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Intermediating climate change: the evolving strategies, interactions and impacts of neglected “climate intermediaries”

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ABSTRACT

Climate change governance systems comprise a wide variety of actors. Here, we introduce “climate intermediaries” as one potentially influential yet often neglected type of actor, behaving as “go-betweens” that connect different types of actors and/or governance levels. This Special Issue analyses two under-researched forms of climate intermediaries: those that exist for reasons unconnected to climate change, and new or uncommon forms of climate intermediaries that have yet to be examined. In this Introduction article, we present the conceptual framework employed within our Special Issue. We begin by problematizing the definition of intermediaries within climate research before clarifying our own relational understanding of “climate intermediaries”. A climate intermediary is thus a role, assumed by any type of actor, while potentially assuming other roles when interacting with other actors. Second, we summarize the existing research on the strategies of intermediaries, the interactions that may exist between them, and the impacts of these actors on the climate policy process. These three foci then guide our three research questions for the Special Issue. Third, we examine existing research on myriad types of intermediaries, such as interest groups, faith-based actors, and funding bodies. Finally, we provide an overview of the contributions included within the issue.

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Non-state, civil society, and local actors have been analysed as potentially influential actors for designing, as well as enacting, environmental policies (e.g. Bäckstrand et al. 2017; Nasiritousi, Hjerpe, and Linnér 2016; Newell 2006; Tosun, Levario et al. 2023). To date, however, much of this literature has been focused on “the usual suspects”, most commonly environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS), and with an emphasis on bodies within economically developed countries (e.g. Berny and Rootes 2018; McDonald 2016; Wurzel and Connelly 2010). In comparison to ENGOS,

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less attention has been paid to the environmental activities of, for example, trade unions (Hampton 2018) and industry bodies or businesses (Brulle 2018; Eaton and Day 2020), especially in economically developing contexts. There is a need for greater research regarding actors that are not high-profile bodies, yet work towards climate action behind – or rather “between” – the scenes.

Particularly evident is the gap in the climate policy literature concerning intermediaries (see Folke et al. 2005 on “bridging organizations”). Specifically, we lack a common conceptualization of these actors that can be applied across climate policy contexts, be it within local communities, as part of international negotiations, or elsewhere. In general, intermediaries are defined by their “in-betweenness” (Moss 2009, 1481). Myriad conceptualizations exist that refine this understanding of intermediaries, especially when focusing on intermediaries as *political* entities (e.g. Zarembeg, Gurza Lavallo, and Guarneros-Meza 2017, 10–13), but there is limited clarity as to how we define them within climate governance. Kivimaa et al. (2019) typologize intermediaries within the sustainability transitions literature, but this field pertains to a different and much broader (albeit overlapping) environmental challenge than climate change (see Farstad 2018; Tobin 2017, 42). Regarding climate change, research on intermediation is often focused at the subnational level, rather than climate intermediation as a broader phenomenon (Hodson and Marvin 2012; Hodson, Marvin, and Bulkeley 2013; Luque-Ayala, Marvin, and Bulkeley 2018; Moloney and Fünfgeld 2015). Meanwhile, the literature on intermediaries beyond environmental action often understands these actors to be state-orchestrated regulatory bodies (e.g. Abbott, Levi-Faur, and Snidal 2017), whereas we note that intermediaries acting on climate action need not be state-led or regulatory in character, potentially resulting in marked differences in their activities.

In short, there is a lack of clarity around conceptualizations of intermediary actors when they are operating specifically on climate change at any level of governance. This article seeks to make a conceptual contribution by problematizing how intermediaries are understood within research on climate governance, and to provide a working definition of “climate intermediaries”.

