

From Sensemaking to Action: Developing a Perception-based Framework for Corporate Climate Resilience

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i. Keywords

Corporate Climate resilience, Organisational Sensemaking, Perception, Manufacturing Sector, Benelux Region, Climate Change Adaptation, Climate Risk Management, Organisational Resilience

ii. Abstract

This thesis explores how large manufacturing companies in the Benelux region make sense of climate resilience and what they perceive as its key elements. Although ‘corporate climate resilience’ has gained increasing attention in academic and practitioner-oriented literature, the concept is characterised by ambiguity and fragmentation, resulting in inconsistent corporate interpretations and practices. Empirical insights into how large businesses perceive and construct meaning around the concept remain nevertheless limited. This research addresses this gap by adopting an inductive, qualitative case-study approach based on 15 semi-structured interviews with 15 representatives from large manufacturers and 4 field experts in the Benelux. Applying thematic analysis, it develops a perception-based framework for corporate climate resilience grounded in organisational sensemaking and perceived resilience elements. The framework suggests that large businesses make sense of climate resilience through a continuous process of interpreting and acting, shaped by firm-level dynamics, systemic interdependencies, and structural constraints. It shows that resilience is shaped through coexisting perspectives and influencing factors, while also being often conditionally relevant. Organisations enact resilience through a continuous interaction between embedment and operationalisation processes. Embedment entails elements of awareness, shared language, pragmatic simplification, willingness, top-down leadership, and strategic embedment, while operationalisation involves data, frameworks, risk-based approaches, ownership, central-local dynamics, and organisational alignment. These elements enable practices of proactive design, redundancy, and resilience across and beyond firms. Overall, the thesis reconceptualises corporate climate resilience as a relational property emerging from interactions between organisational sensemaking and action, and provides practical insights into perceived conditions and challenges for effective climate resilience.

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iii. Summary

This master's thesis explores how large manufacturing companies in the Benelux region make sense of climate resilience and what they perceive as its key elements. Large businesses are increasingly recognised as crucial actors in fostering societal resilience through their financial resources, innovation, products and services, expertise, and broader societal influence. At the same time, climate change poses growing challenges to companies through physical risks, such as disruptions to infrastructure and supply chains, and through transition risks related to changing regulations, technologies, and markets. As a result, corporate climate resilience has gained increasing attention in academic and practitioner-oriented literature. Despite this development, the concept is characterised by ambiguity and fragmentation across the literature, resulting in inconsistent corporate interpretations and practices.

While existing research has predominantly examined climate risk perceptions and organisational attitudes towards climate change, empirical insights into how large businesses themselves perceive and make sense of climate resilience remain limited. These sensemaking processes are crucial for understanding organisational practices. To address this gap, this thesis develops a perception-based framework for corporate climate resilience grounded in organisational sensemaking processes and the perceptions of large businesses themselves.

The study adopts an inductive, qualitative case-study approach focused on the manufacturing sector in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. This context provides a particularly relevant empirical setting because of high dependencies on physical infrastructure, environmental conditions, and global supply chains, combined with a growing climate risk exposure. Empirical data were collected through 15 semi-structured interviews with 15 representatives from large manufacturing companies and 4 field experts in the Benelux. These interviews explored how organisations conceptualise climate resilience, what factors shape corporate interpretations, and what participants perceived as key elements, practices, and constraints for achieving resilience. The data were then analysed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach.

The findings, presented in a final framework, suggest that businesses make sense of climate resilience through a continuous and interactive process of interpreting and acting, shaped by key elements related to firm-level dynamics, systemic interdependencies, and structural constraints. Within this process, climate resilience is conceptualised through multiple, coexisting perspectives related to risk management and business continuity, long-term strategy, adaptation, and organisational survival, product- and process-level innovation, and responsibility and leadership. Organisational sensemaking is influenced by external pressures, such as regulations and stakeholders, and internal drivers such as climate impacts and individual interpretations. Importantly, the relevance of climate resilience tends to be conditional, depending on factors such as risk exposure, insurance coverage, and organisational structures.

Once triggered, climate resilience is enacted through the continuous interaction between the processes of embedment and internalisation, and operationalisation and coordination. The first includes key elements of awareness, shared language, pragmatic simplification, willingness, top-down leadership, and strategic embedment, while the latter concerns data, frameworks, risk-based approaches, ownership, central-local dynamics, and organisational alignment.

These processes simultaneously foster the organisational embedment of climate resilience and translation of the concept into coordinated organisational action, thereby shaping practices such as proactive design, redundancy, and resilience efforts beyond the firm-level. At the same time, effective, large-scale corporate climate resilience is found to be structurally constrained by short-term thinking, limited or deprioritised resources, and the absence of system-level coordination. Although systemic resilience is viewed as essential due to strong interdependencies across value chains, individual firms perceive limited control over resilience initiatives among external actors.

This study contributes to academic theory by reconceptualising corporate climate resilience as a relational property emerging from ongoing interactions between organisational sensemaking and action. It further provides practical implications for businesses, policymakers, and other involved actors into perceived conditions, challenges, and organisational dynamics underlying effective corporate climate resilience. As such, the thesis provides an empirical foundation for future academic research and practical discussions on corporate climate resilience.

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v. List of Abbreviations

BCM – Business Continuity Management

C2ES – Center for Climate and Energy Solutions

CSRD – Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive

DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

EEA – European Environmental Agency

ESG – Environment, Social and Governance

EU – European Union

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

ISO – International Organization for Standardization

NACE – Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community

SBTi – Science Based Targets initiative

TCFD – Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WBCSD – World Business Council for Sustainable Development

Table of Contents

i. Keywords	3
ii. Abstract	3
iii. Summary	4
iv. Acknowledgements	6
v. List of Abbreviations	7
1: Introduction	11
1.1: Background & Motivation	11
1.2: Research Objective & Question	12
1.3: Thesis Structure	12
2: Theoretical Framework	13
2.1: Resilience as an Academic Concept	13
2.1.1: Approaches to Resilience	13
2.1.2: Scales of Resilience	14
2.1.3: Elements of Resilience	14
2.2: Climate Resilience in the Corporate Context	16
2.2.1: Academic Perspectives on Corporate Climate Resilience	16
2.2.2: Corporate Conceptualisations of Climate Resilience	17
2.3: Perception, Sensemaking, and Corporate Climate Resilience	21
3: Methodology	23
3.1: Overall Research Design & Approach	23
3.2: Case Study Context – Manufacturing Sector in the Benelux Region	24
3.3: Sampling Strategy and Participants	26
3.4: Data Collection – Semi-Structured Interviews	29
3.5: Data Analysis – Thematic Analysis	31
3.6: Ethical Considerations	33
4: Findings	34
4.1: Competing Organisational Conceptualisations of Climate Resilience	34
4.1.1: Risk-oriented resilience	34
4.1.2: Strategic- and value-oriented resilience	34
4.1.3: Production- and innovation-oriented resilience	35
4.1.4: Responsibility- and leadership-oriented resilience	35
4.2: Factors Influencing Organisational Sensemaking of Climate Resilience	37
4.2.1: Regulations	37

4.2.2: Stakeholders	37
4.2.3: Materialisation of Climate Risks & Individual Factors	37
4.2.4: Conditional Relevance of Climate Resilience.....	38
4.3: Organisational Embedment & Internalisation of Climate Resilience	39
4.3.1: Cultural Embedment	39
4.3.2: Structural Embedment.....	40
4.4: Organisational Operationalisation & Coordination of Climate Resilience	42
4.4.1: Analytical & Risk-based Operationalisation	42
4.4.2: Organisational Structures & Coordination.....	43
4.5: Organisational Practices across Operations & Value Chains	45
4.5.1: Proactive Design & Anticipation	45
4.5.2: Redundancy & Risk Distribution	45
4.5.3: Resilience Beyond the Firm	46
4.6: Constraining Conditions for Corporate Climate Resilience.....	47
4.6.1: Short-termism.....	47
4.6.2: Resources	47
4.6.3: Absence of System-Level Approach	47
4.7: Final Framework & Synthesis of Findings	49
4.7.1: A Perception-based Framework for Corporate Climate Resilience	49
4.7.2: Key Elements, Relationships, and Tensions.....	50
4.7.3: Main Theoretical Contribution.....	51
5: Conclusion	52
6: References	55
7: Appendices	62
7.1: Interview Topic List	62
7.2: Coding Table	64
Sheet 1: Initial Coding (step 1-2)	64
Sheet 2: Pattern Coding (step 3-4)	64
Sheet 3: Themes & Quotations (step 5-6)	64
7.3: Informed Consent Form	65

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Organisational sensemaking process, adapted from Weick et al. (2005, p. 414)	21
Figure 2: Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)	31
Figure 3: Perception-based framework for corporate climate resilience	49

List of Tables

Table 1: Academic perspectives on corporate climate resilience	17
Table 2: Corporate conceptualisations of climate resilience	19
Table 3: Sample selection criteria.....	26
Table 4: Anonymised overview of participating businesses.....	27

1: Introduction

1.1: Background & Motivation

Large businesses are increasingly recognised as crucial actors in fostering climate adaptation and societal resilience. As early as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), the private sector is identified as an indispensable partner in building resilience, predominantly through investments in risk reduction (United Nations, 2015). While this financial role remains central (Oxera, 2025), a growing body of research highlights a broader corporate role through innovation, products and services, expertise, and influence on markets, communities and political systems (C2ES, 2025; Klein et al., 2022; Cameron et al., 2019; Averchenkova et al., 2016). Corporations then also play an important dual role by both exacerbating and responding to climate change (Wright & Nyberg, 2024).

At the same time, large businesses are increasingly exposed to climate-related risks, commonly divided into physical and transition risks (TCFD, 2017). Physical risks arise from extreme weather events and changing climate patterns, while transition risks stem from shifts in policy, technology, and markets (World Economic Forum, 2023). While physical climate impacts can directly affect operations, infrastructure, and resource availability, pressures from regulators, customers, and competitors can further pose broader financial, reputational, and strategic challenges (Quantis & BCG, 2025; Peterdy, 2024; Cameron et al., 2019).

In response to the increasingly recognised role of large companies in building societal resilience and their rising climate risk exposure, both academic literature (e.g., Wang et al., 2025) and practitioner-oriented work (e.g., WBCSD, 2025) on corporate climate resilience have expanded rapidly. Despite this growing attention, resilience remains characterised by conceptual ambiguity in the academic literature (Alexander, 2013), and fragmentation across corporate conceptualisations, resulting in inconsistent actions and limited large-scale effectiveness (e.g., C2ES, 2025). This raises critical questions about how large businesses understand and give meaning to climate resilience.

However, while existing research has examined corporate perceptions and attitudes towards climate change and its risks (e.g., Hennes et al., 2024), and their influence on climate action (e.g., Dookie et al., 2024), empirical studies that systematically explore how large businesses themselves perceive and make sense of climate resilience remain limited. Practitioner-oriented contributions often draw on corporate perspectives (e.g., C2ES & Resilience First, 2026) but rarely provide an explicit academic understanding of organisational sensemaking processes. As a result, a critical gap persists in understanding how large businesses perceive, interpret, and translate climate resilience into practice.

The relevance of this gap is further underscored by sensemaking theory, which views organisations as ‘interpretation systems’, basing decisions and actions on perceived realities rather than objective conditions (Daft & Weick, 1984). Understanding how large businesses construct meaning around climate resilience is therefore essential to explain how it is interpreted, prioritised, and implemented in practice.

To address this gap, the study adopts an inductive, qualitative case-study approach and focuses on the manufacturing sector in the Benelux region, a regional economic context characterised by growing exposure to climate risks and strong dependencies on physical infrastructure and value chains (e.g., Carlin et al., 2023).

1.2: Research Objective & Question

Building on the identified gap, this research aims to develop a perception-based framework for corporate climate resilience grounded in how large businesses themselves perceive and make sense of climate resilience.

To achieve this objective, the study focuses on the manufacturing sector in the Benelux region as its empirical setting, and is therefore guided by the following research question:

“How do large manufacturing companies in the Benelux region make sense of climate resilience, and what do they perceive as its key elements?”

To answer this question, the research employs an inductive, qualitative research design based on semi-structured interviews with corporate representatives and field experts.

1.3: Thesis Structure

First, the theoretical framework outlines current academic and practitioner-oriented literature on corporate climate resilience, highlighting the concept’s ambiguity and fragmentation, as well as the importance of organisational sensemaking processes. Second, the methodology chapter describes and justifies the research design, sampling strategy, data collection, analysis method, and ethical considerations. Third, the findings chapter presents and discusses the empirical results, which are then transformed into a perception-based framework for corporate climate resilience. Finally, the conclusion answers the research question, reflects on implications for theory and practice, and outlines limitations and directions for future research.

2: Theoretical Framework

2.1: Resilience as an Academic Concept

Resilience has long been contested across academic disciplines, being characterised by divergent interpretations (Alexander, 2013; Pendall et al., 2009). Despite ongoing attempts to conceptualise resilience, scholars consistently argue that the term suffers from conceptual ambiguity and often tends to be a ‘buzz-word’ (Becker, 2024c; Dahlberg, 2015; Manyena, 2006). To understand what resilience constitutes, this section considers existing academic conceptualisations of resilience, distinguishing key approaches, scales and elements. The aim is not to resolve the ambiguity or test these theoretical insights in practice, but to build an academic foundation to explore how businesses navigate it.

2.1.1: Approaches to Resilience

Resilience can be approached from different, often overlapping perspectives. Although not the first person to use the term, C.S. Holling established resilience as a notable concept in ecology (Alexander, 2013). Holling defined resilience as *“a measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables”* (Holling, 1973, p. 7). Resilience relates here to how systems respond to disturbances, reorganise, and maintain core functions and structures, which formed the foundation for subsequent interpretations, emphasising the dynamic and adaptive nature of systems (Alexander, 2013).

