

MONOGRAFIE, STUDIA, ROZPRAWY

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Magdalena Rybaczewska-Błażejowska

**ECO-INNOVATION
AND ECO-EFFICIENCY
IN THE FRAME OF LIFE CYCLE
ASSESSMENT**



Politechnika Świętokrzyska

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Preface

Environmental degradation and resource scarcity, amongst the many problems related to socio-economic development, are of great importance. The negative impacts of anthropopressure, including the growing consumption of natural resources, emission of air, water and soil pollutants, and waste production, have intensified in the twentieth century as a result of industrialisation and growing consumption. In addition, these impacts do not form simple, linear connections, but a complicated networks, often having economic and social consequences. There arises a challenge of decoupling environmental pressure from economic growth.

Initially, environmental protection relied on corrective measures, implemented locally and focused on end-of-pipe technologies. In recent years, due to the growing problem of natural resources depletion, the approach towards environmental protection has changed radically. Currently, preventive measures, which focus on techniques related to environmental management, are at the forefront of environmental protection. One of such techniques is life cycle assessment. It enables a comprehensive analysis of potential environmental impacts, including the use of natural resources, throughout the entire life cycle of a product system, from the extraction of raw materials across production, delivery and use, up to end-of-life treatment, at both operational and strategic levels.

Due to the fact that life cycle assessment assesses and aggregates environmental impacts into one consistent framework, it can be applied in the frame of eco-innovation and eco-efficiency. Eco-innovation, an indispensable element of future economic growth, is related to the creation of new products and production processes that, within a life cycle perspective, reduces the pressure on the environment, particularly regarding the extraction of natural resources. Eco-efficiency is strongly correlated with eco-innovation, since it addresses the relationship between the environmental and economic performance of a product system and therefore can be applied in comparative analyses of technologies, sectors or economies. In addition, eco-efficiency at the meso- and macro-level is stimulated by eco-innovation at the micro-level and thus these two concepts are very closely intertwined. The eco-innovation studies known from the scientific literature are usually of a general nature covering the drivers, characteristics and

effects of eco-innovation of individual countries. The opposite is true when it comes to eco-efficiency. In this respect, studies known from the scientific literature are usually of a detailed nature and concern a selected group of technologies, products or enterprises. Both, eco-innovation and eco-efficiency are relatively young research fields and, as many authors argue, they are still in their infancy.

This monograph presents author's own approaches to eco-innovation measurement at the micro-level, concerning an individual enterprise, and eco-efficiency assessment at the meso- and macro-level, concerning regions and sectors. The discussion on methodological approaches to eco-efficiency and eco-innovation is preceded by 3 chapters. Chapter 1, entitled *Life cycle assessment as a measuring technique*, provides a general introduction to life cycle assessment and includes a discussion of its structure and possible areas of application. Chapter 2, entitled *The essence of eco-innovation*, provides the scientific background to the study on eco-innovation and thus outlines the existing definitions of eco-innovation, its distinct features, classification and measurement related to the findings of past research. Chapter 3, entitled *The essence of eco-efficiency*, provides the scientific background to the study on eco-efficiency and thus explores the main characteristics of eco-efficiency, typology of the eco-efficiency indicators and the advancement in eco-efficiency quantification.

Chapter 4, entitled *A novel methodology of eco-innovation measurement*, provides the justification of the methodology formulation and presents the methodology itself, its attributes and the applicability. It proves that the proposed methodology for eco-innovation measurement allows the identification and prioritisation of environmental impacts of products and the accompanying production processes from a life cycle and the supply chain perspective. Chapter 5, entitled *A novel methodology of eco-efficiency assessment*, provides the most up-to-date review of the joint application of life cycle assessment and data envelopment analysis to eco-efficiency assessment, formulates author's own approach to eco-efficiency assessment and demonstrates its potential areas of applicability. It proves that the proposed methodology for eco-efficiency assessment allows the direct and indirect environmental impacts of regions and sectors to be quantified from a life cycle perspective, including upstream and downstream processes. I strongly believe that the presented approaches, both based on life cycle assessment, provide transparent benchmarks for assessing environmental performance, which, in turn, will contribute to the transformation of enterprises towards circular business models and development of regions and sectors that are resource responsible. I wish you pleasant reading.

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