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# Social actors and institutional carriers in small island states: Examining the role of partnerships in influencing organisations' approach towards environmental disclosure

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## Abstract

Island societies are states with distinct inherent characteristics and vulnerabilities. Their features are important constraints in the development and adaption of actions towards environmental disclosure. Since 1992, international bodies and institutions have been emphasising the importance of international cooperation and partnerships for helping island societies overcome their inherent obstacles and engage in environmental matters and consequently environmental disclosure. Although international bodies and institutions have been pointing out the importance of studying island societies for many years, in academic research it remains relatively unexplored. This research adopts neo-institutional theory and Scott's theoretical framework on institutional carriers to examine the role of partnerships in imposing institutional carriers and influencing organisational behaviour towards environmental disclosure. The study examines island societies that have been cooperating through partnerships with large developed countries. Social actors are analysed at three levels, partnerships being one of them, (a) transnational through the European Union, (b) societal through domestic society and politics, and (c) the organisational field through industrial sectors, in an attempt to examine the role of social actors in shaping the structure of organisations and ascertain their interaction in diffusing institutional carriers for environmental disclosure. Qualitative content analysis was used to examine and interpret semi-structured face-to-face interviews with private and public sector organisations and the governmental environment representative.

**Keywords:** institutional carriers, small island states, partnership, environmental disclosure, social actors, neo-institutional theory

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the current study is to examine corporate environmental disclosure (hereafter, CED) in small island states (hereafter, SIS). Specifically, the research is concerned with identifying the institutional carriers found in SIS, shaping organisations' approach towards CED, along with ascertaining the role of social actors in diffusing and imposing such pressures on firms. Reviewing the literature that has emerged through the years, we observe a gap in the academic research in studies investigating island societies and particularly the existence of institutional carriers influencing organisational strategies, which is addressed by the current paper. Most of the existing literature focuses on the inherent characteristics of island societies (Ghina, 2003) while some studies examine the impact of

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their features on their economic development (Armstrong & Read, 1995; Read, 2001; Briguglio, 1995). Furthermore, studies have been emphasising the critical role of the social content (Schneiberg & Clemens, 2006; Berger et al. 1973) and institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Mohr & White, 2008; Scott, 2008; North, 1994) in shaping organisations' approach towards various issues, arguing for the need of more research examining those two variables (Campbell, 2007; Rahaman et al., 2004; Walsh et al., 2003).

What makes island societies a special case for investigation is the impact of their inherent characteristics in adjusting to today's CED requirements, along with the existence of partnerships between island societies and developed countries for enhancing their ability to impose CED on social reality and organisations. Partnerships and international cooperation have been considered by international institutions and bodies as critical mechanisms helping SIS to cope with their impediments (UN, 2014; UNFCCC, 2005). As they support, bearing in mind the characteristics of island states that work as obstacles in the institutionalisation of the society and organisations towards environmental responsibility, such international cooperation and partnerships may be regarded as a possible solution. SIS are societies that are loosely coupled geographically to other countries due to their remoteness and isolation placing them away from major markets and pressures for institutionalisation. As their supporters argue, such partnerships result in the creation of tightly coupled relations communicating ideas, beliefs and attitudes towards different issues (UN, 2014; UNFCCC, 2005).

Considering the importance and emphasis given to partnerships by the international bodies and institutions, the current paper aims to evaluate their impact in shaping organisations' behaviour concerning CED. The study examines the influence of partnerships between SIS and European Union (hereafter, EU) as an important number of island states are collaborating with the EU. Environmental responsibility is a major issue for EU with more than 200 pieces of environmental legislation providing prescriptions on organisational structures toward environmental issues (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 2002). Furthermore SIS partnerships with the EU require the expediency of members to the values and standards of the EU by defining and implementing policies, standards, regulations and action plans. For this reason considering the exposure of organisations to such pressures we would expect the existence of institutional carriers imposing CED. Specifically, the purpose of the paper is the assessment of the dynamics of social actors at three levels of analysis partnerships being one of them, (a) transnational through the European Union, (b) societal through domestic society and politics, and (c) the organisational field through industrial sectors, and (d) their interaction, in diffusing institutions through various carriers and their effectiveness in engaging organisations in environmental disclosure. The study examines the three social actors instead of focusing entirely on partnerships. The reason behind this was the importance of the social context in setting values and beliefs concerning various issues. It would be wrong to assume that any institutional carrier indication is the result of a partnership or of a single social actor. In many cases, institutions are created through the interaction of various actors in a social context. Furthermore, this approach helps to avoid prejudging the role of partnerships and assigning institutional carriers of other actors to the latter.

