

**Corporate Social Innovation and the Social  
Innovation Ecosystem: Comparative Case  
Studies of the Interaction between  
Government and Firms in Thailand,  
Malaysia, and Singapore**

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Signed: Tongrutai Srinual

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## ABSTRACT

Rising social problems have increased demands for social innovation (SI) as an innovative solution. A key development in theory and practice is acknowledging that business constitutes a key source of SI, leading to a growing study of corporate social innovation (CSI). In Southeast Asian countries, the importance of CSI has been increasingly recognised. However, the understanding of CSI in this region is limited, particularly regarding the interaction between firms implementing CSI and the government.

This thesis aims to explore how Southeast Asian governments interact with firms implementing CSI under different country contexts, focusing on the characteristics and mechanisms of the interactions. The thesis also seeks to scrutinise the understanding of CSI in practice. It employs a comparative case study approach, with Thailand as the primary case, compared with two neighbouring countries: Malaysia and Singapore. Through semi-structured interviews with participants from 29 CSI projects, eight government agencies and six organisations across the three countries, complemented by secondary data from relevant sources, the study reveals specific characteristics and dimensions of the interactions between the government and firms.

Thailand and Malaysia, which have similar country contexts, display purposive and reciprocal-based interaction. The findings also highlight the prevalence of informal interaction through interpersonal relationships between the government and firms. Singapore, in contrast, demonstrates supportive and responsive-based interaction, and the formal interaction through official channels is notable. Further, the findings reveal key barriers to interactions and CSI, including problematic bureaucratic procedures, the failure of top-down approaches, intergovernmental coordination issues, government inaction, constraints on grant funding, firm operational issues, and awareness of social problems. The insights derived from this thesis have valuable implications for enhancing policies related to SI-oriented businesses and entrepreneurs and for advancing the understanding of CSI and relevant theories.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCG	Bio-Circular-Green Economy
CSI	Corporate Social Innovation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SI	Social Innovation
UK	the United Kingdom
US/USA	the United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
VoC	Varieties of Capitalism

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## *1.1 Research Background*

Social problems have triggered concerns among individuals and organisations and increased demands for efficient solutions. As a result, social innovation (SI) has gained considerable attention from scholars and policymakers as it is a novel solution to social problems and needs (Phills et al., 2008) and is a driver of social change (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). Since some social problems, particularly wicked problems, are complex, take time to solve, and require significant resources to alleviate (Nicholls et al., 2015, Remøe, 2015), collaboration between actors is required to create SI. As SI involves actors, their interactions, and local surrounding environments (Björk et al., 2014; Carayannis et al., 2021; Domanski and Kaletka, 2017; Shaw and de Bruin, 2013), it leads to the study of SI in the notion of an SI ecosystem encompassing varieties of interdependent actors across sectors and other elements involving SI creation (Domanski and Kaletka, 2017).

As firms are one of the key SI actors in the SI ecosystem (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012, Carayannis et al., 2021), it brings about a new strand of study using the term ‘corporate social innovation’ (CSI) (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020), which has gained popularity among scholars and policymakers in recent years. Despite having a basis in SI, it represents an innovative solution aiming to solve social challenges but also achieve business objectives and deliver both social and economic value (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019). CSI is also integrated into firm’s core strategies and involves engaging stakeholders both within and outside the organisation (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Tabares, 2020; Mirvis et al., 2016; Domanski and Kaletka, 2017). While CSI is often discussed in connection with corporate social responsibility (CSR), it is important to note that CSI is distinct from CSR and should not be considered a substitute for it (Carberry et al., 2017).

Similar to SI, CSI is intertwined with the surrounding environments of a specific country. These environments are shaped by various political and economic systems, particularly as defined under the varieties of capitalism (VoC). The VoC, which reflects a country's political economy (Hall and Soskice, 2001), plays a crucial role in influencing not only the political and economic conditions of that country but also its institutional, resource, and social environments (Jackson and Deeg, 2006; Whitley, 1999; Borges et al., 2020).

The importance of CSI is highlighted in Asian countries where firms are a primary vehicle for SI (Nee, 2018), and the government in some Asian countries significantly involves CSI (Chin et al., 2019). Addressing social issues often requires substantial resources and time (Remøe, 2015), which can be a challenge for the government as it strives to effectively provide SI to society. Therefore, governments often encourage businesses to take on the responsibility of CSI on their behalf.

Despite its significance, there is a lack of research on the interaction between firms engaged in CSI and the government. Furthermore, the understanding of SI in Asian countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, is relatively limited compared to Western contexts. Additionally, the existing literature on CSI does not adequately explore the systemic conditions that motivate, enable, and hinder firms in their involvement in CSI.

## ***1.2 Research Aims and Objectives***

To address research gaps, this research aims to understand CSI in the context of Southeast Asian countries, which is different from CSI in Western country contexts. This thesis seeks to clarify the interaction between actors in the SI ecosystem of a particular country, focusing on firm and government interaction. This thesis also aims to understand CSI in practice, which helps extend the theoretical knowledge about CSI. The research objectives are outlined as follows.

1. To investigate characteristics of the interaction between firms and the government in CSI.

2. To explore interaction mechanisms and the influence of country contexts.
3. To examine barriers to CSI triggered by framework conditions and actors in the SI ecosystem.
4. To scrutinise the characteristics and contributions of CSI.

### ***1.3 Research Questions***

Research questions in this thesis are developed concerning *how the government interacts with firms undertaking CSI in a particular country*. The following research questions are proposed.

1. What are the characteristics of interaction that firms establish with the government?
  - 1.1 What are the purposes of the interaction, and when did the government involve CSI projects?
  - 1.2 What are the barriers to interaction between firms and government?
2. What are the mechanisms of the interaction?
  - 2.1 How does the government involve CSI projects?
  - 2.2 How do contextual elements influence the interaction?
  - 2.3 What are the impacts of government involvement on firm strategies and activities regarding CSI?

As it is established that CSI is influenced by the context in which it occurs. Various contextual factors influence the application of CSI in practice. Thus, this thesis also concerns the difference between CSI in theory and practice. Another main research question, thus, is proposed as follows:

3. How is CSI understood in practice?
  - 3.1 What are firm's motivations for initiating CSI?
  - 3.2 How is CSI in practice different from the theoretical view?
  - 3.3 What is the contribution of CSI?

## ***1.4 Scope of the Thesis***

This thesis focuses on the interaction between the government and firms that implement CSI, which is influenced by the country's surrounding environments. The scope of the study covers the contexts of three Southeast Asian countries: Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. The justification for selecting these three countries over others in Southeast Asia is that they present the prominence of economic and innovation performance (Dutta et al., 2022, World Bank, 2023a) and illustrate the dissimilarities of country contexts despite being neighbouring countries. Moreover, it is feasible to collect data due to the availability of data access and diverse samples, particularly from CSI projects and relevant government agencies.

To reveal insight into the interaction between the government and firms and an understanding of CSI in practice, primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with participants involved in CSI projects, government agencies, and other organisations. Meanwhile, the secondary data were mainly collected through online sources. The primary and secondary data were analysed and discussed to enlighten the understanding of CSI, the government-firm interactions, and the contextual factors influencing these interactions, ultimately enhancing relevant theories and concepts.

Concerning three main sampling groups, CSI projects in this thesis were projects or firms implementing SI, addressing social and business objectives, providing social and business outcomes, embedding SI in firms' core strategies, and engaging with external parties outside the firms. Government agencies and other organisations involved in CSI projects played roles related to SI or assisted firms in providing benefits to society. Representatives from CSI projects participating in the interviews had a comprehensive understanding of their projects and firms. Meanwhile, representatives from government agencies and other organisations needed to have experience engaging with CSI projects, and/or be knowledgeable about policies or programs regarding SI/innovation.

## ***1.5 Contribution***

This thesis provides both empirical and theoretical contributions. For the empirical contributions, the thesis presents CSI studies focusing on the interaction between the government and firms implementing CSI that remains unexplored. Further, it sheds light on a comprehensive understanding of CSI within the context of Southeast Asian countries, which is ambiguous and lacks comparative-based evidence. This establishes an important ground for future studies and provides insights for proposing meaningful policies regarding CSI and innovation.

For the theoretical contributions, the thesis extends the *productive interaction* concept (Spaapen and Van Drooge, 2011) by integrating CSI with this concept, proposing new focal actors and output of the interaction, broadening types of productive interaction, and taking account of the contextual conditions as factors impacting the interaction between two actors. Further, the thesis contributes to the *national innovation system model* (Kuhlmann and Arnold, 2001) by highlighting the importance of the interconnection between framework conditions and demands and the interconnection between the demands of different actors. Thirdly, this thesis contributes to the notion of *framework conditions* (Boelman et al., 2014; Bund et al., 2015; Krlev et al., 2014) by demonstrating the linkage between framework conditions and VoC and emphasising the strong dependency of each context in the framework conditions. Lastly, this thesis enriches the existing knowledge of CSI by introducing a framework of CSI ecosystems, focusing on firms as the central actor in implementing CSI, other actors involving the creation and delivery of CSI, and the environments and infrastructures in the ecosystem are interrelated with firms creating CSI, which they developed from the SI ecosystem (Carayannis et al., 2021; Domanski and Kaletka, 2017; Kumari et al., 2019; Pel et al., 2019). Additionally, CSI in practice in terms of meanings, motivations, impacts, and differentiation from CSR are scrutinised.



## ***1.6 Structure of the Thesis***

This thesis consists of seven chapters:

Chapter 1 (Introduction) provides the background for this research and explains the rationale behind it, highlighting gaps in the literature. The research questions proposed in this research are also presented, along with the scope of the study to answer these research questions and the contributions of the thesis.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) comprehensively delineates relevant existing studies and presents a critical review of SI, SI ecosystems, CSI, VoC, framework conditions, and relationships between firms and the government. Additionally, the chapter demonstrates examples of existing CSI projects to give a practical overview of CSI projects in different countries. The research gaps are also identified, and the conceptual framework derived from the literature review is illustrated as a blueprint for the thesis at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 3 (Research Design and Methodology) describes and justifies the research design and methodology adopted in this thesis. It then explains case selection, data collection processes, and data analysis. The last section covers ethical considerations and data management plans.

Chapter 4 (Backgrounds of Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore) presents contextual backgrounds in terms of the three countries' political, economic, business, social, institutional, and resource contexts. These form fundamental understandings of Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore before the subsequent chapter delves into the key findings. Finally, it compares key contextual factors across the three countries that can influence the interaction between the government and firms.

Chapter 5 (Interaction between Firm and Government) outlines key findings encompassing motivations for initiating CSI, characteristics of interactions, types of government interactions and mechanisms, influences of government involvement on CSI projects, and

key challenges to CSI. The chapter also clarifies the practical meaning of CSI and its relevance to the concept of CSR.

Chapter 6 (Discussion) explains and theoretically discusses the findings to answer how the government interacts with firms under different political economies, along with the characteristics of the interactions. It also explains how and why the contributions and understanding of CSI from case studies differ from the literature review. Lastly, related theories and concepts are refined, and the conceptual framework is revised to map CSI ecosystems in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Chapter 7 (Conclusion) summarises the thesis and provides empirical and theoretical contributions. It also suggests policy implications, particularly for the government, followed by the thesis's limitations and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces SI concepts and the SI ecosystem and discusses the notion of CSI in terms of meanings, differentiation between CSI and relevant terms, firms' engagements in CSI, and contributions of CSI to firms and society. Then, the VoC and framework conditions are emphasised as they substantially influence SI, the SI ecosystem, and the relationship between firms and government in CSI. Further, this chapter reviews CSI in practice and key related theories and concepts. All of these elaborate on fundamental understanding and initially shape ideas for constructing research questions and an appropriate framework for the thesis.

### ***2.1 Overview of Social Innovation***

To form an understanding of SI, the definition of SI is first presented. The differentiation between SI and conventional innovation is then discussed.

#### ***2.1.1 Definition of Social Innovation***

Early attempts to understand SI began in the twentieth century when SI was related to organisational change, social change, environmental change and quality of life (Conger, 1974, Drucker, 1987, Mesthene, 1969). These early waves of SI studies became a basis for later studies, especially in the twenty-first century onwards, in which SI is more perceived and developed for specific goals, particularly grand challenges (Choi and Majumdar, 2015, Edwards-Schachter and Wallace, 2017). The meanings of SI in the later waves are understood and emphasised with different focuses regarding, for example, innovativeness, drivers of SI, and outcomes.

Concerning the focus on innovativeness, SI can be new *ideas* (Mumford, 2002), innovative *activities and services* (Mulgan et al., 2007), new *processes* (Westley and Antadze, 2010), new or improved *laws, rules, norms, organisational methods, models, social technology*

and *marketing* (Edwards-Schachter and Wallace, 2017), and a new combination and/or new configuration of social practices (Howaldt et al., 2016b).

For drivers causing SI creation, some authors, such as Moulaert et al. (2017), claimed that SI emerged *to solve institutional voids*, including market and public failures. In some contexts, when the public sector cannot provide public welfare or public goods to citizens and financial incentives are not sufficient for the private sector to diminish these government failures (Nicholls et al., 2015, Pol and Ville, 2009), then third sectors are the main actors offering SI to solve these problems. On the other hand, SI emerges *as a new solution instead of conventional solutions* for wicked problems and global crises, such as climate change (Nicholls et al., 2015).

In terms of outcomes, some SI concepts present *incremental* changes to society. SI concepts in this group often address social needs, particularly needs emerging from market failures, institutional voids, and negative externalities, as well as seek improving products and services to satisfy such needs without radically reshaping current institutional arrangements or power structures (Marques et al., 2017, Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). In contrast, some SI concepts aim to cause *radical* change in power relations and social hierarchies through social movements and political groups or networks (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). Radical SI includes “activities that radically reshape how essential goods and services are delivered to improve welfare and that challenge power relations” (Marques et al., 2017, p.501).

Since the concept of SI has gained popularity among researchers, it has been examined from various perspectives. Consequently, different SI papers provide diverse definitions of SI, and a consensus on what constitutes SI has not yet been reached. Several researchers have employed bibliometric techniques to systematically analyse existing studies on SI, revealing key themes and characteristics associated with it. This bibliometric analysis enhances the understanding of SI and illustrates the evolution of its meanings, which can be valuable for future research in this field.

Van der Have and Rubalcaba (2016), for example, conducted a bibliometric analysis and then categorised extant SI research into four main perspectives: community psychology,

creativity research, social and societal challenges, and local development. The SI studies in community psychology addressed the SI process in terms of creating strategies or models, particularly the Experimental Social Innovation and Dissemination model, to cause social and behavioural change and improve quality of life through the introduction and dissemination of innovative solutions along with eco and natural resource management (Choi and Majumdar, 2015, van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2016). The second cluster was creativity research, in which SI was understood as the creative process and new ideas about social organisation that led to new social relationships. This cluster also illustrated a linkage between intrapreneurship and CSR. The third cluster was social and societal challenges that aimed to create socio-technical regime transitions and specific solutions based on social problems. The last cluster was a local development, in which SI aimed to satisfy people's needs through the empowerment or change in relationships between local civil communities and governing bodies that lead to social cohesion and change (van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2016).

Considering key strands of SI research can give a broad view of SI research; however, it neglects key characteristics important for comprehending SI. As a consequence, some authors, such as Moulaert et al. (2005), Pol and Ville (2009), Edwards-Schachter and Wallace (2017) categorised key characteristics of SI embedded in the existing literature with the bibliometric analysis presented in Table 1, leading to more precision about SI concepts. The primary aims of SI were to address social problems, create social values, and satisfy unmet social and public needs. Some scholars, such as Moulaert and Ailenei (2005), Pol and Ville (2009), and Nicholls and Murdock (2012), underlined that social problems have not been solved due to government failures; meanwhile, the private sector has not obtained worthwhile financial returns or incentives to devote their resources to seeking innovative solutions for such problems. Therefore, third-sector or non-government organisations have compensated for government and private sector failure to solve social problems by creating SI (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012).

Table 1: SI Characteristics

<b>Key characteristics of SI</b>	
<b>Aims and value generation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Oriented to social aims and social values, meet social goals</li> <li>- Addressing unmet social needs and complex social problems</li> <li>- Satisfaction of people’s currently unsatisfied needs, fulfilment of needs ignored by the market</li> <li>- Improvement of economic growth</li> <li>- CSR and CSI</li> </ul>
<b>Sources, actors and interrelationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civil society, the third sector, NGO, social and grass-root movements</li> <li>- Firms, businesses, corporations and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)</li> <li>- Social entrepreneurship and social economy or entrepreneurship</li> <li>- Cross-sector between government, business and civil society</li> <li>- User participation, co-creation, (user) community participation</li> <li>- Processes, learning dynamics processes and collective creativity</li> <li>- Changes in territorial development models</li> <li>- Design and design thinking</li> <li>- Resources and costs</li> </ul>
<b>Output/outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New combinations or configurations of social practices</li> <li>- Social inventions, new laws, norms and/or rules</li> <li>- New or improved products and new services</li> <li>- New organisational methods and models</li> <li>- New technology and information and communication technology (ICT) development</li> <li>- Innovation in marketing</li> </ul>
<b>Change in institution and power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes in social relations</li> <li>- Institutional change</li> <li>- Cultural change</li> <li>- Empowerment and increases of socio-political capability and access to resources to satisfy needs</li> </ul>
<b>Evolving complex macro-systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social change, change in social systems and socio-technical change</li> <li>- Relate to sustainable development</li> <li>- Oriented to sustainability and changes in patterns of production and consumerism</li> <li>- Radical innovation and radical changes</li> <li>- Social market failures and social demands</li> <li>- Reorganisation of work</li> </ul>

Source: Moulaert et al. (2005), Pol and Ville (2009), Edwards-Schachter and Wallace (2017)

SI is seen as a way to achieve sustainable economic growth (Urama and Acheampong, 2013). However, economic growth is not the primary objective of SI. Instead, economic growth is a by-product of SI, as SI can help address social issues, such as climate change,

which in turn impede economic growth (Urama and Acheampong, 2013). CSR and CSI are relevant concepts rather than the primary aims of SI.

Various actors are involved in creating SI, such as the government, private sectors, social entrepreneurs, third sectors, civil society, community, and citizens. These actors can form interrelationships to co-create SI (Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010). However, the learning process and design thinking can be alternative approaches to support SI rather than core elements (Brown and Wyatt, 2010); therefore, they are not considered key characteristics of SI. In contrast, empowerment involves access to resources and socio-political capability (Moulaert et al., 2005), and resources are critical for actors to generate SI because actors can consider resources one of the inputs for producing SI, and empowerment is a mechanism for achieving and utilising these resources.

Outcomes/outputs of SI that are widely recognised in most SI literature include new or improved products, services, processes, methods, laws, rules, norms, and social practices. The degree of novelty in innovation can vary, being new to the firm, the market, or even the world (OECD and Eurostat, 2005). Additionally, innovation can be categorised into two types: incremental innovation, which involves "doing better what we already do," and radical innovation, which entails "doing what we did not do before" (Norman and Verganti, 2014, p.82). However, the likelihood of achieving new to the world or radical innovation is relatively low. Thus, the novelty of SI can also be considered new to the actors involved in developing it or to the beneficiaries, and it can be 'significantly' improved. While new technology is often regarded as a form of SI output, some outputs, such as methods, laws, and norms, are not technology-based. Therefore, SI outputs should encompass both technological and non-technological aspects.

Once SI is generated and implemented, it aims to meet social needs and address social problems, leading to changes in social, institutional, and cultural dimensions (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). As people and communities are beneficiaries of SI, SI can reshape their attitudes and behaviours; meanwhile, creating SI can lead to a new form of social relationship through the collaboration of actors (Bock, 2012). Therefore, long-term of SI is suggested as social change (including social relation change), institutional change,

cultural change, behavioural change and attitude change. Since SI can enhance the quality of life, alleviate social problems, and promote sustainability within society, it can be claimed that social sustainability is also an outcome of SI. Further, SI is 'locally situated and targeted' (Shaw and de Bruin, 2013) because it is often driven by social problems and needs in specific areas and provides benefits to beneficiaries living in such particular areas.

Therefore, SI generally encompasses four key elements: social objectives, innovativeness, actors and their interactions, and outputs/outcomes (Gok et al., 2023). The process begins with actors motivated by social aims to address various social needs and challenges, leading to the creation or co-creation of SI. These actors utilise resources for SI development, supported by networks, empowerment, and organisational management. Subsequently, outputs of SI in terms of new or significantly improved products, services, and methods provide value to society by addressing social problems and fulfilling social needs. This can result in social, institutional, cultural, and behavioural changes in the long term.

Although SI can be defined in many ways, the concept of SI in this thesis suggests that

1. SI addresses social challenges and primarily aims to create social values and satisfy unmet social needs.
2. SI can be non-technological and technological innovations such as products, services, processes, methods, laws, rules, norms, and social practices that are significantly improved or new to beneficiaries.
3. SI can lead to social, institutional, cultural, and behavioural/attitude changes in the long term.
4. SI involves many actors, such as the private sector, government, academia, civil society, and third sectors in formal and informal forms. To co-create SI requires collaboration among actors along with empowerment and distribution of resources.

This SI concept helps distinguish SI from conventional innovation and is a basis for developing the concept of CSI, which is explained in later sub-sections.



### ***2.1.2 Social Innovation vs Conventional Innovation***

Innovation is a ubiquitous term. Schumpeter explained innovation as “a new combination of new or existing knowledge, resources, equipment, and other factors” (Schumpeter cited in Fagerberg, 2009, p.1). Although the definition of innovation can be generated based on multidisciplinary fields (Baregheh et al., 2009), innovation commonly involves “a degree of newness of a change and a degree of usefulness or success in the application of something new” (Granstrand and Holgersson, 2020, p.2). The term ‘innovation’ has also become a root for popular terms like SI and business innovation.

Table 2 compares common differences between SI and business innovation in terms of aims, outcomes, funds, partners, resources, and customers. Conventional innovation, or so-called business innovation, is originated by businesses, and profit-making is its core element. Conventional innovation generally aims to maximise firms’ profits or improve business performance and can be diffused to other profit-seeking organisations (Mulgan, 2006).

Though business innovation is sometimes motivated by customer or social needs, it is not necessary to solve social problems (Pol and Ville, 2009). Conventional innovation can include technological innovation and organisational innovation, as purposes of technological innovation and organisational innovation seek profits and commercial success (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014, Pol and Ville, 2009). Although conventional innovation sometimes involves open innovation, it still protects firms’ innovations through intellectual property rights (Howaldt et al., 2017, Pol and Ville, 2009). The main sources of funds for conventional innovation are private funding and public funding support (Howaldt et al., 2017, Pol and Ville, 2009).

Table 2: Comparisons of Conventional Innovation and Social Innovation

	<b>Conventional Innovation</b>	<b>Social Innovation</b>
<b>Aims/drivers</b>	Maximise business profit, technology-driven, customer demand-driven.	Societal challenge and (local) social demand-driven, technological development to solve a problem, institutional failures, unsatisfactory existing solutions.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Economic value-based innovation, value is captured by a limited number of persons, improves business performance.	Social value-based innovation causes social, institutional, cultural and behavioural change.
<b>Fund</b>	Private funding, public funding support	Public funding
<b>Leading actor</b>	Private sector	Third sector and civil society
<b>Partners, resources, and collaboration</b>	A limited number of partners, proprietary, competition but also involving crowdsourcing and open innovation.	Cooperation among various actors, co-creation, and exchange of resources particularly knowledge.
<b>Target group</b>	Buying customers	Beneficiaries

Source: Adapted from Howaldt et al. (2017)

SI, in contrast, primarily focuses on providing social values rather than economic profits. It also explicitly highlights social needs and solutions for social problems (Bhatt and Ahmad, 2017, Slimane and Lamine, 2017, João-Roland and Granados, 2020). SI is viewed as a solution for social problems that the public and private sectors cannot solve (Nicholls et al., 2015). Civil society is often the main actor involved in SI initiatives (Butzin and Terstriep, 2018).

Further, SI arises because existing models and social relations have failed to respond to wicked problems, such as climate change, inequality, and rising healthcare costs (Nicholls et al., 2015). SI outputs are not only social solutions but can also bring about social, institutional, cultural, and behavioural change in the long term.

SI involves various actor engagements to co-produce SI and exchange resources, particularly knowledge. The main sources of funds for SI are public funding (Howaldt et al., 2017), such as government funds and donations from individuals and the private sector. Further, relevant SI stakeholders' relationships are more inclusive than business innovation, which sometimes exhibits rival relations (Marques et al., 2017).

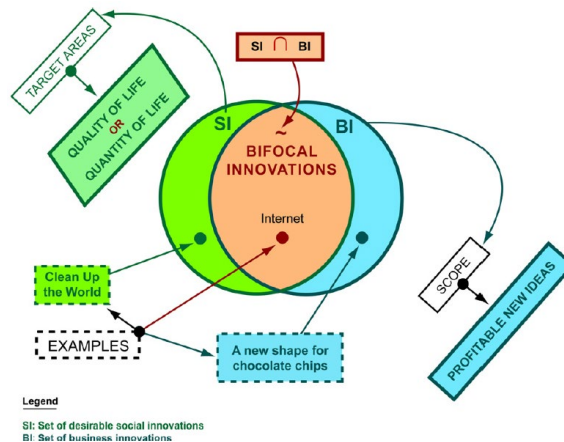
Interestingly, SI has more difficulties with diffusion. Generally, the adoption and diffusion of innovation are influenced by customer's perception of such innovation as superior to existing ones, such as the compatibility of such innovations with the customer's behaviour, norms and lifestyle, ease of understanding and use of such innovation, a trialable degree of innovation, and ease of observing the innovation (Rogers, 2010).

Unlike conventional innovation, where diffusion depends on the customer perception (of relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability) and the business perception towards profits gained by selling such innovation, SI confronts difficulties beyond customer, individual, and organisational levels. Since SI aims for social change, SI that alters social systems and structures is viewed as risky and is refused by government and philanthropic organisations to support it (Chalmers, 2013). Further, SI requires more cooperation across sectors and shifts from serving niche to mainstream (Lettice and Parekh, 2010).

Although conventional innovation and SI are different, they still overlap in some respects. In addition to innovativeness, which is a core element in both conventional innovation and SI, Pol and Ville (2009) suggested that some innovation could be both SI and conventional innovation with a business purpose, or so-called "bifocal innovation" (see Figure 1). The bifocal innovation was profitable and could improve people's quality of life. An example of bifocal innovation was the internet, which "provided new business opportunities to many people and has changed the way we communicate with our friends and family" (Pol and Ville, 2009, p.2).

Although the bifocal innovation seems to be a new term, it is used only in Pol and Ville's (2009) research and the bifocal is not a brand-new concept. Considering SI and profitability often occurs in profit-oriented firms when they would like to engage in SI but still earn revenue. Therefore, the bifocal innovation is relevant to the concept of CSI and explains innovations that can solve social problems, improve people's well-being and benefit businesses through creating revenue, new customer segments, and new markets, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 1: Relationship between SI and Business Innovation



Source: Pol and Ville (2009)

## 2.2 Social Innovation Ecosystem

As mentioned in Section 2.1, SI involves individuals, organisations and their interactions and contributes and relates to surrounding contexts and society (Björk et al., 2014, Carayannis et al., 2021, Domanski and Kaletka, 2017, Shaw and de Bruin, 2013), it is necessary to understand the ecosystem in which SI is embedded, including the main SI actors and their interactions. Section 2.2, therefore, starts with the discussion and justification for adopting the ecosystem approach to help articulate and investigate the interrelationship between SI actors, surrounding contexts and elements, and the interaction between SI actors. This is followed by discussions about the typologies of SI actors, and an overview of the interactions of these interdependent actors.

### 2.2.1 System and Ecosystem of Innovation and SI

The connection between actors involved in innovation, SI and their interactions can be explained through either the system or ecosystem approaches. This sub-section discusses these two approaches and justifies the more appropriate choice for this thesis.

### ***2.2.1.1 Innovation System***

The system approach has been widely used in numerous innovation studies for decades. A *system* comprises components (such as actors and artefacts), relationships among components, and attributes of components and relationships (Carlsson et al., 2002). An *innovation system* indicates interacting components/agents and their relationships in generation, adjustment and diffusion of innovation (Bassis and Armellini, 2018). The concept of the innovation system has been adapted in numerous ways, with the most common variations based on national, regional, and sectoral spatial scopes.

#### ***I. National Innovation System (National IS)***

The definition of National IS has been elaborated by several researchers. For example, “the network of institutions in the public and private sectors whose activities and interactions initiate, import, modify and diffuse new technologies” (Freeman, 1987 cited in Hekkert et al., 2007, p.415), or “the elements and relationships which interact in the production, diffusion and use of new, and economically useful knowledge... and are either located within or rooted inside the borders of a nation state” (Lundvall, 1992 cited in Bassis and Armellini, 2018, p.7), which emphasises the relationship element.

Despite various definitions, this thesis considers existing National IS definitions in a broad view and a narrow view. In the broad definition, National IS encompass agents and relationships in innovation generation along with diffusion and exploitation. In contrast, National IS, in a narrow view, concentrates only on institutions creating innovation (Chung, 2002).

Studies about National IS often lie in two main strands corresponding with broad and narrow meanings; one focuses on institutions in National IS, while another emphasises knowledge and learning processes in National IS (Godin, 2009). Institutions in National IS frequently indicated in existing literature are government, for example, private organisations, public organisations, and

universities. However, National IS, in a broader sense, can include other economic, political and social institutions involving knowledge and learning activities as institutions in National IS (Feinson, 2003, Wirkierman et al., 2018). Therefore, no rule of thumb about institution classification exists.

## ***II. Regional Innovation System (Regional IS)***

Regional IS is “a set of networks between public and private agents” with interactions and mutual feedback, and these agents use their infrastructures to adapt, generate and extend knowledge and innovation (Lau and Lo, 2015, p.100). In contrast to National IS, which focuses on the national level, Regional IS addresses regional clusters and networks that construct knowledge exploitation sub-systems and regional knowledge infrastructure. Regional IS is considered a sub-system of National IS (Fulgencio and Fever, 2016).

## ***III. Sectoral Innovation System (Sectoral IS)***

Sectoral IS is “a set of new and established products for specific uses and the set of agents carrying out market and non-market interactions for the creation, production and sale of those products” (Malerba, 2002, p.248). In other words, Sectoral IS focuses on particular sectors, such as specific industries or sectors’ technologies (Carlsson et al., 2002). Moreover, Regional IS can sometimes establish its Sectoral IS (Lau and Lo, 2015).

### ***2.2.1.2 Innovation Ecosystem***

Although the innovation system approach mentioned above in Section 2.2.1.1 can illustrate institutions/agents and their connections, it presents a static view and does not address the interaction between actors and their connections to related resources. To unlock the limitations of the innovation system, the *innovation ecosystem* is then carried out (Smorodinskaya et al., 2017).

The *ecosystem* commonly illustrates the ecological circulation of materials and energy, competition for resources, and substitution of new resources. Then, when shifting to the innovation perspective, the *innovation ecosystem* is “the evolving set of actors, activities, and artefacts, and the institutions and relations, including complementary and substitute relations, that are important for the innovative performance of an actor or a population of actors”. These artefacts consist of “products, services, tangible and intangible resources, technological and non-technological resources, and other types of system inputs and outputs, including innovations” (Granstrand and Holgersson, 2020, p.3).

The innovation ecosystem is recognised as a new generation of the innovation system (Smorodinskaya et al., 2017). Compared to the innovation system, the innovation ecosystem can exhibit complex interactions between actors, especially their collaborations to co-create innovation (Smorodinskaya et al., 2017). However, the typology of the innovation ecosystem is more varied than the innovation system types. Researchers can adopt the ecosystem approach to generate new types depending on, such as spatial context, innovation category, types of innovators, and other criteria. Examples of innovation ecosystems frequently used in research are corporate innovation ecosystems, regional and national innovation ecosystems, and digital innovation ecosystems (Oh et al., 2016).

It should be noted that the innovation ecosystem is not the business ecosystem, even though it is often adapted in the business context (Ritala and Almpanopoulou, 2017). The business ecosystem commonly consists of, for example, customers, suppliers, stakeholders, networks, resources, products and services (Peltoniemi and Vuori, 2004). Although components of the business ecosystem are similar to the innovation system, the business ecosystem mainly focuses on value capture while the innovation ecosystem aims for value creation (de Vasconcelos Gomes et al., 2018).

### ***2.2.1.3 System vs Ecosystem of Innovation***

According to the system approach and ecosystem approach discussed above, it can be seen that these two approaches have distinct key features, and the innovation ecosystem can

eliminate weaknesses of the system of innovation (see Table 3). Despite being a static view, the innovation system is a straightforward approach and can emphasise key specific institutions along with their roles related to the innovation process and learning process. However, the innovation system fails to illustrate interactions between institutions, even though it presents connections between them. Furthermore, institutions in the innovation system are ambiguous since no specific rules identify what should be classified as institutions, what institutions should be included in the innovation system, and whether these institutions are appropriate and sufficient (Bathelt and Henn, 2017, Edquist, 1997).

Although the innovation ecosystem is more dynamic and addresses complex interactions between actors, it is argued that this approach is new compared to the system approach, which is a less rigorous construct and perhaps exhibits unsubstantiated complex system behaviour (Oh et al., 2016). However, growing numbers of studies embrace and use the ecosystem approach. This is due to its strengths in emphasising and illustrating a systemic group of interconnected organisations and actors, and interactions between interdependent actors and local environments (Brown et al., 2023, Fredin and Lidén, 2020). For some studies regarding the entrepreneurial ecosystem, not only the interconnection, interdependency and interaction of actors, environments and other elements are addressed within the ecosystem sphere but also shared understanding between diverse actors (Wurth and Mawson, 2024). This demonstrates the strength of the ecosystem approach in showcasing the interactive and collective actions at both individual and group levels, an area where the system approach often falls short.

*Table 3: Comparisons of Innovation System and Innovation Ecosystem*

	<i><b>Innovation System</b></i>	<i><b>Innovation Ecosystem</b></i>
<b>Actor or element and relationship</b>	Set of institutions, connections between institutions	Set of actors, institutions, connections and interactions between actors
<b>Example</b>	National, regional and sectoral innovation ecosystem	Corporate, national, and regional digital innovation ecosystems
<b>Strength</b>	Emphasises specific institutions and innovation and learning processes	Highlight interactions between actors and resources, dynamic view
<b>Weakness</b>	Ambiguous definition and numbers of institutions, lack of presenting complex interaction, static view	Less rigorous construct

Source: Author's elaboration



#### ***2.2.1.4 Social Innovation Systems***

The SI system is similar to the innovation system's concepts, but the core idea has shifted away from conventional innovation to SI. An example of SI system concepts delineated by Fulgencio and Fever (2016, p.12) is "an inter-connection of things or actors in developing, diffusing, and utilising innovation targeting social issues or needs". Although the innovation system approach is useful in innovation literature, it is found that the concept of SI system is implemented in a small number of SI literature. This is because SI often requires collaborative actions between interdependent actors. However, the system approach exhibits actors and their connections, while lacking emphasis on complex interactions between these actors.

#### ***2.2.1.5 Social Innovation Ecosystem***

To eliminate the weakness of the system approach in demonstrating interactions between actors, which is a core component of SI, a SI ecosystem is introduced, which is more favourable for several researchers. The SI ecosystem is composed of a set of actors from different societal sectors along with their environments with legal and cultural norms, supportive infrastructures, and many other elements (Domanski and Kaletka, 2017).

The SI ecosystem is dynamic, where multiple actors in the SI ecosystem co-produce SI and other components, such as policies, and construct supportive environments and cultures which are essential for SI initiation and development (Kumari et al., 2019, Pel et al., 2019, Carayannis et al., 2021). The ecosystem approach highlights not only correlation and interaction in the specific ecosystem but also with other relevant ecosystems (Fraiberg, 2017). This corresponds with SI, which sometimes involves, for example, international collaboration in that actors in an ecosystem in a country form an international effort with actors in another ecosystem in another country to generate SI.

Considering relationships between actors, it can be argued that, in the SI ecosystem, cooperative relations dominate the competitive relations, although relationships suggested in the (business) innovation ecosystem would involve both competition and collaboration.

For business innovation, innovation producers compete for competitive advantage and returns against other competitors. On the other hand, SI producers do not aim to compete for financial profit. Moreover, solving social problems is complex and needs collaborative support across sectors. Therefore, the cooperative relationship favours actors in the SI ecosystem, as it helps “create value that no single actor could have created alone” (Adner, 2006, p.98).

Looking at the nature of SI, it entails interdependent actors and their interactions, requires collaborations of various actors and numerous resources devoted throughout the SI process, and is intertwined with locally surrounding environments (Björk et al., 2014, Carayannis et al., 2021, Domanski and Kaletka, 2017, Remøe, 2015, Shaw and de Bruin, 2013). Therefore, explaining SI through a holistic view requires an approach that can illustrate SI as a dynamic system with the interconnection between interdependent actors and environments along with complex relationships between actors.

The system approach can show a group of key actors and links between them, but neglects how they interact with each other. Additionally, it lacks presenting the interconnectedness of actors and surrounding contexts. On the other hand, the ecosystem approach is advantageous in emphasising a systemic group of interconnected actors, local environments, and related elements (Brown et al., 2023). Moreover, it addresses the interactions between interdependent actors and shared understandings between actors (Wurth and Mawson, 2024).

Therefore, the ecosystem approach is more robust and best fits the nature of SI, leading to the implementation of the SI ecosystem hereinafter in this thesis. The SI ecosystem in this thesis can help explain SI in a systemic view in which interdependent actors interact with each other, collectively involved in producing SI, share understandings and goals regarding SI, are embedded and shaped by surrounding local environments, and contribute to those environments and society.

To better understand the SI ecosystem, Section 2.2.2 investigates key interdependent actors and follows them with interactions in Section 2.2.3. Furthermore, Sections 2.4 and

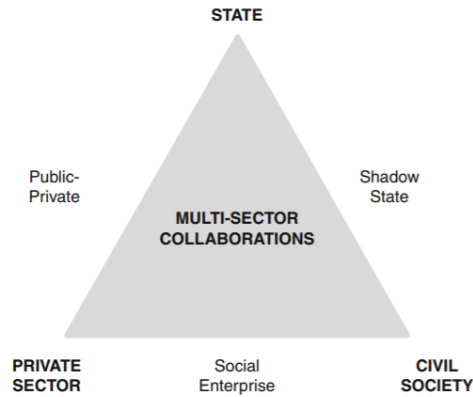
2.5 explain surrounding environments interconnected with interdependent actors and their interactions.

### ***2.2.2 Types of Actors in SI Ecosystem***

Interdependent actors are core elements of the SI ecosystem as they are SI creators. The types of actors in the SI ecosystem can be elaborated in many ways. Some scholars classify actors based on their roles in the SI ecosystem. For example, Björk et al. (2014) distinguished actors into three groups: actors driving the supply of SI, actors driving demand for SI, and actors being brokers between two previous actors. On the other hand, Terstriep et al. (2020) considered actors to be four groups: developers, promoters, supporters and knowledge providers. It can be seen that the typology based on actor roles is sometimes ambiguous and variously specified by scholars.

To delve deeper than the actor's role aspect, another group of researchers have utilised either triple helix or quadruple helix models as a framework to classify types of actors in the SI ecosystem. The triple helix model illustrates three helices: academia, industry and government, intertwining to create innovation (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000). However, some authors, such as Nicholls and Murdock (2012), considered civil society as one of three helices: the private sector, public sector (state), and civil society were claimed as the main SI creators. These three actors had different strategic focuses: the private sector aiming for financial value creation, the public sector focusing on public service, and civil society focusing on social value creation. Moreover, these three actors could combine with another actor to establish hybrid forms, such as social enterprise, public-private partnerships, and shadow state (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Social Innovation Triad



Source: Nicholls et al. (2015)

Indeed, both academia and civil society have significant roles in SI. However, the triple helix model limits researchers from selecting academia or civil society as the third key actor. Therefore, the quadruple helix framework is developed to extend the triple helix framework's boundary by adding academia and civil society, resulting in a better explanation regarding the SI ecosystem (Lindberg et al., 2012, Bellandi et al., 2021). In the quadruple helix model, government, industry, academia, and civil society are commonly considered the main actors in the SI ecosystem. The roles and focuses of each actor concerning SI are described below.

### ***2.2.2.1 Academia***

Academia can refer to universities or higher education systems (Carayannis et al., 2021). Academia is a knowledge-based site with interdisciplinary knowledge, research, and knowledge transfer activities (McKelvey and Zaring, 2018, Bellandi et al., 2021). Knowledge is central to innovation (Leber et al., 2015) and is critical for SI, as it can motivate and develop new ideas (Mulgan, 2006). Therefore, academia is essential in tackling complex social problems through participation in idea generation, prototype, production, and launch (Nowotny et al., 2003, Benneworth and Cunha, 2015).

Academia engages with other actors, promotes the connections between actors, and encourages the SI transition in society. It involves co-producing SI, bridging knowledge gaps, and connecting small groups of businesses, academia, and government agencies. It also increases awareness of society as a whole, leading to scaling up SI (Arocena and Sutz, 2021).

### ***2.2.2.2 Government***

Government can refer to a state or political system (Carayannis et al., 2021). Governments commonly have dominant roles in providing welfare to their citizens. This includes offering public goods and eliminating challenges affecting national and public well-being, poverty, and security. However, governments sometimes fail to provide welfare due to budget constraints and rising welfare costs (Nicholls et al., 2015) and rarely act as independent actors that solely alleviate social problems or develop SI alone.

The roles of the government in the SI ecosystem are often seen to date as supportive roles, such as enacting policies, regulations, initiatives, schemes, networks, and funds that influence SI in direct and indirect ways. Government policies can impact on SI activities and projects initiated by communities and other actors, or the so-called top-down effect; meanwhile, some SI activities and projects conversely present bottom-up direction that they can lead to new regulations and support mechanisms established by governments (Ludvig et al., 2021). The policy impact directions that go forward and backward finally result in institutional change (Ludvig et al., 2021). SI initiatives and activities can form a new regulation and policy design, while this regulative change can promote the creation of SI activities and new institutions directly involving SI.

In institution-void countries, however, governments sometimes struggle to support SI projects (Mair and Marti, 2009). Governments in these countries either pay less attention to SI as it is something new or are interested in SI but lack funding to advocate SI projects and currently lack appropriate supportive regulations for SI.

The government sometimes are a facilitator of SI but can also monitor SI, identify risks, warn, control access to SI projects, and take advantage of SI projects (Borrás and Edler, 2020). These government actions depend on the dominance of government and political regimes. However, SI growth can be affected if the government has vast power to control actors' access to SI projects.

Interestingly, suppose governments cannot provide SI by themselves; in that case, some governments in non-market economies, such as China, encourage private sectors to provide SI to society and participate in strategic partnerships across actors to co-create SI (Chin et al., 2019). Conversely, in a country where the government allows civil society the freedom to make, for example, social movements, civil society becomes the SI creator (Gerometta et al., 2005), substituting for the government.

### ***2.2.2.3 Civil Society***

Civil society is a “media-based and culture-based public” that collaborates to find social problem solutions and can be “NGOs, citizen initiatives, platforms or technologies that enable the exchange of ideas and open data” (Carayannis et al., 2021, p.244). On the other hand, civil society in SI literature is frequently referred to as citizens and community (Nordberg et al., 2020, O’Connell, 2000).

Civil society is frequently recognised as a source of SI (Butzin and Terstriep, 2018), as it encompasses various movements that identify and tackle social challenges, leading to the establishment of local SI initiatives. Civil society, in terms of NGOs or the third sector, are considered a key SI creator who solves social problems that the government cannot solve and private sectors do not have incentives to solve (Nicholls et al., 2015).

Although some authors, such as Carayannis et al. (2021), commented that civil society had a less proactive role than the other three helices, it can be argued that civil society can significantly present proactive roles as being an initiator of several SI initiatives. For example, civil society in Britain established “the most influential new models of childcare,

housing, community development and social care” (Mulgan, 2006, p.145). Additionally, civil society engages in many grassroots social innovations (Martin et al., 2015), and initiates social movements leading to SI (Gerometta et al., 2005). Community-based SI is not only a bottom-up solution but also a driver of partnerships between local initiatives and local authorities that lead to social and political transformation (Galego et al., 2022).

#### **2.2.2.4 Firm**

Firms or economic systems can produce social-driven products and services, and also develop networks, clusters and partnerships (Carayannis et al., 2021). Firms can design and tailor SI and provide financial support. Indeed, the core logic of firms in seeking profits is in contrast to the SI concepts that primarily aim to give social values instead of business values. Firms are sometimes unwilling to produce SI because they consider it a public goods that is not worthwhile to devote their money and resources to (Pol and Ville, 2009). At this point, governments either step in with incentives to encourage firms to engage in SI or leave SI created by third sectors.

Due to the focus on producing products and services to generate revenue, firms seek a balance between economic and social profits when creating SI. To do so, firms integrate SI into their business models. Business model innovation components then are changed to align with the SI context (Carayannis et al., 2021). Firms simultaneously adopt the open innovation approach to co-create bottom-up solutions and develop SI with relevant stakeholders, such as the community, individuals, universities, government agencies, and other firms (Chesbrough and Di Minin, 2014, Carayannis et al., 2021).

*Table 4: Key Roles of Four Actors in SI Ecosystems*

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Key roles</i>
<b>Academia</b>	Knowledge creation and transfer, developing SI research, education programmes
<b>Government</b>	Policymaker, regulator, facilitator (e.g., provide financial resources)
<b>Civil society</b>	Addressing community or social needs and problems through social movement, scaling SI, SI initiator through grassroots innovation
<b>Firm</b>	Facilitator, initiating new social-based ideas, SI-based product and service development

Source: Author’s elaboration

Table 4 summarises the key roles of academia, government, civil society, and firms in the SI ecosystem. It highlights that civil society, like the other three actors, plays an important role in initiating SI. However, civil society is excluded from the triple helix model (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000), which identifies academia, industry, and government as the main SI creators, viewing civil society, in terms of people, as a social value receiver. Although the triad model (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012) included civil society as being a main actor alongside industry (private sector) and government (public sector), this model overlooked academia, which is critical for SI creation in terms of knowledge and research. Therefore, the triad or triple helix model cannot cover all the main SI creators, making the quadruple helix model more appropriate for discussing SI actors in the SI ecosystem. This thesis, thus, adopts four key actors (government, business, universities, and civil society) from the quadruple helix model as key actors in the SI ecosystem. Additionally, the hybrid forms of these four actors are considered a part of interactions between actors.

### ***2.2.3 Interactions Between Interdependent Actors in the SI Ecosystem***

A prominent feature of the SI and SI ecosystem is the complexity of relationships among different actors (Butzin and Terstriep, 2018, Carayannis et al., 2021). Interactions between actors in SI literature follows three main strands: the first strand with bottom-up and top-down relationships, another with collaborative relationships, and the last where one actor acts as a substitute for another actor.

Interactions in terms of the top-down mostly occur by government action through policies and regulations (Ludvig et al., 2021). The government generally takes responsibility for providing welfare and issuing regulations or laws. Therefore, the government can steer the other actors to engage in SI (Chin et al., 2019). For the bottom-up, civil society is the most noticeable in initiating SI at the micro-level, which causes response and change at the macro-level (Galego et al., 2022, Martin et al., 2015).

The collaboration between actors is a topic often discussed in SI literature. This is because social problems, particularly wicked problems, are complex, take time and require many



resources devoted to alleviation (Nicholls et al., 2015, Remøe, 2015). Each actor cannot find innovative solutions and completely solve such problems alone. Therefore, collaborative action is needed across actors to solve complex social problems better (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). Key salient collaborative forms between interdependent actors frequently discussed in the existing literature and established in practice are presented below.

### ***2.2.3.1 University and Civil Society: University Public Engagement***

Civil society, in terms of community, can present socially community-based problems and needs that trigger universities to be aware of and produce SI to eliminate such problems. Universities then attempt to solve social challenges and achieve a third mission or social role (Vargiu, 2014). On the other hand, universities develop and transfer knowledge to communities and other actors, increasing benefits to communities and promoting people to develop SI. In other words, universities and civil society respond to each other through both bottom-up and top-down relationships.

However, universities and civil society cooperate to establish a new form of social relationship: university public engagement to develop SI and knowledge better. Public engagement in universities can be a bilateral collaboration between a university and a community at local, regional, national or global levels to create socially inclusive activities and solutions for community-based social problems (Bellandi et al., 2021).

The main activities of university-community engagement are, for example, knowledge transfer, university continuing education, and community-based research and service learning (Schuetze, 2012). University-community engagement also highlights the accessibility and availability of university resources, both physical and intellectual, to local and sub-regional communities (Hart and Northmore, 2011).

### ***2.2.3.2 University and Government: Cooperative Research and Projects Funded by Government***

The government generally has responsibility for education in the country. On the one hand, the government can influence universities through policies inducing universities to facilitate and engage more in SI establishment. With the key strengths of universities in knowledge creation and government power in terms of regulators or legislators and funds, governments in some countries, on the other hand, establish university-government collaboration to create mutual benefits. Universities take responsibility for creating new knowledge, while the government offers its resources to the university, especially funding (Abbas et al., 2019), which outputs of the collaboration are research or projects corresponding to social needs and challenges.

The collaboration between the government and universities also helps the government fulfil and strengthen its educational roles. The government must improve national education and provide and support education to citizens. With universities' plentiful resources in terms of experts and knowledge, the government can cooperate with universities to improve the quality of education and increase the productivity of both the government and universities (Situmorang et al., 2018). Therefore, universities are a vehicle for advocating SI development for the government. Meanwhile, universities can obtain more resources and support from the government.

### ***2.2.3.3 Government and Business: Public-Private Partnership***

In addition to active and passive participation in SI activities, the government can establish a public-private partnership (PPP) in collaboration with the private sector. PPP projects, especially in developing countries, provide the bottom-up and collective learning process by addressing social challenges, encouraging people and institution engagement, supporting pool resources and collective learning, and scaling up SI (Rao-Nicholson et al., 2017). Governments in developing countries struggle to support SI projects due to budget constraints and rigidity. The PPP then can enable the government and private sector to

create SI better. The PPP also allows the private sector to engage in larger-scale projects (Witters et al., 2012). Therefore, PPP is vital for fostering SI in emerging countries.

#### ***2.2.3.4 Business and Civil Society: Social Enterprise***

Nicholls and Murdock (2012) suggested that social enterprises positioned between the business and civil society spectrum, as social enterprises combined business models and logic along with pursuing social objectives and ownership structures of civil society, such as mutual societies. However, social enterprise is not an explicit collaboration form like university public engagement, PPP, and cooperative research funded by the government. Instead, social enterprise is a distinct type of business that moves away from a purely profit-oriented focus. Some social enterprises, however, lean more towards traditional business logic and prioritise financial returns, while others are more aligned with the civil society's goal of creating social value.

In the last stand, some actors substitute for another actor who fails to create SI or provide value to society. The main substitution forms of actors are as follows:

#### ***2.2.3.5 Shadow State: Civil Society Acting as Government***

An outstanding example of interaction between government and civil society is shadow state. Shadow state is a community or non-government organisation that fulfils government gaps or acts as a government (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). In some countries, governments cannot provide sufficient welfare to citizens, such as healthcare and education. Therefore, the shadow state, such as BRAC, an NGO in Bangladesh, provides healthcare and education programs to people, particularly poor people (Mair and Marti, 2009). However, the shadow state is civil society's actions that respond to government failures rather than the collaboration between civil society and the government.

### ***2.2.3.6 Corporate University: Business Acting as a University***

Recently, numerous businesses have established corporate universities that promote SI. Corporate universities are not collaborations between universities and businesses. In contrast, businesses initially established corporate universities to train their employees, gain control over learning processes, and develop sustainable competitive advantages (Alonso-Gonzalez et al., 2018). Corporate universities are training centres and learning networks across companies (Kolo et al., 2013). Moreover, corporate universities focus on transferring knowledge, particularly from business experiences and practical trainings, rather than creating new knowledge like traditional universities. The corporate university, therefore, can be seen as a strategic business tool.

Linking with SI, Chin et al. (2019) suggested that the corporate university helped employees participating in training and educational programs change their behaviour to be more innovative and environmentally friendly. However, it is unreasonable to claim that all corporate universities can increase awareness of environmental or social concerns and innovation behaviour in creating new/innovative ideas. Since the corporate university aims to develop businesses' human capital, employees joining the corporate university can develop their innovation behaviour without increasing their social awareness.

### ***SI Actors in A Holistic View***

Although most literature has often focused on interactions between two specific actors or one focal actor, some studies have attempted to delineate interactions among all actors in a holistic view. For example, Bulakovskiy et al. (2016) illustrated the cooperation of four actors (government, businesses, civil society, and research institutions) in the SI ecosystem to generate, develop and scale up SI. In the SI ecosystem with the quadruple helix model, the government enacted a policy framework and co-initiated SI with universities, firms, and civil society. Then, actors collectively enabled SI through various engagements and financial support (Bulakovskiy et al., 2016). However, these cooperations are ideal for

some countries, especially developing countries, that lack legal and financial support from the government.

In summary, the interactions between interdependent actors in the SI ecosystem show three patterns: bottom-up or top-down relations, such as in university public engagement; collaboration, such as PPP and cooperative research and projects funded by the government; and substitution, such as civil society acting as a government. Collaboration across actors is crucial for SI development (Domanski and Kaletka, 2017, Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). Once actors have collaborated, they create common goals and shared skills, experiences, and other essentials that can increase their potential to overcome social challenges, resulting in successful SI (Howaldt et al., 2016a). Moreover, the cross-sector collaboration in the SI ecosystem can promote trust and reconciliation among actors, improve governance in terms of better agreement or rules between actors, increase accessibility to new resources and funds, and lead to a good society (Kolk and Lenfant, 2015).

Furthermore, SI research regarding interactions of actors is mainly studied through the lens of a particular actor or a collaboration between two actors. Interestingly, SI research with businesses as focal actors and their interactions with other actors tend to have fewer numbers than research with foci in universities, government, and civil society. Research focusing on business actors seen to date is often related to, for example, commercial enterprise, social enterprise, and CSR topics. In contrast, studies about businesses implementing SI or CSI are smaller. Additionally, research regarding CSI is mainly within the boundaries of one business and rarely exhibits its interaction with other actors in the SI ecosystem. Thus, a research gap exists in studies of the interaction between businesses implementing SI and another interdependent actor, especially the government, calling for further exploration.

## ***2.3 Corporate Social Innovation***

This section begins by clarifying the definition of CSI, followed by firms' roles in CSI. Next, CSI and other terms are differentiated. Driver for firms' engagement in CSI and implementation of CSI in firms are explained before heading to the contribution of CSI, which is presented at the end of this section.

Researchers have recently discussed and debated CSI, a new topic in the SI area. The primary aim of SI is not to seek profits. However, when profit-oriented businesses aim to follow social purpose or SI, they reconfigure the conventional SI concept as a new concept: CSI (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). The existing literature on CSI has two main themes: ontology and epistemology. The first theme is about clarifying definitions of CSI, and the latter is about how CSI is dissimilar from other relevant concepts and how businesses deploy CSI in their organisations.

### ***2.3.1 Definition of CSI***

The concept of CSI was introduced by Kanter (1999), who emphasised strategic alliances between the private and public sectors for improving business profits and solving social problems. After that, numerous scholars have proposed various CSI concepts with different scopes and approaches. For example, Googins (2013, p.93) described CSI as “a strategy” that be “breakthrough solutions to complex social, economic, and environmental issues that impact the sustainability of both business and society” by using use a mixture of “unique set of corporate assets (entrepreneurial skills, innovation capacities, managerial acumen, ability to scale, etc.)” and “the assets of other sectors” to co-create these solutions. However, Varadarajan and Kaul (2018, p.226) argued that it could be “a new product, process or practice, or a modification of an existing product, process or practice” that be able to solve social problems, while “benefited society” and “benefited firms by enhancing their performance”.

Despite different views, existing definitions of CSI indeed concentrate on four major strands (Tabares, 2020). Firstly, some authors, for example, Kanter (1999), Mirvis et al. (2016), Szegedi et al. (2016) and Domanski and Kaletka (2017) focused on the business side and considered CSI as *a strategy for companies* enhancing business performance, profitability and growth. On the other hand, studies proposed by scholars, such as Jupp (2002), Carberry et al. (2017) and Varadarajan and Kaul (2018) described CSI as *a solution to social problems* and improving quality of life. Further, CSI concepts emphasise the *novelty* of, for example, process (Herrera, 2015). CSI definitions in the last strand highlight *co-creation* among stakeholders and partnerships (Chin et al., 2019, Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019). Although CSI concepts have been worked on for many years, no consensus on the CSI concept exists yet.

CSI in research is sometimes called ‘SI in business’, ‘doing good doing well innovation’, and ‘company-based SI’ (Tabares, 2020). Further, when for-profit firms integrate SI in their activities to provide social and economic benefits, they are labelled as doing CSI (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020).

To understand the concept of CSI better, this thesis highlights key characteristics of CSI (see Table 5). In terms of aims, CSI seeks to address complex social, economic, and environmental problems (Googins, 2013) and citizen needs (Canestrino et al., 2015) and primarily aims to create social value and sustain profitability (Kanter, 1999). As CSI is developed based on the SI principle (Mirvis et al., 2016), it can be argued that the public/social needs CSI addresses are unmet or unsatisfied. Further, firms originated to maximise profits, and when these for-profit firms turn to CSI, they need to balance social value creation and firms’ growth and sustainability (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Mirvis and Googins, 2018b).

*Table 5: CSI Characteristics*

<b>Key characteristics of CSI</b>	
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- address and identify social, economic, and environmental problems</li> <li>- address unmet citizen and public needs</li> <li>- generate social value and sustain the firm’s profitability</li> </ul>

<b>Output/outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a new product, process or practice, or a modification of an existing product, process or practice, a way of finding new products and services</li> <li>- solutions to social problems</li> <li>- a source of competitive advantage</li> </ul>
<b>Resources, actors, and interrelationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- firm strategy</li> <li>- organisational resources and capabilities, human resources</li> <li>- corporations, MNCs, businesses, governments, academia, community, NGOs and third sectors</li> <li>- co-creation, cross-sector collaboration, stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>

Source: Author's elaboration

Firms engaging in CSI can shift their focus from existing markets to enter new markets at the bottom of the pyramid (BOP), rather than targeting high-income segments (Mirvis et al., 2016). BOP consumers have low incomes, earning less than \$2 per day at a purchasing power parity rate (Prahalad, 2012), and they often experience challenges related to malnutrition, health, and education (Karnani, 2009). Therefore, providing affordable product innovation by firms with CSI can improve the well-being of BOP consumers and communities. However, since BOP customers have limited incomes and are highly price-sensitive, businesses must reconfigure “the way products are made and delivered” and business models, business strategies, and value chains to provide affordable price products while still gain financial returns (Simanis and Duke, 2014, p.4).

Thus, targeting low-income customers distinguishes firms undertaking CSI from conventional for-profit firms. Conventional firms can create innovation that is good for society or the environment, but this innovation is provided to customers who can pay a high price. Although this innovation can alleviate social and environmental challenges, its impact did not reach people with poor quality of life or well-being or vulnerable people.

