

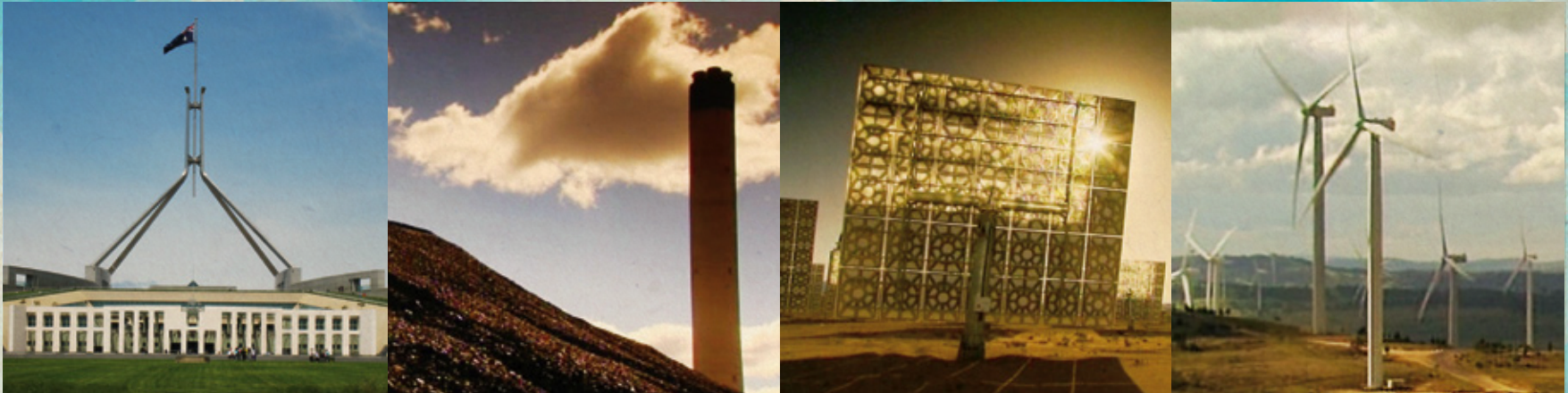
RESISTANCE & RESURGENCE

INTERMEDIARIES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ENERGY LANDSCAPE

Kerry Carmody^a, Paul Twomey^b

^a Environmental Humanities Group, School of Humanities and Languages, University of New South Wales, Australia

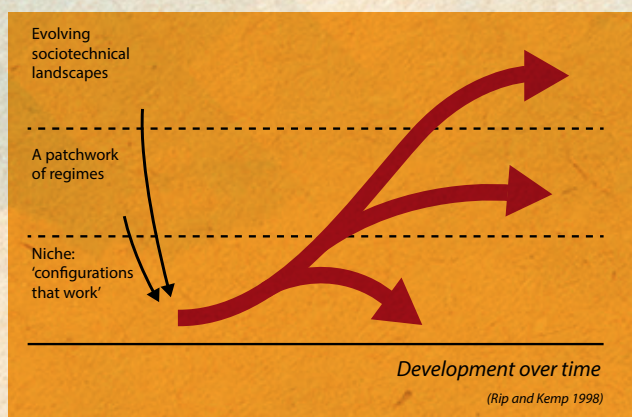
^b Low Carbon Living CRC, Faculty of Built Environment, University of New South Wales, Australia



The Australian political-industrial landscape is an extremely challenging environment for effecting a comprehensive transformation to sustainability in the energy system and beyond. Despite this, a number of initiatives are emerging that aim to contribute to a broad-based transformation of the energy system. Two case studies -- one regional (Uralla Zero Net Energy Town) and one urban (The Sydney Renewable Power Company) -- illustrate how opportunities are being pursued and the crucial role intermediary organizations play.

These case studies provide the opportunity to examine the often hidden work of intermediaries as they coordinate local projects, connect key actors and institutions and disseminate experience, knowledge and ideas. Focusing on the role of intermediaries provides important analytical and practical insight into both the dynamism and diversity of local initiatives, as well as their potential to influence broader outcomes in the contested niche regime space.

THE MULTI-LEVEL PERSPECTIVE



INTERMEDIARIES

"The extent to which a local project can have the capacity to influence the transformation of dominant, large, highly integrated infrastructures materially and institutionally, will depend to a considerable extent on the degree to which they can link with other key centers, actors and organizations. To do this they depend on intermediary organizations." (Guy et al 2011).

"Intermediary actors can be broadly defined as organizations or individuals engaging in work that involves connecting local projects with one another, with the wider world and, through this, helping to generate a shared institutional infrastructure and to support the development of the niche in question." (Hargreaves et al 2013).

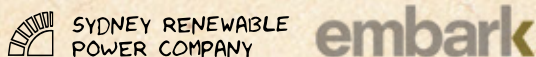
Key Roles

1. Framing and coordinating local projects
2. Brokering and managing partnerships
3. Aggregation and transfer of knowledge
4. Establishing an institutional infrastructure.