The study focuses specifically on the case of Cyprus. Cyprus is one of the 45 island states spread around the globe. There are a number of reasons for choosing Cyprus for examining the subject matter of this research. First, Cyprus has been a member of the European Union since 2004. As highlighted above, there is an extensive EU environmental legislation providing prescriptions on organisational structures toward environmental issues (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 2002). Given the importance of environmental issues for the EU, the membership of the island for the last ten years presents an interesting case for examining the impact of such a partnership in diffusing and imposing institutions relating to CED and shaping organisational behaviour towards the latter. Furthermore, both Overseas Countries and Territories (hereafter, OCT)<sup>1</sup> and EU membership require the expediency of members to the values and standards of the EU. Therefore Cyprus's membership aligns with other types of partnerships between island states and developed countries such as the OCT, where islands have to align or converge their legislation with the EU legislation. Third, Cyprus is one of the largest island states in the world. This results in minimizing the impact of their inherent characteristics to a significant extent. Examining the case of Cyprus, which is a state with more abilities to adopt and change according to the requirements of partnerships than other SIS, will indicate the effectiveness of such partnerships in institutionalising organisational strategies for other less advantageous islands.

This research has been divided into two parts. The first part presented here develops a conceptual framework and reviews relevant literature on island societies and institutions. Institutional carriers and social actors are examined by applying neo-institutional theory which offers the lens to explore the institutional variables and the role of environment and Scott's theoretical framework on institutional carriers. The data collection section presents the findings of the first stage of the data analysis process of a quantitative content analysis on the annual reports and separate environmental reports of 119 organisations listed on Cyprus Stock Exchange (hereafter, CSE), while the

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<sup>1</sup> OCT is the second form of partnership found in the group of SIS between the EU and island societies.

methodology section addresses the groups of respondents and data collection and analysis procedures used at the second stage of the data analysis process. The second phase will cover the data analysis procedure which adopts a bottom-up approach for identifying and assigning institutional carriers to social actors, along with evaluating the role of the latter in institutionalising organisations' approach towards CED. Furthermore, the second part will ascertain the interaction among the three social actors in imposing institutional carriers. The findings provide important information on the role of social actors and specifically partnerships in helping states such as SIS to overcome their inherent obstacles and adjust to today's requirements.

The study contributes on a number of levels. Firstly, it helps to address the gap in academic literature on small island states. Island societies are areas that have not been addressed by academics with regard to CED and the existences of institutional pressures. Furthermore, Newson and Deegan (2002) referred to the trend in the literature of focusing on Europe, Australia and the United States, while Gray et al. (1987) stressed the need for Corporate Social Reporting (hereafter, CSR) on less developed and newly industrialised countries. By examining areas such as SIS the study enriches and expands the existing literature on CED. Secondly, the template used in the current context which combines social actors and institutional carriers can be applied to examine other domains. As was discussed earlier, environmental disclosure was chosen to be examined in this, the first part, because it is an important domain of EU decision making. Therefore, a significant amount of carriers were expected to be identified. In a similar way to environmental disclosure, the template can be applied to explore other issues such as education, justice, employment rights and many more that currently may be secondary in the attention of international bodies and institutions. Thirdly, the study helps to expand and enrich neo-institutional theory by exploring SIS and by examining social actors at three levels of analysis instead of concentrating solely on the organisational field.

Fourthly, the research combines the role of institutions with Scott's framework on institutional carriers. The purpose of the study is to demonstrate the importance of institutions but also emphasise the role of carriers in diffusing and imposing the latter on organisations. Scott (2003) highlights the importance of examining "what carriers are associated with which institutional elements" and assessing their impact on organisations resulting in "durable changes" for CED. Furthermore, the author referred to the importance of examining "what carriers are likely to be employed in combination" for interpreting carriers' relations in shaping organisational structures. The current paper addresses Scott's questions along with ascertaining the role of the social actors in diffusing and imposing them to organisations.