In terms of outcomes/outputs, CSI can be new or modification of products, processes or practices (Varadarajan and Kaul, 2018), ways of finding new products and services (Canestrino et al., 2015) or practices or efforts by corporations (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019). As discussed in Section 2.1.1, SI can be technological and non-technological innovations which are significantly improved or new to beneficiaries; CSI developed based on SI basis then is suggested in this thesis that it can be technological and non-



technological innovations that are significantly improved or at least be new to the firm itself as well.

CSI can create competitive advantages for firms (Jayakumar, 2017, Mirvis et al., 2016) and sustainable social solutions (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Mirvis et al., 2016). Further, it can lead to corporate sustainability and social change in the long term (Carberry et al., 2017). As CSI is relevant to employee attitudes (Herrera, 2015), employees can be stimulated to increase awareness of social problem issues and change their living or consumption patterns.

Actors involved in CSI can be the private sector, government, academia, and civil society (Tabares, 2020), which frequently collaborate within a firm or cross-sector of external parties to co-create CSI (Mirvis et al., 2016). These collaborations between firms and both internal and external stakeholders can foster new relationships, networks, and knowledge exchange processes, ultimately enhancing firms' CSI capabilities (Mirvis et al., 2016). In addition to stakeholder engagement, CSI creation entails exploiting organisational capabilities and resources, including human resources, employee skills, and corporate assets (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Kanter, 1999, Mirvis et al., 2016).

At the same time, CSI calls for integration into core business strategies (KPMG, 2014). While for-profit firms typically design their business models and strategies to maximise profits for themselves and their shareholders, pursuing CSI necessitates that these firms incorporate social issues and objectives into their core strategies and restructure their business models to align with these new strategies (Herrera, 2015).

Therefore, the concept of CSI in this thesis is suggested that:

- (1.) CSI addresses social problems and primarily aims to create value for society and business, solve social problems, and satisfy unmet social/public needs.
- (2.) CSI can be non-technological and technological innovations, such as products, services, processes, practices, methods, models, and strategies that are significantly improved or at least new to the firms.

- (3.) CSI can lead to social change (including change in behaviour and attitude) and corporate sustainability in the long term.
- (4.) CSI involves many stakeholders within firms and external parties, such as private sector, government, academia, and civil society; and they often collaborate to co-create CSI.
- (5.) CSI involves firms' core business strategies and applies corporate assets, capabilities, and human resources.

This CSI concept is employed as a criterion for determining CSI projects in this thesis and distinguish CSI from other terms, which is explained in the later sub-sections.

### ***2.3.2 Roles of Firm in CSI***

Since firms are the focal actors in CSI, they are primary providers of CSI and sometimes supporters of another actor creating CSI instead of the firms. These roles are presented as follows.

#### ***2.3.2.1 Be a Primary Provider of CSI***

As CSI is SI made by firms, firms are the main actors in creating CSI. Firms can act as *the main and only creator of CSI* by directly generating CSI by themselves. Firms use their resources, knowledge, and experts to generate CSI and then deliver CSI to society through their channels (Carayannis et al., 2021, Herrera, 2015).

However, some social challenges are complex and require many resources and collaborative actions across actors to solve them. Firms with resource constraints can collaborate with other firms or the other actors in the quadruple helix model, including government, academia, and civil society, to *co-provide CSI*. Moreover, some forms of cooperation, such as PPP, reduce firms' resource limitations and offer an excellent opportunity for firms to engage in larger-scale projects (Witters et al., 2012).

Interestingly, several firms in practice integrate beneficiaries of CSI into the CSI production process or in their supply chains. This can help firms distribute the positive impacts of CSI directly and immediately to beneficiaries and increase the sustainability of firms' supply.

### ***2.3.2.2 Be a Supporter of Actors Creating CSI Instead of the Firm***

Despite being the main actors in CSI, firms in practice can either primarily create SI by themselves or support other actors to generate SI in their place (Mirvis and Googins, 2018a). JPMorgan Chase, for example, supported the Financial Solutions Lab in finding innovative solutions for financial health challenges in low-income and particular communities (Financial Solutions Lab, 2022a). By leveraging the solutions developed by the Financial Solutions Lab, JPMorgan Chase could enhance its products and services. This collaboration enabled the company to contribute to social innovation indirectly but also allowed it to gain valuable knowledge and ideas that could help reduce costs and risks associated with product and service development.

### ***2.3.3 Differentiating CSI***

This sub-section presents CSI's differentiation, and some terms discussed in CSI research, including SI, CSR, creating shared value, and social entrepreneurship, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of CSI.

#### ***2.3.3.1 SI and CSI***

Even though CSI relates to SI, as CSI connects SI and business (Szegeedi et al., 2016) and addresses social problems to find solutions for these challenges, some significant dissimilarities appear between SI and CSI. SI primarily focuses only on creating social value and causes institutional and social change in the long term (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). Since businesses are the main actor in proving or co-providing directly or indirectly, CSI is a bifocal innovation between SI and business innovation (Pol and Ville, 2009) that aims

to create social and business values and ultimately aims for social change and business sustainability.

Moreover, CSI creation mainly uses private funds, business assets, resources and capabilities, and reshaping business strategies and business models (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Mirvis et al., 2016). However, SI uses resources from actors in the SI ecosystem, such as government and philanthropic funding (Moore et al., 2012).

### ***2.3.3.2 CSI and CSR***

Another concept frequently discussed in CSI research is CSR, a well-known concept in business. CSR has gained the attention of firms for decades, and many firms worldwide have carried out CSR. CSR is “responsible business practices can help build a more sustainable basis for competitiveness, by strengthening brands and reputation, attracting and retaining talent, achieving efficiency gains and cost savings, meeting societal expectations, and perhaps most importantly by creating business opportunities through social innovation” (Crets and Celer, 2013, p.77). However, the concepts of CSR are various and lack consensus.

CSR originated from awareness of the impact of business on society (Mosca and Civera, 2017). Bowen (1953) viewed a business’s social responsibility as an obligation in policies or actions with desirable objectives and values of society. CSR during the 1950s and 1960s was carried out mainly with philanthropic characteristics (Agudelo et al., 2019, Carroll, 2008).

However, CSR, dominated by the philanthropic principle, was criticised as conflicting with the primary aim of business, which seeks profits for shareholders (Friedman, 1970). Therefore, the economic perspective was included in the latter concepts of CSR; for example, Carroll (1999, p.283) stated that CSR was “the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organisations at a given point in time”. Further, she suggested a CSR pyramid indicating

that a business encompassed four responsibilities: being profitable, complying with laws and regulations, doing the right things, and being a good corporate citizen (Carroll, 2016).

The concept of the CSR pyramid continues to be a topic of debate among scholars, such as Visser (2006), Nalband and Kelabi (2014), and Mihaljević and Tokić (2015), who suggested rearranging the priority ranking of Carroll's classic CSR pyramid. However, what is more important than the order of responsibilities is how to achieve and balance these four responsibilities in order to create long-term business sustainability. Further, the notion of corporate behaviour and social concerns, such as economic crisis and environmental problems, have also shaped the latter concepts of CSR (Hack et al., 2014). In the twenty-first century, CSR concepts have expanded to include a broader set of stakeholders, a company's strategic perspective, and a focus on sustainability (Agudelo et al., 2019).

In summary, the concept of CSR has evolved from being solely philanthropic to encompassing economic and business perspectives. Modern interpretations of CSR are recognised across various dimensions, including economic, ethical, social, stakeholder engagement, sustainability, and voluntary initiatives (Sarkar and Searcy, 2016). However, the core of the CSR concept emphasises the responsibility of corporations to society, regardless of the specific dimensions involved.

When linked to innovation, CSR can be seen as a driver of innovation. For example, Bocquet and Mothe (2011) revealed that CSR implemented by companies, particularly as a social strategy, could lead to technological product innovations. In this case, CSR, in the view of strategic management, commonly involves value creation in which the "value creation is necessarily about innovation"; therefore, CSR provides "opportunities for innovation" (Husted and Allen, 2007, p. 597). However, if value creation is an outcome of innovation, then using value creation as an intermediary between CSR and innovation is an indirect and implicit expressions. Moreover, the value derived from CSR and innovation is distinct. The value provided by CSR is to generate social good. However, the value provided by business innovation is to satisfy customer needs and give financial

returns to businesses, while the value provided by SI is to improve people's well-being and solve social problems. Considering CSR as practices/activities that can “create new ways of working, new products, services, processes and new market space” (Gallego-Álvarez et al., 2011, p.1713) can be an alternative logic directly presenting the link between CSR and innovation better than explaining through value creation.

The idea that CSR enables innovation is also agreed upon by MacGregor and Fontrodona (2008), who pointed out that CSR and innovation were closely related and that CSR could drive innovation. CSR-driven innovation could be products or services (innovation) for social purposes. CSR-driven innovation, in other words, was about “doing the right things” (MacGregor and Fontrodona, 2008, p.14). Further, the authors proposed the inverse direction that innovation, in turn, could drive CSR. Innovation-driven CSR was “aligned with creating social processes”, and it could be “the way that output was developed” with “more socially responsible”; in summary, innovation-driven CSR was about “doing things right” (MacGregor and Fontrodona, 2008, p.14). However, innovation-driven CSR has gained less attention from researchers than the concept of CSR-driven innovation. Innovation-driven CSR, which mainly focuses on the output production process with more social responsibility, is not remarkably distinct from the existing CSR practices or activities. The CSR-driven innovation, in contrast, shifts the focus of innovation from business purposes to social and business purposes. CSR-driven innovation, in other words, can be understood as CSI.

Moreover, CSI is sometimes viewed as a new step or stage for CSR, helping firms engage more in innovation and develop solutions to social problems (Googins, 2013, Szegedi et al., 2016). However, CSI is distinguishable from CSR and is not a substitute term for CSR (Carberry et al., 2017). The significant differences between CSI and CSR are explained below.

***Intentions:*** CSI emerges as a *strategic investment* that companies consider like other investments. CSI is generated to respond to social and stakeholder needs and improve business performance and social benefits. CSR, however, is created

from a philanthropic or charitable principle. CSR is the responsibility of companies to address environmental issues, social challenges, and good governance. Additionally, CSR encompasses business ethics and morality (Djellal and Gallouj, 2012, Hanke and Stark, 2009, Jupp, 2002, Mirvis et al., 2016, Pyszka, 2013, Szegedi et al., 2016).

**Outcomes:** CSI presents innovation *that solves* social challenges and is aligned the core business. The ultimate goal of CSI is social change and business sustainability. CSI addresses co-creation and can create new revenue streams, competitive advantages, business growth, new markets, and new customers. However, CSR activities involve innovation, and its voluntary activities are not linked to firms' missions. CSR aims to make society better along with improving goodwill and firm reputation more than seeking profits (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Jupp, 2002, Mirvis et al., 2016, Tabares, 2020, Varadarajan and Kaul, 2018).

**Organisational resources:** CSI involves firms' social-based R&D and corporate assets, skills, knowledge, and experience. CSI is also relevant to business models, firm strategies, and missions; therefore, all firms' departments are involved in CSI. On the one hand, employees have important roles in creating and developing CSI; on the other hand, CSI can raise employees' self-awareness, skills, and management abilities. CSR, conversely, involves contributions of money and manpower. CSR is taken responsibility by a particular department in firms rather than all departments. CSR is also not compulsory for employees to engage in (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020, Domanski and Kaletka, 2017, Herrera, 2015, Mirvis et al., 2016, Tabares, 2020).

**Collaboration:** CSI requires intense collaboration with external and internal parties (different departments within firm) to co-create social-driven innovation. CSR requires collaboration with NGOs and communities to deliver social service and create a corporate reputation (Mirvis et al., 2016, Tabares, 2021). Moreover,

beneficiaries in CSR only have passive roles as benefit receivers and are not required to participate in partnerships with firms; beneficiaries in CSI, in contrast, are called to participate (Popoli, 2016).

Table 6: Comparisons of CSI and CSR

	CSI	CSR
<b>Intention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A strategic investment</li> <li>- Responding to social and stakeholder needs</li> <li>- Improving business performance and offering social benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being derived from a philanthropic or charity principle</li> <li>- The responsibility of companies towards environmental issues, social challenges and good governance</li> <li>- Involving business ethics and morality</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SI linking to core business</li> <li>- Making social change and business sustainability</li> <li>- New revenue stream, competitive advantage, business growth, new markets, new customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Voluntary activities that are not relate to firms' missions</li> <li>- Making society better, improving goodwill and firm reputation</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involving firms' resources (e.g., social-based R&amp;D, corporate assets)</li> <li>- Relating to business model, firms' strategies and missions</li> <li>- All departments in firms are involved in CSI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involving contributions of money and manpower</li> <li>- Being taken responsibility by a particular department in firms rather than all departments</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intense collaboration with external and internal parties</li> <li>- Beneficiaries can engage in CSI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboration with NGOs and communities</li> <li>- Beneficiaries have passive roles</li> </ul>

Source: Author's elaboration

### 2.3.3.3 CSI and CSV

Another overlapping concept is 'creating shared value' (CSV), which has some similar characteristics to CSI. Shared value is about "policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates" (Porter and Kramer, 2011, p.6). A company can create shared value by "reconceiving products and markets" to meet societal needs, "redefining productivity in the value chain" to reduce adverse effects on society, environment



and workers, and also “building supportive industry clusters at the company’s locations” (Porter and Kramer, 2011, p.7).

Although CSV emphasises both business and social benefits, its concept is narrower than that of CSI. CSV's key focus is on business success, while CSI aims for both business and social dimensions (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020).

#### ***2.3.3.4 CSI and Social Entrepreneurship***

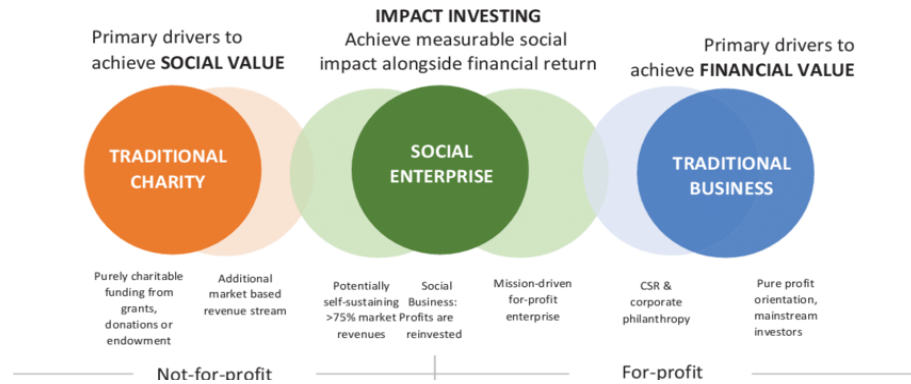
Social entrepreneurship is “a process for addressing social problems, as exemplified by governments and non-profit organisations that operate with business principles” (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, p.29). Although definitions of social entrepreneurship are various, the primary goal of social entrepreneurship in all concepts is social impact (OECD, 2021). Thus, social entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in generating social value (Weerawardena and Mort, 2006) and finding solutions for unmet social needs (Phillips et al., 2015).

Other terms often discussed are social entrepreneur and social enterprise. An entrepreneur commonly refers to a person who operates a business. A social entrepreneur, thus, is an individual adopting a social mission as central to creating solutions for social, cultural, and environmental challenges (Ashoka, 2021, Sullivan Mort et al., 2003). However, social enterprise is “a profit-oriented, privately owned entity that blends business interests with social ends” (Westley et al., 2014, p.2). In summary, social enterprise is about an entity, social entrepreneur is about a person, and social entrepreneurship is about processes and activities.

Social enterprise provides social value while seeking financial returns. Therefore, social enterprise is recognised as existing between the principles of philanthropy and commercial business, as illustrated in Figure 3 (Ryder and Vogeley, 2018). However, not all social enterprises are in the middle of profit and non-profit. The concept of social enterprise in some countries, such as the US, is broader; it encompasses profit-oriented businesses,

businesses with business and social objectives, and non-profit organisations (Kerlin, 2006).

Figure 3: Business Spectrum



Source: Ryder and Vogeley (2018)

CSI, social entrepreneurship, and social enterprise differ in terms of their intended results and focus. CSI aims to create both economic and social value while balancing value creation and value capture, whereas social entrepreneurship/enterprise is mission-oriented to create social value and focuses on value creation more than value capture (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Mizik and Jacobson, 2003).

Although social enterprises theoretically achieve a higher degree of social creation and capture, in countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, they still pursue profits while also aiming for social objectives (KUSKOP, 2023, raiSE, 2024, SE Thailand, 2019). Therefore, CSI projects in these countries can be implemented by either for-profit firms or social enterprises.

The following table summarises and compares the key differences between CSI, SI, CSR, CSV, and social entrepreneurship/enterprise. In summary, SI primarily focuses on the social aspects, while CSI encompasses both business and social dimensions. CSI is an innovation that solves social challenges, is a strategic investment linked to core business strategies or business models, aims for business and social benefits, and is engaged by all departments and external parties. In contrast, CSR is voluntary activities of particular

departments in firms. While CSI focuses on both business and social dimensions, CSV focuses on the business dimension more than the social dimension, and social entrepreneurship/enterprise focuses on the social dimension.

*Table 7: Comparisons of CSI and Relevant Concepts Discussed in this Section*

<b>Key Differences</b>	
<b>CSI vs SI</b>	<p><b>CSI:</b> - creates both social value and economic value            - mainly involves the firm's resources            - aims to create business sustainability and social sustainability</p> <p><b>SI:</b> - creates social value            - involves resources of actors engaging SI            - aims to create institutional and social change</p>
<b>CSI vs CSR</b>	<p><b>CSI:</b> - emerges from strategic investment linking to core business strategies and business models            - be innovation solving social challenges            - respond to social and stakeholder needs            - improves business performance and social benefits, sustainability            - addresses the co-creation            - leads to a new revenue stream            - involves firm's social-based R&amp;D, corporate assets and employee development            - include all departments in firms engage in CSI            - be intense collaboration with external and internal parties, and beneficiaries</p> <p><b>CSR:</b> - emerges from philanthropic principle            - be the responsibility of companies towards environmental and social challenges and good governance            - be voluntary activities            - aims to create social good and goodwill            - involves contributions of money and manpower, and employee volunteer            - has only particular departments engaged in CSR            - be collaboration with NGOs and communities</p>
<b>CSI vs CSV</b>	<p><b>CSI:</b> - focuses on both business and social dimensions</p> <p><b>CSV:</b> - focuses on the business dimension more than the social dimension</p>
<b>CSI vs Social Entrepreneurship/enterprise (SE)</b>	<p><b>CSI:</b> - creates both social and economic value            - balances value creation and value capture</p> <p><b>SE:</b> - creates social value            - focuses more on value creation</p>

Source: Author's own elaboration

### ***2.3.4 Drivers for Firm's Engagement in CSI***

Several studies have explored motivations behind firms' engagement in CSI. For instance, research by Esen and Maden-Eyiusta (2019) indicated motivations of firms towards CSI. It revealed that firms engaged in SI because it was “a strategic tool that increased firm reputation and legitimacy in the eyes of various stakeholders” and due to pressure from state regulations and stakeholders (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, p.38). However, since motivations for engaging in CSI were derived from complementary questions for their interviewees, it was ambiguous to generalise that stakeholder expectations and pressures were the primary drivers for all firms. Therefore, more studies are required to clarify rationales for implementing CSI.

Carberry et al. (2017) also examined drivers for firms to implement CSI, but they focused only on social movement as a main driver. It reported that the social movement activism by civil society indirectly encouraged firms to engage in SI by affecting managerial perceptions of institutional pressures (including regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive pressures) and managerial commitment to SI (Carberry et al., 2017). Although social movement could not directly stimulate firms to engage CSI, this study highlighted the importance of managerial perceptions towards CSI engagement. Further, the social movement entailed social context regarding social needs and challenges. Since SI is generally intertwined with social context (Moulaert, 2016, Shaw and de Bruin, 2013), therefore, not only determinants in the organisational context induce firms to carry out CSI but also in the surrounding context outside firms.

João-Roland and Granados (2020) proposed factors driving businesses to engage in SI in a broad and systematic view. However, these factors were based on the facet of social enterprises having primary goals for social objectives more than maximising profits. The authors outlined three main groups of factors: *organisational factors* (business model to balance social demand, partnership with different partners, knowledge management and culture), *contextual factors* (market dynamics, community participation and political support) and *managerial factors* (manager or innovator characteristics, and managerial

practices). Although the factors driving social enterprises to pursue SI differ from those of profit-oriented businesses, this paper can provide an idea to conceptualise and consider motivations of CSI engagement in a systematic view.

Despite the limited number of studies about firms' motivation to engage in CSI, the existing literature indicates that firms are often encouraged to implement CSI for competitive advantages and to respond to external pressures, such as institutional pressure and business context pressure. Additionally, firms perceiving social problems and public failures are willing to eliminate challenges and fill gaps by undertaking CSI. In other words, CSI is a strategic tool for firms to confront pressures and conform to stakeholders' expectations, business environment, and firm goals in creating social and economic outcomes.

### ***2.3.5 Implementation of CSI in Firms***

Another strand of CSI research in the epistemological aspect is the implementation of CSI in firms. These studies concentrate on two main areas: how firms embed CSI in their organisations and how firms strengthen and make successful CSI.

#### ***2.3.5.1 Embedding CSI in Firm***

Profit-oriented firms commonly set business models and strategies for making profits without prioritising social goals as a critical mission to achieve. However, firms pursuing CSI need to adjust their business models and strategies, along with their resources, networks, and others, to accomplish both social and economic purposes.

To embed CSI in firms, Herrera (2015) suggested that firms needed to review business context, such as stakeholders, corporate footprint, and strategic considerations, to identify social concerns and stakeholder collaboration opportunities, analyse social, economic and environmental impacts caused by the firms, and consider firms' core value, resources, and competencies. Then, firms considered engaging with stakeholders, creating or altering

policies and structure, organisational culture, and employee attitudes to enable CSI, while had a clear focus on CSI outcomes.

Although Herrera's (2015) research helps give ideas for embedding CSI in firms, it mainly emphasises organisational culture, operational structures, and processes while overlooking delivery channels and cost and revenue structures, which are important for businesses. The latter studies then shifted to a new way to implement CSI in firms through reconfiguring firms' business models, including business model innovation (BMI) and business model canvas (BMC), to align with firms' social objectives.

Recalling, BMI considers target segment, product or service offering, value chain, cost model, revenue model, and organisation. In other words, it deliberates value creation, value capture, and value delivery through value proposition, operating model, and revenue model (Lindgardt et al., 2009, Fox, 2020). The BMI enables firms to redesign their existing business models by adding new activities, linking activities in new ways, and changing parties in activities (Amit and Zott, 2012), and helps firms gain competitiveness over competitors and address disruptions and opportunities (Lindgardt et al., 2009).

The BMI frequently utilises BMC as a tool to present and develop firms' BMI. The BMC comprises nine building blocks, including three blocks of customer segments, customer relationships, and channels, which are about customers or the demand side; three blocks of key partners, key activities, and key resources, which can be seen as the supply side; one block of value proposition, which is what companies give to customers; and two blocks of cost structures and revenue streams, which are critical parts involving loss or profit of firms (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010). The BMC, in other words, helps firms take demand, supply, value delivered to customers, costs, and revenues into account, leading to the improvement of firms' business models.

The reconfiguration of BMI to pursue SI is suggested by Carayannis et al. (2021). In the firms' new BMI, the value proposition was shifted to target social missions and customers, including government organisations, companies, and communities. Value capture and value delivery occurred in many ways, such as through programs, initiatives, funds,

events, and projects (Carayannis et al., 2021). Indeed, the BMI reconfiguration is related to the pathway proposed by Herrera (2015), as it makes the pathway that is an abstract principle into a concrete model. However, the BMI focused on elements relevant to a particular value proposition, whereas Herrera's (2015) pathway included consideration of general business context and all existing stakeholders, partners and resources.

Another group of scholars extend the BMC to harmonise with SI and social enterprises by adding a block to either consider the reinvestment of profits to develop organisation and achieve social goals (Social Enterprise Institute, 2018) or consider impact and measurement (Qastharin, 2016, Sparviero, 2019). Moreover, the new model pays attention to identifying what SI firms aim to generate, and details filled in each block are viewed through a social rather than an economic lens (Social Enterprise Institute, 2018). The new model helps firms integrate business and social dimensions (Sparviero, 2019). However, measuring social impact is a challenge for firms when using this model, as social impact is difficult to measure and quantify (Maas and Liket, 2011).

### ***2.3.5.2 Strengthening Firms' CSI***

In addition to the business model redesign, firms need to strengthen their internal elements within firms, such as their vision and commitment to SI and organisational structure and culture that supports social value creation, along with their external engagement with stakeholders (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019). Stakeholder engagement, especially in terms of collaboration, helps firms to co-create and deliver social and economic values effectively. PPP is a well-known example of collaboration between the private sector and government. The PPP is advised as an essential model for less-developed countries (Rao-Nicholson et al., 2017).

However, stakeholder involvement does not necessarily be formal or legal, nor limited to supply-side stakeholders. In turn, firms can invite stakeholders on the demand side, such as their customers or beneficiaries, to identify social-based challenges and needs, and

collaboratively seek innovative solutions. Therefore, open innovation is a pleasant collaborative engagement that leads to identifying social problems, solutions, and knowledge sharing. Some scholars, such as Mirvis et al. (2016), Chin et al. (2019), and Carayannis et al. (2021), also suggested that transfer or exchange of knowledge was a significant factor in strengthening CSI. However, the knowledge exchanged in CSI is sometimes tacit knowledge, making it difficult to transfer (Mirvis et al., 2016). This presents a challenge for facilitating CSI across organisations.

For organisational elements, human resource and their attitudes and skills are essential for nurturing CSI in firms. Employees can be initiators of innovative ideas, in which organisational cultures facilitate innovation and raise awareness of social challenges, helping employees have more willingness to lessen social concerns and better create and develop SI (Urban and Gaffurini, 2017, João-Roland and Granados, 2020). Further, having a clear and outstanding mission regarding social purposes helps firms shape their cultures and duties to be favourable for creating social problem-oriented activities and innovation (Tabares, 2021).

### ***2.3.6 Contributions of CSI***

The contributions of CSI can be viewed in two key dimensions: one is contributions to firms themselves, and the other is contributions to society. For the first dimension, CSI is reported to provide economic profit and competitiveness to firms, such as sales growth, new customers/markets, new sources of talent, firm reputation, brand loyalty and supply chain improvement (Bachnik and Szumniak-Samolej, 2020, Gasparin et al., 2021, Varadarajan and Kaul, 2018).

The outcomes of CSI can alleviate social-based problems embedded in particular areas. According to Gasparin et al.'s (2021) research, SI-based activities of Vietnamese SMEs varied in many forms, such as services for communities, and the core of these activities offered solutions for social concerns in communities and provided cultural values. Further,



case studies of socially-oriented companies in Colombia engaging in CSI revealed that companies provided product innovation that did well in the marketplace, sustainability-oriented innovation, innovation created from the needs of the external environment, innovation based in firms' internal environment, business activities or transactions that create social impact, and alleviating problems for poor customers; these CSI activities concentrated on issues of unsustainable habits, agriculture, climate change, corruption, labour, illiteracy, and lack of community involvement which reflect the country's conditions and characters (Tabares, 2021).

Based on these two studies, companies provide CSI-based activities that align with social challenges in specific regions where firms are located. Moreover, the impacts of these activities can improve the well-being of people in such regions and the regional environment. Interestingly, some CSI activities of these companies are related to basic welfare that governments mainly provide to citizens, such as healthcare and education. This is also found in the case of Novo Nordisk, which collaborated with local partners to improve diabetes care in Bangladesh, which was struggling with high diabetes populations and insufficient diabetes care (Novo Nordisk, 2012, Sarkar, 2023). These reflect government failures in which such basic welfare was offered to citizens by firms instead of government. The governments in these countries have constraints on budget and weak management; thus, they cannot provide adequate welfare to their citizens. Consequently, the private sector stepped in with their help.

Also, CSI can contribute to society at the national and global levels. Varadarajan and Kaul (2018) pointed out the benefits of CSI: In the short term, CSI could increase the employment, skills, and income of people in communities, while in the long term, CSI could improve health and living standards, environmental sustainability, and the economy.

To conclude, according to Sections 2.3.4-2.3.6, firms are commonly motivated by external and internal factors to pursue CSI, such as contextual and institutional pressures, organisational factors, and managerial factors (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, João-

Roland and Granados, 2020, Carberry et al., 2017). Firms then set social goals and objectives and reconfigures business models and strategies to align with social dimensions (Herrera, 2015, Carayannis et al., 2021). Strengthening external engagement with stakeholders and improving organisational elements such as human resources help firms to grow their CSI (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Urban and Gaffurini, 2017, João-Roland and Granados, 2020). CSI, lastly, can contribute to firms in terms of economic profits and competitiveness (Bachnik and Szumniak-Samolej, 2020, Gasparin et al., 2021, Varadarajan and Kaul, 2018) and to society, such as solving social challenges in a particular area, increasing job opportunities, and improving people's quality of life (Varadarajan and Kaul, 2018, Gasparin et al., 2021).

## ***2.4 Diversity of Capitalism Paradigm and SI/CSI***

Since this thesis seeks to scrutinise the interactions between the government and firms undertaking CSI in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, it is important to understand the VoC that influences the political-economic contexts of the country affecting SI/CSI and the interactions of the government and firms. This section begins with the classification of VoC. Next, it explains how VoC is related to SI/CSI, followed by an overview of political regimes. Lastly, the political-economic and SI contexts in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore are explained briefly to form a basic understanding before delving into more detail in Chapter 4.

### ***2.4.1 Varieties of Capitalism***

Political and economic institutions can either enhance or hinder national prosperity. Though the free-market or invisible hand concept can lead to competitive markets, resulting in social optimum at the equilibrium price and efficient allocation of resources, a perfectly competitive market remains a theoretical ideal (Ahmed and Nawaz, 2023, Sheppard, 2017). In reality, markets are rarely entirely free or excluded from political power. Historically, the importance of political institutions through appropriate government

intervention has successfully overcome market failures (Aikins, 2009). Also, national prosperity is promoted better when political institutions adequately protect property rights, allow citizens and society to participate in political decision-making, provide access to education and business opportunities, and release regulations and mechanisms supporting economic growth (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). However, in some countries such as China, citizen participation in political decisions is restricted, but the economy is growing quickly because competitions are allowed in the market (Zhang, 2023).

The close relationship between political power and economy can be presented through the VoC concept, which illustrates the national political economy of each country. The VoC originated by Hall and Soskice (2001) can be classified as liberal market economies (LMEs) and coordinated market economies (CMEs). LMEs, in brief, are free-market economies in which firms rely on competitive market arrangements and price mechanisms; CMEs, in contrast, are state-led economies in which firms rely on non-market relationships to coordinate with other actors, and formal institutions have important roles in regulating markets (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Examples of countries categorised as LMEs are the USA, UK, and Canada, whereas Germany, Japan and Sweden are exemplified as CMEs (Hall and Soskice, 2001).

The VoC classification is extended thereafter to have more than the dichotomy, as some countries cannot be completely categorised as LME or CME. For example, Schneider and Paunescu (2012) argued that some countries would lie between LMEs and CMEs, and then VoC consisted of LME, CME, and mixed market economies (such as LME-like and hybrids). Further, researchers have proposed alternative VoC types that have been considered more in business spheres. Nölke and Vliegenthart (2009), for example, suggested a dependent market economy (DME) as the third type for economies that depended on intra-firm hierarchies within transnational enterprises and exemplified Eastern and Central European countries as DMEs.

Moreover, Hall and Gingerich (2009) embraced LME, CME, and DME, then generated state-permeated capitalism (SME) as an additional type for large emerging economies

with the dominance of national capital, such as China, India, and Brazil (Nölke et al., 2015). These four types of capitalism are dissimilar in finance, labour, innovation, and market (Table 8). In addition to the two classic types (LME, a free-market economy that gets innovation along with labour and financial capital via a market mechanism, and CME, which is a non-market and state-led economy), the DME that relates to multinational corporations obtains investment funds and innovation from the parent companies in abroad, whereas SME with business and state coalition obtains fund and innovation from the state (Nölke et al., 2015).

Table 8: Main VoC

<b>Variety Of Capitalism</b>	<b>Liberal Market Economy (LME)</b>	<b>Coordinated Market Economy (CME)</b>	<b>Dependent Market Economy (DME)</b>	<b>State-permeated (State-led) Capitalism (SME)</b>
<i>Coordination mechanism</i>	Competitive markets and formal contracts	Interfirm networks and associations	Dependent on intra-firm hierarchies in multinational corporations	Interpersonal reciprocity, loyalty and private-public alliances
<i>Corporate governance</i>	Outsider control: minority shareholders	Insider control: concentrated shareholders	Control by headquarters of multinational corporations	Control by national capital, not by transnational investors
<i>Corporate finance</i>	Domestic and international capital markets	Domestic bank lending and internally generated funds	Foreign direct investments (FDI) and foreign-owned banks	Family capital and state-owned banks, low foreign finance banks
<i>Labour relations</i>	Pluralist, market-based, few collective agreements	Corporatist, rather consensual, sectoral or nationwide agreements	Appeasement of skilled labour, company-based agreements	Low-wage regime, selective enforcement of worker rights
<i>Transfer of innovation</i>	Market and formal contracts	Intercompany cooperation and business associations	Intra-firm transfer within multinational corporations	Technological catchup through reverse engineering and state-led innovation
<i>Domestic market and international integration</i>	Linked to a liberalised global economy, expansion via financial markets	Not constitutive for export-based growth model, mainly exports	Very open for imports, dependent on external actors	Large domestic markets, selective internationalisation

Source: Nölke et al. (2015)

However, these four types of capitalism cannot be generalised to all countries; they have been developed based on the Western context and thus are not applicable to, especially, the Asian context (Witt and Redding, 2013). Hundt and Uttam (2017), for example, argued that the diversity of capitalism led to varying forms of social embeddedness in different countries. They then proposed specific types of capitalism for individual Asian countries<sup>1</sup>, taking into account their socioeconomic sphere, political and industrial policies and regimes. Examples included Collective Capitalism, Confucian capitalism, and Entrepôt Capitalism’.

It can be seen that the VoC displays not only the political economy of the country but also labour resources and institutional and social contexts. Exploring the interaction between the government and firms implementing CSI through the VoC lens then helps understand the nuanced country contexts across different countries.

## ***2.4.2 VoC and SI/CSI***

This sub-section presents the emergence of SI through political and economic perspectives and how SI is underpinned by the VoC, which are explained below.

### ***2.4.2.1 Emergence of SI Through Political and Economic Perspective***

SI involves political and economic dimensions in terms of how it emerges and develops. Some concepts of SI indicate that it emerges from institutional failures in which the government cannot provide welfare to citizens. Meanwhile, private sectors have no sufficient incentives and financial returns to substitute such welfare instead of government. Therefore, third sectors or civil society substitute for government in offering services, such as health and education (Nicholls et al., 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, Japan is labelled as having ‘Collective Capitalism’, while South Korea and Taiwan have ‘Confucian Capitalism’, Hongkong and Singapore are ‘Entrepôt Capitalism’, Malaysia is ‘State Capitalism’, Thailand is ‘Alliance Capitalism’, India is ‘Democratic Capitalism’, and China is ‘Market Socialism’.

Civil society must be empowered to highlight social challenges and make social movements that can lead to citizen/community-based SI initiatives. For CSI, firms that satisfy social needs or find innovative solutions for social problems can be seen as being empowered by the government to offer SI to society. Through empowerment, SI can be “both incubated and enacted as a part of reinventing government” (Nicholls et al., 2015, p.8). That means the government is catalytic and functions through steering more than providing SI by itself (Osborne, 1993). Once SI is created, empowerment is still important in this stage to permit civil society or private sectors to produce, deliver and scale up SI. Further, the government must establish appropriate regulations, policies, infrastructures, and environments advocating SI development.

Thus, the government involves SI initiation through its failures, pushing other actors to make SI and endeavouring to reform government and improve the legitimacy of democracy by empowering other actors to substitute SI and increasing citizen engagement. Meanwhile, the government promotes SI growth by providing supportive conditions for civil society and private sectors to develop SI.

On the other hand, SI can affect the government through social and institutional restructuring. SI can shape the recognition and awareness of people in society. This can bring about behavioural and social changes (Choi and Majumdar, 2015). Further, these changes can pressure the government to reform or release new mechanisms, such as policies and regulations, to respond to these changes. However, the government must carefully implement SI policies to avoid negative consequences. SI also encourages industries’ awareness to consider externalities, particularly negative impacts on society and the environment, and reconfigure market structures to give new social value through, for example, fair trade and microfinance (Ronquillo, 2013).

#### ***2.4.2.2 SI Underpinned by VoC***

Depending on its type, the VoC has different institutional features and governance approaches that influence corporate behaviour, innovation, the financial system, and

labour relations (Diaz-Carrion and Franco-Leal, 2021). These differences influence the novelty degree of innovation and business's social responsibility, which are components in forming CSI, as explained below.

### ***I. VoC and Novelty Degree of Innovation***

With the two dichotomies of VoC, several researchers have attempted to clarify links between VoC and innovation generation. Some authors, such as Hall and Soskice (2001), Crouch (2006), and Dilli et al. (2018), agreed that Liberal MEs could better support radical innovation creation, whereas Coordinated MEs provided better conditions for incremental innovation. This was because Liberal MEs had flexible and less restricted capital markets (labour market and equity market) then increased competition among companies to develop radical innovation continuously; while Coordinated MEs presented long-term employment and labour with firm-specific skills, then the stable system and long-term relationships caused less disruption and enabled specialisation in niche and incremental innovation (Diaz-Carrion and Franco-Leal, 2021, Hall and Soskice, 2001).

### ***II. VoC and Business's Social Responsibility***

In addition to the novelty of innovation, another group of researchers has studied the impacts of the VoC on doing social good. These kinds of studies examine the social responsibility of corporations through the lens of VoC. The VoC has resulted in two views on CSR: substitution and mirror hypotheses (Jackson and Bartosch, 2017). In Liberal ME contexts where countries are less regulated, CSR operates as a substitution for formal state regulations, in other words, CSR is a voluntary measure corresponding to demands for formal regulations regarding responsibility (Matten and Moon, 2008).

However, CSR in Coordinated ME contexts mirrors strong state regulations, where a higher degree of regulation regarding social responsibility has led to greater effectiveness of CSR (Campbell, 2007). These two hypotheses, in summary, reflect how businesses in different political economies respond to responsible business practices. Businesses in

Liberal MEs engage in CSR because of their willingness to be responsible for society or make social good, whereas CSR in Coordinated MEs is driven due to regulatory pressures.

However, these two hypotheses are elaborated from the contexts of Western countries, and CSR characteristics cannot be explained through only the VoC dichotomy. In the case of Japan, which is Coordinated ME, it presents other key factors beyond regulations that significantly influence businesses' responses to society, such as the long-term legitimacy of firms in society, pressures of foreign investors, and culture (Jackson and Bartosch, 2017, Tanimoto and Suzuki, 2005).

### ***2.4.3 VoC and Political Regimes***

Although several scholars have attempted to classify types of capitalism, this thesis focuses on the core concepts of VoC rather than classifying VoC typologies. The core concepts of VoC, indeed, hint at national governance approaches and political regimes, along with an economy, market, and industry shaped by political elements. These affect businesses and innovation development, which contributes to CSI growth.

The political regime generally reflects government power and citizen engagement in administration. Although there are many types of political regimes, they can be categorised into two main groups depending on the number of rulers: the first group is a *democracy*, which allows citizen engagement in administration, making decisions and voting for representatives who are “authorised to exercise power on their behalf”; and another group is an *autocracy*, in which a country is ruled by one person or a few people (Wigell, 2008, p.234).

The political regime plays an important role towards businesses and the country's context. The autocracy exhibits a greater government power in monitoring and controlling businesses (Clegg et al., 2018), which can impede business operation and growth. Democracy, on the other hand, provides a more favourable business environment. Democracy boosts established entrepreneurs by creating new opportunities and fostering



empowerment (Goel and Nelson, 2023) and attracts a higher level of FDI, benefiting employment, technology transfer, productivity improvement, and economic growth (Ayub et al., 2019, Jensen, 2003). In addition, democracy is linked to improvements in national income (Londregan and Poole, 1996, Madsen et al., 2015), demonstrating a growing economy. Additionally, democracy is associated with greater freedom (Hellmeier et al., 2021, Stier, 2015), which encourages creativity and new ideas. Overall, democracy promotes innovation more effectively than autocracy (Wang et al., 2021).

Countries with a lower degree of government intervention in businesses and a higher level of citizen engagement and freedom, therefore, offer more favourable business and economic environments as well as ample accessible resources compared to those with greater government power and control. These conditions are beneficial for innovation and businesses, including firms engaged in CSI. In other words, the democratic regime provides more appropriate environments for the growth of CSI than non-democratic ones.

## ***2.5 Framework Conditions for CSI***

To achieve successful innovation, it is important to have appropriate factors advocating innovation creation and development. This led to research into the notion of framework conditions, which scrutinise factors that influence and promote innovation. For firms willing to innovate, framework conditions provide “resources, incentives, capabilities and opportunities” (Allman et al., 2011, p.13). Further, framework conditions can be seen as “the wider economic and institutional system of a country or region” (Remøe, 2015, p.9). The broader framework conditions, consequently, can affect national or regional innovation performance (Remøe, 2015).

Since framework conditions are crucial for enabling innovation at both business and national levels, various key framework conditions thus are proposed to promote innovation, for example, public research and knowledge exchange, demand for innovation, business competition, intellectual property rights, regulatory regime, taxation

system, access to finance, human resources, infrastructures and cultural propensities to innovation (Allman et al., 2011, OECD, 2014, Remøe, 2015).

The concept of framework conditions is also adopted in research regarding, for example, the entrepreneur ecosystem and innovation ecosystem. This is because of the compatibility of elements in the entrepreneur/innovation ecosystem and framework conditions, such as infrastructures, resources, networks and institutions. These elements play important roles in entrepreneurial activities and innovation processes (Audretsch and Belitski, 2017, Boelman et al., 2015, Krlev et al., 2014).

Since the framework conditions mentioned above are various and uncategorised, grouping them into main categories can help researchers use and apply the concept of framework conditions more conveniently. The framework conditions presented as the main groups are suggested by Boelman et al. (2015), who introduced five key categories of framework conditions: financial or economic environment, legal or institutional environments, human resources, political context, and social context. Krlev et al. (2014) also identified four main groups of framework conditions: institutional framework, political framework, societal climate framework, and resource framework.

Although Boelman et al. (2015) and Krlev et al. (2014) suggested similar categories of framework conditions, Krlev et al.'s (2014) work broadened the resource framework to encompass human, financial, and infrastructural resources. Further, the institutional framework in Krlev et al.'s (2014) work was more extensive than in Boelman et al. (2015), as Krlev et al. (2014) covered normative, regulative, and cultural-cognitive institutions. In contrast, Boelman et al. (2015) focused only on the legal dimension. However, Boelman et al. (2015) acknowledged the economic environment, which was overlooked in Krlev et al.'s (2014) paper. Indeed, the economic environment is crucial for doing business. The economic environment, thus, should be another main category of framework conditions for CSI. Since both papers present the framework conditions differently in some respects, integrating their concepts allows researchers greater flexibility in selecting and adapting categories to align with their specific work.

This thesis adopts the five categories of framework conditions introduced by Boelman et al. (2015) to present a broader perspective on these conditions. However, the human factor is extended to include other kinds of resources instead of using only human resources, and this category is renamed from ‘human resources’ to ‘resource context’ to clarify this category better. Moreover, the legal or institutional context is extended to cover legal and non-legal institutions and then is retitled as ‘institutional context’. Lastly, the financial or economic context is changed to an ‘economic and business context’ to include business dimensions in this category.

Consequently, this thesis covers five framework conditions: *institutional context*, *economic and business context*, *social context*, *political context*, and *resource context*, which are discussed in detail below.

### ***2.5.1 Institutional Context***

The concept of institutional framework is elaborated from the institutional theory, which can be categorised as formal and informal institutions (Audretsch and Belitski, 2017, Stiglitz, 2000). Though concepts of formal and informal institutions are clarified by scholars in different perspectives, a *formal institution* is often explained as ‘officially codified’ and ‘legitimised by state agencies’ such as laws, while an *informal institution* is ‘not formally codified’ and ‘publicly recognised’ such as social norms and customs (Casson et al., 2010, Lauth, 2004).

The institutional context can affect SI, as SI is interactively affected by both actor and structure, which is determined by underlying institutions in a historical and cultural context (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). Actors in the institutional environment perceive the institutional voids and then create SI to overcome these challenges (Turker and Vural, 2017). For SI actors, especially the private sector, understanding the institutional context also helps discover new opportunities and leads to social-based firms' legitimacy, survivability, and scalability (Schmidpeter, 2013).

### ***2.5.2 Economic and Business Context***

The relationship between economic framework and SI is often seen in the SI process in which problematic economic context leads to SI initiation. Grameen Bank's microfinance is a well-known example of SI established due to the financial constraints of poor people (Yunus et al., 2010). Additionally, as a tool for solving economic problems, SI can reduce poverty through job creation for people, especially in the BOP market leading to higher incomes (Fahrudi, 2020).

The conducive business environment encourages businesses to initiate and grow sustainably (UNIDO, 2017), including firms undertaking CSI. A good business climate encompasses, for example, good legislation and policies enabling business start and development, access to market and finance, and freedom to invest and competition (MFA, 2016, UNIDO, 2017), which the government must participate in improving the business climate. Also, a country with a good business climate and open to foreign investment is an attractive host country for multinational corporations (MNCs) to initiate SI projects in the host country. The Coca-Cola Company, for example, had set a goal to enable women entrepreneurs. Then, the company created several SI projects to empower women entrepreneurs in countries the company invested in (The Coca-Cola Company, 2021).

### ***2.5.3 Social Context***

The social framework is closely related to SI as it addresses local social problems and satisfies underserved needs, particularly social needs in a specific region or society (Nicholls and Murdock, 2012). Further, Krlev et al. (2014) pointed out that social engagement, attitudes, and openness to SI of citizens could also influence the development of SI in their region. When people in the region had positive attitudes and embraced socially-oriented innovation, it could result in succeed in creating, developing, and scaling SI.

Indeed, social framework can be considered through the lens of social structure in terms of the demographic character of the population and social relationships (Armansin et al.,

2020, Sussman, 2001). Within this view, the concept of social framework suggested by Krlev et al. (2014) can be expanded to include social needs and demands for SI, as well as the social engagement and attitudes of the population, along with other factors such as demographics and social hierarchy within a specific region. Demographic factors can act as catalysts for SI; for instance, various SI projects in Japan have been developed specifically for the elderly in response to the country's aging population. In Thailand, social hierarchy is deeply ingrained in both society and daily life. Thus, social hierarchy can affect SI by excluding people from SI creation, hindering or supporting SI initiatives, and affecting the sustainability of these projects over the long term (Tjahja and Yee, 2018).

#### ***2.5.4 Political Context***

A notion of the SI concept is the empowerment of beneficiaries to create SI. Civil society, as a beneficiary, is unable to address social problems, create social movements, and generate SI unless people are empowered by the government to some extent (Avelino et al., 2019, Galego et al., 2022). When comparing political regimes, democratic governments allow people freedom, resulting in a higher level of empowerment than non-democratic governments. SI, thus, is inevitably relevant to the political context.

In addition to political regimes that affect empowerment, the government's awareness of SI can also increase SI growth. Favourable policy instruments, such as policies, regulations, incentives, and interventions supporting SI, are made if governments perceive the importance of SI and social needs and problems (Krlev et al., 2014). Although the government launched policies or incentives to encourage civil society and private sectors to produce SI, achieving policy implementation requires the government's credibility and commitment to policies (Brunner et al., 2012).

#### ***2.5.5 Resource Context***

Various resources, such as financial resources, human resources, knowledge, and other infrastructures, are devoted to the SI process (Remøe, 2015). Lack of these resources can

lead to the failure of SI initiatives (Oeij et al., 2019). Howaldt et al. (2016b), additionally, emphasised that financial accessibility was vital throughout the SI process, while new technology and networks or platforms for cooperation among stakeholders could drive and facilitate SI.

Due to the diversity of resources, resources can be categorised into two main groups: financial and non-financial resources. Financial resources are simply about funds and expenditures for social purposes and SI (Krlev et al., 2014). Non-financial resources, on the other hand, are human resources, tangible resources, social capital, knowledge, ICT infrastructures, academic resources, and SI-based networks/associations (Allman et al., 2011, Boelman et al., 2015, Krlev et al., 2014).

The resource framework is about the diversity and adequacy of resources and resource accessibility. Limited access to finance and networks is a key barrier to SI development (Chalmers, 2013). Moreover, resource transfer among SI actors is crucial for SI. Since some social problems are wicked problems, they need collaborative actions across actors to find innovative solutions (Nicholls et al., 2015, Remøe, 2015). In the collaboration of SI actors, experiences, skills and resources are shared and exchanged to build SI (Howaldt et al., 2016a). Resource exchange, especially knowledge, can create new capabilities, leading to successful SI (Mirvis et al., 2016).

### ***Framework conditions and variety of capitalism***

Although institutional, economic, social, political, and resource frameworks are positioned in different dimensions, they are all integrated. Formal institutions (in the institutional framework), for example, are near the political framework. The process of making and approving laws is part of the political framework, but the enacted law is about formal institutions (Krlev et al., 2014).

These five groups of framework conditions are relevant and can influence SI/CSI. However, these framework conditions are shaped by the VoC. Since the VoC reflects the country's political economy (Hall and Soskice, 2001), diverse types of VoC then lead to

the differences in political, economic and institutional environments in each country. Moreover, the VoC, in terms of the coordination mechanism (mentioned earlier in Table 8), present the prominence of either formal or informal institutions as the main mechanism, such as the formal institution being the main mechanism in LME, but in CME is the informal institution (Borges et al., 2020). The VoC also influences social structure and interaction, financial and labour markets, technology and innovation, education and industrial relations (Jackson and Deeg, 2006, Whitley, 1999). Thus, the institutional, social, and resource environments of the country are also affected by the VoC.

Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore are suggested as the focal scope in this thesis due to their higher potential and progress regarding SI compared to the other countries in Southeast Asia. Details regarding the five groups of framework conditions in each country are discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1-4.3).

## ***2.6 Relationship Between Firms and the Government in CSI***

As this thesis focuses on the interactions between the government and firms undertaking CSI, this section then explains dimensions of the interactions between the government and firm, government instruments that the government can use in the interactions, and government roles regarding SI. Lastly, this section highlights corporate-political connections, which reflects close relationships between these two actors.

### ***2.6.1 Dimension of Interaction Between Firms and the Government***

Although firms are key actors in creating CSI, other SI actors can also be involved. CSI, in other words, is considered an outcome of interaction between firms and other SI actors. After being delivered, CSI contributes to social and business benefits. CSI, as an outcome of interaction between firms and other actors, is related to the concept of productive interaction.

*Productive interaction* is originally developed as an approach for assessing research impacts. Productive interaction is understood as “exchanges between researchers and stakeholders” to produce “knowledge” that provides “social impacts”, and “the interaction is productive when it leads to efforts by stakeholders to somehow use or apply research results or practical information or experiences” (Spaapen and Van Drooge, 2011, p.212).

The interaction in the concept of productive interaction can be divided into three main types: *direct interaction*, which is “personal interactions involving direct contacts between humans”, *indirect interaction*, which is “established through some kind of material carrier”, and *financial interaction*, which occurs “when potential stakeholders engage in an economic exchange with researchers” (Spaapen and Van Drooge, 2011, p.213).

Adopting the concept of productive interaction in this thesis helps to understand the interaction between firms and the government in CSI. Nevertheless, this thesis focuses on the system level and the interactions between organisations rather than individuals. Therefore, direct interaction between firms and the government in this thesis is understood in the sense that firms directly contact the government without any mediator. In contrast, indirect interaction is established through a mediator.

However, interaction types in the original concept of productive interaction proposed by Spaapen and Van Drooge (2011) were classified based on communication channels between researchers and other stakeholders, which does not align with this thesis. Indeed, many studies regarding state-business relations have frequently discussed relations between government and business in formal and informal forms. *Formal relation* is conceptualised as having some forms of official status and recognition, while *informal relation* is related to non-official relations such as interpersonal-based and social-based (Cali and Sen, 2011, Leftwich, 2009, Sabry, 2019). Also, the concept of formal and informal applied in studies about state-business relations is not only in terms of (in)formal relationships between state and business but also (in)formal institutions, networks, and



organisations<sup>2</sup> that relate and influence relations between state and business (Leftwich, 2009, Radnitz, 2011).

Thus, this thesis carries out the concept of productive interaction. However, the two players are changed from ‘researcher and stakeholders’ to ‘government and firm’ to align with the objectives of this thesis. Additionally, the dimensions of interaction are focused only on direct and indirect ways and extended to cover interaction in formal and informal ways.

### ***2.6.2 Government Instrument in SI***

Governments generally use a wide range of tools or instruments to reach their goals (Capano and Howlett, 2020). Since the government has responsibilities to provide welfare to citizens and eliminate social problems, the government sometimes uses appropriate tools to support SI growth, as SI can lead to a reduction of social problems. However, the types of government instruments vary depending on how researchers categorise such instruments.

Existing literature, particularly public policy research, has been scrutinised by government instruments in three main strands. Research in the first strand has frequently concentrated on instruments in terms of organisation forms available to the government, such as public-private partnerships and public corporations (Pinz et al., 2021, Bache, 2010, Hood, 2006). The second strand of research is about instrument categorisation. An example of a well-known approach in categorising instruments is the ‘carrots, sticks, and sermons’ approach, which refers to instrument configuration as economic means (carrot), regulation (stick), and information (sermon) (Pacheco-Vega, 2020, Serbruyns and Luyssaert, 2006, Bemelmans-Videc et al., 2011). While research in the first and second strands aims to study organisation forms and typology of instruments, the last strand concerns selecting instrument selection and a link between instrument and policy problems (Hood, 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of formal organisation are universities, businesses, political parties, and charities; examples of informal organisations are clans, mafia organisations, and secret societies (Leftwich, 2009).

### ***2.6.2.1 Types of Policy Instruments***

The classification of instruments government authorities established to achieve their goals, especially those that foster innovation, is varied. For example, Borrás and Edquist (2013) deployed the concept of carrots, sticks and sermons and then distinguished policy instruments into three main types: *regulatory instruments* or legal tools to regulate interactions in society and economy, *economic and financial instruments*, which were incentives or disincentives to promote social and economic activities, and *soft instruments*, which could be recommendations and norms. However, Borrás and Edquist (2013) suggested using an instrument mix or policy mix to target better specific problems and suitable for contexts in the country.

The three-fold policy instrument proposed by Borrás and Edquist (2013) is relevant to the concept of hard power and soft power discussed in literature about government policy, such as DeLisle (2020), Nye (2010), and Wang and Lu (2008). According to Nye (2005, p.12), hard power, so-called command power, was “the ability to change what others do” through coercion or inducement. Soft power, so-called co-optive power, was “the ability to shape what others want” through the attractiveness of culture, political value and government policies (Nye, 2005, p.12). Therefore, the concept of hard power is relevant to regulatory instruments and economic instruments, whereas soft instrument is a kind of soft power. Since the concept of hard and soft power reflects a strategy dichotomy, these two terms are sometimes applied at the organisational level. However, the original concepts were developed with a focus on the national level.

Shifting away from the carrot, stick, and sermon approach and taking account of the goals of innovation policy and policy orientation in terms of supply-side and demand-side policies, Edler et al. (2016) proposed types of instruments as 15 key instruments, such as fiscal incentives for R&D, policies for training and skills, and standards. It can be seen that adopting multi-dimension to classify typology not only delineates pertinent instrument types but also contributes to policy design and scrutinising instrument impacts.

### **2.6.3 Government Role in SI**

Government roles in innovation or SI in existing research are studied from two perspectives. The first perspective follows the traditional view of state roles in creating markets and roles in intervening in markets or fixing market failures (Wu and Ramesh, 2014, Mazzucato, 2016). However, research from the second perspective has suggested that government roles have extended beyond being market creators and market correctors since some scholars, such as Borrás and Edler (2020), argued that governance modes also caused government actions. This thesis discusses government roles using both perspectives in the following sections.

#### **2.6.3.1 Classic Dichotomy of Government Role**

The classic dichotomy identifies two key roles of government in creating and correcting markets (Wu and Ramesh, 2014, Mazzucato, 2016). Linking with SI, the government's role in creating markets can be seen as a *source of SI* because the government acts as the key actor in creating SI. A role in correcting the market, on the other hand, reflects the responsive role. When it was the SI case, it could be the role of the *facilitator of SI* helping SI creators through, for example, regulations and funds.

##### ***I. Being a Source of SI***

In the quadruple helix model discussed earlier in Section 2.2.2, the government is one of the key actors in creating SI. However, some social problems are wicked and need collaborative actions across actors to find innovative solutions (Nicholls et al., 2015, Remøe, 2015). Moreover, the government, especially in developing countries, has budget constraints and rigidity that challenge it to provide SI. Therefore, the government cooperates with other actors in the quadruple helix model to become a partner in creating SI instead of being a single SI creator. As mentioned in Section 2.2.3, the PPP is one form of collaboration between the government and private sector, helping them share their resources and expertise to co-create SI (Rao-Nicholson et al., 2017). Moreover, this

partnership is a win-win situation for the government and private sector, as the government can mitigate its limitations and achieve goals to provide social values. Meanwhile, having a strong relationship with the government helps the private sector obtain legitimacy and some privileges from the government, such as information and accessibility to government networks (Yao et al., 2022).

Although collaboration with other actors is a great alternative to succeeding in making SI, governments in some countries find innovative solutions to social problems by themselves. In other words, the government acts as a think tank for SI and sets up a special unit, team, or organisation with tasks to produce design-led innovation in response to challenges and needs in their countries (Bason, 2013).

MindLab, for example, was a cross-governmental innovation unit that was part of three ministries and one municipality in Denmark. It was established to create new social solutions (Centre For Public Impact, 2015). MindLab also involved citizens and businesses in collectively proposing ideas and prototypes (The Govlab, 2016).

Not only in Denmark but also in other countries, mostly developed countries such as the UK, the USA, and Singapore, the government attempted to establish think tank units to look for social challenge-oriented innovations and redesign public policies and services (Bason, 2013). Regardless of country, these governmental innovation units often highlight the involvement of cross-government agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

Moreover, the government can also be an indirect creator of CSI by being a lead user of CSI. Lead users are a source of innovation since they can help the company identify needs and problems and provide potential solutions, leading to the improvement and development of innovation (Eisenberg, 2011, Franke et al., 2006). Zipline is a CSI case in which the government is a lead user. The Zipline company signed contracts with the governments of Ghana and Rwanda to deliver blood, medicines, vaccines and other medical products by drones to rural health centres in their countries (Ackerman and Koziol, 2019). The government and health care staff were lead users of the companies as they faced unmet needs for years, and they provided suggestions with innovative solutions or unnoticed

problems, helping the company improve the distribution of medical supplies in rural areas and led to the development of a new type of drone.

## ***II. Being a Facilitator of SI***

Though the government can act as an SI actor and generate SI, the roles of government in SI often seen to date in SI projects are supportive roles. The government frequently fosters SI in key aspects, as shown below.