Building on Holling’s definition, Pendall et al. (2009) describe three key conceptualisations. First, resilience can be seen as *“bouncing back”* to a single equilibrium or a system’s original state (Pendall et al., 2009, pp. 72-73). Second, the authors refer to Berkes and Folke (1998, p. 12) defining resilience as *“a measure of robustness and buffering capacity of the system to changing conditions”*. A more recent interpretation views systems as complex and adaptive, defined as *“the ability to change or adapt in response to stresses and strains”* and characterising it as a *“process of continuous adjustment”* (Pendall et al., 2009, pp. 76-77). Instead of returning to the original state or shifting into new equilibria, systems then dynamically respond to disruptions.

In addition, Becker (2024a, p. 200) frames resilience as *“the capacity of a human-environment system to continuously develop while remaining within human and environmental boundaries”*. Going beyond the reactive nature of systems, the author includes proactive capabilities of humans, for example by anticipating potential disruptions. Moreover, this definition links resilience to a system’s sustainability, thereby viewing it as a continuously adaptive process connected to long-term development.

To understand resilience, complexity thinking becomes crucial. A complex system can be understood as *“a large number of elements interacting dynamically and non-linearly, so it is impossible to ever fully grasp the system”* (Becker, 2024b, p. 245). Complex systems have ambiguous boundaries and bring forth ‘emergent properties’, which are created through non-linear, dynamic interactions of system elements, making the system’s overall behaviour unpredictable (Dahlberg, 2015, p. 546). Resilience can thus be seen as an emergent property of the complex system (Becker, 2024a; Dahlberg, 2015; Bergström & Dekker, 2014).

2.1.2: Scales of Resilience

Resilience unfolds across spatial and temporal scales. Understanding resilience as an emergent property of complex systems raises the question *where* and *when* it occurs in the system (Pendall et al., 2009, p. 79). Despite the need for a holistic perspective to understand resilience, authors state that “analytical sacrifices” in space and time are necessary to examine resilience (Bekker, 2024b, p. 249; Bergström & Dekker, 2014, p. 2).

Bergström and Dekker (2014) identify three spatial scales at which resilience occurs: the microlevel; meso level; and macrolevel. Importantly, the meso level bridges the micro and macrolevels, making resilience emergent through the interactions between different scales (Bergström & Dekker, 2014, pp. 4-5). For example, small actions at the work floor can trigger new organisational procedures and norms through the meso level, while organisational strategies only take shape when specified in structures at the microlevel.

In order to grasp resilience in human-environment systems, it is therefore crucial to consider how resilience emerges across, and through the interactions between, different spatial and temporal scales. This can also be applied to large businesses, for example by conceptualising firms as the meso level, while these are being shaped by individual actors internally (microlevel) and broader value chains externally (macrolevel).

2.1.3: Elements of Resilience

Resilience further involves certain abilities and conditions. Across the academic literature, various terms are used for such elements, including *dimensions* (Rodriquez et al., 2022; Tong, 2021; Feldmayer et al., 2019), *characteristics* (Bahadur et al., 2013; Berkes & Ross, 2012), *indicators* (Cutter et al., 2010), *capabilities* (Duchek, 2019; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2010), and *capacities* (De Graaf-Van Dinther & Ovink, 2020; Walker et al., 2004). As such, this section seeks to structure this fragmentation.

Firstly, authors frame resilience as a set of core actions which the system must perform before, during and after disruptions (Becker, 2024c; Tong, 2021; De Graaf-Van Dinther, 2020; Duchek, 2019; Tyler & Moench, 2012; Walker et al., 2004). In this regard, Becker (2024c, pp. 219-230) distinguishes proactive (before a disruption) and reactive (during and after a disruption) functions. The first involves anticipating, monitoring, preventing, mitigating, and preparing for potential disturbances, while the latter concerns abilities to assess, respond, recover, and learn from disruptions.

Similarly, other authors use terms such as ‘threshold and adaptive capacity’, ‘anticipation capabilities’, ‘coping’, and ‘absorbing’ (De Graaf-Van Dinther & Ovink, 2020; Duchek, 2019; Tyler & Moench, 2012). In addition, Tong (2021) and Walker et al. (2004) identify the system’s adaptability and transformability as overarching abilities that allow systems to continuously adjust and transition into fundamentally new systems. Resilience is thus shaped by the system’s ability to perform these functions across time.

Thematic dimensions constitute another common approach to distinguish key elements contributing to resilience. Various authors have identified such dimensions, but often in the context of cities and communities (Rodriguez et al., 2022; Tong, 2021; Tariq et al., 2021; Feldmayer et al., 2019; Saja et al., 2018; Dhar & Khirfan, 2017; Bahadur et al., 2013; Berkes & Ross, 2012; Cutter et al., 2010). Across these works, five core system dimensions can be synthesised, including social, economic, institutional, infrastructural and environmental elements.

First, a social dimension refers to social relations, knowledge, participation, and cohesion. Second, an economic dimension entails a system's economic diversity, innovation capacity, financial resources and stability. Together with an institutional dimension, including governance, enforcement, and administrative elements, these determine a system's ability to coordinate and implement resilience initiatives. Fourth, an infrastructural dimension involves protecting and planning the built environment and crucial infrastructure to enhance robustness to disruptions. Finally, an environmental dimension involves a system's environmental quality, land use, and natural resources which further shape risk and adaptation. From a complexity perspective, these elements do not operate in silos but interact dynamically and non-linearly through inherent interdependencies between them.

Finally, resilience requires certain system conditions, capabilities and behaviours. Authors stress that these are crucial to navigate uncertainty and complexity (Becker, 2024b; Bahadur et al., 2013; Berkes & Ross, 2012; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2010; McManus et al., 2008; Manyena, 2006; Walker et al., 2004). Moreover, they enable interactions between different resilience scales (Bergström and Dekker, 2014). Such elements often relate to knowledge, skills, norms, values, beliefs, and resources which foster holistic thinking, adaptability, and learning (Becker, 2024b; Bahadur et al., 2013; Berkes & Ross, 2012; Tyler & Moench, 2012). In addition, Lengnick-Hall et al. (2010, pp. 82-84) distinguish cognitive elements (e.g., values and purpose), behavioural elements (e.g., resourcefulness and routines), and contextual elements (e.g., psychological safety and diffuse accountability structures). Combined with the resilience functions and dimensions, these elements provide a basis for exploring which elements large businesses themselves perceive as central to resilience.

Reflecting on these academic insights, resilience can be understood as an emergent property of a complex human-environment system, such as large businesses, arising from the dynamic, non-linear interactions of certain functions, dimensions, and enabling conditions across different system scales. At the same time, resilience can be viewed from multiple perspectives, reaching from traditional 'bouncing back' to long-term, sustainable development. Establishing this academic foundation is therefore crucial to navigate what 'resilience' constitutes and to understand how large businesses themselves perceive and make sense of the concept.

2.2: Climate Resilience in the Corporate Context

Building on the academic foundation of resilience, this section examines how climate resilience is conceptualised in the corporate context. Rather than synthesising different perspectives on corporate climate resilience, it considers several distinct, yet overlapping academic and practitioner-oriented conceptualisations. It thereby highlights the persistent conceptual ambiguity and fragmentation of resilience, and establishes the landscape within which large businesses engage with the concept.

2.2.1: Academic Perspectives on Corporate Climate Resilience

Multiple scholars have demonstrated that corporate climate resilience lacks a unified understanding in the academic literature (Wang et al., 2025; Hennes et al., 2024; Danese & De Marchi, 2024; Averchenkova et al., 2016; Beermann, 2010). This suggests that the conceptual ambiguity identified in the broader resilience literature persists within the corporate context. This ambiguity unfolds in two interacting conceptual dimensions that underlie recurring tensions in how corporate climate resilience is understood among academics.

A first dimension concerns the overall approach to resilience. A dominant perspective frames climate resilience as robustness and business continuity, emphasising the ability of businesses to maintain core business functions during climate-related disruptions and to recover rapidly afterwards (Singh & Goyal, 2023; Linnenlueke & Griffiths, 2011; Beermann, 2010). Huiskamp et al. (2022, p. 1765) refer to this approach as the *stability* domain of corporate climate resilience, which aligns closely with traditional interpretations of ‘bouncing back’ and robustness (Pendall et al., 2009).

At the same time, resilience is viewed as broader adaptation and transformation through learning, innovating, and developing in response to long-term climate change (Wang et al., 2025; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2010). In contrast, Huiskamp et al. (2022, p. 1765) label this as the *change* domain of corporate climate resilience. Here, resilience relates less to the continuation of current business functions, but rather to proactive, long-term adjustment to changing societal and climatic conditions. This framing aligns more closely with resilience as continuous adaptation (Pendall et al., 2009), and as long-term development (Becker, 2024a).

A second dimension concerns the inherent nature of climate resilience and functioning in practice. Most authors frame resilience as plannable and manageable, implemented through strategies, governance, and frameworks (Wang et al., 2025; Gupta & Gupta, 2025; Hennes et al., 2024; Danese & De Marchi, 2024; Huiskamp et al., 2022; Alibašić, 2022). Resilience is often an outcome of effective climate risk management or corporate governance, suggesting that it can be achieved through strategic planning (Gupta & Gupta, 2025; Singh & Goyal, 2023).

Another perspective explains resilience as a dynamic, emergent process which arises from a set of organisational capabilities (Wang et al., 2025; Danese & De Marchi, 2024; Beermann, 2010; Linnenlueke & Griffiths, 2010). From this perspective, resilience cannot be fully designed or implemented through planning, but is also enabled or constrained by organisational practices, capacities, and external conditions.

Importantly, these planning-oriented and emergent perspectives intersect and cut across both *stability*- and *change*-oriented framings of corporate climate resilience, illustrating that business continuity and broader transformation can be framed as both manageable outcomes and long-term processes. See Table 1 for an overview of the coexisting perspectives.

Table 1: *Academic perspectives on corporate climate resilience*

Conceptual Dimension:	Main Perspective:	Key Characteristics:	Key Authors:
<i>Overall approach to resilience</i>	<i>Stability-oriented resilience</i>	Robustness, business continuity, maintaining core business functions, bouncing back.	Singh & Goyal, (2023); Huiskamp et al. (2022); Linnenlueke & Griffiths (2011); Beermann (2010)
	<i>Change-oriented resilience</i>	Adaptation, transformation, learning, innovation, long-term development, future orientation.	Wang et al. (2025); Huiskamp et al. (2022); Lengnick-Hall et al. (2010)
<i>Nature of resilience in practice</i>	Resilience as plannable and manageable	Strategic planning, risk management, strategies, governance, frameworks, outcome-based.	Wang et al. (2025); Gupta & Gupta (2025); Hennes et al. (2024); Danese & De Marchi (2024); Huiskamp et al. (2022); Alibašić (2022)
	Resilience as emergent	Process-based, dynamic, complex, organisational capabilities and capacities, uncertainty, relational.	Wang et al. (2025); Danese & De Marchi (2024); Beermann (2010); Linnenlueke & Griffiths (2010)

These two dimensions demonstrate that conceptualisations of corporate climate resilience are neither unified nor mutually exclusive. Instead, authors combine multiple approaches and underlying assumptions. As a result, resilience remains ambiguous and fragmented in the academic literature, which is also acknowledged by academics themselves. For example, Beermann (2010, p. 841) notes that resilience is underpinned by “different theoretical assumptions”, while Hennes et al. (2024, p. 4) observe that climate resilience and adaptation lack unified definitions, “leaving considerable ambiguity” in the corporate context. Large businesses are thus required to navigate the concept in practice, underscoring the importance of organisational perceptions and sensemaking processes.

2.2.2: Corporate Conceptualisations of Climate Resilience

Large businesses predominantly engage with corporate climate resilience through practitioner-oriented publications, particularly from consultancies (e.g., PwC, 2025) and business coalitions (e.g., WBCSD, 2025). In turn, these actors often draw on widely acknowledged definitions, particularly those provided by the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) and the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD, 2017).

The IPCC fulfils a particularly dominant role in serving as a key reference point for practitioners. It provides an academically grounded and broad definition of resilience, reflecting both the *stability* and *change* domains identified by Huiskamp et al. (2022):

“the capacity of social, economic and ecosystems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganising in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure [...] while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation” (IPCC, 2022, p. 7).

A second dominant definition is provided by the TCFD, which offers guidance to businesses in disclosing their climate-related risks and opportunities to stakeholders. It defines climate resilience as an organisation’s:

“[...] adaptive capacity to respond to climate change to better manage the associated risks and seize opportunities, including the ability to respond to transition risks and physical risks” (TCFD, 2017, p. 7).

Compared to the IPCC definition, this perspective places stronger emphasis on climate risk management, scenario analysis, and strategic planning, thereby offering a more operational yet comparatively narrow conceptualisation. Although corporate conceptualisations of climate resilience are often grounded in these definitions, they tend to emphasise different elements and diverge in the perceived purpose, scope, scale, and controllability of resilience.

A first, dominant corporate conceptualisation centres on business continuity and climate risk management. Here, climate resilience is primarily framed as the ability of organisations to maintain core business functions through the management, absorption, and recovery from physical climate disruptions (PwC, 2025; C2ES, 2025; WBCSD, 2025; MSCI, 2025; Cameron et al., 2019; Marsh & McLennon Companies, 2017). This perspective aligns closely with resilience as ‘bouncing back’ and robustness (Pendall et al., 2009), the *stability* domain (Huiskamp et al., 2022), maintaining core functions (IPCC, 2022), and responding to physical climate risks (TCFD, 2017).

