2016). Indeed, thanks to being audited by a third party standard organization, B Corporations can safeguard conscious consumer and investor against greenwashing (M.J. Stecker, 2016). Observing US and EU B Corps, it seems however that the potential of the B Corp certification has not been yet understood. This can be noticed especially in Europe, where the legislation lacks for these particular business models (G. Nigri \textit{et al.}, 2017).

https://hbr.org/2016/06/why-companies-are-becoming-b-corporations
3. Research Gap

Considering the Italian framework, unfortunately, there are not too much data available concerning B Corporations and Benefit Corporation as well. Probably it depends both on the recent development but also to the limited attention that media, papers, and the overall society have put into this movement plays certainly a fundamental role.

In the few articles founded online, published by the most valuable Italian newspapers, the B Corporation movement is depicted as extremely interesting and as a potentially useful way of doing business that could lead a social development. The topic is principally dealt in general terms: information provided are easily available on the B Corp website while additional elements are really few. Moreover, observing the publishing data of articles, it is easy to recognize that Italian press took care of the B Corp certification only after 2016 Stability Law. The superficial attention of media and press have given to this innovative business model could be significantly considered one of the reasons for the scarce and limited knowledge among the public. Indeed, it results that B Corp certification is ignored by the overwhelming majority of Italians. In addition, it seems that both B Corp Certification and Benefit Corporation have not completely received a proper consideration also by the Academic Community because publications related to these subjects are not so much as well.

Given these points, the Italian B Corp movement does not appear, from an outside point of view, relevant to be analyzed. However, even if there are many informational shortcomings, the limited available data demonstrate the Italian B Corp movement is growing, especially after the implementation of the Benefit Corporation’s law (Figure 17). The aim of this paper is going beyond present data and investigate why some Italian enterprises have decided to achieve the B Corp certification and whether it results to be better than a CSR- oriented company.

4. Methodologies

In order to design a useful framework for evaluating the choice of getting the B Corp certification, it has been considered appropriate to provide different perspectives. Firstly, it will be considered a survey conducted on Italian Certified B Corps that, even if it cannot be considered reliable for the low level of participation, it has given several points to think about. Secondly, there are some considerations of accounting data of Italian corporations that have the certification for at least two years. Finally, to conclude the methodology part, it will be considered the thought of two Italian researchers in order to have a better academic opinion on this movement.

4.1 The Italian B Corps Survey

The first time I heard about B Corps was during a university’s lecture: an Italian researcher came as a visitor and briefly introduced the topic. Moreover, there was also the testimony of one Italian B Corporation, NWG Energy, that told its story and how developed the awareness of its commitment. The topic was extremely interesting that I decided to voluntarily participate to The Best for Italy 2017, an event held to reward Italian B Corps that gained the Best for the World prize. The event was organized by Nativa, the First Italian enterprise that obtained the certification in 2013 and that is currently the country partner of the B Lab. Attending the event as part of the staff, I had the great opportunity to understand what really means be part of the B Corp Community. There were people from all parts of Italy, both entrepreneurs, collaborators, and people interested in knowing better this kind of business. After a brief introduction of Marco Herrouz, a member of the B Lab Europe, some participants shared their experiences of interdependence. Furthermore, the organization had prepared an activity just in order to promote dialogues and connections between entrepreneurs. Indeed, in small groups managed by a facilitator, they had to discuss many questions after having introduced themselves. During these briefing concerning the role played by B Corps in society and the potential power of collaboration between them, entrepreneurs had the opportunity to confront ideas and know each other, exchanging also their business cards. Moreover, as soon as they had received acknowledgment for using business as a force for good, businessmen had the possibility to talk and, hopefully, develop possible partnerships. People were really available to tell their experiences and future aims; the atmosphere was really familiar. I had a really positive impression that, after the event, I decided to take a poll to directly ask their opinions.
Even if there are many interviews with B Corps leaders, I decided to conduct one personally made because I wanted to ask them specific questions. I prepared a survey using the online platform Sondaggio Online, that is freely available for students of the University of Bologna.\footnote{Sondaggio Online website. \url{https://www.sondaggio-online.com}} To make it easier, questions were provided in Italian and were eighteen; particularly, they were both open and closed questions, but they comprehended also ranking or evaluating lists (Appendix D). The major part of the open questions was voluntary to give the possibility of not answering and complete the survey faster. The objective was to investigate why today CSR is not considered enough and, so, which were the main reasons that push them to achieve the B Corp certification. Moreover, I wanted to get more information on the B Impact Assessment and their experiences with this tool. Finally, I requested their opinions on advantages encountered after having obtained the certification and how the B Corp movement could be improved and spread in Italy. Once I had finished the survey, I asked a feedback to Nativa staff that gave me some extremely useful suggestions to refine it and provided me the list of Italian Certified B Corp, updated to December 2017. Indeed, the B Corp website, that shows the B Corps and their B Impact Report, is not always upgraded. Subsequently, obtained the names’ list, I searched, for each of them, the web pages in order to find the emails to which send the poll. Then, after having perfected the survey, I sent it to 68 B Corps, specifying to address the email to CEOs or the internal members that followed the B Impact Assessment. This because some questions could have been quite focused, thus, not all internal members would be able to give complete and satisfying answers. The provided list actually presented 69 enterprises but, unfortunately, even after having phoned to Banca Prossima, I did not receive the reference email. Thus, it was not considered in the sample.

After one month, the questionnaire was carried out by 13 enterprises and, however, completed only by 10 of them. I suppose that this low rate of participation is given by the fact that the survey was sent next to Christmas holidays. In addition, Nativa suggested that Italian B Corps receive a lot of surveys like mine and, thus, they cannot answer to all of them. Unfortunately, answers are very few and they cannot be considered feasible: data collected are not able to reflect the reality. As a consequence, it is not too much satisfying to analyze these quantitative data but, anyway, some considerations can be done. Specifically, to not waste data and to thank those that kindly had replied to the survey, I have decided to take into consideration open questions because they principally deal with opinions, personal experiences, and suggestions. Unfortunately, the following considerations cannot be contextualized, such as considering the business sector or size, because the survey was conducted anonymously.
The first part of the survey is focused on the reasons why companies became B Corps, more to the point, the survey starts by asking why the Corporate Social Responsibility is not still sufficient. The answers say that the CSR was a really good idea but, without practical tools, it has never been a success, or, better, it has been used with a different aim: as a marketing strategy. Indeed, even if the principles behind are really similar, a CSR-oriented company looks first the business and, only afterward, the social responsibility; on the contrary, the B Corp exchanges the two elements, giving a higher priority to social responsibility. As it is reported: changing the grouping of addends does not change their sum. In the CSR-oriented companies, thus, the social responsibility covers only a part of the business activity and, more importantly, practices are measured with subjective and not standardized methods. Moreover, CSR actions are not always relevant and, usually, they are short-term programs. On the contrary, System B, as suggests the name, is exactly a complex and structured mechanism of assessment that uses standard criteria. Indeed, being a for-profit enterprise is a commitment for the long period: it does not only mean to take care of environmental and social aspect but try to enhance them together with the business performances. It is a 360° path of improvement. Indeed, business is based on social and environmental conditions that cannot be granted. To maintain a growing business activity, in fact, the enterprise must understand that should take care of them because once depleted, there would not be necessary conditions for production. Consequently, companies must concern about social and environmental issues as well, overcoming the exclusively for-profit goal. Then, the enterprise should have the objective of having a positive impact on the society, and the BIA is a concrete tool that attests something has been created. The B Corp is based on a new idea of an economy that wants to regenerate both society and environment. Finally, it has also been underlined that, if the CSR is not sufficient, the B Corp certification is not as well: in fact, as any other certification has a deadline and, thus, depends on the business management. Only becoming a Società Benefit is possible to bind the business management actions, introducing duties regarding social and environmental objectives.