### ***Law and regulation***

The government commonly involves legislative functions; hence, it can utilise legal and regulatory authority to establish a conducive legal framework to support SI. This involves enacting new laws and regulations that promote SI as well as reforming existing regulations to make them more flexible, agile, and favourable for SI actors. The government offers tax benefits for investment regarding SI and enables the establishment of new legal entities that help social enterprises overcome limitations related to raising capital and generating profits, such as B Corps and Community Interest Companies (Mulgan, 2017).

### ***Fund and financial resource***

The government can be a funding source by granting funds directly to SI actors or creating a special fund for SI purposes. Grant funding is frequently provided to charities and social enterprises, especially in European countries, while some countries, such as Slovakia, allow taxpayers to allocate a percentage of their tax bill to support SI-focused charities (Boelman et al., 2015).

However, grant aid can be challenging for governments facing fiscal pressures or tight budgets, which leads them to explore alternative financial mechanisms such as repayable finance (Mulgan, 2017). Further, the government encourages or incentivises investors to invest in SI projects. Recently, the government has deployed some financial innovations to promote SI, such as social impact bonds, in which the government commits to repaying

the initial investment and returns to investors if the agreed-upon social outcomes are achieved (Boelman et al., 2015).

### ***Capacity building for SI creators***

To foster SI, it is important to help SI creators enhance their knowledge and skills through, for example, training and incubation (Bria et al., 2015, Terstriep et al., 2020). Also, building capacity for SI creators can promote SI throughout the SI process, from launching ideas to scaling up SI. In this regard, the government has implemented incubation and acceleration programs, such as ‘Social Impact Start’ in Germany (Boelman et al., 2015).

### ***Promoting engagement and network***

Many social challenges are complex and require collaboration across various sectors to find effective solutions (Nicholls et al., 2015, Remøe, 2015). Engaging a wide range of stakeholders is an effective way to gather diverse ideas, experiences, opinions, knowledge, and resources, all of which contribute to successful SI. The government can facilitate this engagement by establishing forums and platforms where participants can brainstorm, co-design, crowdfund, and co-create SI, as well as creating networks for social innovators to connect and share knowledge across communities and countries.

### ***R&D and SI monitor***

SI sometimes requires advanced technology and knowledge to succeed. The government can facilitate existing research organisations and academia to develop relevant knowledge and technology and to foster awareness and interest in social innovation among students. Further, governments should have a comprehensive understanding of SI in various dimensions within the context of their countries, for instance, structural conditions, activities, outcomes, and impacts of SI, and should monitor them (Boelman et al., 2015).

### 2.6.3.2 Government Role Underpinned by Governance Mode

Although government roles in SI are considered a source and a facilitator of SI, it can be argued that the political regime of a particular country can differentiate the forms and functions of governments, leading to dissimilar roles and responses of governments to SI. Therefore, some research has conceptualised the roles of the government by deliberating political regimes.

Borrás and Edler (2020), for example, proposed various roles of the state across governance modes (see Table 9), while government roles in this paper were not only about initiating, facilitating and supporting but also about monitoring and taking opportunities from the projects. This paper, thus, extended the roles of government far beyond the classic dichotomy, mentioned in Section 2.6.3.1. Although this article focused on the transformation of socio-technical systems and projects related to modes of governance rather than SI projects, the government roles suggested in Borrás and Edler's (2020) paper are helpful for this thesis as they help in explaining characteristics of the interactions between the government and firms, especially purpose of government involvement in CSI projects.

Table 9: Roles of the State

Notion of governance	Mode of governance	Illustrative case	Roles of state
Driven by state actors + Hierarchical, dominated	Command and control	Nuclear Power	Moderator Promoter Initiator Guarantor Watchdog
Driven by state actors + Heterarchical, non-dominated	Primus inter pares	Smart Cities	Facilitator Lead user Initiator Promoter Enabler of societal engagement Gatekeeper
Driven by non-state actors + Hierarchical, dominated	Oligopoly	Automated vehicles	Gatekeeper Facilitator Promoter

Driven by non-state actors + Heterarchical, non- dominated	Self-regulation	Cryptocurrencies	Observer Warner Mitigator Opportunist
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Source: Borrás and Edler (2020)

By adopting the government roles from this paper to CSI projects, the role of being a facilitator providing, for example, fund and capacity building, to SI creators is discussed in the sub-section above. Moreover, the role of being a barrier is also found in projects in which the government has high power over the project. In this case, Bambang et al. (2018) studied social purpose projects in Indonesia, especially projects for community empowerment. They discovered that the government played a crucial role as an obstacle when projects required permission from government agencies. These community empowerment projects often faced lengthy and leveraging permission requirements when asking for formal permission from government officials, and the time taken to receive approval increased if the organisation seeking permission did not offer financial incentives to the government officials involved (Bambang et al., 2018). This government role, therefore, can have a detrimental impact on CSI projects, hindering their growth in the country.

#### ***2.6.4 Corporate-political Connection***

In the research area with corporate and political actors as the focal point, the concept of ***corporate-political connection*** (CPC), which refers to “the relationships or ties developed between firms and political actors”, is studied through the lens of business and political perspectives (Wei et al., 2023, p.1873). Existing CPC literature has focused the connection between firms and political actors on two main types: one is the relationship-based CPC addressing the interpersonal or individual-organisation connection between these two actors, and another is the equity-based CPC addressing connections in terms of firms’ equity ownership held by governments or politicians (Wei et al., 2023).

The CPC is advantageous for firms as it can increase firms’ legitimacy, reduce uncertainties caused by deficiencies in formal institutions, and help firms gain some



resources controlled by political actors, which is critical for doing business in emerging market countries with less-developed formal institutions (Zhang, 2017, Cui et al., 2018, Wei et al., 2023). On the other hand, the CPC can provide political actors with financial gain from firms, votes, information, and job positions (Bertrand et al., 2018, Wei et al., 2023).

The CPC concept has sometimes been discussed together with the concept of *corporate-political activity* (CPA), which is defined as “corporate attempts to shape government policy in ways favourable to the firm” (Hillman et al., 2004, p.837). The CPA can be proactive activities to shape public policy or influence legislative and regulatory processes such as lobbying and campaign contributions, and also be reactive activities such as keeping track of law and regulation development to ensure compliance when they are passed and to surpass compliance requirements (Katic and Hillman, 2023, Hillman et al., 2004).

Although the concept of CPC places more emphasis on the connection between actors whereas the CPA focuses on activities, these two relevant terms are considered the market strategy and non-market strategy of firms to, for example, improve business performances and capabilities, expand to new markets particularly in emerging countries, obtain policies and regulations that are favourable to firms, and reduce regulatory pressures (Hillman et al., 2004, Lawton et al., 2013, Rajwani and Liedong, 2015, Wei et al., 2023). This encourages some researchers, such as Hillman and Hitt (1999), Mathur and Singh (2011), and Den Hond et al. (2014), to study a particular topic which is *corporate-political strategy*. The definition of corporate-political strategy (CPS), indeed, combines meanings of CPC and CPA as it is explained as “a firm’s attempt to shape its competitive environment via government relationships by relying on issue advocacy, constituency building, lobbying, and contributions to political action committees” (Ozer and Markóczy, 2010, p.252).

Some studies have explored the connections between corporate political connections, corporate political activity, and corporate political strategy, particularly in relation to innovation and CSR. These studies emphasise the significance of corporate-political connections as a strategic tool for influencing policies and regulations and building favourable conditions for firms to create innovation; then, the corporate-political strategy

can be an alternative or complementary to firms' innovation strategy (Ozer and Markóczy, 2010). Also, firms engaging in CSR can leverage political connections and resources to identify relevant CSR topics and beneficiaries that are politically and socially salient, to increase economic viability through critical information obtained from political actors and favourable regulations created by the polity, and to increase the firm's credibility (Den Hond et al., 2014). Further, connecting with political actors and aligning goals with political actors can help firms undertaking CSR increase positive outcomes in terms of reputation (Den Hond et al., 2014).

According to the existing literature mentioned above, the corporate-political connection benefits firms undertaking CSI, particularly in developing countries where patronage is prevalent (Fraser et al., 2006, Wateethammawipat et al., 2020). Firms undertaking CSI can gain exclusive resources from political actors with whom they maintain good relationships or share aligned goals for their projects. Firms can also benefit from policies or regulations tailored to their projects. Moreover, firms undertaking CSI are more reliable when collaborating with the government, which is vital for new and less well-known CSI projects.

## ***2.7 CSI in Practice***

This section shifts away from CSI's theoretical perspective and moves closer to it in its practical implementation. The following well-known CSI projects illustrate how CSI is implemented in practice.

### ***2.7.1 Examples of CSI Projects***

Before presenting four examples of CSI projects, the CSI concept in theories is reminded that CSI *aims to create value for society and business* (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019; Szegedi et al., 2016), *can be non-technological and technological innovation* (Tabares, 2020; Canestrino et al., 2015; Esen and Maden-

Eyiusta, 2019), *provides social and business outcomes* (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Herrera, 2015; Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019), *involves stakeholders within firms and external parties* (Mirvis et al., 2016, Domanski and Kaletka, 2017), and *involves firms' core business strategies and applies corporate assets, capabilities, and human resources* (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020; Tabares, 2020; Mirvis et al., 2016; Domanski and Kaletka, 2017). The four examples of CSI projects explained below encompass these criteria, but some dissimilarities appear, which are discussed in Section 2.7.2.

### ***2.7.1.1 Grameen Danone by Grameen Danone Food Limited in Bangladesh***

The Grameen Danone project was established in 2006 by Grameen Danone Food Limited (GFDL), a joint venture between Danone and the Grameen Group, with the aim of pursuing social business objectives (Danone, 2020). GFDL combined Danone's expertise in yoghurt production with the Grameen Group's knowledge of rural areas in Bangladesh to create nutrient-rich yoghurt for sale, particularly targeting children in low-income communities (Danone, 2020).

This project provided significant social value to children from less affluent families as well as to suppliers within the supply chain. The main ingredient for yoghurt production, milk, was sourced from small-scale farmers, while women from Bangladesh were employed to sell and deliver the yoghurt to customers' homes (Danone Communities, 2022). The strong collaboration between Danone and Grameen Group was presented in the form of a JV. Engagements with micro-farmers and with women in locals also occurred. Interestingly, micro-farmers and women employees were co-creators of CSI and beneficiaries of this CSI project. Notably, the government had minimal involvement in this project.

### ***2.7.1.2 Financial Solutions Lab by JPMorgan Chase in the USA***

In 2014, JPMorgan Chase and a non-profit company named Financial Health Network collectively launched the Financial Solutions Lab with support from Prudential Financial.

The Financial Solutions Lab had goals to develop new strategies and financial products and services that improve financial health for people struggling with financial health challenges and having low to moderate income (Financial Solutions Lab, 2022b). This project offered three programmes: a fintech accelerator, a meeting place for exchanging insights and building collaboration between fintech providers and non-profit organisations, and innovative solutions for financial needs (Financial Solutions Lab, 2022a).

By supporting this project, JPMorgan Chase could utilise new fintech and financial solutions developed in this project to improve and reduce costs in creating products and services. Meanwhile, this project could improve Americans' financial health, leading to financial stability at personal and national levels (Radjou, 2021).

### ***2.7.1.3 Intelligent Water System by Hitachi in Maldives***

Hitachi is a Japanese multinational conglomerate company aiming to deliver social challenge-driven innovation along with embedding SI in the company's culture, vision and mission, and embracing customer co-creation of SI (Akatsu, 2021). Hitachi has searched for solution development using operational and information technology to alleviate social challenges in Japan and other countries (Hitachi, 2021b, Hitachi, 2021a). In 2010, Hitachi partnered with the Maldivian government in the form of Malé Water and Sewerage Company Pvt. Ltd. to build a water treatment system, seawater desalination system, and water distribution system in Malé Island with smart control and smart information management (Hitachi, 2021a, Hitachi, 2013, Maldives, 2021). This could relieve the water shortage, increase water supply stability, and help people on the island access safe drinking water (Hitachi, 2021a, Hitachi, 2013).

### ***2.7.1.4 Smart Mining by Huawei in China***

Huawei, an ICT infrastructure and smart device provider, is another firm focusing on social challenges. Although Huawei has not directly announced that it has engaged in SI, Huawei set one of the company goals to promote environmental sustainability, and some

recent products and services were developed to address social challenges. Concerning the high risks of coal mining in Shanxi province, Huawei collaborated with Jingying Shuzhi (a system development company) and the China Coal Research Institute to co-develop an AI-based solution called 'Mine Brain' in an endeavour to help coal mines achieve zero deaths and increase efficiency for coal mining (Huawei, 2019, Xue and Xu, 2019). The Mine Brain, which was installed in mines in Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, and Anhui, could intelligently identify unsafe scenarios and immediately issue warning alarms through the broadcast system, which could protect workers' lives and lead to the improvement of safety management (Xue and Xu, 2019).

### ***2.7.2 CSI in Practice vs the Theoretical View***

According to the examples of CSI projects above, all projects exhibit social objectives and firms' strong intentions to alleviate social challenges. These firms embed social objectives into their strategies and business models to provide positive values to society's beneficiaries in terms of health, employment, and financial stability while obtaining revenues and business opportunities.

Furthermore, the innovation shown in the example CSI cases is new products or services and new ways to produce and provide socially oriented products or services to target beneficiaries. For example, in the Grameen Danone project, new products that contributed to health benefits for poor people were created. In contrast, this project initiated its new distribution process by hiring local women for door-to-door sales. Moreover, the innovation shown in the example projects is technological and non-technological.

Collaboration and partnership are also found in exemplified CSI projects. Firms can collaborate with the government, other businesses, academia, and communities to co-produce CSI. Interestingly, beneficiaries of CSI projects can be a part of projects such as the Grameen Danone project, in which the beneficiaries were involved in the delivery of the products. Although firms are generally primary producers of CSI in their projects, they also support other social innovators in producing SI instead of them, such as in the case

of the Financial Solutions Lab. By doing this, firms can bring SI created by other social innovators and other knowledge obtained during SI processes to further develop or apply in their organisations, helping them reduce the risk of failures and costs for developing SI from scratch (Mirvis and Googins, 2018a).

When comparing CSI in existing literature with CSI in practice, some discrepancies arise. Firstly, CSI literature suggests that CSI provides social and business values; however, in practice, some projects exhibit an imbalance. Firms' key role in the literature is primarily to create SI. This includes the 'co-creation' of SI between firms and their partners. In practice, however, firms sometimes fund other social innovators and allow them to develop SI on behalf of the firms. SI created by these other innovators are then utilised by the firms in the future.

Thirdly, beneficiaries of some CSI projects can participate in the production process of CSI, which has not been extensively highlighted in existing literature. Lastly, the literature often emphasises the government's supportive role in CSI projects. However, the government can take a proactive role in CSI projects. The differences between CSI in practice and theory help extend the meaning of CSI, especially in terms of stakeholder engagement and spectrum of objectives. Additionally, they address the prominent relationship or role of the government in CSI projects, which helps scrutinise the interaction between the government and firms implementing CSI in this thesis.

## ***2.8 Conclusion and Research Gaps***

Although this thesis focuses on CSI, understanding SI is crucial as it provides a ground for the CSI concept, actors, and other elements relevant to CSI. After reviewing the literature, it can be seen that SI is closely linked to socio-institutional contexts. SI highlights problems and needs that are embedded and triggered by these contexts, then finds innovative ways to solve social problems, satisfy people's unmet needs, and cause changes in society, institutions, and people's behaviours. SI also emphasises that government, industry, university, and civil society are the main interdependent actors who

are drivers, creators, and beneficiaries of SI and the interactions among these actors. Interdependent actors, interactions, environments surrounding actors (socio-institutional context) and other relevant components are weaved into an ecosystem of SI.

Since SI emerged to overcome social problems and serve unmet social needs, some scholars, such as Nicholls et al. (2015), pointed out that these challenges arose from institutional voids or failures of public sectors and private sectors to eliminate problems and provide welfare and public needs to improve quality of life (Nicholls et al., 2015). Consequently, third sectors (which can be understood as civil society) took on the responsibility of solving social problems and satisfying unmet needs instead of governments and private sectors. However, due to wicked problems, SI to date calls for more collaborations among actors than relying on a single actor to create SI. This can result in new collaborative forms and relationships in the SI ecosystem, for example, PPP and university public engagement.

Although researchers, such as Gerometta et al. (2005) and Bellandi et al. (2021), studied SI through the lens of interdependent actors, most research has focused on universities, governments, and civil society, whereas studies based on the firm aspect are few. This is because the nature of SI is far from commercial purposes, which are a core component of business. When considering firms as focal actors, the concept of CSI encompasses social and business objectives, social and business benefits, innovativeness, stakeholder engagement, and core business strategy involvement. Also, firms are motivated to implement CSI due to external pressures, stakeholder expectations, business environment, and their own goals for creating social and economic outcomes.

In recent years, there has been an increase in studies focusing on; however, many of these studies often concentrate within the boundaries of individual firms rather than linking to contextual elements and other actors in the SI ecosystem. However, existing studies, such as Herrera (2015), Carberry et al. (2017) and Nordberg et al. (2020), focused on CSI in the context of Western countries and civil society played a significant role as a key creator of SI. In contrast, civil society in some Asian countries often struggles to address social

problems or create SI because of dictatorship and a lack of civil rights (Morris-Suzuki and Soh, 2017). When governments and civil society face challenges in generating SI, governments encourage firms to become the main creators of SI. However, governments sometimes maintain control or partner with companies to create SI. Despite the importance of government, there is a lack of research studying the interaction between the government and firms undertaking CSI, especially in the context of Southeast Asian countries.

To understand the interaction between the government and firms undertaking CSI, the VoC provides a helpful lens as it reflects the country's political economy and is relevant to social, institutional, and resource contexts. These intertwined contexts play important roles in influencing CSI. As the VoC hints at the political and governance approach of the country, the VoC then also affects the form and function of government, leading to dissimilar government roles and instruments regarding CSI across countries. Since the VoC shapes the country contexts and government of a particular country, different VoCs thus can lead to varied interactions between the government and firms undertaking CSI across different countries.

## ***2.9 Conceptual Framework***

Since the research questions concerning '*What are characteristics of interaction that firms establish with the government?*', '*What are mechanisms of the interaction?*', and '*How is CSI understood in practice?*', the conceptual framework (as depicted in Figure 4) is developed based on the SI ecosystem framework, national innovation system model, and productive interaction concept. Moreover, the conceptual framework is also derived from the VoC and institutional theory.

By adapting the national innovation system model developed by Kuhlmann and Arnold (2001) to SI, the national SI system in this conceptual framework then comprises wider framework conditions that are shaped by VoC, and the framework conditions also involve demands (both social and state demands) and other SI actors. However, the national SI



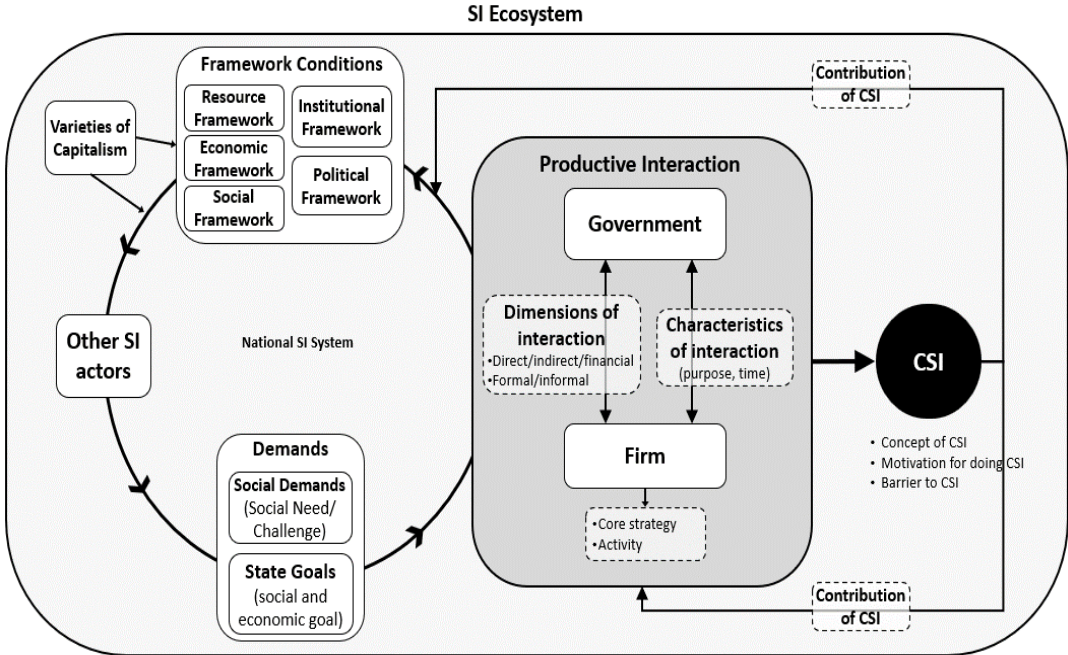
system illustrates interactions among elements in the system less. This thesis then extends from the SI system to the SI ecosystem to highlight interactions between SI actors (focusing on government and firm actors), framework conditions, the VoC, and contributions of CSI as a feedback loop.

Looking at key SI actors in the ecosystem, this thesis focuses on firms and government and their interactions in CSI. This thesis adopts the concept of productive interaction and considers CSI as an output of the interaction between firms and the government. However, the characteristics of this interaction can vary across countries. This thesis then explores ***“What are characteristics of interaction that firms establish with the government?”*** focusing on interaction purposes and time in which the government is involved. In addition, this thesis examines framework conditions and other independent actors in the SI ecosystem that can be barriers to interaction.

In the interaction between firms and government, the government is involved in CSI in different ways. Therefore, this thesis investigates ***“What are mechanisms of the interaction?”*** by focusing on how the government involves firms’ CSI, considering the dimensions of direct, indirect and financial interactions and formal and informal interactions. Further, this thesis explores the influence of contextual factors on interactions and the impact of government involvement in firms’ CSI, especially on firm strategies and activities regarding CSI.

According to the concept of productive interaction, the interaction's output contributes to society. By applying this concept, this thesis focuses on the contribution of CSI, particularly to society and business. Moreover, different VoC leads to CSI that diverge from theoretical views, especially motivations for initiating CSI and understanding of CSI. The last research question suggested is, ***“How is CSI understood in practice?”***

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework



Source: Author's elaboration

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses research design and methodology carried out in this thesis to answer the research questions. The first section of this chapter explains and justifies research method, strategies for selecting cases, and units of analysis and observation. Next, data collection techniques and processes are explained in detail before describing data analysis. Finally, data management plan and ethics are presented in the last section of this chapter.

## ***3.1 Research Methodology***

### ***3.1.1 Research Method***

Since this thesis aims to study how firms interact with the government in CSI in a particular country in terms of mechanisms and characteristics of the interactions, the qualitative methodology thus is adopted in this research. This is because exploring insights about the interaction between firms and government cannot be quantified as numerical data. Further, understanding and theorising these interactions aligns better with narrative approaches than with mathematical calculations. Therefore, qualitative methodology is used in this research.

Among various types of qualitative research methods, case study research is concerned with contextual understanding as a part of the explanation (Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018, Suryani, 2013). Moreover, case study research can provide a holistic view of the phenomenon and its dynamics (Noor, 2008). Therefore, case study approach can depict CSI in a particular country as a whole system encompassing interactions among actors, especially between firms and government, the country's contexts, and other related elements shaped by the VoC.

### ***3.1.1.1 Comparative Case Studies***

Multiple case studies are selected for this thesis since different countries have different VoCs and contexts, leading to dissimilarities in the interaction between government and firms. This is because multiple case studies can help researchers comprehensively understand differences and dissimilarities between countries, which can deeply analyse data within each case and across cases (Gustafsson, 2017, Starman, 2013). Moreover, multiple case studies encompass several empirical evidence bases, making this thesis robust and rigorous for theorisation (Gustafsson, 2017).

As this thesis focuses on the interaction between government and firms as a whole country rather than on one individual firm, each country thus is represented as one case study: the Thai, Malaysian, and Singaporean cases. Comparative analysis is adopted in this thesis to compare these three cases. The comparative case studies present their strengths in comparisons across multiple cases at the same scale, analysing networks and interrelationships at different scales, and understanding the phenomenon that has changed over time (do Amaral, 2022). This helps this thesis in analysing, synthesising, and emphasising the different interactions between government and firms across countries, the influence of nuanced VoC and contexts on the interactions within a country and across countries, and CSI characteristics in different countries.

### ***3.1.1.2 Case Selection***

This thesis aims to understand the interaction between firms implementing CSI and government, which is influenced by VoC and framework conditions, focusing on the setting of Southeast Asian countries where there is a lack of research and understanding of CSI. Therefore, this thesis selects one typical case as the primary case compared with different countries. As mentioned, the key challenge of comparative case studies is that it consumes enormous amount of time and resources. Pursuing comparative case studies with one main case can overcome this challenge and help the author gain a deep

understanding of the interaction in a specific country while having a comprehension of the interaction in other selected countries.

Among the 11 Southeast Asian countries, three potential countries (Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore) are proposed as case studies in this thesis. These countries are notable for their economic and innovation performance (Dutta et al., 2022, World Bank, 2023a). Furthermore, these three countries are neighbouring countries located next to each other and are in the same region but are nuanced in terms of type of capitalism and context. This results in dissimilarities between CSI and government-firm interaction.

These three countries are suitable for collecting both primary and secondary data. This is because they have a large number of social and innovation-related businesses and government agencies and relevant organisations involved in social-oriented business support, increasing the possibility of having numerous participants from these projects and organisations that could participate in this thesis, along with having a large amount of secondary data complementing the primary data. This helps enable the data collection to be successful within a limited timeframe.

Despite embracing the comparative case study analysis, Thailand is proposed to be the main case study, which is comparatively analysed with Malaysian and Singaporean cases. Due to limitations related to the capabilities and time constraints of the PhD program, it is challenging for a student to obtain extensive primary data from all three countries within a short timeframe. Moreover, this thesis considers country contexts and VoC as key influences on the interaction. Therefore, focusing on one country as the main case study is more practical than exploring and analysing three countries simultaneously.

### ***3.1.2 Research Paradigm for Comparative Case Studies***

Research paradigms frequently found in case study research are interpretivism and critical realism. In **interpretivism/constructivism**, individuals subjectively see the world or reality in different views depending on their experiences and understanding (Ryan, 2018).

Case study research employing interpretivism, thus, seeks to comprehend a phenomenon by acknowledging individual subjectivity (Rashid et al., 2019), with social context being a key element that influences individuals' experiences and interpretations. Despite aiming to understand a phenomenon, interpretivism focuses on interpreting individuals' experiences towards the phenomenon rather than considering causality (Easton, 2010).

Due to the limitation in causal explanations and the recognition of contextual power, **critical realism**, which originated from Bhaskar (2013), is often suggested as an alternative. Critical realism highlights the importance of surrounding contexts and conditions that influence mechanisms causing the phenomenon (Easton, 2010). Meanwhile, it allows a causal explanation for the phenomenon and acknowledges individual subjectivity (Wynn Jr and Williams, 2012). Therefore, critical realism can effectively articulate the contextual causal mechanisms in the given context and theorise the mechanisms to explain the phenomenon (Lawani, 2021).

This thesis aims to understand CSI and the interaction between firms and government in CSI. Country contexts are critical elements that significantly affect interdependent actors and form how they interact. Country contexts, in other words, result in CSI and the interaction between firms and government. Thus, they should be accounted for in the analysis. Therefore, the critical realism paradigm is selected for this thesis.

Concerning the ontology of critical realism, reality is stratified into three levels: the empirical level which events are measured and explained through common sense and experiences), the actual level which events occur in the real world), and the real level, which causal mechanisms or structures cause social events (Stutchbury, 2022). The causal mechanisms are "social products that can ultimately be understood through phenomena at the empirical level" (Fletcher, 2017, p.183).

In this thesis, the interactions between the government and firms undertaking CSI are events that occur and can be observed through the experience and perceptions of individuals from firms, government agencies, and other organisations involved in CSI projects. The causal mechanisms of the interaction thus can be understood through the

interpretation and analysis of individuals' experiences and perceptions along with contextual data that influence the interaction mechanism. Adopting the case study method that concerns contextual influence and individual subjectivity can help explain and understand the interaction mechanisms.

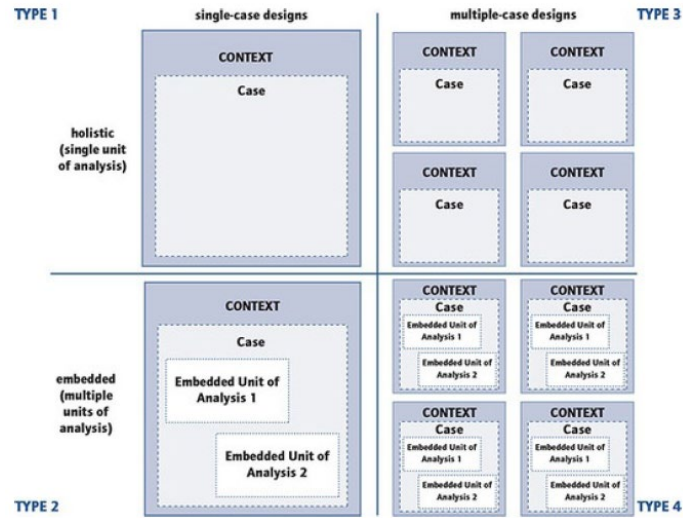
Further, observing events (the interactions between the government and firms) at the empirical level led to data collection design to gather intensive and extensive data. Intensive data involving, for example, in-depth interpretive data and extensive data involving the broader contexts (Fletcher, 2017, Lawani, 2021) was obtained from different methods. The primary data collection, mainly through interviews, provided intensive data. On the other hand, extensive data was gathered from the secondary data. Besides, the abduction using theories and concepts to redescribe the empirical data and retrodution focusing on identifying contextual conditions for a particular causal mechanism (Fletcher, 2017) were employed in the data analysis process to explain the causal mechanisms of the interaction.

### ***3.1.3 Unit of Analysis and Observation in Comparative Case Studies***

#### ***3.1.3.1 Unit of Analysis***

An important process in case study research is to consider the appropriate case study design and unit of analysis. According to Yin (2018), case studies can be categorised based on the number of cases and the number of units of analysis into four main types: holistic single case study, embedded single case study, holistic multiple case study, and embedded multiple case study (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies



Source: Yin (2018)

This thesis investigates the interaction between government and firms undertaking CSI across different countries and VoC through comparative analysis. As mentioned earlier, multiple case studies then are selected for this thesis. According to Figure 5, the unit of analysis of multiple cases can be categorised into two types; one is a holistic case study which is proper to examine the nature of an organisation in a holistic aspect, and another is an embedded design for studying several units within one case such as one unit is the organisation as a whole and another unit is the individual member (Yin, 2018). This thesis examines the interaction and CSI in a country's whole system. One country is represented by one case, with only one unit in the case. This thesis, therefore, carries out *a holistic multiple-case study* (Yin, 2018). The unit of analysis of each case study is at the country level, and comprises three case studies: Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

### 3.1.3.2 Unit of Observation

In addition to designing the unit of analysis, it is necessary to consider the unit of observation or level of data. The meanings of unit of analysis and unit of observation are different. The unit of analysis is “who or what for which *information is analysed and*



*conclusions are made*”, while the unit of observation is “who or what for which *data are measured or collected*” (Sedgwick, 2014, p.1).

This thesis looks at the interaction between government and firms implementing CSI at a country level rather than individual firms. Thus, the unit of analysis is at the country level. However, sources of data are from individual CSI projects and related government agencies and other organisations. Country contextual data, especially framework conditions and VoC as key influences on the interaction, are also considered. Thus, the unit of observation is at the organisational and country levels.

CSI projects are the starting point for collecting data, which can then be extended to other SI actors, particularly government agencies and other organisations involving the CSI project. The data gathered from CSI projects illustrates how the government influences and engages in each CSI project and identifies SI actors/other organisations that participate in the project. CSI project-oriented data, in other words, can exhibit the interaction between firms and government that occurs within a specific country.

Despite providing actual interaction and being instructive, relying solely on project-oriented data from some CSI projects risks misleading interpretations. Furthermore, this thesis considers framework conditions and VoC as key influences on the interaction. It is necessary to collect country contextual data, which helps in understanding the country's background, SI ecosystem, and relationships between firms and government in general and in a holistic view. For example, country contexts such as political and economic contexts present characteristics of government, economy, and businesses in the country, and they shed light on the relationship between government and firms.

Additionally, analysing country-level data can help identify more government agencies and organisations that play significant roles within the SI ecosystem. It also provides insight into the formal interactions among actors in this ecosystem, supporting and enhancing the robustness of the project-oriented data. However, the country-level data sometimes does not reveal informal interactions, which is crucial in examining the interaction between firms and government in practice.

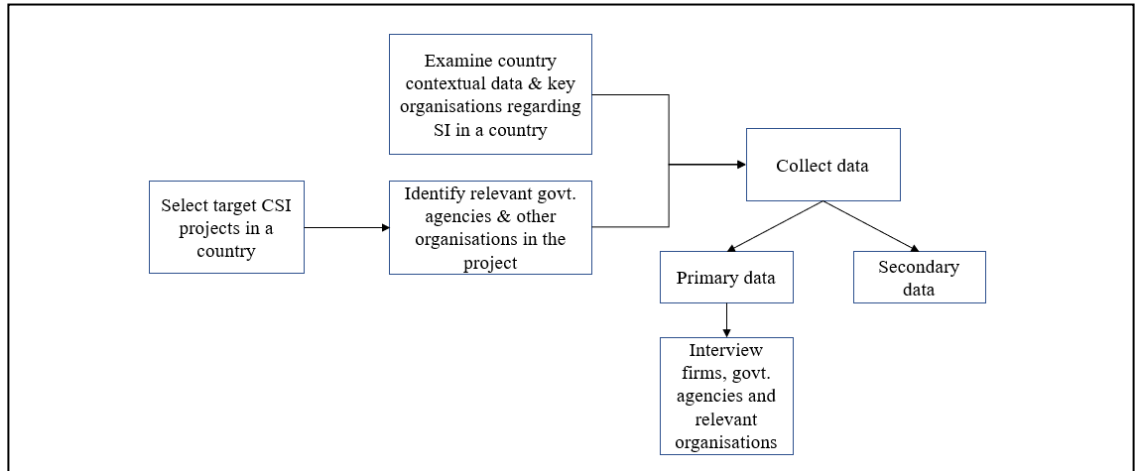
### ***3.2 Data Collection Design***

Figure 6 outlines the data collection process. As mentioned in Section 3.1.3.2, CSI projects were selected as entry points for directly exploring their interactions. Next, salient government agencies and other organisations involved in the projects were identified to collect data. At the same time, contextual data on a country was considered to understand its contexts and seek key government agencies and other organisations that played important roles in the country's SI ecosystem. Any key government agencies and organisations that were overlooked in sample CSI projects were included for data collection.

The primary data was obtained mainly through the interviews. The secondary data sources were from, for example, online databases, news, and company reports, which were helpful for data triangulation (Graue, 2015) and ensuring comprehensive data. Both primary and secondary data were later analysed to investigate the interaction between government and firms undertaking CSI across different countries. It should be noted that Thailand is the main case study with a greater sample size, while Malaysia and Singapore are given as comparison cases with a smaller sample size. Comparing small-N cases with a large-N case can enhance the external validity of the main case (Slater and Ziblatt, 2013) and help explain the varying conditions that can lead to different causal patterns in this phenomenon (George, 2019).

In terms of data access, participants in Malaysia and Singapore were interviewed directly in English, which is widely spoken in these countries. Although English is not as commonly spoken in Thailand, the author is a native Thai speaker. Therefore, selecting these three countries to study for this research poses no significant language barriers. Moreover, these three countries were considered low-risk countries (University of Manchester, 2023), making them safe for conducting fieldwork interviews.

Figure 6: Brief Data Collection Process in this Thesis



Source: Author's elaboration

### ***3.2.1 Primary Data Collection***

To get insight into the interaction between firms and the government in CSI and understand the CSI and SI ecosystem, the primary data was collected from interviews through informants in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore along with fieldwork in these three countries. The secondary data was also gathered through various sources, such as online databases, news, and company reports, which complemented and triangulated the primary data. However, interview instruments are varied and have different advantages and disadvantages. This section discusses the types and methods of interviews and then selects the suitable one for this thesis.

#### ***3.2.1.1 Type of Interview***

This thesis adopts the semi-structured interview, which combines predetermined questions and additional questions to probe data during the interview (Naz et al., 2022). This helps obtain all necessary data, additional insightful data, and participants' opinions elicited during the interviews. Moreover, semi-structured interviews can unlock the limitations of structured and unstructured interviews in terms of scopes and comparisons of data across informants (Qu and Dumay, 2011, Bihu, 2020).

### ***3.2.1.2 Interview Method***

#### ***I. Individual Interview***

The semi-structured interviews to obtain data for this thesis were conducted through individual interviews rather than group interviews. The individual interview, in which one informant joins each interview, enables the researcher to delve deeper into sensitive topics and personal experiences than a group interview (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017; Fox, 2009). This is helpful for obtaining in-depth data, particularly the informant's personal experiences and comments related to the interactions with government agencies, which is critical for this thesis.

#### ***II. Face-to-face Interview***

The individual interviews in this thesis were conducted face-to-face, both in person and virtually. Face-to-face interviews are advantageous in terms of building rapport and observing nonverbal cues such as voice and body language (Harvey et al., 2024, Opendakker, 2006). These cues are useful in interpreting and analysing data and make the interview natural, making participants feel at ease.

Since this thesis focuses on Thai, Malaysian, and Singaporean cases, a combination of in-person and videoconferencing interviews is beneficial for the author in conveniently and successfully collecting interview data from the three countries within a limited timeframe. Videoconferencing interview closely resembles the in-person interview, as it allows the researcher to meet the participant face-to-face and observe visual and emotional cues (Irani, 2019). However, videoconferencing offers greater flexibility in terms of time and location, is more cost-effective, and aligns better with COVID-19 safety measures compared to in-person interviews (Irani, 2019, Kobakhidze et al., 2021). For the pilot interviews conducted between June and July 2022, videoconferencing was the primary method due to location constraints. However, in-person meetings were prioritised for the full-scale research interviews, though videoconferencing could also be used if participants preferred.

### ***3.2.1.3 Interview Guideline***

Since this thesis aims to study the interaction between government and firms, firms with CSI projects and government agencies engaging in CSI projects or relevant to CSI were the main target informants. In addition to firms and government agencies, data should be obtained from other SI actors to ensure the inclusion of extensive insights from all aspects, including the viewpoint of civil society and academia. However, these participants must be relevant to CSI projects or involved in SI/CSI to provide meaningful data regarding CSI and its interactions. This thesis, hence, has three main categories of interviewees: firms implementing CSI projects, government agencies involving CSI, and other organisations involving CSI. To obtain insights from informants, themes for interviews for each type of informant are constructed and exemplified in Appendix II.

### ***3.2.2 Secondary Data Collection***

In addition to the primary data obtained from the interviews, this thesis employs secondary data, especially regarding framework conditions, to be analysed with the primary data. The secondary data was collected from, for example, existing academic papers, international organisation databases (World Bank, OECD, and ASEAN Secretariat), and Thai, Malaysian and Singaporean government websites. To efficiently gather secondary data and provide meaningful country background, each framework condition was considered based on specific scopes that could affect SI/CSI and the interaction between the government and firms.

This thesis, therefore, focuses on the ***political context*** in terms of the political regime of the country, political environment and stability, administrative structure, and government goals and policies related to SI or solving social challenges. The ***economic and business context*** covers economic performance (for example, GDP growth, GDP composition, and country income level), national economic goals and policies, business climate, and government intervention in the market. The ***social context*** focuses on key social problems and needs in the country, social awareness, and responses to those problems and needs.

The *institutional context* considers *formal institutions* and *informal institutions* of the country that affect SI/CSI. The formal institution is about ‘officially codified’ and ‘legitimised by state agencies’, whereas the informal institution is about ‘not formally codified’ and ‘publicly recognised’. In this thesis, formal institutions concern laws, regulations, state policies, and other authorised rules; and informal institutions concern social norms, beliefs, and values shared among groups of people. Lastly, the *resource context* includes financial and non-financial resources, which are important to CSI growth. Financial resources in this thesis include state budgets, funds, grants, and other sources of funds for businesses. Non-financial resources include human resources such as labour skills and the number of social-based businesses; and infrastructure resources, such as networks and organisations supporting SI/social-based businesses.

### ***3.3 Interview Process***

#### ***3.3.1 Interview Participant Selection***

Before conducting the semi-structured interviews, this thesis selected CSI projects as starting points and then identified government agencies and other organisations related to these CSI projects. The chosen projects were examined to determine whether they aligned with the CSI concepts employed in this research, ensuring that they were considered CSI projects. It should be noted that CSI projects were not limited to qualified projects undertaken by for-profit firms but also by social enterprises.

According to concepts of CSI suggested in Section 2.3.1, projects that could be labelled as CSI projects for this thesis should *address both social and business objectives, highlight SI (non-technological and technological) done by firms, deliver social and business outcomes, embed SI in firms’ core strategies, and involve external parties outside firms*. Government agencies and other organisations qualified for the data collection should be involved in CSI projects, have roles related to SI, or promote business to innovatively benefit society.

Table 10: Criteria for Selecting Participants

Criteria		
	For projects or organisations	For interviewees
<b>CSI project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement SI.</li> <li>- Address both social and business objectives.</li> <li>- Deliver social and business outcomes.</li> <li>- Embed SI in the firm’s core strategy.</li> <li>- Involves external parties outside the firm.</li> </ul>	Know about their CSI projects and firms.
<b>Government agency</b>	Involve CSI projects, have roles related to SI, or help the firm to innovatively provide benefits to society.	Have experience in engaging with CSI projects or know about policies or programs regarding SI or innovation the agency is providing.
<b>Other organisations</b>	Involve CSI projects, have roles related to SI, or help the firm to innovatively provide benefits to society.	Work with CSI projects or be knowledgeable about SI/CSI in the country.

Source: Author’s construct

Additionally, participants representing firms undertaking CSI projects had a strong understanding of their CSI projects and organisations. Participants from government agencies had experience in engaging with CSI projects or were knowledgeable about relevant policies or programs regarding SI/innovation. Participants from other organisations worked with CSI projects or were knowledgeable about SI/CSI in the country.

Since this research has criteria for filtering projects and organisations, interview participants were selected rather than randomly chosen. The *purposive strategy* is appropriate for this research, as it enables a researcher to discern and select suitable samples for study (Sharma, 2017). In qualitative research, purposive sampling is often utilised as a tool for informant selection (Tongco, 2007). By using the purposive strategy, it can identify qualified CSI projects, government agencies, and other organisations and invite them to participate in individual semi-structured interviews.

In addition to the purposive strategy, the *snowball strategy* is employed in this research. Snowball sampling is a strategy that relies on “referrals from initially sampled respondents to other persons believed to have the characteristic of interest” (Johnson, 2014, p.1). This strategy, in other words, allows researchers to increase the number of informants through

referral and networking of initial participants (Parker et al., 2019). In this thesis, participants either suggested or mentioned related CSI projects, government agencies, and other organisations during the interviews, which was very helpful in getting more potential participants.

By adopting these strategies, approximately half of the participants from government agencies and other organisations in Thailand were recruited through the snowball strategy, in which the participants from Thai projects mentioned or suggested government agencies and other organisations. Meanwhile, all participants from firms in the three countries, as well as all participants from government agencies and other organisations in Malaysia and Singapore, and the other half of participants from government agencies and other organisations in Thailand, were recruited through the purposive strategy.

### ***3.3.2 Interview Participants***

The table below presents the number of CSI projects, government agencies, and other organisations that participate in each country's research interviews using the purposive and snowball techniques.

*Table 11: The Number of CSI Projects and Organisations Participating in the Interviews*

	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Overall</b>
<b>CSI projects</b>	17	6	6	<b>29</b>
<b>Government agencies</b>	5	2	1	<b>8</b>
<b>Other organisations</b>	4	1	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>43</b>

Source: Author's construct

In case study research, there are no rules regarding sample size, allowing the researcher to determine the appropriate size based on their needs (Marshall et al., 2013; Schoch, 2020; Yin, 2018). This thesis primarily focuses on Thailand as the main case study, with Malaysia and Singapore serving as secondary cases. Observing the main case thus is more



intense than the subordinate case (Yin, 2018). Therefore, the sample size in Thailand is comparatively greater than in Malaysia and Singapore.

Also, practical limitations led to a greater number of samples in Thailand. While a large number of informants in the Thai case were willing to participate in the interviews for this research, the acceptance rate for Malaysia and Singapore was notably lower. In this thesis, the average acceptance rate of the Thai case was over 70%. However, in Malaysia and Singapore, it was only around 30%, despite efforts to increase informant numbers through a snowball strategy.

Table 12 summarises the details of CSI projects, organisations, and positions of informants who participated in the interviews. To maintain anonymity, names of CSI projects and organisations were replaced with code numbers. It can be seen that most CSI projects in this thesis were operated by small firms. The informants from these projects were often founders, co-founders, and managers. These individuals possessed a deep understanding of the projects and were well-versed in CSI/SI, enabling them to provide valuable insights into their relationships with the government and CSI. Additionally, CSI projects participated in this thesis were varied across industries, such as agrifood, textile, IT, waste management, and tourism, helping to generalise understanding of CSI and interactions between the government and firms across different sectors.

Most government agencies in this thesis were national-level organisations. The author attempted to engage and invite some local government agencies referenced during interviews with informants from CSI projects. However, these local government agencies declined to participate in the research interviews. Although the author could not directly probe the local government, some informants from national governments previously worked in local government agencies for decades. Where this was the case, the informants shared their experiences regarding CSI and the interactions in the aspect of the local government.

Table 12: Summary of Interview Participants

Code name	Business sector or industry	Business size <sup>3</sup>	Participant's position
<b>Thailand</b>			
Thai Project 1	Manufacturing (Agrifood)	Medium	- Founder - Team member
Thai Project 2	Tourism	Small	Manager
Thai Project 3	Manufacturing (Food)	Micro	Founder
Thai Project 4	Retail (Agricultural product)	Small	Co-founder
Thai Project 5	Retail (Learning product)	Small	Project Manager
Thai Project 6	Manufacturing (Textile)	Small	Founder
Thai Project 7	Retail (Motor vehicles)	Small	Founder
Thai Project 8	Advertising company	Small	Manager
Thai Project 9	Retail (Food and beverage)	Medium	Project Manager
Thai Project 10	Retail (Food and beverage)	Medium	Project Manager
Thai Project 11	Manufacturing (Machinery)	Micro	Managing Director
Thai Project 12	Manufacturing (Agrifood)	Large	Manager
Thai Project 13	Tourism	Micro	Director
Thai Project 14	Wholesale (IT, software)	Small	- Manager - Team member
Thai Project 15	Health and social work activities	Micro	Founder
Thai Project 16	Agriculture	Small	Co-founder
Thai Project 17	Retail (Eco-friendly products)	Small	- Manager - Team member
<b>Government agency</b>			
Thai Government 1	Government agency under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation		Manager
Thai Government 2	Government agency supporting social-objective enterprises		Director
Thai Government 3	Government agency under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security		Department Head
Thai Government 4	Government agency (autonomous agency)		- Director - Team member
Thai Government 5	Government agency under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation		Vice President

<sup>3</sup> Definition of MSMEs in Thailand

- Micro enterprise: annual revenue ≤ 1.8 million baht (around £38k) and numbers of employees ≤ 5
- Small enterprise in manufacturing: annual revenue ≤ 100 million baht (around £2.1 million) and numbers of employees ≤ 50; Small enterprise in trade and service: annual revenue ≤ 50 million baht (around £1.1 million) and numbers of employees ≤ 30
- Medium enterprise in manufacturing: annual revenue ≤ 500 million baht (around £10.7 million) and numbers of employees ≤ 200; medium enterprise in trade and service: annual revenue ≤ 300 million baht (around £6.4 million) and numbers of employees ≤ 100

OSMEP. 2021. *Definition of MSMEs* [Online]. <https://www.sme.go.th/en/page.php?modulekey=363>. [Accessed 18 August 2021].

<b>Other organisations</b>			
Thai Others 1	A non-profit organisation helping people with disabilities and creating an inclusive society		Manager
Thai Others 2	A non-profit organisation helping people with disabilities and bridging them to firms		Director
Thai Others 3	A non-profit organisation growing social entrepreneurs		Manager
Thai Others 4	A large company's program promoting social entrepreneurs		Manager
<b>Malaysia</b>			
<b>Code name</b>	<b>Business sector or industry</b>	<b>Business size<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Participant's position</b>
Malaysian Project 1	Recycling	Small	Founder
Malaysian Project 2	Waste management	Small	Co-founder
Malaysian Project 3	Computer and communication device	Small	Founder
Malaysian Project 4	Environmental services	Small	Director
Malaysian Project 5	Manufacturing (Textile)	Small	Director of Business Development
Malaysian Project 6	Recycling	Small	Co-founder
<b>Government agency</b>			
Malaysian Government 1	Government agency under the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development		Deputy Secretary
Malaysian Government 2	Government agency promoting green technology		Chief Executive Officer
<b>Other organisations</b>			
Malaysian Others 1	An organisation promoting innovation and innovative entrepreneurs		Executive - Programme and Partnership
<b>Singapore</b>			
<b>Code name</b>	<b>Business sector or industry</b>	<b>Business size<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Participant's position</b>

<sup>4</sup> Definition of MSMEs in Malaysia

- Micro enterprise: sales turnover of less than RM300,000 (around £50k) OR fewer than five full-time employees
- Small enterprise in manufacturing: Sales turnover from RM300,000 (around £50k) to less than RM15 million (around £2.5 million) OR between five and 75 full-time employees; small enterprise in service and other sectors: sales turnover from RM300,000 (around £50k) to less than RM3 million (around £0.5 million) OR between five and 30 full-time employees
- Medium enterprise in manufacturing: sales turnover from RM15 million (around £2.5 million) to not exceeding RM50 million (around £8.3 million) OR full-time employees from 75 to not exceeding 200; Medium enterprise in service and other sectors: Sales turnover from RM3 million (around £0.5 million) to not exceeding RM20 million (around £3.3 million) OR between 30 and 75 full-time employees

SME ASSOCIATION OF MALAYSIA. 2024. *SME definition* [Online]. <https://smemalaysia.org/sme-definition/>. [Accessed 15 April 2024].

<sup>5</sup> SMEs in Singapore are defined as “enterprises with operating revenue not more than \$100mil or employment not more than 200 workers”. DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS SINGAPORE. 2024a.

Singaporean Project 1	IT services and IT consulting	SME	Founder
Singaporean Project 2	Eldercare	SME	Founder
Singaporean Project 3	Civic and social organisation	SME	Founder
Singaporean Project 4	Biotechnology	SME	Founder
Singaporean Project 5	Retail apparel and fashion	SME	Founder
Singaporean Project 6	Retail sale	SME	Co-founder
<b>Government agency</b>			
Singaporean Government 1	Government agency promoting social-objective businesses		Assistant CEO
<b>Other organisations</b>			
Singaporean Others 1	An organisation enabling disabled people and building an inclusive society		Manager

Source: Author's construct

### ***3.3.3 Conducting Research Interview***

#### ***3.3.3.1 Pilot Study***

After the university approved the ethics application, the pilot study was conducted immediately in late June 2022. The pilot study is crucial for the research as it was undertaken to pretest research instruments and identify potential problems in advance of the full-scale study (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001), and enable the development of essential research skills, and obtain preliminary data for pre-analysis (Doody and Doody, 2015).

Since Thailand is the main case study for this thesis, the pilot study was undertaken with Thai participants from two CSI projects and one government agency in June and July 2022. Initially, the author sent the interview invitation, participant information sheet, and key topics for discussion via email to the targeted CSI projects and government agencies. When they agreed to participate, the consent form and the privacy notice for participants in the research project were directly sent to them. They were also asked to sign the consent and return it to the author to comply with the university's policies.

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*Singapore's enterprise landscape 2023* [Online].  
<https://www.singstat.gov.sg/modules/infographics/economy>. [Accessed 15 April 2024].

The interviews were conducted through the university Zoom meeting at times convenient for the participants. On the days of the interviews, participants were informed about their rights, data anonymisation, and brief purposes of this study. They were also asked for permission to record the interviews. Each interview lasted about one hour on average. It should be noted that the interviews were in Thai, and all documents sent to the participants were also in Thai. After the interviews, the recorded audio was transcribed and preliminary analysed.

Once the first interview in the pilot study was completed, the interview questions and their sequence were revised to make them more natural and precise as well as cover more points, which were adapted to the latter interviews in the pilot study and the full-scale interviews. For example, new questions regarding additional government support and improvements desired from the government were added to indirectly encourage the interviewees to express their concerns and challenges regarding the government. Moreover, the author's skills, especially communication and problem-solving skills, were improved with the increased number of interviews, resulting in greater fluency and rapport with the participants.

The key challenge found in the pilot study was the process of approaching Thai government agencies. Government agencies in the pilot study and the full-scale research interviews often required a permission letter from the head of the agency. Once the agency received all required documents, the invitation was passed hierarchically from the head to the responsible individual. This entire process took a minimum of two weeks. Therefore, planning and being well-organised were necessary when inviting Thai government agencies to participate in full-scale research interviews.

### ***3.3.3.2 Full-Scale Research Interview***

After the pilot study, the full-scale research interviews commenced from late August 2022 to early April 2023. The interviews started with participants in Thailand and were then followed by Malaysia and Singapore. Similar to the pilot study, interview invitations were

sent to targeted CSI projects, government agencies, and other organisations. After the invitation was accepted, participants were asked for their availability and whether they preferred to meet online or in person. The consent form also needed to be signed, and the interviews were recorded for later transcription.

Although Thailand eased its COVID-19 safety measures and allowed people to meet without wearing facemasks in open-air venues from July 2022 onwards (Thai PBS World, 2022), most participants in Thailand were hesitant to meet in person. Therefore, most interviews with Thai informants were conducted via the university's Zoom meetings. However, one CSI project preferred to meet in person at the project location. The interviews with Thai informants lasted between 45 and 70 minutes and were conducted in Thai. The recorded audio was transcribed verbatim in Thai as soon as possible after completing the interviews.

While almost finishing data collection for the Thai case, the author simultaneously contacted targeted CSI projects, government agencies, and other organisations in Singapore and Malaysia. Since English is widely used in both countries, the documents were sent to participants in English. Most interviews for the Singaporean and Malaysian cases were conducted online, including university Zoom meetings and the participant's platform. However, some were conducted in person during the author's travels to these countries.

### **Follow-up interview and field trip**

For three projects, the author conducted follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews helped the author receive additional insights after the previous interviews and were an opportunity for rechecking the interpretation of previous interviews (Holter et al., 2019). A participant in the follow-up review was the same person as the one in the previous interview to clarify an unclear point, and the other was a new participant involving the projects to provide additional data for some questions. The follow-up interviews were via phone call and took, on average, 10 to 20 minutes.

To gain an in-depth understanding of the participating CSI projects, the author tried out some of their products and services. In addition to Thailand, the author also did fieldwork in Singapore and Malaysia in February 2023 to understand the natural settings and people's experiences within a context, culture, and environment (Eden et al., 2019, Kennedy, 2015, University of Nottingham, 2023). Visiting Singapore and Malaysia allowed the author to observe and comprehend these countries in naturalistic ways, as well as conduct in-person interviews at project sites.

### ***3.3.4 Positionality and Cross-Cultural Research***

Since this thesis aims to study the interaction between government and firms in the three countries influenced by different contextual elements and VoC, it is important to consider cross-cultural issues and researcher positionality that can impact data collection and analysis. As the author is a Thai citizen, it is advantageous to access and collect primary data in Thailand, which is the main case in this thesis. Moreover, the author possesses a deep understanding of the Thai context, helping to analyse data in the Thai case. This is because a researcher, as a cultural insider, can share better insights, gain more trust from research participants, build rapport with the participants better, and overcome language barriers (Manohar et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the author is a cultural outsider to the Malaysian and Singaporean cases. However, English is a common language among participants in these countries, which minimised language issues during data collection and analysis. Moreover, the author conducted fieldwork in Malaysia and Singapore, enhancing understanding of their cultures and country contexts.

Besides the cultural issue, the author's position as a Thai government scholarship student was beneficial when approaching interview participants in all three countries. However, during the interviews, some participants struggled to express their concerns and negative experiences with government agencies. The question, 'Would you (the company) like to ask the government for any other support? What should the government improve?', thus

was included in the interviews to allow the participants to reveal their concerns, unmet needs, and challenges in interacting with government agencies. Additionally, the interviews were one-on-one, giving the participants a comfortable environment to discuss sensitive issues.

### ***3.4 Data Analysis***

Concerning data analysis, case study research gives a researcher great flexibility to analyse data in various aspects and find significant patterns or concepts (Yin, 2018). To investigate the interaction between the government and firms undertaking CSI across different countries and VoC, the comparative case study approach was selected for this thesis. The data was analysed and synthesised across cases and within the case.

During the data analysis process, analytic strategies, including the deductive and inductive approaches suggested by Yin (2018) were relied on. Since the framework and research questions of this thesis were constructed based on main theories, the deductive approach was employed. The inductive approach was also considered because promising themes and findings could enhance the concept of CSI and improve the theories applied in this thesis.

Initially, each country case was described to prepare an understanding of CSI, country contexts VoC, and the interaction between government and firm in the country. These are secondary data gathered from various sources, such as existing academic papers, international organisation databases, and government websites. They were meaningfully described, particularly in Chapter 4 (Sections 4.1-4.3), country by country to construct an understanding of contextual data in a specific country, leading to the comparison between countries at the end of the chapter (Section 4.4).

Next, the primary data obtained from the interviews were transcribed in Thai for the Thai case, and in English for the Malaysian and Singaporean cases. Thematic analysis was employed to identify emerging themes and analysed these themes across cases (Clarke et



al., 2015, Terry et al., 2017). Besides the manual analysis to map the relationships between firms/CSI projects and government agencies, the NVivo program was used to analyse thematically at this stage. The primary data was analysed based on themes derived from the research questions and conceptual framework. New important sub-themes discovered during the analysis process were also added to enhance the key themes. Further, the primary data obtained from fieldwork and the secondary data were combined and analysed with the primary data obtained from the interviews to consider individual subjectivity and surrounding contexts that influence mechanisms causing the phenomenon in each country.

The analysed data from each country case was then compared to scrutinise the similarities and differences in the characteristics and mechanisms of the interaction, which were influenced by the varying country contexts and VoC. The concepts and theories adopted in this thesis were utilised to elucidate the characteristics and mechanisms of the interaction. Meanwhile, synthesising empirical evidence and theories led to revisions of existing theories, enhancing the understanding of CSI and the relevant theories applied in this thesis.

Both data analysis and data validation were considered. Data triangulation was employed, as using data from multiple sources, multiple people, multiple places, or multiple times can strengthen the validity of the case study research (Flick, 2004, Yin, 2018). In this thesis, data triangulation used data collected from the semi-structured interviews with different informant groups, including firms in several sectors, government agencies and other organisations, and different countries, as well as data from various online sources, fieldwork, and observation.

### ***3.5 Data Management Plan and Ethics***

Data management is crucial for dealing with a large amount of data. The university then suggests a data management plan to help PhD students effectively organise data in their research. This thesis takes account of the importance of data management and has a data

management plan for this research to explain the types of data generated in this research and how to manage data (see Appendix IV).

