



**Institute for Social and Economic Change**

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**Lecture by distinguished scholar as a part of Golden Jubilee**

**Life cycle assessment in an environmental and  
innovation policy context**

by

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***Abstract***

In the last two decades, Life Cycle Assessment has emerged as a framework not only for businesses and consumers to better understand the environmental impacts of their decisions and undertake voluntary action, but also one that could be used by policy makers to regulate pollution through standards and incentives indexed to life cycle emissions. Specific examples include the California Low Carbon Fuel Standard and the US Renewable Fuel Standard. However, since LCA was not specifically designed for such purposes, important questions about the general framework and methodology and proper form of use of LCA remain unresolved. Using a few specific emerging technologies and industries as case studies, I aim to present some general thoughts on both how LCA (and Industrial Ecology more broadly) can contribute more effectively to public policy, and also how LCA itself needs to evolve.