Why union confederations matter in regions.

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Unions and Regional Change and development

Dual focus: Government roles in regional development
  – Strategic interventions
  – State-market

• Actor Empowerment?
  – Employers
  – Workers/Unions (secondary/marginal)
Confederations and Regions

Confederations
• One feature of unionism.
• Long history

Capacities
• Agents of mobilisation
• Agents of exchange (regulation)
• Agents of service provision
Research Methods and Context

1. Background: (Theoretical engagement and empirical study)
   a. Unions and Transition
   b. Skills and Opportunities

2. Opportunities and Barriers to Economic Development
   a. Documentary research: policies
   b. Interviews: 230+
   c. Scenario Workshops: 7
   d. Observation: limited meetings/consultation
Three Cases
Case One: Gippsland Region, Victoria, 2012

As Victoria’s energy system transitions to a low carbon economy:
- we will get our energy from a diverse range of renewable and fossil fuel resources
- our centralised electricity supply will become more dispersed
- our transmission and pipeline infrastructure will need to expand.

Energy infrastructure and resources in Victoria

Resources
- Gas
- Solar
- Wind
- Coal
- Potential Geothermal

Power Stations & Generators
- Wind
- Hydro
- Bioenergy
- Gas Generator
- Coal Generator

Other infrastructure
- Transmission Line
- Gas Pipeline
Case Two: Geelong: Region

- Old industries
- Agriculture and food
- Advanced manufacturing
- Health
- Education
- Transport and logistics and construction
- Disadvantaged
Case Three: Tasmania: The North West Coast

- Old industries
- Agriculture
- Agricultural processing
- Tourism
- Disadvantaged
What can unions do in relation to regional change and development, transition?
1. What should the union do? Firstly we have got to get our heads around it all and so we have an understanding, we then need to then get into a position where we have a clear direction of what we want, what we want as a union, ok. And then it might be, might not just be our union, it might be a number of unions who support a position. (ETU Organiser, 2008)

2. …we’ve got the people and we’ve got the skills here, but we need manufacturing type jobs or whatever type jobs that can turn around and utilise us here. (ETU delegate, 2011)
### Unions and regional transition: Geelong Region

| a. Major Industrial Unions – reasonably resourced | AMWU Environment Officer in Geelong, described Geelong's Austeng Engineering's move to produce small-scale wind generators as ‘a great example of a traditional manufacturer who have been willing to embrace clean technology and new opportunities’ (2011). |
| b. Geelong Trades Hall Council |
| c. Alliances – environment/job development |
Trade Unions without a confederation

1. Mainland unions and Tasmanian ones
   - Defence of members plant by plant
   - Workers’ Training Centre – Forest Industries Employment and Training Services
   - Unions-Tasmania – under-resourced/staffed

2. Unions-Tasmania (Confederation)

   ... all sorts of industries that the union movement needs to develop a strategy around, but you've got to find them first. There's no easy way of doing it, unless, of course, somebody at the plant puts their hand up ....

   ... There's in some ways a bit of an opportunity missed to train up some local activists or someone like that to actually go and be involved in those types of things.

   ... in the current environment it's unlikely that the individual unions would commit to an exercise of that kind. (Unions Tasmania leader, 2012)
Confederation: Organisation, Capacities and Purpose 1

1. Policy
   ‘… show me in the world where there's transition taking place? Always it's been the gate is shut first. Then they do regional development. What we want them to do is regional development first before the chain goes on the gate. (Gippsland Trades and Labour Council - GTLC leader, 2012).

2. Language
   ‘we need to present Gippsland as the [innovative agricultural] region and climate change is a plus for us …. (Gippsland Agricultural leader, 2012)

3. Meetings

4. Resources

5. Research

6. Alliances:
   - Local state
     ‘[Agricultural leader] has the experiences where manufacturing links with the farming industry. So there are links between all around’. (GTLC leader, 2012)
   - Other organisations
## Confederation: Organisation, Capacities and Purpose 2

1. Organisational base
   - Geelong Trades Hall Council: ‘There’s no plan [for the impacts of transition] and today we still don’t have [one]. There’s only gossip and knowledge and if you’re on G21 Lend [inter-council alliance, councillors, employers and the GTHC] you’ve got the ear of local members [politicians] and you're talking to all the organisers [union] and all the industries [employers]. You would get some idea of what’s going on but often that’s too delayed’ (GTHC leader, 2013)

2. Forums: State policies/Local forums

3. Narrative Frames: defensive, *ad hoc* and pessimistic
Confederations: A Framework for analysis

Organisation

Capacities

Purpose
Confederations and Regions

Three dimensions to consider:

1. Governance relations: Governments, employers, unions and citizens

2. Regional specificity

3. Organisation, Capacities and Purpose: confederations as umbrella/focus of union activity
THANK YOU