Furthermore, resilience is here often framed as an outcome of effective corporate governance, strategic planning, and risk management achieved through linear, structured processes (PwC, 2025; C2ES, 2025). This is in line with planning-oriented academic perspectives (e.g., Gupta & Gupta, 2025). While providing operational guidance, this conceptualisations tends to downplay the complexity inherent to resilience, as described by more recent works (e.g., Wang et al., 2025).

A second, coexisting conceptualisation incorporates adaptive and transformative elements of resilience. Here, it extends beyond business continuity and risk management to include strategic opportunities, innovative capacities, and competitive advantage achieved through effective adaptation and transformation (C2ES & Resilience First, 2026; Quantis & BCG, 2025; PwC, 2025; MSCI, 2025; Einhorn & Siddall, 2024; Marsh & McLennon Companies, 2017). As such, it emphasises the *change* domain (Huiskamp et al., 2022), adaptation and transformation (IPCC, 2022), and climate-related opportunities (TCFD, 2017).

At the same time, this conceptualisation often strategises resilience, framing it as a form of value creation and an instrument to gain a “competitive edge” (Marsh & McLennon Companies, 2017, p. 6). It thereby diverges from academic perspectives highlighting the emergence, uncertainty, and dynamism inherent to resilience (Becker, 2024a; Dahlberg, 2015).

Moreover, it tends to overlook broader organisational capabilities and enabling conditions, as emphasised in broader resilience literature (e.g., Berkes & Ross, 2012) and emergent perspectives (e.g., Danese & De Marchi, 2024).

A final, less prevalent conceptualisation explicitly acknowledges the complex, uncertain, and long-term nature of climate change and resilience. In contrast to previous perspectives, resilience is viewed as continuous adaptation and learning alongside long-term, systemic change that extends beyond firm boundaries to broader value chains (Morrison et al., 2025; WBCSD, 2023; Bezamat et al., 2022). Here, authors often highlight interrelated business dimensions for resilience (C2ES & Resilience First, 2026; Cameron et al., 2019), organisational skills, such as holistic thinking (Quantis & BCG, 2025), and frameworks for long-term decision-making under uncertainty (WBCSD, 2023). This framing thus builds on complexity thinking (Becker, 2024a; Pendall et al., 2009) and *change* perspectives (Huiskamp et al., 2022; IPCC, 2022). At the same time, this framing often remains implicit and abstract, thereby potentially limiting its practical applicability.

Taken together, the three corporate conceptualisations of climate resilience largely overlap in terminology, as provided by the IPCC (2022) and the TCFD (2017), yet diverge fundamentally across their perceived purpose, scope, scale, and controllability of resilience. Table 2 summarises the key differences and overlap between these perspectives. Corporate conceptualisations of climate resilience thus often draw on similar reference points yet remain differently adopted and accentuated, thereby driving conceptual fragmentation.

Table 2: *Corporate conceptualisations of climate resilience*

Perspective:	Purpose:	Scope:	Scale:	Controllability:
<i>Risk Management</i>	Continuation of business activities	Physical climate risks	Firm-level	Resilience is manageable
<i>Strategic & Adaptive</i>	Long-term competitive advantage	Transition & Physical climate risks	Firm & Market	Resilience is also plannable
<i>Emergent & Complex</i>	Systemic change & societal adaptation	Systemic resilience, all types of risks	Sectoral & Societal	Resilience is mostly uncontrollable; it emerges

Beyond ambiguity alone, fragmented corporate conceptualisations of climate resilience can also be explained by structural, institutional, and organisational factors. First, regulations may incentivise framings that align closely with dominant reporting standards, for example climate risk management under the CSRD (WBCSD, 2025, p. 45). Second, economic incentives, governance structures, and performance pressures tend to encourage more manageable and strategy-oriented perspectives on resilience (C2ES & Resilience First, 2026; Wang et al., 2025; Wright & Nyberg, 2024, p. 7). Finally, practitioner-oriented conceptualisations themselves can further drive fragmentation by selectively translating existing perspectives into sector- or firm-specific framings. Combined, these factors shape which interpretations become dominant in practice, while reinforcing fragmentation.

The identified fragmentation among corporate conceptualisations of climate resilience has significant implications for how the concept is operationalised and practised. In this regard, the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (2025, p. 6) states that “the absence of a unified framework for climate resilience leaves resilience-focused efforts fragmented and unable to effect change at the necessary scale”. At the intergovernmental level, the UNFCCC (2020, p. 3) observes that “there is no shared narrative and clear taxonomy of climate risk management interventions”, resulting in uncoordinated initiatives and perceived “magic bullet” solutions. Other authors emphasise the implications of conceptual fragmentation for regulatory uncertainty (WBCSD, 2025, p. 14), heterogeneous methodologies (Quantis & BCG, 2025, p. 7), and siloed governance structures (Morrison et al., 2025). As a result, corporate climate resilience efforts often remain inconsistent, limited, and ineffective.

Overall, the conceptual ambiguity and fragmentation of climate resilience in the academic literature persists among corporate conceptualisations. Combined with the selective adoption of academic and widely acknowledged conceptualisations, corporate climate resilience lacks a unified understanding. Therefore, corporate practices of climate resilience cannot be understood by existing definitions and framings alone, but fundamentally depend on how businesses perceive and make sense of the concept within their unique context. As such, the final part of the theoretical framework turns to perception and sensemaking theory as key analytical lenses for exploring how large businesses understand and practise resilience.

2.3: Perception, Sensemaking, and Corporate Climate Resilience

The previous sections have revealed that climate resilience efforts of large businesses cannot be understood through formal definitions, conceptualisations, and frameworks alone. Instead, organisational perceptions and sensemaking processes must be considered, which then inform the conceptual lens for the empirical interviews. Weick et al. (2005, p. 409) explain that sensemaking processes are triggered when the “current state of the world is perceived to be different from the expected state of the world”. Sensemaking theory therefore suggests that organisations do not respond to uncertain, ambiguous, or unexpected conditions in an objective way, but instead act as ‘interpretation systems’ that give subjective meanings to these conditions in order to guide organisational action (Cristofaro, 2021; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Daft & Weick, 1984).

Sensemaking is understood as an ongoing and socially embedded process which involves three interrelated phases (Cristofaro, 2021, pp. 394-395; Weick et al., 2005, p. 414). First, organisational actors ‘enact’ their environment by ‘noticing’ and ‘bracketing’ certain cues, thereby shaping possible interpretations influenced by actor identities. Second, organisations select the most plausible, rather than the most objectively accurate, interpretation in order to reduce ambiguity. Third, dominant interpretations tend to be retained through narratives, routines, and shared understandings, which subsequently pre-structure future sensemaking processes within the organisation. See Figure 1 for an overview of this sensemaking process in the context of corporate climate resilience.

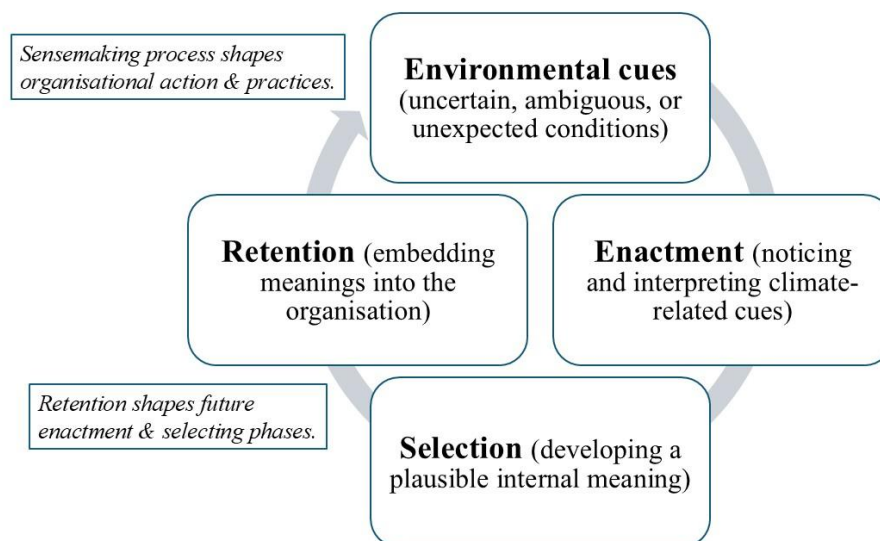


Figure 1: Organisational sensemaking process, adapted from Weick et al. (2005, p. 414)

Importantly, these sensemaking processes are often shaped by managerial perceptions, given their central and influential role within organisations (Ericson, 2001; Daft & Weick, 1984; Snow, 1976). As such, organisational decision-making, strategic priorities, and responses to uncertain and ambiguous conditions are actively constructed by perceptions, interpretations, and broader sensemaking processes (Kaplan, 2008; Weick et al., 2005; Ericson, 2001).

Corporate climate resilience can be understood as a sensemaking issue. First of all, climate change and its consequences pose uncertain and complex conditions for large businesses unfolding over long temporal horizons. At the same time, climate resilience itself is characterised by inconsistent and fragmented conceptualisations across both academic and practitioner-oriented literature, suggesting that it is constructed through organisational interpretations and meaning-making processes. In addition, the structural factors, such as regulations and economic incentives, further shape how resilience is translated into practice, underscoring that this process is neither neutral nor purely technical.

Finally and adopting a complexity perspective, ‘corporate climate resilience’ itself could become a trigger for sensemaking processes. Indeed, if the concept is understood as an emergent property from dynamic, non-linear interactions within systems, organisations face uncertainty regarding when resilience occurs and how it can be recognised or achieved. This may then encourage organisations to produce their own subjective, context-specific understanding of resilience, further underscoring the need for a sensemaking lens.

In recent years, the role of organisational perceptions and sensemaking processes regarding climate change has gained attention in the academic literature. However, current contributions predominantly focus on climate risk perceptions and organisational attitudes towards climate change rather than examining how businesses perceive climate resilience itself (Zhang & Bao, 2025; Hennes et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024; Forino & Von Meding, 2021; Todaro et al., 2020).

Similarly, research has demonstrated that perceptions play an important role in organisational practices of adaptation and resilience, yet lacks empirical evidence for how organisations themselves construct these concepts (Dookie et al., 2024; Bleda et al., 2023; Tisch & Galbreath, 2022; Wade & Griffiths, 2021). In addition, practitioner-oriented research often builds on corporate perspectives themselves to inform guidelines and frameworks around corporate climate resilience (e.g., C2ES & Resilience First, 2026; MSCI, 2025). Nevertheless, these often lack an academic foundation as well as explicit considerations of organisational perceptions and sensemaking processes.

As such, while organisational perceptions and sensemaking processes are increasingly recognised in the literature, a critical empirical gap persists if corporate interpretations, constructions, and enactments of climate resilience remain unexplored. This is underscored by the concept’s persistent ambiguity and fragmentation, and by the importance of organisational sensemaking processes for ultimate action. As such, this study addresses this gap by examining such perceptions and sensemaking processes among large businesses.

3: Methodology

3.1: Overall Research Design & Approach

This research adopted an inductive qualitative approach to explore how large businesses make sense of climate resilience and what they perceive as its key elements. Instead of formulating and testing predefined hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework, the study sought to generate new empirical insights that can complement existing understandings of corporate climate resilience. In line with inductive reasoning, a bottom-up approach was applied, allowing patterns and conceptual elements to emerge from the empirical observations (Coccia, 2018; Cresswell, 2013).

In addition to its inductive logic of inquiry, the research incorporated an abductive element. While themes and patterns were allowed to emerge inductively, the interview design and interpretation of the findings were informed by existing theoretical insights into resilience and organisational sensemaking. Rather than being solely data-driven or theory-driven, the study moved iteratively between empirical observations and theory to guide the interviews and interpret the data, thereby partly aligning with abductive reasoning (Blaikie, 2010). This abductive element was particularly helpful in navigating the conceptual ambiguity of climate resilience in practice, while not aiming to test or verify existing theory. Overall, the thesis adopted a qualitative approach, which enables the exploration of subjective meanings and interpretations (Cresswell, 2013). The research design further aligns with constructivist epistemological assumptions, which emphasise that meaning is socially constructed rather than objectively discovered (Crotty, 1998).

Building on this, the thesis employed a qualitative case-study design. Case studies are well-suited to studying complex and context-dependent phenomena that require an in-depth understanding (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this research, the case and its boundaries were defined as the manufacturing sector in the Benelux region, which offered a highly relevant empirical setting to explore organisational perceptions and sensemaking processes regarding climate resilience. This case can also be considered a “critical case” due to its strategic relevance for the broader research problem (Baskarada, 2014, p. 7). In this study, ‘large businesses’ were defined according to on the criteria of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) (Sustainability Directive, 2026), while ‘manufacturing’ was defined based on the NACE Rev. 2 classification (Eurostat, 2008).

Furthermore, the selected case fulfilled an exploratory and instrumental function. Rather than aiming to develop a deeper understanding of the manufacturing sector in the Benelux region itself, as would be the objective of an intrinsic case, this research used the selected context as a means to generate empirical insights into how large businesses perceive and interpret climate resilience (Baskarada, 2014; Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this case, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with representatives of large manufacturing companies in the Benelux and with field experts. While empirical data were collected at the individual level, the units of analysis in this study are the organisational perception and sensemaking processes related to climate resilience.