## **2. SMALL ISLAND STATES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Discussions of SIS and the group of small states in general have been characterised by arbitrariness and incoherence (Read, 2001; Liou & Ding, 2002; Armstrong & Read, 1995) arising from the non-existence of a single definition. This situation is further illustrated by the existence of an assortment of population threshold criteria for defining small states. There are four main geographic and economic indicators that are used in the analysis of size (Read, 2001; Liou & Ding, 2002; Crowards, 2002). These are the gross domestic product (hereafter, GDP), the geographic area, the terms of trade and the population (Read, 2001; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000; Liou & Ding, 2002; Briguglio, 1995; Jansen, 2004). The most common size indicator used in studies (Read, 2001; Crowards, 2002; Jansen, 2004) and which is also applied in this research is population. The latest threshold of 1 million citizens (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000) was adopted during the 1970s and has remained a common size indicator for small states (Read, 2001). This threshold was used as the small size indicator for choosing the SIS for the study. There are 57 small states with a population of less than 1 million citizens. From the larger group of 57 small states, the research focuses on a group of 45 island societies whose inherent characteristics and their impact on their ability to adjust to changes such as environmental issues are more prominent than the rest small states. In addition, island societies' remoteness and isolation place an additional burden on them by setting them far from major markets.

In spite of the fact that SIS are not a homogeneous group of countries, they share some common characteristics. These features have been identified in a number of studies as the main factors behind the economic, social and environmental vulnerability of SIS (Kaly et al., 2002; Ghina, 2003; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000). There is no complete list of inherent SIS characteristics. By reviewing a number of studies examining island societies, their main features were enumerated into: small domestic markets, remoteness and isolation, limited diversification, high income volatility, limited institutional capacity, ecological uniqueness and fragility, rapid population growth and high densities, susceptibility to natural disasters, dependence on external finance, economic openness and inability to influence international prices. The inherent characteristics of SIS and their severe impact on the social, economic and environmental spheres has received the thoughtful attention of important institutions and bodies concerned with sustainable development. The Rio Conference of UNFCCC in 1992 marked the beginning of a new era of discussions on SIS and the special attention required in the process of achieving sustainable

development. Since then, international bodies and institutions have committed to helping them follow sustainable development and especially the area of environmental impact. This can clearly be seen from the commitments and importance given to SIS in different conferences and summits. The main measure discussed and emphasised by the different institutions and bodies is international cooperation and partnerships. In this context, the UN (2014) supports the fact that SIS do not have the resources required in terms of national institutions, technologies, capacity and many more to respond to multiple crises such as environmental destruction. Furthermore, the UN emphasised the lack of national capacity to deal with the issue and the “urgency” to “strengthen cooperation” and for “strong, genuine and durable partnerships at the sub-national, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels”. Armstrong and Read (1995), in their paper “Western European micro-states and EU autonomous regions: the advantages of size and sovereignty” dealt with the economic development of SIS and described island societies as being “handicapped” by their inherent characteristics. As the authors accentuated, the “absorption” of SIS into larger countries may be the only “feasible strategy” for achieving economic development. By reviewing the summits from different meetings of major institutions and bodies, the commonality is the importance placed on international cooperation and partnerships. As is emphasised in the reports, it is believed that through such a process SIS will be able to overcome their obstacles deriving from their inherent characteristics and they will be able to deal with issues such as environmental destruction. The general idea of the international institutions and bodies is that bearing in mind the characteristics of island states that work as obstacles in the institutionalisation of the society and organisations towards environmental responsibility, such international cooperation and partnerships may be regarded as a possible solution.

From the larger group of SIS, there are 16 island states that are in partnership with the EU either in the form of member states or as OCT.

### **3. SOCIAL ACTORS**

As it was stressed in the introduction of this paper social actors are analysed at three levels, partnerships being one of them, (a) transnational through the European Union, (b) societal through domestic society and politics, and (c) the organisational field through industrial sectors, in an attempt to examine the role of social actors in shaping the structure of organisations and ascertain their interaction in diffusing institutional carriers for environmental disclosure. Using Stockinger’s (2006) definition of social actors we refer to “any human...agent such as a group of persons, an individual, an organised group (a company, a union, a party...), who: (a) possesses a common cognitive reference frame (composed, among others, by a common tradition, common knowledge and values, common routine practices, common communication means, ...), (b) requires the possession or acquisition of a specific competence for understanding, accepting and dealing with this common cognitive reference frame and with the actor itself as well as with its members”. In the context of this research, each social actor holds its own “common cognitive reference frame” for environmental disclosure. Each actor has its own beliefs and values concerning what is considered a disciplined approach of firms towards CED, which is expected to be accepted and adopted by the latter. Of course, it is important to stress that this does not mean that the “common cognitive reference frames” among the three social actors should definitely diverge from each other. For this reason it is critical to choose an appropriate approach for identifying the pressures deriving from each social actors and evaluating the level of organisational engagement to CED caused by each pressure.

