

The renaissance of life cycle assessment: a social scientist's perspective

Susanne Freidberg

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Tesco boss unveils green pledges

Supermarket giant Tesco has unveiled wide ranging plans to cut carbon emissions and encourage its customers to buy green.

Tesco said it aimed to develop a carbon footprint labelling measure for all products sold in store, and cut the cost of many energy-efficient goods.



The UK should aim for a low-carbon economy, Tesco's boss says



Carbon footprinting—opportunities and threats

Matthias Finkbeiner

“Taking carbon footprinting as the one and only yardstick, one has to face life-threatening trade-offs...”

LCA IN EUROPE

Carbon Footprint

A Catalyst for Life Cycle Assessment?

*Bo P. Weidema, Mikkel Thrane, Per Christensen,
Jannick Schmidt, and Søren Løkke*

At Wal-Mart, Labeling to Reflect Green Intent

By STEPHANIE ROSENBLOOM

Published: July 15, 2009

Shoppers expect the tags on [Wal-Mart](#) items to have rock-bottom prices. In the future they may also have information about the product's carbon footprint, the gallons of water used to create it, and the air pollution left in its wake.



Two Steps Forward

The Renaissance of Lifecycle Thinking

By **Joel Makower**

Published August 10, 2009

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It wasn't that long ago that LCA seemed pretty much DOA.

LCA, for lifecycle analysis (or, sometimes, "lifecycle assessment"), is a decades-old methodology to holistically evaluate the environmental impacts associated with the cradle-to-grave life cycle of a product or process. For years, LCA languished in the back rooms of companies, a geeky system of accounting that was of interest to few outside of a small number of engineers and environmental managers. Conducting an LCA was a lengthy, complex, and expensive proposition that few companies could justify. It certainly lacked mass adoption.

That's changing quickly. In the past few months, LCA has moved to the forefront of corporate environmental efforts, propelled by enabling technology, the prospects of climate change legislation, and the growing demands for *radical transparency* by consumers, business customers, government regulators, and retailers, notably **Walmart**. And it's not just about modeling individual products and processes. LCA is moving from the shadows and into the limelight, a strategic tool for environmental leadership companies.



The Deep Thought Problem

SF: The business media always says, “beware, LCA is very complicated.” What would you say to that?

Interviewee 1: I wouldn't say complicated. I would say complex.

Interviewee 2: The way I would respond to that is, beware of being too simple. Because the world is not simple. Oscar Wilde used to say, “the truth is never pure and rarely simple.” So [LCA] can be perceived as little too complicated, sometimes, but I think it's the duty of the good practitioner to convey the message that...there's only so much simplification that can be implemented before it becomes devoid of any meaning...we're all for simplified tools, but simplification doesn't have to mean the lack of a multifaceted answer.



The Endless Debate Problem



How should the environmental footprints of *foie gras* and *maigret du canard* be calculated? Interested parties disagree.



The Wizard of Oz Problem

ANDREW SAYER

Why Things Matter to People

Social Science, Values and Ethical Life



“Values are 'sedimented' valuations that have become attitudes...the relation between values and particular valuations is recursive, informed by past but also informing action...While in one sense values are indeed subjective and personal, they are fallibly related to objective circumstances and events.”

Editorial

Subjective is not Arbitrary

Walter Klöpffer

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“Subjectivity is treated as a kind of evil in most contributions to the ongoing discussion...but although incompatible with (exact) science, it does not mean the absence of any scientific guidance.”

International Journal of LCA, 3, 2, 1998.