Moreover, it has been investigated why the B Corp can be considered as an efficient sustainable business model. Generally, answers affirm that this model of business works because it acts as a for-profit organization, being able to independently carries. The fact that a B Corp is a for-profit business indeed is an essential factor that permits to survive in a competitive market. More precisely, complying with high standards of transparency and accountability leads to an improvement in the whole production chain, from suppliers to customers. Thanks to these parameters, B Corp concretely creates a shared value between its stakeholders and, in the meanwhile, it enhances the quality and competitiveness of goods and services produced. By taking into account all stakeholders’ interests, the business assumes a long-term perspective, going beyond the profit maximization. As a result, the
enterprise becomes more flexible and adaptable to market conditions. Indeed, creating shared value should not be seen as a waste of resources, as it seems in CSR, but rather an added value for the future, leading to social, environmental and economic prosperity. A clear advantage of the B Corp model is that, thanks to the several criteria considered, each enterprise is free to shape itself as better thinks. In this way, it can be used by companies extremely different each other. Anyway, the key point is not that the B Corp certification creates a winning company but, rather, it creates a network of enterprises that share same aims. An economic framework like this could lead to overcome issues present in the current for-profit market, for instance, achieving an efficient competitiveness.

Afterwards, the survey asks principally closed questions about the B Impact Assessment. The aim of this part was to collect quantitative data in order to statistically analyze the characteristics of Italian B Corps. As already mentioned, data collected in this part and in the third one regard only 10 companies and, thus, they are not enough to conduct a satisfying analysis or neither to generalize the results. Anyway, from the data obtained, it turns out that the participants have recently achieved the certification and the process has been quite fast, for the majority it takes less than 5 months. The highest score achieved is 112 points while, with the exception of two companies that have obtained 107, all the others are below 100 points. The Impact Area that has been resulted challenging to enhance is the environmental one but, however, only one participant argues that he implemented internal changes to comply BIA requirements. Besides having modified their business stature, some enterprises have implemented new practices: for instance, a corporation has gifted reusable aluminum bottle to all its employees. The aim is to promote a more conscious behave, reducing plastic waste. Some participants have mentioned that BIA questions were very specific and, sometimes, not too much clear. Moreover, it has been reported that the assessment, designed on U.S. corporations, does not completely catch the features of Italian enterprises. As the same, it has been affirmed that the Customers Impact Area should be considered for all businesses because, even if they invest a lot of resources in this field, sometimes, it is ignored by the BIA. Another element that has been pointed out is the tool’s vulnerability. Indeed, even if the parameters will be improved thanks to feedbacks, currently there are possible lacks that would permit to get the certification also to those enterprises with commercial purposes. With the exception of this last comment, all the doubts and feedbacks have been sent to the B Lab or the reviewer. Asking to evaluate the aid provided by the B Lab on a range from 0 to 100, participants were generally satisfied, giving a score higher than 80. However, someone considered the relationship positively by the 50% while, someone else ratings it below the 20%.
Moreover, we ask participants to evaluate whether they have perceived the advantages proposed by B Lab to become a B Corp. Observing the graph, it can be noticed that the great part of the interviewers often perceives to lead a movement while the feeling of being part of a community is a little bit lower. Indeed, only three of them claim to have had a direct experience of interdependent relationships. Particularly, they have affirmed to collaborate and get suppliers from other B Corps or either Società Benefit. For instance, a participant tells that he got the certification after having redesigned a more environmental-friendly product for a client, which suggested to conduct the BIA. The certification does not seem to be really convenient and, indeed, this is indicated as the only potential disadvantage of being a B Corp. On the contrary, the BIA is positively used as a benchmark to confront and improve business performances. Moreover, some companies have recognized a reinforcement in the brand and a stronger credibility by consumers, however, the same interest it is not even found among investors. The certification strongly appears to be really relevant for the protection of the mission in a long-term perception but, at the same time, it does not seem to be able to attract talent or even engage employees. There are also discrepancies on the perception of how is perceived the generation of the press by the certification: someone this the certification could be attractive for media while, the major part does not support the same point of view, considering it plays
an irrelevant role for the press. Indeed, the great part of participants has not believed that communicate with a collective voice could be considered as an advantage perceived after the certification. Even if these data do not support too much the advantages proposed by B Lab, entrepreneurs are looking optimistically ahead. Indeed, the 70% of them think that the B Corp certification will bring positive economic benefits in the future years, while the others think it would not particularly influence next yields. It is necessary to notice that a participant fulfilled two answers in two lines: in the fourth, he marked both “Seldom” and “Neither seldom nor often”, while in the seventh line he listed both “Often” and “Very often”. To not subjectively influence the results, I decided to maintain both of them.

Enterprises do not evidence particularly disadvantages, with the exception of the high cost of the certification. At the same time, it has been affirmed that a great part of Italian B Corps actually provide services. It would be great if more businesses that produce goods would become B Corps because, in this way, the B Corp network could increase comprehending more sectors and market segments. As a direct consequence of having a wide range of choices Certified B Corps would be able to create more connections and commercial partnerships, boosting interdependence relationships. Moreover, increasing the Business-to-Consumer B Corps, even than Business-to-Business collaborations, could be a potential method to let consumers know about B Corps and spread the certification’s recognition among the public.

Investigating on how to spread the knowledge of the B Corp Community, the major part of interviewees suggests organizing meetings through which involve other entrepreneurs, consumers, public administration, and universities as well. These meeting should be a focus on the advantages gained by achieving the certifications and providing examples of interdependence relationships. The goal should be to create a huge event that could strategically attract media and press. Furthermore, it is evidenced that a great part of the communication strategy depends on how CEOs and managers deal with this topic. Thanks to their positions, they should be the first persons to promote this way of doing business with other business people. For instance, it would be really helpful to promote initiative by empowering the entire business environment, such as employees, suppliers and the all supply chain. However, it could be a smart idea to add the B Corp logo next to the business name in digital firms, letterheads, and all the communication tools. At the same time, to better attract the consumer’s attention, the B Corp logo can be print on the goods’ labels. In all these cases, the social media could have a fundamental role to spread the knowledge toward the B Corp certification.
4.2 Performance Analysis of the first Italian B Corps

Taking into considerations the drawbacks encountered during the first methodology, it has been decided to investigate whether being a B Corp result to be advantageous from an economic point of view. To analysis this perspective, thus, it was decided to consider objective, truly and certified data, such as past balance sheets. Indeed, Italian corporations must provide, by law, their accountability each year, and these data are available to the public. Usually, the consultation is not freely available for common citizens but, thanks to the University’s resources, there is the possibility to use Aida platform. Even if there could be some lacks in available data, the system gives the opportunity to consult online information regarding employees or business financial statements, and, in addition, it permits to compare corporations’ values or to design graph to better understand the performance evolution. Furthermore, it provides the possibility to consult the accountability deposited of the last six years.