Since the primary data was collected through interviews, it is necessary to consider ethical issues to comply with the university's code of practice on investigations involving human beings. The investigation in this research focuses solely on gathering participants' opinions and experiences related to CSI and does not involve biological and medical investigation, deceased persons, cadaveric tissue, and exposure to any risks. Therefore, this thesis is classified as low risk.

Further, this thesis strictly follows ethical principles and data protection guidelines. After selecting informants for the interviews, they received invitation letters detailing the research and a brief list of interview questions. Consent forms were also sent to the participants once they agreed to participate in the study. The participants were requested to sign the consent form and return it to the author prior to or on the day of the interview. To ensure that the participants acknowledged their rights to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving a reason, the author informed them again and asked their permission to record audio before starting the interview.

Moreover, the participants were not requested to provide personal data; all data was anonymised, kept confidential, and was not shared with their employees. The signed consent forms were kept securely and separately from other documents to prevent any connection between participants' personal information (such as their names and signatures) and other documents. The interview questions did not include any personal or commercially sensitive data. Names of the interview participants appeared only on the signed consent forms, while pseudonyms (such as Thai Project 1) were used throughout this thesis to protect participants' privacy.

After the interviews, audio files were kept in encrypted folders and stored in university storage. To ensure data security, audio recordings were transcribed in a secure environment where no one else could hear or view the transcripts. All notes taken during the interviews were also stored in university storage. Once the thesis was completed, the

audio files and notes were deleted, while the anonymised transcripts were retained in university storage.

More details about the participation sheet information, consent form, ethics application form, and data management are presented in the appendices of this thesis (Appendices IV-VII). The ethics application was approved by the university in June 2022.

## **CHAPTER 4: BACKGROUNDS OF THAILAND, MALAYSIA, AND SINGAPORE**

This chapter presents the contextual backgrounds of Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, focusing on five dimensions: political context, economic and business context, social context, institutional context, and resource context. Country contexts are explained separately by country in the first three sections of this chapter, providing an understanding of nuanced contexts in the three countries, though they are neighbouring countries located next to each other and in the same region. After explaining country contexts separately by country, the last section of this chapter provides a comparative view of contexts in all three countries. It highlights key potential contextual factors that can influence CSI and the interaction between government and firms, such as governance structure and resource abundance, and it also discloses contextual similarities between Thailand and Malaysia, which are more than with Singapore.

### ***4.1 Thailand's Country Contexts***

#### ***4.1.1 Political Context***

Thailand was initially governed by an absolute monarchy system but transitioned to a constitutional monarchy in 1932, in which a government led by a prime minister emerged and the monarchy's power was limited by a constitution (Traijakvanich and Rojjanaprapayon, 2020). To date, Thailand is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy (Royal Thai Embassy, 2021b).

Thailand experienced a period of European colonialism in Southeast Asia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although the colonial period ended, it left consequences for colonised countries, particularly on institutional and economic developments (Bardhan, 2017, Grier, 1999). For some colonies, colonialism helped to

abolish slavery, create property rights, introduce a modern legal and administrative system, and improve education and infrastructures, which are fundamental to institutional and economic improvements (Heldring and Robinson, 2012). However, colonial authorities primarily focused on rule and exploitation rather than development; colonialism then triggered inequalities and social and political conflicts that continue to hinder institutional and economic progress today (Cooper, 2019, Heldring and Robinson, 2012).

During the era of European colonialism in Southeast Asia, Thailand was the only country in this region that was never colonised. At that time, Britain controlled Thailand's neighbouring countries to the west and south, including Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore. At the same time, France colonised neighbouring countries to the east, including Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (Booth, 2007). Despite maintaining its independence, Thailand faced significant challenges due to the spread of colonialism in the surrounding areas. This situation can be described as 'crypto-colonialism'<sup>6</sup> (Herzfeld, 2002) or 'semi-colonialism' (Jackson, 2004). To reduce the impacts of colonialism, Thailand attempted to modernise the country in terms of, for example, bureaucracy, legal system, infrastructures, education, slavery abolition, international trade, and international affairs (Jackson, 2004, Keawngam, 2020).

The transformation during the colonial period tremendously influenced the current contexts of society, institutions, and the economy of Thailand. For example, slavery abolition led to an increase in the workforce, which boosted the Thai economy and prompted improvements in the tax system, currency, and the establishment of banks (Bangkok Biz News, 2020). Meanwhile, enhanced international trade and diplomatic relations with Western countries increased income, enlarged the economy, and promoted

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<sup>6</sup> Herzfeld (2002) defined crypto-colonialism as "the curious alchemy whereby certain countries, buffer zones between the colonised lands and those as yet untamed, were compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence, this relationship being articulated in the iconic guise of aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models. Such countries were and are living paradoxes: they are nominally independent, but that independence comes at the price of a sometimes humiliating form of effective dependence".

exports. It also allowed technology and innovation diffusion and knowledge and human resources from abroad.

Moreover, changes in bureaucracy resulted in decentralised administration and fiscal reform (Chamaram, 2016). Modifications to the legal system marked the initial step towards adopting a civil law system (Keawngam, 2020). Although the impact on monarchy and democracy in Thailand is not as noticeable as the effects on other dimensions, the transformation of the country in society, economy and institution during the colonial era is a ground for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1932 and becoming a country with parliamentary democracy at the present time.

The decentralised administration is one of the colonial legacies that has shaped the current administrative system, which consists of national and local governments. At the national level, the prime minister leads the central government, and each ministry is governed by a minister (The Government Public Relations Department, 2023). At the local level, its structure is a dual system involving the local administration, in which the central government appoints governors of each province and district, while local autonomous self-governments elect heads for sub-districts, municipalities, the Bangkok metropolitan area, and Pattaya city (OECD, 2016b, OECD, 2023, Wongpreedee and Mahakanjana, 2017).

Democracy in Thailand began to flourish after the country became a constitutional monarchy in 1932. However, several coups and political protests throughout the decades have been major challenges to democracy in Thailand. The recent coup took place in 2014, resulting in the reign of the current government. In recent years, political protests have emerged due to widespread dissatisfaction with the government's administration and the constitution, along with concerns about improper budget allocations to royal offices and serious enforcement of measures against criticism of the monarchy. These political entanglements caused the political stability in Thailand to be assessed at 31.6%, lower than Malaysia and Singapore, estimated at approximately 51.9% and 97.2% , respectively (Worldwide Governance Indicators, 2023). Despite facing political and external pressures,

the Thai government has made efforts to boost the economy, reduce poverty, and promote innovation development through the Thailand 4.0 policy. This also includes the increase in R&D expenditures and the incubation and acceleration of entrepreneurs and innovation-driven enterprises (Royal Thai Embassy, 2021a).

Although SI in Thailand is in the nascent stage, it is gaining more attention from the government. The National Innovation Agency, for example, has launched projects and policies to encourage SI growth at regional and national levels (NIA, 2021a). Further, the Thai government has promoted social enterprise growth and encouraged businesses to provide social values to society (Thailand, 2021, SET, 2021).

#### ***4.1.2 Economic and Business Context***

Thailand is an upper middle-income country and the second-largest economy in Southeast Asia, with approximately USD 515 billion in 2023 (World Bank, 2024b, World Bank, 2024e, World Bank, 2022a). Although Thailand seems to be an agricultural country due to being one of the top agricultural product exporters such as rice, natural rubber, fruits and nuts (ITC, 2024a), the agriculture sector indeed contributed income to the country only around 9% of GDP in 2023 (NESDC, 2024a). The majority of Thai GDP, with nearly 61%, was from the service sector, particularly tourism, while the industrial sector accounted for 30% in 2023 (NESDC, 2024a, NESDC, 2022a). Although the agriculture sector has not outperformed in terms of contribution to GDP, it has a critical role in employing around 30% of the country's labour force and being a buffer for unemployed workforces in Thailand, especially during financial or economic crises (DEPA, 2020, Chanthaphong and Tassanoonthornwong, 2021).

With abundant natural and historical tourist attractions, millions of foreign travellers come to Thailand, leading to growing numbers of businesses and services related to tourism and recreation such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation, which are one of the main revenue sources of Thailand. In 2019, revenue from tourism before the pandemic was

around 16% of Thai GDP and the number of foreign travellers in the same year was almost 40 million (Rueanthip and Loasumrit, 2020).

Also, Thailand is an export-oriented country, providing about 65% of GDP in 2023 (NESDC, 2024a). Electrical machinery and equipment, machinery, and vehicles were the top export products generating income for Thailand of around USD 123 million, accounting for almost half of the total export value in 2023 (ITC, 2024b). This depicts Thailand as an export manufacturing hub, particularly for the USA, China, and Japan (ITC, 2024b).

Interestingly, though electrical machinery was an important export product generating USD 50 million in revenue for Thailand in 2023, it ranked first in import products with imported values of around USD 59 million (ITC, 2024b). This trade deficit can reflect problems about insufficient numbers and ineffectiveness in producing electrical machinery, especially high-tech machinery, to serve domestic demands.

In summary, the Thai economy relies on revenues from abroad for exports and services, especially tourism. This causes trouble for Thailand if the economies of those foreign countries experience downturns and other uncertainties that impede Thailand's exports, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of trade protectionism by trade partner countries. To reduce the impacts of these circumstances, the Thai government has attempted to increase government expenditures to be a key driver of the economy when private consumption, private investment, and exports tremendously shrink (NESDC, 2022b).

Regarding business climate, Thailand is an open market country that allows market competition and embraces investment, particularly from abroad. The Board of Investment, which is a government agency, has offered tax and non-tax privileges to investors, for example, corporate income tax exemption, exemption on import duties, and right to own land (McKenzie, 2021) to encourage the investment growth in Thailand, especially in target areas specified in the National Economic and Social Development Plan. However, several internal and external challenges in Thailand, such as higher wages, political



instability, and revoking trade preferences on some products, have led to the relocation of MNCs from Thailand to other Southeast Asian countries.

Despite some challenges, Thailand's overall business climate is friendly compared to other countries. Thailand was ranked twenty-first out of 190 economies in the Ease of Doing Business Index 2020, with prominent scores in starting a business, getting electricity, and protecting minority investors (World Bank, 2021b). However, enforcing contracts and intellectual property rights, especially counterfeit and pirated goods in online markets, is a concern for investors (ITA, 2021, World Bank, 2021b).

Looking at businesses operating in Thailand by business size<sup>7</sup>, the majority of businesses in 2022, with almost 85% of total enterprises, were micro-enterprises, whereas SMEs accounted for 14.4% and large enterprises accounted for only 0.5% (OSMEP, 2024). While MSMEs gather in the trading and service sectors, large enterprises spread across the trading, manufacturing, and service sectors (OSMEP, 2024).

Due to the sluggish economic growth and structural challenges, the Thai government has recently endeavoured to achieve the fourth industrial revolution, known as Thailand 4.0. The Thailand 4.0 policy aims to transform the country's economy and industry, emphasising innovation, creativity, high technology, and high-value services to overcome the middle-income trap (Jones and Pimdee, 2017). Therefore, several support programs have been launched for business and investment align with this policy and relevant investments in the Eastern Economic Corridor, regional economic corridors, and other initialised special economic zones (NESDC, 2022b).

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<sup>7</sup> Definition of MSMEs in Thailand

- Micro enterprise: annual revenue  $\leq$  1.8 million baht (around £38k) and numbers of employees  $\leq$  5
- Small enterprise in manufacturing: annual revenue  $\leq$  100 million baht (around £2.1 million) and numbers of employees  $\leq$  50; Small enterprise in trade and service: annual revenue  $\leq$  50 million baht (around £1.1 million) and numbers of employees  $\leq$  30
- Medium enterprise in manufacturing: annual revenue  $\leq$  500 million baht (around £10.7 million) and numbers of employees  $\leq$  200; medium enterprise in trade and service: annual revenue  $\leq$  300 million baht (around £6.4 million) and numbers of employees  $\leq$  100

OSMEP. 2021. *Definition of MSMEs* [Online]. <https://www.sme.go.th/en/page.php?modulekey=363>. [Accessed 18 August 2021].

Moreover, the Thai government introduced a new economic model for sustainable growth: the bio-circular-green (BCG) economy, and this model has been incorporated into national development strategies for 2021-2027 (NSTDA, 2021). The BCG model is part of Thailand's 4.0 policy seeking a value-based, innovation-driven economy. However, the BCG model emphasises the environment and local economy and conforms to UN SDGs and the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy proposed by the former king of Thailand (NXPO, 2022). The BCG model focuses on four strategic sectors that can improve the economy, productivity, and well-being of people in the country and local communities: food and agriculture, medical and wellness, bioenergy, biomaterial and biochemical, and tourism and creative economy (NXPO, 2022).

According to the policies and economic model above, Thailand's business environment is shifting towards innovation-driven and green business practices, creating value for both the national and grassroots economies. Even though these policies increase awareness of environmental and social issues and the importance of innovation, which are elements leading to SI, SI is a comparatively new concept for businesses in Thailand compared to CSR, which is commonly employed in Thai companies and is required to commit in listed companies (SEC, 2021). SI in Thailand, therefore, is in the nascent stage but has the potential to grow due to increasing recognition of innovation and social problems.

### ***4.1.3 Social Context***

Since Thailand is an upper middle-income country, poverty has been a key social problem for a long time. Over eight million people, or approximately 12.2% of the Thai population, live below the poverty line for upper middle-income nations, while around 10,000 individuals exist below the international poverty line (World Bank, 2024c). Since people experiencing poverty often encounter limited access to educational and employment opportunities (OASH, 2024), a higher poverty then is associated with a higher income inequality (Amar and Pratama, 2020, Hills et al., 2019). This is exacerbated by a substantial wealth gap, where about 58% of the country's total wealth is concentrated in

the hands of the top 1% of the richest Thais (World Bank, 2021c). Consequently, the economic opportunities available to those in poverty become increasingly restricted. Therefore, poverty and inequality in Thailand are interrelated issues that have persisted for decades.

It should be noted that the richest Thais and politicians, bureaucrats, and the royal family, or the so-called elites, possess economic capital but also social capital, especially networking and alliances, and cultural capital that they create to differentiate themselves from others (Thongsawang et al., 2020, Yanyongkasemsuk, 2007). Despite being a small group, the elites wield considerable power and hold the majority of capital, thereby widening the inequality gap. While there have been several social movements to reduce the inequality gap, they often struggle to prompt government action due to the complex relationship between the government and the Thai elites.

In addition to poverty and inequality problems, Thailand faces challenges with the ageing population. Thailand became an ageing society, with 10% of the total population aged 60 years and over in 2005, then surged to around 20% in 2021 and is expected to reach almost 30% in 2031 (Bangkok Post, 2021b). The fast-growing ageing population causes economic and fiscal impacts such as labour shortage, slow economic growth, and reduction in tax revenues, but it also increases pressures on the national healthcare system. Despite challenges, an ageing society and demographic transition are also opportunities as they create demands for, for example, health products and services, retirement homes, and innovation and technology substituting labour shortage and facilitating ageing people (Sethumadhavan and Saunders, 2021, World Bank, 2021a).

Environmental issues are also a major concern in Thailand. Similar to other agricultural-producing countries, climate change and natural disasters caused by climate change inevitably affect agricultural productivity, destroy agricultural areas, and sometimes transport infrastructures (World Bank, 2021c). Moreover, environmental problems caused by human activities such as deforestation, air and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity are rising, and they have social and economic impacts in the long term (ODT, 2017).

Additionally, Thailand is one of the most significant contributors to marine plastic waste, reflecting waste mismanagement and consumer behaviour that must be changed (Chanthamas, 2021).

The key social problems above raise awareness among Thais and provoke change in individuals' attitudes and behaviour and policy transformation. For example, Thais are more eco-conscious and intend to buy eco-friendly and ESG-linked products, though prices are higher (PwC, 2021). Moreover, public awareness of plastic waste has motivated people to use less plastic, along with urging the imposing of a ban on single-use plastic and enacting a Roadmap on Plastic Waste Management between 2018 and 2037 (Bangkok Post, 2022).

In addition to the importance of innovation being well acknowledged, SI has only been perceived and become a popular topic in the past few years. Nowadays, public platforms, forums and contests have been established to initiate, develop and provide knowledge and understanding about SI, such as SI school, Thailand Social Innovation Platform, Honor the King's Legacy program, and SI business plan contest (NIA, 2021b, Nissan, 2020, School, 2022, TSIP, 2022). This also comes with recognising social enterprise and social entrepreneur concepts now ubiquitous in Thailand. Although CSR activities are familiar to Thais, the proliferation of SI and social enterprises is a hope of solving social challenges sustainably more than CSR.

#### ***4.1.4 Institutional Context***

The institutional context can be considered in terms of formal and informal institutions. The formal context focused on this research is 'officially codified' and 'legitimised' by state agencies such as laws and regulations. The term 'informal institution', however, is 'not formally codified' and 'publicly recognised' such as social norms, beliefs, behaviours, and customs.

Thailand is a Buddhist country, with over 90% of the population identifying as Buddhists (NSO, 2018). Buddhism significantly influences the beliefs, culture, and social values in Thailand. The core principles of Buddhism encourage Buddhists to engage in right actions, speech, and attitudes, along with fostering empathy and altruism. These principles shape morals, ethics and ideal characteristics of individuals in Thai society to do good and help others or society, which aligns with the concept of SI concerning social objectives. Moreover, Buddhism and social values shaped by Buddhism influence businesses and other organisations to take responsibility for improving society and alleviating social problems. Srisuphaolarn (2013) indicated that religious and social values were significant and could affect the implementation of CSR in businesses, and these values were more potent drivers than regulations.

While the influence of religion fosters SI, certain social norms, particularly regarding social status and hierarchy, can hinder its development in Thailand. Social status in Thailand is hierarchically ordered by, for example, wealth, seniority, education and occupation (Tjahja and Yee, 2018). Unlike social hierarchy in the Western and Indian caste systems, social status in Thailand is more fluid because it can change depending on the situation (Tjahja and Yee, 2018). Although the flexibility of social hierarchy in Thailand does not cause significant adverse impacts, it can interrupt SI creation. Tjahja and Yee (2018) revealed that the social hierarchy could harm the co-creation process of SI because participants with lower social hierarchy struggled to share their ideas and opinions, and those with higher social hierarchy sometimes neglected their opinions.

For formal institutions, Thailand adopts a legal system with a statutory law and government ministries can issue regulations (Leeds, 2020). With administrative decentralisation, local government authorities such as provincial administrative organisations and municipalities also have the power to issue local ordinances about finance, public services and emergencies that are in line with the constitution and are enforced only in their territories (Jaijing and Wongwisetthorn, 2017). Considering the challenge of formal institutions, weak regulatory enforcement is the key concern in Thailand (Bangkok Post, 2021a). This

is exacerbated by transparency issues (World Bank, 2024d), which can harm the development of a country.

Laws and regulations that can relieve social and environmental problems are varied and mostly are enforced for years. However, attempts have been made to stimulate SI development in Thailand by enacting new laws focusing more on SI actors. For example, the Social Enterprise Promotion Act was enacted in 2019 to increase the number of social enterprises and help social enterprises unlock some benefits, especially financial benefits, provided by the government (Rojphongkasem, 2022). Further, the Securities and Exchange Commission has implemented a rule that requires listed companies to disclose information about their CSR activities in, for example, their annual report and registration statement for offering securities (SEC, 2021) in an endeavour to raise awareness of and responsibility for society and social problems.

#### ***4.1.5 Resource Context***

Despite having various sources of finance, accessing funding remains one of the main challenges for SI actors in Thailand. Several social enterprises, for example, have not received any financial support and need to rely on informal financial resources, such as financing from family and friends and their funding (Rojphongkasem, 2022). Many social enterprises cannot to secure bank loans due to a lack of collateral and limited networks to connect with potential investors (Rojphongkasem, 2022).

Government budget constraints are also a challenge for SI in Thailand. Though the Thai government has supported a wide range of social protection programs, its expenditure on social protection is relatively low, at around 3% of GDP, compared to other countries in the region, such as Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam (OECD, 2020).

However, there is an increasing awareness of social issues and SI in Thailand, which has led to a rise in the number of enterprises and other organisations with social purposes. Several universities have also begun offering new courses focused on SI at both

undergraduate and postgraduate levels, which could help develop the necessary human resources for future SI growth.

Table 13: Summary of Country Contexts in Thailand

<b>Key features</b>	
<b>Political context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thailand is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy and has never been colonised.</li> <li>- Despite growing concerns over political entanglements and widespread discontent with the current administration, the government has still attempted to boost the economy and encourage the growth of innovation including SI.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic and business context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thailand is an open market country and the government embraces international trade and investment.</li> <li>- The export and service sectors, especially tourism, are the main sources of revenue. Its reliance on foreign income is risky during arising uncertainties in traveller's and trade partner countries, and when being imposed trade protection measures.</li> <li>- The business climate is easy for starting a business and is friendly for foreign investors. Government agencies offer tax and non-tax incentives.</li> <li>- Higher wages, political instability, and being revoked of trade preferences and concerns about enforcing contracts and intellectual property rights are significant challenges for doing business and investing in Thailand.</li> <li>- Most enterprises are micro-enterprises, and MSMEs tend to gather in service and trading sectors.</li> <li>- The Thai government has attempted to transform the country's economy to be a value-based and innovation-driven economy and align with the UN SDGs.</li> </ul>
<b>Social context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty is a major problem in Thailand for a long time. This is aggravated by inequalities, especially wealth inequality.</li> <li>- Elites who are powerful, have complex relationships with the government and possess the most capital in the country are important barriers for social movements to reduce the inequality gap.</li> <li>- Although the fast-growing ageing population causes economic and fiscal impacts, it creates opportunities and demands for products, services and innovations for facilitating ageing people and substituting labour shortages.</li> <li>- Environment issues such as climate change and environmental problems caused by human activities are affecting the society and economy, particularly the agriculture sector.</li> <li>- Public awareness of environmental and social problems is rising, and policies are improving in response to these problems.</li> <li>- Increases in public platforms, forums and contests encourage SI growth and the recognition of social enterprise and social entrepreneur concepts.</li> </ul>

<b>Institutional context</b>	<p><i>Informal institution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social values, cultures and beliefs shaped by Buddhism are friendly for SI growth.</li> <li>- The social hierarchy tends to harm the co-creation process of SI.</li> </ul> <p><i>Formal institution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local regulations and local governments have less effect and power over CSI projects compared to the central government and national regulations.</li> <li>- Regulatory enforcement is weak.</li> <li>- Though no law or regulation is generated directly for SI, some laws and regulations, such as the Social Enterprise Promotion Act and the requirement for listed companies to report their CSR activities, increase SI creators and raise awareness to solve social problems.</li> </ul>
<b>Resource context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enterprises with social objectives experience difficulties in accessing finance though several sources of finance are available in Thailand.</li> <li>- Government confronts budget constraints.</li> <li>- The number of enterprises and organisations with social objectives, and SI courses in universities are growing.</li> </ul>

Source: Author's elaboration

#### ***4.1.6 SI in National Plans and Royal Family***

Thailand currently has two main national plans; a 20-year plan and a five-year plan. The 20-year National Strategy is the first long-term plan of the country implemented from 2017 to 2036, and it is a national framework with objectives to transform the country into a value-based and innovation-driven economy (NESDC, 2017). While the 20-year plan provides a broad framework, it lacks specific details and targets compared to the five-year plan. However, the 20-year plan sets the overall boundaries within which the five-year plan must operate.

The five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) is the country's main strategic plan, encompassing national social, economic, and environmental goals and strategies or plans to achieve these goals. Moreover, the NESDP is a blueprint for government agencies to outline their strategies and tasks in complying with this plan. Since its first launch in 1961, the NESDP has been continually revised to navigate the country and strengthen the economy, society, and environment (NESDC, 2024b).



The most significant progress on the five-year plan, explicitly emphasising goals and plans regarding innovation development, was made in the twelfth plan (2017-2021). The twelfth plan is also the first five-year plan to address the importance of SI and design strategies for SI development. Although the twelfth plan was terminated in September 2022, the thirteenth plan (2023-2027) keeps SI development while focusing on creating an appropriate ecosystem for innovation and SI (NESDC, 2021, NESDC, 2024b). Furthermore, the direction of the recent NESDP was changed to align with the national long-term plan and incorporate the SDGs (NESDC, 2017).

Although the thirteenth plan pays attention to global challenges and social-oriented innovation, it can be noticed that the focal point is commercial-oriented innovation more than social-oriented innovation (see more details of Thailand's national plans in Appendix II). This can result in policies, regulations, and other support schemes at both national and subnational levels that are more favourable for commercial-oriented innovation than SI. Therefore, SI in Thailand over the next five years may still face challenges in its growth.

The thirteenth plan, interestingly, has kept adopting the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy<sup>8</sup> developed by King Rama IX as one of the key principles like the previous NESDPs (NESDC, 2024b, p.2). This reflects the royal family's importance regarding the country's development. Indeed, the king and royal family symbolise beneficence, and royals have initiated many successful third-sector organisations in Thailand. Royal projects and organisations with royal patronage have become role models in serving social services, for example, education, healthcare, and job creation for Thais, especially those living in rural areas, since the 1950s (ORDPB, 2021).

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<sup>8</sup> Sufficiency economy is a philosophy developed by King Rama IX to create a balanced and stable development for individuals and society. It comprises three elements (moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity) and addresses the importance of following the middle path. ROYAL THAI EMBASSY. 2022. *Philosophy of "sufficiency economy"* [Online]. <https://thaiembassy.se/en/monarchy/philosophy-of-sufficiency-economy/>. [Accessed 1 May 2022].

## ***4.2 Malaysia's Country Contexts***

### ***4.2.1 Political Context***

Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy and His Majesty the King as the Paramount Ruler (Parliament of Malaysia, 2021). With the federal system, Malaysia has both federal and state governments. Nine of 13 states are royal states, and the king is elected from these nine rulers every five years (Lee, 2020, Malaysia, 2013). In a constitutional monarchy, the king (Yang di-Pertuan Agong) is the supreme commander of the armed forces, carries out duties under the constitution, acts on the advice of the prime minister and cabinet, appoints the prime minister, summons parliament conference, and has absolute power to prorogue or dissolve the parliament (Harding and Kumarasingham, 2022, Parliament of Malaysia, 2019b, Parliament of Malaysia, 2019a).

Malaysia also has more political stability than Thailand but less than Singapore. The Worldwide Governance Indicators estimated that Malaysia's political stability index in 2022 was 51.9% (the highest political stability is 100%), while Singapore was assessed at 97.2% and Thailand at 31.6% (Worldwide Governance Indicators, 2023).

Similar to Thailand, the Malaysian government also encompasses national and local governments. The national government refers to the federal government, while the sub-national level comprises the government of 13 states and the local government (city council, municipal council, and district council), where mayors and municipal councillors are appointed by the state government (OECD, 2016a).

Malaysia was colonised in 1511 by the Portuguese and then occupied by the Dutch in 1641, the British in 1824, and a couple of years during World War II by Japan (Department of Information, 2016c). After World War II, Malaysia (or Malaya, at that time) was ruled by the British again until it achieved independence in 1957. The remarkable change happened in 1963 when colonies, including Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak, were merged into a state called Malaysia (Department of Information, 2016c). Singapore, however, decided to separate from Malaysia two years later (Parliament of Singapore,

2023). Being ruled by the British for decades, the government system of Malaysia then adopted the Westminster system as a model (Parliament of Malaysia, 2021).

Despite being a democratic country, the post-colonial Malaysian government was dominated by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party for decades, as all Malaysian prime ministers from 1957-2018 were members of this party (UMNO, 2023). However, the UMNO lost its prime minister seat for the first time when Najib Razak, a member of this party and prime minister from 2009 to 2018, was found guilty of corruption concerning the 1MDB fund (Reuters, 2020, UMNO, 2023). After that, the political stability of Malaysia decreased, as Malaysia had four prime ministers in just a few years (Export Finance Australia, 2022).

Although Malaysia has encountered political instability, the government has endeavoured to grow the country. Recently, the Twelfth Malaysia Plan 2021-2025 was launched as a medium-term plan for developing the economy, society, and environment (Ministry of Economy, 2021b). The government also introduced the Wawasan Kemakmuran Bersama 2030 (WKB 2030), or Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, aiming to achieve sustainable growth and improve the standard of living for all Malaysians (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2019).

#### ***4.2.2 Economic and Business Context***

Malaysia is an upper-middle income economy and the sixth largest economy in Southeast Asia, with around USD 400 billion in 2023 (World Bank, 2024b, World Bank, 2024e, World Bank, 2022a, World Bank, 2023d). Despite Malaysia's impressive economic growth, only 20% of households are classified as top-tier (T20), which have a monthly income exceeding RM 10,960; however, 40% of households fall into the middle-tier category (M40), while the remaining households, with incomes below RM 4,850, are designated as the bottom-tier (B40) (Business Today, 2022). The B40 group then is the focus of the government, non-government organisations, and the private sector in Malaysia,

leading to numerous programmes aimed at supporting vulnerable individuals within this group.

After gaining independence, Malaysia transformed its economy from an agricultural and commodity-based economy to a manufacturing and service-driven economy, becoming an exporter of electrical and electronics products (World Bank, 2022b). Moreover, Malaysia is promoting the adoption of new and advanced technology along with digitalisation across all sectors to sustainably accelerate economic growth (Ministry of Economy, 2021b). The green economy is also a key agenda in the current national plan (Ministry of Economy, 2021b). Therefore, the economic environment in Malaysia is conducive to innovation development, especially green innovation.

Alongside its efforts to drive digitalisation, advanced technology, and a green economy, the Malaysian government keeps growing its investment momentum. The business climate in Malaysia is favourable for investors, particularly foreign investors. However, the Malaysian government maintains regulatory frameworks regarding free and fair competition, price control, and anti-profiteering, enabling the government to penalise businesses that engage in excessive pricing of their products and services (PWC, 2022).

As environmental, social and governance (ESG) has become one of the main agendas in Malaysia, the government then has encouraged businesses to integrate ESG into their strategies. For example, the Securities Commission Malaysia requires companies, particularly listed companies, to address sustainability risks and opportunities in an integrated and strategic manner to support the commission's long-term strategy and success, while Bursa Malaysia launched the FTSE4Good Bursa Malaysia Index to highlight companies with outstanding ESG (PWC, 2022, Securities Commission Malaysia, 2021).

With efforts to stimulate businesses to address environmental and social issues and the national plan supporting innovation development, Malaysia's economic and business environment is promising for SI and companies to be involved in or initiate more social innovation-related projects.

### ***4.2.3 Social Context***

Malaysia has an area of 329,960 square kilometres, smaller than Thailand (Department of Information, 2016a). However, Malaysia is separated into two main areas; one is West Malaysia or Peninsular Malaysia, which is between Thailand and Singapore, and another area is East Malaysia, located on the northern part of Borneo Island and bordering Brunei and Indonesia (Department of Information, 2016a).

Although West Malaysia accounts for only 40% of the country's total area, most states of Malaysia are located in West Malaysia, whereas East Malaysia comprises only Sabah, Sarawak, and the Federal Territory of Labuan (Malaysian Aviation Commission, 2023). Despite having a larger area, East Malaysia is less populated, less industrialised and has more natural resources such as timber, oil and gas (Malaysian Aviation Commission, 2023). A comparison between West and East Malaysia shows a noticeable development and economic gap between these two regions. Peninsular Malaysia is the country's financial, economic and educational centre and has well-developed infrastructures (Athukorala and Narayanan, 2018, ICA, 2024). However, East Malaysia has confronted challenges with lower economic performance, inadequate infrastructures and public services such as healthcare, internet, sanitation and waste disposal systems, and lower educational attainment and insufficient skillsets, resulting in a lower quality of life and economic opportunities than Peninsular Malaysia (Business Today, 2021).

Looking at the demographics of Malaysia, the country has a total population of approximately 32 million, comprised of three main ethnic groups: Malay (or Bumiputera) account for 70% of the total population, Chinese account for 23%, and Indians account for 7% (Department of Statistics, 2022a). However, the indigenous people in East Malaysia represent a majority (Prime Minister's Department, 2022). According to the constitution, Islam is recognised as the official religion of the federation (Department of Information, 2016b), with around 61% of the population identifying as Muslim, whereas 20% are Buddhists, and 9% are Christians (USCIRF, 2023).

Malaysia's multiracial society has resulted in tensions between ethnic groups, particularly between the Malays and Chinese. Indeed, the tension between the Malay and the Chinese emerged when the British ruled Malaysia. At that time, non-Malay immigrants, particularly Chinese, were favoured by the British, leading to greater economic power over the Bumiputera (ADST, 2020). While Bumiputera was the poorest group in the country, Chinese households comparatively had much higher incomes (Khalid and Yang, 2019). The wealth gap between Chinese and Malay then caused racial conflict and triggered a major riot in 1969.

In 1969, a power shift in the Malaysian parliament occurred when a Malay party (the Alliance Party) lost seats to Chinese parties in the general election, resulting in a violent riot between Malay and Chinese, with hundreds of deaths reported (ADST, 2020). A few years later, the government dominated by the UMNO party then introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) aiming to “eradicate poverty irrespective of race” and “restructure society to eliminate the identification of race with economic function and geographical location” (Ministry of Economy, 2008).

However, the NEP is often regarded as a pro-Bumiputera policy as, for example, it aimed to secure 30% equity ownership for Bumiputera (Jomo and Sundaram, 2004). Although the NEP was implemented only from 1971 to 1990 and more attempts have been made to treat Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera equitably, instances of racial discrimination can still be observed in society and some policies. For example, the Twelfth Master Plan continues to emphasise support for Bumiputera communities and entrepreneurs.

In addition to racial inequality and income gap issues, Malaysia also faces the challenge of becoming an ageing society, similar to several other countries in the region (Department of Statistics, 2022b). This causes a labour shortage and a burden on healthcare and welfare. The government then created the National Strategic Development Plan on Ageing Population to promote inclusion and employment for senior citizens and encourage collaboration across agencies to achieve initiatives (Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis, 2019).

Environmental issues, particularly those related to waste, are increasingly becoming a concern in Malaysia. After China imposed a ban on waste imports a few years ago, Malaysia was one of the main destinations for illegal plastic waste from Europe and North America (Picheta, 2020). With its long coastline, Malaysia is inevitably affected by marine plastic pollution (OECD, 2022). However, the government recently launched the Malaysia Plastics Sustainability Roadmap 2021-2030, along with policies regarding circular and green economy to phase out single-use plastic and foster environmental sustainability in Malaysia (Ministry of Environment and Water, 2021, OECD, 2022).

Food insecurity is also a challenge in Malaysia. Despite having ample land, the country is unable to produce sufficient food to meet domestic demand, leading to the necessity of importing essential food from neighbouring countries like Thailand and Indonesia (Hanif, 2023). The government then launched the National Food Security Policy Action Plan to increase food security by, for example, empowering local food producers and improving agricultural practices (Kuen, 2022). Moreover, food waste is also highlighted to raise awareness of food waste reduction and food use (Kuen, 2022).

#### ***4.2.4 Institutional Context***

Malaysia is a multicultural country where religion-based beliefs of particular ethnic groups encourage Malaysians to engage in good deeds (Tan et al., 2022). This foundation is beneficial for fostering SI in Malaysia. However, people sometimes struggle to address social problems and inequality. Although Malaysia was occupied by the British for decades, the colonial legacy in terms of civil society empowerment diminished from Malaysia in the post-colonial era (Farouk, 2011). The Malaysian government wields high power in the country and sometimes restricts people's freedom of speech (Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 2011). This obstructs civil society in creating SI.

However, the government has also perceived the importance of SI and has shown its endeavour to embrace SI. The government included SI as a key strategic goal in, for example, the NPSTI, the Malaysia Plan, and the KPWKM plan to improve well-being and

lessen social-environmental problems (Nasir and Subari, 2017). Due to the current economic condition and constraints on the government budget, the government actively encourages the private and third sectors to engage more in SI (Nasir and Subari, 2017).

In addition to national plans, the government established government agencies responsible for building an ecosystem for social-driven business and SI development. For example, the Agensi Inovasi Malaysia (AIM) was set up in 2010 to focus on SI initiatives and national innovation strategy, and the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC) was established in 2014 to promote social innovators and social enterprises (Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, 2022). The MaGIC also introduced the Malaysian Social Enterprise Blueprint 2015-2018, which was the first official blueprint for social enterprises in Malaysia (Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, 2022).

However, the AIM was later abolished, and the MaGIC was transferred to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, which redirected its focus away from social-based innovators and entrepreneurs (Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, 2022). Currently, the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives is one of the government agencies working to create a vibrant ecosystem for social-based businesses, and the ministry recently launched a social entrepreneurship blueprint 2030 to be a framework for supporting social enterprises in Malaysia.

Although no particular government agency specifically takes responsibility regarding SI, the concept of SI has become a ground for various government organisations to develop strategies and policies to support businesses and innovators who intend to solve social and environmental problems. Moreover, rising social challenges are accelerating the Malaysian government's serious actions and use of SI to deal with these challenges, leading to regaining government agencies with primary duties regarding SI.

Despite the government's attempt to build a favourable environment, weak regulatory enforcement and corruption issues are key challenges in the country (Allianz Trade, 2024)



(Md Nasir and Hashim, 2021). These influence the efficiency of formal institutions and can hinder the development of country and SI in the long term.

#### ***4.2.5 Resource Context***

Though Malaysia is abundant in natural resources, financial resources are a major challenge for SI growth. The Malaysian government has encountered budget deficits for years, and the deficit last year was recorded at 5.6% of GDP (Ananthalakshmi et al., 2023). Therefore, budget constraints in spending for SI-related initiatives and projects are frequent. Access to finance, additionally, is pointed out as a key challenge for social-driven businesses in Malaysia (Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, 2022).

Being the former colony of the British and being a multi-ethnic country, most Malaysian workforces then have multilingual skills (PWC, 2022). However, the number of high-skilled labourers in Malaysia is far less than in Singapore. The percentage of high-skilled labour is only almost 30%, while 60% is semi-skilled labour (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023). The government, nonetheless, aims to reach at least 45% of high-skilled labourers soon (Azuar, 2022). In addition to strengthening labour skills, Malaysia has education programmes and modules about SI in higher education institutions along with a growing number of SI research (British Council, 2020a). This can result in more labourers with a social entrepreneurial mindset and high skill levels, which is advantageous for CSI growth in Malaysia.

However, one of the biggest challenges is to provide knowledge and skill development programs to those who live in East Malaysia. While Peninsular Malaysia can conveniently access education and the internet, some remote areas in East Malaysia are disconnected from essential infrastructure such as the internet, education, sanitation, and healthcare (Business Today, 2021). These underdeveloped infrastructures impede Sabahans and Sarawakians from accessing educational and entrepreneurial resources necessary for labour skill development and SI growth.

Table 14: Summary of Country Contexts in Malaysia

**Key features**

<b>Political context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy and was colonised by the British for decades.</li> <li>- The political stability is worse than Singapore but is better than Thailand.</li> <li>- After being independent from the British, the government has been dominated by the UMNO party until 2018. Although the UMNO party then lost the prime minister's seat to other parties, its power, accumulated over 50 years, is ingrained in Malaysia's administration and economy.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic and business context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Malaysia is an upper middle-income economy.</li> <li>- Only 20% of households are categorised as a high-income top-tier group (T20), whereas middle-income and low-income households account for 40% and 40% (M40 and B40).</li> <li>- The manufacturing and service sectors mainly contribute to economic growth.</li> <li>- The government is attempting to transform the economy into both an innovative and advanced technology-based economy and a green and digital economy.</li> <li>- The business climate and regulatory environment are friendly to foreign investors, but some government interventions concern free and fair competition, price control, anti-profiteering, and limits on equity ownership.</li> <li>- ESG is now a national agenda. The government then launched regulations in line with ESG, and either required or encouraged businesses to follow ESG-driven regulations.</li> </ul>
<b>Social context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Malaysia consists of two main areas; one is Peninsular Malaysia, and another is East Malaysia which is less urbanised.</li> <li>- Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country in which the majority of the population is Malay (Bumiputera) and the minority are Chinese and Indian.</li> <li>- Despite being a minor group, the Chinese tend to dominate wealth and economic power in the country. This large income gap between Chinese and Malay once triggered a major racial riot in 1969.</li> <li>- A few years after the racial riot, the government issued the national plan (the NEP) which is a pro-Bumiputera policy.</li> <li>- Although the NEP was terminated in 1990, later national plans and policies remain to give Malay supremacy over non-Malay.</li> <li>- Key social challenges calling for urgent solutions are, for example, the fast-growing ageing population, environmental issues, and especially waste and food insecurity.</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional context</b>	<p><i>Informal institution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social values varied across different heritages are friendly for SI growth, but government interference tends to disempower people in addressing social problems.</li> </ul> <p><i>Formal institution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Malaysia now has no government agency taking responsibility for SI, but the concept of SI is embedded in national plans and strategies of several government agencies to support businesses with social purposes and build an ecosystem for social enterprise and SI.</li> <li>- Regulatory enforcement is weak.</li> </ul>

<b>Resource context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Malaysia has constraints on financial resources.</li> <li>- Malaysian labourers have multilingual skills but most of them are not high-skilled labourers.</li> <li>- Several higher education institutions have modules and research regarding SI, but this good educational opportunity is not well distributed to students or people living in East Malaysia.</li> </ul>
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Source: Author's elaboration

#### ***4.2.6 SI in National Plan***

Key national development plans generally involve long-term planning ranging between 10 to 30 years, along with five-year medium-term planning (Ministry of Economy, 2024). The current long-term plan being implemented is Wawasan Kemakmuran Bersama 2021-2030, or Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, which aims to improve national prosperity, the standard of living of all Malaysians, sustainable growth, and political stability (MyGovernment, 2024). Since the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 is a broad framework for national development, SI is not explicitly outlined as a strategy for achieving its goals. However, this long-term plan focuses on environmental sustainability and social well-being improvement, which encourages SI as a tool for solving environmental and social challenges to grow. Besides, Malaysia launched the National, Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2021-2030, which highlights the importance of SI in this plan as the stimulation of SI can benefit society, especially marginalised and underprivileged communities (MOSTI, 2022).

In terms of medium-term planning, SI has been adopted as a strategy to improve social welfare delivery in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) and there were hundreds of SI projects initiated during the plan (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2018, British Council, 2019). The current five-year plan (the Twelfth Malaysia Plan 2021-2025) aligning with the long-term plan aims to propel high value-added and high-impact industries to boost economic growth, enhance national security, well-being and inclusivity, and enhance green growth and energy sustainability (Ministry of Economy, 2021a). This plan continues to incorporate SI as a strategy to lessen social-environmental problems.

It can be seen that there is a growing recognition of the importance of SI in both long-term and medium-term national plans. This creates a supportive environment for the development of SI in Malaysia and encourages Malaysians to initiate or participate in SI-related activities, leading to the sustainable growth of SI in Malaysia in the long term.

### ***4.3 Singapore's Country Contexts***

#### ***4.3.1 Political Context***

Singapore is a parliamentary democracy country where the president is the head of state, while the prime minister is the head of government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). The political system in Singapore follows the Westminster model, which consists of the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary (Parliament of Singapore, 2023). Due to being a city-state, Singapore has only one government level, which is the central government (Dollery et al., 2008, CLGF, 2017). The political stability in Singapore is high compared to other countries in the same region (Department for International Trade, 2021). However, the People's Action Party (PAP) has dominated Singaporean politics since 1959, with all prime ministers from that period belonging to the PAP (Prime Minister's Office Singapore, 2024). This dominance has led to criticism regarding power succession, political pluralism, and increasing governmental repression (Tan and Preece, 2024, Freedom House, 2024, US Department of State, 2024). Therefore, political freedom in Singapore has become increasingly challenging, despite its comparative political stability.

In the nineteenth century, islands and coastal regions in and around the Malay peninsula, including Singapore, were British colonies (The National Archives, 2023). After gaining independence from Britain, Singapore joined the Malaysian Federation in 1963, but two years later Singapore separated from Malaysia and announced its independence on 9 August 1965 (CIA, 2023, Parliament of Singapore, 2023). Despite its independence, the Empire's legacy can still be seen in Singapore's political system.

Before becoming a developed country, Singapore spent decades improving the country. The Singaporean government adopted an export-oriented development model and then strongly promoted industrialisation and foreign investment (Rana and Lee, 2015, World Bank, 2019). After the success of this model, Singapore emerged as a regional financial hub (World Bank, 2019).

In addition to the economy, the Singapore government actively promotes innovation development. According to the Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) 2025 plan, Singapore expects to invest around S\$25 billion in research, innovation, and enterprise in 2021-2025 (National Research Foundation, 2021). Although this plan did not directly mention SI, some strategic domains of the plan have focused on human health, urban solutions, and sustainability, which can induce enterprises to create innovation in line with these main strategies.

### ***4.3.2 Economic and Business Context***

Singapore is a developed country and high-income economy (World Bank, 2024e, World Bank, 2023d). Although Singapore is a city-state and is the smallest country in Southeast Asia, its economy is at a high rank in this region (Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, 2023). The size of Singapore's economy in 2023 ranked third in Southeast Asia with around USD 501 billion, while Indonesia and Thailand were first and second, respectively (World Bank, 2024b, World Bank, 2023a).

The service industry is a key driver of the Singaporean economy, accounting for approximately 70% of GDP in 2023, and the financial and insurance sector performed as the most outstanding sector among service industries (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2024b). Despite relying on the service sector, manufacturing, particularly electronics and precision engineering sector are key engines contributing to Singaporean economic growth (World Bank, 2019).

Mainland China, Malaysia and the USA were major trading partners of Singapore in 2023 (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2024b). Additionally, the US is a main foreign investor

in Singapore alongside the Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands, Japan and the UK (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2024b). With attempts during and after the Lee Guan Yew government, Singapore is one of the most business-friendly regulatory environments and a Southeast Asian business hub (Rana and Lee, 2015, World Bank, 2019).

The Singapore government is pro-business and enacts regulations that are friendly for starting and doing business (Global-is-Asian, 2016, Grant Thornton, 2018). The government tries to minimise its power over businesses but also creates appropriate infrastructure and a corruption-free environment (Grant Thornton, 2018, Rana and Lee, 2015).

Despite already having a prominent economy and a business-friendly environment, the Singapore government is committed to promoting further business and economic growth. The government recently launched the Singapore Economy 2030 vision as a blueprint for developing service and manufacturing sectors along with trade and enterprises, which are key drivers of the Singaporean economy.

According to the Singapore Economy 2030 Plan, the service sector is transitioning towards a digital economy and green economy, while the manufacturing sector will be enhanced by strengthening innovation, enhancing capabilities and global reach, and attracting talented locals (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2022). Singapore is also expanding its trade to more countries and creating a strong ecosystem for trading companies to grow Singapore-based global traders (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2022). Further, the government plans to support enterprises in Singapore through capability development, innovation, digitalisation, and internationalisation (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2022).

Singapore emphasises innovation, a green economy, a business ecosystem, and capability development. These benefit firms doing business in Singapore but also CSI projects that can gain more opportunities to be strengthened and to provide more impacts to society.

### ***4.3.3 Social Context***

Singapore is a small country with 710 square kilometres (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). The population in Singapore in 2022 was approximately 5.6 million (National Population and Talent Division, 2023). This causes Singapore to be one of the countries with a high population density, estimated at nearly 8,000 people per square kilometer (World Bank, 2023b).

Singaporeans comprise Chinese as the major ethnic group, Malay, Indian, and Eurasian (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Despite the government's efforts to promote racial equality, this multicultural city-state still encounters instances of racial discrimination, such as exclusion from certain job positions (Velayutham, 2017), and this exists even in developed countries (Quillian et al., 2019).

Singapore is fully urbanised, with a reported urban population of 100% (World Bank, 2023c). Moreover, the literacy rate in Singapore is impressively high, at around 98% (Department of Statistics, 2023a). Singapore has several world-class academics, and many Singaporeans are high-skilled labourers who are proficient in English and at least one other language, such as Mandarin (EDB, 2023).

Although Singaporean workers are well-educated and skilled, the country faces challenges related to an aging population and a low fertility rate, which could lead to labour shortages (National Population and Talent Division, 2023). The rise in the elderly population, on one hand, has increased pressure on government budgets, for example, in healthcare and pensions. On the other hand, it has created business opportunities and significant demand for products and services catering to older adults.

Singaporeans have a good quality of life; however, the challenges of high population density and complete urbanisation have negative impacts on daily living. Environmental issues can also be triggered by these challenges. To alleviate these, SI projects thus often relate to urban living, environment protection, and ageing populations, such as water system management, waste management, ethical shopping, urban mobility innovations with high safety and low carbon emissions, and age-friendly city (Balamatsias, 2020).

#### ***4.3.4 Institutional Context***

Since the majority of the population in Singapore are Chinese Singaporeans, Confucianism and Buddhism significantly influence them in terms of altruism and charitable tradition, which can be passed down through generations (Tan and Lam, 2018). Malay Singaporeans and Indian Singaporeans also have religious beliefs, such as zakat and dana, which motivate people to pursue charitable giving (Tan and Lam, 2018). Additionally, a goodwill action, particularly philanthropy, can signal the wealth and prestige of donors, and this kind of perspective is widespread in many Asian countries (Tan and Lam, 2018).

Furthermore, the legacy of colonialism can cause Singaporeans to perceive and be familiar with civil society organisations and movements in the Western style (Shapiro et al., 2018). Social values vary across different heritages, and the colonial legacy could be an essential ground for developing philanthropic-driven organisations and social-oriented businesses in present-day Singapore.

Although Singapore has not explicitly declared national plans and strategies regarding SI, businesses and residents are encouraged to be conscious of social challenges and search for innovative solutions. For example, Singapore mandates that all listed companies report on their environmental, social, and governance practices, promoting positive social impact (Lam and Han, 2019). Moreover, several universities and organisations offer programs to train individuals to start doing good business (Lam and Han, 2019). In addition to the favourable environment, effective regulatory enforcement in Singapore (Lum, 2022) can strengthen the government's attempts and benefit the development of SI and the country.

#### ***4.3.5 Resource Context***

As mentioned in Section 4.3.3, the Singaporean workforce is well-educated, and many have high skills; this is an advantageous capability of the country's human resources. However, becoming an ageing society leads to a lack of labour supply. Singapore thus has attempted to extend the retirement age to lessen the labour shortage and encourage the



elderly to share their knowledge and experience with the younger workers (Ministry of Manpower, 2021).

Due to being a regional financial hub, Singapore has a wide range of financial resources that businesses can access, such as banks, grants, and venture capital. Examples of significant funders, especially for businesses with social objectives, are *raiSE*, *SG Enable* and *Impact Investment Exchange* (British Council, 2020b). However, it is reported that several social enterprises mainly rely on self-funding more than applying for grants and loans (British Council, 2020b).

Increasing awareness of social challenges boosts the number of businesses with social objectives in Singapore. In 2021, Singapore had almost 300,000 social enterprises, most of which are SMEs and the majority of which are locally owned (Department of Statistics, 2023b). These businesses often seek to provide employment opportunities, develop skills, and assist vulnerable and marginalised communities and people with low incomes (British Council, 2020b).

To stimulate social enterprise growth, the government established the *Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise (raiSE)* as a key actor in raising awareness of social entrepreneurship and supporting social enterprises with resources. Singapore also built a vibrant ecosystem to support social enterprises, provide networks connecting them to global partners, and encourage more businesses to address social challenges or become social enterprises (Lam and Han, 2019).

*Table 15: Summary of Country Contexts in Singapore*

<b>Key features</b>	
<b>Political context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Singapore is a parliamentary democratic country and was colonised by Britain for decades.</li> <li>- The political stability is very high compared to other countries in the same region.</li> </ul>

<b>Economic and business context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Singapore is a high-income economy.</li> <li>- The service sector, especially the finance industry, and advanced manufacturing mainly contribute to economic growth.</li> <li>- The government is pro-business.</li> <li>- The business climate and regulatory environment are very friendly for doing business.</li> <li>- The government is seeking to facilitate enterprises through capability development, innovation, digitalisation, and internationalisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Social context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Singapore is a small city-state with a high population density, full urbanisation and an ageing society.</li> <li>- Singapore is a multicultural country, and Chinese is the major ethnic.</li> <li>- Social challenges in Singapore are often urban living, the ageing population, the environment, and inequality.</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional context</b>	<p><i>Informal institution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social values vary across different heritages and the colonial legacy is friendly for SI growth.</li> </ul> <p><i>Formal institution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Though no law or regulation is generated directly for SI, efforts have been made to encourage businesses to report their environmental, social, and governance practices, and promote education and training programs regarding social enterprise and SI.</li> <li>- Regulatory enforcement is comparatively good.</li> </ul>
<b>Resource context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Singapore has high-skilled human resources and a variety of financial resources.</li> <li>- Social-driven enterprise in Singapore has grown significantly in recent years.</li> <li>- The government attempts to boost social enterprise growth and build a vibrant ecosystem for doing good business.</li> </ul>

Source: Author's elaboration

#### ***4.3.6 SI in National Plan***

In Singapore, key national development plans consist of long-term plan guiding the development over the next 50 years and five-year plan or Master Plan translating long-term strategies into a more detailed medium-term plan (Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2024a). As the long-term plan concerning strategic land use and infrastructure is a wide framework, it does not specifically include SI as a strategy. Similarly, SI is not explicitly mentioned in the current Master Plan (2019-2024). However, the Master Plan focuses on adapting to climate change and promoting convenient, sustainable mobility, which encourages the adoption of SI as a strategy to address these challenges (Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2024b). Further, the Research, Innovation and Enterprise

(RIE) 2025 plan intends to invest in research and innovation to enhance human health, urban solutions, and sustainability (National Research Foundation, 2021). Although this plan does not directly mention SI, it can be another driver of SI growth in Singapore. Therefore, national plans in Singapore create a favourable environment for SI to grow although SI is not explicitly outlined as a strategy in the plans.

#### ***4.4 Contextual Factors for CSI and Interaction Across Countries***

After explaining the country contexts of Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore separately in Sections 4.1-4.3, this section synthesises the three countries' contexts to present a comparative view of contexts across countries. This section also highlights key potential contextual factors that can influence CSI and the interaction between government and firms in the three countries, including political system and governance structure, economic system and development, resource abundance, institutional environment, and social challenge.

##### ***4.4.1 Political System and Governance Structure***

Despite being democratic countries, the Thai and Malaysian governments control and intervene more than the Singaporean government. Although the royal family is a role model for doing good in Thailand, its influence in encouraging firms to pursue social objectives has diminished in recent times. Therefore, the royal family's impact on CSI and the interaction between the government and firms is not significant.

The governance structures of Thailand and Malaysia are multi-level, while Singapore has one level. The multi-level of government in Thailand and Malaysia reflects the political decentralisation, granting autonomy and power to local governments (Isufaj, 2014). Local governments generally have close relationships with citizens and communities. The importance of local governments is thus highlighted, especially in Thai CSI projects. Moreover, the multi-level government, particularly in Thailand, is relevant to social hierarchy and patronage (Tjahja and Yee, 2018). This leads to the building of a reciprocal-

based relationship between businesses and government, allowing businesses to obtain privileges from the government (Varkkey, 2012).

Conversely, Singapore has only one level of government, which is centralised. Approaching and establishing personal relationships with the national government is more complicated than with the local government. The Singaporean government, further, is highly committed to transparency, minimising individual relationships between government officials and firms to avoid misconduct. This makes firms in Singapore have a formal and weak relationship with the government. From the coordination mechanism perspective of VoC, Singapore displays a formal relationship related to LME. In contrast, Thailand and Malaysia exhibit the interpersonal reciprocity between government and firms, which is associated with SME.

#### ***4.4.2 Economic System and Development***

Thailand and Malaysia are classified as upper middle-income countries, while Singapore is a high-income country. Consequently, the Singaporean government has more financial resources and capabilities to support SI compared to the Thai and Malaysian governments. Moreover, Singapore has a free-market economy, making it easy to start a business; however, this also means facing high competition. Due to the high number of businesses, limited government intervention, and an abundance of resources and capabilities, the Singaporean government has created an ecosystem that firms can access and utilise, rather than proactively assist them through personal connections.

On the other hand, the economy of Thailand and Malaysia is a mixed economic system, where the government can regulate the economy to some extent, such as exchange rate intervention and foreign ownership control (McKenzie, 2021, BNM, 2024, BOT, 2024, PWC, 2022). Moreover, the government has constraints on resources to enable SI in a formal way such as grants. Therefore, the government in Thailand and Malaysia is more involved in CSI projects than in Singapore, and they can establish interpersonal relationships with firms and offer other assistance beyond financial support and linking firms to the ecosystem.

From the coordination mechanism perspective of VoC, all three countries are open to competitive markets. From the domestic market and international integration perspective, they are linked to the global economy and have a large portion of exports to GDP. Regarding corporate finance, Singapore attracts a higher inflow of foreign capital compared to Thailand and Malaysia (World Bank, 2024a). However, family capital remains an important funding source, particularly when starting a business (SMEhorizon, 2024).

#### ***4.4.3 Resource Abundance***

The resource context of the country illustrates the capability and abundance of resources, such as human resources, financial resources, and other essential infrastructures that facilitate CSI production. Thailand and Malaysia have fewer resources to enable CSI than Singapore; they provide other forms of support instead or impose vast requirements on firms to obtain resources. This stimulates the informal relationship between the government and firms to obtain government-owned resources in Thailand and Malaysia (Wei et al., 2023). In the case of Singapore, the government can create an ecosystem from plentiful resources for firms that firms can evenly access and use. Therefore, Singaporean firms do not need to develop personal relationships with the government to gain special privileges.

However, solving social problems, especially wicked problems, is complicated and requires considerable resources and time (Nicholls et al., 2015, Remøe, 2015). Collaboration, therefore, is critical to share resources and have mutual actions to solve problems. In Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, SI has become more important, and efforts are being made to support its development in hopes of alleviating social problems within their countries. Some problems, such as marine plastic and air pollution, are regional challenges more than national ones. Therefore, creating SI to tackle these challenges necessitates collaboration among ASEAN countries.

Though SI is not explicitly identified in the recent ASEAN plan regarding innovation (APASTI 2016-2025), this plan does emphasise green technology and technology that can improve quality of life (ASEAN Secretariat, 2017). Further, this plan included mutual

thrust and actions to strengthen the collaboration of actors and the mobility of researchers in the region, which are a positive sign for regional SI growth. Although the regional plan regarding innovation is favourable for SI and CSI, some specific problem-oriented action plans confront challenges. The regional framework and action plan on marine plastic debris, for example, is not legally binding and lacks distinctive provisions specifically aimed at dealing with plastic waste (Kamaruddin et al., 2022), diminishing the plan's effectiveness in resolving this regional issue.

#### ***4.4.4 Institutional Environment***

Institutional context, both informal and formal, can either support or hinder the creation of CSI. Informal institutional environments in all three countries foster the growth of CSI, as religion-based beliefs significantly motivate people to engage in altruistic actions. Further, governments have made efforts to promote social-driven businesses and raise awareness of social and environmental issues among citizens and enterprises. These inspire individuals and businesses to tackle social and environmental challenges while pursuing innovative solutions.

Formal institutional environments in Thailand and Malaysia, however, become a challenge due to weak regulatory enforcement associated with transparency issues, while the regulatory enforcement in Singapore is in a stronger position. The weak formal institutions are harmful to CSI because they negatively affect firms doing innovation and innovation development (Lee and Law, 2017, Rodríguez-Pose and Zhang, 2020), and encourage firms to establish political ties, leading to less motivation for firms to develop skills and capabilities (Du and Luo, 2016, Yiu et al., 2005). To foster CSI development, it is crucial to improve formal institutions, especially in Thailand and Malaysia.

