

## Summary

The global energy and climate crisis has prompted the world to accelerate energy transition and move toward clean and green alternatives. Energy transition involves a chain comprising many links: political will, regional and global interests, policy instruments, finance, energy providers and companies, delivery systems, technology and innovation, and end-users. With a focus on Sri Lanka, this dissertation examines post-war societies' prospects of achieving energy transition socially, equitably and positively and explores potential pathways and associated challenges.

This dissertation explores the motives, strategies, and conditions accompanying energy transitions in a post-war context. Understanding how such initiatives unfold in a post-war state is a complex task requiring research and insight into processes and mechanisms taking place at multiple levels. This dissertation addresses this task through a research design exploring energy transition from three analytical perspectives: the local, national, and global. The local level explores grassroots issues relating to justice and equity from the perspective of societies in former war zones. The national-level perspective directs attention to policymaking and democratic aspects of governance concerning energy transitions. The global level perspective explores geopolitical issues and conditions for energy transitions.

These three analytical levels deliver insights into how people react to new wind and solar farms in their area (local level), how spatial concentrations of energy policymaking emerge and evolve (national level), and the geopolitical conditions that enable or hinder the development of clean energy transitions (global level). Particular attention is devoted to analysing the interactions between levels and the spatial setting encompassing the energy transition. Much current research on energy transitions in the Global South builds on a particular set of theoretical approaches, including transition studies or governance studies. This dissertation nuances and enriches the kaleidoscope of theoretical and conceptual thinking by adding other perspectives aimed at fostering critical thought when engaging with energy transitions.

Much, if not most, emphasis in the energy transition discourse is placed on new technological solutions like solar photovoltaics, digitalisation of electricity infrastructure, and electric vehicles. Such technological interventions can result in unintended consequences for energy poverty, justice, and democracy, not only but especially in the

Global South if not given careful consideration. A range of social, scientific, and philosophical work has emerged on energy transition in the Global South in the last decade. However, three gaps have been identified in the extant literature: 1) Much of it is concerned with the effect of transition at the (inter)national energy systems level, with less attention given to the political and ethical consequences these transitions could have on people's everyday lives. 2) The literature falls short of interrogating the unintended consequences of (rapidly) ramping up energy transition in post-war settings. 3) Most work on energy transition has shown minimal engagement with geopolitical aspects, which are of particular relevance to the Global South.

The research questions are: How is the energy transition unfolding in Sri Lanka locally, nationally, and globally? How are energy transition dynamics interlinked to equity and justice in post-war Sri Lanka? What characterizes and explains policymaking on energy transition in Sri Lanka? How do geopolitics impact the post-war energy transition in Sri Lanka? How do Sri Lanka's climate commitments and post-war economic opportunities shape energy transition policies? These questions have been explored in more detail through five papers and from different vantage points. The papers explain and demonstrate the complexity of energy transition from a post-war Global South context. The dissertation with its associated papers is based on extensive fieldwork conducted in Sri Lanka.

The dissertation has four principal conclusions. First, the starting point for any energy transition, especially in a post-war environment, should be the understanding that energy injustice is produced historically, geographically and materially. In other words, energy inequity, injustice, and vulnerability are far more complex than matters of technology, prices and income and involve structural and socio-cultural conditions that have evolved and will continue to do so, positively or negatively, over time and space.

Second, the Sri Lankan case demonstrates that there are four key prerequisites for successful and equitable energy transition in the developing world: 1) A localised participatory approach with a better understanding of and respect for varied local realities. 2) A consistent, inclusive policy built on improved inter-sectoral cooperation. 3) Political willingness to move beyond outdated or colonial understandings of development. 4) Financial models and mechanisms that disadvantage the poorest need to be replaced with models that harness local skills, know-how, business and management to provide deprived communities with renewable energy and the added benefits of community improvements.

Third, responding to climate commitments while ensuring equitable energy necessitates including and recognising the different capabilities of the state and relevant actors. Failure to do so can lead to hollowed-out energy transitions, detaching de-carbonisation from energy security, impeding social and justice issues, and confining any action taken to a minimal and even undesirable level with regard to energy transition. Whilst issues of carbon lock-in, path dependency and inertia are found in many developed and developing countries, their impact impedes the attention given to ‘newer’ aspects of the energy transition, such as justice and equity. This highlights the uneven distribution of agency throughout Sri Lankan society. In a post-war context such as that of Sri Lanka, this may further hinder or raise opposition to positive energy transitions.

Fourth, the case of Sri Lanka indicates that the geopolitics of energy is at the forefront of reshaping external affairs and diplomatic relations. Sri Lanka’s dependence on external actors for energy, international finance, technologies and its climate commitments has made Sri Lanka’s energy transition a geopolitical battleground. Energy transitions are used by geopolitical actors for three essential purposes: 1) territorial control, where energy infrastructure becomes a route to geopolitical manifestations, 2) hegemony as part of grand strategies and initiatives and 3) influence, to gain specific control and to counter other actors’ influence. Developing countries have committed to high renewable energy targets, yet they miss them considerably. Energy has become a geopolitical battleground since countries have failed to build up indigenous capacity, recognise their own energy sources, and are in need of a long-term sustainable and coherent energy transition policy. If these issues are not addressed, they will become increasingly dependent on external actors that, in turn, could create monopolies, debt, political tension, security threats and policy challenges. By focusing on these factors, this dissertation studies the policy pathways and geopolitical dynamics of energy transition in post-war Sri Lanka and points out that clean and green are not always desirable.