Considering that the major part of the Italian B Corps has obtained the certification in the last two years, there will be analyzed only the first corporations that had achieved it. Moreover, it shall be remembered that the most recently available information on the platform concern data regarding the 2016 financial year; this because accountability of 2017 will be deposited, and thus available, just in spring 2018. For these two reasons, the study will investigate Italian pioneer B Corps: then, there will be considered only those companies that received the certification at least three years ago (respect to January 2018) in order to have an interesting range of data to analyze. Adopting this criterion, there will be taken into account enterprises that have become B Corps in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and, thus, for the recent ones, there will be at least two financial years to review.

Particularly, to have a general idea of the business performances, the analysis will focus on only four items of the balance sheets. First of all, it is taken into consideration sales revenues. This item refers to the amount realized from sales of goods and services occurred over the financial year. It does not take into account financial charges, such as discounts, or amending details. Thanks to this component, it is possible to understand whether the demand for the business goods and services has been increased. Clearly, a rise in the sales revenues is a positive indicator for the company’s performance. The second item deems relevant is the EBITDA. This is a profitability indicator and stands for Earnings Before Interests, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization. Being a profitability indicator of the business, it is highly principally considered by investors because it can reflect the ability to generate income, evaluating exclusively the operational management activity. It provides, thus, a
general idea of how the enterprise is handled. Another item that is kept into consideration is the net profit, that is also called as net income, earnings or even net earnings. It is the profit calculated by reducing total revenues from operating expenses and all other charges, such as taxes, interest, and depreciation. It is examined because it is also reputed as a measure of profitability: higher is value, greater is earnings. On the contrary, whether expenses and charges exceed revenues, the corporation incurs a net loss. To conclude, the last evaluated aspect is the net financial position. It provides information regarding the business financial situation; it is calculated as the financial liabilities minus cash and cash equivalent. The net financial position may be negative, but this does not necessarily reflect a negative situation. This item, in fact, can result really tricky: indeed, the company could have been incurred in debt position to fund an expansion project or, in contrast, to refinance an older loan and thus cover deeper troubles. To solve this kind of ambiguity, it is helpful to consult the integrative note, an inner part of the balance sheet. Indeed, it briefly explains important events of the financial year considered, providing information able to justify data uncertainties. Integrative notes have been highly considered in the analysis below.

As shown in the next table, corporation analyzed are 8. The first one, Nativa, is the first Italian B Corp and achieved the certification in February 2013. The following year, it has been followed by five corporations, between which there is the well-known Fratelli Carli, that exports olive oil all over the world. In 2015 other two companies joined the movement: Mondora and Dermophisiologique. Below the corporation’s name, it is stated the legal status and, respectively, the date of establishment. It must be noticed that some of them have already adopted the Benefit Corporation status, indicated by SB.

To create a scandalized table, the certification year (X) of each enterprise is just indicated in the first column and, then, it is evidenced in a light green column. First of all, this solution has been adopted to focus the attention on the certification year as a dividing line; secondly, it permits to easily compare different certification years. As a consequence, the X+1y stands for the first year after the certification while X-1y refers to the year before the certification. Salmon-coloured cells want to evidence values that had recorded an improvement over years.

https://www.money.it/Cos-e-EBITDA-significato-calcolo
46 Financial Times Lexicon.
http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=net-profit
47 Investopedia.
https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/debtservice.asp
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<th>Index</th>
<th>NOT CERTIFIED</th>
<th>CERTIFIED</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X-3y</td>
<td>X-2y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>February 2013</td>
<td>NATIVA</td>
<td>S.r.l. SB</td>
<td>Sales revenues</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>TREEDOM</td>
<td>S.r.l.</td>
<td>Sales revenues</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>FRATELLI CARLI</td>
<td>S.P.A.</td>
<td>Sales revenues</td>
<td>139.542.465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>August 2014</td>
<td>D-ORBIT</td>
<td>S.r.l.</td>
<td>Sales revenues</td>
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<tr>
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<td>December 2014</td>
<td>LITTLE GENIUS INTERNATIONAL</td>
<td>S.r.l. SB</td>
<td>Sales revenues</td>
<td>865.644</td>
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<td>December 2014</td>
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<td>S.c.a r.l.</td>
<td>Sales revenues</td>
<td>378.327</td>
</tr>
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<td>March 2015</td>
<td>MONDORA</td>
<td>S.r.l. SB</td>
<td>Sales revenues</td>
<td>3.220.251</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>DERMOPHISIOLOGIQUE</td>
<td>S.r.l. SB</td>
<td>Sales revenues</td>
<td>3.220.251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES:**
- NATIVA:
  - Sales revenues:
    - February 2013: 105.285
    - 24/07/2012: 20.930
  - EBITDA:
    - February 2013: 20.930
    - 24/07/2012: 12.905
  - Net profit:
    - February 2013: 5.297
    - 24/07/2012: 7.511
  - Net funding position:
    - February 2013: 8.837
    - 24/07/2012: -8.661

- TREEDOM:
  - Sales revenues:
    - February 2013: 84.054
    - 16/04/2010: 18.625
  - EBITDA:
    - February 2013: 20.930
    - 16/04/2010: 8.205
  - Net profit:
    - February 2013: 12.905
    - 16/04/2010: -19.711
  - Net funding position:
    - February 2013: -1.520
    - 16/04/2010: n/a

- FRATELLI CARLI:
  - Sales revenues:
    - February 2013: 139.542.465
    - 26/07/1983: 10.494.510
  - EBITDA:
    - February 2013: 19.369
  - Net profit:
    - February 2013: 7.511
    - 26/07/1983: -8.449
  - Net funding position:
    - February 2013: -1.520
    - 26/07/1983: n/a

- D-ORBIT:
  - Sales revenues:
    - February 2013: 0
    - 07/03/2011: 0
  - EBITDA:
    - February 2013: -60.755
    - 07/03/2011: -115.850
  - Net profit:
    - February 2013: -61.217
    - 07/03/2011: -117.113
  - Net funding position:
    - February 2013: -187.895
    - 07/03/2011: -53.462

- LITTLE GENIUS INTERNATIONAL:
  - Sales revenues:
    - February 2013: 1.147.428
    - 19.11.2004: 328.120
  - EBITDA:
    - February 2013: 328.120
    - 19.11.2004: -6.101
  - Net profit:
    - February 2013: 88.121
    - 19.11.2004: -31.391
  - Net funding position:
    - February 2013: -418.558
    - 19.11.2004: -495.668

- HABITECH:
  - Sales revenues:
    - February 2013: 865.644
    - 09/08/2006: 5.922
  - EBITDA:
    - February 2013: 1.550
    - 09/08/2006: 86.933
  - Net profit:
    - February 2013: 2.610.712
    - 09/08/2006: -41.478
  - Net funding position:
    - February 2013: 44.254.796
    - 09/08/2006: -187.895

- MONDORA:
  - Sales revenues:
    - February 2013: 378.327
    - 21/09/2002: 156.557
  - EBITDA:
    - February 2013: 19.191
    - 21/09/2002: 200.646
  - Net profit:
    - February 2013: 19.191
    - 21/09/2002: 39.060
  - Net funding position:
    - February 2013: 254.694
    - 21/09/2002: -66.544