#### ***4.4.5 Social Challenges***

Social context, on the one hand, illustrates a particular country's social problems and needs that motivate firms to engage in CSI. Thailand and Malaysia have confronted poverty

problems for a long time. Despite government efforts to resolve these challenges, significant wealth and income disparities remain prevalent (Khalid and Yang, 2019, World Bank, 2021c). For Singapore, it is densely populated and fully urbanised, resulting in negative impacts on Singaporean quality of life. Moreover, being an ageing society is challenging Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore in terms of, for example, public healthcare, labour force, infrastructure for older people, and pressures on tax revenues (Khalid, 2023, Rouzet et al., 2019). At the same time, environmental problems due to climate change and human activities are gradually harmful to the three countries' society, economy, and natural environment.

Social context, on the other hand, points out that social diversity in terms of ethnic groups and religion indirectly affects the government and economic development. This is seen in Singapore and Malaysia, where the British colonised. The legacy of colonialism is one of the factors that contributed to Singapore's rapid development. Governance and legal systems, infrastructures, and education systems, for example, that are derived from the British, become the basis for the current system. In other words, the legacy of colonialism is a guideline for country development in Singapore.

Furthermore, Singapore experiences less tension between ethnic groups compared to Malaysia. A harmonious society is one of the favourable conditions for the country's development. The combination of well-established infrastructure and systems inherited from the colonial era, coupled with the peaceful coexistence of diverse ethnic groups, enabled Singapore to transition from a low-income nation to a wealthy country within a few decades (World Bank, 2019).

In contrast, Malaysia has partially retained its colonial legacy. Tensions among ethnic groups and political instability led to changes in governance, legitimacy, and resource distribution among different ethnic groups. This caused dissimilarities between Singapore and Malaysia in the post-colonial era regarding contextual elements, leading to different interactions between their governments and firms undertaking CSI.

Thailand, on the other hand, has not encountered severe ethnic conflicts, and the insurgency issue in the three southernmost provinces has not considerably hindered overall national development. Although Thailand was never colonised, its geographical proximity to colonised countries stimulated Thailand to improve, for example, governance and legal systems, infrastructure, and education system.



# CHAPTER 5: INTERACTION BETWEEN FIRM AND GOVERNMENT

This thesis aims to understand the interaction between the government and firms undertaking CSI projects in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, focusing on characteristics and mechanisms of interaction, the influence of country contexts, and key barriers to CSI and seeks to understand CSI in practice. This chapter then exhibits key findings from the primary data complemented with the secondary data. In particular, findings are presented under seven key themes: motivations for initiating CSI, characteristics of interaction, types of government interaction and mechanism, influences of government involvement on CSI projects, contributions of CSI, key challenges to CSI, and understanding of CSI. The summary table of these key themes and their sub-themes is presented in Appendix I.

## *5.1 Motivations for Initiating CSI*

Findings indicated that both responsive and proactive motivations drove CSI projects in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. In the case of *responsive motivation*, project founders recognised social problems and then decided to create CSI with objectives to alleviate these social problems. Founders' awareness of social problems often stemmed from personal experiences towards particular problems and from directly perceiving problems in communities and current urgent incidents in the country. For example,

*“The founder’s parents are retirees. They have felt lonely and have isolated from their friends and community [...] The founder has realised that this could cause depression. The founder then has explored a solution for helping ageing people to engage with the community again and to regain their self-esteem.” (Thai Project 8)*

*“At that time, I came up with a startup that is dealing with the solar energy [...] but the E-waste thing is actually causing a lot of trouble in the developing countries [...] And in January 2018, China passed a new law to stop importing the E-waste from other countries [...] And the E-waste go to other countries like Malaysia [...] we found one phone dealer*

*in KL who has been open his shop for 25 years. And he said that he knew that the E-waste was harmful [...] he doesn't know what to do, but he knows that he cannot throw them away [...] So now I realised that the waste is there, and the factory is there but because they are not connected.” (Malaysian Project 3)*

According to the above quotations, the founder of Thai Project 8 noticed the loneliness and social isolation experienced by her aging parents. As mentioned in Section 4.1.3, this trouble has become more important in Thailand, as the country is currently an ageing society, and the fast-growing ageing population is leading to challenges to the country’s economy and healthcare system (Bangkok Post, 2021b). For Malaysian Project 3, the founder recognised the rising levels of international and domestic E-waste as well as the inefficiency of waste management, which was one of the key environmental issues in Malaysia (Yusof et al., 2023, Business Today, 2023), as discussed in Section 4.2.3. Examples of these two CSI projects, therefore, highlight the responsive motivation of project founders and address social and environmental problems, which can be more than problems in a particular country but also international problems, especially transboundary movement of E-waste affecting many countries (Sasaki, 2021).

While CSI projects with responsive motivation were generated by founders who recognised social problems and aimed to mitigate them, projects driven by **proactive motivation** involved founders who not only recognised these challenges but also experienced business pain points and could anticipate new business opportunities arising from these problems. For example,

*“We are interested in waste problem and intend to start a business regarding waste reduction [...] One of founders suffered from the problem of excessive fabric which was a pain point in her own family business. Being a start-up means we must eliminate the pain point. We then sell these fabrics on our online platform along with figuring out the way we can sell them more and more. In the beginning, we sell them as raw material, and we next also produce our products made of them.” (Thai Project 6)*

The participant from Thai Project 6 explained the awareness of waste problem, which this issue is one of the key challenges in Thailand (Stratsea, 2023), as mentioned in Section

4.1.3. This issue is also part of the government's BCG strategy aimed at tackling environmental concerns (NSTDA, 2022), as mentioned in Section 4.1.2. Further, the participant revealed his intention to seize new business opportunities and eliminate business pain points by initiating a business corresponding to this problem. The Thai Project 6, therefore, was initiated due to the proactive motivation to solve environmental problems and gain business opportunities and benefits.

## ***5.2 Characteristics of Interaction***

In addition to motivation, the findings also revealed characteristics of interaction between the government and firms in the three countries. Under the interaction characteristic themes in this thesis, six sub-themes were identified: the level of government involved in CSI projects, commencement of interaction, time of involvement, level of formality, purpose of government involvement, and government instrument. Each sub-theme is explained below.

### ***5.2.1 Level of Government Involved in CSI Project***

As described in Section 4.3.1 that Singapore is a city-state country with only a national government (CLGF, 2017), Singaporean projects thus were approached only by government agencies at the national level. However, the data in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.1 indicated that Thailand and Malaysia have multi-level governments (OECD, 2023, The Government Public Relations Department, 2023, OECD, 2016a). Due to the multi-level of governance, CSI projects in Thailand and Malaysia were engaged by national government, such as ministries, and local governments with both provincial/state and local governments.

For example, in Malaysia, a local government agency involved in Malaysian Project 2: *“We have this municipal council that see the effort. So, they come in to actually acknowledge the product, and they adopt the technology”*. Another example is Thai Project 15, which revealed its *“collaborating with a community leader and local government”* because *“we are an outsider to their communities [...] we need someone such as a community leader and local government who can guarantee*

*the reliability of our project.” Therefore, the involvement with the government was “a strategy to make local farmers trust us and our project”.*

As discussed in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.4.1, local governments in Thailand have close relationships with local communities, as local governors are from local elections and are residents of local communities. Good relationships with local governments, thus, are one of the key success factors for CSI projects in accessing local communities credibly.

### ***5.2.2 Commencement of Interaction***

Government agencies at the national level generally perform in a holistic perspective, overseeing entire countries rather than focusing on individual communities. This broader perspective often made it challenging for these agencies to search for targeted CSI projects among many projects in their countries and then contacted these projects to initiate the interaction. Firms undertaking CSI projects in Singapore, thus, needed to start approaching government agencies, mainly through formal channels, such as applying for grants, membership, and licenses. Singaporean Project 1, for example, mentioned that *“we got a smaller size grant from them (a government agency)”* and commented that *“the way the Singapore system oftentimes works is based on grants that they are having as well where you have to apply for”*, emphasising the interaction with government agencies commenced by firms and in formal forms.

However, in Thailand and Malaysia, interactions were initiated by firms and government agencies, particularly the government at the national level. Regarding the interactions initiated by the government, it was observed that government agencies often focused on well-known CSI projects or project founders. When government agencies recognised the potential and significance of CSI projects, they proactively contacted firms to offer assistance. This support included, for example, facilitating access to resources, connecting firms with potential stakeholders, and inviting them to participate in government events or to serve as exemplary case studies. Thai Project 3 is a good example of this; the

representative of this project explained that “*I was on the air in a TV show [...] someone in a government agency saw this [...] I was invited to attend their course*”.

### **5.2.3 Time of Involvement**

The government's involvement in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore was observed in both the early and latter stages of CSI projects. Further details about the government involvement in the early and the latter phases of the projects are illustrated as follows:

- ***The Early Phases***

The findings suggested that government agencies in the three countries often offered resources, particularly financial resources, to firms undertaking CSI projects. This also included knowledge and skills for firms through incubation programs and training programs. For example,

*“I was induced by a government agency to join an incubation program [...] It was free of charge, and I have learnt about doing business and making a business plan. I also won a business plan competition in this program and got a cash prize used for my business.”*  
(Thai Project 3)

*“There's a program from a government agency, which is basically helping to grow local startups. And we got a smaller size grant from them, which was a good starting point for us.”* (Singaporean Project 1)

From these examples, CSI projects were incubated by government agencies and also received cash prizes or grants from them. Notably, several government agencies inclusively nurtured CSI projects with knowledge and skill training alongside financial assistance, which were essential for starting and growing businesses in the early stages.

Additionally, government agencies actively connected firms with potential stakeholders, such as partners and customers, and linked firms to the ecosystem, helping them grow their projects. For example, Thai Project 9 stated that “*besides an initial fund, a government*

*agency has connected us to experts as we required.”. Similarly, Malaysian Project 5 revealed that “they (a government agency) have helped us connect with an ecosystem of social enterprises.”*

Government agencies sometimes were involved in the early stages of CSI projects by permitting firms to start their projects. Singaporean Project 4, for instance, commented that *“a government agency, they are regulating me [...] so when I started my farm, they wanted me to get approval from them to start the farm”*.

Furthermore, in some CSI projects, such as Thai Project 8, a government agency participated in the project to collectively produce and deliver CSI. The informant from this project explained that *“a government agency has collectively worked with our project [...] We benefit from working with the government [...] the government has its own network of beneficiaries so we can reach more beneficiaries and new networks in new areas”*. The collaboration between Thai Project 8 and the government agency created a win-win situation: the project benefited from grants and networks provided by the government agency, while the government agency fulfilled its commitment to assist a specific beneficiary through the CSI project.

- ***The Latter Phases***

In the later stages of CSI projects, government involvement also offered resources and connections to potential stakeholders, which greatly benefited firms in scaling their projects. For example, in Singaporean Project 4, the informant explained that a government agency involved in the project *“has a lot of networking sessions [...] have overseas trips where they bring Singapore youth to go overseas to meet other youth in other countries”*. The informant *“was invited to go to abroad to meet the top youth in the field to interact with them and stuff like that”*, which provided valuable experience and access to a broader regional network.

Furthermore, the government guaranteed the credibility of firms or CSI projects, making it easier for them to engage with stakeholders or beneficiaries. This was particularly evident in CSI projects initiated by newly established or lesser-known firms. For instance,

*“Being a member of it (a government agency) helps to put us to be seen in a light. When we go out there and we talk to the government agencies or talk to corporates. And they*

*look at you, and they say okay if you're a member of it (a government agency) then you are not a scammer or you're not a dodgy company.” (Singaporean Project 2)*

For Singaporean Project 2, being a member of a government agency helped the project become more reliable. In the Singaporean example, connecting with the government also exhibited people's trust in the government. However, the interaction between this Singaporean project and the government agency was predominantly formal rather than interpersonal, reflecting the government's efforts to create a corruption-free environment and minimise individual relationships between government officials and firms (Grant Thornton, 2018, Rana and Lee, 2015), which discussed earlier in Section 4.3.2.

In some CSI projects, such as Thai Project 1, government agencies became customers, buying products or services from the CSI project.

*“They (government agencies) made procurements to buy products from us” (Thai Project 1)*

Additionally, the government was a mitigator, assisting firms in resolving conflicts with individuals. Thai Project 10, for instance, expressed that *“we sometimes experience conflicts with middlemen [...] the government agency helps us to deal with this”*. This government involvement highlighted the government's power and close relationships it had with firms, which could occur in countries with multi-level governance (Tjahja and Yee, 2018, Isufaj, 2014, Varkkey, 2012), as discussed in Section 4.4.1.

Due to the project's success, the government utilised CSI projects as a tool to achieve its targets. This was often observed in CSI projects that aligned with government agencies' goals and responsibilities. For instance, Thai Project 6 addressed waste management and upcycling, which *“they (government agencies) have to do and focus on the circular economy and the BCG”*. Focusing on the same issue, the founder of this project then was *“invited to be their (government agencies) guest speaker”* at government agencies' events. Another example is Singaporean Project 6, which provided *“advice”* and *“participated in talk or whatever we could do”* to the government agency.

The government also subcontracted CSI projects to take on certain governmental tasks. For example, Thai Project 2 had community networks, which were in line with a

government agency's duties. The government agency then subcontracted the project to incubate communities into social enterprises.

*“A government agency was focusing on advocating communities to be social enterprises [...] We have our own networking of communities, then we have become a part of the government agency's program. We have selected qualified communities and invited experts to educate these communities to become social enterprises.” (Thai Project 2)*

Subcontracting to firms, on the one hand, allowed the government to leverage firms' expertise relevant to governmental work. On the other hand, the government, particularly the central government, could take advantage of firms' relationships with communities to lessen conflicts between the government and communities.

In the case of Malaysia, the government was able to utilise some CSI projects, such as Projects 1 and 3, as pathways to connect with foreign governments and as a tool for policy development.

*“The government of Thailand wanted an official from the government agency to accompany us to the Thailand trip because this was official delegation. So, they wanted someone from the government to be with us. So, we called the person at the government agency [...] And she was very happy, and she came with us to the trip to Thailand.” (Malaysian Project 3)*

*“We were invited to be part of the focus group for the plastic roadmap. So, if you look at the plastic roadmap that was launched. We're actually in there.” (Malaysian Project 1)*

For Malaysia CSI Project 1, a government agency invited the firm to participate in drafting the national plastic roadmap. In Malaysian Project 3, a Malaysian government agency and the project visited a Thai government agency as part of an official delegation. This visit facilitated connections between these two government agencies and fostered further collaboration between the countries, aligning with the ASEAN plan that promotes regional cooperation among various stakeholders, as mentioned in Section 4.4.3 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2017).

As mentioned in Section 5.2.2, the government sometimes issued licenses or provided grants to firms. Subsequently, the government closely monitored these firms to ensure



compliance with the stipulations of the licenses or grants. Government monitoring was often found in terms of reports that firms needed to submit regularly to the government. For instance, Malaysian Project 6 indicated that the project *“has gotten (the E-waste license) a few years ago [...] so every year, we have to submit the report in a routine way to report how much that we have recycled.”*

However, in some CSI projects, such as Thai Project 15, that were related to a specific topic that the government was interested in but had yet to implement relevant policies or regulations. In this case, the government monitored the project to observe its progress and effects.

*“It complies with international basis, not Thai basis. It is out of scope of the government control. Thus, the government only keeps an eye on what we do.” (Thai Project 15)*

In summary, the governments of all three countries were involved in CSI projects during both the early and latter stages. In the early phases, the government often provided essential support and resources, such as financial support and entrepreneurial skills, to produce CSI and grow CSI projects. The government also played an important role in enabling firms to start their CSI projects. It was also observed that sometimes the government participated in CSI projects as co-producers or partners.

In the latter phases, the government was also involved in CSI projects to provide some assistance that enhanced the capabilities and growth of the projects. At the same time, the government utilised the success of these projects to fulfil its responsibilities.

Interestingly, the interview data revealed that the involvement of the Thai and Singaporean governments was in the early stages and the latter stages equally. In contrast, the Malaysian government was involved more in the latter phases than in the early phases. This can be attributed to two main reasons. Firstly, most of the Malaysian Projects in this thesis were either in new industries the government had never been involved in or established before the government focused on these new industries. By the time the government recognised the importance of these new industries and sought to engage, the projects had already progressed to the latter stages.

Another possible reason is that most founders of the Malaysian projects participated in this thesis are non-Bumiputera. They encountered some challenges in securing government support when they were early-stage and unknown. According to the fieldwork in Malaysia, ethnic segregation was slightly observed during the trip, such as in terms of employment, where certain ethnic groups had greater access to specific job opportunities. Moreover, a Malaysian project expressed difficulties in obtaining government assistance and resources during its early phases. The founders, however, had enough resources, skills, and knowledge to develop CSI in the initial stage. Approaching the government was, therefore, unnecessary for them at that time.

#### ***5.2.4 Level of Formality***

The findings also revealed interpersonal and informal relationships between the government and firms, which were more pronounced in the Thai and Malaysian cases compared to the Singaporean case. For example, Thai Project 1 had a close relationship and worked with a government agency for years. Similarly, the founder of Malaysian Project 1 had a personal relationship with a government officer who could assist him when necessary.

*“We and a government agency have known each other for many years. We have several co-projects with the government agency. We are friends for years.” (Thai Project 1)*

*“One of government official from a ministry has just moved across to another ministry [...] We know him well. So, I just texted him personally like congratulations, we would love to be able to work with you.” (Malaysian Project 1)*

This is due to patronage, which is more prevalent in Thailand and Malaysia than in Singapore (Fraser et al., 2006, Wateethammawipat et al., 2020), as discussed in Section 4.4.1. Patronage, thus, fostered interpersonal bonds between the government and firms. Further, with the multi-level governments in Thailand and Malaysia, local governments could become deeply involved in CSI projects, enabling them to establish personal relationships with firms.

The Singaporean government had a weaker involvement in CSI projects compared to the Thai and Malaysian governments, due to efforts to minimise government power over business (Grant Thornton, 2018, Rana and Lee, 2015), as mentioned in Section 4.4.1. Instead, the government focuses on creating a conducive ecosystem for businesses (Lam and Han, 2019). Moreover, the Singaporean government exhibits greater transparency than the governments of Thailand and Malaysia (CPIB, 2023), leading to less personal connection with firms. Additionally, as discussed in Section 4.4.3, Singapore has more resources than Thailand and Malaysia. The Singaporean government, therefore, often assisted firms undertaking CSI formally, especially through financial support and by helping them build networks with potential players in the SI ecosystem.

### ***5.2.5 Purposes of Government Involvement***

According to the findings, the government was involved in CSI projects for four main reasons: to solve social challenges and provide social benefits, to steer firms or CSI projects per the government's demands regarding SI, to accomplish the government's policy and organisational goals, and to improve the government's capabilities. Details of each government's purpose are explained below.

#### ***5.2.5.1 Solving Social Challenges and Providing Social Benefits***

One of the government's duties is to tackle social and environmental issues within the country, leading to the pursuit of SI as an innovative solution. The government, hence, encouraged and facilitated firms to create CSI, either as a replacement for government efforts or in addition to existing programs, to alleviate social problems and deliver social benefits. For instance, Thai Project 8 worked with a government agency having similar objectives.

*“A government agency has worked with our project because one of the main goals of this agency fits with our project and our objectives.” (Thai Project 8)*

### ***5.2.5.2 Steering Firms or CSI Projects Per the Government's Demands Regarding SI***

Governments in the three countries sought to solve social problems and provide social benefits; however, each government agency focused on different issues and beneficiaries based on their specific responsibilities. When government agencies were involved in CSI projects, they either directly or indirectly motivated firms to create CSI to solve specific problems or serve specific groups of beneficiaries. Malaysian Project 3, for example, was encouraged “*to build a system a tech system*” when the project received a grant from a government agency regarding high-technology development.

According to examples outlined in Section 5.2.3, the Thai and Malaysian governments demonstrated an intense involvement in CSI projects, such as being partners or co-producers to directly navigate firms. In contrast, the Singaporean government connected firms to the ecosystem, indirectly encouraging them to address specific issues. This difference can be attributed to varying political and economic influences, which Thai and Malaysian governments comparatively exhibit more intervention in the economic system than Singapore (globalEDGE, 2024, Sangsukiam, 2021). Meanwhile, the Singaporean government aims to foster a vibrant ecosystem for businesses (Lam and Han, 2019), as discussed in Section 4.4.2.

### ***5.2.5.3 Accomplishing the Government's Policy and Organisational Goals***

Government agencies generally focus on meeting their annual milestones and missions, which are often derived from national policies and plans. Government agencies then engaged in CSI projects to utilise the projects as a pathway to achieve their organisational goals, such as increasing the number of businesses addressing specific social issues and beneficiaries and encouraging CSI projects or firms with similar objectives. For example, Thai Government 2 set “*the number target and sector target*” for social-based businesses that it

expected to incubate annually. Further, Thai Project 14 indicated that the firm was “*invited to be speakers and open our booth [...] and present our inclusive technology in their (government agencies) events*”.

#### ***5.2.5.4 Improving the Government’s Capabilities***

The government also utilised CSI projects to enhance and strengthen its capabilities, such as establishing new connections with various groups of people or a foreign government agency. For instance, a Malaysian government agency gained an opportunity to connect with a Thai government agency during the trip with Malaysian Project 3. Further, the government employed firms as intermediaries to mitigate conflicts with communities and improve its image within communities and society. In Thai Project 2, for example, a government agency had a conflict with a community. The project then “*had been hired to do a project on behalf of this government agency in the same community*”, and the success of Thai Project 2 led to the improvement of the government agency’s image and relationship with community residents.

In conclusion, the purpose of involvement in CSI projects of the Thai and Malaysian governments was often to utilise CSI projects as a tool to achieve their goals and as a complement to ongoing work. In contrast, the Singaporean government used CSI projects as a supplement to its existing efforts rather than a primary tool for achieving goals. This is due to resource, social and political contexts, which differ across countries, as explained earlier in Section 4.4.

#### ***5.2.6 Government Instrument***

The findings revealed that government instruments applied in the Thai, Malaysian, and Singaporean projects were not significantly different. Considering the government instrument derived from Borrás and Edquist (2013), governments in all three countries often employed **soft instruments**, such as incubation programs, networking events, and partnerships, alongside **economic instruments**, such as grants. The government also used

**regulatory instruments** in some CSI projects, but to a lesser extent than soft and economic instruments. This is due to the government's efforts to encourage social and innovation-based businesses. The government then provided businesses, for example, funding and networking, which are crucial for business growth (De Klerk and Kroon, 2008, Muriithi et al., 2018).

Examples of CSI projects implemented by soft instruments are Thai Project 3, which participated in an incubation program, and Singaporean Project 4, which took part in a networking trip. An example of a project implemented by economic instruments is Thai Project 8, which received a grant from a government agency. Projects implemented by regulatory instruments are Singaporean Project 4 and Malaysian Project 6, which required government approval; these CSI projects are explained in Section 5.2.3.

The interview data also indicated that government instruments were employed both formally and informally in CSI projects. As discussed in Section 2.6, **formal implementation** occurred when the government officially used specific instruments for CSI projects. For example, Thai Project 10 officially partnered with government agencies, and Thai Government 1 provided grants to qualified firms.

*“In some provinces, we have officially partnered with government agencies.” (Thai Project 10)*

*“One of our main duties is to offer grants [...] to potential and qualified applicants” (Thai Government 1)*

From these examples, the government could formally implement every type of instrument, ranging from regulatory to soft instruments. This highlights that formal implementation is a generic way for the government to apply its tools.

For **informal implementation**, the government unofficially used particular tools, primarily soft instruments, for specific firms. For example, in Thai Project 6, the founders were personally invited and introduced to others at an event by a government agency, helping the firm gain exposure and meet other potential stakeholders.

*“They (a government agency) were kind to us [...] once we were personally invited to join a government event [...] they introduced us to others.” (Thai Project 6)*

Moreover, it was observed that the informal implementation of government instruments, particularly in Thailand and Malaysia, often occurred when the government had positive relationships with firms and had been acquainted with them for some time. This highlights the widespread government-business ties in Thailand and Malaysia, as well as the influence of multi-level governance, as discussed in Section 4.4.1.

The table below summarises interaction characteristics across six sub-themes in three countries. The interactions in Thailand and Malaysia exhibited similarities in various aspects, such as the level of government involved in CSI projects, the commencement of interaction, and the formality of the relationships between the government and firms. These similarities were influenced by contextual factors, particularly the political-economic system, governance structure, and resource abundance, which were similar in both countries.

*Table 16: Summary of Interaction Characteristics in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore*

	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>Singapore</b>
<b>Level of government involved in CSI projects</b>	Both national and local governments	Both national and local governments	National government
<b>Commencement of interaction</b>	Started by both firms and government agencies	Started by both firms and government agencies	Mostly started by firms
<b>Time of involvement in CSI projects</b>	Both the early and the latter phases of CSI projects	Mostly in the latter phases of CSI projects	Both the early and the latter phases of CSI projects
<b>Formality of the relationships between the government and firms</b>	Interpersonal and informal relationships especially with the local government	Interpersonal and informal relationships especially with the local government	Formal relationship through funding and linking firms to the SI ecosystem

<b>Purpose of governmental involvement</b>	- Involving due to all four key reasons - To use CSI as a tool and a supplement	- Involving due to all four key reasons - To use CSI as a tool and a supplement	- Involving due to all four key reasons - To use CSI as a supplement more than as a tool
<b>Governmental instruments implemented in the interaction</b>	- Regulatory, economic, and soft instruments - Being implemented both formally and informally	- Regulatory, economic, and soft instruments - Being implemented both formally and informally	- Regulatory, economic, and soft instruments - Being implemented formally more than informally

Source: Author's elaboration

### 5.3 Types of Government Interaction and Mechanisms

From the interview data, the author observed seven primary patterns of interactions and four secondary interactions in CSI projects across Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. The typologies of interactions are displayed in the table below.

Table 17: Government Interaction Types Observed in CSI Projects

<b>Primary Interaction</b>	<b>Secondary Interaction</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The government was a customer.</li> <li>2. The government subcontracted to the project.</li> <li>3. The government became a partner or co-producer.</li> <li>4. The government provided financial support</li> <li>5. The government was a mentor.</li> <li>6. The government enabled the project to meet stakeholders and gain exposure.</li> <li>7. The government managed the entry to target places, people and industries.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The government used the project for foreign affairs and policy-making.</li> <li>2. The government mitigated conflicts.</li> <li>3. The government monitored the project.</li> <li>4. The government was a barrier.</li> </ol>

Source: Author's construct

In this thesis, primary interaction is an interaction between a government agency and a firm that occurs without necessarily having any prior interaction between these two parties. Secondary interaction, on the other hand, is a subsequent interaction occurring after a government and a firm interact through any primary interactions. Details about each type of interaction are explained below.



### ***5.3.1 Primary Interaction***

Since the primary interaction could occur without previous interactions between government agencies and firms, it is more prevalent than the secondary interaction. Details about each primary interaction are explained below.

#### ***5.3.1.1 The Government Was a Customer of a CSI Project***

*“They (a government agency) have helped us, they place orders with us.” (Malaysian Project 5)*

In this interaction type, the intensity of involvement in CSI projects was low, and the interaction occurred in formal ways more than personal relationships. Despite being only a customer, the government could develop further relationships with firms, which could lead to other interactions in the future, such as helping firms gain exposure and build connections.

It was observed that the interaction mechanisms, in terms of involvement intensity and formality, were consistent across the three countries. This is due to the similar formal institutional context regarding government procurement, which adheres to similar core principles. It is also due to the nature of business that customers rarely engage in the production process and operations, resulting in limited involvement in the project.

#### ***5.3.1.2 The Government Subcontracted Some Work to a CSI Project***

This interaction was also evident in the latter phases of projects, such as Thai Project 13. Government agencies perceived firms' expertise and capabilities in providing innovative solutions to beneficiaries, who were also the government's target groups. When government agencies had projects related to beneficiaries or activities of CSI projects and the projects were considered superior to the government agencies in their capabilities, the government agencies reached out to subcontract tasks to the CSI projects. For example,

*“They (a government agency) realised our expertise our potential [...] when they had projects, they hired us to be a part of the projects and run the projects” (Thai Project 13)*

The relationship between the government and firms in this type of interaction was not very intense. However, it was more significant than in the first type discussed earlier (see Section 5.3.1.1), being a customer buying products and services from CSI projects. Although the relationship between the government and firms was formal, personal relationship could develop over time.

Indeed, the purpose of the subcontract was not only to enable firms to produce and deliver SI to society on behalf of the government but also to guide firms in addressing specific problems or fulfilling government objectives through conditions and agreements identified in the contracts. Further, the government sometimes subcontracted firms to help mitigate conflicts between itself and local communities. Therefore, this kind of interaction allowed the government to pursue its goals related to SI while reducing tensions with communities.

In Thailand, subcontracted firms, such as Thai Project 2, played a vital role in government projects. In contrast, firms in Singapore, such as Singaporean Project 2, were primarily employed to complement government efforts and activities. This reflects Singapore's attempt to minimise the government-business relationship while promoting transparency, more than in Thailand (Grant Thornton, 2018, CPIB, 2023), as discussed in Section 4.3.2. However, this kind of interaction was not observed in the Malaysian case. This is because of the limited number of sample Malaysian projects.

### ***5.3.1.3 The Government Became a Partner or Co-produces CSI in Some Parts of CSI Project***

Government agencies possessed specific expertise that was advantageous for CSI projects. Government agencies, furthermore, addressed similar problems and groups of beneficiaries that aligned with CSI projects' focuses. Firms then contacted and invited government agencies to collaborate in certain processes of CSI production, especially as partners helping firms deliver innovative products and services to society. Thai Project 4, for instance,

partnered with a government agency benefiting the project in growing and selling its products.

*“They (a government agency) partnered with us, helped us in growing and selling crops [...] we have aligned goals and tasks with them” (Thai Project 4)*

Firms could engage with government agencies from the early phases to the latter phases of their projects. The relationship between the government and firms in this kind of interaction was strong, as they both needed to work closely. Further, the cooperation between the government and firms could be either official or unofficial. Being part of CSI projects allowed government agencies to achieve their goal of solving social problems while supporting and steering firms undertaking CSI.

This interaction was observed only in Thailand and Malaysia. In contrast, involving government agencies as partners or co-producers was more challenging in Singapore. This is due to the business context in Singapore, which facilitates ease of opening and doing business, resulting in a larger number of businesses (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, the political context in Singapore lacks local government (Dollery et al., 2008, CLGF, 2017), leading to a smaller number of government agencies compared to Thailand and Malaysia, as discussed in Section 4.4.2. Moreover, as explained in Section 4.3.2, the Singaporean government implements business-friendly policies, such as restricting government intervention in businesses and promoting a corruption-free ecosystem (Grant Thornton, 2018, MPA, 2024). The imbalance between the number of businesses and government agencies in Singapore, along with the business-friendly policies, hindered cooperation between government agencies and firms, especially in terms of being partners or co-producers that could interfere in CSI projects.

#### ***5.3.1.4 The Government Provided Financial Support to a CSI Project***

Government agencies, such as Thai Government 1, recognised urgent social and environmental problems and intended to assist firms in solving challenges aligned with their focus areas. Government agencies thus provided grants to eligible firms through

applications or competitions. Firms that received grants were required to meet grant contract conditions, such as creating innovation to solve specific problems and assisting designated beneficiaries. Malaysian Project 3, for instance, received a grant from a government agency to develop a tech system, which was aligned with the government agency's objectives.

*“Then there is a government agency [...] they actually also gave us a grant to build a system a tech system that will accelerate our work and allow us to spread this model all around Malaysia.” (Malaysian Project 3)*

Firms applying for grants were frequently in the early phases of their projects. Moreover, the government involvement in CSI projects was limited, as the government primarily acted as a grant provider. This kind of interaction between the government and firms was often in official forms, and firms did not need to engage with the government agency before applying for grants. Indeed, the relationship between grant providers and grant receipts was often short-term. Once a firm received a grant from a government agency, it rarely sought additional grants for the same project from that agency.

This interaction was observed in all three countries. However, competition was higher in Singapore, and funding decisions were more rigorous than in Thailand and Malaysia. This is because of the Singaporean business context concerning many businesses and the institutional context regarding transparency, as discussed in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.4.

### ***5.3.1.5 The Government Was a Mentor to a CSI Project***

Government agencies had goals and responsibilities related to some specific topics or beneficiaries. Government agencies knew firms or entrepreneurs and recognised their potential that government agencies could grow and groom. Then, government agencies offered advice or invited them to participate in, for example, mentoring and incubation programs or events. Throughout these programs or events, government agencies guided and encouraged firms or entrepreneurs to address specific challenges or beneficiaries through suggestions and fostering a social entrepreneurial mindset. For example, Thai

Project 10 was suggested by a government agency about a potential area for growing coffee, which aligned with the government agency's responsibilities. Furthermore, Malaysian Project 2 received constructive feedback from a mentoring program that benefited the project's development.

*“The government agency suggested areas where we should grow crops” (Thai Project 10)*

*“We took part in mentoring program [...] they helped us grow, they gave feedback [...] they help us have more focus on specific areas” (Malaysian Project 2)*

The interaction between the government and firms could occur from the beginning to the latter phases of the projects. Inviting firms to join incubation or mentoring programs was an official relationship, while advising firms was sometimes unofficial. As the government only incubated and advised firms, the involvement in CSI projects was limited.

The interaction mechanisms in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore were similar. Government agencies acting as mentors to firms were national government agencies rather than local government agencies, as national government agencies had more expertise and resources devoted to mentoring firms than local ones. The responsibility for growing and grooming firms, thus, was generally assigned to the government at the national level more than the local level.

### ***5.3.1.6 The Government Enabled the CSI Project to Meet Potential Stakeholders and Gain Exposure***

In all cases, government agencies perceived the existence and capabilities of CSI projects in creating CSI and providing innovative solutions to society. Moreover, the topics and beneficiaries addressed by CSI projects often aligned with the interests of government agencies. These agencies then contacted CSI projects and invited their representatives to participate in government events, allowing them to network with other businesses and governmental organisations. Government agencies sometimes utilised CSI projects as example cases presented on their websites and at domestic and international conferences. For example, in Thai Project 14, a government agency *“invited us to present our inclusive*

*technology in their events.*”. Moreover, Thai Project 16 was selected by a government agency “*to be a demonstration project for presenting in Thailand and abroad*”.

This interaction often occurred when CSI projects were successful and well-known, such as Thai Project 6, Thai Project 14, and Thai Project 16. As the government primarily introduced firms to other stakeholders and networks along with showcasing the projects, the government involvement in these projects was low. Regarding the formality of the interaction, it was observed that it could occur formally and informally. For example, in Thai Project 6, a government agency personally introduced the firm to potential stakeholders. In contrast, for Singaporean Project 1, the government agency officially bridged the firm to connect with the SI ecosystem that the government established.

Although attending government events provided firms with opportunities to gain exposure and meet potential stakeholders, a representative from Thai Project 7 expressed concerns that these events were low-hanging fruit because they did not provide as much value to the project as initially anticipated. For example,

*“We are one of the highlights of the expo [...] Ministers visited our booth and asked if they could support us [...] The government is very interested in us. But the government just only show its interest without taking any actions and giving any supports for us.” (Thai Project 7)*

Interestingly, this interaction in Thailand and Malaysia often involved personal relationships more than in Singapore. This is due to the context in Singapore, where the government focuses on developing a suitable ecosystem for firms and addressing issues related to conflicts of interest and corruption (CPIB, 2024, Grant Thornton, 2018, Lam and Han, 2019), as discussed in Section 4.3.2.

However, an ecosystem with a wide range of resources and potential stakeholders in Singapore gradually caused firms to detach from the government. This is because firms can directly connect to other key players in the SI ecosystem without relying on the government as an intermediary.

### ***5.3.1.7 The Government Managed the Entry of a CSI Project into a Place, Industry, and Group of People***

Since government agencies had legitimacy, credibility, and connection with local communities or groups of people, firms thus interacted with government agencies for two main reasons. One was to seek government accreditation, such as licenses necessary for operating in specific industries or certifications for social enterprises, exemplified in Malaysian Project 5. Another reason was firms utilised the established connections of government agencies with local communities to gain introductions to communities and people, as demonstrated in Thai Project 15.

*“We got started with a government agency [...] we have this accreditation for social enterprise with the highest level of the Malaysian accreditation” (Malaysian Project 5)*

*“We are an outsider to their communities. If we walk into their communities and tell them that participating in our project can give them money, they will definitely think that we are a liar and cheater. We need someone such as a community leader and local government who can guarantee the reliability of our project. So, collaborating with a community leader and local government is a strategy to make local farmers trust us and our project.” (Thai Project 15)*

Projects that caused health and safety impacts to people were obligated to obtain licenses before commencing, such as in Singaporean Project 4. Firms then formally applied for licenses from related government agencies. Moreover, some firms, such as in Singaporean Project 2, registered as social enterprises to benefit from associated incentives and to enhance their credibility. In these cases, the government involvement in the projects was low, as the government primarily provided accreditation to the firms.

Firms, being new and unknown or having brand-new products and services unfamiliar to the public, contacted government agencies either during the early or latter stages of their projects to request a guarantee of their reliability. This guarantee could be in formal forms, such as an endorsement letter from the government or having a government agency logo on the project website. Government agencies could also indirectly assure the reliability of

these firms by introducing them to local communities. Since government agencies only guaranteed firms' reliability, the government involvement in CSI projects was limited.

Interestingly, it was observed that firms seeking government assistance to ensure their credibility often had close relationships with government agencies for some time. However, obtaining licenses to start business did not require firms to have such personal relationships with the government.

The findings also indicated that firms in Singapore interacted with government agencies to obtain official accreditation. However, in Thailand and Malaysia, firms contacted government agencies to obtain accreditation and official and unofficial assurances. This results from the institutional and political contexts, as discussed in Section 4.4. The multi-level governance in Thailand and Malaysia allows local governments to form strong connections with local communities (Communities and Local Government, 2006), thereby influencing people's attitudes (Svara and Denhardt, 2010) towards firms. Conversely, Singapore's single-level government limits the interpersonal and interdependent relationships between the government and local communities. Having an interaction with local government agencies, therefore, is beneficial for firms in Thailand and Malaysia.

### ***5.3.2 Secondary Interaction***

The interactions between the government and firms were dynamic. They could develop from one type of interaction to another. The interview data showed four types of interactions occurred after the government and firms had primary interactions, which is explained below.

#### ***5.3.2.1 The Government Used a CSI Project to Connect with a Foreign Government and to Build a Policy***

After CSI projects became well-known, firms sometimes began operating internationally and established connections with foreign governments. This can be seen in Malaysian



Project 3, mentioned in Section 5.2.3. In this case, the host country's government, which had a strong personal relationship with the firm, participated in a meeting alongside the firm and the foreign government to vouch for the firm's reliability. Meanwhile, the host country's government seized this opportunity to connect with the foreign government and enhance their relations.

Additionally, well-known firms or CSI projects in sectors prioritised by the government, such as Malaysian Project 3, were officially invited to participate in meetings to share valuable experiences, insights, and advice necessary for developing government policies and projects. When firms form closer ties with political actors and contribute to government policy-making, where this was the case, it can lead to increased corporate political activity in the future (Hillman et al., 2004).

*“There is actually a 15-year project between the Malaysia and Japanese governments. [...] In the execution phase, we were newly nominated into the task force. And we are helping to shape this legislation moving forward. (Malaysian Project 3)*

Since this type of interaction was observed in the latter phases of the projects, government involvement in the projects was low. The relationship between the government and firms invited to participate in policy-making was formal. However, connecting with a foreign government agency was a by-product of a joint meeting between the firm and foreign representatives. Therefore, the government's use of CSI projects for foreign relations was unofficial.

It is observed that the government utilising CSI project as a conduit to connect with foreign government was only in one Malaysian project. However, inviting firms to participate in policy-making or project-making was found in both Malaysian and Singaporean projects. Surprisingly, this type of interaction was not observed in any Thai projects. The lack of participation in the policy or project-making process in the Thai case, thus, reflects a problematic public engagement in Thailand.

### ***5.3.2.2 The Government Helped a CSI Project to Mitigate Conflicts***

Government agencies, especially at the local level, often had significant influence and strong ties with local communities. In the case of Thai Project 10, for example, a local government agency partnered with the project and assisted the firm in negotiating with local residents during conflicts.

*“We sometimes experience conflicts with middlemen who also buy crops from local farmers in the same area [...] The government agency helps us to deal with this. The government agency comes with us when we talk to farmers and middlemen.” (Thai Project 10)*

Focusing on the government’s action in this interaction, the government, especially the local government, only personally helped firms mitigate conflicts with communities. Thus, the government involvement in CSI projects was limited.

While this interaction was specifically observed in Thailand, a similar situation could occur in Malaysia. This is because this interaction reflects the close connections between local governments, communities, and firms, which are prevalent in countries with multiple-level government and patronage, such as Thailand and Malaysia (Tjahja and Yee, 2018; Isufaj, 2014; Tan and Wong, 2024), as discussed in Section 4.4.1.

### ***5.3.2.3 The Government Carefully Monitored a CSI Project***

Firms that receive grants from government agencies were usually required to submit regular progress reports. As funders, government agencies could monitor these firms to ensure compliance with specific requirements that the agencies were focusing on. Malaysia CSI Project 3, for instance, received a grant from a government agency and regularly submitted reports to update the agency on the project's progress and impacts.

*“We need to report on a quarterly basis [...] so that the government person who gave us the fund will be able to present our work to his superior and show that he has not wasted the public money on some bad project or something like that” (Malaysian Project 3)*

This interaction could occur during both the early and the latter stages of the projects, depending on when the grants were awarded. Since government agencies only officially monitored the after-grant progress, government involvement in CSI projects was low.

This type of interaction was commonly found in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore because submitting progress reports is a standard requirement when receiving government grants in these and several other countries.

#### ***5.3.2.4 The Government Was a Barrier to a CSI Project***

Firms were sometimes connected to the government through regulatory enforcement. Instead of supporting firms in entering new markets and reaching new beneficiaries, firms were restricted by laws, regulations, or bureaucratic procedures. This could be a significant barrier to the growth of CSI projects unless alternative supports became available or existing regulations were amended. For instance, Thai Project 7 was unable to scale up the project as planned due to a regulation that limited the total number of a specific type of vehicle allowed in Thailand. Similarly, the bureaucratic procedure in Singapore posed a challenge for Singaporean Project 4 when the firm sought government approval to initiate the project.

*“The total number of them (a specific type of vehicle) in Thailand is limited (by the regulation) [...] That means we can sell only 2 years, and we have to exit our business in the third year.” (Thai Project 7)*

*“I waited 6 months before they (a government agency) even issue out the license [...] So I just being so scared and stuck like that.” (Singaporean Project 4)*

This interaction was observed in the early and the latter phases of CSI projects. In this type of interaction, the government inadvertently acted as a barrier to CSI projects by imposing generic regulations that could negatively impact some projects. In the case of Thailand, a lack of regulation revision that should be amended per social and technological changes obstructed the growth of projects. This can also hinder the success of government policies and plans in, for example, creating an appropriate ecosystem for innovation and SI (NESDC, 2021, NESDC, 2024b) and creating a BCG economy (NXPO, 2022). In the

case of Singapore, the stringent approval processes and cautious decision-making by the government are sometimes inappropriate for the rapidly changing business environment, along with being a challenge to the vibrant ecosystem and the business-friendly environment which the government strives to promote (Global-is-Asian, 2016, Grant Thornton, 2018, Lam and Han, 2019).

The table below summarises the types of government interaction explained in Section 5.3, along with the characteristics of interaction, especially the timing of government involvement, the level of formality (including intensity) of government involvement, and the purpose of government involvement explained in Section 5.2 to demonstrate how and why the government interacts with firms undertaking CSI in the three countries. The nuances of interactions across countries are also presented in the last column of the table.

The table below shows that the interaction where “government-provided financial support” was frequently observed during the early phases of CSI projects, as financial resources are crucial for initiating and developing projects at this stage (Sloka et al., 2016). On the other hand, the interactions observed only in the latter phases of CSI projects when the projects were successful, well-known, and scaling up, were “government was a customer”, “government subcontracted to project”, “government enabled the project to meet stakeholders and gain exposure”, and “government used the project for foreign affairs and policy-making”.

Moreover, government involvement in most interactions was low, except for the instance where “government became a partner or co-producer”, as the government was included as a part of the project or in producing CSI. The low government involvement reflects the limited government intervention in direct and explicit ways, which is influenced by the political-economic contexts of the three countries, especially Singapore which restricts government intervention in business more than Thailand and Malaysia (Sangsukiam, 2021; globalEDGE, 2024; Grant Thornton, 2018; Rana and Lee, 2015). Although government involvement in explicit ways was low, the government still indirectly navigated CSI projects, such as in the interactions where “government provided financial support” and

“government was a mentor” that the government navigated firms through grant requirements and influenced the mindsets of founders.

For formality of interaction, some interactions, such as “government was a customer”, “government subcontracted to project”, and “government provided financial support”, were obviously on formal or official basis, such as government procurement, contracts, and grant schemes. On the other hand, the interaction where the “government mitigated conflicts” was observed only in an informal way, as the government personally assisted firms in resolving conflicts with individuals.

In terms of the purpose of involvement, accomplishing the government’s goal was one of the main purposes for the government in most interactions, alongside utilising CSI projects and products or services from these projects to solve social problems. This suggests that CSI is not only an innovative solution for tackling social challenges and generating revenue for firms, but also a tool for the government to fulfil its responsibilities and goals.

The interaction where “government was a customer”, “government was a mentor”, and “government monitored the project” showed no significant differences across the three countries. However, some interactions were observed only in one or two countries, such as “government became a partner or co-producer” found in Thai and Malaysian cases and “government mitigated conflicts” found only in Thailand. This is due to contextual influences and the limited number of Malaysian and Singaporean projects that participated in this thesis.

Table 18: Types of Government Interactions and Characteristics

Types of interaction		Characteristics of interaction			Differences in interaction between countries
Interactions	Mechanisms	Time of the government's involvement	Intensity of government involvement in the CSI project & Formality of interaction	Purposes of the government's involvement	
<b>Primary Interaction</b>					
<b>1. The government was a customer.</b>	The government perceived the importance of projects and products or services related to specific problems and topics → the government contacted firms to buy products or services.	Latter phases of the project	- Low involvement - Formal interaction	- To utilise products or services to solve social problems - To achieve goals in supporting businesses with social objectives	- No significant difference was observed.
<b>2. The government subcontracted to the project.</b>	The government had a project and perceived firm's expertise, and capabilities related to the government's projects → the government contacted firms and subcontracted some works to firms.	Latter phases of the project	- Low involvement - Formal interaction	- To allow firms produce solutions to social problems and complete the government's works - To navigate firms to address specific problems that the government focus - To utilise firms to improve the government's capabilities	- In Thailand, the subcontracted firms had an important role in the government's projects but the subcontracted firms in Singapore had a less important role. - This interaction was not observed in Malaysian sample projects.
<b>3. The government became a partner or co-producer.</b>	Firms perceived the government's expertise and capabilities relevant to the firms' projects → firms recognised advantages of having the government in their project → firms contacted the government and invited the government to be a partner or co-producer.	Early and latter phases of the project	- High involvement - Formal and informal interactions	- To collectively solve social problems - To achieve goals in supporting firms with social objectives - To navigate firms to comply with the government's demands	- This interaction was observed only in Thai and Malaysian projects. - The business and political contexts in Singapore prevented this interaction.

<p><b>4. The government provided financial support.</b></p>	<p>The government was dealing with specific topics → the government organised competitions or grant applications to search for eligible firms to create SI concerning specific topics → eligible firms received grants and created SI.</p>	<p>Early phases of the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low involvement</li> <li>- Formal interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To motivate firms to focus on specific social problems</li> <li>- To achieve goals in supporting firms with social objectives and solving social problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding decisions and competitions in Singapore were more rigorous than in Thailand and Malaysia.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. The government was a mentor.</b></p>	<p>The government was dealing with specific topics or had duties to support businesses with social objectives → the government advised firms/entrepreneurs or invited potential firms/entrepreneurs to grow and groom through incubation programs → firms/entrepreneurs created SI concerning specific topics or became businesses with social objectives.</p>	<p>Early and latter phases of the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low involvement</li> <li>- Formal and informal interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To encourage firms to focus on specific social problems</li> <li>- To achieve goals in supporting firms with social objectives and solving social problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No significant difference was observed.</li> <li>- The national government was a mentor more than the local government.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. The government enabled the project to meet stakeholders and gain exposure.</b></p>	<p>The government perceived the existence and success of firms that aligned with the government's current works and focus → the government contacted and invited representatives from firms to join events and meet other businesses and government agencies, or the government used the projects as example cases to present in conferences.</p>	<p>Latter phases of the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low involvement</li> <li>- Formal and informal interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To achieve goals in supporting firms with social objectives and solving social problems</li> <li>- To strengthen the SI ecosystem that the government established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Thailand and Malaysia, the government often had a personal relationship with firms more than in Singapore.</li> </ul>

<b>7. The government managed entry into targeted places, people and industries.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Firms needed licenses or certifications → firms contacted the government to obtain licenses or certifications</li> <li>- Firm needed to enter new markets or launch new products or services but lacked reliability and connections with communities → firms perceived the legitimacy, credibility and connection with communities of the government → firms contacted the government to be an intermediary introducing firms to communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Early and latter phases of the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing licenses: low involvement; formal interaction</li> <li>- Being an intermediary to new markets: low involvement, informal interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To achieve responsibilities regarding issuing licenses and achieve goals in supporting firms with social objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Singaporean firms interacted with the government to obtain accreditations only.</li> <li>- In Thailand and Malaysia, firms contacted the government to obtain accreditation and assurance officially and unofficially.</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Interaction</b>					
<b>1. The government used the project for foreign affairs and policy-making.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government was a partner or co-producer or had a strong relationship with firms → the government accompanied firms on meetings with the foreign government → the government stayed in touch with the foreign government and developed further relationships.</li> <li>- The government aimed to create policies regarding specific topics, and firms or CSI projects were related to such topics → the government invited firms for focus groups and meetings to share experiences and insights.</li> </ul>	<p>Latter phases of the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linking with the foreign government: Low involvement, informal interaction</li> <li>- Making policy: Low involvement, formal interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To achieve responsibilities in making new policies or projects</li> <li>- To improve government capabilities regarding diplomacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Firm being an intermediary to the foreign government was only observed in one Malaysian project.</li> <li>- In the case of inviting a firm to share insight, it was found in Malaysian and Singaporean projects.</li> </ul>
<b>2. The government mitigated conflicts.</b>	<p>Firms had conflicts with individuals or communities → the government helped firms</p>	<p>Early and latter phases of the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low involvement</li> <li>- Informal interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To facilitate CSI projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This interaction was observed only in the Thai projects.</li> </ul>



	negotiate with that individual and communities.				
<b>3. The government monitored the project.</b>	Firms received government grants → firms reported to the government regularly to ensure that their compliance with grant requirements.	Early and latter phases of the project	- Low involvement - Formal interaction	- To monitor and control firms or CSI projects complying with the government's requirements	- No significant difference was observed.
<b>4. The government was a barrier.</b>	The government issued laws and regulations regarding specific topics → firms were under these regulations but were restricted by these regulations.	Early and latter phases of the project	- Low involvement - Formal interaction	The government unintentionally was a barrier, but it was an impact of a generic regulation imposed on all relevant businesses.	- In Thailand, it resulted from an antiquated regulation. - In Singapore, it resulted from complex and prolonged processes of decision-making and licensing.

Source: Author's construct

## ***5.4 Influences of Government Involvement on CSI Projects***

As mentioned in Section 2.3.1, CSI is relevant to firms' core business strategies. In light of the findings, this section presents the influence of government involvement on projects' or firms' core strategies. Changes in project activities are also explained in this section to highlight the effect of government involvement throughout CSI projects.

### ***5.4.1 Changes in Core Business Strategies***

Interestingly, the findings exhibited that none of CSI projects participating in this research changed their core business strategies due to governmental influences. However, business factors were significant drivers for any changes in firms' core strategies. For example, Malaysian Project 2 modified its business model to enhance the project's sustainability.

*“I want to make our business more sustainable. Especially we change our business model from selling the machine to like a rental basis like a subscription basis.” (Malaysian Project 2)*

In the case of Singaporean firms, their unchanged core business strategies were attributed to minimal government intervention and business-friendly policies (Grant Thornton, 2018), as discussed in Section 4.3.2. The government did not significantly affect Singaporean firms, leading to an unchanged core business strategy. However, certain activities within CSI projects were slightly modified to meet governmental requirements.

Indeed, the founder of Singaporean Project 4 considered relocating the project to Malaysia. The founder mentioned that this was because *“the cost does not make sense”* in Singapore and he needed to *“wait for the government agencies to slowly write the approval. It's expensive to wait”*. Since this CSI project was in a new industry, the government took time to evaluate its effects and risks, resulting in longer approval times compared to more traditional projects.

The approval process could take longer than expected. However, as described in Section 4.3.2, the ease of starting a business, leading to a high number of competitors, and the high cost of living in Singapore (World Bank, 2020, Gov.SG, 2023) imposed a significant burden on firms, particularly start-ups, during the approval process. The Singaporean

government should, thus, carefully resolve these issues to promote the growth of CSI in the country.

In Thai and Malaysian cases, government influence was insufficient to compel firms to change their core business strategies despite the government's leverage over businesses. This results from the economic and political contexts of both countries, which are mixed market economies, where the government can partially control the economy (McKenzie, 2021, BNM, 2024, BOT, 2024, PWC, 2022), as discussed in Section 4.4.2. Furthermore, the Thai and Malaysian governments prioritise economic growth acceleration as one of the key national goals (Ministry of Economy, 2021b, NESDC, 2024b). The government then influenced firms more indirectly than directly dominating firms.

#### ***5.4.2 Changes in Activities***

Although the core business strategies remained unchanged, the findings revealed that CSI projects sometimes adjusted their activities to align with government requirements and procedures. For example, submitting progress reports to the government became a new activity for Thai Project 2.

*“We have to send report updating project progress to the government agency which we have never done before.” (Thai Project 2)*

Moreover, some activities were modified based on governmental suggestions aimed at improving project efficiency. For example, Thai Project 15 utilised advice from a government agency to improve the registration process, helping local farmers participate in the project conveniently.

*“We have adjusted something based on the local government suggestions to comply with behaviours and contexts of local areas [...] for example, the registration was conducted through the paper-based method instead of the mobile app as local farmers struggled with this kind of software.” (Thai Project 15)*

In Thailand and Malaysia, activities in CSI projects were often changed when the government was involved in providing financial support, subcontracting work, and helping firms approach new beneficiaries or new markets. However, Singaporean projects modified some activities when they received government grants.

In summary, firms' core business strategies and main activities were not changed after interacting with the government. Only minor activities were adjusted to align with government procedures. However, significant changes to core business strategies and activities were primarily driven by other factors, especially business contexts, rather than by government influence.

*Table 19: Summary of influence of government involvement on CSI projects*

	<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>Singapore</b>
<b>Core business strategy</b>	No change was caused by government involvement.	No change was caused by government involvement.	No change was caused by government involvement.
<b>Activity</b>	The project adjusted some activities when “government provided financial support to CSI projects”, “government subcontracted some works to CSI projects” or “government enabled the projects to meet stakeholders and gain exposure”.	The project adjusted some activities when “government provided financial support to CSI projects”, “government subcontracted some works to CSI projects” or “government enabled the projects to meet stakeholders and gain exposure”.	The project adjusted some activities when the “government provided financial support to CSI projects”.

Source: Author’s construct

## ***5.5 Contributions of CSI***

Based on the findings, CSI projects in the three countries contributed to three main aspects: society, firms, and the government. The following sub-sections show contributions of CSI in these three aspects.

### ***5.5.1 Contributions to Society***

Some CSI projects created job opportunities for beneficiaries, helping them earn a higher income and improve their quality of life. Furthermore, some CSI projects contributed to reducing pollution in the environment. For example, Thai Project 2 generated jobs for approximately 3,000 people, while Thai Project 14 assisted nearly 600 disabled individuals in securing employment. Malaysian Project 1 reduced carbon emissions and recycled plastic and aluminium waste instead of disposing it in landfills.

*“We’ve worked with more than 200 communities and helped around 3,000 people living in communities to get jobs” (Thai Project 2)*

*“We have almost 600 disabled people participating in our project and successfully induce around 60 firms to employ them” (Thai Project 14)*

*“In the last 6 months since we’ve launched 30 machines, we’ve collected more than 30 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e through diverting these plastic bottles and aluminium cans away from the landfill.” (Malaysian Project 1)*

Although SI can lead to behavioural and social changes (Choi and Majumdar, 2015, van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2016, Nicholls et al., 2015), as mentioned in Section 2.1, these changes were unclear in the findings. This is because the size and duration of CSI projects that participated in this thesis were insufficiently large or long enough to observe these changes.

### ***5.5.2 Contributions to Firms***

In addition to generating revenue for firms, the findings revealed that CSI projects also created business opportunities and enhanced firms' reputation. For example, Thai Project 10 sourced quality crops from local farmers, whom the project had nurtured from the beginning. The firm utilised the story of helping local farmers increase their value-added and the firm's image.

*“We’ve helped local farmers since the beginning of growing crops until buying crops from them. So we can control the quality in all processes [...] and we can make value-*

*added and storytelling from this like we've helped all in the chain, fair trade, and save the environment" (Thai Project 10)*

However, several projects, such as Singaporean Project 5, commented that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the contributions to firm revenues.

### **5.5.3 Contributions to Government**

The contribution to the government in this sub-section focuses on changes in policies, laws, or regulations resulting from CSI projects rather than benefits that the government obtained, as mentioned in Section 5.2.5. One notable finding was the explicit contribution of CSI projects to the government: the improvement of law in Malaysia. In this case, a government agency utilised insights from Malaysian Project 3 to legislate a new category of law directly related to the project.

*"Someone from there (a government agency) called me and said we would like to invite you for a meeting [...] we went to the meeting, and we explain to them everything that we do [...] they (the government agency) were like, okay thank you for the information. We (the government agency) will process this data inside our department, and then we will decide what should we do in the future [...] few years later, they invite us again back to the HQ [...] When we went to the HQ, they told us that they have created in the law a special new category called authorised collector to allow players like us to be legal in Malaysia fully." (Malaysian Project 3)*

## **5.6 Key Challenges to CSI**

The findings also suggested key challenges to CSI projects, which are categorised into two main groups: challenges regarding the government and other challenges that may not be directly related to the government. The two types of key challenges are explained below.

## ***5.6.1 Challenges Regarding the Government***

Five key challenges regarding the government were observed in this thesis: the complexity of the bureaucratic procedure, failure of the top-down approach, lack of intergovernmental coordination, constraint and complexity of government grants, and government inaction. Each key challenge is explained below.

### ***5.6.1.1 Complexity of Bureaucratic Procedure***

Based on the interview data, several firms commented on the excessive processes and documentation requirements, along with the slow progress and inflexibility of bureaucratic procedures. These issues created burdens and caused project delays. For example, Thai Project 12 expressed that the delay of the project was caused by the government's slow progress in dealing with the documentation. Malaysian Project 5, similarly, experienced delays due to the time-consuming documentation process. Additionally, Thai Government 1 commented on the delay in drafting regulations.