3.2: Case Study Context – Manufacturing Sector in the Benelux Region

The empirical case of this research is the manufacturing sector in the Benelux region, comprising Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The selection of this context was primarily motivated by three interrelated factors: the structural characteristics of manufacturing industries, their increasing exposure to climate risks, and the growing regulatory pressure on large companies to address climate change and climate resilience. While manufacturing has historically played an important role in the Benelux economies, its relevance to this research lies primarily in the nature of its production structure and dependencies.

First of all, manufacturing is defined in accordance with the NACE Rev. 2, the standardised statistical classification for economic activities across the EU, as “the physical or chemical transformation of materials, substances, or components into new products” (Eurostat, 2008, p. 112). This definition encompasses a wide range of industries, including metals, food and beverage production, machinery and equipment, automotive manufacturing, chemicals, electronics, textiles, and pharmaceutical production. These industries remain an important component of industrial production and export value across Europe and within the Benelux region (Eurostat, 2025).

The manufacturing sector is characterised by structural components and processes. These typically rely on capital-intensive, geographically concentrated facilities, climate-controlled production processes, stable energy and water supplies, and global supply chains (Carlin et al., 2023). As a result, manufacturing companies are strongly dependent on physical infrastructure, global trade networks, and environmental conditions to maintain stable production. These dependencies make the sector particularly sensitive to disruptions affecting such core business elements (EEA, 2024; Carlin et al., 2023).

These vulnerabilities are not only theoretical but have already become visible in the Benelux. A notable example is the severe flooding that affected Western Europe, and particularly Germany and the Benelux, in 2021. This event resulted in approximately EUR 44 billion in damages and caused considerable disruption to infrastructure and business continuity, illustrating the vulnerability of manufacturing companies’ components and structures to climate impacts (EEA, 2024, p. 303; Hagenlocher et al., 2023).

Looking ahead, exposure to physical climate risks is expected to increase in the near future. According to the IPCC and the European Climate Risk Assessment, hazards such as flooding, extreme heat, sea-level rise, drought and water scarcity are estimated to become more frequent and severe, particularly in low-lying and densely populated areas such as the Benelux (EEA, 2024; Hagenlocher et al., 2023; IPCC, 2022). Consequently, manufacturing companies are likely to face more critical physical climate risks that can affect infrastructure and production processes (Carlin et al., 2023; Climate ADAPT, n.d.).

At the same time, climate resilience has become an increasingly important topic within European policy and regulatory frameworks. The European Union has strengthened its focus on climate resilience through initiatives such as the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change (European Commission, 2021).

Specifically for large companies, directives such as the CSRD require them to assess and disclose climate-related risks and resilience strategies (European Union, 2022). Manufacturing companies are particularly affected by these regulatory developments due to their relatively high environmental impact and climate risk exposure (Carlin et al., 2023). As such, they are increasingly required to integrate climate resilience into their governance structures, operations, and strategic decision-making.

Combined, the structural characteristics, increasing climate risk exposure, and growing regulatory pressure made the manufacturing sector in the Benelux region a particularly suitable empirical setting for exploring how large businesses perceive and make sense of climate resilience. The case thus fulfilled an exploratory and instrumental function, and was considered critical by providing a particularly strategic setting to generate in-depth insights for the broader research topic (Baskarada, 2014, p. 7; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

In addition to its theoretical and empirical relevance, the case was selected for its accessibility and feasibility. As the researcher is of Dutch nationality and maintains a professional network within the Benelux business environment, this context provided practical opportunities to access relevant companies and interview participants. Such direct access has been acknowledged for achieving rich empirical data and is considered equally important to theoretical relevance in case studies (Goodman, 2024). The researcher's positionality thus facilitated the case selection and access to relevant interview participants.

3.3: Sampling Strategy and Participants

Within the qualitative case study, criterion-based, purposive, and snowball sampling were applied to gather relevant organisations and interview participants. Rather than aiming for statistical representativeness, these approaches were used to obtain an analytically relevant and valid sample within the selected case. The sampling strategy followed a sequential logic, following Cresswell (2013, p. 156). First, organisations were selected based on predefined criteria reflecting the target population (criterion-based sampling). Second, participants were selected based on their relevance to the research topic (purposive sampling). Third, initial interview participants were asked to suggest additional relevant contacts, thereby enabling further access to suitable interviewees (snowball sampling).

For the selection of participating businesses, the following criteria were applied:

Table 3: *Sample selection criteria*

Element:	Value:	Purpose:	Source:
<i>Business Size</i>	Meeting two of the three following criteria: - Over 250 employees - Over €40 million net turnover - Over €20 million total assets	Guaranteeing a business size that represents large businesses.	CSRD-definition of a large company (Sustainability Directive, 2026).
<i>Sector</i>	Business must predominantly transform materials, substances, or components into new products. Possible industries include metals, food and beverage production, machinery and equipment, automotive manufacturing, chemicals, electronics, textiles, and pharmaceutical production.	Guaranteeing companies that represent the manufacturing sector.	Eurostat-definition of manufacturing (Eurostat, 2008, p. 112).
<i>Region</i>	Business must be highly operative and/or headquartered in Belgium, the Netherlands, and/or Luxembourg.	Guaranteeing companies that represent the Benelux region.	

Representatives within the selected organisations were purposively chosen based on characteristics relevant to climate resilience to secure rich, relevant data to address the research objective. These characteristics included participants' job titles (e.g., climate risk specialist), roles and responsibilities (e.g., responsible for physical climate risks), and work experience. This ensured that participants were involved in climate resilience within their organisation. In addition, field experts were included to provide system-level insights, and to support the interpretation of the empirical findings. These were selected for their expertise in corporate climate resilience and familiarity with the case, and enabled triangulation by complementing firm-level perceptions with cross-organisational insights.

Participants were recruited via four channels. First, the researcher's professional network was approached to identify and contact relevant participants. Second, business associations and industry networks were contacted to circulate the research invitation among their members. Third, and most frequently, potential participants were approached via LinkedIn with a concise description of the research and an invitation to participate. Fourth, additional participants were identified via existing interviewees.

The use of multiple channels increased the likelihood of a response, whilst reducing dependence on a single source and mitigating potential sampling bias (Cresswell, 2013).

The sampling strategy yielded a final sample of 9 businesses, 15 business representatives, and 4 field experts, for a total of 15 interviews (including expert interviews). The sample size was sufficient to identify recurring patterns and themes, and data collection continued until no substantially new themes emerged, reflecting theoretical saturation (Boddy, 2016). A fully anonymised overview of the final sample is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *Anonymised overview of participating businesses*

Business #:	Industry type:	Short description:	Alignment with criteria:	Participants #:
A	Food & Beverage	A Dutch food production company, transforming raw materials into a range of consumer and industrial food products.	Full alignment	2
B	Advanced Materials	A Belgium-based industrial manufacturing company specialised in advanced materials and engineered products for various sectors.	Full alignment	1
C	Food & Beverage	A medium-to-large sized company from the Netherlands producing and distributing food ingredients and consumer products.	Full alignment – large business under CSRD-definition.	1
D	Life Sciences / Industrial Services	An international company headquartered in Luxembourg providing scientific and compliance-related services to multiple manufacturing industries.	Partial alignment – not a manufacturing company itself, but closely embedded in manufacturing industries.	2
E	Food & Beverage	A Dutch multinational company producing and distributing consumer products with extensive production processes and supply chains.	Full alignment	1
F	Technological	A global company from the Netherlands focusing on the development and manufacturing of advanced technological products.	Full alignment	2
G	Technological	An international company from the Netherlands specialised in the development and supply of highly advanced technologies for various manufacturing systems.	Full alignment	2
H	Technological	A Belgian technology company developing and manufacturing advanced technological systems and industrial applications.	Full alignment	3
I	Life Sciences / Chemicals	A multinational company headquartered in the Netherlands producing chemical and biological-based products for various industries.	Full alignment	1

The diversity of the selected businesses was intentional to capture a broad range of perspectives on climate resilience, as interpretations and priorities may differ depending on industrial characteristics and risk exposure. Including a range of industries enabled the identification of both shared patterns across businesses and firm-specific differences in how climate resilience is perceived.

One organisation (business D) is strictly taken not a manufacturing company but is nonetheless closely embedded in manufacturing value chains through the provision of industrial and scientific services. Because of its supportive and enabling role for various industries, the organisation's perspective was deemed equally important for understanding how climate resilience is perceived in the broader sector.

The business representatives held roles in risk management, sustainability, insurance, and strategic decision-making, including managerial, senior executive, and specialist roles. This ensured a wide range of perspectives from individuals actively involved in interpreting, managing, and implementing climate resilience within and across the businesses.

In addition, Expert 1 was affiliated with a global insurer, Expert 2 with an international infrastructure company, Expert 3 with an asset manager, and Expert 4 with a consultant. Their perspectives offered additional cross-organisational and external specialist insights, as well as triangulation of the empirical findings at the firm-level. As such, the combination of business representatives and field experts yielded a diverse and analytically relevant empirical dataset to explore how large manufacturing companies in the Benelux make sense of climate resilience.

3.4: Data Collection – Semi-Structured Interviews

The empirical data were primarily collected through individual and small-group semi-structured interviews. This data collection method is particularly well-suited for exploring subjective perceptions, conceptualisations, and interpretations of complex research phenomena, such as climate resilience (Cresswell, 2013; Blaikie, 2010). Individual interviews enabled an in-depth exploration of how participants, and thus their organisations, make sense of climate resilience and translate this into organisational practices.

Three interviews were conducted with two to three participants from the same organisation. These small-group interviews allowed for the exploration of both individual perspectives and collective reflections within the same organisational context. Moreover, participants were encouraged to respond to one another's views, leading to both divergent and shared perspectives. Due to the limited number of participants and the primary focus on individual experiences rather than interactions, these interviews are not considered focus groups, but rather small-group interviews (Wilkinson, 1998).

Furthermore, a semi-structured design was applied, based on an interview topic list with open-ended questions. This provided a consistent structure while allowing sufficient flexibility for participants to elaborate on their perspectives and experiences, which is essential for exploring complex, subjectively constructed concepts (Cresswell, 2013). It also enabled the use of probing and follow-up questions, fostering depth and richness in the data. Taken together, these elements align closely with the exploratory nature of the research (Blaikie, 2010).

The interview topic list was informed by both the research question and the theoretical framework. Importantly, the interview questions were not closed and predefined based on existing literature, but instead designed around open-ended questions, allowing participants to share their own interpretations and experiences.

In line with sensemaking theory, particularly Weick et al. (2005), most questions aimed to explore how organisations enact, interpret, and give meaning to climate resilience. While the theoretical framework served a conceptual foundation for guiding the interview and interpreting participants' responses, the interview design remained mainly driven by the research question. In this way, the topic list followed an exploratory and inductive logic.

The interview topic list was structured around four themes. First, the participants' interpretative lens was established by considering their role and engagement with climate-related topics. Second, a sensemaking lens was applied to explore how participants and their organisations construct meaning and interpret the concept of climate resilience. Third, and most inductively, participants were asked to reflect on the key elements which, in their view, constitute climate resilience in a large business. Finally, attention was given to how understandings are translated into organisational practices, such as strategies and measures. The interview topic list is included in [Appendix 7.1](#).

Importantly, these themes provided guidance and a degree of consistency across the interviews, while maintaining flexibility. At the same time, the sequence and phrasing of questions were, where appropriate, adapted to follow the natural flow of the conversation and the participant's background. As such, this iterative approach allowed for probing and flexibility, while maintaining the same themes and questions to ensure comparability. As such, the researcher actively guided the interview, while allowing sufficient room for the participant to share and express their perspective openly. On top of that, interviews were prepared through thorough desktop research on the organisation's background, activities, and reports, enabling the topic list to be adapted most effectively.

All interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams. This format was primarily chosen for practical reasons, including geographic distance and participants' limited availability. Interviews typically lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, providing sufficient time to explore and discuss key topics in depth, while remaining feasible for participants. Although online interviews may limit non-verbal communication and conversational depth, they are increasingly recognised for their flexibility, accessibility, and ability to facilitate participation across geographical boundaries (Knott et al., 2022).

Before each interview, key ethical considerations were addressed. First, participants were given a concise summary of the research aim and interview structure. Second, the signed informed consent was revisited, including explicit confirmation to record the interview, and a reminder of the participant's right to decline any question or withdraw from the research at any time. Third, full anonymisation and confidentiality of both the participant and their organisation were emphasised.

In addition, participants were given the opportunity to indicate their preferred language to support comfort. All interviews were ultimately conducted in English with the participants' consent, despite most participants being non-native speakers. This deliberate choice facilitated data collection and interpretation, as concepts such as resilience and sensemaking originate from English-language literature and are difficult to translate consistently into other languages, while also ensuring comparability across participants. At the same time, conducting the interviews in English may have limited some participants' ability to fully articulate their perceptions, experiences, and reflections, thereby potentially resulting in a loss of detail or meaning.

Following the interviews, participants were offered the opportunity to review their transcripts prior to the analysis, and were guaranteed a copy of the final thesis. Recordings were downloaded from Microsoft Teams, securely stored, and transcribed using the software TurboScribe; the transcripts were then manually reviewed for accuracy. Finally, a fully anonymised copy of each transcript was prepared, removing any identifiable information, including names, job titles, organisational references, and other identifying characteristics. All data was stored securely within the researcher's password-protected digital domain. A more detailed overview of ethical considerations is provided in [Section 3.6](#).

The interviews were conducted over a period of approximately two months, from the end of February 2026 to mid-April 2026.