- DERMOPHISIOLOGIQUE:
  - Sales revenues:
    - February 2013: 3.220.251
    - 29/07/1993: 3.220.251
  - EBITDA:
    - February 2013: 59.187
    - 29/07/1993: 38.862
  - Net profit:
    - February 2013: 59.187
    - 29/07/1993: 38.862
  - Net funding position:
    - February 2013: 1.358.403
    - 29/07/1993: -418.558
- **Nativa S.r.l. SB**
  It is the first Italian B Corp and it is the country partner of B Lab. Nativa is an activist sustainability consultancy and, founded in 2012, it has achieved the certification the following year. Furthermore, it has become a Benefit Corporation in 2016 and, then, it is the only company that presents four balance sheets as a Certified B Corp. Observing the recovered data, it is possible to notice that the corporation has increased all the items, with the only exception of the net profit, that, however, remains a positive value. The sales revenues record an exponential increased, from a 105.285 in 2012 to 897.677 in 2016: the absolute value of the growth is 792.392, that corresponds to a percentage increase equals to 752.6%. At the same time, the trend of the EBITDA is positive but results more gradual. The net funding position shows a general positive shape even went down in 2014. The decrease could be the consequence of an increase of the total liabilities of that year respect to the previous one. In any case, Nativa recovered the 2014 negative position showing great values in the following years. Differently, the net profit presents a drop both during the certification year, in 2013, and after having almost reached the initial value, it falls again in 2016. The integrative note suggests that is caused by the stop of a project in September 2016. Indeed, Nativa refers that one of its greater clients asked to withdraw a Sustainable Innovation project for reasons of force majeure that led to management changes.

- **Treedom S.r.l.**
  Treedom is an Italian corporation that promotes agroforestry projects and has become a B Corp in June 2014. At first sight, it can be easily recognized a huge growth in sales revenues between 2011 and 2016, especially after the certification year. The EBITDA has an oscillatory that, however, remains positive over years; specifically, it reaches an extraordinary peak of 179.544 in 2015. The significative negative values of both net profit and net profit position recorded in 2016 appear to be really strange if compared to the other two incredibly positive items. This huge discrepancy can be explained by an extraordinary event: an increase of the equity (or social capital). Indeed, Treedom has decided to undertake new projects, expand its European market and introduce new communication campaigns. Obviously, to concretely implement this development projects, the corporation deliberated to increase the equity in order to get a higher resources availability. This is also confirmed by the critical debt position. The integrative note justifies then the worrying negative values, adding that future balance sheets would fix the situation. Furthermore, it mentions the renovation of the B Corp certification between the relevant events of 2016.
• Fratelli Carli S.p.a.
It is a well-known Italian corporation that exports olive oil and gastronomy products all over the world. Fratelli Carli S.p.a. is a huge business and this can be noticed by the values concerning sales revenues that, further, are gradually increasing. Generally, both EBITDA and net profit have a slightly swinging trend that, however, is always positive. Particularly, the latter one seems to become more stable in the last two years. Taking into consideration the net funding position, it has been recorded a lower value during the certification year that slowed to 33.177.863 in 2015. On closer inspection, even if the corporation shows great values, it fluctuates and exhibits a suffering position in 2014. An explanation is provided again by the integrative note. More specifically, it illustrates that 2014 is considered as a terrible year for the olive oil production. Thanks to mild clime and abundant precipitations during the summer season, the olive flies have critically affected the oil production, reducing it by the 60% respect to the previous year. Although the net profit is lower than other years (55.474), the integrative note suggests that the general performance should be evaluated positively: in fact, while tacking unexpected events and many new investments, the revenues continued to increase. All things considered, the Fratelli Carli S.p.a. has recovered almost every loss in the following years.

• D-Orbit S.r.l.
This B Corp develops smart satellite disposal systems. Working in a very specific sector, the corporation does not present sales revenues for the initial five years, reaching a significant peak only in 2016. The positive value, in fact, corresponds to the development of a useful device to bring back to the Hearth those satellites that do not even work. The prototype could be really profitable in future years, as supported by a relevant increase in the net funding position of 2016 balance sheets reflect. As explained in the integrative note, the negative data of previous years explain costs and investments in research that characterize the initial phase of the start-up. However, as confirmed by 2016 values, more profitable performances are expected in future years, during which the business would be hopefully able to reach the maturity phase.

• Little Genius International S.r.l. SB
The Italian corporation offers preschool educational services. It was founded in 2005 and it has become a Società Benefit in 2015. Unfortunately, Aida platform does not provide balance sheets before the change of the legal status. In 2015, together with the legal status, it has also changed the end of the reporting period in order to match the financial year with the school year. Consequently, the 2016 financial year ends on 31st August 2016. Comparing the few available data, 2016 reports a
downward trend in all items. The integrative note attributes the negative path to non-monetary costs of previous years, an inferior financial year (only eight months) and fundings for study grants. Taking into considerations all these reasons, the loss is defined as temporary. Moreover, the 2016 balance sheet displays a perspective graph of future years, showing an expected increase in future students. Negative values can also be affected by new projects implemented, such as summer school and new co-working laboratories, or even by the new recorded brand “Big Genius”.

- Habitech – Distretto Tecnologico Trentino S.c.a r.l.
Habitech is a cluster promoting innovative procedures in green building and achieved the certification in December 2014. Sales revenues show an increasing path even if the last two years exhibit a slight decline. Particularly, the inferior revenues of 2015 are attributed to have defer some items to the following year while the lower EBITDA has been positively considered because the value after taxes is better of what expected. The negative funding position is doubled in 2015 probably due to new projects, and, even if still negative, it is reduced in 2016. Comparing the values of 2016 to those concerning the 2011, it can be evidenced a huge increase in sales revenues, EBITDA and also net profit. However, it must also be noticed that the corporation achieve its maximum values in 2013. After the introduction of the new business model, Habitech shows an improvement in EBITDA and net profit.

- Mondora S.r.l. SB
Mondora, founded in 2002, is a software and advisory company and achieved booth the B Corp certification and the Benefit Corporation legal status in 2015. The corporation evidences a general and gradual improvement of all items, with the exception of the net funding position. During the certification year, however, it shows a moderate reduction of both EBITDA and net profit. The negative net funding position, that gets worst over year, could be affected by a five-year loan that would have been settled the 31/10/2017. Besides, the critical situation of 2016 (-1.048.309) could be link to a general increase in debts, especially in “tax liabilities” (from 66.248 to 399.386) and “other debts” (from 64.510 to 178.805). However, the negative financial position is compensated by huge increase in sales revenues, EBITDA and net profit. The integrative note reminds also that, in the same year, the B Corp has achieved again the certification getting a higher score and has launched new projects.
• Dermophisiologique S.r.l. SB

The enterprise, funded in 1989, is a leader in professional cosmetics. All data available are positive and, generally, it can be noticed a gradually increase. The only exception is the net funding position that decreases by the 74.13% but, anyway, it still remains a positive value. it can be noticed a significant increase in the net profit: it has grown up by 123.89% in just five years.

