Part I

Understanding Sustainability Transitions

In the first part of this book, the focus is on the key approaches that are developed to understand sustainability transitions and to conceptualize processes of socio-technical change. Chapters 2–7 in this part share a commitment to understanding change as something that cannot be reduced to (simple) technological substitutions or singular policy mandates, but instead requires fundamental shifts across technological and social domains. In engaging with these matters, the different approaches grapple with the relationship between agency and structure, though they place different emphasis on where the key leverage points for change might lie. Each approach contributes a unique perspective while reinforcing a common theme: that sustainable futures emerge from the intricate dance between innovation, established practices and broader societal dynamics.

In Chapter 2, the Multi-level perspective will be introduced, where transitions are understood through the interactions between niche innovations, socio-technical regimes and the landscape. It offers a structured approach to understanding how transitions occur across different societal levels. In Chapter 3, the focus is on transition governance, with special attention given to the concept of Transitions Management, the chapter highlights the role of institutions and policy-making in guiding transitions. Further, in Chapter 4, the evolution of innovation systems will be discussed, with a focus on Technological Innovation Systems (TIS) as a framework for understanding the dynamics around emerging (sustainable) technologies. After that, Chapter 5 introduces Strategic Niche Management and explores how protected spaces can be created to nurture emerging innovations until they are robust enough to compete in the mainstream market and thereby contribute to sustainability transitions. In Chapter 6, the focus will be on social practices, where the chapter examines how everyday practices and routines influence sustainability transitions. Finally, in Chapter 7, the concept of Deep Transitions will be introduced, examining how multiple, interconnected systems undergo fundamental shifts over extended periods. By analysing long-term

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patterns of socio-technical change, it provides insights into the co-evolution of systems and the cumulative impact of multiple transitions.

By covering these foundational concepts, Part I equips readers with a fundamental theoretical grounding to understand the complexities of sustainability transition dynamics. This foundation is essential for analysing how profound changes in socio-technical systems can be conceptualized and facilitated, setting the stage for the more in-depth examinations in the subsequent parts of the book.

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