

Automobile Industry Impact on Waste Management

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Editorial

There are few industries as large, diverse and influential as the automotive industry. Arguably, the largest single manufacturing sector worldwide, the management practices, organisational forms, and particularly the response to environmental pressures adopted by this industry are important in their own right, but also in terms of influencing many other business sectors. The products of this industry touch our daily lives not only by providing personal mobility for millions, but also by bringing a wide array of challenges. The deterioration of local air quality in urban areas, along with global issues such as global warming, and the treatment of scrapped vehicles are just a few examples of such challenges. As our introductory paper to this Special Issue argues, the resolution of environmental issues has to proceed alongside the many economic challenges currently facing the automotive industry: notably over-capacity; saturated and fragmenting markets; capital intensity; and persistent problems with achieving adequate profitability.

The papers collected for this Special Issue on The Automobile Industry & Sustainability reflect both the diversity of the environmental challenges associated with the automotive industry, as well as the diversity of academic treatments of multiple subjects. As editors of the special issue, we felt it was important to reflect differing theoretical and empirical perspectives, to capture the essence of where the 'research frontier' was with respect to the industry, without being overly prescriptive or imposing a particular theoretical focus. At the same time, it was, of course, necessary to filter proposals both for quality and innovation, and for a broad fit within the theme of treating the business and technology aspects of sustainability as they apply to the automotive industry. Equally, it seemed important to capture the views from scholars in a variety of geographic locations. The result is a special issue that could be characterised as multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural and multi-national. Academia is usually organised into schools of thought, within which there may be various theories and methodologies that supposedly constitute meaningful intellectual endeavour.

In this respect, the focus on an industrial sector is unusual (though

previous special issues of Journal of Cleaner Production have also sought to focus on sectors), but increasingly relevant. Our claim for such relevance arises out of the characteristic of discourses on sustainability, where the call for multidisciplinary analysis is strongest. As this special issue seeks to demonstrate, what is required is a multiplicity of solutions and understandings to be brought to bear against the fundamental issue: how do we achieve a sustainable automobile industry and how will that contribute to helping our societies become more sustainable? The papers are mostly a reflection of an underlying perspective: that sustainable mobility (whatever that may be) cannot be delivered by an industry or production consumption system that is itself unsustainable. For all this talk of diversity, however, it is incumbent upon the editors to arrange the papers in a logical manner, and to explain the conceptual foundations upon which the choice and coverage of the papers rest. The remaining sections of this introductory chapter seek to provide that explanation [1-5].

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