4.3 Key Informant Interviews

After having collected the businessmen opinions and having analyzed the items of balance sheets, it was considered exhaustive to ask two key informants about their opinions. Even if the B Corp movement is not treated in depth by the public opinion and, as a consequence, it is widely ignored by the Italians, the academic world is enchanted by this business model. Here as well, the topic is unknown from the great part of the Italian academic community, however, for its unconventional peculiarities, it attracts the attention booth from its innovative legal and organizational structure. Experts who have recognized the potential relevance of the B Corp are wondering about its real success, collecting data and focusing on case studies. Precisely in order to add also a professional perspective to the analysis, it was decided to contact two specialists. Thanks to their experience and knowledge on the topic, they are the only ones who have the competence to reply to some specific questions. The two Italian key informants contacted by emails are Giorgia Nigri and Annamaria Tuan.

G. Nigri has a BA in Business Administration with a minor in International Relations and has completed her MBA in 2007. She has a professional experience in marketing, communication, and public relations and is currently in the last year of her Ph.D. in Economics at LUMSA University of Rome. She is focusing on Business Ethics, Environmental Economics, and Green Economics and, particularly. Her current project is “Benefit Corporation and B Corps”.

A. Tuan, after having achieved a degree in Management and a Ph.D. in Business Studies at the University of Udine, is currently a researcher of the Department of Economics and Management at the University of Pisa. Her teaching activities are focused on Relationship and Social Media Marketing, she is a member of the Junior Committee of Italian Marketing Association and she is a Secretary of Animaimpresa, Association involved in promoting CSR and Sustainability.

Besides being extremely available to explain some uncertainties concerning the B Corp “World”, they kindly accepted to answer questions arisen from the survey’s data and the overall Italian situation. First of all, similarly to what was demanded business leaders, key informants were asked
why CSR-oriented companies should become B Corps. G. Nigri suggests that CSR-oriented companies should become B Corps because they already have an existing structure - accountability, reporting, performance management – that facilitates the access to certification. Unfortunately, this step results to be harder than expected because the B Corp certification is born as a new paradigm, separate from the CSR heritage. A. Tuan evidences that the B Corp certification can help companies to protect the core business and diminishing the risk of greenwashing. This latter reason actually seems a relevant key point to convince business. Most of the consumers are indeed skeptical about social and environmental claims promoted by companies. A B Corp certification can allow companies to generate more trust in stakeholders because it allows overcoming greenwashing problems. In addition, the legal status provides entrepreneurs, owners, and investors with the assurance that the company’s social and environmental values remain equally important to making profit.

After having clarified the reasons that could convince corporations to achieve the B Corp certification, it is spontaneous to wonder if the major part of Società Benefit would become B Corp. A. Tuan thinks this will happen because the certification can be more easily recognized and also permit to join a very active community. In fact, being part of the B Corp movement, that actually is also a supportive network, is a point of pride for enterprises she has known. G. Nigri believes that the major part of Società Benefit might become B Corp because these two entities grew up together in Italy. She includes that Smaller companies that have become SB without the support of consultants, such as Nativa, still have some trouble in setting up their company structure accordingly. The Ph.D. researcher reveals though some doubts concerning the fact that SIaVS or social enterprises will feel the need to certify once they achieve the Società Benefit status.

Additionally, focusing on Law 208/2015 text, the Italian legislator lists the requirements the third party that certifies the enterprise’s performance should have. To better understand who can satisfy these requirements, as well as B Lab, some examples were asked. A. Tuan affirms that all the certifications related to environmental and social issues, such as ISO 9000, ISO 14000 and SA 8000, can be considered as a third party. G. Nigri suggests ULE 880 for manufacturers (that follows the LEED rating system) and Green Seal, but also CSQA was considering entering the market. Furthermore, there are also new certifiers emerging in university accelerators for social enterprises. Finally, she underlines that she still sees B Lab as a market leader.

Remembering the answers of the survey, one of the participants was wondering on the idea of tailoring B Impact Assessment questions on the enterprise’s country. To reply, this idea does not seem to be feasible. Key informants agree in fact that a unique model should be better. They claim that it is already hard to compare the standard as is and, introducing the country’s criterion, it would not be
possible to compare results of companies in more companies. The unique model appears to be the best solution and it should be standardized as much as possible.

As widely said, the B Corp movement has had a great diffusion in Italy. To understand why this happened in Italy rather than in the other European countries, explanations have been requested. Both researchers evidence that Italy, thanks to its history, was predisposed to embrace the B Corp movement. For instance, A. Tuan reminds that Italy has Catholic and communist roots. Both of them designed a strong history of civil economy which raised fundamental questions about the complex links between markets, states and civil society (e.g. Olivetti and Luisa Spagnoli). As well, before introducing the Benefit Corporation, G. Nigri adds Italy has the social enterprise legislation and Zamagni, an expert professor in this field, always mentions third and fourth sectors. Focusing on the Catholic root, she affirms it has had a fundamental role in aligning philanthropy and business in the Italian background. On the contrary, these two spheres were kept separated in Lutheran/Calvinistic countries, such as Nordic and Baltic countries. According to these statements, Spain and France seem to be more similar to Italy and, thus, a comparable development of the B Corp movement could happen. N. Nigri includes that France is already considering other forms of for-profit and for purpose businesses. She also adds that major issues will arise when the UK legal system will deal with this matter.

About future expectations, both key informants think, and also wish, the B Corp movement will grow in future years. They agree on the fact that large companies, shifting towards these new forms of business, will have a fundamental role in changing the market.
5. Results

After having displayed the three methods, it is necessary to sum up collected information. The idea of using different methodologies is arisen by the willingness to compare several points of views and, thus, provide an exhaustible scenario. Key informants’ interviews can provide interesting observation thanks to the widespread knowledge on the topic, however, it cannot be substituted by direct experiences of entrepreneurs. Achieving the certification, they can testify what really means to undertake this choice. This is the reason why, although the data obtained by the survey are few, they have been introduced in the analysis: excluding the opinion of B Corp business leaders would create a lack in the evaluation. Furthermore, balance sheets data have been considered as an additional opportunity to think. They furnish objective values that concretely reflect the reality. The three perspectives are complementing each other and, only considering all of them, it is possible to comprehend the overall situation and, then, to draw conclusions.

Taking into consideration the information gathered in the survey, it can be said that business people who have joined the B Corp movement are extremely prepared on the topic. This can be affirmed thanks to the exhaustive and elaborated explanations that they gave in open questions. It results that the decision of becoming B Corp is not a commercial strategy but, on the contrary, is a firmly conscious initiative undertaken to change the current way of doing business. These entrepreneurs are really aware of the key role they play in society: they have recognized the responsibilities they have with respect to current and future generations. They want to promote an efficient market in which goods and services are traded without compromise future possibilities. B Corp leaders feel part of a group of people that firmly believe in a change that could become real. Comments on how to spread the B Corp certification are focused on active engagement. Some participants affirmed, for instance, they had suggested their suppliers undertake the B Impact Assessment. Direct testimonies are reputed as the best way to share the willingness of having a positive impact on society and environment and, as follows, to enhance the B Corp movement.

Although data show B Corps have reasonably experienced the advantages proposed by the B Lab. However, it must be remembered that the major part of the survey’s participants has achieved the certification in 2016 or 2017. Then, it can be supposed that the advantages suggested can be better noticed in many years following the certification. For instance, it currently appears quite complicated to develop relationships of interdependence because of the low number of Italian B Corps. The Italian movement seems to be in an “incubation” stage and, thus, results too early to provide any judgment, still on the truth of advantages proposed. However, even if the certification has been evaluated
expensive or advantages are not yet encountered, changemakers are driven by a bigger path for the economy that leads them to go beyond these considerations.