3.5: Data Analysis – Thematic Analysis

The research applied thematic analysis to transform qualitative interview data into final findings. To this end, the study followed the six-phase approach of thematic analysis, as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method of analysis provided a structured yet iterative and flexible process for inductively generating core themes related to the corporate perceptions and sensemaking regarding climate resilience.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 79-81), thematic analysis is well-suited for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning within a qualitative dataset and is not committed to any specific theoretical framework or epistemological assumption. This flexibility makes it appropriate for the exploratory nature of this research. Moreover, the research employed an inductive, constructionist analytical approach; themes were derived from the data itself, while acknowledging the sociocultural context in which these meanings and interpretations were constructed. The analysis focused on both semantic themes (explicit meanings) and latent themes (underlying interpretations) in the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 83-85). See Figure 2 for an overview of the six phases of thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Figure 2: Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

First, the interviews were transcribed and reviewed to ensure familiarity with the data and to identify initial patterns. During this phase, first observations and reflections were noted, including recurring language use, definitions, influencing factors, and key elements across the interviews. As such, this familiarisation formed a basis for the coding process.

Second, all transcripts were systematically coded. During this initial coding phase, all data segments that were relevant to the research question were identified and highlighted in Word.

This coding process was conducted inductively, capturing recurring patterns in how climate resilience is understood, defined, influenced, and operationalised within businesses. The transcripts were coded sequentially, ensuring consistency while remaining open to emerging insights in later interviews. A separate Word-document was created to write down the highlighted segments. These were then organised into six broader descriptive categories: relevance and drivers; conceptualisations; organisational sensemaking; internal interpretations and tensions; key elements; and perceived barriers and gaps.

Third, the initially coded segments were grouped into broader pattern codes that captured recurring patterns across the highlighted segments and formed the basis for candidate themes.

This step involved clustering overlapping elements, and identifying relationships among the initial codes, such as those among influences, organisational structures, and conceptualisations of climate resilience. Moreover, constant cross-case comparison was applied to identify both similarities and differences between businesses. The pattern codes along with the related data segments were then systematically organised in an Excel-based coding table (see [Appendix 7.2](#)). This table includes the data segments, initial category, pattern code, the code definition, associated interviewees, and illustrative quotations. From the pattern codes, broader, overarching candidate themes were identified.

In the final phases, the candidate themes were reviewed and defined. This involved revisiting the transcripts and data segments to ensure clear analytical distinctions between codes and coherence within each code. Codes and candidate themes were then redefined, merged, and rescoped. Quotations were selected for their relevance to the theme and variation among interviewees, ensuring a clear link between the empirical findings and the research question. The themes and quotations were ultimately integrated into a coherent analytical narrative that answered the research question and informed the final framework.

Overall, the thematic analysis remained iterative and reflexive throughout the process. Early findings and codes were repeatedly reviewed and compared with later interviews and the expert insights. The six-phase approach thus provided a systematic yet iterative analysis, generating themes that were grounded in the empirical data, answering the research question and informing the final framework.

3.6: Ethical Considerations

The thesis adhered to core ethical principles in qualitative research throughout the research process, in accordance with the Social Research Association's Research Ethics Guidance (2021) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Key principles included informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and secure data handling.

Participation to the research was fully voluntary and based on informed consent. Prior to each interview, participants received a concise information sheet outlining the research objective, the format of participation, and the intended use of data. Participants were further informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time without consequences and were asked for explicit consent for participation and recording. These elements were briefly revisited at the start of each interview to ensure clarity and transparency. After the interview, participants were offered the opportunity to review the interview transcript, and were asked for permission to use anonymised quotations. See [Appendix 7.3](#) for the informed consent form used for all the interviews.

Furthermore, considering the professional context and potential sensitivity of the interview questions, particular attention was given to confidentiality and anonymity. All participants and organisations were anonymised using coded identifiers (e.g., Interviewee 1, Business A). Moreover, any identifying information was removed or generalised during the transcription to prevent direct or indirect identification. Business descriptions in Table 3 were intentionally kept broad to prevent traceability, especially given the relatively small sample.

Data protection was ensured throughout the research process in line with the GDPR. Interview recordings and transcripts were stored in password-protected digital environment accessible only to the researcher, supervisor, and specific interviewees. For the anonymity, a separate, secure Word file was created linking identities to codes. All collected data will be deleted within three months after completion of the thesis.

Continuous efforts were made to minimise potential harm to participants by ensuring anonymity, avoiding sensitive questions, and allowing participants to have full control over their responses. At the same time, the research aimed to generate practical and academic value by providing new insights into corporate climate resilience.

Finally, the researcher's positionality, especially familiarity with the Benelux business environment, facilitated access to participants but may also have shaped the interview questions and data interpretation. To mitigate potential bias, an inductive, iterative, and reflexive research approach was applied throughout the data collection and analysis.

4: Findings

4.1: Competing Organisational Conceptualisations of Climate Resilience

A first theme that emerged from the interviews concerns the different, yet often overlapping conceptualisations of climate resilience. Four key approaches can be distinguished that explain how large manufacturing companies in the Benelux region understand climate resilience.

4.1.1: Risk-oriented resilience

Most participants (12 out of the 15 business representatives) primarily conceptualised climate resilience from a risk-management and business-continuity perspective. Here, resilience is framed as a direct response to risk, entailing the assessment, prevention, mitigation, and recovery from climate-related disruptions. As Interviewee 9 described:

“[...] Consider both sides, not only the preventive part, the likelihood, but also the impact part and the recovery part [...] So you can adapt and know how to respond. And if something happens that you can recover quickly [...].”

This perspective was particularly dominant among interviewees working in risk, insurance, and operational functions, reflecting their alignment with existing risk management approaches. In addition, some participants positioned insurance as an inherent element of this framing. Interviewee 5 explained:

“It's a form of resilience, or it's actually part of it in a way that all risk is not insurable [...] see what's not insurable and tackle those risks.”

Climate resilience is thus viewed primarily as proactive risk management, while insurance serves as a secondary, supporting mechanism for managing residual risks. However, the participants also perceived that insurance bears limitations, as financial compensation does not necessarily ensure long-term resilience due to long-lasting recovery and rising insurance premiums.

Overall, this risk-oriented conceptualisation aligns closely with dominant perspectives in the literature, viewing resilience as traditional ‘bouncing back’ and robustness (Pendall, 2009), and as specific functions (Becker, 2023c). Expert insights similarly recognised that companies often equate climate resilience with existing risk categories, particularly related to natural hazards. However, they also criticised that companies may overlook long-term, structural climate developments when framing resilience as a risk management issue.

4.1.2: Strategic- and value-oriented resilience

Another group of participants (nine) conceptualised climate resilience as a strategic capability aimed at future-proofing the organisation. From this view, resilience involves balancing risks and opportunities, protecting and creating value, and adapting and transforming business models and operations. It further constitutes a strong forward-looking orientation, as highlighted by Interviewee 7:

“Resilience is about future proofing the organisation with whatever future might come, based on the ongoing climate change and nature changes.”

This perspective was mostly articulated by sustainability- and strategy-oriented representatives, and often linked to climate-mitigation roles. Here, resilience also explicitly encompasses climate-related opportunities and value creation, thereby going beyond risk management alone. This aligns with framings of resilience as strategic and plannable, as well as with TCFD’s (2017) definition, incorporating both climate-related risks and opportunities.

Importantly, resilience is perceived as essential for the organisation’s long-term success, suggesting that climate change is viewed as a structural threat shaping the business conditions. This perceived strategic necessity is recognised yet also nuanced by the experts. As Expert 4 explained:

“[...] companies are there to survive. They’re built that way; to stay afloat, to come out on top [...] a resilient company is not necessarily a ‘climate positive’ company.”

This finding uncovers a tension between strategising resilience for long-term profitability and for making a broader societal impact.

4.1.3: Production- and innovation-oriented resilience

A less prominent conceptualisation, articulated by five participants, is centred at the product- and process-level. It integrates resilience with enhancing environmental performance through efficient, circular, and eco-friendly operational designs. As Interviewee 6 explained:

“[...] it’s very much centralised on water, carbon and circularity [...] and about our production process or assets or way of producing the products itself.”

This perspective was dominant among companies that depend on specific materials or production processes, suggesting that operational dependencies shape organisational understandings. Moreover, climate resilience is viewed as a combination of sustainability, quality, and efficiency considerations. Interviewee 11 reflected:

“[...] it is an integral part of [resilience], how environment and quality are integrated into new technologies [...] through high-quality and environmentally eco-designed products.”

This indicates that product- and process-level innovations are directly linked to climate resilience and competitiveness. As such, this framing builds on the strategic-oriented one by translating value-driven aspects of climate resilience into operational optimisations.

4.1.4: Responsibility- and leadership-oriented resilience

A final group of participants (four) conceptualised climate resilience primarily as a commitment to responsibility and leadership. Unlike the previous ones, this perspective reframes resilience as a normative orientation centred on societal impact and willingness to go beyond regulatory compliance or client expectations. As Interviewee 3 illustrated:

“[...] where do we as a company can make the difference? [...] where goes our responsibility? [...] if you only do things because there’s legislation or certification, then you’re mainly busy with ticking the box. But you’re pretty far away from impact.”

While often implicitly articulated, four participants explicitly positioned commitment and willingness as prerequisites for climate resilience. This conceptualisation was particularly prominent among family-owned businesses, reflecting their strong long-term and intergenerational considerations. In addition, some organisations expressed how their leadership-position in the market reinforces this framing, linking this to ‘leading by example’ and setting standards for the broader industry. Interviewee 8 illustrated the practical benefits of such a position:

“[...] if you're a frontrunner, it often allows you to embed your own ideas in what's coming, so you can influence regulations [...] if you don't, then you always have to catch up [...] the frontrunning part allows you to have an edge on these topics.”

This example indicates that leadership is also perceived as a strategic advantage, as it can enhance the organisation’s long-term positioning, thereby partially overlapping with the value-oriented framing. At the same time, the experts critically noted that this normative perspective remains fragile in the absence of supporting regulatory or financial incentives.

Reflecting on these findings, corporate climate resilience does not emerge as a single, unified construct but as a set of coexisting perspectives. Whilst often complementing each other, such as the strategic- and the product-oriented framings, the different yet overlapping conceptualisations can also create tensions, for example between short-term risk reduction and long-term transformation, and between profitability and impact.

4.2: Factors Influencing Organisational Sensemaking of Climate Resilience

Organisational conceptualisations and sensemaking processes of climate resilience are actively shaped by internal and external actors and processes. A second theme entails factors that influence how climate resilience is understood and practised within the organisations.

4.2.1: Regulations

A primary factor concerns regulations. Most participants (11) mentioned that directives, such as the CSRD, form the main driver of climate resilience. In addition, the interviewees explained how regulations shape how organisations interpret resilience by offering guidance on how to define and apply the concept. This suggests that regulations not only drive relevance but also actively shape the operationalisation of resilience. However, this regulatory influence also has downsides, as explained by Expert 1:

“[...] companies that used to work with us paused their investments. And that really shows how much they are being pushed and are relying on the regulation, and are not always willing to take steps if regulation is not there or is being paused.”

As such, regulations constitute a common, impactful factor influencing organisational sensemaking and action regarding climate resilience.

4.2.2: Stakeholders

A second factor concerns various stakeholders. Twelve participants identified customers, shareholders, and investors as influential stakeholders because of their direct economic interests in the business. Customers were perceived as impactful through shifting demand, while shareholders and investors through demanding insights into risks and opportunities. The influence of these stakeholders varied across organisations and often depended on the concentration of customers or collective pressure from shareholders.

In addition, competitors, industry peers, and insurers play a more indirect role by serving as external pressures and benchmarks. As Interviewee 6 explained:

“[...] you're progressing according to what the industry is progressing; we share the same value chain, we share the same supplier [...] and for our industry, we have a group. That's where all the similar companies unite time to time to discuss key topics.”

Building on this reflection, participants explained how climate resilience is shaped not only by competitors, but also by suppliers and customers. Business relations and power dynamics within the relational sphere of firms thus further influence organisational sensemaking.

4.2.3: Materialisation of Climate Risks & Individual Factors

Another impactful, though less prominent, factor concerns the materialisation of climate risks. Whereas the previous factors are primarily externally induced, four participants explicitly identified climate impacts as powerful, internal drivers of organisational sensemaking and action. As Interviewee 13 illustrated:

“[...] that's initiated because we saw incidents [...] because we see the claims rising in time. [...] after that, it became more evident that we have year on year more impact from climate. [...] then they moved from TCFD to we want to know the risk.”

Rising damage, business interruption, and insurance claims thus act as direct triggers to address climate resilience. Expert observations reinforce this pattern, but also point out that organisational action largely depends on the scale and frequency of climate losses.

Furthermore, climate impacts help understand how individual interpretations shape corporate climate resilience. Six participants explained how individual experiences, backgrounds, and beliefs shaped their understanding of climate resilience. Organisational sensemaking is then not only shaped by objective factors, but also by individual perceptions. Combined, climate impacts and individual factors form an internal, experience-based mechanism that influences how climate resilience is interpreted within organisations.

4.2.4: Conditional Relevance of Climate Resilience

Climate resilience was not universally perceived as relevant across organisations. A few participants (four) described that a lack of direct climate-related disruptions nuances the concept's significance. As such, climate resilience tends to become salient only under certain conditions. Interviewee 4 explained:

“[...] only a small portion of our assets is exposed. For these assets, resilience is relevant. [...] we believe that the current level of insurance that we have, plus the local management of this risk, is sufficient. [...] our business model makes us naturally resilient.”

This example illustrates that the relevance of climate resilience depends on factors such as risk exposure, insurance coverage, and business models. Nevertheless, the interviewees did note that external pressures, particularly from regulation and investors, often require organisations to engage with the concept, regardless of the perceived internal relevance.