*“We’ve planned to finish our work within one and a half year. But after dealing with the government many times, we’ve realised that this one and a half year must exclude any period related to documentation because we don’t know how long our documents get stuck at the government agency [...] we can’t control anything about documentation.” (Thai Project 12)*

*“A lot of times they (government agencies) need a lot of documentation, and they take a long time. And their results are delayed from their timeline. So it makes a little bit difficult in planning and sometimes it's a lot of work.” (Malaysian Project 5)*

*“Regulations should be designed to support business to grow, but they are so delayed. Some were drafted for years before enacting.” (Thai Government 1)*

These challenges arose from bureaucracy, which operated through hierarchical structures, and bureaucratic regulations, particularly in Thailand, that required extensive paperwork for every procedure. These resulted in difficulties for firms in terms of wasted time and increased operating costs.

### ***5.6.1.2 Failure of Top-Down Approach***

Since the implication of policy and government support is generally top-down, some firms in Thailand and Singapore, such as Thai Project 13, Singaporean Project 3, and Singaporean Project 5, mentioned that the government sometimes lacked a deep understanding of CSI and their projects. The government then provided support that was generic and did not align with their actual needs. Moreover, a shortage of bottom-up channels to reflect their needs was experienced.

*“The local government doesn’t understand community-based tourism. They just put the policy from the ministry into action. When the local government the frontline officer misinterpreted this [...] They’ve never asked what the community really need.” (Thai Project 13)*

*“The government direction has come from the top. And the top direction is not to go to support people on the ground [...] People from the ground they have problem, but we cannot reflect this problem up to the ministry level, to the top.” (Singaporean Project 3)*

*“They (government agencies) will have like a template on how they can support businesses. But that template is not applicable to everyone [...] the agencies need to understand that everyone has different needs. And they need to, maybe like, talk to businesses what are the support that need.” (Singaporean Project 5)*

In Thailand and Singapore, the lack of insights and understanding from the bottom level was a major factor contributing to ineffective government support for communities or beneficiaries. In the Thai case, the presence of a multi-level government exacerbated this issue, as inefficient communication between national and local governments in Thailand resulted in misinterpreting policies.

### ***5.6.1.3 Intergovernmental Uncoordination***

The findings revealed that government agencies often worked in silos and rarely cooperated with each other, particularly across different ministries. The lack of intergovernmental coordination burdened firms and led to inefficient government support for CSI projects.



For instance, Thai Project 4 and Singaporean Project 1 similarly stated that government agencies in their own countries worked separately without collaborating as much as expected, forcing them to start from scratch when contacting a new agency.

*“Normally, government agencies rarely work across ministries. They focus on the same thing but in practice they are not cooperative. If I ask for some assistance from a ministry, they sometimes said that I had to go and ask for this from other ministries all by myself.”*  
(Thai Project 4)

*“Government agencies sometimes are not so well connected or not as well connected as we wish they would be. So sometimes we see that they're working a little bit in silos. And if you might have some quite close relationship with one agency, it doesn't mean that the other agencies know what we are doing or something.”* (Singaporean Project 1)

*“Each government agency has its own KPIs and similar programs that could be cooperative, but it's impossible to do that. Meaning that output of agency A can't be transferred to become input of agency B though these two agencies are doing similar things.”* (Thai Government 1)

This challenge was influenced by the culture and structure of the government, especially in Thailand. Thai Government 1 explained that the inability of government agencies to work collectively stemmed from the different key performance indicators assigned to each agency.

#### ***5.6.1.4 Constraint and Complexity of Government Grant***

Although the government provided financial support for eligible CSI projects, some CSI projects commented on insufficient financial support. However, the government attempted to offer alternative forms of support. It was also observed that several firms struggled to meet grant recipients' requirements, and the reimbursement conditions were often unsuitable for the nature of business. For example, Thai Project 15 experienced challenges due to a grant condition that nearly 100% of the grant was in the form of reimbursement. This forced the project to use funds from other sources upfront before receiving reimbursement. Moreover, Malaysian Project 3 stated that they were required to submit quarterly reports

to government agencies, which they found unfamiliar and overly frequent. Further, Malaysian CSI Project 2 commented that a government agency offered them other forms of assistance instead of financial support.

*“Regarding the government grant, it doesn’t meet the need for developing start-up or social innovation in the early phase. Because around 95% of the grant now is in form of reimbursement [...] One thing I could suggest is the grant should come with better conditions compatible with the nature of start-up” (Thai Project 15)*

*“Every quarter we needed to kind of disrupt all of our operations [...] we stop our operation just to produce some papers [...] This kind of reporting and paperwork bureaucracy is a bit far from the start up culture.” (Malaysian Project 3)*

*“Malaysia lacks funds. If we ask for any funding, they (a government agency) usually give in terms of mentoring, maybe business matching. But not so much on funds that they can support.” (Malaysian Project 2)*

Indeed, the requirement for grant recipients and the conditions for reimbursement were derived from bureaucratic regulations, which were sometimes unfavourable for small firms. Offering resources other than financial support in the Malaysia case was due to the country's problematic resource abundance and ongoing budget deficit, which impacted the allocation of grants and funds (Ananthalakshmi et al., 2023), as indicated in Section 4.2.5.

### **5.6.1.5 Government Inaction**

The findings also revealed government inaction in some projects. For instance, Thai Project 6 indicated that the government was not proactive enough, paid less attention to the project than anticipated, and lacked consistency in its interactions and support. Similarly, Singaporean Project 2 commented that a government agency was less proactive and was slow to respond to urgent incidents.

*“Foundations in abroad, they are very active to help us, to give us a grant. Our government is less active [...] why don’t we have someone from the government who scout us and suggest what we should do or where I can get a grant.” (Thai Project 6)*

*“Government agencies they are a little bit slow to react most of the time [...] they just not proactive as you probably hope them to be [...] a lot of government agencies they are not so forward thinking. Maybe in a word, they rather do things the safe way.” (Singaporean Project 2)*

Due to bureaucratic administration in Thailand and Singapore, as well as the large number of businesses, particularly in Singapore, the governments then often struggle to connect with all firms or provide specific support for particular firms. This could lead to perceptions of government inactivity among firms.

### **5.6.2 Other Challenges**

The findings also suggested that CSI projects were affected by key challenges that may not be directly related to the government. These other challenges included operational issues, a lack of awareness regarding social problems, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which are explained below.

#### **5.6.2.1 Operational Issues**

The first challenge involved operational difficulties, such as securing funding, creating inclusive workplaces for individuals with disabilities, and building brand awareness. For example, Thai Project 9 encountered challenges in facilitating their disabled employees. Thai Project 6 struggled to build brand awareness and effectively communicate with the public. Singaporean Project 1 had difficulties securing funding from investors.

*“A challenge for our disabled staffs such as with hearing impairment is communication with customers.” (Thai Project 9)*

*“When we first started our project, we were worried about communication like ‘will customers understand what we do?’ will there be anyone want to join us?’ [...] it’s quite challenge because I need to explain lots of things before people understand what we are doing” (Thai Project 6)*

*“And we very soon realised that probably going the kind of VC round, which will be harder for us because we are too green, and maybe not fast growing enough to what they are looking at” (Singaporean Project 1)*

Surprisingly, financial issues emerged as one of the significant challenges in Singapore, as noted by nearly all Singaporean projects during the interviews. This resulted from the high operational costs in Singapore despite the availability of various financial resources accessible to firms (British Council, 2020b), as mentioned in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.5.

### ***5.6.2.2 Awareness of Social Problems***

Some CSI projects, such as Thai Project 11, Malaysian Project 4, and Singaporean Project 5, encountered difficulties stemming from a lack of social awareness regarding specific social problems, though the governments in these three countries targeted this issue (MFA, 2018, Ministry of Environment and Water, 2021, NESDC, 2024c). This challenge led to diminished public attention towards these projects and less attention to collectively solving social problems.

*“People don’t realise that waste sorting, waste management and generating value from waste are so important now” (Thai Project 11)*

*“The challenge, I suppose this is less now, is convincing people of the importance of growing food in the city” (Malaysian Project 4)*

*“I think awareness is number one, because we are doing a unique business. And second hand is also a big issue in Asia generally.” (Singaporean Project 5)*

### ***5.6.2.3 COVID-19 Pandemic***

The COVID-19 pandemic inevitably hindered the growth of CSI projects, disrupting operations and creating financial burdens, along with concerns from customers regarding projects, such as Thai Project 4 and Singaporean Project 5.

*“During the pandemic, we had more expenses [...] and it was more difficult to visit our farmers in urban areas” (Thai Project 4)*

*“The lockdown really affected us, because obviously we cannot operate [...] and then before we open back, everyone was just asking of like ‘how do you sanitise and make sure that everyone’s way is safe?’ So what we just did is like explain to them that we will steam every clothes” (Singaporean Project 5)*

However, this challenge was no longer significant in these three countries because all relevant safety measures were lifted, and people were not as concerned about COVID-19 as they had been in the past few years.

## **5.7 Understanding of CSI**

Lastly, the findings revealed the understanding of CSI in practice, particularly regarding CSI elements, differentiating CSI and CSR, and their relevance, which are explained below.

### **5.7.1 CSI Elements**

As mentioned in Section 2.3.1, the concept of CSI from the perspective of researchers is often relevant to five main elements: *innovation, social and business objectives, social and business outputs and outcomes, stakeholder engagement, and relevance to firms’ core business strategies*. The findings indicated that CSI, from the practitioner’s point of view in the three countries, also comprised these five elements. However, the findings suggested that social and business objectives and innovation were the interview participants’ main concerns when they explained their understanding of CSI/SI. This was followed by core business strategies and business models, whereas outputs/outcomes in social and business dimensions and stakeholder engagement were less prioritised during the interviews. Understanding of each element of CSI in practice is explained as follows.

### **5.7.1.1 Innovativeness**

Most interviewees, such as from Thai Project 8, emphasised that CSI could encompass both technological and non-technological innovation. Only a few participants, such as from Thai Project 14, believed that CSI was primarily focused on technological innovation.

*“I think social innovation is a new method whether tech or non-tech, and it’s workable. When it is used, it causes impacts that make the society better.” (Thai Project 8)*

*“From my understanding, it’s like a technology that has been developed or newly initiated to help the society” (Thai Project 14)*

Participants from Thai Project 9 provided examples of non-technological innovation, stating, *“Personally, it’s a new way of doing business”*. Similarly, an informant from Malaysian Project 6 described it as *“the innovative idea that is going to be beneficial to society”*.

Therefore, the participants' understanding of CSI regarding innovation was closely aligned with the theoretical concepts outlined in Section 2.3, as both highlight technological and non-technological innovation.

### **5.7.1.2 Social and Business Objectives**

In the participants' opinions, such as from Thai Project 6, Thai Project 14, and Singaporean Project 1, objectives of CSI included helping society, creating positive social impacts, and generating profits. However, some participants, such as from Thai Project 14, prioritised social purpose as the most important objective. Additionally, the relevance to the UN Sustainable Development Goals was mentioned during the interview with Thai Project 6

*“It’s a business doing for profits and for better society and environment. And it meets SDGs.” (Thai Project 6)*

*“It might be created to make money or make profit. Making money or profit is of secondary importance, but improving the society matters.” (Thai Project 14)*

*“It's basically innovations that for the social good. So basically, businesses are not only working to create more profit for like themselves, but they are also having the component of doing something for the society at the same time.” (Singaporean Project 1)*

Although the concepts of CSI in terms of objectives showed similarities between practical and theoretical perspectives, CSI outlined in Section 2.3 often displayed a balanced objective between business and social dimensions. Nevertheless, the interview data indicated that firms sometimes considered social objectives to be a higher priority than business ones. For these firms, CSI could provide social impacts and sustainability more explicitly than business returns.

### ***5.7.1.3 Core Business Strategy***

Similar to CSI discussed in Section 2.3, informants from CSI projects, such as Thai Project 14 and Singaporean Project 1, recognised that CSI was relevant to core business strategies. Moreover, involving core business strategies was an important component that distinguished CSI from CSR, as addressed in the interview with Singaporean Project 1.

*“It not only focuses on social dimension but also business model and business strategy.”  
(Thai Project 14)*

*“What I can see, CSR is often like a kind of not like a strategic thing [...] But for me, social innovation would mean that the social aspect is in the centre of the core of the business.” (Singaporean Project 1)*

The findings and the literature recognised the relevance to firms' core business strategies as a key element of CSI and as a criterion for differentiating CSI and CSR. While the literature discusses CSI in terms of utilising corporate assets, capabilities, and human resources (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Kanter, 1999, Mirvis et al., 2016), the findings argued that the interview participants placed less emphasis on these aspects.

#### ***5.7.1.4 Social and Business Outputs/Outcomes***

The findings suggested that the outputs/outcomes of CSI were mainly highlighted regarding social outputs/outcomes more than business ones. For example, a participant from Thai Project 3 commented that *“it’s a solution for social problems and it’s a beneficiary-centric solution”*. Similarly, a representative from Thai Government 5 explained that CSI *“makes social change, makes society better, makes people more secure”*. Moreover, Thai Others 2 specified that CSI *“increases job opportunities for disabled people”*.

The CSI outputs/outcomes observed in the interviews aligned with those outlined in the CSI literature discussed in Section 2.3. Interestingly, some interview participants, such as a representative from Thai Project 8, remarked that *“social innovation can create lasting positive impacts, but CSR is just a one-off project”*. This emphasis on durability serves as another criterion distinguishing CSI from CSR from the practitioner's perspective.

#### ***5.7.1.5 Stakeholder Engagement***

Similar to CSI outlined in Section 2.3, the engagement of stakeholders/other actors was underscored as a key practical element of CSI. For example, Thai Project 5 indicated that CSI could encourage more people to participate. Further, Thai Project 7 identified that the government, private sector, and civil society needed to collaborate.

*“It can better solve social problems because it encourages more people to participate”  
(Thai Project 5)*

*“Government, private sector and civil society altogether need to help social innovator create more and more social innovation to the society” (Thai Project 7)*

However, the interview participants focused less on stakeholder engagement compared to other elements of CSI, revealing a gap in awareness regarding collaboration among various actors.

In summary, the concepts of CSI discussed in the literature in Section 2.3 and the interview participant’s perspectives encompass the same key elements. Moreover, the findings showed



that the understanding of CSI in the three countries is the same. However, some nuances were observed in some elements, such as one objective may take precedence over another, the use of corporate assets and resources was less addressed in the core business strategy element, and stakeholder engagement was deemed less important than suggested in the literature.

### ***5.7.2 Differentiating CSI and CSR***

According to Section 2.3.3.2, CSR is frequently discussed in CSI research. This is especially the differentiation between CSR and CSI, which is distinct in terms of intention, outputs/outcomes, organisational resources, and stakeholder collaboration.

According to the findings, CSI and CSR were distinguished based on four key themes: innovativeness, intention and involvement with core business strategy, impact and durability, and resource. This aligns with the theoretical differentiation of these two concepts outlined in Section 2.3.3.2, except for stakeholder collaboration, which the informants addressed less.

In comparison to other elements, stakeholder collaboration was not a primary focus for participants during the interviews when explaining the differences between CSI and CSR. Only a few participants, such as one from Singaporean Project 3, described that *“it’s (CSR) just people coming together and doing good together”*. Similarly, a participant from Thai Project 13 explained that it was *“a group of people doing good in a community in a one-off activity”*.

The following displays details of the differentiation of CSI and CSR in each element, including innovativeness, intention and involvement with core business strategies, impact and durability, and resources.

#### ***5.7.2.1 Innovativeness***

Participants identified innovativeness as a key characteristic of CSI. For CSR, on the other hand, many participants, such as Thai Project 14, Malaysian Project 1, and Singaporean

Government 1, indicated that it was about firms' donations, charity, and additional activities rather than innovation.

*"CSR is an activity that employees in the firm do something like plant trees." (Thai Project 14)*

*"CSR is just something they've got to do like donate money to the orphanage or plant a 100 trees or fund to golf day, or whatever it is" (Malaysian Project 1)*

*"It's about donate your money. You do a donation once a year. Maybe go to a charity, donate to the charity. So that's the CSR to me." (Singaporean Government 1)*

Interestingly, CSR activities carried out in the three countries were quite similar, such as donation and tree planting, which were recurrent activities unrelated to innovativeness.

### ***5.7.2.2 Intention and Involvement with Core Business Strategy***

The quotations in Section 5.7.2.1 reflected that CSR was realised as activities with philanthropic purposes. Furthermore, from participants' perspectives, such as those from Thai Project 9 and Singaporean Project 4, CSR was disconnected from firms' core business strategies.

*"CSR activity isn't related to or has a business model. Sometimes it terminated after the CEO initiating this CSR activity retired from the company. Because it couldn't generate revenue to reinvest itself, it then died" (Thai Project 9)*

*"It (CSR) is outside of the business scope to contribute to some community and some social impact to it. But when I refer to social innovation, it means as a business model itself [...] CSR could be some people working at bank and hey let's pick up rubbish. That's not totally related to their business at all." (Singaporean Project 4)*

Furthermore, CSR was understood as a tool for enhancing firms' image (as noted in Thai Project 12, Thai Project 14, and Singaporean Project 3), along with satisfying shareholders and fulfilling ESG reporting requirements (as mentioned in Malaysian Project 3).

*"CSR is public relations [...] it's a way we can tell the society what we've done for the environment for people" (Thai Project 12)*

*“Firms do CSR because they are condemned. They want to have a good image, then they do CSR.” (Thai Project 14)*

*“It's just another term that is used by corporate to make them look good in doing good” (Singaporean Project 3)*

*“CSR is always a kind of a corporate centric. We're doing it to make to improve ESG reporting. We're doing it to please shareholders.” (Malaysian Project 3)*

Since CSR was viewed as activities separate from firms' core business strategies and not a source of revenue, it could be easily discontinued. A representative from Thai Project 15 also commented that *“during the COVID-19 pandemic, a cutoff of CSR activity was the first thing that many companies did because CSR is only an activity, not their businesses”*.

### ***5.7.2.3 Impact and Durability***

Informants, such as from Thai Project 15 and Malaysian Project 1, explained that CSI could contribute more significantly to society than CSR; whereas CSR often focused on managing stakeholders, and its social return on investment were difficult to measure.

*“CSI is a solution to social problems [...] CSR is not a problem solving, it's about managing relevant stakeholders.” (Thai Project 15)*

*“CSI can have an impact on people's live [...] CSR isn't doing based on a strategy and it's very hard to measure social return on investment.” (Malaysian Project 1)*

Additionally, CSI was considered to be more sustainable than CSR; some informants, such as from Singaporean Project 5, explained that *“from the start, CSI need to be a part of the plan when you're doing a business [...] CSR is an extra thing, it's a façade”*. Similarly, the participant from Thai Project 13 indicated that *“CSR is a one-off activity in a community, but CSI is perpetual it's more sustainable”*.

In summary, CSI could contribute explicit social impacts and was regarded as firms' long-lasting projects. However, CSR was short-term and irrelevant to core business strategies or business models. Therefore, CSR's durability and impact were seen as inferior to those

of CSI. Interestingly, the difference in terms of durability was highlighted more in the findings than in the literature reviewed in Section 2.3.3.2.

#### **5.7.2.4 Resources**

Though resources or corporate assets used to create CSI were less mentioned in the findings, CSR was explained as relying on firms' profits as seen in, for instance, Thai Project 11 and Thai Project 15.

*“Because CSR is a donation, not an investment [...] CSR is done after you're rich, you use your profit to donate.” (Thai Project 11)*

*“Honestly, CSR is the use of your surplus your profit to do good.” (Thai Project 15)*

However, it should be noted that only a few participants mentioned resources for doing CSR. Therefore, resources were not a focal point for participants when considering CSI and CSR.

The table below summarises the differences between CSI and CSR based on the findings, distinguishing them by innovativeness, intention, impact and durability, and resources. CSI was seen as an innovation aiming to help society and generate profit for firms, along with involving core business strategies and business models. In contrast, CSR was viewed as philosophic-based activities relying on firms' profits rather than involving innovation, and it was disconnected from core business strategies.

Additionally, CSI was perceived as a long-term project capable of solving social problems, whereas CSR was a one-off activity with limited social impact. Therefore, the understanding of CSI and CSR, according to the findings, is not significantly different from the concepts suggested in Section 2.3.3.2. However, stakeholder engagement and resources for implementing CSI and CSR were less emphasised in the findings.

Table 20: Differentiation of CSI and CSR in the Findings

Key theme	CSI	CSR
<b>Innovativeness</b>	Be innovation/social innovation.	Be donations, charity and additional activities of firms rather than innovation.
<b>Intention and involvement with core business strategy</b>	- Aiming to help society, create positive social impacts, and generate profits. - Involving core business strategies and business models.	- Done for the philanthropic purposes. - Disconnecting to core business strategies.
<b>Impact and durability</b>	- Be able to solve social problems. - Be a long-term project.	- Providing less social impact than CSI. - Be a short-term or one-off activity.
<b>Resources</b>	Not mentioned in the interviews.	Leaning on firms' profits.

Source: Author's construct

### 5.7.3 Relevance of CSI and CSR

Although the findings indicated that CSI and CSR were seen as being different, some participants mentioned that CSR was relevant to CSI. For example, the informant from Malaysia CSI Project 4 commented that CSR was a source of funding for CSI. Further, the participant from Malaysian Project 3 stated that CSR overlapped with CSI in terms of focusing on the corporate aspect. However, the participant from Malaysian Project 2 argued that CSI was a subset of CSR, as CSR encompassed both innovation and non-innovation.

*“CSR programs can be channel to a social innovation [...] what we do is we pitch to them for CSR fund.” (Malaysia Project 4)*

*“I think it overlaps [...] Because CSR, you have to go back to the 3 letters. CSR, so C-Corporate, so it always is kind of a corporate centric.” (Malaysian Project 3)*

*“I would think that social innovation can be part of the CSR. Because CSR is quite broad in a sense that even without innovation you can do this CSR [...] But innovation, social innovation is one part that I think it helps to make life much easier by using technology innovation that can benefit the public. So, it's the part of CSR.” (Malaysian Project 2)*

Interestingly, the participants who highlighted the connection between CSI and CSR were from Malaysian firms. In contrast, participants from Thailand and Singapore believed that CSI differed from CSR. This is due to their personal perceptions of the key elements of CSI and CSR. In Malaysia, CSR is often used interchangeably with some terms, such as social enterprise and community works, as SI is a newer concept in the country compared to CSR, making the meaning of SI/CSI vague (British Council, 2020a).

## ***5.8 Summary of Findings***

To summarise, CSI projects in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore were driven by responsive and proactive motivations. For responsive motivation, project founders were aware of social problems and then decided to create CSI with objectives to alleviate these issues. For proactive motivation, project founders not only recognised social problems but also experienced business pain points and anticipated new business opportunities arising from these problems.

Regarding characteristics, the findings showed that government agencies involved in CSI projects in Thailand and Malaysia were both national and local government agencies. Moreover, the interactions in Thailand and Malaysia were commenced by firms and government agencies, particularly government agencies at the national level. Interestingly, government agencies often initiated interactions with well-known projects or founders. The findings also highlighted informal and interpersonal relationships between the government and firms in Thailand and Malaysia.

In Singapore, however, government agencies involved in CSI projects were primarily national agencies. Additionally, there was an imbalance in the number of government agencies compared to firms, resulting in infrequent initiation of interactions by the government. Moreover, the relationship between the government and firms in Singapore was found to be comparatively more formal than in Thailand and Malaysia.

Governments in the three countries were involved in CSI projects during both the early and latter stages to seek social problem solutions and encourage firms to create CSI to

tackle specific problems or benefit targeted beneficiaries, alongside utilising CSI projects as a pathway to achieve their goals and enhance their capabilities. The instruments that the governments used in CSI projects included regulatory, economic, and soft instruments that applied both formally and informally.

The findings also revealed seven primary patterns of interactions, including a government agency was a customer, subcontracted some works to CSI projects, became a partner or co-producer, provided financial support, became a mentor to CSI projects, helped CSI projects to meet potential stakeholders and gain exposure, and managed the entry into specific places, industries, and groups of people. Additionally, four secondary patterns of interactions were observed: government agencies used CSI projects to connect with foreign governments and develop policies, assisted the projects in mitigating conflicts, monitored the projects, and became a barrier to the projects.

Despite government involvement in CSI projects studied in this research, none of these projects changed their core business strategies due to government influence. However, some activities were adjusted to align with government requirements and procedures. The CSI projects that participated in this thesis generated social and environmental benefits, such as creating job opportunities and reducing carbon emissions. The CSI projects, meanwhile, provided firms with revenue, enhanced business opportunities, and improved their public image. Notably, one CSI project led to an improvement in existing law.

Key challenges, especially regarding the government, included the complexity of the bureaucratic procedure, the failure of the top-down approach, intergovernmental incoordination issue, the constraint and complexity of government grants, and government inaction. Alongside these governmental challenges, other challenges included operational issues, a lack of awareness regarding social problems, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding the understanding of CSI, the concepts reviewed in Section 2.3.1 and the findings encompassed the same key elements, including innovativeness, social and business objectives, social and business outputs/outcomes, relevance to core business

strategies, and stakeholder engagement. The findings also indicated that the definitions of CSI and CSR were consistent with those found in the literature discussed in Section 2.3.3.2. However, stakeholder engagement and resources for implementing CSI and CSR were less emphasised in the findings. While most participants recognised the differences between CSI and CSR, only a few participants indicated the relevance of CSI and CSR, that CSI was a subset and overlapped with CSR, and CSR was a source of funding for CSI.



## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to relevant theories and concepts outlined in Chapter 2 to enhance the understanding and knowledge of CSI. The discussion begins with the characteristics of the interaction between the government and firms. This is followed by dimensions of the interaction, the influence of contextual factors, the impact of government on CSI, key challenges to the interaction, the contribution of CSI, and the understanding of CSI. Lastly, theories and empirical evidence are synthesised, leading to a revision of the theories and conceptual framework, along with drawing the CSI ecosystem in each country.

### *6.1 Characteristics of the Interaction*

According to the findings, interactions between the government and firms fall into two main types. The first type was primary interaction that occurred between government agencies and firms without any prior engagement between these two parties. Another type was secondary interaction, which occurred after primary interaction had occurred. In CSI projects studied in this thesis, secondary interactions were found to be less than primary interactions.

In primary interactions (see Table 21), the government engaged in CSI projects to be a customer, a partner or co-producer, a financial provider, a mentor, an enabler of stakeholder engagement, subcontract the firms, and manage the entry into specific places, groups of people, or industries. In secondary interaction, the government used CSI projects for international relations and policy-making, assisting the firms in conflict mitigation, and monitoring the projects. Additionally, the government unintentionally obstructed CSI projects.

Table 21: Summary of Government Interaction Types Observed in CSI Projects

Primary Interaction	Secondary Interaction
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The government was a customer.</li> <li>2. The government subcontracted to the projects.</li> <li>3. The government became a partner or co-producer.</li> <li>4. The government provided financial support.</li> <li>5. The government was a mentor.</li> <li>6. The government enabled CSI projects to meet stakeholders and gain exposure.</li> <li>7. The government managed the entry into targeted places, people and industries.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The government used CSI projects for foreign affairs and policy-making.</li> <li>2. The government mitigated conflicts.</li> <li>3. The government monitored CSI projects.</li> <li>4. The government was a barrier.</li> </ol>

Source: Author's construct

Classifying the types of government interactions in CSI projects is beneficial to this thesis because it illustrates the government's roles in CSI projects, reflecting the overview and purpose of government involvement in such projects. Moreover, it provides a foundation for exploring the characteristics and mechanisms of these interactions, as well as revealing dimensions of interaction that can evolve over time. The details regarding government roles and interaction characteristics are discussed further below.

### ***6.1.1 Government Roles in CSI Projects***

By drawing on the typologies of state roles developed by Borrás and Edler (2020) that presented various roles of the state beyond initiating, facilitating, and supporting but also about monitoring and taking opportunities from the projects (more details in Section 2.6.3.2, Table 10) helps illuminate government roles in this thesis. Considering primary and secondary interactions in the findings, government agencies acted as opportunists, facilitators, initiators, enablers of actor engagement, gatekeepers, moderators, watchdogs, and guarantors. The findings also revealed additional roles beyond the original typologies: a 'co-producer', and a 'barrier'.

The roles aligned with the previous study emphasise government roles that are similar regardless of the country context. In contrast, the extended typologies, particularly the role of a barrier, underline the negative impact of government involvement on CSI and the challenges posed by outdated and complex regulations that hinder CSI projects.

According to the findings, some government agencies became beneficiaries, seizing opportunities from CSI projects by being customers, subcontracting them, and utilising them for foreign affairs and policy-making. This aligns with the role of being an *opportunist*, where the state “takes up the arising opportunity” and “becomes an active beneficiary for specific purposes” (Borrás and Edler, 2020, p.17). However, from the firm’s perspective, the government acting as a customer can also be seen as a *sponsor* that supports the firm (Dedehayir et al., 2018).

Similar to the original concept, in which this role was described in a case driven by non-state actors (Borrás and Edler, 2020), the government in this thesis acted as an opportunist in CSI projects primarily led by firms without the dominant government involvement. Moreover, the government took advantage of these CSI projects to achieve its goals and responsibilities regarding SI, supporting enterprises with social objectives, and enhancing its capabilities, especially networking. However, CSI projects that involved the government as an opportunist were often well-known. This is because such projects offer the government more opportunities to demonstrate its goals and responsibilities achievements compared to lesser-known CSI projects.

From the findings, some government agencies supported firms through financial support and mentoring programs. These government agencies acted as *facilitators*, making the process easier by supporting private and non-state agents (Borrás and Edler, 2020). In this thesis, the facilitator role focuses on the government's explicit actions to support firms through visible tools rather than any covert assistance offered to firms individually. Additionally, as facilitators, the government should create a favourable environment for firms, which are key drivers of innovation development (Patanakul and Pinto, 2014). The mentoring programs and grant schemes provided by government agencies are considered efforts to foster an environment where firms can access funds, enhance their skills, and develop innovative ideas.

In the role of *initiator*, the government identifies opportunities and utilises its resources and expertise to transform the system (Borrás and Edler, 2020). The government sometimes collaborate with other actors to initiate and control SI-related projects (Etzkowitz and

Zhou, 2007). The findings showed that some government agencies recognised and aimed to eliminate social challenges. They then deployed their resources to leverage firms to tackle such challenges. However, these government agencies did not initiate CSI projects with firms from the beginning of the projects. Instead, they intervened after the projects had already started and did not exercise direct control over them.

Furthermore, it was discovered from the findings that government agencies acting as initiators often simultaneously were facilitators. Therefore, the government support offered to CSI projects was not only for assisting firms but also for utilising their resources as a tool to indirectly leverage firms to respond to the government's demands. This can extend the understanding of the government's role as an interdependent actor in the SI ecosystem, which existing studies often highlight its supportive roles in SI development (Boelman et al., 2015, Mulgan, 2017).

As a *lead user*, the original concept defined that “the state initiates market creation and co-design to find specific solutions to public needs” (Borrás and Edler, 2020, p.17). When examining government agencies as partners or co-producers in CSI projects, their actions in co-producing social solutions were highlighted and aligned with the lead user concept. However, these government agencies did not show their positions in creating market. Further, the co-producer role reflected their involvement in the co-implementation of CSI projects (Voorberg et al., 2015). Therefore, in this thesis, the government being a partner or a co-producer should be labelled as a *co-producer* rather than a lead user.

From the findings, some government agencies introduced firms undertaking CSI to potential stakeholders to strengthen firms’ networks and create new opportunities. Dedehayir et al. (2018) referred to an actor in the innovation ecosystem that linked firms to other actors as an *sponsor*, while (Borrás and Edler, 2020, p.17) suggested that the government “encouraging actively the involvement of stakeholders in participatory processes to define the direction of change” could be called an *enabler of actor engagement*, which more clearly identified a specific role of the government than a sponsor. Therefore, the role of being an enabler of actor engagement is carried out in this thesis. However, these government agencies achieved their duties in responding to particular

social issues more than in defining the direction of resolution. They enabled the engagement of other potential actors directly by inviting firms to participate in government events, and indirectly by showcasing CSI project as a case study at conferences or through other government channels.

Some government agencies, in this thesis, controlled access to industries and targeted people and communities through official ways, such as issuing licenses, certifications, and endorsement letters to firms, as well as through unofficial ways, such as personally introducing firms to people in communities. This should be considered a *gatekeeper* in which “the state controls access for change agents and opens up or closes down spaces for transformation” (Borrás and Edler, 2020, p.17). Although Borrás and Edler (2020) did not specify the specific features of agents to whom the government controls access, this thesis argues that the government takes this role for managing CSI projects that either impact health and safety or are unfamiliar to the public. In particular, the introduction of new firms or CSI projects to targeted people and communities underlines the government's significance as a key factor in the success of business operations in the Southeast Asian context, where government influence on local citizens and communities along with government-business ties are prominent (Ang et al., 2013, Hadiz, 2007, Montes and Cruz, 2020).

In some CSI projects, government agencies helped firms in resolving conflicts with individuals or communities. These government agencies acted as *moderators* who are “arbitrators or negotiators between different social and political positions among agents” (Borrás and Edler, 2020, p.17). In this thesis, however, government agencies with this role differed slightly from the original concept, as they often had strong interpersonal relationships with firms, supporting and siding with them rather than acting as neutral intermediaries in negotiations. This can be evidence reflecting the influence of contextual factors on the government's roles and corporate-political connections that shift the government away from being a neutral arbiter when mitigating conflicts among stakeholders (Muttakin et al., 2018).

If the government acts as a *watchdog*, it “ensures that individual agents comply with particular collectively defined norms” (Borrás and Edler, 2020, p.17). Instead of focusing on the defined norms, the government in this thesis monitored firms or projects to ensure they complied with specified requirements. The findings also revealed that the watchdog role occurred after the government initially acted as a facilitator by providing grants to firms. In contrast, the watchdog role, in the original concept, was not associated with the government’s role as a facilitator.

From the findings, when the interaction between the government and firms occurred, it signalled to society that these firms or projects were reliable. In this case, the government acted as a *guarantor*, ensuring firms’ reliability. This also aligns with the notion of government-firm ties in which the government can guarantee the credibility of CSI projects or firms (Wei et al., 2023). However, Borrás and Edler (2020, p.17) emphasised the *guarantor* role in “securing operations against financial and/or security and safety risks”, which differs from the focus of this thesis.

The findings in this thesis also proposed an additional role of the government, extending the typologies of state roles in Borrás and Edler’s research (2020). According to the findings, the government restricted the growth of some CSI projects through outdated regulations and excessive procedures. The government, thus, acted as a *barrier* to these projects. This aligns with Bambang et al.’s research (2018), which highlighted the government becoming a barrier to social-oriented projects that require authorisation from the government. The emergence of a barrier role highlights the negative impact of inappropriate regulations on firms and CSI, suggesting that there is a need to revise relevant regulations to create more suitable regulations and policies in the future.

The table below summarises the classifications of government roles based on the interactions between government agencies and firms undertaking CSI projects observed in this thesis.

Table 22: Classification of Government Roles based on Observed Interaction Types

Government roles	Types of government interaction
Opportunist	- The government was a customer. - The government subcontracted to the project. - The government used the project for foreign affairs and policy-making.
Facilitator and initiator	- The government provided financial support. - The government was a mentor.
Co-producer	- The government became a partner or co-producer.
Enabler of actor engagement	- The government enabled the project to meet stakeholders and gain exposure.
Gatekeeper	- The government managed the entry into targeted places, people and industries.
Moderator	- The government mitigated conflicts.
Watchdog	- The government monitored the project.
Guarantor	- All types of government interaction.
Barrier	- The government was a barrier.

Source: Borrás and Edler (2020), Author's construct

By linking the government interactions observed in the findings with various roles, it can broaden existing classifications of government roles. Additionally, it shows that the government can have multiple roles simultaneously: acting as both a facilitator and an initiator, as well as being a facilitator providing grants then also acting as a watchdog. This demonstrates a shift away from the classic dichotomy roles of the government being solely a source or facilitator of SI (Bason, 2013, Boelman et al., 2015, Mulgan, 2017).

The government, as an interdependent actor in the SI ecosystem, currently plays more than supportive and active roles in co-creating and encouraging firms to create SI as solutions for social challenges (Berzin et al., 2014, Merlin-Brogniart et al., 2022). In addition, the government monitors the operation of CSI projects, controls firms' access to the SI ecosystem, and utilises firms undertaking CSI. While the government can act as an opportunist in CSI projects, the findings indicated that the Thai and Malaysian governments performed the opportunist role more than the Singaporean government. This is because of contextual influences in Thailand and Malaysia that are favourable for the government engagement and exploitation of CSI projects, while the Singaporean government is obstructed from such actions (globalEDGE, 2024, Sangsukiam, 2021, Grant Thornton, 2018, MPA, 2024).

Additionally, the government can sometimes act as a barrier to the progress and growth of CSI projects (Bambang et al., 2018). Once the government facilitates CSI projects or firms, it can support SI creation and leverage these projects to achieve its goals (O'Byrne et al., 2014). Another point that arises from extending government roles is that the role as a co-producer is the only instance where the government explicitly demonstrates its presence and position in intervening in firms and CSI projects. According to the government roles outlined in Table 22, all government roles, except for being a co-producer or co-designer, show low involvement of the government in the production and operation of CSI projects. This limited involvement is influenced by the political-economic contexts of the three countries, with Singapore imposing greater restrictions on government intervention in business than Thailand and Malaysia (Sangsukiam, 2021, globalEDGE, 2024, Grant Thornton, 2018, Rana and Lee, 2015).

### ***6.1.2 Characteristics of the Interaction***

In addition to government roles, key characteristics of government interaction highlight important aspects of the relationships between the government and firms. These include involvement time and commencement of interaction, government power in CSI projects, and utilisation of CSI projects, as discussed below.

#### ***6.1.2.1 Involvement Time and Commencement of Interaction***

Government involvement in CSI projects could occur at every stage of the projects. Nonetheless, some interaction types were exclusive to either the early or the latter phases. For instance, the government interaction with firms to provide financial support was frequently found during the early phases of the projects. In contrast, being a customer, subcontracting firms, and enabling firms to meet potential stakeholders were evident only in the later stages of CSI projects.

Since one of the key barriers to establishing social-related businesses is the lack of financial resources (Hoogendoorn et al., 2011), government financial support is crucial for small



firms and startups to grow and improve their performance (Peter et al., 2018, Songling et al., 2018). This thesis found that several government agencies across three countries have attempted to close the funding gap by offering grants through various competition schemes. However, the insufficiency of financial support was still noted in the findings. Moreover, a mismatch occurred in terms of timing was observed; most grants were available only for projects in their early phases, while firms often required additional funding during latter stages.

These highlight a problematic system for government grants, as the bottom-up feedback from firms is often overlooked. Without a feedback linkage between firms and formal decision-makers, there is a risk of becoming symbolic participation in which firms cannot contribute to decision-making and implementation, diminishing firms' motivation to engage in government schemes (Van Meerkerk, 2019). This can negatively affect the effectiveness of the government's financial tools for CSI, hindering the growth of CSI and benefits provided to society.

Although the government encounters challenges in fulfilling firms' financial needs, non-governmental financial sources can serve as an alternative. Indeed, being government grant recipients can signal firms' growth potential, leading to increased opportunities for securing venture capital funding or other non-government financing in the future (Islam et al., 2018, Xiang and Worthington, 2017).

Receiving financial support from the government during the early stages of the project not only provides immediate monetary benefits but also enhances competitiveness in securing future funding. The findings in this thesis also affirmed that an affiliation with the government could increase firms' credibility, resulting in more business opportunities. This highlights the prevalence of corporate political activity, where firms can gain credibility and competitive advantage by associating with the government (Den Hond et al., 2014).

In the latter stages of the projects, the government involvement was relevant to scaling up the projects and enhancing their impacts. Strengthening capabilities, particularly by

building connections and encouraging people or organisations to pursue SI, is significant for scaling SI (Zainol et al., 2019). Given that the government has credibility and strong networks, having the government act as a customer, contractor, and networking enabler can help firms become lucrative and competitive in enhancing CSI and their projects. Although assisting firms with networking, subcontracting, and purchase orders is reasonable and appropriate to projects' demands in the latter stages, it is essential for the government to be attentive to firms' needs through bottom-up communication to avoid misarrangements that may arise. This can reduce the risk of diminished effectiveness of government tools, as well as lower motivation for firms to engage in government schemes.

In addition to the involvement time, the findings revealed that both the government and firms could commence the interaction. However, the government agencies often initiated relationships with well-known and successful CSI projects. Government agencies approached them to leverage the benefits of these projects while providing support. Specifically, firms with strong reputations and objectives aligned with those of the government could gain more attention from the government. These kinds of firms can strengthen their relationships with the government and enter the political arena to influence governmental policies or processes (Den Hond et al., 2014).

For firms, this can be a non-market strategy to obtain valuable resources, such as information and political contacts, that can improve their competitiveness (Den Hond et al., 2014). The government and firms can complement each other: the government can utilise the successful CSI projects, while firms can benefit from the intangible resources gained from the government to grow their CSI projects. This enables these two interdependent actors to develop a reciprocal relationship in which the government and firms can pursue their own goals while achieving mutual commitments, resulting in a larger and more sustainable SI ecosystem (Romero and Molina, 2011, Valkokari, 2015).

In contrast, new and lesser-known CSI projects often needed to approach the government first to seek support and validation. For a country with a high number of businesses and a small number of government agencies, such as Singapore, approaching the government and then being selected for government assistance was a significant hurdle for Singaporean

projects. However, the country eliminated this challenge by establishing a vigorous ecosystem to enable SI creators, including firms, to meet government and non-government stakeholders and receive assistance that firms require.

For new and lesser-known projects, it is more difficult to gain attention from the government and influence the policy-making process compared to well-known projects or large firms (Mathur and Singh, 2011). Small firms, therefore, often receive less government support, which can limit their competitive advantages. However, collective action can empower smaller firms to engage more in political activities than individual undertakings (Lawton et al., 2013). By connecting with other stakeholders in the ecosystem, new and small projects can form alliances, thereby increasing their influence in shaping policy and fostering relationships with the government.

### ***6.1.2.2 Government Power in CSI Projects***

According to the findings, government agencies in the three countries rarely participated in CSI projects as partners or co-producers to explicitly co-create CSI. Instead, government agencies attempted to indirectly leverage firms and projects through subcontracting, providing financial assistance, mentoring, and controlling access to specific industries and groups of people. This suggested that the government exercised limited and indirect control over firms undertaking CSI.

The official partnership between the government and firms for the production and delivery of CSI was less significant in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, which is in contrast to some studies highlighting the importance of government-business partnerships for generating SI in emerging economies, especially in China and India (Chin et al., 2019, Rao-Nicholson et al., 2017). These studies often advocate for PPP as effective strategies for sharing resources among partners and encouraging collective efforts to tackle complex social challenges.

However, the government and firms, as interdependent actors in the SI ecosystem, in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore have less mutualistic and superior-subordinate

relationship than pronounced in, especially, China (Breslin et al., 2021, Mi et al., 2019). Furthermore, the government's ownership of resources essential for CSI projects in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore is lesser than in China, where formal engagement with the government allows firms greater access to exclusive resources under government control (Wei et al., 2023). Although the findings revealed that firms in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore sometimes benefited from government ties, it was on interpersonal and short-term basis rather than from long-term contractual agreements.

From the government's perspective, PPP is preferable because it is a channel to transfer power both vertically from the national level to local levels and horizontally among various actors (Björstig and Sandström, 2017). This partnership is recognised as a strategic tool of the government for cascading national policy to the operational level, translating policy into action, and guiding interdependent actors in the SI ecosystem (Björstig and Sandström, 2017). Though PPP appears to be strategically advantageous for the government, it is typically constructed in megaprojects with long-term contractual cooperation and strong mutual goals (Wang et al., 2018). Further, government-business partnerships often have complex and time-consuming processes in negotiating and finalising satisfied agreements, as well as having high participation and transaction costs (Osei-Kyei and Chan, 2017). In Singapore, Hwang et al. (2013) underlined that the lengthy delay in negotiation and high participation costs were significant barriers to establishing government-business partnerships.

In this thesis, most CSI projects were small and mid-sized projects with no long-term contracts with the government. In these cases, instead of actively engaging in all key processes and activities in CSI projects, the government engaged only provisionally and partially in the production process and delivery of innovative products or services to society. Therefore, the role of PPP in co-creating SI in this thesis is not as prominent as suggested by some previous literature. The findings, particularly in the Singapore case, showed that no Singaporean projects interacted with the government as partners or co-producers. Furthermore, representatives from some Singaporean projects expressed their

concerns about the burden of costs incurred while awaiting government approval, which often took a considerable amount of time.

Although the governments of the three countries rarely carried out official partnerships, such as PPP, to exert direct control over firms, they still indirectly leveraged CSI projects through various types of interactions, such as providing conditional financial assistance, mentoring, and encouraging firms to focus on specific social issues. The government's efforts to engage in businesses with social objectives and foster SI through grants, mentoring and incubation programs, capability building, public procurement, and regulatory and monitoring tools are widely acknowledged as essential for SI growth and government intervention in business (Droste et al., 2016, Jung et al., 2016, Owen et al., 2018). Unlike PPP, these government tools can effectively support businesses regardless of their size or the length of their relationship with the government.

### ***6.1.2.3 Utilisation of CSI Project***

The findings in this thesis emphasised that the government deployed CSI not simply for social-based objectives, but as a strategic tool. The government utilised CSI projects to encourage firms to align with its priorities, claim these projects as government achievements, enhance its capabilities, and resolve conflicts with communities.

Indeed, the findings of this thesis align with the case of CSR, where the government showed interest in CSR as a means to fulfil national and international policy goals, complement existing laws and regulations, and foster stakeholder engagement (Steurer, 2010). The government's involvement in CSI projects creates a win-win situation: the government can utilise these projects as a tool to achieve policy goals while strengthening networks and relations with diverse stakeholders, and firms can benefit from government ties.

The mutual benefits between the government and firms incentivise these two interdependent actors to build interpersonal bonds within the SI ecosystem, especially in countries with multi-level governments, where patronage networks can easily form (Varkkey, 2012). However, for those CSI projects that share less goals with the government, this can impede

accessing resources and support. Thus, the government should act as an enabler, connecting firms with multiple stakeholders in the ecosystem to counterbalance the advantages that come from government ties (Sun et al., 2019).

In conclusion, categorising government roles reveals that the government, especially in Southeast Asian countries, plays more than supportive roles in fostering CSI projects; it also leverages CSI and sometimes can hinder its growth. When seeking to assist and benefit from CSI projects, the government frequently prioritises well-known or successful projects. Furthermore, the government often covertly influences CSI projects through, for example, incubation and conditional grants. Therefore, official collaborations between firms and the government, especially PPP, to create and provide CSI is less significant. Additionally, the government's involvement in CSI projects is not only to address societal issues but also to be a tool assisting the government in accomplishing its objectives.

## ***6.2 Dimensions of Interaction***

In addition to specific characteristics, the findings revealed the mechanisms of government involvement in CSI projects, demonstrating notable forms of interaction between the government and firms. The concept of productive interaction adopted as the core theory in this research suggested three main types of interaction: ***direct interaction***, which is “personal interactions involving direct contacts between humans”, ***indirect interaction***, which is “established through some kind of material carrier”, and ***financial interaction***, which occurs “when potential stakeholders engage in an economic exchange with researchers” (Spaapen and Van Drooge, 2011, p.213). As the productive interaction concept is not initially focused on the government and firms, this thesis then expands on it by incorporating the notions of ***formal and informal relations*** that are often discussed in research regarding state-business relationships (Cali and Sen, 2011, Leftwich, 2009, Sabry, 2019).

When considering government involvement in CSI projects, the findings revealed that the interaction between the government and firms undertaking CSI could be seen in three main dimensions. Firstly, it was an *interpersonal relationship* between firms' founders/workers and government officers, which frequently developed into an *informal relationship*. The second was a *formal relationship* between the government and firms through official channels, such as incubation programs, registration processes, and licensing. The last was a relationship through *financial support and grant schemes*, which was official rather than informal.

As presented in Table 23, when government officers and firms' founders/workers established interpersonal relationships, these government agencies could become unofficial partners and mentors providing valuable advice and facilitating CSI projects along with personally introducing firms to potential stakeholders and targeted places or groups of people. Besides, government agencies assisted firms in negotiating with people and communities and accompanied firms to meetings with foreign governments, which also helped these agencies connect with foreign governments.

In contrast, some government agencies formally engaged with firms through official channels to purchase products or services from CSI projects, subcontract the projects, become official partners or co-producers, mentor firms in incubation programs, invite firms to participate in government events and focus groups, license firms to undertake their projects, monitor firms, and sometimes negatively impact firms through problematic regulations. Government agencies also officially provided funding for CSI projects through their grant schemes.

*Table 23: Government Involvements in CSI Projects Categorised by Dimensions of the Interaction*

<b>Dimension of interaction between the government and firms</b>	<b>Government involvement in CSI projects</b>
1. Informal interaction through interpersonal relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government became a partner or co-producer.</li> <li>- The government was a mentor.</li> <li>- The government enabled the projects to meet stakeholders and gain exposure.</li> <li>- The government managed the entry into targeted places, people, and industries.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government utilised CSI projects for foreign affairs and policy-making.</li> <li>- Government mitigated conflicts.</li> </ul>
2. Formal interaction through official channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government was a customer.</li> <li>- The government subcontracted to the projects.</li> <li>- The government became a partner or co-producer.</li> <li>- The government was a mentor.</li> <li>- The government enabled the projects to meet stakeholders and gain exposure.</li> <li>- The government managed the entry into targeted places, people, and industries.</li> <li>- The government utilised the projects for foreign affairs and policy-making.</li> <li>- The government monitored the project.</li> <li>- The government was a barrier.</li> </ul>
3. Financial interaction through official forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The government provided financial support.</li> </ul>

Source: Author's construct

These three dimensions of interaction between the government and firms observed in this thesis also propose to refine the descriptions of the interaction typology suggested in Spaapen and Van Drooge's study (2011) to align with the interactions that the government and firms become focal actors. The direct interaction between humans should be represented by the *interpersonal relationship* between firms' founders/workers and government officers, which can develop into *informal interactions* (see Table 24). The indirect interaction established through material carriers should be the contact between the government and firms through, such as incubation programs, registration processes, and licensing, which are *official channels* that allow the government and firms to *interact formally*. Lastly, financial interaction is displayed in terms of financial support and grant schemes and is an official form rather than an informal one.

Table 24: Descriptions of Interaction Types

Types of interactions	Interaction descriptions originated by Spaapen and Van Drooge (2011)	Interaction descriptions adapted to this thesis
1. Direct interaction (informal interaction through interpersonal relationship)	"Personal interactions involving direct contacts between humans, interactions that revolve around face-to-face encounters, or through phone, email or videoconferencing"	Interpersonal relationships between firms' founders/workers and government officers that can develop into informal interactions.



2. Indirect interaction (formal interaction through official channels)	“Contacts that are established through some kind of material ‘carrier’, e.g., texts, or artefacts such as exhibitions, models or films”	The government and firms connect formally through official channels, for example, incubation programs, registration processes, and licensing.
3. Financial interaction (financial interaction through official forms)	“When potential stakeholders engage in an economic exchange with researchers, for example, a research contract, a financial contribution, or a contribution ‘in kind’ to a research programme”	Financial support and grant schemes.

Source: Spaapen and Van Drooge (2011), Author’s construct

Since the informal and interpersonal interaction as well as the formal interaction occurring through official channels are prominent and reflect different contextual influences, they are elaborated upon and discussed further in the following sub-sections.

### ***6.2.1 Informal Interaction Through Interpersonal Relationships***

In this thesis, an interpersonal relationship between government officers and firms was often observed when they interacted in informal or unofficial ways. This relationship developed over time when they became acquainted and collaborated. This informal and interpersonal relationship was important for firms and was a key success factor for conducting CSI in Southeast Asian emerging markets like Thailand and Malaysia.

In emerging market countries with less-developed formal institutions, having interpersonal connections with political/governmental actors is critical for firms to gain legitimacy, reduce uncertainties of laws and regulations, and access government-controlled resources (Wei et al., 2023). Business-government connections create social capital that enables firms to secure regulatory resources during institutional transitions, such as exclusive updates on new policies and regulations, and lobbying officials to revise and devise favourable regulations for firms (Yang et al., 2019). Government ties can also help firms obtain “exclusive government endorsement and favourable treatment” (Sheng et al., 2011, p.3).

Firms undertaking CSI in this thesis, especially in the Thai and Malaysian cases, are aligned with prior studies, as their interpersonal connections with government agencies granted them access to new markets and beneficiaries, expanded their networks, and provided valuable knowledge and information. Additionally, these connections enhanced their reliability within communities and helped mitigate conflicts with individuals. This addresses the importance of interpersonal relationships with government actors for firms undertaking CSI, particularly in Thailand and Malaysia.

While the personal ties between firms and government agencies can be advantageous for firms, they also highlight the challenges posed by formal institutions in these countries. In emerging markets, there is a greater likelihood of significant changes to formal institutions, resulting in an unstable legal and regulatory framework, institutional voids, enforcement inefficiencies, and ineffective market-supporting systems (Rao et al., 2005, Sheng et al., 2011, Yang et al., 2019). Weak formal institutions negatively affect firms creating innovation and hinder the overall innovation development of a country (Lee and Law, 2017, Rodríguez-Pose and Zhang, 2020). Additionally, increased political connections can lead to fewer government subsidies for innovation quality and reduced R&D intensity among firms (Liu et al., 2021). This can ultimately impede the growth of CSI and the SI ecosystem in the long term. Thus, it is essential to improve formal institutions to support sustainable CSI growth.

Although interpersonal relationships can compensate for inefficient formal institutions or transitional formal institutions, they are not long-term cooperation. This is because of government agents' job rotations and their dependence on political parties more than on individual government officials (Sheng et al., 2011). However, according to the findings, firms' founders and political agents sometimes could maintain personal relationships even when political agents rotate across different ministries. These individuals could still leverage and share mutual benefits from this reciprocal ties. Therefore, the ongoing interpersonal relationship, particularly at the individual level, depends on continuous exchanges of benefits between businesses and government (Sun et al., 2015).

### ***6.2.2 Formal Interaction Through Official Channels***

According to the findings, the government could formally interact with firms in official ways without prior acquaintances. The formal interaction was observed when the government, for example, was a customer purchasing products or services from CSI projects, subcontracted the projects, and provided financial support. Although the formal interaction between government agencies and firms could be found in all three countries, it was more pronounced in Singapore compared to Thailand and Malaysia.

In countries with weak formal institutions, interpersonal relationships are often more prevalent. Conversely, in countries with stable and developed formal institutions, there is generally less government intervention and a more vibrant environments for business operation and competition (Du and Luo, 2016, Yiu et al., 2005). This can reduce dependency on government actors and government linkages through political ties (Du and Luo, 2016). Consequently, in countries with well-developed formal institutions, the interaction between government agencies and firms is more formal than interpersonal.

Besides, fewer government ties are often accompanied in countries with lower levels of lobbying and corruption (Habib et al., 2018). However, government ties are sometimes still powerful at the local level, even in countries with low corruption (Amore and Bennesen, 2013). Therefore, the formal interaction between the government and firms is prevalent in countries with well-developed formal institutions and single-level government. This could be a possible explanation for the prominence of formal interaction through official ways in Singapore more than in Thailand and Malaysia.

When the government had fewer connections with firms undertaking CSI, it was unable to leverage their CSI projects as a tool as much as it could with a strong government-business connection. The government interacted with firms undertaking CSI mainly through formal ways, therefore, considered CSI as a supplement rather than a tool to achieve its goals. Moreover, firms' less dependency on the government could prevent a reciprocal relationship between these two actors and hinder the government from directly communicating and receiving feedback from firms. Thus, the government should establish

an efficient communication channel that allows firms to provide feedback and participate in public hearings regarding policy-making in order to avoid failures resulting from a lack of a bottom-up system (Aars, 2006).

In Thailand and Malaysia, government agencies were also involved in CSI projects through official forms, but their involvement was less prominent than in Singapore. According to the findings, government agencies sometimes offered informal assistance through personal connections instead of formal support due to resource shortages, particularly in funding. Therefore, government-business interactions can sometimes change from official forms to informal and interpersonal relationships. This differentiates the interactions and relationships between these two interdependent actors in SI ecosystems in Thailand and Malaysia from those in Singapore.

### ***6.2.3 Transition of Interactions***

The findings highlighted that the interaction between the government and firms was dynamic. Firms could initiate or terminate interactions with multiple government agencies. Meanwhile, firms could evolve their interaction with a specific government agency from one type to another. Further, interpersonal interaction could be developed after the government and firms had formal interactions, especially in countries with multi-level governments and less-developed formal institutions.

Firms can interact horizontally with various government agencies to seek more competitive advantages, reduce uncertainties in multi-dimensions that impede the growth of businesses or projects, and expand their business into new markets (Du and Luo, 2016). On the other hand, deepening relationships with a specific government agency can enable firms to access exclusive benefits and exert legislative influence on policy and decision-making (Faccio et al., 2006, Lord, 2000). The transitions in interactions can lead to shifts in government involvement roles. It can also restructure relationships among actors in the SI ecosystem, influencing the operation and growth of the CSI projects and the contributions of the projects to society and firms.

In a horizontal transition, firms can connect with more government agencies, thereby gaining access to extensive stakeholder networks from these agencies. At the same time, firms can encourage the government agencies to interconnect with other agencies and organisations. This fosters interdependence among actors and initiates new forms of relationships within the SI ecosystem (Keune and Marginson, 2013, Le Ber and Branzei, 2010). While cooperation across actors can promote the development of SI, it also confronts challenges in creating new collaborative forms (Sanzo et al., 2015). According to the findings in this thesis, a lack of intergovernmental coordination was a significant challenge, particularly in building engagement among government agencies, which this issue needed to be resolved.

In a vertical transition, firms deepen their interdependence with a specific government agency, resulting in stronger government ties (Caeyers and Dercon, 2012, Keune and Marginson, 2013). This can lead to a higher level of mutual benefit and can develop into a long-term relationship, which is advantageous for firm performance and profitability (Najaf and Najaf, 2021). However, this effect is more pronounced in countries with autocratic regimes but is adverse in democratic countries (Saeed et al., 2016). In the cases of Thailand and Malaysia, it can be argued that the adverse effect is limited due to observable governmental power, particularly at the local level, despite these countries being classified as democracies. However, firms should focus on enhancing their knowledge, skills, and relationships with other business organisations for long-term growth, rather than solely depending on government connections (Sheng et al., 2011).

In summary, developing the productive interaction concept with redefined types of interaction highlights two unique interactions between the government and firms in Southeast Asian countries: informal interaction with interpersonal relationships and formal interaction through official channels. Moreover, these interactions can evolve to become more informal over time.

Informal interaction with interpersonal relationships is remarkable in countries with weak formal institutions, limited resources for undertaking CSI, some resources are restricted and controlled by the government, and prevalence of patronage and government-business ties. This situation is evident in Thailand and Malaysia (Montes and Cruz, 2020, Puteh-Behak et al., 2015, Sen and Tyce, 2019). With these environments, firms implementing CSI are driven to build interpersonal relationships with government officials to access exclusive resources and gain competitive advantages through unofficial ways. At the same time, the government can utilise firms' CSI projects, leading to reciprocal relationships and benefits between the government and firms.