Even the survey can be considered a feasible source of information, on the other side, balance sheets data of pioneer B Corp are more reliable. It can generally be claimed that the eight B Corps analyzed show an overall positive trade. Treedom, Habitech, and Mondora present a drastic drop in the net funding position of 2016 that, however, is counterbalanced by high positive sales revenues. Then, these negative values could easily be seen as liabilities subscribed in order to fund new projects or develop the operational structure. Focusing the attention on sales revenues of 2016, it can be said that only Habitech and Little Genius International have recorded a lower value than the previous year, reduced, respectively, by 30,15% and 50,64%. The decrease of Little Genius International appears to be troublesome but it must be remembered that the 2016 financial year has been shortened. Increasing sales of goods and services are instead showed for all the other six corporations. As the same, the EBITDA has observed a spread improvement and, in only two cases, it has encountered a gentle downward trend. With the exception of the last three enterprises (Habitech, Mondora, and Dermophisiologique) whose integrative notes have not underlined important facts, all the others B Corps have provided helpful information to better understand balance sheets. Indeed, where performances have shown oscillations or declines, they were explained, such as the case of the olive flies that affected the 2014 production of Fratelli Carli. Of course, a wider range of data would have provided a more satisfying and interesting performances evolution but, again, the analysis has to face with the recent development of the B Corp movement. Anyway, to sum up, it can be said that overall data support the idea that being an Italian B Corp could lead a positive effect on business performance.

Moreover, it is extremely relevant that the researchers’ opinion is in line with that one of business leaders. They believe B Corp certification does not only guarantee a conscious production of goods and services but, above all, it permits consumers to easily recognize them. This can be considered as the great difference between the B Corp certification and CSR practices and, consequently, the most important reason why CSR-oriented companies should become B Corps. As a consequence, the certification results to be the fundamental tool to overcome greenwashing. It finally proves the higher quality of products thanks to the high standards respected in the production process. The certification hence achieves the objective of recognizing truly socially responsible corporations. Then, it also allows consumers to distinguish real eco-friendly products from the huge eco-hostile variety.

As well, key informants have clearly explained why the B Corp movement has a great success in Italy. Italian corporations are born in a context in which philanthropy and business are intended to be linked by a strong connection.Implicitly, this thought is already intrinsic in Italian enterprises. As G. Nigri has evidenced, most of them are already structured as B Corps. This statement is confirmed by
a comment collected in the survey: a participant reports that their corporation was already a B Corp, but they did not know it yet. That is the reason why a widespread knowledge of B Corp could reveal the presence of a larger number of Italian enterprises that already satisfy requirements of B Corp certification.

The recent development of the Italian B Corp movement is probably the main cause of the limited availability of data. Anyway, all the three methods applied suggest a positive attitude towards the future. Businesspeople strongly believe in what they are doing and want to spread the knowledge about B Corps. This would permit to expand the B Corp community and, then, to increase advantages coming from belonging to a community, such as interdependence relationships. Similarly, a positive economic feedback is already given by balance sheets data of Italian pioneer B Corps. Even if these corporations achieved the certification not too long ago, they have already verified improvements in their performances. To conclude, also key informants look forward optimistically. More and more businesses are becoming B Corp and also huge companies seem recently interested in joining the movement. Thanks to well-known brand that have become B Corp, such as Alessi S.p.a., the certification is increasingly gaining popularity. Under those circumstances, it seems that the B Corp movement could really achieve a huge development in future years.

Figure 25 The perspective of a market of Certified B Corp products. B Corp Literature.

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6. Conclusions

The current society has to face too many problems, the management of which will play a fundamental role for the entire planet in future years. Countries should focus and cooperate to meet global problems, such as global warming, famine, and poverty, that are expected to exponentially growth together with the earth’s population. Considering this scenario, nowadays it seems that Corporate Social Responsibility should suppose to be taken for granted and the shift towards a higher step is required. The B Corp certification results to satisfy this general need, proposing a sustainable and responsible business. As claimed by Riccardo Sabatini, an Italian scientist and entrepreneur, the idea of B Corp is so obvious that the opposite sounds suspicious (R. Honeyman, 2016). Going beyond CSR is necessary to create shared value and, consequently, by solving social issues will be easier to address also environmental matters. Keeping a CSR approach would not result to be sufficient to realize Global Goals.

Fortunately, a growing number of companies and entrepreneurs are recognizing the importance of their role in the future path of the earth. Probably thanks to globalization, faster communications of information, a higher knowledge of current matters and a modern high-technology society, the new generation of entrepreneurs seems to have an intrinsic concern to social and environmental issues. The B Corp certification appears to be able to group together all these businesspeople. The certification distinguishes a company that has concretely integrated sustainability and responsibility in its core business, overcoming greenwashing. Then, it is possible to affirm that the business model promoted by the BCorp certification could really play a key role in the future: it succeeds in reconciling an economic growth with both the society’s needs and the scarcity of natural resources. It seems that, in fact, it has founded a balance between economic, social and environmental systems. This is the reason why the B Corporation could be considered as one of the sustainable models of business that could achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

The B Corp movement is growing all over the world: there are 2429 B Corporation in more than 50 countries and 130 industries.49 The global scenario appears to be predisposed to an enhancement and look positively ahead. At the same time, the B Lab continues to improve the B Impact Assessment to better quantify the positive impact and the Multinationals and Public Markets Advisory Council (MPMAC) is working to design a clear path to certify multinational and public companies. Certainly, once great companies, such as Unilever or Danone, will have gained the certification, the B Corp symbol will easily be spread and recognized around. In addition, it must be observed, that the

49 B Corporation website.
https://www.bcorporation.net/
introduction of a specific regulation for Benefit Corporation has been resulted extremely relevant. Both in U.S.A. and Italy, it has been recorded a remarkable pick in the in the number of Certified B Corps after the law adoption. This is the reason why Certified B Corps are asking their governments a legal structure for their hybrid organization in Australia and other countries.\(^{50}\)

Even limited data available, it seems that the BCorp certification has been positively seen by Italian entrepreneurs. Opinions and feedbacks of the survey show a spread pride of being part of the B Corp community and a general willingness to increase the Italian network. The Certified B Corp community is growing and, as mentioned before, numbers reveal the importance of the Società Benefit implementation. From this point of view, Italy seems to be a particular study case because B Corps and Benefit Corporations are born almost simultaneously and, they are still increasing together. The explanation to this peculiarity is that the BIA is highly useful for the compliance. Furthermore, focusing on balance sheet data, it has been observed a general positive trade of Italian B Corps. With the exception of Nativa, that is the B Lab country partner, it is not possible to claim that successful values are directly connected to the B Corp certification but, however, the fact that all of them have recorded positive performances must be highlighted. Finally, all data collected by the three methodologies seem to be proactive for the Italian future scenario. Particularly, it results that the movement has a great potential in developing and, thus, it is too soon to draw conclusions.