Climate resilience therefore does not necessarily seem to be a structural, organisational priority, but rather the result of perceived urgency and external pressures. In this regard, the experts observed that businesses often base resilience efforts on short-term climate triggers, such as recent climate impacts or current regulations. Consequently, they emphasised that businesses tend to misalign their perceptions and actions with the long-term, systemic challenges posed by climate change.

Overall, the relevance and conceptualisations of climate resilience are influenced by a combination of external pressures and internal experiences. Although these drivers actively trigger and shape organisational sensemaking, they can occur reactively and conditionally, potentially mispositioning climate resilience as a short-term response instead of a structural, long-term priority.

4.3: Organisational Embedment & Internalisation of Climate Resilience

Whereas the previous sections focused on how climate resilience is conceptualised and influenced, this section identifies key elements that foster the organisational embedment and internalisation of climate resilience. A set of cultural and structural elements can be distinguished that together contribute to the prioritisation, legitimisation, and broader internal sensemaking of the concept. Importantly, these elements occur simultaneously and continuously interact with operationalisation and coordination elements which are discussed in [Section 4.4](#).

4.3.1: Cultural Embedment

Several participants (seven) perceived organisation-wide awareness as a first precondition for internalising climate resilience. Without internal awareness of climate change, its risks, and opportunities, resilience cannot be embedded as a long-lasting and legitimate organisational priority. The interviewees emphasised that iteration helps normalise the concept in everyday organisational practices. As Interviewee 6 illustrated:

“[...] a topic that is repeated and repeated and repeated becomes more natural and more normal [...] keep talking about the same topic in a consistent way and in a routine way.”

Three participants also pointed to external influences for enhancing awareness, such as social media and recent climate disasters, suggesting that awareness can be achieved through multiple sources. At the same time, the interviewees reported challenges stemming from, for example, divergent climate-related risk perceptions, beliefs, and interactions with the topic. Awareness is thus perceived as a foundational, yet challenging, first step for embedding and internalising climate resilience.

Many participants (10) perceived a clear, uniform internal understanding of climate resilience as a second precondition for internalisation and effectiveness. At the same time, participants explained that ‘climate resilience’ is rarely explicitly used within organisations but is instead reflected in terms such as climate risk. Consequently, departments and individuals tend to make their own translation of the concept. This was particularly expressed by firms with multiple departments working on resilience, where different functions tend to apply their own interpretation. To navigate this fragmentation, Interviewee 3 explained that:

“[...] you have a different kind of dialogue. You have a different kind of way to approach it; the language that you use [...] you try to do it on all the levels.”

These findings indicate that awareness does not necessarily translate into a shared organisational understanding, albeit perceived as a precondition for effective internalisation and embedment. Instead, businesses rely on adaptive language use, thereby shaping how climate resilience is communicated and translated into action within organisations.

Furthermore, several participants (six) explained that climate resilience is actively simplified to make it tangible and actionable in practice. This further suggests that awareness alone is insufficient for effective internalisation due to the concept’s perceived abstractness and complexity. As Interviewee 6 explained:

“[Academics] tend to stay too much in their own bubble of specialists talking in specific language [...] when you start to make things more tangible, people relate to that easier than when you do it in a more conceptual mode.”

This pragmatic simplification is thus deemed important to translate internal awareness into actual application. Without such translation, climate resilience risks remain vague and unusable for organisational practices.

A final, perceived precondition relates to organisational and individual willingness. While the previous elements centred on awareness and understanding, seven participants highlighted that organisational action ultimately depends on internal willingness to prioritise and act on resilience. Moreover, resilience was viewed as a collective commitment rather than an individual one, requiring willingness across all organisational levels. Despite this perceived importance, the four experts critically identified willingness as a common shortcoming among companies.

To enhance willingness, engagement mechanisms help make climate resilience more meaningful and relevant internally. As Interviewee 6 further reflected:

“But the more you show them [employees] the value and their contribution, the more they are engaged on it [...] people start seeing how they can influence [...] with a bit more purpose.”

In this way, engagement can enhance organisational willingness to act on climate resilience by giving the concept meaning in everyday practice. Overall, these elements form an interrelated chain of awareness, understanding, and action which fosters the internalisation and embedment of climate resilience into organisational cultures.

4.3.2: Structural Embedment

In addition to cultural elements, the businesses identified key elements that foster the integration of climate resilience into long-term organisational structures. A first element relates to strong top-down leadership in which commitment and direction from senior management make climate resilience an organisation-wide, recognised priority. As Interviewee 9 explained:

“I think it begins with management. They set the tone, you need commitment from them [...] So management has to give you the direction, timeline and roadmap.”

Eight participants viewed senior management as crucial for both initiating the embedment and providing direction and structures to translate climate resilience into organisational practices. Top-down leadership then enables and reinforces cultural embedment by strengthening the concept's prioritisation and legitimacy. This was underscored by expert insights which pointed out that leadership directly shapes corporate culture, thereby determining other elements, such as awareness and willingness.

Moreover, visible commitment from senior management can extend organisation-wide and thus influence long-term embedment and internal priorities. This became particularly evident among family-owned businesses, as explicitly articulated by Interviewee 3:

“[...] family businesses have a more long-term horizon. So, they think more about next generations [...] our owner is the one who truly believes that sustainability is the condition for future success. So, that helps.”

This perceived benefit was particularly supported by Interviewee 14 and Expert 1, who observed that family-owned firms are characterised by more long-term thinking than shareholder-driven companies. As such, strong top-down leadership aligns priorities, reinforces commitment, and fosters the overall embedment of climate resilience.

A final key element concerns the formal embedment of climate resilience within organisational strategies and structures. Many participants (10) perceived climate change as a structural, long-term challenge that requires formal institutionalisation and integration into broader business strategies. As Interviewee 7 illustrated:

“It's not a sustainability strategy and a corporate strategy. It's integrated into corporate strategy [...] And that makes it a win-win situation and embeds it in the ways of working [...] it's just more effective to do it that way.”

Notably, this example indicates that strategic embedment is perceived as not only enhancing the long-term commitment to climate resilience but also its effectiveness. In addition, some participants reported that internal targets and metrics help cascade the topic to employees, thereby further fostering structural embedment. Expert 3 further underscored the importance of such targets and strategies, as these are increasingly considered in external evaluations of corporate climate resilience.

As such, the organisational embedment and internalisation of climate resilience are achieved through a combination of cultural and structural elements. Together, these make the concept a long-term and recognised priority within the culture and structure of large manufacturing companies.

4.4: Organisational Operationalisation & Coordination of Climate Resilience

Simultaneous with the organisational embedment and internalisation process of climate resilience, the process of operationalisation and coordination becomes central for organisational sensemaking. While cultural and structural elements make climate resilience meaningful, prioritised, and legitimate within the organisation, a set of perceived analytical and coordination elements help translate the concept into actionable practices. These two processes are part of the same broader sensemaking process and together enable resilience efforts in practice.

4.4.1: Analytical & Risk-based Operationalisation

Having accurate data, information, and expertise constitutes the first core enabler for the operationalisation of climate resilience. Several participants (eight) viewed data availability as a condition for making the concept actionable. Moreover, this was perceived as foundational not only for decision-making itself but also for legitimising and prioritising resilience efforts by fostering objectivity within these decision-making processes. While experts also recognised this, Expert 2 observed that collaboration among companies is nevertheless often limited, hindering the diffusion of available information.

However, data alone was considered insufficient without internal frameworks to guide decision-making and action on climate resilience. Interviewee 9 reflected:

“I think that this kind of framework you need so you can talk together about what for priorities do we make and what kind of decisions do we make?”

While data provides insights, frameworks help translate information into structured actions and guide internal discussions. Some businesses initiate internal targets, metrics, and performance systems to operationalise resilience, often extracted from external frameworks, such as the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). In this way, frameworks and metrics support organisational decision-making, prioritisation, and action.

Building on this, most businesses (10) adopt a risk-based approach, including risk identification, assessment and prioritisation, evaluation based on the organisation’s risk appetite, and ultimate action. These were often aligned with existing risk assessment standards, such as the ISO 31000. While a risk-based approach was particularly dominant among firms with established risk management structures, such as Enterprise Risk Management, it was not limited to these organisations. Even in firms where ESG serves as the central unit for resilience-related activities, this approach was adopted to structure processes. As such, a risk-based approach fulfils a fundamental role in operationalising resilience across large businesses, regardless of their underlying conceptualisations or approaches.

Overall, these three enablers reveal that organisations operationalise climate resilience through a multi-layered analytical system, aligning closely with planned-oriented literature. Together, these elements form a sequential logic in which data, information, and expertise serve as a foundation, frameworks guide decision-making, and a risk-based approach structures action.

4.4.2: Organisational Structures & Coordination

A second set of perceived key operationalisation elements concerns organisational structures and coordination to implement resilience in practice. The first element relates to ownership, including clear roles and responsibilities, which seven participants perceived as a condition for effective coordination. Ownership is often located at the senior level or within specific departments, such as ESG, risk management, and corporate strategy. These structures range from centralised ownership to more fragmented, cross-divisional structures, which the experts explained as the consequence of different maturity levels and business cultures.

At the same time, formalised roles and responsibilities do not necessarily equate ownership in practice. As Interviewee 9 reflected:

“Every communication about BCM, ESG, or IT security goes via the account team. So you're also dependent on the account lead and his interests, his biases, his priorities [...].”

This reveals that power dynamics, such as the account lead's informal power in the example above, actively influence how climate resilience is prioritised and coordinated in practice. Ownership of climate resilience must then also be considered through a power lens.

Furthermore, several participants (six) perceived central-local dynamics as another key element for effective coordination. This element was predominantly observed in organisations with a decentralised or cooperative structure, illustrating that governance arrangements extend across organisational levels. While participants viewed local ownership as effective, they also pointed to tensions within this dynamic. Interviewee 1 reflected:

“[...] there would be some tension between the local plant and the corporate. And the local plant would say, if it's very important to be more resilient, bring us the money [...] At a corporate level, they would say the plant is responsible to keep running [...].”

This suggests that central-local dynamics can also involve conflicting priorities about responsibility, resources, and decision-making. While central direction was often deemed necessary, participants emphasised that agreement between both parties is crucial. Effective coordination thus emerges from an interplay between central direction and local action.

A final, perceived key element is organisational alignment. Despite clear governance and coordination structures, six participants emphasised that a lack of alignment between organisational units can still hamper effectiveness. As such, resilience is not always uniformly interpreted, prioritised, and practised internally, even when governance and ownership structures are in place. Interviewee 14 reflected on the consequences of such misalignment:

“And now they [departments] are all different islands, working on their own, because that's the way it used to be. But then you miss out on a lot of risks, companywide [...] because there's a lot of interdependencies within the company.”

Organisational misalignment can thus further limit the identification of interconnected risks. Expert 1 similarly observed that organisational actions, such as climate risk analyses, are often conducted in silos, thereby constraining efficiency and holistic thinking. Cross-divisional cooperation and co-creation were therefore perceived as essential for both effectiveness and overcoming trade-offs between departments.

Taken together, these findings suggest that corporate climate resilience is operationalised through a combination of analytical enablers and coordination structures, which emerge from interdependent and aligned organisational elements within an integrated system. Importantly, these elements continuously and simultaneously interact with elements related to the embedment and internalisation of climate resilience. As such, these processes and key elements are interdependent and together contribute to the corporate sensemaking of climate resilience, while forming the basis for ultimate organisational practices.

4.5: Organisational Practices across Operations & Value Chains

A final set of perceived key elements for corporate climate resilience relates to concrete organisational practices across firm-level operations and broader value chains. As such, the focus shifts from internal sensemaking processes to observable actions.

4.5.1: Proactive Design & Anticipation

A first key practice concerns integrating climate resilience into the early design and planning stages of facilities, production processes, and products. Here, climate resilience is proactively integrated from the start, rather than addressed only in response to disruptions. As a result, organisations enhance the adaptability of their operations and reduce vulnerability to future disruptions. On top of that, anticipating upcoming climate trends and regulations can avoid costly, time-consuming redesigns, particularly for organisations that develop products with long design phases and life cycles. As Interviewee 10 explained:

“[...] we always tried to foresee future regulations and prepare internally because our products last very long. And it takes a lot of time to produce or to design something. So it's important to already know beforehand if that design is future proof.”

This was strongly supported by Expert 2, who further underlined that proactiveness in the design and planning phase is crucial for structural adaptation, although future conditions remain uncertain. As such, proactive designs directly contribute to the organisation's long-term resilience and strategic positioning.

4.5.2: Redundancy & Risk Distribution

A second key practice concerns redundancy and risk distribution across operations. Some participants (five) emphasised that the presence of multiple alternatives across core business elements, such as suppliers, production sites, and resources, is vital to ensure business continuity in the event of a disruption. As Interviewee 1 highlighted:

“[...] you need to have a diverse market to be able to deal with any upsets or negative factors. So having a very broad book of business is one way and probably the best way for a company to be very resilient.”

By embedding flexibility and diversity in their operations, companies aim to reduce their dependence on single business assets. In addition, three participants described the importance of organisational structure and risk distribution. As Interviewee 4 illustrated:

“[...] we believe we are resilient because [...] we are rather distributed. So, our risk is split into many parts [...] even if something is happening, we have the ability to transfer our business from one location to another very quickly.”

This suggests that redundancy and risk distribution are more feasible for companies with decentralised structures, whereas businesses with high dependence on specialised suppliers, resources, or facilities face heavier constraints in implementing this practice.

Expert 4 built on this tension by explaining that systemic climate impacts may reduce future alternatives, particularly for companies that depend on specific resources or climatic conditions for their production. Redundancy and risk distribution are thus perceived as crucial for climate resilience, although their large-scale implementation and future feasibility may be limited.

