For decades economic growth has been the foremost priority on the political agenda in China, but in a recent declaration China’s leaders have pronounced the building of a harmonious society as the official long-term goal in China. CSR is perceived as the private sector’s contribution to this goal (Wong, 2009). Key concerns are how to sustain this economic growth, and understanding the contribution of CSR to greater sustainability in China’s international value chains and to a ‘harmonious society’ inside China.

Studies show Chinese firms are increasingly implementing CSR practices and CSR reporting (Ip, 2009; Kolk, Hong, & van Dol en, 2010; Welford, 2005; Wong, 2009). This behavior appears to be driven by global and domestic forces.

Looking first at global drivers, the fast integration of China into the global economic system and its prominent position as manufacturing hub in global supply chains (Wang & Juslin, 2009) has led to stakeholder calls (NGOs, consumers, governments) to enhance responsibility along global supply chains a trend reinforced by China’s entry to the World Trade Organization (Ip, 2009). For example, international customers increasingly require their suppliers to undergo CSR audits and Chinese government has introduced regulations to strengthen corporate commitment to CSR, including the Labor Contract Law, PRC Company Law and central government guidelines on social responsibility implementation for state-owned enterprises (Lin, 2010; Wang & Juslin, 2009).

Domestic drivers for CSR also have become more explicit in recent years. Societal expectations regarding CSR grew particularly in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake where media and the public scorned several firms for perceived stingy donations which led various companies to expand their donations (Lin, 2010; Roney, 2011). In addition, growing industrial unrest amongst the migrant worker population employed in the manufacturing sector, related media attention towards labor conditions and statements of high-level public officials condemning firms that mistreat their workers, have put pressure on organizations to pursue more socially responsible behavior towards their employees (Lin, 2010; Tang & Li, 2009).

Combining these international and domestic forces, many Chinese firms operating within global supply chains make significant efforts to increase their value-added in China, some supported by strong government support for R&D and innovation. Therefore CSR may become more instrumental in order to attract
and retain more skilled workers and through the development of collaborative relationships that can bring in knowledge and foster innovation.

Alongside these practice and policy-based developments, there is an increasing knowledge of CSR in China produced by scholars using the English language, both based in the PRC and outside (Moon and Shen, 2010). The purpose of this Business & Society special issue is to bring together some of the current leading scholarship on the topic.

The Call for Papers

We invite papers to explore various perspectives on the role of corporate social responsibility in the aforementioned developments, ranging from more theoretical to practice-oriented, from a China angle to comparative perspectives, and from the micro-level to the sector/supply chain level and macro-level. These could include contributions from business ethics, corporate citizenship, accountability, sustainability and business-government perspectives, for example.

We seek papers that explore how the development of CSR is reflecting a shift in the balance between stakeholders from government, business and civil society; a shift between normative and instrumental motives for CSR (Moon & Shen, 2010); and a shift from implicit to more explicit CSR (Matten & Moon, 2008).

We especially invite papers that develop fresh theoretical perspectives, aim to apply recently developed conceptual frameworks or present empirical evidence in areas that are relatively underexplored in China. Examples of potential topics are:

- How does the interaction of regulations and institutions shape the nature of corporate social responsibility in Chinese firms at home and abroad?
- What is the evolving role of civil society (including consumers) in framing and driving CSR in China?
- Is there a specific relationship between philanthropy and corporate social responsibility in Chinese firms, and/or is it possibly to identify a distinct Chinese perspective on CSR and business ethics?
- CSR reporting is expanding rapidly in China – why and to what effect?
- What is the CSR contribution to the government’s goal of a harmonious, innovative and climate-friendly Chinese society?
- How and why is CSR manifest Global supply chains and CSR in Chinese supplier firms?
- What is the nature of stakeholder engagement in CSR of firms in China and of Chinese firms expanding abroad?
- How do comparative perspectives on CSR and sustainability strategies improve our understanding of the Chinese experience?
- Are there particularly prominent instances of irresponsible business behaviour in China, why and how might CSR address these?
References


Editors

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Timetable

Please submit papers by 31st July 2012 to Peter.Hofman@nottingham.edu.cn

Please use Business & Society style for citations, references, and internal headings (see any recent issue of the journal). The references in this call (word or pdf documents) are in the basic BAS format for submissions: upper-lower case article, chapter, and book titles, journal volume numbers in italics, italicized book and journal titles.