
Letter to the Editor

Hofstetter, P. 2004. Letter to the editor responding to S. Gerson's letter regarding Hofstetter and Mettier's (Spring 2003) "What Users Want and May Need: Insights from a Survey Users of a Life-Cycle Tool," *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 7(2): 79–102.

Many thanks for reading our article and your suggestion to move towards graph-based interfaces. I appreciate the inputs from all different disciplines and experiences. Unfortunately, I am not an expert in graph-based interfaces. However, from what I know and the hints in your letter I can imagine that this is a useful tool to conceptualize a new situation as suggested by you. Indeed it might also increase the understanding of impact category indicators if they are presented relational (in a web-like form). Until now, impact categories are presented as being independent although they might be dependent from each other.

However, if the software is supposed to go beyond the analysis of a building and provide an assessment of different options, the graph-based representation might be confusing and too complex for a normal user of LCA software tools. Again, this first assessment may be biased by my lack of experience with these tools and I am curious to see developments that test the features of graph-based interfaces. The eco-park example may be an example where a tool that supports exploration may be helpful.

In order to present impact assessment results, my colleagues and I developed the mixing triangle presentation (Hofstetter et al. 2000). This tool may be one step into the direction you suggest. It allows the decision maker to identify the change of rank order in results dependent on the relative weights given to three safeguard subjects. Some LCA software offers the presentation of the results in such a mixing triangle but I am unaware of its actual use and utility.

Hofstetter P., Braunschweig A., Mettier Th., Müller-Wenk R., Tietje O., The mixing triangle: correlation and graphical decision support for LCA-based comparisons, *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 3 (4) 2000:97-115

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