The reason for paying attention to the social actors is because we cannot assume that institutions exist and flow autonomously. They are created by social actors and dispersed through various carriers. Therefore it is important to ascertain the effectiveness of different actors in shaping organisational structures. Specifically, in the case of island societies, it is critical to assess the role of partnerships in institutionalising organisations’ behaviour towards CED as their purpose is to help SIS to change and adapt to various issues including environmental measures.

### **4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study applies Scott’s framework on institutional carriers to examine which carriers result in the institutionalisation of organisational structures concerning CED and consequently evaluating the role of each social actor. The term “carrier” in the current study refers to the instruments that play an important role in “framing, packaging and circulating” institutional pressures on organisations (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002). In this context, Scott (1995) discussed the importance of examining carriers as they allow us to “account for how ideas move through space and time, who or what is transporting them, and how they may be transformed by their journey”. By exploring institutional carriers we are trying to examine the instruments used by social actors in order to communicate and impose their beliefs and values. According to Scott’s framework (see Table 1 below), there are different types of carriers of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive nature that can impact the engagement of firms towards CED.

Table 1. Different carriers for each institution type

	<b>Regulative</b>	<b>Normative</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>
<b>Symbolic system</b>	Rules, laws	Values Expectations Standards	Categories Typifications Schema Frames
<b>Relational systems</b>	Governance systems Power systems	Regimes Authority systems	Structural isomorphism Identities
<b>Activities</b>	Monitoring Sanctioning Disrupting	Roles, Jobs Routines Habits Repertoires of collective action	Predispositions Scripts
<b>Artefacts</b>	Objects complying with mandated specifications	Objects meetings conventions, standards	Objects processing symbolic value

Note: Adopted from Scott (2013)

The environment in island societies and specifically the existence of partnerships, makes it more important to focus on examining the institutional carriers and social actors diffusing and imposing the latter on organisations instead of investigating isomorphism in organisational approaches towards CED. For this reason the study applies Scott's framework for understanding on how and why some types of institutional carriers are more prominent than others, and how and why certain actors expand organisations' disclosure of environmental information. The research questions of the study are divided into four groups. Each group has a different purpose, however the groups are interrelated and interconnected. In the first group the purpose of the research questions is to grasp an understanding of the meaning of environmental disclosure for organisations:

1. *What is the status of environmental disclosure in island societies?*
2. *How is environmental disclosure interpreted?*

The answers to the above research questions are directly related to the institutional carriers imposed on firms as they construct the meaning given to environmental disclosure and the behaviour of organisations. Therefore the second group of questions focuses on the types of institutional carriers experienced by organisations:

3. *What types of institutional carriers exist that impose pressures on firms to disclose environmental information?*
4. *What are the implications of these carriers for the engagement of companies in environmental disclosure?*

Moving on from the second group of questions, the third group focuses on the actors diffusing and imposing these institutional carriers. Once we have identified the different types of institutional carriers, we can assign them to the three social actors examined through this research.

5. *What is the role of actors in the process of firms' institutionalisation towards environmental disclosure?*
6. *What are the implications of having (i) the European Union, (ii) domestic society and politics, and (iii) industrial sectors, as actors diffusing institutional carriers?*
7. *What are the implications of the interaction among the three actors on the type of institutional carriers and their effectiveness for corporate environmental disclosure?*

The final group of research questions is the culmination of the previous three. It deals with the effectiveness of international cooperation and partnerships among island states and developed countries, which is the main focus of the study. Their effectiveness is a result of the institutions diffused from each carrier and the interaction among them.

8. *What are the implications of international cooperation and partnerships for organisational environmental disclosure?*

By answering all eight questions light can be shed on the main social actors resulting in organisational change and engagement in CED.

## 5. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS– FIRST STAGE

The decision to explore the "putative association" between carriers, social actors and CED in island societies emerged initially from studying the academic literature on environmental disclosure and island societies and then from examining the empirical data collected during the data collection phase. The latter consists of two stages: the first stage was based on (1) analysing the annual reports and separate environmental reports of 119

organisations listed on the Cyprus stock exchange and in quasi-public firms and (2) attending the national conference on Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility in Cyprus, while the second stage was based on analysing semi-structured interviews from three groups of respondents. During the first stage of the data collection process a longitudinal quantitative content analysis was conducted of the organisations' annual reports and separate environmental reports between 2004 and 2010. The dimension used was the location of environmental information and there were two categories: annual reports and separate environmental reports. Organisations were also contacted requesting environmental reports that were not available online.