All things considered, the only disadvantage underlined result to be the certification cost. It is comprehensible that the certification could be quite expensive for small and medium-size companies, thus, to incentive them maintaining the certification, the priority is to inform. The BCorp certification helps corporations to attests their responsible behaviors (overcoming greenwashing) but it is also helpful to consumers in making conscious choices. Then, spread the knowledge about BCorp could be fundamental for two different reasons. First of all, it would support real responsible businesses to get the certification in order to distinguish from those companies that implement CSR practices just as a marketing strategy. Secondly and not least, it is really important that consumers know what they really buy. It is then necessary to explain that a higher price reflects higher standards and continuous controls to which the business is subject. A responsible consumer should be conscious of its expenditure choices, preferring those goods that, even if more expensive, are sustainable. Indeed, a consumer should begin to recognize and award those enterprises that have undertaken a responsible choice, postponing short-term profits to long-term benefits for environment and society. Only let them know what mean the BCorp certification will allow them to take responsible choices.

DECLARATION
OF INTERDEPENDENCE

We envision a global economy that uses business as a force for good.

This economy is comprised of a new type of corporation – the B Corporation – Which is purpose-driven and creates benefit for all stakeholders, not just shareholders.

As B Corporations and leaders of this emerging economy, we believe:

That we must be the change we seek in the world.

That all business ought to be conducted as if people and place mattered.

That, through their products, practices, and profits, businesses should aspire to do no harm and benefit all.

To do so requires that we act with the understanding that we are each dependent upon another and thus responsible for each other and future generations.

______________________________
Director/Officer

______________________________
Director/Officer, B Lab

______________________________
Date

______________________________
Company

______________________________
Date

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Appendix B

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![B Corporation Logo]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall B Score</th>
<th>Company Score</th>
<th>Median Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The Environment section of the Assessment evaluates a company's environmental performance through its facilities; materials, resource, and energy use; and emissions. Where applicable, it also considers a company's transportation/distribution channels and environmental impact of its supply chain. This section also measures whether a company's products or services are designed to solve an environmental issue, including products that aid in the provision of renewable energy, conserve resources, reduce waste, promote land/wildlife conservation, prevent toxic/hazardous substance or pollution, or educate, measure, or consult to solve environmental problems.
| Environmental Products & Services (e.g. Renewable energy, recycling) | 12 | 7 |
| Environmental Practices | 10 | 6 |
| Land, Office, Plant | 5 | 3 |
| Energy, Water, Materials | 3 | 1 |
| Emissions, Water, Waste | 2 | 1 |
| Suppliers & Transportation | N/A |
| **Workers** | 23 | 18 |
| The Worker section of the survey assesses the company's relationship with its workforce. This section measures how the company treats its workers through compensation, benefits, training, and ownership opportunities provided to workers. It also focuses on the overall work environment within the company through management/worker communication, job flexibility and corporate culture, and worker health and safety practices.
| Compensation, Benefits & Training | 14 | 12 |
| Worker Ownership | 3 | 1 |
| Work Environment | 6 | 3 |
Customers
The Customers section of the Assessment measures the impact a company has on its customers. The section focuses on whether a company sells products or services that promote public benefit, and if those products/services are targeted towards serving underserved populations. Questions in this section will measure whether a company's product or service is designed to solve a social or environmental issue (e.g. improves health, preserves environment or creates economic opportunity to individuals or communities, promotes the arts/sciences, or increases the flow of capital to purpose-driven enterprises).

| Customer Products & Services | N/A | N/A |
| Products & Services          | 12  | N/A |
| Serving Those in Need        | N/A | N/A |

Community
The Community section of the survey assesses a company's impact on its community. The Community section evaluates a company's supplier relations, diversity, and involvement in the local community. The section also measures the company's practices and policies around community service and charitable giving. In addition, this section includes if a company's product or service is designed to solve a social issue, including access to basic services, health, education, economic opportunity, arts, and increasing the flow of capital to purpose-driven enterprises.

| Community Practices          | 27  | 15  |
| Suppliers & Distributors     | 4   | 2   |
| Local                        | 5   | 5   |
| Diversity                    | 7   | 2   |
| Job Creation                 | 1   | 2   |
| Civic Engagement & Giving    | 11  | 3   |

Governance
The Governance section of the Assessment evaluates a company's accountability and transparency. The section focuses on the company's mission, stakeholder engagement, and overall transparency of the company's practices and policies.

| Accountability | 6 | 3 |
| Transparency    | 7 | 3 |
| Overall         | 102 | 55 |

80 out of 200 is eligible for certification
*Of all businesses that have completed the B Impact Assessment [2]
*Median scores will not add up to overall

Print Impact Report [3]

Source URL: /community/mightybytes-inc/impact-report/2017-10-31-000000

Links
[1] /community/mightybytes-inc
[2] /benchmarks
[3] /javascript%3Awindows.print%28%29
Appendix C

Società Benefit

LEGGE 28 dicembre 2015, n. 208
Disposizioni per la formazione del bilancio annuale e pluriennale dello Stato (legge di stabilità 2016)
(GU n.302 del 30-12-2015 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 70)
Vigente al: 1-1-2016
http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/12/30/15G00222/sg

Article 1

(Purposes)

1. The purpose of this law is to promote the establishment and the growth of corporations - hereinafter, benefit corporations - which, in carrying out their economic activities shall pursue, in addition to the aim of distributing profits, one or more aims of common benefit, and operate in a responsible, sustainable and transparent manner vis-à-vis individuals, communities, territories and the environment, cultural and social heritage, entities and associations as well as other stakeholders.

2. The purposes under paragraph 1 above shall be specifically identified within the benefit corporation’s corporate purpose and shall be pursued through an administration finalised at balancing the interest of the shareholders and the interest of those that may be impacted by the company’s business activity.

3. The purposes under paragraph 1 above, may be pursued by any of the entities subject to the provisions of Book V, Title V and VI, of the Civil Code, in compliance with the relevant applicable provisions.

Article 2

(Definitions)

1. For the purposes of this law:

(a) “common benefit”: means the pursuit, while carrying out the benefit corporation’s economic activities, of one or more positive effects, or the reduction of negative effects, for one or more of the categories listed under article 1, paragraph 1, above;

(b) “other stakeholders”: the individuals or groups of individuals directly or indirectly involved in, or affected by, the activities of the benefit corporation, being, inter alios: workers, clients, suppliers, lenders, creditors, public administration and civil society;

(c) “third party standard”: procedures and criteria required in order to assess the impact generated by the benefit corporation with respect to common benefit;
(d) “evaluation areas”: sectors to be necessarily included in the assessment of the activities of common benefit.

Article 3

(Benefit corporation’s corporate purpose and company name)

1. The benefit corporation, without prejudice of the applicable provisions of the Italian Civil Code, shall identify, within its corporate purpose, the aims of common benefit that the benefit corporation intends to pursue.

2. Companies other than benefit corporations which intend to pursue also aims of common benefit shall amend accordingly their by-laws or articles of association, in compliance with the relevant provisions applicable to the different kind of corporations according to the Civil Code.

3. The amendments under paragraph 2 above, shall be filed, registered and published in compliance with the relevant provisions applicable according to article 2252, 2300 and 2436 of the Italian Civil Code.

4. The benefit corporation which has included in its corporate purpose the aims of common benefit, can add, next to the company name, the words “Società Benefit” (i.e. Benefit Corporation) or “SB”, and use such denomination in its issued securities, official documentation and communication to third parties.

Article 4

(Benefit Corporations’ directors’ obligations and liabilities)

1. The benefit corporation is administered in a manner that considers the interest of the shareholders, the pursuit of the common benefit objectives, and the interests of those identified under Article 1.1 above, in accordance with the provisions of the by-laws.

