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2 Corporate environmental sustainability management strategies: looking through the Chinese lens

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INTRODUCTION

The 2007 United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) coupled with Al Gore's (EIU ViewsWire, 2006) statements on global warming and the Stern review (Stern, 2006) have propelled global environmental sustainability issues into the foreground (Diener and Rowe, 2007).

Corporate environmental sustainability management (CESM) has emerged from a 'green' social organizational fringe to an acknowledged core business strategy. Research studies in this arena have been centred on industrialized nations, and until recently, there has been a dearth of empirical studies on CESM for rapidly emerging nations like the People's Republic of China (PRC). As the most populous nation on earth with one fifth of humanity (1.3 billion), China's astounding economic growth and resource consumption (*Economist*, 2005), provide 'telescoping' lessons in understanding the embracing of CESM in rapidly emerging economies (Rowe, 2006).

In addressing the gap in existing literature, the main objectives of this chapter are to explore the normative assumptions underpinning CESM in Shanghai and how business enterprises respond to such challenges. Specifically, this chapter presents senior managers' perception of CESM in China. Two case-study enterprises are reported to illustrate the ontological difference of CESM concepts and management strategies undertaken in response to environmental challenges in Shanghai.

To provide conceptual and empirical support for this study, the following sections review the background literature on the significance of CESM and development of corporate environmental paradigms. This is necessary for an understanding of the embryonic stage (Chan and Welford, 2005; Guo, 2005) of 'greening' in Shanghai. These sections are followed by an account of research methodology, scope and limitations, before tracing the Chinese experience and comparative case-study enterprises. The chapter concludes with the implications of the findings and recommendations for future research.