4.5.3: Resilience Beyond the Firm

Finally, many participants (nine) explicitly mentioned that the interconnectedness between suppliers, customers, and other actors in the broader value chain requires climate resilience beyond the firm. As such, systemic resilience is perceived as both a system-level practice and key condition for corporate climate resilience, aligning with literature conceptualising resilience as a broader, systemic adaptation topic (e.g., Morrison et al., 2025).

Specifically, resilience is actively shaped through ongoing interactions between customers and suppliers within the broader system. As Interviewee 15 stated:

“This is really a full supply chain effort [...] And what we get from the customers, we reflect to our suppliers [...] so we use that as a leverage [...] And we also trained our suppliers to teach how to do things [...] So, that's how it goes from top to bottom in the full supply chain.”

This highlights how climate resilience is not only co-created through collaboration and dialogue but is also shaped by interdependencies and power dynamics. While upstream customers influence firm-level practices, companies also set standards for their own suppliers, thus cascading expectations and practices throughout the value chain.

At the same time, the participants also identified challenges in realising unified resilience practices across complex and diverse value chains. In particular, divergent maturity levels and interpretations among companies can lead to fragmentation across the value chain. Despite firms' attempts to standardise and unify resilience efforts among suppliers through pressure and learning, a shared understanding and consistent approach often remains absent.

These challenges underscore a structural tension between high dependence and limited control. Companies with a high reliance on their suppliers, in combination with widespread, complex supply chains, highlighted that their influence on resilience actions and outcomes beyond the firm ultimately remains limited. Building on this, Expert 4 critically observed:

“[...] very few companies actually have the overview in their supply chain to see what's really going on and what might impact them [...].”

The perceived limitations in overview and control over risks and resilience across the broader value chain further underscore the importance but also the inherent tensions of corporate climate resilience within a broader, complex, and interconnected system.

Overall, while proactiveness and redundancy strengthen firm-level resilience, broader, systemic resilience depends on coordination across multiple actors. At the same time, inherent tensions between organisational control and structural dependencies, in combination with different maturity levels and interpretations, further fragment and limit large-scale resilience efforts. As a result, corporate climate resilience is relational, shaped by multiple interactions and interdependencies across the value chain.

4.6: Constraining Conditions for Corporate Climate Resilience

In addition to the perceived key elements, participants identified cross-cutting, structural constraints for effective corporate climate resilience. These conditions were not limited to specific organisations, but instead reflect broader, systemic tensions that continuously affect organisational sensemaking and action.

4.6.1: Short-termism

A first constraint relates to the short-term focus within large businesses. While climate change is inherently a long-term threat, nearly all participants mentioned that organisational prioritisation is often driven by short-term profit. As Interviewee 2 explained:

“It's a long-term strategy element, which sometimes clashes or interferes with your short-term financial or non-financial objectives [...] And these tensions also influence how serious people take actions.”

This reflects a structural misalignment between the long-term nature of climate change and the short-term logic of businesses. Consequently, climate resilience initiatives risk being deprioritised, even when their importance is recognised. Likewise, Expert 3 illustrated:

“Many companies plan right now until 2030. And after that, it's all open [...] there's no idea in how they want to achieve their 2050 ambition.”

The experts thus highlighted that organisational time horizons remain relatively narrow compared to the structural implications of climate change, and often overshadowed by short-term profit, even when climate resilience is formally prioritised and integrated into strategies.

4.6.2: Resources

Building on short-termism, six participants explicitly identified internal resource constraints, such as in budget and expertise, as another challenge. In this regard, climate resilience can be constrained when resources to act on it are scarce or deprioritised. Expert 1 explicitly supported this finding by observing that companies without adequate funding, expertise, or profitability tend to invest as minimal as possible in climate resilience. As such, resource constraints or lacking willingness to invest in them are a second cross-cutting barrier for corporate climate resilience.

4.6.3: Absence of System-Level Approach

A final, system-level constraint relates to the absence of a unified, cross-organisational approach to climate resilience. Building on the structural interdependencies across value chains, four participants explicitly emphasised that resilience requires coordination across industries, supply chains, and other system-level actors. As Interviewee 2 observed:

“[...] this cross-business and more ecosystem approach is very important [...] There is not enough backbone or global structure; industry peers networks that can help to solve the challenge together [...].”

Consequently, organisations tend to develop their own approaches in isolation, leaving resilience efforts scattered, inconsistent, and with limited collective impact.

Despite the existence of supporting frameworks, participants viewed the absence of an overarching structure to enable unified, coordinated system-level action as a structural shortcoming.

The need for such a structure is further underscored by the four experts, who argued that companies consistently approach climate change in a confined and isolated way. As a result, structural challenges such as systemic failures, climate tipping points, and climate-induced geopolitical conflicts, are often neglected. The absence of a unified, system-level approach is thus perceived as a final, overarching constraint for building climate resilience at scale.

4.7: Final Framework & Synthesis of Findings

In this final section, the main findings of this research are integrated into a perception-based framework for corporate climate resilience. The key corporate sensemaking processes, elements, and tensions regarding climate resilience are discussed, thereby forming the building blocks for answering the research question.

4.7.1: A Perception-based Framework for Corporate Climate Resilience

From the findings that emerged from the interviews with large manufacturing companies and field experts, the following final framework could be developed.

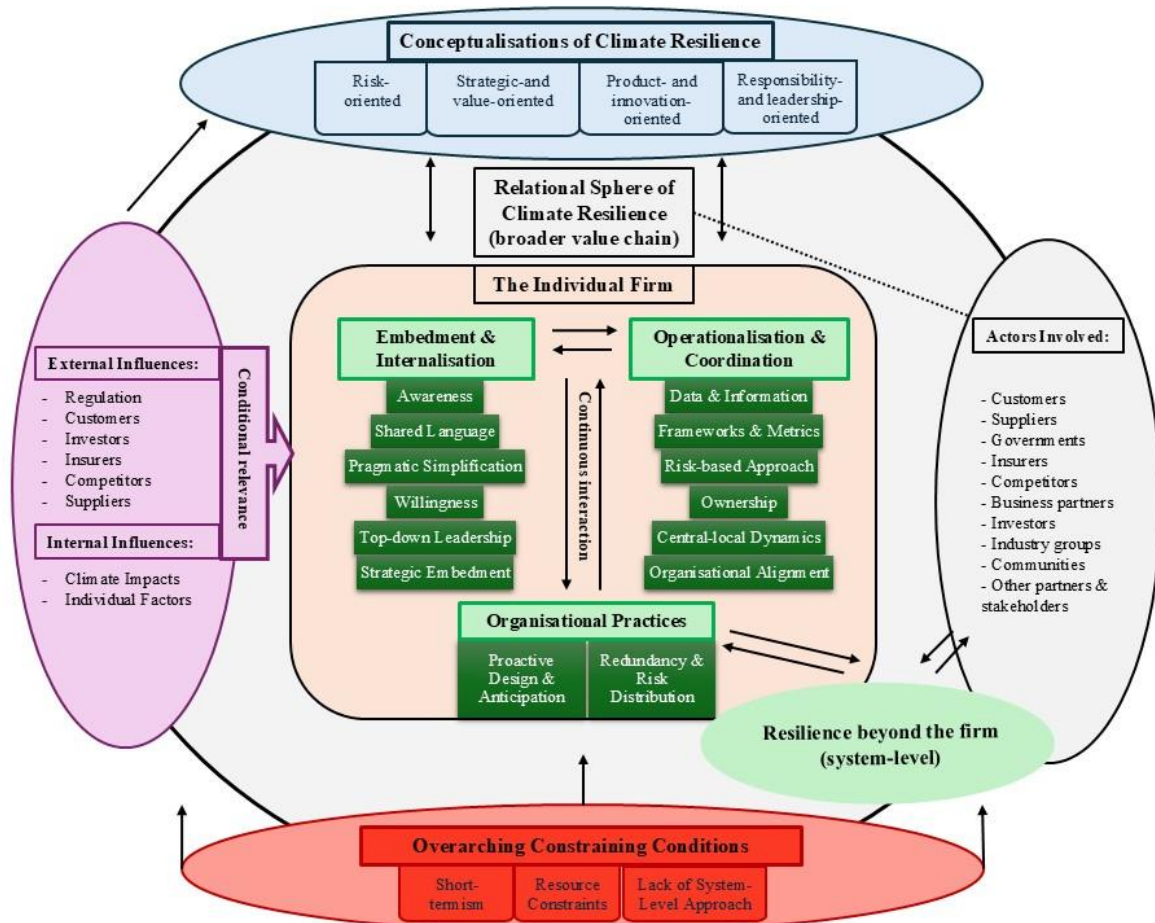


Figure 3: Perception-based framework for corporate climate resilience

The framework shows how organisations make sense of climate resilience and what they perceive as key elements that contribute to or constrain it. At its core, it represents corporate sensemaking of climate resilience as a continuous and interactive process between organisational interpretation and action, in which corporate climate resilience emerges as a relational property. As such, the framework adopts a complexity perspective by framing resilience as emergent from continuous, dynamic and non-linear interactions between key elements, actors, and interdependencies across and beyond the firm-level.

At the top of the framework, four conceptualisations capture how climate resilience is understood within organisations. These perspectives coexist both within and across firms, reflecting the conceptual ambiguity of resilience. On the left side, external and internal influencing factors shape the relevance and organisational sensemaking of climate resilience. Importantly, this relevance tends to be conditional, depending on factors such as risk exposure, insurance coverage, and experienced climate impacts.

Once triggered, resilience becomes enacted within organisations. This is represented by the transition into the firm-level, where the internal processes of internalisation and embedment start interacting with operationalisation and coordination. These processes occur simultaneously and are mutually reinforcing rather than sequential. While cultural and structural elements enable prioritisation and legitimacy, analytical and governance elements provide the structures for decision-making and implementation.

Together, these internal processes translate into concrete organisational practices, such as proactive designs and redundancy, as depicted at the bottom of the firm-level domain. While these elements strengthen firm-level resilience, corporate climate resilience extends beyond the firm into the relational sphere of companies, reflecting their dependence on external actors. These actors are clustered at the far-right side of the framework, and the dotted line illustrates that they are part of this relational sphere of climate resilience. The ‘resilience beyond the firm’ domain highlights that resilience is co-shaped among these actors within the broader value chain, rather than controlled by a single firm. Finally, the base of the framework represents the overarching, constraining conditions that cut across all other elements. Summed up, the framework reconceptualises corporate climate resilience as a relational property of ongoing interactions between corporate sensemaking and action.

4.7.2: Key Elements, Relationships, and Tensions

The key elements in the framework are embedded within relationships and tensions that either reinforce or limit corporate climate resilience. A first tension emerges from the coexistence of multiple conceptualisations of climate resilience within and across organisations. While these perspectives often complement each other, they can also lead to trade-offs in practice. For example, organisations simultaneously address short-term risks while aiming to adapt to long-term changes, creating conflicting priorities. This reflects a persistent ambiguity regarding what drives resilience and what constitutes effective action.

A second tension concerns the drivers of corporate climate resilience. The findings suggest that resilience is not universally prioritised and embedded across organisations, but rather conditionally relevant. External pressures, such as regulations and stakeholders, often drive action, while materialised climate risks act as internal triggers. This reveals a tension between more externally driven and intrinsically motivated responses, potentially resulting in variation in proactiveness, scope, and integration across companies.

A third tension lies at the core of the framework, namely in the continuous interaction between embedment and operationalisation. While this interplay is essential for translating climate resilience into organisational practice, it also reveals critical misalignments. For example, awareness may not translate into action, while actions may lack a shared understanding, resulting in fragmented and ineffective efforts.

As such, this ongoing sensemaking process constitutes a structural tension: it depends on the very elements that are required to enable resilience, yet is also constrained when these elements are not coherently integrated, revealing that sensemaking processes and climate resilience itself are inherently connected and interdependent.

Furthermore, corporate climate resilience extends beyond the firm and is relational. While organisations implement firm-level practices, they remain dependent on external actors, such as suppliers and customers. This creates a tension between high dependence and limited control. In combination with divergent maturity levels, priorities, and interpretations among actors, resilience efforts across the value chain tend to be fragmented. This stresses the importance of system-level coordination, which nevertheless remains limited.

Finally, corporate climate resilience is constrained by structural, cross-cutting conditions. Even when key elements, such as data, governance, and willingness, are present, short-termism and resource constraints continue to affect prioritisation and implementation. Combined with the absence of system-level coordination, these conditions cut across all elements in the framework and thus limit effective, large-scale climate resilience.

Together, these dynamics demonstrate that corporate climate resilience does not emerge from isolated elements, but from the continuous interplay between organisational processes, external pressures, and systemic interdependencies, which are all shaped by structural tensions and constraints.

4.7.3: Main Theoretical Contribution

This research contributes to the existing literature by understanding corporate climate resilience as a relational property emerging from ongoing interactions between organisational sensemaking and action, rather than a static, linear, or fully controllable outcome. Resilience emerges from the interaction between organisational interpretations of climate-related conditions, such as risks and external pressures, the translation of these interpretations into coordinated organisational practices, and actual organisational action within and beyond the firm. Within this process, resilience is shaped by multiple, coexisting conceptualisations, conditional relevance, interdependencies across value chains, and structural constraints, making it inherently relational. As such, this study reconceptualises corporate climate resilience as a continuous, relational, and sensemaking-driven process.

5: Conclusion

This final chapter concludes the thesis by answering the research question, highlighting the main theoretical and practical implications, and addressing the key limitations and directions for future research.

Answer to Research Question

This master's thesis set out to answer the following research question:

“How do large manufacturing companies in the Benelux region make sense of climate resilience, and what do they perceive as its key elements?”