2. For the purposes of paragraph 1 above, the benefit corporations shall, without prejudice of the relevant applicable provisions of the Italian Civil Code, identify the individual or the individuals to be appointed with the role and tasks for pursuing the common benefit.

3. The breach of obligations under paragraph 1 above, may be deemed as a breach of the duties imposed by the applicable laws and the by-laws upon the directors of the company.

4. In the event of breach of the obligations under paragraph 1 above, the relevant provisions of the Civil Code regarding directors’ liability shall apply.

Article 5

(Annual benefit report)
1. For the purposes of this law, the benefit corporation shall produce an annual report concerning the pursuing of common benefit; such report shall be attached to the annual financial statements and shall include:

a) the description of the specific objectives, modalities and actions implemented by the directors in order to pursue the aims of common benefit and the possible mitigating circumstances which have prevented, or slowed up, the achievement of the above aims;

b) the evaluation of the generated impact, using a third party evaluation having the requirements listed under Annex A and which includes the evaluation areas identified under Annex B;

c) a specific section containing the description of the new objectives which the benefit corporation intends to pursue in the following fiscal year.

2. The annual report shall be published on the benefit corporation’s website, if existing. For the protection of the beneficiaries of the annual report, some financial data can be omitted.

Article 6
(Italian Competition Authority’s competences)

1. The benefit corporation that does not pursue the aims of common benefit is subject to the provisions of Italian Legislative Decree 2 August 2007, No. 145, regarding misleading advertising and the provisions of the Italian Legislative Decree, 6 September 2005, No. 206 (the Italian Consumer Code).

2. The Authority carries out the activities under the provisions set forth in paragraph 1 above, within the limits of the available funds and without charging any additional expenses upon the entities subject to its supervisory activity.

ANNEX A
THIRD PARTY STANDARD

The third party standard used by the benefit corporation shall be:

1) comprehensive in that it assesses the impact of the business and its operations aimed at pursuing common benefit upon individuals, communities, territories and environment, cultural and social heritage, entities and associations, as well as other stakeholders;

2) developed by an entity which is not controlled by, or affiliated to, the benefit corporation;

3) credible in that it has been developed by a person that both:

(a) Has access to necessary expertise to assess overall corporate social and environmental performance;
(b) Uses a balanced scientific and multistakeholder approach including a possible public comment period to develop the standard;

4) transparent in that the following information is made publicly available:

(i) The criteria considered when measuring the overall social and environmental performance of a business;

(ii) The relative weightings of those criteria;

(iii) The identity of the directors and the governing body of the organization that developed and controls revisions to the standard;

(iv) The process by which revisions and changes to the standard are made;

(v) An accounting of the sources of financial support for the organization, with sufficient detail to disclose any relationships that could reasonably be considered to present a potential conflict of interest.

ANNEX B

EVALUATION AREAS

The evaluation of the overall performance shall include the following areas:

1. Corporate governance, for evaluating the degree of transparency and liability of the corporation in pursuing of the aims of common benefit, with a particular focus on the corporate purpose, the degree of involvement of the stakeholders and the degree of transparency of the policies and practices adopted by the corporation;

2. Workers, for evaluating the relationships with employees and collaborators in terms of salaries and benefits, training and opportunities of personal growth, quality of the working environment, internal communication, flexibility and job security;

3. Other stakeholders, for evaluating the relationships of the corporation with its suppliers, the local environment and local communities in which it operates, the voluntary activities, the donations and the cultural and social activities, as well as any actions aimed at supporting the local development and the development of its own supply chain;

4. Environment, for evaluating the overall performance of the corporation, considering the life cycle of goods and services, in terms of exploitation of resources, energy, commodities, production, logistic and distribution processes, utilization and consumption and life end.
Appendix D

Diventare BCorp

1. Perché non è più sufficiente essere semplicemente un’azienda socialmente responsabile?

2. Perché la BCorp è un modello di business sostenibile efficiente? *

B Impact Assessment

3. In che anno avete ottenuto la certificazione? *

  - 2013
  - 2014
  - 2015
  - 2016
  - 2017
4. Quanto tempo è stato impiegato per ottenere la certificazione? *

- < 3 mesi
- 3-5 mesi
- 5-10 mesi
- 10-15 mesi
- 15-20 mesi
- > 20 mesi

5. Classifica le aree in base al punteggio che hanno ottenuto per l'impatto positivo. *

1 = maggior punteggio
5 = minor punteggio

- Environment
- Governance
- Workers
- Customers
- Community

6. Quale area risulta essere più complicata da migliorare? *

- Governance
- Environment
- Workers
- Customers
- Community

7. Che punteggio siete riusciti a totalizzare? *

Abbiamo ottenuto complessivamente [ ] punti.
8. Avete dovuto apportare modifiche interne all’azienda per soddisfare i requisiti richiesti? *

☐ sì
☐ no

9. Se sì, quali tipi di modifiche?


10. Siete stati soddisfatti dall’assistenza ricevuta dal BLab? *

No _________________________________ Si

11. Ritenete ci siano degli aspetti migliorabili del B Impact Assessment? Se Sì, l’avete segnalato a BLab direttamente nello strumento, e cosa riguardano?


### Essere BCorp in Italia

**12. Avete riscontrato tali vantaggi nel diventare BCorp?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Far parte di una comunità e godere di rapporti di interdipendenza</th>
<th>Per niente</th>
<th>Poco</th>
<th>Abbastanza</th>
<th>Molto</th>
<th>Molissimo</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attrarre talenti e coinvolgere dipendenti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rafforzare il Brand, migliorare la credibilità e alimentare la fiducia</td>
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<td>Visibilità sui media</td>
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<td>Confrontare e migliorare le performance</td>
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<td>Attrarre investimenti</td>
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<td>Proteggere la mission aziendale nel lungo periodo</td>
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<td>Comunicare con una voce collettiva</td>
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<td>Risparmiare denaro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidare il cambiamento</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**13. Avete avuto esperienze dirette di interdipendenza?**

- [ ] sì
- [ ] no
14. Se si, vi va di raccontarci la vostra esperienza?


15. **Ritenete che essere diventati BCorp possa portare benefici economici (in termini di fatturato) nei prossimi anni?** *

   ○ Sì
   ○ No
   ○ Non credo inciderà molto sul fatturato

16. **Avete riscontrato svantaggi nel diventare BCorp?**


17. **Vi siete già adeguati alla nuova forma giuridica della Società Benefit?** *

   ○ Siamo nati come Società Benefit
   ○ Sì, abbiamo già modificato la nostra forma giuridica in Società Benefit
   ○ No, dobbiamo ancora adeguarci
18. In che modo si potrebbe concretamente far conoscere il movimento BCorp nella comunità in cui si opera?

es. organizzare meeting con stakeholders ed imprenditori della zona per far conoscere ed approfondire il tema, utilizzare maggiormente il logo BCorp sui propri prodotti o puntare ad una soluzione low-cost sfruttando al meglio i social network..

19. Il questionario è quasi terminato.

Vi ringrazio per la collaborazione.

Qualora lo riteneate opportuno, vi invito a scrivere nel riquadro sottostante annotazioni o riflessioni relative alla vostra esperienza BCorp o al questionario.

Per qualsiasi informazione, mi potete contattare all’email: alice.bianchi8@studio.unibo.it

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