On the other hand, countries with more robust formal institutions and abundant resources that firms can access easily, such as Singapore, highlight the formal interaction through official channels. Establishing interpersonal relationships with government officials and relying heavily on the government is unnecessary due to the lower risks and uncertainties of formal institutions, accessible resources, and a vibrant ecosystem provided by the government. Accordingly, informal and interpersonal relationships are unremarkable in Singapore, while formal interactions are prominent.

### ***6.3 Contextual Factors***

As discussed above, types of government involvement in CSI projects, as well as the characteristics and dimensions of the interaction between government and firms, are influenced by the country's contexts. These contextual factors also differentiate the interaction between the government and firms implementing CSI across countries. Understanding the contextual influence then helps explain CSI holistically and enhances the knowledge of CSI relevant to contextual factors which are understudied. The subsections below, hence, discuss the influences of contexts and the transitions of contexts.

### ***6.3.1 Influences of Contexts***

As mentioned in Section 2.5.2, the weak economic context encourages SI initiatives to address social problems, such as poverty, while the business-friendly environment and the political context that empowers people, along with supportive policies for SI, can stimulate the growth of SI (Fahrudi, 2020, Morris-Suzuki and Soh, 2017, Tjahja and Yee, 2018, Yunus et al., 2010). The findings showed the alignment that several CSI projects aimed to increase beneficiaries' incomes and reduce poverty, which resulted from the weak economic context. Moreover, several government agencies had policies and programs to support CSI projects and encourage entrepreneurs to create SI. Although the findings indicated that a business-friendly environment benefited firms in initiating and operating their CSI projects, connections with government agencies was crucial for firms, particularly in Thailand and Malaysia.

The country contexts are shaped by the VoC, which its core concept is about national political economies reflecting the country's political and economic regimes and institutional settings (Diaz-Carrion and Franco-Leal, 2021, Hall and Soskice, 2001). Moreover, the VoC influences resource allocation and transfer (Hall and Soskice, 2001). In liberal or free-market economies, there is typically less government intervention and more opportunities for resource transfer compared to countries with state-led or coordinated market economies (Hall and Soskice, 2001). In Asian countries, countries with high public involvement can promote firms' involvement in SI (Diaz-Carrion and Franco-Leal, 2021).

Considering political and economic regimes, Thailand and Malaysia have similar political economies, while Singapore differs in this aspect, even though all three countries are under a democratic system. Thailand and Malaysia are classified as developmental states (Chareonwongsak, 2021, Long, 2013, Montes and Cruz, 2020), which refers to "a state where the government is intimately involved in the macro and micro economic planning in order to grow the economy" (UNESCWA, 2014, p.1). However, Singapore was transformed, deregulated, liberalised, and privatised, moving away from the conventional model of a developmental state (Liow, 2012, Siddiqui, 2016, Wade, 2018).

According to the findings, government agencies in Thailand and Malaysia covertly intervened and developed stronger interpersonal relationships with firms compared to Singapore. This is associated with the political and economic contexts, which are mixed economies and multi-level governance, which facilitate the exercise of power, particularly at the local level, allowing the government greater control over businesses (Varkkey, 2012). In Singapore, in contrast, the government allows a free-market economy, as well as its power is limited by single-level governance, making it challenging for government agencies to forge interpersonal relationships with businesses and provide any exclusive benefits. Consequently, Thai and Malaysian government agencies played proactive roles in CSI projects, acting as, for example, opportunists, co-producers, and mitigators. In contrast, Singaporean government agencies primarily had supportive roles, such as being facilitators and enablers of actor engagement.

The existing SI research addresses the importance of institutional context that the institutional void can lead to SI creation, and formal institutions are significant to firms undertaking CSI (Schmidpeter, 2013, Turker and Vural, 2017). This thesis's findings corroborate these statements. The findings also revealed that the institutional context, especially formal institutions, in Thailand and Malaysia were comparatively weaker than in Singapore. While Singapore benefited from effective regulatory enforcement (Lum, 2022), weak regulatory enforcement posed a significant challenge in both Thailand and Malaysia (Bangkok Post, 2021a, Allianz Trade, 2024, Md Nasir and Hashim, 2021).

As mentioned, weak formal institutions are often linked to problematic political contexts, where firms must cultivate interpersonal relationships with government agencies to mitigate uncertainties and risks associated with inefficient formal institutions (Wei et al., 2023). The informal institution also encourages interpersonal relationships, as patronage and social hierarchy have been deeply ingrained in Thai and Malaysian societies for a long time (Puteh-Behak et al., 2015, Sen and Tyce, 2019, Tjahja and Yee, 2018). Therefore, a mutualistic relationship between the government and firms is typically observed in Thailand and Malaysia.



The resource context is important to SI creation, and the exchange and sharing of resources among actors can lead to successful SI (Howaldt et al., 2016a, Howaldt et al., 2016b, Mirvis et al., 2016, Oeij et al., 2019). Since democracy is associated with the improvement of a country's income (Londregan and Poole, 1996, Madsen et al., 2015), firms undertaking CSI in countries with higher government control struggle with limited financial resources compared to those in countries with less government control. The findings of this thesis also emphasised the importance of resources to CSI projects and the accessibility to government resources, which could increase competitive advantages, particularly in Thailand and Malaysia. Due to the relatively limited financial resources in Thailand and Malaysia compared to Singapore, government agencies offered firms exclusive government-controlled resources as substitutes

Indeed, Thailand and Malaysia are transitioning to catch up with an early developer like Singapore through, for example, economic transformation, resource allocation improvement, and innovation and network strengthening (Gunasilan et al., 2021, Wade, 2018). Thai and Malaysian governments may offer fewer exclusive resources to firms when Thailand and Malaysia achieve higher income levels, as well as when their political and institutional contexts become more developed and suitable for accumulating essential resources for doing CSI and for firms to directly access resources through the ecosystem. Instead, the governments may promote fair business competition, leading to more formal interactions.

The problematic political, economic, institutional and resource contexts can negatively affect the social context, resulting in social problems, such as inequality and poverty, which require substantial resources for alleviation (Nicholls et al., 2015, Remøe, 2015). A promising social context, meanwhile, can foster SI creation (Krlev et al., 2014). The findings illustrated that the social context was relevant to social problems and social engagement in creating CSI. The government, especially in Thailand and Malaysia, encouraged and leveraged firms to focus on particular social problems, as the limitations in government capacity and resources impeded the government to tackle these challenges alone. This then influenced the purposes of government involvement in CSI and the interaction with firms undertaking CSI.

In summary, Thailand and Malaysia exhibited higher levels of government intervention compared to Singapore, and their formal institutions and resources were less developed than those in Singapore. However, these weaknesses in Thailand and Malaysia were compensated by competitive advantages from government-business ties. This resulted in the interaction in Thailand and Malaysia remarkable in terms of interpersonal relationships, the government's utilisation of CSI projects, and the involvement in CSI projects, which were beneficial for the government. In contrast, the interaction in Singapore was in formal forms through the ecosystem or intermediary established by the government.

In other words, in Southeast Asian countries, countries with high levels of government intervention, less free-market economies, and weaker formal institutions and resources are associated with a greater government involvement in CSI, especially through informal interactions. Conversely, governments in countries with lower levels of intervention, along with vigorous formal institutions and resources engage in CSI through formal channels rather than informal ones.

### ***6.3.2 Transitions of Contexts***

Considering the relationship and transitions of contextual factors among these three countries, it can be argued that Thailand and Malaysia are positioned as developmental states. However, Singapore has moved beyond this position, resulting in distinct country contexts compared to Thailand and Malaysia. Indeed, it is a common characteristic of a developmental state that is associated with embedded autonomous bureaucracy, polity-led development, close interpersonal relationships between state agencies and businesses, and highly capable states in making, implementing, monitoring and enforcing policies (Routley, 2012, Wong, 2004). The prevalence of state-business linkages and state intervention in developmental states, often observed in developing and resource-poor countries, can influence institutions and resource allocation in ways that favour politically connected firms (Auty and Gelb, 2000, Doner et al., 2005).

Thailand and Malaysia, as developing countries with limited resource endowment and state intervention, are regarded as developmental states (Montes and Cruz, 2020). Although Singapore is frequently exemplified by scholars in studies related to the concept of the developmental state (Doner et al., 2005, Gopinathan, 2007, Han, 2017, Liow, 2012, Wong, 2004), it is portrayed as a successful example that employed state intervention to establish a strong foundation and then gradually deregulated, liberalised and privatised to become a neoliberal state (Liow, 2012, Wade, 2018, Yeung, 2000).

In other words, Singapore has undergone a transitional trajectory that Thailand and Malaysia are currently facing (Sen and Tyce, 2019). If Thailand and Malaysia were to alter their political and economic systems, it would lead to a reconfiguration of their political, economic, institutional, resource, and social contexts. This change would ultimately reshape the interaction between the government and firms from a proactive to a supportive role, shifting relationships from interpersonal or informal forms to more formal ones.

#### ***6.4 The Impact of Government Involvement on CSI Projects***

The government involvement in CSI projects affected the projects and firms in two dimensions: changes in core business strategies and activities and enhancement of firms' competitiveness, which are discussed below.

##### ***6.4.1 Changes in Core Business Strategy and Activity***

According to the findings, the government did not cause any significant changes in core business strategies and business models of firms in the three countries. Only a few operational activities were adjusted to either comply with government requirements or to meet the needs of beneficiaries. When the government attempted to influence firms' core strategies and business models, it was typically through incubation programs or at a point when firms had not yet initiated their projects. Changes in core business strategies and

business models during project operations, thus, were primarily driven by economic and business factors rather than governmental influences.

The CSI projects observed in this thesis were initiated due to two main reasons: responsive motivations to alleviate social problems that project founders perceived and proactive motivations to solve business pain points or seize business opportunities from these social problems. In other words, CSI projects were created from contextual factors (problems arising in society), managerial factors (project founder's awareness of social problems) and organisational factors (business pain points and new opportunities). This aligns with prior studies suggesting that firms can be driven to engage in CSI by internal personnel, business pressures and opportunities, and external pressures from social contexts (Carberry et al., 2017, Herrera, 2015, João-Roland and Granados, 2020).

However, this contrasts with the findings in Esen and Maden-Eyiusta's paper (2019), which indicated that stakeholder expectations regarding firm reputation and regulatory pressures were key rationales for firms' engagement in SI projects. This is because most CSI projects participating in this thesis were established by new firms rather than incumbent firms that focused on reputation improvement and regulation compliance (Miller et al., 2020).

Calibrating operational activities is common when working with various actors, especially government agencies. Key challenges in working with government agencies are often related to time-consuming, along with complex bureaucratic processes and decision-making (Rajabi et al., 2021). Firms must understand these challenges and adapt their activities to align with the requirements and procedures of government agencies. On the other hand, government agencies should recognise the nature of firms, increase flexibility and agility, and improve communication channels to obtain firm feedback.

#### ***6.4.2 Enhancing Firms' Competitiveness***

According to the findings, government engagement in CSI projects assisted firms with not only resources, knowledge, and networks but also legitimacy and other benefits. Embracing

government involvement in CSI projects, in other words, was a strategic tool for firms to enhance their competitiveness. This aligns with existing studies pointing out that firms with government ties are advantageous in terms of, for example, uncertainty reduction and gaining exclusive resources, legitimacy, and favourable regulations (Hillman et al., 2004, Lawton et al., 2013, Rajwani and Liedong, 2015, Wei et al., 2023).

Despite preventing the impacts of fluctuations in the country and providing benefits, the effect of government relations on firm internationalisation is a topic of debate. Some scholars, such as Du and Luo (2016), proposed the negative impacts on firm internalisation, as government dependency could impede the development of skills and capabilities necessary for internationalisation. Others suggested that such relationships could result in both positive and negative impacts because firms could leverage government support to overcome internationalisation challenges and global competition (Bai et al., 2019, Lebedev et al., 2021).

According to the findings in this thesis, one CSI project benefited from a strong relationship with a government agency, allowing it to connect with a foreign government agency. In this case, the government connection played an important role in guaranteeing the firm's credibility and potential in the foreign government's view. However, due to the limited number of CSI projects involved in internationalisation, the impact of government involvement on firm internationalisation cannot be generalised from this research.

### ***6.5 Key Challenges of the Interaction and CSI Growth***

The findings highlighted challenges regarding government agencies, including the complexity of bureaucratic procedures, top-down approach failures, intergovernmental incoordination, government grant constraints, and government inaction. Operational issues, awareness of social problems, and the pandemic of COVID-19 were also observed as other key challenges affecting CSI projects. These challenges emphasised problematic administration that was bureaucratic, complex, rigid, and less efficient, in addition to various social and business contextual difficulties.

Government bureaucracy is an administrative barrier for businesses, particularly in emerging countries (Rahman et al., 2020, Luo and Junkunc, 2008). This barrier can be in the form of, for example, excessive documentation requirements, inconsistent procedures across departments, lengthy registration or approval periods, complex processes requiring multi-agency approval, and the redundant complexity of formalities (Luo and Junkunc, 2008). These barriers not only trigger a large burden on firms but also strengthen corporate-political ties and increase incidences of bribery to expedite processing times (Bardhan, 2017). In the case of Singapore, some firms participating in this research also expressed their concerns regarding the intricacy and duration of bureaucratic procedures. Despite the low likelihood of bribery occurring in Singapore due to its political and institutional context, the complicated administrative procedures could significantly hinder business formation (Kosi and Bojnec, 2013).

To eliminate these challenges, the government and policymakers should prioritise the implications of administrative procedures while also improving formal institutions, as administrative barriers are associated with political ties, the inefficiency of governments at lower levels, and the administrative culture environment (Luo and Junkunc, 2008, OECD, 2009). Additionally, intergovernmental coordination should be enhanced to minimise redundant time and processes across different government agencies. At the same time, the government should take more proactive actions to approach and receive feedback from firms to streamline procedures.

Operational issues are typically more straightforward to resolve compared to bureaucracy-related challenges. However, solving these challenges requires government assistance in creating a favourable business environment and enabling civil society to recognise and address social challenges, in addition to intra-firm improvements, such as modifying business models to reduce costs, capture more value, and manage unexpected risks (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Krlev et al., 2014). Therefore, eliminating the key challenges for CSI projects necessitates harmonising the government and firms to improve relevant external contexts that affect internal organisation revisions.

## ***6.6 Contributions of CSI Projects***

In existing studies, CSI is claimed to benefit both firms and society (Bachnik and Szumniak-Samolej, 2020, Gasparin et al., 2021, Varadarajan and Kaul, 2018). In this thesis, CSI contributed to firms and society; concurrently, it affected the government and formal institutions. According to the findings, CSI was an important source of revenue and business opportunities for firms. Beneficiaries of CSI projects, additionally, were provided job opportunities, leading to an improved quality of life. Moreover, in some projects, CSI could significantly reduce environmental threats.

Since CSI was integrated into the core strategy and business model of firms, it enabled the capture of both business and social values (Carayannis et al., 2021, Herrera, 2015). Furthermore, government agencies utilised CSI as a tool to solve social challenges, and showcased CSI projects as part of their achievements.

Although some CSI projects in this research led to new regulations and contributed to policy-making, they did not explicitly contribute to social and behavioural changes as suggested in the literature in Section 2.1 (Choi and Majumdar, 2015; van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2016). Only particular groups of people relevant to CSI projects were affected, and their behaviours were adjusted. The limited impacts of CSI projects on social and behavioural changes in this research resulted from the small scale of the projects and their relatively short duration, which hindered observable outcomes.

## ***6.7 Understanding of CSI***

The meaning of CSI observed in this research comprised the same key elements (innovativeness, social and business objectives, social and business outputs/outcomes, core business strategy involvement, and stakeholder engagement in firms and external parties) as suggested in prior literature. However, this thesis argues that the objectives of CSI in practice are unbalanced and have less emphasis on corporate resources and stakeholder engagement, which differ from theoretical perspectives.

Highlighting social objectives over business objectives, on the one hand, allows firms to differentiate themselves from competitors and enhance their corporate image (Alam and Islam, 2021, Mason, 2012). On the other hand, it results from the attitudes of entrepreneurs, particularly those with backgrounds in charity or non-profit organisations (Kamaludin et al., 2021). For these entrepreneurs, CSI can provide explicit social impacts and sustainability.

Although corporate resources were less addressed in the interviews, the core business strategies and business models practically involved utilising firm resources to generate and deliver CSI to beneficiaries. The projects, indeed, engaged a wide range of stakeholders, although the interview participants did not emphasise this aspect. However, projects typically foster more stakeholder engagement when they can access a broader network through bridging ties (Tiwana, 2008).

Considering the concepts of CSI and CSR, the findings revealed that the participants had opinions aligning with established definitions from previous literature. However, the engagement of stakeholders and resources for implementing CSI and CSR were less emphasised during the interviews. Most participants recognised differences between CSI and CSR. However, a few participants indicated the relevance of CSI and CSR, that CSI was a subset and overlapped with CSR, and that CSR was a funding source for CSI. Since the meanings of CSI and CSR have not been officially and unanimously defined, understanding these two terms and their differences is shaped by varying personal experiences, perceptions, and values influenced by organisational and institutional contexts (Fordham and Robinson, 2018).

## ***6.8 Synthesis of Theories and Empirical Evidence***

This thesis proposes specific characteristics and dimensions of interactions between the government and firms under two different political economies in Southeast Asia: one represented by Thailand and Malaysia, and the other exemplified by Singapore. Furthermore, this thesis proposes new interpretations of the productive interaction concept, extending it to cover both government and firms as focal actors. The typologies of interactions within



this concept are also redefined to align with these new key actors. Therefore, this thesis fills gaps in understanding CSI concerning contextual influences and the interactions between government and firms, while also extending the productive interaction concept to explain interactions between the government and firms in producing CSI.

According to the conceptual framework of this thesis (see Section 2.9), it initially depicts that the VoC (reflecting the country's political economy) plays an important role in shaping the framework conditions (encompassing political, economic and business, institutional, resource, and social contexts) and leads to the distinction of interaction between the government and firms across different countries, especially the characteristics and dimensions of interactions. Meanwhile, the framework conditions and the interactions are associated with demands (including both social and state demands) and other SI actors. Moreover, the interaction between the government and firms can impact firm strategies and activities regarding CSI. The contribution of CSI is a feedback loop to firms, government, and framework conditions.

The key findings showed that Thailand and Malaysia exhibited a higher degree of government intervention compared to Singapore. Through the VoC lens, Thailand and Malaysia displayed a combination of SME and LME, whereas Singapore showed characteristics of LME. Therefore, Thailand and Malaysia exemplified countries with semi state-led political economies, while Singapore represented a country with a free political economy. This influenced each country's political, economic and business, institutional, resource, and social contexts.

In *Thailand and Malaysia*, it influenced the political context in terms of the implementation of government power, the institutional context in terms of remarkable government-political ties and weak formal institutions, the economic and business contexts in terms of less favourable economic and business environments, the resource contexts regarding exclusive resources under government control and limited financial resources, and the social context that resulted in social problems requiring innovative solutions from firms and relevant actors. These are explained below.

**Political context** in Thailand and Malaysia displayed a greater degree of government power compared to Singapore. Although these countries are democratic, their governments were unable to explicitly dominate firms undertaking CSI as much as autocratic governments could. Furthermore, the multi-level governance structure in Thailand and Malaysia, comprising national and local governments, facilitated the exercise of governmental power, particularly at the local level. Therefore, having positive relationships with local government agencies was beneficial for firms, especially when their CSI projects were relevant to local communities.

**Institutional context** in terms of the informal institution showed the prevalence of government-business ties when the government wielded considerable power and intervention. The emergence of government-business ties was also associated with weak or less-developed formal institutions. Having political ties could then help firms reduce risks from inefficient laws and regulations and gain access to non-financial resources controlled by the government, such as networks related to specific individuals, organisations, and communities.

**Economic and business contexts** were intervened partially by the government. Though the government has endeavoured to create a business-friendly environment, the higher degree of government power and intervention resulted in increased involvement in firms. While democracy was associated with improving a country's income, a higher degree of government control could hinder this progress.

**Resource context** in terms of financial resources was affected by a higher degree of government power, leading to limited resources for implementing CSI, especially funds. Moreover, a higher degree of government power allowed the government to control some resources enabling CSI. Consequently, firms often sought associations with the government to obtain exclusive non-financial resources for their CSI projects.

**Social context** was influenced by the intertwined political, economic, institutional, and resource contexts, which resulted in significant social problems in the country, such as poverty. Additionally, challenges related to environmental and demographic

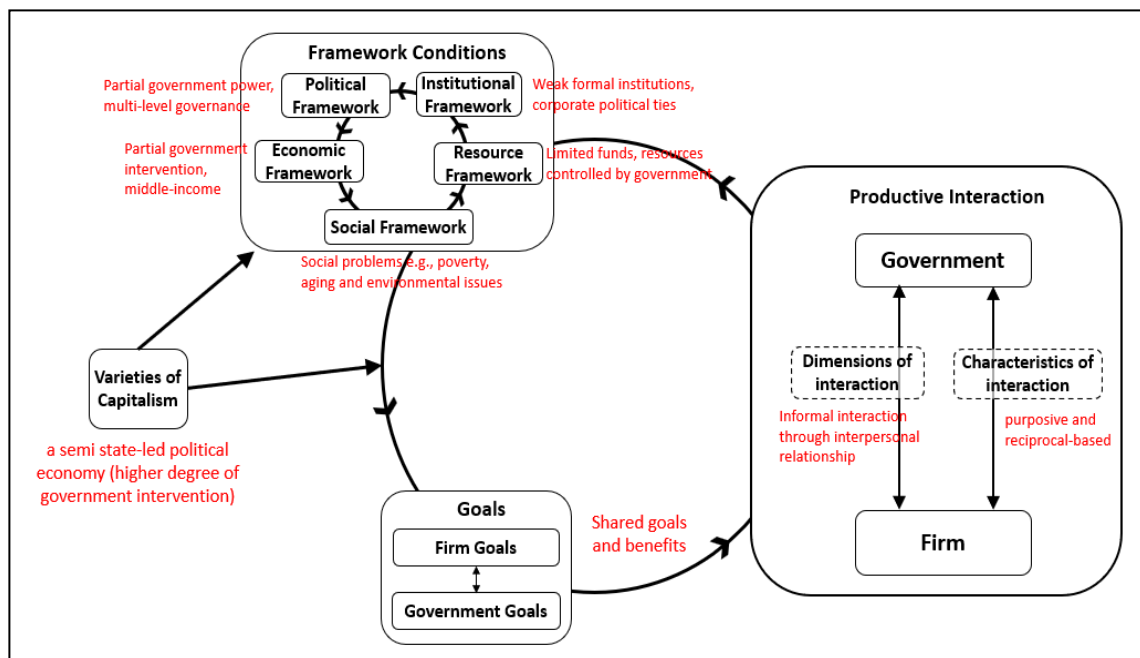
changes were also priorities for both the government and firms, as they represented major issues at both global and national levels. These challenges motivated firms to engage in CSI and encouraged the government to establish relevant goals.

The intertwined contexts shaped by the political economy consequently led to specific characteristics of interactions in Thailand and Malaysia that were *purposive and reciprocal-based* (see Figure 7). Firms sought to benefit from their connections with the government. Meanwhile, the government attempted to covertly leverage CSI projects and utilised CSI projects as a strategic tool to achieve its own goals and responsibilities. The classification of government roles in this research also emphasised the role of an opportunist in addition to supportive roles. It also extended the understanding of government roles regarding SI, which previous studies mainly identified as either a source of SI or a facilitator of SI. Furthermore, the thesis found that the government often prioritised and initiated interactions with well-known CSI projects that aligned with its objectives. Thus, *mutual goals and benefits* between the government and firms were critical factors in establishing and developing the interactions.

Due to weak formal institutions and exclusive resources controlled by the government, firms were compelled to establish corporate-government ties to enable CSI projects and gain competitive advantages. For example, some CSI projects were personally assisted by government agencies or officials to meet potential stakeholders, gain access to specific groups of people or communities, and mitigate conflicts. On the other hand, the pressures from various social challenges and the limited resources for solving such problems motivated the government to encourage firms to create SI. At the same time, the political and economic contexts allowed the government to intervene and implement its power to some extent. Therefore, the government connected with firms undertaking CSI projects, especially those that were well-known and had collective goals with the government, to support them and induce them to focus on specific issues or beneficiaries aligned with the government's priorities. This helped the government achieve social objective-based goals, while incorporating these projects as parts of its achievement of specific goals.

In terms of the dimension of interaction, the intertwined contexts in Thailand and Malaysia led to a prevalence of *informal interactions through interpersonal relationships* between the government and firms (see Figure 7). Weak formal institutions, widespread corporate-government connections, multi-level governance, limited financial resources, and the government’s control over some resources prompted firms to cultivate personal relationships with government officials, allowing firms to gain additional assistance and non-financial resources from the government, such as networks and unofficial endorsements of their credibility. These contexts not only stimulated firms to form personal bonds with the government officials but also created an environment conducive to the development of strong government-business ties. Since having informal and interpersonal relationships with the government provided firms competitive advantages, it was a key success factor for firms undertaking CSI.

Figure 7: Contextual Influence on the Interactions in Thailand and Malaysia



Source: Author’s construct

In contrast, *Singapore*, representing a country with a free political economy, displayed diverse country contexts, particularly in terms of political, institutional, economic, and resource contexts.

**Political context** displayed less government power over firms. Due to its single-level governance, Singapore has only a national government and fewer government agencies, resulting in fewer opportunities for exercising power at the local level compared to Thailand and Malaysia.

**Institutional context** showed more stable and developed formal institutions than Thailand and Malaysia. Firms did not need to establish personal connections with government officials to mitigate the risks and uncertainties associated with weak formal institutions. Consequently, the government-business ties in Singapore were less significant than those in Thailand and Malaysia.

**Economic and business contexts** were less influenced by government intervention, which was favourable for initiating and operating businesses, leading to economic growth. However, this also led to a larger number of businesses in the country, resulting in increased competition. Smaller firms and CSI projects with different goals from the government sometimes struggled to approach and directly obtain assistance from the government.

**Resource context** in terms of financial resources was abundant, and the government created a vibrant ecosystem that provided networking and essential resources for firms. Consequently, firms could easily and officially access and receive sufficient resources for their CSI projects without relying on personal relationships with the government to acquire exclusive resources owned by the government.

**Social context** was influenced by the other contexts, resulting in social challenges such as income inequality. Singapore also confronted with environmental and demographic change issues similar to those in Thailand and Malaysia. These challenges motivated firms to initiate CSI projects and encouraged the government to set goals in response.

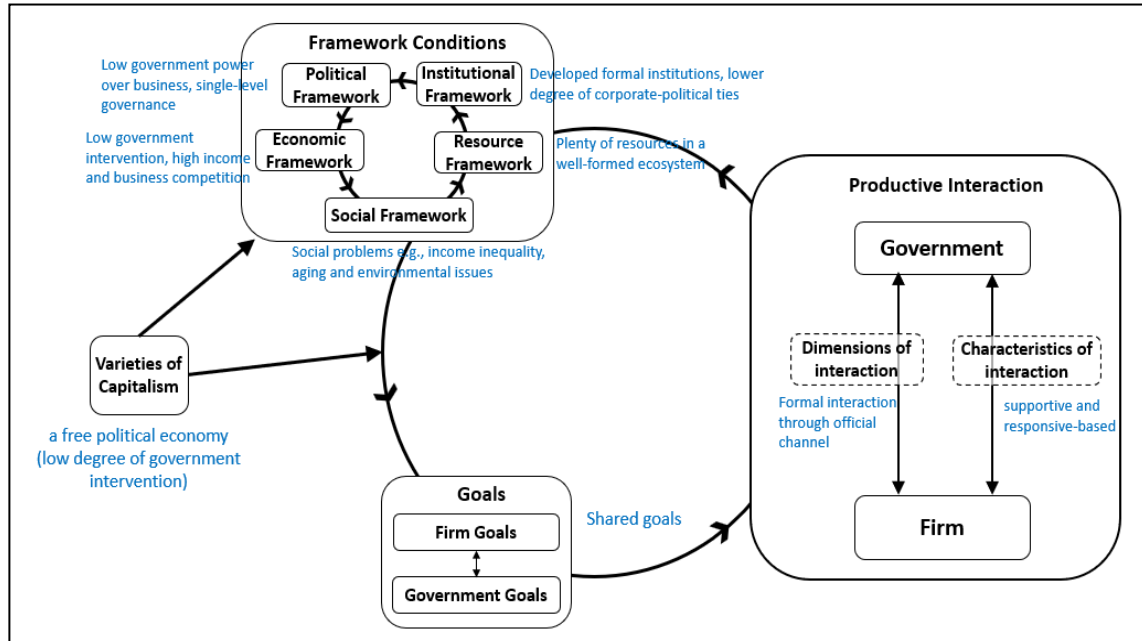
Since the government had sufficient resources and efficiently solved the challenges to some extent, CSI was a supplement rather than a strategic tool for the government.

With contextual influences, the interaction between the government and firms in Singapore demonstrated *supportive and responsive-based* characteristics (see Figure 8). Due to the unbalanced number of firms and government agencies supporting firms undertaking CSI and the limited government power, the government infrequently approached firms first and participated directly in CSI projects compared to Thailand and Malaysia. Instead, the government established official support and incubation programs that interested firms could apply to and join, allowing them to receive assistance and connect with other stakeholders involved.

As the government could potentially resolve social challenges to some extent, it utilised CSI as a supplement rather than a key strategic tool for achieving its goals and responsibilities. Therefore, the government's role was supportive, acting as a facilitator, initiator, and enabler of actor engagement, more than taking on an opportunistic role such as being a customer. Given the large number of firms in the country, those that shared similar goals with the government were particularly appealing. Thus, the *mutual goals* between the government and firms were critical for establishing and developing the interaction in Singapore.

In contrast to the dimension of interaction in Thailand and Malaysia, the country contexts in Singapore resulted in a prevalence of *formal interactions through official channels* (see Figure 8). The country's more developed formal institutions, single-level governance, lower levels of government intervention and power implementation, and the availability of resources for firms engaging in CSI enabled these firms to reduce the need for building interpersonal relationships with government officials. Instead, they could access essential support and networks through official platforms and programs provided by the government.

Figure 8: Contextual Influence on the Interactions in Singapore



Source: Author's construct

Although Thailand and Malaysia exhibited different characteristics and dimensions of interactions compared to Singapore due to different political economies and country contexts, the interactions in Thailand and Malaysia could become more formal, similar to Singapore's, if they were to transition beyond a developmental state. This transition would require improvements in the political, economic, institutional, resource, and social contexts of these countries. However, it is crucial to prioritise advancements in the institutional and political contexts, as the findings highlighted key challenges arising from these two contexts. The inappropriate and outdated regulations and requirements, as well as excessive and complex procedures, caused the Thai and Malaysian governments to become barriers to CSI projects. Even in Singapore, lengthy and complicated processes and decision-making can be obstacles for firms engaging in CSI. Intergovernmental incoordination, government inaction, and a lack of bottom-up feedback channels also increased concerns for firms undertaking CSI.

Although the characteristics and dimensions of interactions in Thailand and Malaysia differed from those in Singapore, the impacts of the interactions on firms' core business

strategies and activities were similar across all three countries. This research observed that firms did not change their core business strategies after interacting with the government. However, only a few operational activities were adjusted to comply with the government requirements. This was because CSI projects in the three countries were initiated due to social-based and business-based motivations rather than as a response to government pressure or regulations. Additionally, the political economy limited government intervention in CSI projects

The major contributions of CSI projects in this research were remarkable regarding increasing firms' incomes and opportunities, improving job opportunities and quality of life for beneficiaries, achieving government goals and responsibilities, and leading to the enactment of new regulations. However, the contribution to behavioural and social changes was unclear, mainly due to the limited scale and duration of the projects studied in this thesis.

Regarding the elements of the CSI concept, this research found that in practice, CSI encompassed the same elements as its theoretical concept. However, some CSI projects showed an imbalance between social and business objectives. During interviews, participants acknowledged the distinction between CSI and CSR, although some also noted the relevance of the two concepts. This differing understanding of the CSI concept, in practice and theoretically, stemmed from individual perceptions influenced by their contextual surroundings.

### ***6.8.1 Revision of Theories and Conceptual Framework***

The results of this research emphasised that the interactions between the government and firms were influenced by framework conditions (country contexts), which were shaped by the VoC (the political economy). This contributes to *the concept of framework conditions* (Boelman et al., 2015, Bund et al., 2015, Krlev et al., 2014), which the original concept did not consider the VoC. This thesis exhibited that each context within the framework conditions was not only interdependent but also closely related to the VoC and was shaped



by the VoC. Changes in the VoC resulted in changes across all contexts. Previous research realised that framework conditions could both promote and hinder SI (Krlev et al., 2014) and suggested that policymakers should create favourable contexts to foster SI (Boelman et al., 2015). However, this thesis argues that it needs more than the improvement at the policy level to create appropriate contexts to promote SI. Since framework conditions are intertwined with a country's political economy, the successful refinement of contexts requires a transformation of political-economic regimes.

However, transforming the political economy is particularly challenging in the current circumstances in Thailand and Malaysia. In the short term, some potential ways to improve framework conditions despite existing constraints are, for example, improving formal institutions and intergovernmental coordination, eliminating excessive and complex procedures, and establishing an official networking and business ecosystem where firms undertaking CSI can conveniently find and connect with stakeholders. Furthermore, reducing corporate-government ties and shifting the mindset away from patronage can help create favourable contexts for growing SI sustainably. For Singapore, encouraging the engagement of foreign actors can help compensate for the limited number of government agencies supporting CSI projects.

In the conceptual framework, *the national innovation system model* developed by Kuhlmann and Arnold (2001) is adapted with a focus on CSI. It proposes that the framework conditions and interactions are associated with demands (both social and state demands) and other SI actors. The findings also emphasised the association between framework conditions, interactions, demands, and other SI actors. Framework conditions could trigger social problems, lead to demands for solutions, and influence the interactions between the government and firms. In response to these demands, both the government and firms set their objectives, while other actors participated in creating innovative solutions alongside firms. Therefore, this thesis extends the national innovation system model (Kuhlmann and Arnold, 2001) by addressing *the interconnections between framework conditions and demands*, which were less addressed in the original model.

Additionally, this thesis suggests that other *SI actors* can be included in the framework conditions, not just the quadruple helix actors, when focusing on government-firm interactions. This is because other actors can be considered a part of resources, providing firms with financial and non-financial assistance to produce CSI. The findings also highlighted the importance of mutual goals/demands between the government and firms in all three countries. Since the national innovation system model less addressed the connections between each actor's *demand*, this thesis proposes that the demands between these actors can indeed be interconnected. These collective demands are beneficial for fostering CSI and interactions among actors.

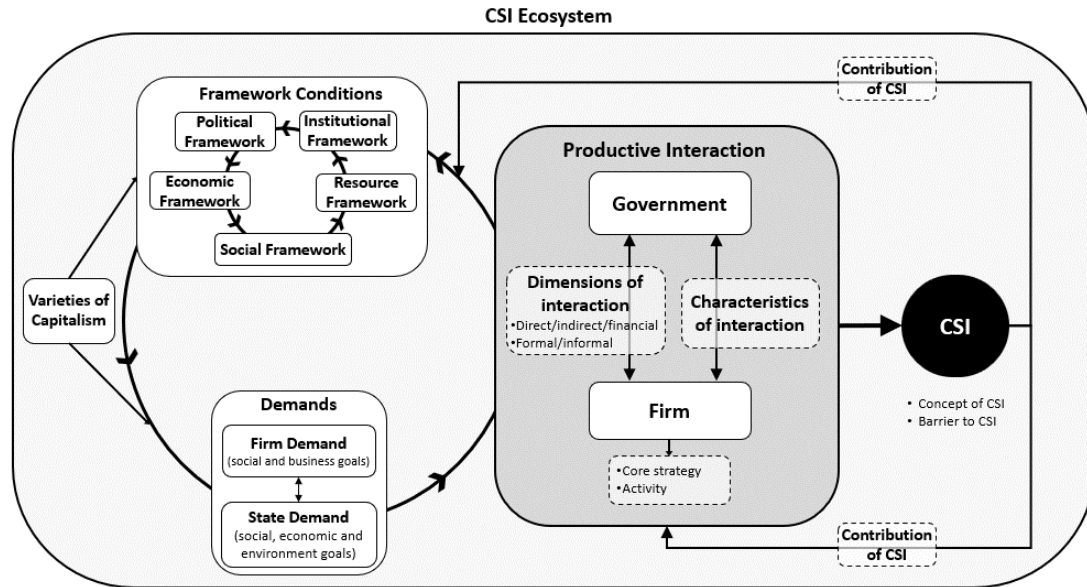
The conceptual framework in this thesis is also derived from *the productive interaction concept* (Spaapen and Van Drooge, 2011) to explain the interactions between the government and firms. However, the original concept was not linked to contextual factors. Thus, this thesis expands the productive interaction theory by incorporating *contextual conditions* as factors influencing the interactions between these two actors. The findings of this thesis were evident in contextual influences on the productive interaction. Moreover, the productive interaction theory is reinterpreted regarding *focal actors* and *output*. The focal actors are changed from 'researcher and stakeholders' to 'government and firms', and the interaction output is 'CSI' instead of 'knowledge'.

*The types of interactions* are also refined according to the new focal actors. The original theory suggested three types of interactions: direct interaction, indirect interaction, and financial interaction (Spaapen and Van Drooge, 2011). When applied to the government and firm actors, however, formal and informal relationships are also key notions in discussing the interactions between these two actors (Cali and Sen, 2011, Leftwich, 2009, Sabry, 2019). Therefore, the aspects of formal and informal relationships are considered in this thesis to broaden the types of productive interactions. Direct interaction is considered informal interaction through interpersonal relationships; indirect interaction is formal interaction through official channels; and financial interaction pertains to financial interaction through official forms.

Lastly, this research extends the concept of the *SI ecosystem*, which generally focuses on multiple actors, their interactions, environments, and infrastructures (Carayannis et al., 2021, Domanski and Kaletka, 2017, Kumari et al., 2019, Pel et al., 2019). However, this thesis adopts an entrepreneurial lens and positions firms as the focal creators of SI. Other actors within the ecosystem are involved in creating and delivering CSI to beneficiaries, as well as impeding CSI. Moreover, the environments and infrastructures within the ecosystem are interrelated with firms creating CSI. As the ecosystem in this thesis mainly concentrates on CSI, it should be labelled as the *CSI ecosystem* rather than the SI ecosystem. Interestingly, when considering the concept of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, which is a dynamic and complex system encompassing diverse entrepreneurial actors, organisations, institutions, and their connections and contributions to the ecosystem (Wurth and Mawson, 2024), the CSI ecosystem has some attributes similar to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Therefore, the CSI ecosystem is between the SI and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

All of these lead to improving conceptual frameworks in visualising relationships among contexts in the ‘framework conditions’ box to address the interrelation between contexts better (see Figure 9). Additionally, the ‘other SI actors’ box is removed from the revised conceptual framework in this thesis because other SI actors are considered as resources for firms in undertaking CSI rather than playing a dominant role as the quadruple helix actors in the SI ecosystem. The ‘demands’ box in the ‘social demand’ element is renamed to specify that it is ‘firm demand’ to respond, solve needs/challenges, and achieve business objectives. A double arrow line is also inserted between the ‘firm demand’ and ‘state demand’ boxes to illustrate their interrelationships. The text ‘motivation for doing CSI’ under the ‘CSI’ box is removed because motivations are affected by framework conditions and are reflected through firms’ social and business goals within the ‘firm demand’ box. Lastly, the term ‘SI ecosystem’ is replaced with ‘CSI ecosystem’ to more accurately describe the actors, their interactions, and elements relevant to CSI.

Figure 9: Revised Conceptual Framework



Source: Author's construct

### 6.8.2 Mapping CSI Ecosystem

The revised conceptual framework and the findings of this thesis can draw the CSI ecosystem of a particular country, portraying firms and the government as key interdependent actors interacting to create CSI and illustrating elements interrelated to firms and the government, such as country contexts and other relevant actors. Since Thailand is the primary focus of this thesis, the CSI ecosystem in Thailand is mapped to illuminate a holistic view of CSI. Malaysian and Singaporean CSI ecosystems are also illustrated to shed light on CSI ecosystems in Southeast Asian countries.

By integrating the interactions between the government and firms undertaking CSI, contextual influences, and shared goals between the government and firms, Figure 10 complements debates on the SI ecosystem. It presents the SI ecosystem through the entrepreneur lens, enlarging the existing understanding of the SI ecosystem and introducing the CSI ecosystem as a new notion. It also addresses key issues and conditions that support

or hinder CSI projects, providing valuable insights for policymakers to develop effective strategies for fostering CSI in Thailand.

The findings of this thesis showed that government agencies in Thailand prominently displayed purposive and reciprocal relationships with firms through official and unofficial ways, which could be seen through the roles of an opportunist, facilitator, initiator, co-producer, enabler of actor engagement, and guarantor. On the one hand, firms obtained, for example, financial support, networking with other actors, and skill training (see Figure 10). However, firms sometimes needed to adjust their activities to align with the government requirements. On the other hand, the government could fulfil its goals and duties, such as finding solutions for specific problems and increasing the number of firms with social objectives. Firms were sometimes intermediaries connecting the government with other actors, such as firms, individuals, and communities within their networks. In some projects, firms strengthened their bonds with the government, particularly at the local level, after receiving support from the government.

The purposive and reciprocal relationships between the government and firms, in other words, highlighted the importance of mutual goals and benefits between the government and firms. Moreover, they indicated the consequences of interlinked contexts in Thailand shaped by a partially intervened political economy, such as weak formal institutions, prevalent corporate-government ties, and inadequate financial resources. Although the government and firms could rely on each other to achieve their goals, including social-oriented goals, it was not a sustainable way to eliminate the root causes of some social problems in Thailand, particularly problems arising from inefficient and untransparent governance and problematic formal institutions. These issues should be addressed and improved as much as possible to grow CSI and benefit the country in the long term.

Figure 10 also presents the connection between government agencies at both the national and local levels through the goals and policies established at the top level and implemented at the lower level. Moreover, it presents typologies of interactions between firms and government agencies in both formal and informal forms. According to the findings, however, firms established formal relationships with national-level government agencies

more than with local government agencies. This was because of the limitations of local government agencies in involving CSI projects in formal ways, particularly in financing, monitoring, subcontracting, and mentoring. In contrast, national government agencies had the potential and responsibilities to perform these. Nonetheless, local government agencies excelled in fostering close relationships with local communities, which led to specific interactions with firms, including introducing firms to local communities and helping to resolve conflicts between firms and communities. Such interactions could not be observed in the interactions between firms and national-level government agencies.

Since the government involvement in firms or CSI projects to finance, incubate, and hinder was only performed by government agencies at the national level; therefore, the national government agency was critical for growing CSI in Thailand. The national government agency should strengthen the incubation and facilitation of CSI projects, while reducing difficulties caused by inappropriate regulations and requirements, bureaucratic procedures, and inefficient communication between the government and firms to foster CSI.

For the local government agency that helped firms engage with local communities and mitigate conflicts with individuals in local communities, policymakers should deliberate on corruption issues and formulate measures to increase transparency (Liu et al., 2016). Additionally, all levels of government agencies should improve coordination among agencies and demonstrate a proactive approach to assisting firms and responding to their needs and challenges.

Figure 10 also shows the contributions of CSI to society, firms, and the government. According to the findings, in Thailand, CSI benefited society and beneficiaries by, for example, creating job opportunities, improving the quality of life for beneficiaries, and improving the environment. CSI, meanwhile, generated revenue for firms and created new business opportunities.

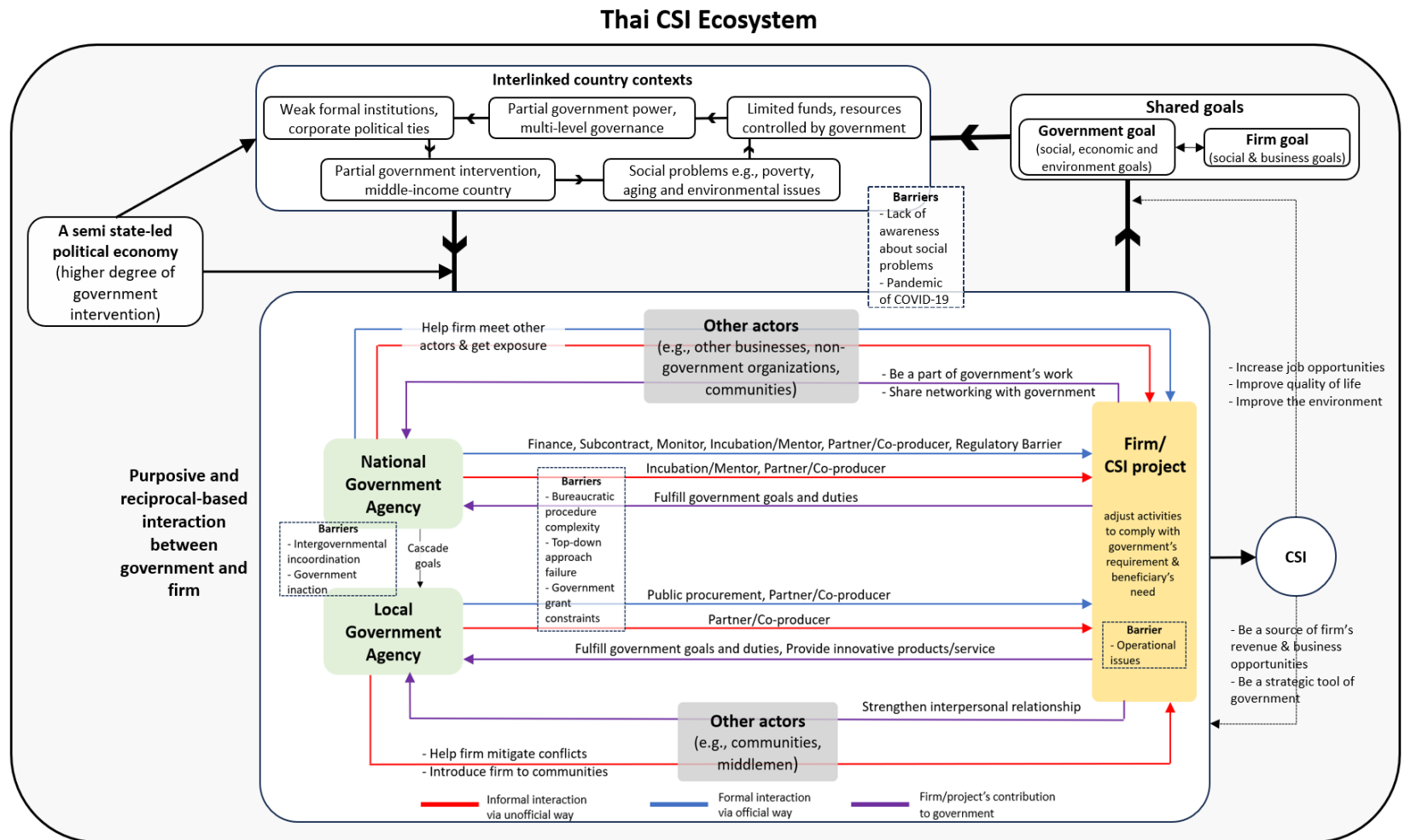
However, a tension between business and social objectives could arise in some CSI projects, which entrepreneurs realised social objectives more than business ones, as discussed earlier in Section 6.7. In contrast, CSI entrepreneurs with a strong business focus

often prioritised their business objectives. This could lead to different dimensions of CSI outcomes delivered by these two types of CSI entrepreneurs. Social objective-led projects contributed to society and beneficiaries more than generating revenues and business opportunities for firms. However, business objective-led projects provided business outcomes more than social outcomes. Importantly, CSI projects prioritising social missions over business missions could encounter greater business difficulties, especially during economic downturns, compared to those focused on business objectives.

For the contribution to the Thai government, CSI was a strategic tool for achieving its goals and duties and addressing social problems. Furthermore, CSI projects could help the government enhance networks with potential stakeholders and resolve conflicts with specific communities.

Lastly, Figure 10 displays the key barriers within the Thai CSI ecosystem. In addition to the government-related barriers mentioned earlier, operational issues, such as increasing brand awareness, were observed as concerns for some CSI projects or firms. Additionally, firms or CSI projects sometimes confronted external risks resulting from a lack of public awareness regarding social problems and unforeseen occurrences, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. To effectively overcome these barriers, the intra-firm improvement is required, along with cooperation among actors in the CSI ecosystem.

Figure 10: Thai CSI Ecosystem



Source: Author's construct



The Malaysian CSI ecosystem is nuanced to the Thai CSI ecosystem. Malaysia exhibited the purposive and reciprocal relationships between the government and firms, which were shaped by a partially intervened political economy, weak formal institutions, prevalent corporate-government ties, inadequate financial resources, and social problems similar to those in Thailand (see Figure 11).

Typologies of interactions between firms and government agencies, presented in Figure 11, are also in both formal and informal forms. Although the interactions observed were mainly between firms and national-level government agencies, due to the limited number of Malaysian participants in this thesis, it was evident that these national government agencies displayed similar interactions to those in the Thai CSI ecosystem. Therefore, the interactions between the Malaysian local government agencies and firms possibly underlined the local government's importance in approaching local communities and helping firms mitigate conflicts with local communities, similar to the interactions in Thailand. This is because Malaysia has multi-level governments and similar country contexts to Thailand.

Interestingly, the interaction in which a Malaysian government agency utilised a Malaysian CSI project to link with a Thai government agency reflected the interconnection between CSI ecosystems across countries. This encourages policymakers to foster bilateral or regional cooperation among CSI actors across countries, allowing firms engaged in CSI to connect with more stakeholders from abroad, ultimately promoting the growth of CSI in multiple countries.

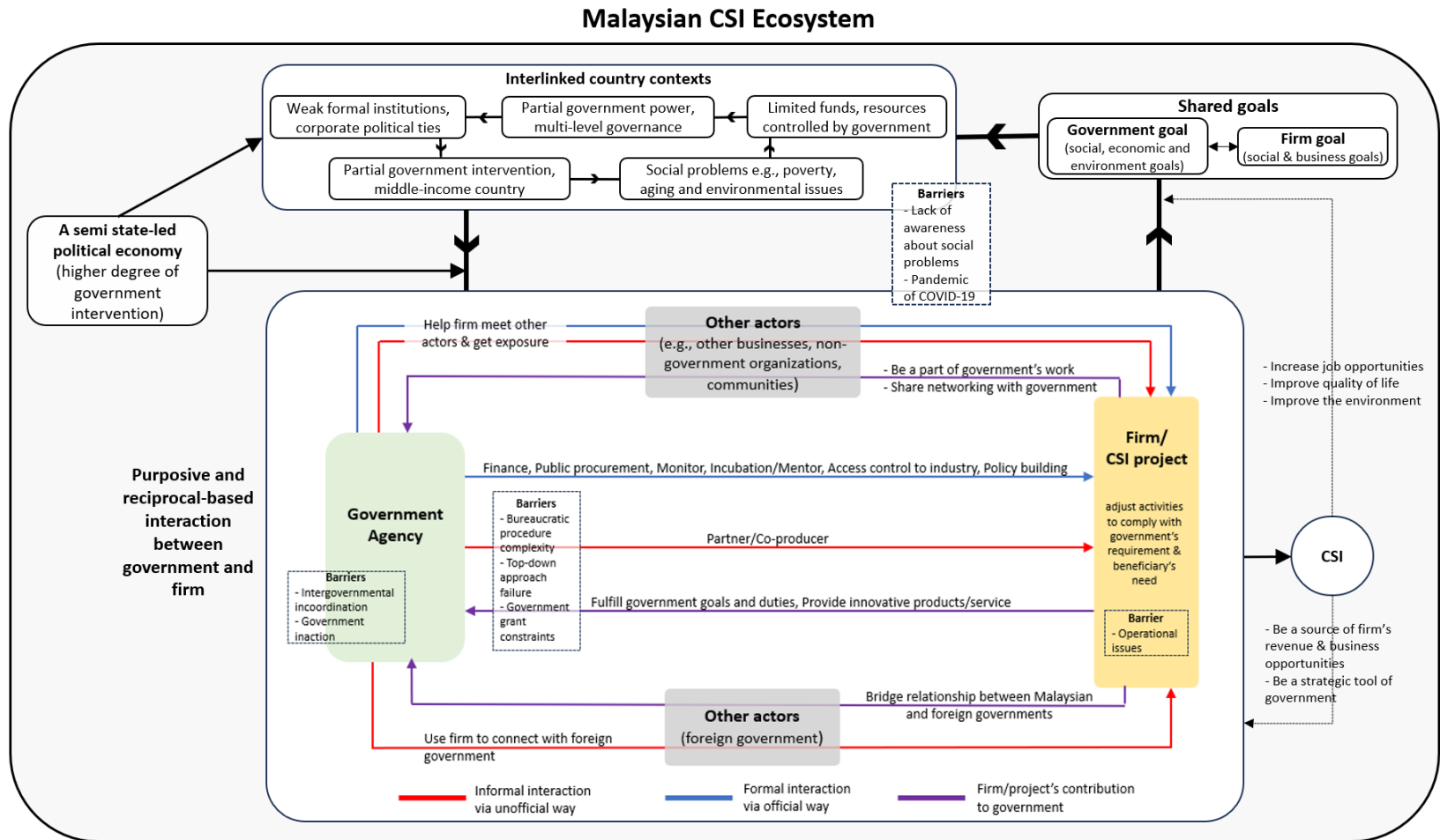
However, the CSI ecosystem in Singapore differs from those in Thailand and Malaysia. As depicted in Figure 12, Singapore demonstrates a lower degree of government intervention and has country contexts different from Thailand and Malaysia, resulting in supportive and responsive-based interactions between the government and firms. Furthermore, the interactions within the Singaporean CSI ecosystem, as observed in this thesis, were only formal and occurred between national-level government agencies and firms. The weaker bonds between the government and firms in Singapore reduced some benefits or privileges that firms gained from the government compared to the Thai and

Malaysian CSI ecosystems. However, the Singaporean government compensated for this by establishing a vibrant and easily accessible ecosystem with a wide range of potential stakeholders and resources for firms, as discussed in Sections 4.3.5 and 6.2.2.

Although this thesis observed no interconnection between the Singaporean CSI ecosystem and the Thai or Malaysian CSI ecosystems, the welcoming nature of the Singaporean ecosystem toward new potential stakeholders or actors can provide an opportunity for Thai and Malaysian firms and government agencies to participate in its ecosystem to share resources and goals along with creating new multinational networks. This can lead to a strong regional CSI ecosystem that effectively addresses transboundary social challenges and supports the growth of firms. The mutual plans and actions of ASEAN countries to collaborate and promote the mobility of human resources within the region, as discussed in Section 4.4.3, can strengthen the interconnections between CSI ecosystems.

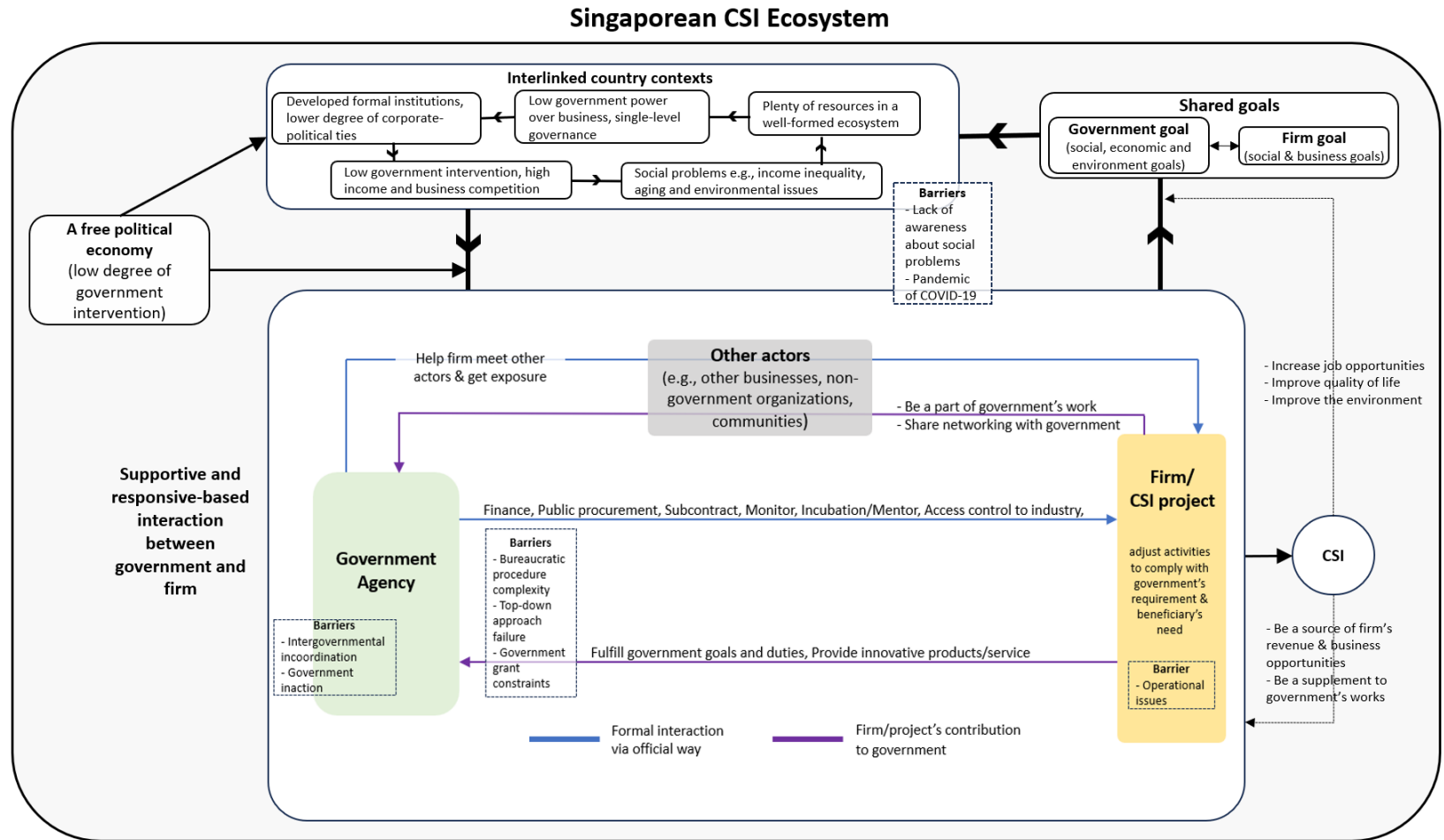
Despite benefits, interconnected CSI ecosystems can dilute the relationships between firms and their governments in Thailand and Malaysia. Firms may alternatively rely on the resources and reliability of foreign stakeholders rather than on their own governments. Consequently, government agencies in Thailand and Malaysia, which benefit from the success of these firms can be affected, especially in terms of their goals and duties regarding CSI or firms undertaking CSI. Therefore, the Thai and Malaysian governments should consider and prepare for this issue when there are more connections between CSI ecosystems in the region.

