

Posters

LCA in practice: Two case studies of LCA projects in industry.

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Poster Abstract

Explorations of the practice of LCA have been less numerous compared to conceptual descriptions of LCA. To counter the imbalance between a conceptual understanding of LCA in theory and that of LCA in practice, studies of LCA projects carried out in Swedish companies have been made. One of them is an LCA project in a chemical company. The project was run in 1993/1994 and was one of the company's first. It was later updated (in 1997) in order to help one of their customers. In addition, the findings from the case study in the chemical company are contrasted against findings from another case study on an LCA project run in 1996 in a telecommunications company in Sweden.

In these case studies, qualitative research methods are used: the LCA projects were studied through interviews, observations and documents (minutes of meetings at the company and company publications).

The case studies focus on how the LCA projects were organised, their role in the decision making process, and their part in the process of implementing LCA in the companies. For example, it is shown that the LCAs delivered more outcomes than expected, and thus acted as "learning devices" rather than as a "decision tool". Based on the case studies and literature, a general description of the LCA implementation process is developed inspired by institutionalisation theory. In the two cases, the presence of an "LCA entrepreneur" is notable. The strategies of this person are documented and analysed. The usefulness of LCA manuals is also discussed in the context of the two case studies.