



Environmental Life Cycle Assessment of Goods and Services: An Input-Output Approach

Chris T. Hendrickson, Lester B. Lave, H. Scott Matthews

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Environmental life cycle assessment is often thought of as cradle to grave and therefore as the most complete accounting of the environmental costs and benefits of a product or service. However, as anyone who has done an environmental life cycle assessment knows, existing tools have many problems: data is difficult to assemble and life cycle studies take months of effort. A truly comprehensive analysis is prohibitive, so analysts are often forced to simply ignore many facets of life cycle impacts. But the focus on one aspect of a product or service can result in misleading indications if that aspect is benign while other aspects pollute or are otherwise unsustainable. This book summarizes the EIO-LCA method, explains its use in relation to other life cycle assessment models, and provides sample applications and extensions of the model into novel areas. A final chapter explains the free, easy-to-use software tool available on a companion website. (www.eiolca.net) The software tool provides a wealth of data, summarizing the current U.S. economy in 500 sectors with information on energy and materials use, pollution and greenhouse gas discharges, and other attributes like associated occupational deaths and injuries. The joint project of twelve faculty members and over 20 students working together over the past ten years at the Green Design Institute of Carnegie Mellon University, the EIO-LCA has been applied to a wide range of products and services. It will prove useful for research, industry, and in economics, engineering, or interdisciplinary classes in green design.

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