

## Epilogue: The Future of LCM

### Life Cycle Management's Audacious Challenge

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This fictional dialog is set in Darwin's kitchen in Downe, near London, where a thirty something carpenter is invited to take a break from modifying the specimen shelf and have a tea. Darwin, the eternal protagonist, remorseful that there remains no ink in his well, puts down his plume and places, admiringly, his acquaintance's toolbox on the table. Faustino, the somewhat reluctant counterpart, weary from the years of developing, making and using his instruments, eyes the fresh scones and is aware of his ironic role as an antagonist, as he begins to flip through a series of books on Life Cycle Management.

*Darwin, offering some marmalade and butter, "Life Cycle Management seems to be a measure, not so different as the amount of clothes you carry in a basket to do your laundry."*

*Faustino, fitting in quite well and pouring tea for both, "Perhaps, though it lacks thresholds so, in the end, we have a monitoring system, quite suited for management and reporting indeed, though looking only at a part of the issue to be addressed. Can a firm, or organisation, really determine if their operations is sustainable by examining only this tiny subset? Can we have sustainable products in unsustainable communities?"*

*Darwin, moving his attention from the table and rising, "Such a nice set of tools, each piece a masterpiece, as if you were in a previous life a violin maker."*

*Faustino, happy to be tasting the still steaming hot breakfast and nodding that he had never produced musical instruments, "There are many useful objects in the toolbox, Charles, the art is how one combines them. Perhaps your analogy to the violins we make today quite a good one, as there is no standardization. Possession of all of Stradivari's tools, which we do have by the way, cannot permit even the most skilled modern craftsman duplicate the sound of their old violins."*

*Darwin, standing still and looking firmly at Faustino, "A poignant observation, almost beautiful in its simplicity. What then, is it that is unquantifiable, in the combination of these tools which is the future of Life Cycle Management?"*

*Faustino, returning the stare and handing over an article, "The concert master, the conductor, the orchestra, of course! The coordination of LCM can only be defined politically. Though some may argue, I like this concept by the young academic Finkbeiner (handing a conference preceding to Darwin), who basically says we can eliminate the necessity to assess, and hence micro-manage, if taxation is fair within an environmental life cycle perspective. It is also a process*

that all stakeholders, from individuals to public organizations to firms can influence and is compatible with the market system."

*Darwin, rotating his head, half in acknowledgment half indicating he is still pondering the idea, "I would like to try another analogy, closer to 'home', so to speak. Evolution is a concept and its quality is not that it defines how one species derives from another, but its flexibility and the overall acceptance of the idea and how that changes the practices."*

*Faustino, completing his breakfast and nodding, "Absolutely, the toolbox is really an instrument to collect with. It is the tools that develop and had we had this conversation a generation ago, much of what fascinates you with this 'basket' would have been different, or not there at all ..."*

*Darwin, interrupting and continuing directly, "...and how the tools evolve, and combine with others is the key."*

*Faustino, taking back his monologue, "Yes, rather like life cycle costing mating with societal life cycle assessment."*

*Darwin, pleased at the power of his friend's conversation, though surprised, "So, strong genes, this is your analogy to sustainable development?"*

*Faustino, looking out the window at the magnificent green of the Summer countryside, "Indeed, strong genes though in a mixed pool. The genetic analogy is a good one, as disease concentrates in isolated gene pools. That is why such a large portion of the Maldivian women have sickle cell anemia. So, we need strong tools though cannot over rely on any one."*

*Darwin, upset at himself less for the loss of a point than in the threat of Global Warming, "Of all paradises, those 1190 inhabited islands, spread over several magnificent atolls, none more than four meters above sea level, seem, unjustly, to be the first to be threatened."*

*Faustino, now taking the thread without delay, "We now pass, in many parts of the world, from Winter to Summer. Man made activity influences not only the species but also a season. Humanity has made Spring extinct! But do not misinterpret me, I am not here to point fingers. Be it consumption that pulls production and generates pollution or products which create demand, companies cannot be sustainable, though communities can, as long as resist the devilish temptation to export their waste and fly in products, even food, from the other side of the world, where much of the burden lies."*

*Darwin, returning to his chair and finishing his tea though still fully engaged, "Companies do Life Cycle Management! Have you forgotten?"*

*Faustino, pleased that there is a splash of tea left, "Yes, though firms need an almost unprecedented coordination with their supply chain otherwise all they are doing is monitoring and reporting. Lets get back to a subject on more solid ground. The tools in this box, the assessment tools in your book, which are the most appropriate, and validated sorry to repeat myself, will survive. You call this survival of the fittest and that is not inconsistent with market forces. Here, I have fixed your pen."*

*Darwin, in admiration, and almost speechless, "And with a new color ink, how can I thank you?"*

*Faustino, smiling, "You have and will again I am sure. It is an ink I extract from the forest. Rather less forceful than the Asian indigo we are used to, though local." Looking straight into Darwin's eyes, "Charles, use your influence, we all must."*

*Darwin, cleaning the table and in full reflection though with a humorous intonation, "So my reading was as fruitless as your scone! The marmalade is not at from these parts and we would need much more summer indeed to have oranges on this wonderful island so warmed by the Gulf stream." Standing and looking out the window with an arm around Faustino's shoulder, "The future of LCM is as a strong concept, filled with ever-changing and evolving tools? You flatter me to equate LCM to Darwinism."*

*Faustino, quietly, "I know there is pressure for quick solutions. What Life Cycle Management can assess, and moni-*

*tor, creates a historic data base and one which requires concerted action. Our tools may make better, more environmentally friendly instruments, but it is only a green orchestra which will save us."*

*Darwin, so pleased to have spent the morning in thought and learning, and shaking hands as Faustino is at the doorstep, "Your namesake sold his soul to the Devil. It is ironic that what you bring is, essentially, a manifesto, though an environmental one at that."*

*Faustino, putting on his wool socks, "I ask us to have faith in a process, one that will involve and be lead by political action. However, I ask us not to follow but to join this action and to participate locally. Be involved in your village, town or city structures and become the politicians we need to carry us forward. Interact with firms and, through your work, help companies share data that permit us to reduce burdens and identify the thresholds below which they must be decreased. You know better than I that we must catch up to our followers and our followers want easy to understand indicators which will let them do the right thing."*

*Darwin, almost at the top of his voice to Faustino, descending the path towards to street, with a tone of celebration in his voice, "We will be good leaders!"*

*Faustino waves and leaves a letter in the mailbox. A day later, Darwin opens it to find a recipe for preserves which can be made completely from what is extracted locally. On the reverse side is Faustino's handwritten note, "Have the courage to know that change in our consumption and production patterns requires audacity and not risk. Understanding the difference will go a long way towards sustainability and in how Life Cycle Management defines itself."*

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