Table 2. Environmental disclosure dimension and its categories

Dimension:	Location		Location	
	Annual Report		Sep. Environmental Report	
2004	D: 0	ND: 119	D: 0	ND: 119
2005	D: 0	ND: 119	D: 0	ND: 119
2006	D: 0	ND: 119	D: 0	ND: 119
2007	D: 0	ND: 119	D: 0	ND: 119
2008	D: 0	ND: 119	D: 0	ND: 119
2009	D: 7	ND: 112	D: 2	ND: 117
2010	D: 10	ND: 109	D: 2	ND: 117

Note: The letters refer to: D = Disclosing and ND: Not Disclosing. The sample was 119 organisations consisting of private sector firms listed on the Cyprus stock exchange and quasi-public companies.

The table presents the number of organisations disclosing environmental information in their annual reports and separate environmental reports. The reason for choosing to start from the year 2004 was to identify patterns in the number of firms disclosing environmental information since the accession of the island into the EU in 2004. As the data clearly indicate, there is limited disclosure of information in either the annual reports or the separate environmental reports. From 2004 there was no disclosure by the organisations until 2009 when seven companies started disclosing in their annual reports and two firms prepared separate environmental reports. The results indicate that CED was not a major issue for organisations between those periods. Furthermore, the slow increase in the number of firms disclosing environmental information in 2009 and 2010 indicates the start of institutional carriers pressuring organisations to disclose such information. Therefore, it is important to examine the types of carriers that appeared in the last years and the reasons they are not spread among all firms.

Following on from the findings from examining the disclosure of information in the annual reports and separate reports of organisations, the data collection process also included attending the national conference on Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility. Given the lack of information disclosure, the purpose of attending was to gain an understanding of the meaning given to environmental disclosure for organisations. The process involved observation and note taking. From the observation of the presentations of organisations disclosing environmental information, the presentation of the governmental representative and from discussions with organisational representatives who were attending the conference, there was confusion over the meaning given to CED and the factors structuring the latter. On the one hand, the organisations that were already engaged in CED as well as the governmental representative argued the importance of CED and the need for more organisations to get involved with this domain. On the other hand, organisations' representatives remained confused about the purpose and meaning of disclosing such information.

The findings of the first stage of the data collection process underlined the importance of identifying the institutional carriers shaping some of the organisations' behaviour in engaging in CED as well as ascertaining the role of the EU in the increase of environmental disclosure in 2009 and 2010 as found in the first stage of the data analysis process.

## 6. METHODOLOGY

### 6.1 Epistemological position

The purpose of the research supports the research philosophy decision to ground the study on interpretive orientation as the epistemological position. The epistemological orientation of interpretivism is based on understanding social meaning. This approach, according to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010), is based on the assumption that "meaning is constructed via the interaction between humans or between humans and objects". For this reason, examining how people interact in a social context enables light to be shed on the issue being examined. It is grounded on elucidating human interaction in order to understand the meaning. In the context of the current study, the focus is on interpreting organisations' experience with environmental disclosure. The interpretation aims to identify the institutional carriers shaping their approach towards CED and to ascertain the impact of social actors. Both institutional carriers and social actors structure the approach of firms towards

environmental disclosure. It is important to examine organisations' engagement in environmental disclosure and the "story" behind their approach to understanding the meaning environmental disclosure has for them and consequently identifying the institutional carriers.

## **6.2 Data collection method**

The study used semi-structured face-to-face interviews to examine organisations' approach towards CED. The method was considered as the most appropriate for collecting data for a number of reasons. First, the study adopts an interpretive orientation examining people's experiences and meaning. Through interviews, participants have the opportunity to discuss and elaborate their experiences. They are not constrained to specific questions but can express their experience in their own words. Furthermore, the researcher has the opportunity to clarify any misunderstanding as well as moving the discussion onto issues of interest. In this context, an extensive analysis of the views of participants is a fundamental part of the research as the content of their responses will shed light on the institutional carriers and their actors pressuring organisations to disclose environmental information. Therefore, through the interaction between the researcher and the organisational representatives knowledge of the subject of interest will be constructed. Comparing interviews with observations, interviews were considered to be a more appropriate method as the study is not concerned with the working environment of the organisations but interpreting the experience and identifying the manifest and latent meaning of their behaviour. Additionally, interviews provided the opportunity to collect data from a larger sample than observation, which is a more time consuming method. For the study, it was important to collect data from a significant number of organisations in order to identify all the various forms of carriers experienced by firms in various settings.