Figure 11: Malaysian CSI Ecosystem



Source: Author's construct

Figure 12: Singaporean CSI Ecosystem



Source: Author's construct

# CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This last chapter summarises the thesis recall and answers the research questions. It addresses the thesis's contributions in terms of empirical and theoretical aspects and proposes meaningful policy implications. Lastly, it reflects the limitations found in the thesis and proposes recommendations for future research.

## ***7.1 Conclusion***

By realising the importance of CSI in Asian countries and the gaps in the literature and empirical evidence, this research seeks to understand CSI in Southeast Asian contexts, focusing on the interaction between the government and firms implementing CSI. This research used a comparative case study method to determine how governments interact with firms under different capitalisms and scrutinise their understanding of CSI in practice. In this research, each country represents one case study, and Thailand was selected as the main country for comparison with Malaysia and Singapore. By conducting semi-structured interviews with participants from CSI projects, government agencies, and other organisations and gathering secondary data from related sources, they revealed specific characteristics and dimensions of the interactions under two different political economies, one represented by Thailand and Malaysia and the other by Singapore.

Recalling the research questions shown in Section 1.3 and employing what was explained and discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, the answers to the research questions are as follows:

- 1. What are the characteristics of interaction that firms establish with the government?*** Concerning the purpose of the interaction, time of government involvement in CSI projects, and barriers to the interaction.

In this research, Thailand and Malaysia, countries whose political economies were partly led and intervened in by the government, exhibited *purposive and reciprocal-based*

*interaction* between the government and firms. The government and firms with mutual goals collectively benefited while interacting. The government could covertly leverage CSI projects as strategic tools to achieve its goals and duties regarding social objectives and non-social objectives. Meanwhile, firms could engage with the government to, for example, access exclusive government-controlled resources and gain competitive advantages.

In contrast, a country with a free political economy, represented by Singapore, demonstrated *supportive and responsive-based interaction* between the government and firms. The government established official programs and ecosystems to assist firms, particularly those whose goals aligned with its own. Furthermore, the government utilised firms implementing CSI as a supplement to strengthen its arm rather than as a strategic tool in solving social problems and fulfilling government responsibilities.

In terms of involvement, governments in both state-led and free political economies participated in the early and latter stages of CSI projects. During the early stages, their involvement often involved incubating, navigating, and authorising the projects through financial assistance, networking, knowledge and skills training, project approval, and acting as partners or co-producers. In contrast, their involvement in the latter stages focused on scaling up CSI projects and enhancing their impacts by, for example, enabling firms or projects to meet potential stakeholders, guaranteeing firms' credibility, and purchasing products or services from CSI projects.

Key barriers to interactions and CSI projects, regardless of the political and economic regime, were problematic bureaucratic procedures, such as complexity of bureaucratic procedures, top-down approach failure, intergovernmental incoordination, constraints on government grants, and government inaction. Moreover, firm operational issues, a lack of awareness of social issues, and unforeseen circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic were also barriers to the interactions and CSI projects.

2. *What are the mechanisms of the interaction?* Focusing on how the government involves CSI projects, the influences of contextual elements on the interaction and the impacts of government involvement on firms' strategies and activities regarding CSI.

In countries with semi state-led political economies, such as Thailand and Malaysia, the government often engaged with projects or firms through *informal interactions arising from interpersonal relationships* between the government and firms. Firms often established personal bonds with the government to personally gain additional assistance and non-financial resources from the government, such as networking and unofficial endorsements of their credibility. This was due to weak formal institutions, widespread corporate-government connections, multi-level governance, limited financial resources, and government possession of some resources in the country. In these contexts, having informal and interpersonal relationships with the government provided firms with competitive advantages and was a key success factor for firms to undertake CSI.

On the other hand, in a country with a free political economy like Singapore, government involvement with projects or firms occurred through *formal interactions occurring via official channels*. Because of the more developed formal institutions, the lower degree of government intervention and power implementation, available and accessible resources, and single-level governance, firms in Singapore were encouraged to seek essential support and networks from official platforms or programs provided by the government, rather than relying on personal relationships with individual government officials.

Since all CSI projects studied in this thesis were initiated due to social-based and business-based motivations rather than pressures from the government and regulations along with due to the limited government intervention in CSI projects in the three countries, government involvement in CSI projects did not lead to a significant change in firms' core business strategies. However, it drove firms to adjust operational activities to comply with government requirements.

3. *How is CSI understood in practice?* In terms of firms' motivations for initiating CSI, the difference between CSI in practice and theory, and the contributions of CSI.

In Southeast Asian countries, CSI was created because of responsive motivation to alleviate social problems and proactive motivation to mitigate social problems while solving business pain points and seeking business opportunities. This is consistent with previous literature (Carberry et al., 2017; Herrera, 2015; João-Roland and Granados, 2020). However, the reasons for undertaking CSI projects due to regulatory pressure and stakeholder expectations were less significant in this thesis compared to what was suggested in existing literature (Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019). This is because most of CSI projects analysed in this thesis were initiated by new firms rather than established ones, which are often more focused on enhancing their reputation and ensuring regulatory compliance.

The meaning of CSI observed in this thesis encompassed five key elements: innovativeness, social and business objectives, social and business outputs/outcomes, core business strategy involvement, and stakeholder engagement in firms and external parties, aligned with those suggested in existing CSI literature (Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020, Esen and Maden-Eyiusta, 2019, Googins, 2013, Mirvis and Googins, 2018a, Mirvis et al., 2016, Tabares, 2020). However, this thesis argues that the objectives of CSI in practice are unbalanced, leading to the delivery of social outcomes more than business outcomes in CSI projects with the prioritisation of social objectives over business ones. Further, this thesis argues that CSI, in practice, focuses less on corporate resources and stakeholder engagement, which differs from the theoretical perspective. Moreover, while most participants in this thesis acknowledged the distinction between CSI and CSR, only a few indicated that CSR overlapped with and was a funding source for CSI. The varying personal experiences, perceptions, and values shaped by organisational and institutional contexts distinguished the theoretical perspective and the practical understanding of CSI and CSR.

CSI contributed to firms, society, government, and formal institutions. CSI was an important source of revenues and business opportunities for firms, while also providing



job opportunities, enhancing the quality of life for beneficiaries, reducing environmental threats, and resulting in new regulations and policies. However, due to the limitations in the size and duration of CSI projects discussed in this thesis, their impact on behavioural and societal changes has been minimal.

## ***7.2 Research Contributions***

This thesis offers theoretical contributions to the productive interaction concept, the national innovation system model, framework conditions, and the CSI concept. Firstly, it represents the first attempt to integrate the productive interaction concept (Spaapen and Van Drooge, 2011) with the CSI study. Furthermore, as outlined in Section 6.8.1, this thesis extends the productive interaction concept by proposing new focal actors and outputs of interaction, expanding the types of productive interactions, and considering contextual conditions as influential factors in the interactions between two actors.

Secondly, the findings and discussions in Chapters 5 and 6 address the association between framework conditions, interactions between the government and firms, and the demands of both entities. These led to the development of the national innovation system model (Kuhlmann and Arnold, 2001) by announcing the importance of the interconnection between framework conditions and demands as well as the interconnection between the demands of different actors.

Thirdly, this thesis contributes to framework conditions (Boelman et al., 2015, Bund et al., 2015, Krlev et al., 2014) by demonstrating how the framework conditions are intertwined with VoC. It complements SI studies proposed by, for example, Krlev et al. (2014) and Tepsie (2014) that promoting SI requires not only favourable framework conditions but also appropriate VoC, making countries with high government control and intervention encounter slower growth of SI. This thesis emphasises the strong dependency of each context in the framework conditions, meaning that all contexts in the framework conditions should be improved inclusively to enable SI/CSI.

This thesis also introduces the CSI ecosystem, developed from the SI ecosystem (Carayannis et al., 2021, Domanski and Kaletka, 2017, Kumari et al., 2019, Pel et al., 2019). The CSI ecosystem consists of firms as the focal creator of SI, other actors involving firms, and infrastructures and environments related to firms creating CSI.

For the last theoretical contribution, this thesis affirms that CSI in practice, in terms of meanings, motivations, impacts, and differentiation with CSR, is mainly in line with what existing research has suggested. However, CSI in practice in Southeast Asian contexts has unbalanced objectives, focuses less on corporate resources and stakeholder engagement, is rarely driven by regulatory pressures and stakeholder expectations, and has less impact on behavioural and social changes than indicated in the CSI literature.

Apart from the theoretical contributions, this thesis enhances CSI studies by focusing on the interaction between governments and firms implementing CSI which is underexplored. Further, it sheds light on a comprehensive understanding of CSI in the context of Southeast Asian countries, which is ambiguous and lacks comparatively based evidence. This establishes an important basis for future studies and provides insights for proposing meaningful policies regarding CSI and innovation.

### ***7.3 Policy Recommendations***

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, CSI was an essential tool for governments, particularly the Thai and Malaysian governments, in dealing with societal and environmental problems along with responding to global goals. In Singapore, CSI was also beneficial to the government as a supplementary tool. However, the CSI projects studied in this thesis were hindered by government-related barriers and confronted other challenges calling for government assistance.

To strengthen CSI growth and eliminate key barriers, the government and policymakers are recommended to build feedback channels, remove unnecessary procedures, increase actors in the CSI ecosystem, increase intergovernmental coordination, improve formal

institutions, support R&D, and create the regional SI ecosystem, which is explained as follows:

***Building feedback channels:*** The governments in Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore should build channels through which firms can provide feedback on their needs and problems and/or share their ideas and insights directly with the government. This bottom-up communication can reduce the failure of the top-down approach, as the government can understand firms and their needs better and use this communication channel to allow firms to take part in drafting and improving policies.

***Removing unnecessary procedures and requirements:*** Several firms implementing CSI in all three countries experienced excessive procedures and requirements when, for example, requesting licences from specific government agencies, which caused burdens for firms. Thus, the government should cut down unnecessary procedures and requirements to increase its agility and minimise the time and expenses that firms need to bear while dealing with the government.

***Enlarging actors in the CSI ecosystem:*** Governments, especially in Thailand and Malaysia, confront many limitations. To enable firms to create CSI conveniently, governments should encourage more actors, particularly funders, to enter the CSI ecosystem. In Singapore, increasing the number of actors in the ecosystem can provide firms more opportunities to approach and receive support from potential actors.

***Increasing intergovernmental coordination:*** According to the findings, several government agencies in all three countries worked in silos. Therefore, government agencies, especially across different ministries, should cooperate and share goals and resources to reduce redundant work and maximise resource utilisation.

***Improving formal institutions:*** The findings in this thesis emphasised weak formal institutions in Thailand and Malaysia, which caused uncertainties for firms. Therefore, the government in these two countries should improve formal institutions, particularly laws and regulations, to be more accurate, enforceable, and updated to decrease regulation-driven barriers to CSI projects and sustain CSI growth in the long term.

***Supporting R&D:*** Although the government-business ties in Thailand and Malaysia are advantageous for firms implementing CSI, they encourage firms to pay less attention to R&D (Liu et al., 2021). Thus, the Thai and Malaysian governments should support and induce firms implementing CSI to work on R&D through, for example, tax incentives and bridging firms with research institutions.

***Creating the regional SI ecosystem:*** As some environmental problems widely affect Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore, and solving such problems requires significant resources and time, the governments of the three countries should collectively create a regional SI ecosystem to pool resources, co-produce innovative solutions, and scale up impacts across the region. However, the government and policymakers, especially in Thailand and Malaysia, should carefully consider the impact of the interconnection of CSI ecosystems that can loosen relationships between firms and the government, as discussed in Section 6.8.2.

#### ***7.4 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research***

This thesis collected extensive data from three countries and interviewed a wide range of participants across sectors, all while operating within the constraints of time, budget, and manpower. However, there are some limitations to consider for future studies.

This research succeeded in collecting primary data from plenty of interview participants in Thailand, which was the focal country. However, the number of participants from Malaysia and Singapore was slightly lower than anticipated due to a low response rate. Despite this limitation, the data obtained from the interviews are rich and adequate for robust analysis. Future studies aiming to gain insights from in-depth interviews with participants in Southeast Asian countries are advised to collaborate with local partners or contact persons to help reach targeted organisations and individuals. Furthermore, it is important to allow ample time when engaging with government agencies, especially in Thailand and Malaysia.

Secondly, the CSI projects studied in this thesis encompass several sectors, such as agriculture, tourism, elderly care, textiles, and the automotive industry, which can provide a holistic view of CSI. However, it leaves unexplored CSI in Southeast Asian countries at the micro-level. Future research may, for instance, investigate CSI within a specific sector to eliminate this ambiguity.

Lastly, the primary data gained from the full-scale and follow-up interviews took place from late August 2022 to early April 2023, and each participant was interviewed at a single point in time. Future research can benefit from conducting longitudinal interviews, where the same participants are interviewed at different points in time to investigate subsequent changes and gain more accurate data from small-scale samples (Caruana et al., 2015, Lynn, 2009).

## ***7.5 Concluding Remark***

Different country contexts shaped by VoC could influence and lead to diverse characteristics and mechanisms of interaction between the government and firms undertaking CSI. Thailand and Malaysia, having similar country contexts, exhibited the interaction characteristics as purposive and reciprocal-based interactions, along with highlighting a prevalence of informal interactions through interpersonal relationships between the government and firms in the interaction mechanism. Singapore, having different country contexts from Thailand and Malaysia, on the other hand, demonstrated supportive and responsive-based interactions and formal interactions through official channels.

Key barriers to the interactions and CSI were relevant to problematic bureaucratic procedures, failure of top-down approaches, intergovernmental coordination issues, government inaction, constraints on grant funding, firm operational issues, and awareness of social problems. While the practical understanding of CSI aligned largely with theories, there were nuanced differences influenced by individual and contextual factors.

The results of this thesis not only enhance knowledge of CSI in the context of Southeast Asian countries but also emphasise the importance of contextual elements in the interaction between two interdependent actors and CSI. Policymakers must recognise and consider contextual conditions when formulating policies related to social impact-oriented businesses and entrepreneurs. This will ultimately lead to successful CSI growth and CSI utilisation to solve social challenges in their countries.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix I: Key Themes of Findings

Key themes	Sub-themes
<b>1. Motivations for initiating CSI</b>	Motivations for initiating CSI
<b>2. Characteristics of interaction</b>	2.1 Level of government involved in CSI project 2.2 Commencement of interaction 2.3 Time of involvement 2.4 Level of formality 2.5 Purposes of government involvement 2.6 Government instrument
<b>3. Types of government interaction and mechanism</b>	3.1 Primary interaction 3.2 Secondary interaction
<b>4. Influences of government involvement on CSI project</b>	4.1 Change in core business strategy 4.2 Change in activity
<b>5. Contributions of CSI</b>	5.1 Contribution to society 5.2 Contribution to firm 5.2 Contribution to government
<b>6. Key challenges to CSI</b>	6.1 Challenges regarding the government 6.2 Other challenges
<b>7. Understanding of CSI</b>	7.1 CSI elements 7.2 Differentiating CSI and CSR 7.3 Relevance of CSI and CSR

## Appendix II: Interview Guideline

### *Interview Participants from Firms*

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Sample Questions
1. About the project and company	1.1 Motivation of project	- What are the motivations of the project?
	1.2 Strategy, model, and activities	- Please briefly describe about activities and scope of activities in the project. - What makes the project successful?
	1.3 Impacts, challenges, and sustainability of the project	- What are the impacts of this project on beneficiaries and the company? - What are the key challenges, concerns and issues for the project? (e.g., challenges from formal or informal institutions, and in business dimensions) - How did the company deal with these challenges? - What is the plan for growing the project and increasing positive social impacts?
	1.4 Understanding of CSI	- In your opinion, what is social innovation, and is it different from CSR?
2. Interactions with government (and other organisations)	2.1 Previous and existing connections with the government	- Before initiating this project, has the company worked with or gotten any support from government agencies? - If yes, when was this interaction established and how long did it last?
	2.2 Engagement of government (and other organisations) in the CSI project	- What organisations (both government and non-government agencies) are involved in the project, and how are they involved? - How did the company know about or contact these organisations and establish cooperation with them? - After the engagement of the government agency in the project, did any changes occur in the project? - Is the engagement of a government agency important to the project? How? - Would the company like to ask the government for any other support? What should the government improve? - Will the company plan to engage the government in its next project?

### *Interview Participants from Government Agencies*

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Sample Questions
1. About the government agency	1.1 Goal and plan concerning SI/CSI	- What do you and your organisation think about social innovation? - What are your organisation's goals and plans related to SI? - What are the key challenges for growing SI in the country? - What is the plan for supporting or creating SI?

	1.2 Government instruments regarding SI/CSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How and what tools, policies and programmes does your organisation use to support firms' CSI projects? Which one is most used?</li> <li>- In your opinion, do these tools, policies and programs meet the firms' needs and are they sufficient? What should be improved?</li> </ul>
	1.3 Understanding of CSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In your opinion, is social innovation different from CSR?</li> </ul>
2. Interaction with firms	2.1 Engagement with firms undertaking CSI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please give examples of firms or CSI projects that you or your organisation engage in.</li> <li>- How did you support or involve these firms in CSI projects?</li> <li>- How did you know and select these firms or CSI projects? What are the criteria for selection?</li> <li>- Have you experienced any challenges during the engagement with these firms or CSI projects?</li> <li>- How did you deal with these challenges?</li> <li>- How long do you plan to support or be involved in these firms or CSI projects?</li> </ul>
	2.2 Impacts of CSI on the government agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has your organisation improved or changed any tools, policies or programmes after engaging with CSI projects?</li> <li>- What caused your organisation to improve or change?</li> </ul>

### ***Interview Participants from Other Organisations***

<b>Main Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Sample Questions</b>
1. About the organisation	1.1 Attitude towards SI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you or your organisation think about social-related projects and SI?</li> <li>- In your opinion, is social innovation different from CSR?</li> <li>- How do you or your organisation support SI or firms with CSI projects? What is the plan for supporting SI or firms undertaking SI?</li> </ul>
2. Interaction with firm and government agency	2.1 Engagement with firms or CSI project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please give examples of firms or CSI projects that you or your organisation engage in.</li> <li>- How did your organisation know and engage in the CSI project?</li> <li>- When did your organisation join the project and in what role?</li> <li>- What are the key challenges during the engagement with the project?</li> <li>- How did your organisation deal with these challenges?</li> </ul>
	2.2 Relationship with the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has your organisation ever worked with or involved government agencies, and in what ways?</li> <li>- How did you know them?</li> <li>- What are the key challenges experienced during the engagement with them?</li> <li>- Would the company like to ask the government for any other support? What should the government improve?</li> </ul>

## Appendix III: Key Strategies and Targets in National Long-term and Medium-term Plans

Plan	Key strategies and targets
<p><b>The 20-year national strategy (2017-2036)</b></p>	<p><b>The key strategies cover 6 dimensions.</b></p> <p><b>(1) National security</b> (Maintaining domestic peace; Mitigating existing security problems and preventing anticipated national security related issues; Strengthening national capacity to prepare for threats that might affect national security; Integrating security cooperation within the ASEAN region and among foreign countries including related government and non-governmental organisations; Developing mechanisms for overall security management)</p> <p><b>(2) National competitiveness enhancement</b> (Exploring value-added agriculture; Developing future industries and services; Creating diverse tourism; Developing high quality infrastructure to connect Thailand with the world; Developing a modern entrepreneurship-based economy)</p> <p><b>(3) Human capital development and strengthening</b> (Transforming social values and culture; Promoting human development at all stages of life; Improving learning processes to accommodate changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; Realizing multiple intelligences; Enhancing well-being among Thai people, including physical and mental health, wisdom, and social aspects; Promoting conditions that encourage human capacity development; Strengthen capacity of sports to generate social values and promote national development)</p> <p><b>(4) Social cohesion and equity</b> (Mitigating inequality and creating multidimensional justice; Expanding economic, social and technological hubs to other parts of the country; Promoting social empowerment; Empowering local community capacity for development, self-reliance, and independent management)</p> <p><b>(5) Eco-friendly development and growth</b> (Promoting green growth and sustainable development; Promoting sustainable maritime based economy growth; Promoting sustainable climate-friendly based society growth; Developing urban, rural, agricultural, and industrial areas with a key focus on a sustainable growth; Creating eco-friendly water, energy, and agricultural security; Improving the paradigm for determining the country's future)</p>

	<p><b>(6) Public sector rebalancing and development</b> (Having a people centric public sector that effectively delivers responsive, fast, and convenient services with transparency; Having an integrated managed public sector that adheres to the National Strategy as an end goal and can effectively support and promote developments at all levels, issues, missions, and areas; Downsizing of the public sector in accordance to missions and tasks and promoting public participation in national development; Modernizing the public sector; Ensuring that government employees and staff exhibit morality, ethics, virtues, dedication and professionalism; Ensuring that the public sector operates with transparency with no corruption and malfeasance; Ensuring that the country has laws only to the extent of necessity and in accordance with existing national contexts; Ensuring that the country’s judicial administration respects human rights and treats all people equitably)</p>
<p><b>The 12<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021)</b></p>	<p><b>Overall targets:</b> 40% of the poorest should have higher incomes by at least 15%; economy grows 5% annually; forest area increase to 40% of country’s land area; greenhouse gas emission in energy and transport sector is reduced at least 7% by 2020; Thais have good manners, attitudes and be socially responsible; improve transparency, efficiency and decentralisation of public administration; strengthen national security and reconciliation.</p> <p><b>The 10 key development strategies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Strengthening and realizing the potential of human capital</li> <li>(2) Creating a just society and reducing inequality via three major policy directions</li> <li>(3) Strengthening the economy, and underpinning sustainable competitiveness</li> <li>(4) Environmental-friendly growth for sustainable development</li> <li>(5) Reinforcing national security for the country’s progress towards prosperity and sustainability</li> <li>(6) Public administration, corruption prevention, and good governance in Thai society</li> <li>(7) Advancing infrastructure and logistics</li> <li>(8) Science, technology, research, and innovation development (including SI)</li> <li>(9) Regional, urban, and economic zone development</li> <li>(10) International cooperation for development</li> </ol>

<p><b>The 13<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027)</b></p>	<p><b>Overall targets:</b> become innovation-driven economy and reach GNI per capita at 9,300 USD by 2027; increase human achievement index score to 0.72; income ratio of top 10%/bottom 40% is less than 5; reduce greenhouse gas emission in energy and transport sector at least 20% from business-as-usual; 5-year average ranking in global climate risk index is higher than 40<sup>th</sup>; reach 30<sup>th</sup> in IMD's World Digital Competitiveness Ranking and 15<sup>th</sup> in IMD's Government Efficiency; and get 90% in each core competency of WHO's International Health Regulations capacity and health emergency preparedness</p> <p><b>The 13 key development strategies in 4 dimensions:</b></p> <p><b>Dimension 1: Targeted industries and services</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Being leader in high-value agriculture and agriculture processing</li> <li>(2) Being a destination for high quality and sustainable tourism</li> <li>(3) Being a key production hub of electric vehicle</li> <li>(4) Being a centre of high-value medical and wellness</li> <li>(5) Being an investment and logistic hub in the region</li> <li>(6) Being a key production hub of intelligent electronic device</li> </ol> <p><b>Dimension 2: Social and economic opportunity and equality</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(7) Strengthening competitiveness of SMEs</li> <li>(8) Creating safety and smart cities</li> <li>(9) Reducing poverty across generations and increasing social protection</li> </ol> <p><b>Dimension 3: Natural resources and environmental sustainability</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(10) Becoming circular economy and low carbon society</li> <li>(11) Reducing risks and effects of natural disasters and climate change</li> </ol> <p><b>Dimension 4: Country transformation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(12) Strengthening potential of human capital</li> <li>(13) Improving government efficiency</li> </ol>
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Source: NESDC (2017), NESDC (2021), (NESDC, 2024c), NSSO (2022)

## Appendix IV: Data Management Plan

Project Name:	Corporate Social Innovation and Social Innovation Ecosystem	Funder:	-
Project Description:	This project is the fulfilment of my PhD thesis.		
Student:	Tongrutai Srinual	Principal Investigator/ Supervisor:	Abdullah Gök
Institution:	University of Strathclyde	Dept / School:	Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship
Date of First Version:	8 May 2022		
Date of Updates:	25 May 2022		

This template is based on DCC (Digital Curation Centre). (2013). Checklist for a Data Management Plan. V.4.0. Edinburgh: Digital Curation Centre. Available online: <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/data-management-plans>

### Data Collection

#### What data (file types) will you collect or create?

List all the research data (file types) that you will collect /generate as part of your project. Examples are included on the first three rows to help you get started, and there are links to relevant info, where indicated (i.e. [i](#)).

Data type	Original format	Preservation format*	Estimated volume	Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) owner <a href="#">i</a>	Active storage location	Completed storage location
Notes	Paper, Word	PDF	~100MB	University of Strathclyde	OneDrive for Business	PURE
Audio files	MP4, WAV	MP4	~1GB	University of Strathclyde	OneDrive for Business	Be deleted after project completion
Transcriptions	NVP	PDF, Plain text	~100MB	University of Strathclyde	OneDrive for Business	PURE
Compiled data from online sources	Word, Excel, PDF	PDF, Plain text	~100MB	University of Strathclyde	OneDrive for Business	PURE

\*Preservation formats should be easy to access without the need for specific proprietary software.

#### How will the data be collected or created?

- How will you collect or generate data?
- How will you structure and name your folders and files?
- How will you handle versioning?
- What quality assurance processes will you adopt?



The University's Information Governance Unit have guidance on **file naming** and **version control** at <https://strath.sharepoint.com/sites/igu/SitePages/ManagingRecords.aspx>

My project will use both primary and secondary data for analysis. The primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, and will be recorded as audio files along with taking notes. To get insights about corporate social innovation (CSI), interviewees are representatives from different stakeholders involving CSI such as companies undertaking CSI, government agencies, and third sectors.

It must be noted that data that I will collect is not commercial or business-sensitive data as well as not private/personal data. Moreover, all data will be anonymous, kept confidential and not be shared with their employees.

Before commencing the interview, the participant information sheet and consent form will be sent to participations in advance, and the signed consent form will be collected before or on the interview day. In the consent form, interviewees will be asked for permission to record audio during the interview. I will inform interviewees about this and their other rights identified in the consent form again on the interview day.

This data will then be processed and analysed by a data analysis program. NVivo is expected to be the program used in my project. The secondary data will be collected from online sources and online databases such as company websites and government agencies websites. This data will be assembled in Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel. Moreover, primary and secondary data will be collected in parallel.

As the data will be collected from different types of organisations. I will then create one main folder for one type of organisation, and sub folders for organisations with the same type. For example, a main folder named "Thai large company" will contain two sub folders named "CompanyA" and "CompanyB". The folder CompanyA can contain one folder for interview data and another for secondary data.

To name the data file, I will carry out format 'IntervieweeNo.\_Date' for audio files and notes obtained from interview informants from company A such as IntervieweeNo.1\_20220812, IntervieweeNo.2\_20220813. This format will be applied to transcriptions from audio files as well. While the secondary data about company A will be named in format 'DataType\_Year' such as AnnualReport\_2020.

After data is processed and analysed, version control is necessary for naming files. I will name a file with format 'FileName\_version\_EditedDate' such as ContextAnalysis\_V1\_20220910, ContextAnalysis\_V1.1\_20220920.

To assure the quality of data, paper field notes will be incorporated in data transcription from audio files in order to include nonverbal cues. Moreover, data triangulation will be adopted to validate data using different data sources. Interviewees are representatives from different stakeholder groups, and data obtained from interviews will be cross checked with document reviews.

## **Documentation and Metadata**

### **What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?**

#### **What is data documentation?**

Documentation may include details on the methodology used, analytical and procedural information, definitions of variables, vocabularies, units of measurement, description of

instruments, software and hardware used, use conditions, and any assumptions made. For example, a survey questionnaire, or interview schedule is 'data documentation' because it **provides context to the data** collected from the survey and interviews.


Electronic Lab notebooks and readme files offer a mechanism for documenting data; as would a codebook, which lists and explains the variables and scales used when analysing data.

### What is metadata?

Metadata is effectively 'data about data,' often 'intended for reading by machines, metadata helps to explain the purpose, origin, time references, geographic location, creator, access conditions and terms of use of a data collection' ([UK Data Service, Metadata](#)).

### Why are documentation and metadata important/ required?

Many research funders expect researchers to publish metadata to accompany research data as part of the terms and conditions of the grant award/funding. In addition, the University encourages the creation, capture, and publication of comprehensive documentation and metadata so that the data - associated with Strathclyde's research projects and publications - is made findable, accessible, and assessable to the wider research community and to enable its reuse by others, for societal benefit.

Consider, **how will you capture and create documentation and metadata**; rich, and meaningful documentation and metadata enable dataset/s to meet the **FAIR**  (**Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-usable**) data principles. Data that are discoverable, and identifiable via a dataset DOI (Digital Object Identifier) are more easily re-usable and citable.

As data in my research is mainly obtained from the interview, documentation that will be created for the interview are interview schedule, questionnaires for interviews, covering letters to invite participants/informants, participant information sheet, and consent form. However, I will also look at data regarding country contexts and CSI projects. Therefore, I need to generate a description of indicators/dimensions on which I will focus. These documentations will be plain-text files (README), and they must be anonymised.

## 1. Ethics and Legal Compliance

### How will you manage any ethical issues?

Where a project/study involves working with people, or animals, there will be ethical considerations to address. If you are carrying out research involving human participants, you must consider whether consent is required to allow the data you collect to be archived, shared, and reused. Consider the following:

- Have you gained consent for data preservation and sharing from participants?
- How will you protect the identity of participants if required? For example, via anonymisation.
- How will sensitive data be handled to ensure it is stored and transferred securely and appropriately?

If collecting **personal data**, you must ensure it is managed in line with **data protection laws**. Ethical issues affect how you store data, who can see/use it, and how long it is retained.

Managing ethical concerns may include: anonymisation of data; referral to departmental or institutional ethics committees; and formal consent agreements. It is prudent to identify any issues and plan accordingly.

The University has templates for **Consent forms, Participant info sheets, and Privacy notices**, as well as a Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings accessible from <https://www.strath.ac.uk/ethics/>

As my project involves human participation, ethical consideration then is necessary. My ethics application form must be submitted to the ethics committees and it must be approved by the committees before conducting the data collection through the interview.

After selecting informants/organisations for the interview, I will send an invitation letter to them. If they are willing to participate in my project, I will then send them the PIS consent form to them and a brief of interview questions in advance. Before starting the interview, the PIS consent form must be signed by interviewees and I will inform them again about their rights to stop the interview without giving any reasons. I will also ask for their permission again to record audios though they agree to do so in the PIS consent form.

All data will be anonymised and kept confidential. The signed consent form will be kept securely and separate from other documents to avoid linking interviewee's personal information (in this case is interviewee's name and signature) with other documents. Interview questions will not involve any personal data and commercial/business-sensitive data. Interviewees' names will appear only on the signed PIS consent form, and I will use pseudonymisation (such as IntervieweeNo.1 Company A) instead of their names from the beginning of interview onwards. Moreover, I will not use online questionnaire/survey in my research. Therefore, there is no concern that the online survey platform will collect email and IP addresses of respondents.

After the interview, audio files will be kept in encrypted folders and stored on university storage. To ensure the security of data, the transcript of audio recordings will be done in a secure environment where other people cannot hear audio recordings and cannot see transcripts. Paper-based notes that I take during the interview will be changed into PDF files and also be stored on university storage. The paper notes will be kept in a locked cabinet without being carried in public places.

After project completion, audio files will be deleted and paper-based notes will be destroyed. Anonymised transcribed and anonymised notes in PDF format will be kept on university storage.

#### **How will you manage copyright and IPR issues?**

The default **licence applied to datasets** currently deposited in the University's institutional data repository is CC BY 4.0. Anyone who uses a dataset with this licence must 'must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made'. **Researchers can request a different licence be applied to their dataset**, by arrangement, as best fits any contractual or ethical agreements pertaining to the research/study.

**Where data have been generated using existing and/or secondary data sources**, researchers must factor-in, and adhere to, relevant third-party licence and/or re-use agreements.

Please consider the following points:

- How will the data be licensed for reuse?
- Are there any restrictions on the reuse of third-party data?
- Will data sharing be postponed/restricted e.g., to publish or seek patents?
- Do the IPR owners have any reason to restrict data sharing?

Open data is typically made available under a **CC-BY licence**, meaning that anyone can reuse the data for any purpose, as long as they cite the source of the data.

Commercially sensitive data should be restricted accordingly<sup>1</sup>

Data created in this project will belong to the university. The metadata about the description of indicators/dimensions, questionnaires for interviews, covering letters to invite participants, participant information sheet and consent form which are anonymised are openly available data and can be reuse under a CC-BY licence. The reuse of compile data from online sources must be in accordance with CC-BY licence, and third-party licence and/or re-use agreements identified in original sources.

However, audio files, paper notes and transcripts should be restricted to share due to ethics/data protection concerns. The audio files and paper-based notes will be destroyed immediately after project completion, while transcripts with anonymity and anonymised notes in PDF formant will be kept on university storage.

## 2. Storage and Backup

**How will the data be stored during research, and how will you manage access and security?**

The **University offers a number of secure file storage and sharing platforms<sup>1</sup>** which are **automatically backed-up throughout the day**. A comparison of these platforms is available from the **Compare file storage options** web page at <https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/is/help/indepth/comparefilestorage/>

**Research data which are confidential, sensitive, and/or contain protectable IP (intellectual property) must not be stored on unencrypted storage.** Researchers are encouraged to use the University's own systems over less secure storage platforms/methods.

When **working off campus**, or **if working with external project partners**, **arrangements can be made to facilitate joint/collaborative working via shared project folders** on the University's network/storage platforms, as outlined on the [Compare file storage options](#) web page.


Please refer to the [Compare file storage options](#) web page and consider the following:

- Will the data you create/collect/generate be stored on the University's network/storage platforms?
- How will data be transferred to the University's network/storage platforms if it originates from another location?
- How will you ensure that collaborators, supervisors, or participants can access your data securely?
- Will data be stored on H: drive; i: drive; OneDrive for Business; Teams; SharePoint, or elsewhere?

Data from the interview will be transferred from my encrypted recording device (expected to be iPad) to university storage (OneDrive for Business) as soon as possible through my personal laptop, and be deleted from my recording device. Not only audio files, but all data in my project will be also stored on OneDrive for Business. All data will be kept private without sharing links with anyone. However, if my supervisors need to see these data, I will give access to OneDrive individually.

### 3. Data Curation and Open Access to Data

#### How will data preservation and open access to data be managed?

**At, or near to project completion, or following publication, upload the data** associated with your project/s, publications, theses, etc. **to the University's institutional data repository in [Pure](#)**, so that it can be catalogued, preserved, and made **openly accessible from the [KnowledgeBase Research Information Portal](#)** 

If you are **planning to upload the data to an external data repository** (e.g., UK Data Service; GitHub) you must **create a registry record (with metadata and a persistent link, e.g., DOI) in [Pure](#)**, so that the University can record compliance with any funder mandate and keep track of the data. Instructions and guidance, on uploading data to [Pure](#) is available on the [Data deposit](#) web page, and from RDMS (Research Data Management & Sharing) staff.

Researchers should consider the following when selecting data for curation and preservation:

- What data must be retained &/or destroyed for contractual, legal, or regulatory purposes?
- How will you decide what other data to keep (e.g., that which does not underpin a publication)?
- What data will be shared openly?
- When will you make the data available?
- How will data be preserved and shared?
- How will completed datasets be organised?

Outputs (publications, theses, etc.) arising from public funding should contain **data (access /availability) statements**, to direct readers to the data which underpins and supports the research findings. **Data statements should include persistent links (e.g., a DOI/Digital Object Identifier)** to the data source. Placeholder DOIs (Digital Object Identifier) are available in advance of final manuscript submission from RDMS staff. Further info, including example statements, is available from the [Data access statements web page](#).

**In addition to uploading data, many research funders expect structured metadata - describing the research data - to be published.** Metadata must be sufficient to allow others to understand what research data exists; why, when, and how it was generated; and how to access it. This expectation can be met by creating a dataset record in Pure and including the relevant details.

After my project is complete, data will be kept in Pure but they are not publicly shared. Only metadata about the description of indicators/dimensions, questionnaires for interviews, covering letters to invite participants/informants, participant information sheet and consent form which are anonymised can be shared and be openly available data.

#### Are any restrictions on data sharing required?

- What restrictions are required on data sharing?
- How can these restrictions be minimised? (e.g., temporary embargo, partial sharing, one to one sharing, non-disclosure agreements)

**Explain any necessary restrictions on sharing** (e.g., commercial, privacy, or security reasons). If data cannot be shared, a dataset record should still be created in [Pure](#) so that the data can be catalogued and preserved long-term. In such cases, data can be uploaded to [Pure](#) but the data (files) restricted, whilst a record, containing metadata only, can be made publicly visible. The record should explain why the data is not accessible; the circumstances under which access may

be granted; and who to contact for information about the dataset.  
**NB. If data relates to a patent application it should not be uploaded to Pure, or any other data repository, nor shared,** until such times as clearance has been given by the project PI and/or [IP & Commercialisation staff](#).

Anonymised transcriptions and notes kept in Pure will be restricted due to ethics concerns. However, compiled data from online sources can be shared but adhere to relevant third-party licence and/or re-use agreements identified in original sources.

#### **4. Responsibilities and Resources**

##### **Who is responsible for data management?**

- Who is responsible for implementing the plan, and ensuring it is reviewed and revised?
- Who will be responsible for each data management activity?
- How will responsibilities be split across partner sites in collaborative research projects?
- Will data ownership and responsibilities for research data management be part of any consortium agreement or contract agreed between partners?

My project is the fulfilment of my PhD thesis, and is not a part of any consortium agreement or contract agreed between partners. Therefore, I have overall responsibility to implement the plan and all activities in the plan.

##### **What resources will you require to deliver your plan?**

- Is additional specialist expertise (or training for existing staff) required?
- Do you require hardware or software which is additional to existing institutional provision?

My project will not require any additional specialist expertise. Besides, software for data analysis (Nvivo) is already provided by the university.

NB. Draft DMPs (Data Management Plans) can be uploaded to the [DMP Inbox](#) for review and feedback. Ideally, they should be treated as 'living' documents and reviewed over the course of a project/study.

## **Appendix V: Participant Information Sheet**

### **Participant Information Sheet for [firm/government agency/organisation] involving corporate social innovation**

**Name of department:** Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship

**Title of the study:** Corporate social innovation and social innovation ecosystem

#### **Introduction**

I, Miss Tongrutai Srinual, have got a scholarship from the Royal Thai Government to pursue a PhD at Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, University of Strathclyde, UK. I'm working on my PhD thesis about corporate social innovation (CSI) and social innovation (SI) ecosystem.

Arising of social problems, especially after the pandemic of Covid-19 that trigger many difficulties for societies and people all over the world, has tremendously increased demands for efficient solutions. Besides, some social problems, for example, climate change and inequality are complex or wicked problems which need collaborative actions across sectors along with times and resources devoted to alleviation. SI thus has gained more interest from researchers as SI is a novel solution to social challenges that tend to be better than existing approaches.

Although there is a lot of SI research, most of them have been elaborated based on the western country context. SI generally seen in western countries is mainly conducted by the third sector. In some Asian countries, however, there is an increase in the prevalence of company involvement in SI, and companies tend to have the dominant role in generating SI more than the third sector. If focusing on SI created by firms or so-called CSI, the interaction between firms and government in CSI remains underexplored. Besides, there is a lack of study about government roles in CSI and SI ecosystem. Increasing understanding about these, therefore, will help CSI and the SI ecosystem be more productive.

#### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of my thesis is to scrutinize CSI in the context of Southeast Asian countries which tend to be different from CSI in the western country context. Further, my research aims to clarify interactions between actors in SI ecosystem, especially between firms and government.

#### **Do you have to take part?**

Please note that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason.

#### **What will you do in the project?**

If you are interested, you will be asked to take part in an interview taking around 30-45 minutes at your preferred venue and in person. The interview will be organised in accordance with Covid-19

safety measures. If an in-person interview cannot be arranged, the interview will be conducted through online methods such as Zoom meeting.

**Why have you been invited to take part?**

As you are one of significant actors involving CSI and SI ecosystem in Thailand, it is a great honour and pleasure to invite you to participate in a research study. Your expertise and experiences are vital and valuable to enhance existing understanding about CSI and the interaction between firm and government in CSI. Since I have an obligation to work at the Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council (NXPO) after graduation, your precious assistance will then be beneficial to the future of policies and programs regarding SI in Thailand.

**What information is being collected in the project?**

Topics in the interview will be about your experiences and perspectives on CSI and will not certainly relate to your personal identifiers.

**Who will have access to the information?**

Your information will be kept confidential and anonymous. It will not be shared with your employee and any third party involving this research. You will be assigned as a number code to ensure that your identifier is fully protected.

**Where will the information be stored and how long will it be kept for?**

Your anonymised data will be under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and will be retained on the storage of University of Strathclyde during and at the completion of this project.

**What happens next?**

If you are willing to participate in this research, please sign the consent form attached with this information sheet. Please make sure that you have read and understood the information in the consent form. Data obtained from the interview will be further analysed in my PhD thesis.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Researcher contact details:**

If you have any enquiries, please feel free to contact Tongrutai Srinual, the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, Stenhouse Wing, 199 Cathedral Street, Glasgow, G4 0QU. Phone number (UK) +44 (0) 1415483482, email: [tongrutai.srinual@strath.ac.uk](mailto:tongrutai.srinual@strath.ac.uk)

**Chief Investigator details:**

The Chief Investigator of this project is Dr Abdullah Gök, a Senior Lecturer and Chancellor's Fellow, the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, Stenhouse Wing, 199 Cathedral Street, Glasgow, G4 0QU. Phone number (UK) +44 (0) 1415483482, email: [abdullah.gok@strath.ac.uk](mailto:abdullah.gok@strath.ac.uk).



This research was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the research, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

Secretary to the University Ethics Committee  
Research & Knowledge Exchange Services  
University of Strathclyde  
Graham Hills Building  
50 George Street  
Glasgow  
G1 1QE

Telephone: 0141 548 3707

Email: [ethics@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@strath.ac.uk)

## Appendix VI: Consent Form

### Consent form for [firm/government agency/organisation] involving corporate social innovation

**Name of department:** Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship

**Title of the study:** Corporate social innovation and social innovation ecosystem

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice for Participants in Research Projects and understand how my personal information will be used and what will happen to it (i.e. how it will be stored and for how long).
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of completion, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that anonymised data (i.e. data that do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn once they have been included in the study.
- I understand that any information recorded in the research will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project.
- I consent to being audio and/or video recorded as part of the project.

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date:

## Appendix VII: Ethics Application

# Ethics Application Form

Please answer all questions

### 1. Title of the investigation

Corporate social innovation and social innovation ecosystem

Please state the title on the PIS and Consent Form, if different:

-

### 2. Chief Investigator (must be at least a Grade 7 member of staff or equivalent)

Name: Dr Abdullah Gök

Professor

Reader

Senior Lecturer

Lecturer

Senior Teaching Fellow

Teaching Fellow

Department: Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship

Telephone: +44 (0) 1415483482

E-mail: [abdullah.gok@strath.ac.uk](mailto:abdullah.gok@strath.ac.uk)

### 3. Other Strathclyde investigator(s)

Name: Dr Paul Lassalle

Status (e.g. lecturer, post-/undergraduate): Senior Lecturer

Department: Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship

Telephone: +44 (0) 1415483482

E-mail: [paul.lassalle@strath.ac.uk](mailto:paul.lassalle@strath.ac.uk)

### 4. Non-Strathclyde collaborating investigator(s) (where applicable)

Name: -

Status (e.g. lecturer, post-/undergraduate):

Department/Institution:

If student(s), name of supervisor:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Please provide details for all investigators involved in the study:

### 5. Overseas Supervisor(s) (where applicable)

Name(s): -

Status:

Department/Institution:

Telephone:

Email:

I can confirm that the local supervisor has obtained a copy of the Code of Practice: Yes

No

Please provide details for all supervisors involved in the study:

### 6. Location of the investigation

At what place(s) will the investigation be conducted

Thailand (and in, if possible, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia)

If this is not on University of Strathclyde premises, how have you satisfied yourself that adequate Health and Safety arrangements are in place to prevent injury or harm?

My project does not involve any procedures that can cause physically or mentally injury or harm to participants. All process during the investigation taken place in Thailand will be in line with health and safety measures of Thailand.

### 7. Duration of the investigation

Duration(years/months) : 6 months

Start date (expected): 15 / 08 / 2022                      Completion date (expected): 15 / 2 / 2023

### 8. Sponsor

Please note that this is not the funder; refer to Section C and Annexes 1 and 3 of the Code of Practice for a definition and the key responsibilities of the sponsor.

Will the sponsor be the University of Strathclyde: Yes  No

If not, please specify who is the sponsor: -

### 9. Funding body or proposed funding body (if applicable)

Name of funding body: -

Status of proposal – if seeking funding (please click appropriate box):

In preparation

Submitted

Accepted

Date of submission of proposal:                      /                      /                      Date of start of funding:                      /  
/

### 10. Ethical issues

Describe the main ethical issues and how you propose to address them:

This is a low-risk project with no main ethical issues. The investigation is not relevant to any of the categories mentioned in the Code of Practice Section B1(a), and no participants fall into a category listed in Section B1(b).

### 11. Objectives of investigation (including the academic rationale and justification for the investigation) Please use plain English.

Arising of social problems has tremendously increased demands for efficient solutions. Besides, some social problems such as climate change are complex or wicked problems which need collaborative actions across sectors along with times and resources devoted to alleviation. Social innovation (SI) thus has gained more interest from researchers as SI is a novel solution to social challenges that tend to be better than existing approaches.

Although there is a lot of SI research, most of them have been elaborated based on the western country context. SI generally seen in western countries is mainly conducted by the third sector. In some Asian countries, however, there is an increase in the prevalence of company involvement in SI, and companies tend to have the dominant role in generating SI more than the third sector. If focusing on SI created by firms or so-called corporate social innovation (CSI), the interaction between firms and government in CSI remains underexplored. Besides, there is a lack of study about government roles in CSI and SI ecosystem. Increasing understanding about these, therefore, will help CSI and the SI ecosystem be more productive. The purpose of my thesis is to scrutinize CSI in the context of Southeast Asian countries which tend to be different from CSI in the western country context. Further, my research aims to clarify interactions between actors in SI ecosystem, especially between firms and government. The result of my thesis will enhance understanding of CSI and be a ground for further development of frameworks and theories about CSI and SI in the future. Since I have an obligation to work at the Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council (NXPO) in Thailand after graduation, I can utilise knowledge and results gained from this research to improve policies regarding SI and assist Thai businesses in successfully implementing and proceeding the CSI.

## **12. Participants**

Please detail the nature of the participants:

Participants will be representatives from 3 main groups; *firms* undertaking CSI projects, *government agencies* and *other organisations* involving CSI projects. In each CSI project, there will be around 1-2 participants from each participant group, or 3-6 participants in total in one CSI project. I plan to examine around 5 CSI projects, thus there are 15-30 participants in total (5-10 participants of each participant group).

I currently plan to examine CSI in four potential countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia). Thailand is the main location in my research that I will start the investigation, then I will approach participants in the other countries. If all four countries are carried out, overall participants are 60-120 people.

Summarise the number and age (range) of each group of participants:

Number: 5-10 (from 5 CSI projects in one country) Age (range) 30-60

Please detail any inclusion/exclusion criteria and any further screening procedures to be used:

Participants from firms should work in or directly involve CSI projects since they must know well about their CSI projects and firms. Participants from organisations involving CSI projects should work closely with the project or be knowledgeable about SI/CSI in the country.

Participants from government agencies should have experience in dealing with the CSI project and know well about government policies/programs regarding SI/innovation in the country.

The potential CSI projects will be selected as samples and be examined what firms, organisations and government agencies involve in the project. I will then contact these firms, organisations, and government agencies to ask for participation and representatives for interviews. The snowball sampling approach will also be used to increase the number of participants/CSI projects.

## **13. Nature of the participants**

Please note that investigations governed by the Code of Practice that involve any of the types of participants listed in B1(b) must be submitted to the University Ethics Committee (UEC) rather than DEC/SEC for approval.

Do any of the participants fall into a category listed in Section B1(b) (participant considerations) applicable in this investigation?: Yes  No

If yes, please detail which category (and submit this application to the UEC):

-

#### 14. Method of recruitment

Describe the method of recruitment (see section B4 of the Code of Practice), providing information on any payments, expenses or other incentives.

The invitation letter in format of the PIS will be sent to target firms, organisations and government agencies via email. If they agree to take part in my project and assign 1-2 representatives for the interview, I will then send the consent form and a brief of interview questions to the participant. The participation is voluntary and there is no financial incentive. However, I will offer a document after my thesis is completed which includes a brief overview of SI/CSI in the country, some interesting findings and suggestions that will be useful for their organisations.

As participations are non-English speakers, all documents I send to Thai participants such as the invitation letter and the PIS consent form will be translated into Thai language by myself. Participants in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, meanwhile, will receive the document in English version.

#### 15. Participant consent

Please state the groups from whom consent/assent will be sought (please refer to the Guidance Document). The PIS and Consent Form(s) to be used should be attached to this application form.

The PIS and full informed consent form will be sent to participants when they agree to join the interview. The signed consent form will be collected before or at the interview date. At the interview date, I will inform participant's rights and anonymity again before starting the interview.

#### 16. Methodology

Investigations governed by the Code of Practice which involve any of the types of projects listed in B1(a) must be submitted to the University Ethics Committee rather than DEC/SEC for approval.

Are any of the categories mentioned in the Code of Practice Section B1(a) (project considerations) applicable in this investigation?  Yes  No

If 'yes' please detail: -

Describe the research methodology and procedure, providing a timeline of activities where possible. Please use plain English.

My research will use the qualitative methodology. To get an insight about interaction between firms and government in CSI as well as characteristics of CSI in Southeast Asia, the case study approach is appropriate for my research. One case study will represent CSI ecosystem as a whole in one country. CSI projects existing in the country will be entry points to start collecting data. Target projects will be filtered by using CSI definitions as criteria in order to ensure that they are not CSR activities but CSI projects. I expect to select 5 CSI projects per country which will give the number of participants for interview at around 15-30 people. The duration of interviewing participants in one country case study will take almost 2 months.

What specific techniques will be employed and what exactly is asked of the participants? Please identify any non-validated scale or measure and include any scale and measures charts as an Appendix to this application. Please include questionnaires, interview schedules or any other non-standardised method of data collection as appendices to this application. The primary data will be collected through semi-structured interview in person. If this is not possible, the interview will be conducted through the virtual interview. Interview questions will be prepared before the interview. Besides, a brief interview question will be sent to participants in advance to allow them to consider and prepare answers. However, participants are able to tell their experiences beyond the listed questions but still within the scope of my research topic.

Where an independent reviewer is not used, then the UEC, DEC or SEC reserves the right to scrutinise the methodology. Has this methodology been subject to independent scrutiny?

Yes  No

If yes, please provide the name and contact details of the independent reviewer:

#### **17. Previous experience of the investigator(s) with the procedures involved.**

Experience should demonstrate an ability to carry out the proposed research in accordance with the written methodology.

I have experiences in co-conducting the interview with SME entrepreneurs in Thailand when I was pursuing my bachelor's degree and when I was working at Export-Import bank of Thailand.

#### **18. Data collection, storage and security**

How and where are data handled? Please specify whether it will be fully anonymous (i.e. the identity unknown even to the researchers) or pseudo-anonymised (i.e. the raw data is anonymised and given a code name, with the key for code names being stored in a separate location from the raw data) - if neither please justify.

Data obtained from the interview will be kept confidential and pseudo-anonymous with a code name such as Interviewee No.1.

Explain how and where it will be stored, who has access to it, how long it will be stored and whether it will be securely destroyed after use:

The anonymised data and all data in my project will be retained in the storage of University of Strathclyde (OneDrive for Business) during the project. Audio files recorded in interviews will be deleted immediately from my encrypted recording device after being transferred to OneDrive for Business. All data will be kept private without sharing links with anyone. However, if my supervisors need to see these data, I will give access to OneDrive individually.

After my project is complete, audio files will be deleted, and anonymised transcripts will be kept on university storage (Pure) but they are not publicly shared. Only metadata about the description of indicators/dimensions, questionnaires for interviews, covering letters to invite participants/informants, participant information sheet and consent form which are anonymised can be shared and be openly available data.

Will anyone other than the named investigators have access to the data? Yes  No

If 'yes' please explain:

#### **19. Potential risks or hazards**

Briefly describe the potential Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) hazards and risks associated with the investigation:  
 The interview will not cause any physically or mentally injury or harm to participants. Besides, interview questions will be approved by my supervisor to ensure that they will not cause any risk.  
 Please attach a completed OHS Risk Assessment (S20) for the research. Further Guidance on Risk Assessment and Form can be obtained [here](#).

**20. What method will you use to communicate the outcomes and any additional relevant details of the study to the participants?**  
 I will offer a document to some participants after my thesis is completed which includes a brief overview of SI/CSI in the country, some interesting findings and suggestions that will be useful for their organisations.

**21. How will the outcomes of the study be disseminated (e.g. will you seek to publish the results and, if relevant, how will you protect the identities of your participants in said dissemination)?**  
 I plan to present my study at a conference and probably publish it in a journal. However, I will show the results as a whole picture without identifying data individually, and I will still ensure anonymity.

Checklist	Enclosed	N/A
Participant Information Sheet(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent Form(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sample questionnaire(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sample interview format(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sample advertisement(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OHS Risk Assessment (S20)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Any other documents (please specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**22. Chief Investigator and Head of Department Declaration**  
 Please note that unsigned applications will not be accepted and both signatures are required

I have read the University's Code of Practice on Investigations involving Human Beings and have completed this application accordingly. By signing below, I acknowledge that I am aware of and accept my responsibilities as Chief Investigator under Clauses 3.11 – 3.13 of the [Research Governance Framework](#) and that this investigation cannot proceed before all approvals required have been obtained.



Signature of Chief Investigator

Please also type name here:

I confirm I have read this application, I am happy that the study is consistent with departmental strategy, that the staff and/or students involved have the appropriate expertise to undertake the study and that adequate arrangements are in place to supervise any students that might be acting as investigators, that the study has access to the resources needed to conduct the proposed research successfully, and that there are no other departmental-specific issues relating to the study of which I am aware.

Signature of Head of Department

Please also type name here

Date:

/ /

**23. Only for University sponsored projects under the remit of the DEC/SEC, with no external funding and no NHS involvement**

**Head of Department statement on Sponsorship**

This application requires the University to sponsor the investigation. This is done by the Head of Department for all DEC applications with exception of those that are externally funded and those which are connected to the NHS (those exceptions should be submitted to R&KES). I am aware of the implications of University sponsorship of the investigation and have assessed this investigation with respect to sponsorship and management risk. As this particular investigation is within the remit of the DEC and has no external funding and no NHS involvement, I agree on behalf of the University that the University is the appropriate sponsor of the investigation and there are no management risks posed by the investigation.

If not applicable, tick here

Signature of Head of Department

Please also type name here

Date:

/ /

For applications to the University Ethics Committee, the completed form should be sent to [ethics@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@strath.ac.uk) with the relevant electronic signatures.

**24. Insurance**

The questionnaire below must be completed and included in your submission to the UEC/DEC/SEC:

<p>Is the proposed research an investigation or series of investigations conducted on any person for a Medicinal Purpose?          Medicinal Purpose means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ treating or preventing disease or diagnosing disease or</li> <li>▪ ascertaining the existence degree of or extent of a physiological condition or</li> <li>▪ assisting with or altering in any way the process of conception or</li> <li>▪ investigating or participating in methods of contraception or</li> <li>▪ inducing anaesthesia or</li> <li>▪ otherwise preventing or interfering with the normal operation of a physiological function or</li> <li>▪ altering the administration of prescribed medication.</li> </ul>	No
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If **“Yes”** please go to **Section A (Clinical Trials)** – all questions must be completed

If **“No”** please go to **Section B (Public Liability)** – all questions must be completed

**Section A (Clinical Trials)**

<p>Does the proposed research involve subjects who are either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. under the age of 5 years at the time of the trial;</li> <li>ii. known to be pregnant at the time of the trial</li> </ol>	Yes / No
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*If “Yes” the UEC should refer to Finance*

<p>Is the proposed research limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Questionnaires, interviews, psychological activity including CBT;</li> <li>iv. Venepuncture (withdrawal of blood);</li> <li>v. Muscle biopsy;</li> <li>vi. Measurements or monitoring of physiological processes including scanning;</li> <li>vii. Collections of body secretions by non-invasive methods;</li> <li>viii. Intake of foods or nutrients or variation of diet (excluding administration of drugs).</li> </ol>	Yes / No
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*If “No” the UEC should refer to Finance*

<p>Will the proposed research take place within the UK?</p>	Yes / No
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*If “No” the UEC should refer to Finance*

Title of Research	
Chief Investigator	
Sponsoring Organisation	
Does the proposed research involve:	
a) investigating or participating in methods of contraception?	Yes / No
b) assisting with or altering the process of conception?	Yes / No
c) the use of drugs?	Yes / No
d) the use of surgery (other than biopsy)?	Yes / No
e) genetic engineering?	Yes / No
f) participants under 5 years of age (other than activities i-vi above)?	Yes / No
g) participants known to be pregnant (other than activities i-vi above)?	Yes / No
h) pharmaceutical product/appliance designed or manufactured by the institution?	Yes / No
i) work outside the United Kingdom?	Yes / No

If **“YES”** to **any** of the questions a-i please also complete the **Employee Activity Form** (attached).

If **“YES”** to **any** of the questions a-i, and this is a follow-on phase, please provide details of SUSARs on a separate sheet.

If **“Yes”** to any of the questions a-i then the UEC/DEC/SEC should refer to Finance ([insurance-services@strath.ac.uk](mailto:insurance-services@strath.ac.uk)).

<b>Section B (Public Liability)</b>	
Does the proposed research involve :	
a) aircraft or any aerial device	No
b) hovercraft or any water borne craft	No
c) ionising radiation	No
d) asbestos	No
e) participants under 5 years of age	No
f) participants known to be pregnant	No
g) pharmaceutical product/appliance designed or manufactured by the institution?	No
h) work outside the United Kingdom?	Yes

If **“YES”** to any of the questions the UEC/DEC/SEC should refer to Finance ([insurance-services@strath.ac.uk](mailto:insurance-services@strath.ac.uk)).

**For NHS applications only - Employee Activity Form**

Has NHS Indemnity been provided?	Yes / No
Are Medical Practitioners involved in the project?	Yes / No
If YES, will Medical Practitioners be covered by the MDU or other body?	Yes / No

This section aims to identify the staff involved, their employment contract and the extent of their involvement in the research (in some cases it may be more appropriate to refer to a group of persons rather than individuals).

<b>Chief Investigator</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>NHS Honorary Contract?</b>
		Yes / No
<b>Others</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>NHS Honorary Contract?</b>
		Yes / No
		Yes / No
		Yes / No
		Yes / No

Please provide any further relevant information here:

## **Appendix VIII: Conference Presentation**

The Interaction between the Government and Firms in Corporate Social Innovation, Eu-SPRI Early Career Researcher Conference (ECC) - Sustainability in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy: between complexity and uncertainty, March 2024, Rome, Italy (Full paper submission).