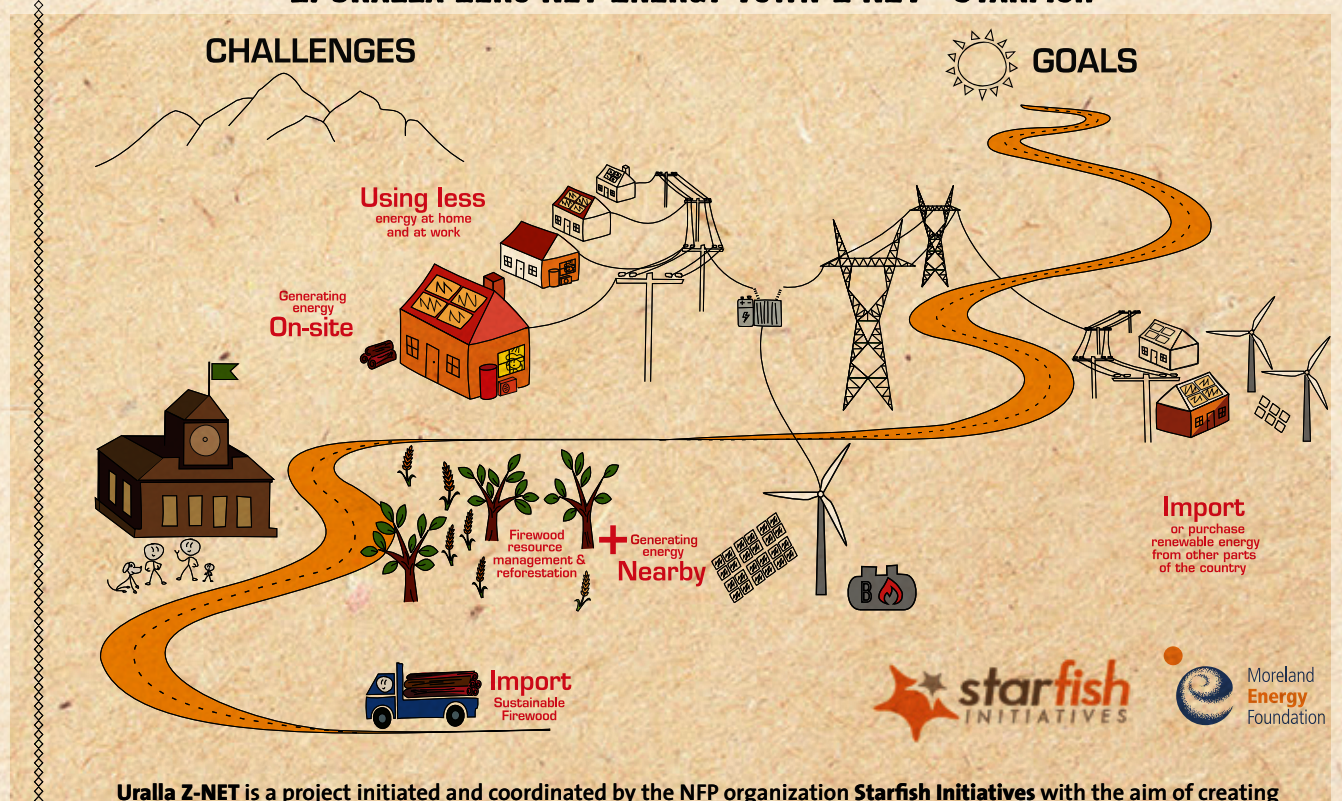
CASE STUDIES

1. SYDNEY RENEWABLE POWER CO. – EMBARK

The **Sydney Renewable Power Co.** is an unlisted public company limited by shares, established by the NFP organization **Embark** as a vehicle for innovative community energy projects in urban areas of Sydney. Their first project, a collaboration with the multinational Lend Lease Corporation, involves the installation of a 520 kW solar PV rooftop array at the redeveloped International Convention Centre Sydney. The project will enable local community members who do not possess the circumstances to install their own solar PV to participate in the renewable energy sector while also receiving a sound financial return. The initial shareholder offering will be launched in late 2015 and the project completed in 2016.



2. URALLA ZERO NET ENERGY TOWN Z-NET – STARFISH



Uralla Z-NET is a project initiated and coordinated by the NFP organization **Starfish Initiatives** with the aim of creating Australia's first fully renewable energy based town. The Z-NET Blueprint for this small regional town combines energy efficiency measures, local renewable energy production and the importation of renewable energy. It was developed by the community energy specialists **Moreland Energy Foundation** in consultation with the local community.

FINDINGS

Intermediaries – a window into processes of socio-technical transformation.

1. Framing and coordinating local projects

Different kinds of local communities are aligned with different kinds of intermediary organizations and projects: well bounded regional community (Uralla) working with a loosely structured intermediary organization (Starfish) on a multifaceted community energy project (ZNET) cf. loosely bounded urban community (central Sydney) engaged by a tightly structured intermediary organization (Embark) through a mono-focal community investment project.

2. Brokering and managing partnerships

Intermediaries simultaneously work within and beyond local projects, at times transgressing the boundaries between niche and regime levels: Starfish and Enova, Australia's first community owned energy retailer.

3. Aggregation and transfer of knowledge

Not only local knowledge, but products, processes and practices are abstracted by intermediaries and circulated across multiple projects: community energy legal structure (created by Embark) and ZNET blueprint (created by MEFL).

4. Establishing an institutional infrastructure

Creating an institutional infrastructure as a repository for the exchange of knowledge is particularly challenging in the absence of a well-established community energy niche: the Coalition for Community Energy (C4CE) is one such body.