Preface

This book is the result of a joint effort of the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the Free University (Vrije Universiteit) in Amsterdam, and the university's Institute for Environmental Studies. This has led to a thorough search for the potential contribution of evolutionary economics to understanding innovations and transitions in the context of energy and sustainable development. This in turn has given rise to practical suggestions as to the role of the government and the design of public policies aimed at making a transition to a sustainable development. Current policies in a number of relevant areas are critically examined against the background of lessons learned from the application of evolutionary economics. In addition, three specific energy technologies – namely, fuel cells, nuclear fusion and photovoltaic energy – are examined in detail within the adopted evolutionary-economic framework. A glossary of the evolutionary-economic terminology employed here is included at the end of the book.

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It is our hope that this book will serve as a stimulus for future research on the implications of evolutionary economic thought for environmental policy and transition management.

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