The study as illustrated through the paper adopts Scott's framework on institutional carriers to examine which carriers result in the institutionalisation of organisational structures concerning CED and consequently evaluating the role of each social actor. With the use of Scott's framework on institutional carriers, there was a group of preset themes that were used as codes for identifying institutional carriers experienced by participants. The use of Scott's framework and the number of preset themes resulted in considering semi-structured interviews as the most appropriate approach for the research. The semi-structured type of interviews enabled us to examine the various types of institutional carriers along with giving the participants the opportunity to express their experiences in their own words and identify similar category nature carriers.

Grounded on neo-institutional theory and Scott's framework, the main themes on which the interview questions were based on were: (1) How participants describe corporate environmental disclosure, (2) How participants are associated with the government in relation to environmental disclosure, (3) How participants view the industry as a whole in terms of CED and (4) How participants are planning to deal with pressures for environmental disclosure.

## **6.3 Groups of respondents**

The second stage of the data collection process was conducted over a period of 12 months due to the difficulty in arranging interviews with managers and CED representatives in each of the three groups of respondents. A total of 30 interviews were conducted from three different groups. The first and main group were the private sector organisations. By interviewing private sector firms we were able to identify the different types of carriers experienced by them that pressured them to disclose environmental information. The second group included firms from the public sector. The reason for conducting interviews with public sector firms was to obtain more information on the role of the EU and domestic society and politics in imposing institutional carriers to private sector firms. Lastly, an interview was conducted with the governmental environment representative whose responsibilities included environmental issues and CED. The latter was able to provide information on both the experience of private and public sector firms as their role enabled them to deal with both groups.

## **6.4 Data analysis method**

The data analysis approach used for examining the data collected, was qualitative content analysis. The process consisted of identifying various types of carriers in the transcripts of participants. In the data analysis process Scott's institutional carriers were used as preset themes for identifying institutional carriers experienced by participants. The existence of carriers would shed light on the role and impact of each social actor. The investigation of the interview transcripts was not strict about identifying specific words used in Scott's analysis, for example "rules", "habits" and "repertoires of collective action", but about finding carriers of each category nature, i.e. carriers of regulative symbolic systems description etc. Additionally, it was important to use the appropriate approach for examining the data collected in order to avoid prejudging the impact of social actors in

shaping organisational behaviour towards CED through various institutional carriers and deriving false conclusions. For this reason, the study conducted a content analysis of the interviews by applying a bottom-up approach. Under the bottom-up approach application in the current study, the starting and ending point of the analysis process was the organisations. This means that the investigation started by initially examining private sector organisations to identify institutional carriers and ended by examining again the private sector organisations to ascertain the impact of each social actor in shaping their approach towards CED. Specifically, in the first stage the interviews with private sector organisations were examined to identify different types of institutional carriers along with the interviews of public sector firms and the governmental representative whose purpose was to enrich the analysis process of finding institutional carriers. Once the institutional carriers had been identified, the second stage dealt with assigning them to each social actor. The third and last stage of the process was to examine the pathway of institutional carriers to ascertain the role of actors in engaging organisations in CED.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the research presented here was to develop a conceptual framework and review relevant literature on island societies and institutions. The research has provided a background of SIS and their partnerships with large developed countries. Furthermore, Scott's framework on institutional carriers was addressed as a main theory that shed light on the types of pressures experienced by organisations for ascertaining the role of social actors. Lastly, the methodology section addressed the three groups of respondents, data collection and analysis procedures, while the first stage of the data collection process presented the findings from conducting a quantitative content analysis on the annual reports and separate environmental reports of 119 organisations listed on CSE. The second part of this research that will follow will present the data analysis procedure for identifying and assigning institutional carriers to social actors, evaluating the role of the latter in institutionalising organisations' approach towards CED and ascertaining the interaction among the three social actors in imposing institutional carriers. The findings provide important information on the role of social actors and specifically partnerships in helping states such as SIS to overcome their inherent obstacles and adjust to current requirements.

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