
Letter to the Editor

Boguski, T. 1998. Letter to the editor regarding E. Hertwich's (Fall 1997) "Book Review of *Environmental Life Cycle Assessment*, edited by M. A. Curran," *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 1(4): 128–131.

I am writing in reply to Edgar Hertwich's review of Mary Ann Curran's book, *Environmental Life-Cycle Assessment*. I am regretful that Mr. Hertwich had difficulty in understanding Chapter 2 of the book and believed it to be "incoherent and poorly written." This is not the feedback that we have received from others. Contrary to Mr. Hertwich's belief that the "chapter appears to be a collection of separate pieces," I wrote the entire document myself with considerable review and input from the other authors.

If Mr. Hertwich will take another look at Chapter 2, he will see that, contrary to his review statements, the chapter does not contain any argument for or against cutoff rules except to caution the reader that excluding steps from the study must be done with extreme caution. [pg. 2.7] In addition, the "feedback loops" that he suggests are not familiar to us are discussed on page 2.5. We simply refer to these "feedback loops" as iterative calculations. Feedback loops (iterative calculations) are not a novelty in the LCA field.

Another area where Mr. Hertwich had difficulty was impact assessment. He states that, "the most startling deficiency of the book is the absence of a chapter on impact assessment." The concept of impact assessment is an integral part of LCA. It is addressed at length in both Chapters 2 and 17 and discussed in several other chapters. The authors stopped short of advocating a specific impact assessment methodology because, as stated in the book [pg. 2.27], there is currently no widely accepted impact assessment methodology.

LCA is an interesting field. However, it is a "soft science." Therefore, part of Mr. Hertwich's frustration is understandable. It is unlikely that one specific prescriptive methodology for LCA will ever be developed and used by all LCA practitioners. This is especially true when one leaves the boundaries of the inventory phase and enters the realm of impact assessment. Ms. Curran's book does an excellent job of compiling and describing the methods used by many of the professionals working in the field of LCA.

Reference

Curran, M., ed. 1997. *Environmental Life-Cycle Assessment* New York: McGraw Hill.

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