The findings reveal that large businesses make sense of climate resilience through a continuous and interactive process of interpreting and acting on the concept, shaped by key elements related to firm-level dynamics, systemic interdependencies, and structural constraints. Climate resilience is thus not an independent or static outcome, but a relational property emerging from ongoing interactions between organisational sensemaking and action.

Within this process, large businesses approach climate resilience through different, often overlapping conceptualisations, including risk-oriented, strategic, product-centred, and responsibility-driven perspectives. This highlights that corporate climate resilience is not interpreted as a single, unified concept. Moreover, the relevance and sensemaking of climate resilience are conditional, shaped by a combination of external influences, such as regulations and stakeholders, and internal drivers, including climate impacts and individual interpretations.

Once triggered, climate resilience is enacted through the continuous and simultaneous interaction between processes of embedment and internalisation, and operationalisation and coordination of the concept. Embedment and internalisation involve cultural elements such as internal awareness, shared language, pragmatic simplification, organisational willingness, as well as structural elements including strong top-down leadership and strategic embedment. Operationalisation and coordination, in turn, rely on analytical elements such as data, frameworks, and risk-based approaches, alongside coordination elements including ownership, central-local dynamics, and organisational alignment. These elements are inherently interdependent and require continuous alignment to enable effective resilience.

Together, these processes translate climate resilience into concrete organisational practices, particularly proactive designs and redundancy across operations. However, resilience extends beyond the firm level and structurally depends on broader value chains. At the same time, firms perceive limited control over such interdependencies, underscoring the need for system-level coordination. Combined with short-termism and resource constraints, the absence of such coordination constitutes a structural barrier for effective and large-scale corporate climate resilience.

Key Theoretical Implications

This research complements the academic literature on corporate climate resilience by developing a process-based and sensemaking-driven understanding of the concept. By adopting a perception and sensemaking lens, the study addressed a critical gap in the literature, demonstrating that resilience cannot be understood independently of how organisations interpret, prioritise, and enact it in practice. In doing so, it empirically substantiates the conceptual ambiguity and fragmentation of resilience (e.g., Alexander, 2013), showing how these actively trigger sensemaking processes.

Furthermore, the research bridges key theoretical tensions identified in the literature. First, it integrates stability-oriented perspectives (robustness and business continuity) and change-oriented ones (adaptation and transformation) as distinguished by Huiskamp et al. (2022), showing that companies engage with both simultaneously. Second, it directly combines planning-oriented views (e.g., Gupta & Gupta, 2025) with emergent perspectives (e.g., Wang et al., 2025) by demonstrating that resilience is neither fully controllable nor entirely unplanned, but arises from both structured organisational processes and ongoing sensemaking across different organisational levels.

Key Practical Implications

The findings offer several practical implications for businesses, policymakers, and other actors involved in corporate climate resilience. First, actors should recognise that climate resilience is actively shaped by organisational perceptions and sensemaking processes. Developing a shared understanding and structure, while allowing contextual adaptations across organisations and departments, therefore becomes essential for coherent and effective action.

Second, involved actors should acknowledge that climate resilience extends beyond individual organisations. Given strong interdependencies, companies are encouraged to actively engage in collaboration and information sharing. However, considering the limited perceived control over external actors and the absence of overarching coordination structures, policymakers and system-level actors play a crucial role in providing stable regulatory frameworks, incentives, and system-level structures to facilitate large-scale resilience.

Third, the findings highlight the importance of aligning internal organisational elements. For example, analytical tools and enablers, such as data and frameworks, must be complemented by strong leadership commitment and organisational willingness to act. In this regard, the role of top management is particularly critical in setting priorities, shaping organisational culture, and enabling coordination.

Finally, companies should move beyond reactive and compliance-driven approaches. While regulations and stakeholders play an important role in triggering action, reliance on external pressure can lead to short-term and narrow interpretations of resilience, limiting both long-term adaptation and the ability to seize strategic opportunities. Organisations are therefore encouraged to proactively embed climate resilience into long-term strategies and structures.

Key Limitations

The research is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First of all, the study exclusively focuses on large manufacturing companies in the Benelux region. While this context provides valuable empirical insights, the findings may not be fully generalisable to other sectors or geographical regions. Moreover, large companies are characterised by specific structures, challenges, and priorities, further limiting broader applicability.

A second limitation stems from the qualitative, perception-based approach. While this enables an in-depth exploration of organisational sensemaking processes, it relies on subjective, and potentially socially desirable, responses from a relatively small number of interview participants. Although senior representatives and external experts were included, the identified perceptions may differ from actual organisational behaviour and not fully represent the entire organisation.

Furthermore, the research captures perspectives at a specific point in time. Considering that climate change, regulations, and organisations themselves are dynamically evolving, organisational interpretations and approaches to climate resilience may change over time. Overall, the relatively small sample size, driven by time and resource constraints, limits the generalisability of the findings and requires further validation through future research.

Directions for Future Research

Building on the findings and limitations, three main directions for future research emerge. First, future studies could extend this research to other sectors and regions to examine how contextual differences influence organisational sensemaking of climate resilience. Comparative studies could further identify cross-cutting enablers and barriers for corporate climate resilience.

Second, quantitative and mixed-method approaches could complement this research by exploring relationships between sensemaking processes, perceived key resilience elements, and measurable organisational outcomes. This could further inform future resilience strategies and assessments. In addition, longitudinal studies could analyse how organisational perceptions and actions evolve over time, particularly in response to uncertain climate and regulatory developments.

Finally, more research is needed on system-level resilience by including perspectives from across value chains and broader society, such as suppliers, policymakers, and financial institutions. On top of that, more understanding is needed on how organisations can overcome key constraints, particularly short-termism and limited system-level coordination, to enable more effective and long-term climate resilience. Such research can further strengthen the empirical and practical basis for understanding corporate climate resilience as both an organisational and system-level challenge.

6: References

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7: Appendices

7.1: Interview Topic List

1) Role & Context (max 5 minutes):

- **Focus** = positioning the interpretative lens through which the participant perceives resilience.
- *Can you briefly describe your role within the organisation and how climate-related topics come up in your work?*
- *From your perspective, is 'climate resilience' a relevant concept for your organisation today? Why? (→ Is the term explicitly used internally?)*

2) Organisational Sensemaking of 'Climate Resilience' (max 8 minutes):

- **Focus** = exploring how the concept is constructed and given meaning to within the organisation.
- *When you hear the term 'climate resilience', what does it mean to you individually?*
 - ➔ *Why do you think you understand it in that way?*
 - ➔ *In what kinds of situations does this term typically come up?*
- *From your experience, how is 'climate resilience' generally understood within your organisation?*
 - ➔ *So if you had to explain to a new employee what climate resilience means for your organisation in practice, what would you say?*
 - ➔ *Who tends to influence how it is framed or defined, you believe?*
 - ➔ *What factors do you think that shape how it is understood internally?*
- *Would you say that people within your organisation (e.g. your team) understand the term in the same way or differently?*
 - ➔ *If so, what do you think that drives those differences?*
 - ➔ *If there are differences, what makes one interpretation more convincing or actionable than another?*
- *From your experience, has your organisation's understanding of resilience changed over time, or has it remained generally the same?*
 - ➔ *If so, what triggered that shift? (e.g., events, regulation, restructuring, insurance, scaling).*

3) Key Elements of Climate Resilience (max 15 minutes):

- **Focus** = generating the key elements of climate resilience as perceived by the participant (most inductive, open, and important part of the interview).
- *From your perspective, what makes a large manufacturing company, like your own, resilient to climate-related challenges?*
 - ➔ *So, if you had unlimited budget, what would you change in the company to make it truly resilient to climate-related risks?*
- *Are there any elements that you believe are most important or most prioritized to be resilient?*
- *What makes those elements important, you believe?*
- *Can you think of a situation that made you realise this element is important?*
 - ➔ *If a major climate event happened tomorrow affecting one of your main sites, what would determine whether the company handles it well or badly? And what about a climate-related issue affecting the company as a whole, for example new regulation or sharp customer decline?*

4) Translation into Practice and Action (max 8 minutes):

- **Focus** = understand how perceptions and interpretations of resilience become visible in practice.
- *From your experience, does your organisation's understanding of resilience become visible in practice? For example, in decisions and actions?*
- *Can you describe a situation where this became visible?*
- *In that situation, did your organisation's understanding of resilience influence what was prioritised in the action? How?*
- *Do you feel that certain approaches to climate-related challenges or ways of thinking about resilience have become standard over time?*

7.2: Coding Table

Below is an example of the coding process. The tables contain the full coding process for the code ‘awareness & internalisation’ within the ‘organisational embedment and internalisation’ theme. Due to the large size of the Excel file, these figures only serve as an example. The full Excel table, including all codes and themes, is available upon request.

Sheet 1: Initial Coding (step 1-2)

A	B	C	D	E
1	Initial data element	Initial category	Initial code	Code Definition
2	The power of consistent repetition enhances organisational understanding	Organisational Sensemaking	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
3	Iteration (repetition) is super important to keep the concept alive, otherwise it's just som.	Organisational Sensemaking	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
4	Depends on what someone is aware of within the company & annual report is overarching	Organisational Sensemaking	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
5	Incentives to raise awareness and action on climate resilience	Organisational Sensemaking	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
6	Social media as a influencing factor of awareness	Organisational Sensemaking	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
7	Awareness raising, communication and even strong messages, especially from manager	Organisational Sensemaking	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
8	Internal measurements/KPIs (key performance indicators or long-term incentives) help	Organisational Sensemaking	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
9	Internal KPIs to measure progress and keep awareness high	Key elements	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
10	Awareness is needed for engagement	Key elements	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
11	Awareness is where it starts	Key elements	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
12	Different maturity levels within company (awareness and engagement)	Internal Interpretations & Tense	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
13	Novelty and ambition: if a program is new, people need time to understand it, and if it is m	Internal Interpretations & Tense	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
14	Awareness & Communication: need to understand and feel that it matters, dialogue, corr	Key elements	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as a relevant and legitimate organisational concern.
15				

Sheet 2: Pattern Coding (step 3-4)

A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Pattern/Inducted code (step3)	Description	Interpretation	Illustrative quotations	Candidate theme (step4)
2	Awareness & Internalisation	Awareness across the organisation through repetition, exposure, and internal communication enables the internalisation of climate resilience as	I1, I2, I6, I7, I12, I13, I14	I1: "People needed to understand and also believe more or less that this is something to deal with..." I2: "...not everybody is already well aware of all the terminologies..." I6: "...a topic repeated and repeated and repeated become more natural and more normal..." I7: "...keep talking about the same topic..." I12: "...taking account of these things within your risk assessment, you're raising awareness of the people that are doing it as well..." I13: "...he will refer to the things that he's aware of. And what is he aware of? He's aware of what we have put in our annual report..." I14: "...he will refer to the things that he's aware of. And what is he aware of? He's aware of what we have put in our annual report..." I1: "...what I do is showing the site, what happens internal, the company, how many damage we have..." I2: "...what I do is showing the site, what happens internal, the company, how many damage we have..." I3: "...what I do is showing the site, what happens internal, the company, how many damage we have..." I4: "Because that's risk awareness. And that's the first step when people start to be risk aware, then the ball keeps rolling."	Organisational embedment and internalisation of climate resilience
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Sheet 3: Themes & Quotations (step 5-6)

Theme	Code	Quotation & Interviewee	Ranking
Organisational embedment and internalisation of climate	Awareness & Internalisation	I6: "...a topic repeated and repeated and repeated become more natural and more normal." & "...keep talking about the same topic..."	Used
		I14: "Because that's risk awareness. And that's the first step when people start to be risk aware, then the ball keeps rolling."	Must use
		I12: "...he will refer to the things that he's aware of. And what is he aware of? He's aware of what we have put in our annual report."	Must use
		I1: "People needed to understand and also believe more or less that this is something to deal with..."	Supporting
		I2: "...not everybody is already well aware of all the terminologies..."	Supporting
		I13: "But the most important reason why the pushback is completely gone is social media."	Interesting
		I13: "...what I do is showing the site, what happens internal, the company, how many damage we have..."	Interesting

7.3: Informed Consent Form

BY SIGNING THIS FORM I UNDERSTAND THAT: - I may withdraw from the interview at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequence - My interview will be recorded and transcribed - For confidentiality, identifying details of the participant and its affiliation will be anonymized across the entire research - Access to my own interview recording or transcript will be provided at any time, if requested - Only the primary researcher and his supervisor will have access to interview transcripts - Extracts from this interview may be quoted in the planned dissertation and potential future publications, but also remain anonymized - I will not receive any payment for participation - I am free to contact the primary researcher or his supervisor at any time to seek clarification or further information DATA SECURITY Interview and participant details, consent forms and recordings will be stored on a password protected, local hard drive, disconnected from cloud services. Anonymous transcription may be done using DeepL, NCH, Microsoft Office or Otter.ai, which all meet industry standards of data encryption and EU-U.S. Privacy Shield requirements.	CORPORATE PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE RESILIENCE This master's thesis explores how large manufacturing companies in the Benelux region perceive and make sense of 'climate resilience' in practice. While the concept has become a prominent concept in both academic and practitioner-oriented literature, it remains conceptually ambiguous and fragmented, resulting in diverse and often inconsistent interpretations across organizations. This highlights the importance of perception and sensemaking processes in shaping how organizations understand and act upon climate resilience. However, empirical research on how large businesses themselves perceive and make sense of resilience remains limited. Adopting an inductive case-study approach, this research conducts semi-structured interviews to identify the key elements of climate resilience as perceived by large businesses.
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