We propose the following definition: *climate intermediaries* are “go-betweens” that operate between different types of actors and/or between levels of governance, acting directly or indirectly to affect stakeholders’ behaviour and/or policy goals on climate change. Thus, this definition is inherently relational; any type of actor may be a climate intermediary. With such a wide range of potential cases, we propose that research has particularly neglected two types of climate intermediaries that merit investigation. First, some climate intermediaries do not exist *because* of their commitment to climate action, for example religious groups or trade unions, but may seek to engage with climate change for other reasons, and as a result, have often been overlooked by research (for exceptions, see Bomberg and Hague 2018; Hampton 2018). Second, some climate intermediaries, such as climate funding bodies, have been purposefully established to deal with climate change, but are such recent and/or uncommon innovations that little research has been conducted about them (for exceptions, see Hodson and Marvin 2012; Howells 2006; Obydenkova, Rodrigues Vieira, and Tosun 2021; Polzin, von Flotow, and Klerkx 2016). Thus, this special issue examines *neglected climate intermediaries* from around the world.

As well as the need to define climate intermediaries as a precise concept, there is scarce understanding of the strategies such actors may employ, or how they coordinate, cooperate, and/or compete with other actors, or the nature and extent of their influence on the policy process. For example, Wolf et al. (2021, 1) note that there is a lack of in-depth research on intermediaries, particularly on their successful strategies for bringing about environmental action. Kivimaa et al. (2019, 12) call for “further empirical insight” to identify “the most useful strategies (...) for supporting transformative change through intermediary actors”. Neither of these studies relate directly to climate action. Indeed, although scholars working on sustainability or energy transitions have begun to develop common frameworks and conceptual foundations regarding intermediaries (see Kivimaa et al. 2019), these conceptualizations rarely emphasize intermediaries’ tactics, or the inequalities between actors within the policy process. Meanwhile, much of the research on intermediaries’ strategies more broadly draw from investigation of *lobbying* (see Awad 2020), rather than the actions of climate intermediaries, which may differ.

Thus, we seek to explore: (1) the political strategies of climate intermediaries; (2) the interactions between these actors; and (3) the impacts of these behaviours on the climate policy process. By employing these guiding research foci, this Special Issue embraces the complex interconnections that exist within climate governance networks, and the influence of climate intermediaries on intersecting dynamics of the policy process.

We have structured this Introduction article as follows. In Section 1, we provide a detailed definition of climate intermediaries that is used throughout the Special Issue. Section 2 then outlines existing research on the strategies, interactions, and impacts of intermediaries working within climate governance systems so far. The gaps in this body of literature provide the foundations for our three research questions. Third, we summarize the existing literature on actors that we suggest can now be understood as climate intermediaries, alongside early findings of their impacts on the policy process. Finally, Section 4 provides an overview of the contributions in the Special Issue, which examine climate intermediaries in Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, and the UK. The Special Issue deliberately provides a broad examination of dynamics in different policy contexts, including intermediation between the local and national, between the national and international, and between different types of actors, yet finds commonalities and patterns across these contributions. As such, we feel confident that the conceptualization of “climate intermediaries” that we introduce here can provide new insights for understanding the empirical realities of the climate policy process, and thus offers a useful new conceptual tool for scholars to examine within future research.

1. Defining climate intermediaries

Intermediaries have long been analysed within policy studies. So much so, one may question the utility of advancing a further conceptualization of intermediaries in the climate policy process. Yet, we suggest that such a contribution is needed. There exists a range of competing interpretations of how to conceptualize and typologize intermediaries, depending on the scholarly focus of individual studies (see Hodson, Marvin, and Bulkeley 2013, 1404). Such a lack of clarity stems from studies approaching intermediaries

from different conceptual foundations, and from the wide-ranging types and roles of intermediaries that can shape different policy arenas (e.g. Folke et al. 2005; Moss 2009; Zaremborg, Gurza Lavalle, and Guarneros-Meza 2017). Thus, although we can promulgate that intermediary actors may play influential roles within complex climate governance structures, the simple task of defining such actors is not straightforward. Here, we problematize the lack of a shared understanding of intermediary actors regarding climate action, before offering our definition of “climate intermediaries” as a specific form of intermediary.

In the field of sustainability transitions studies, Kivimaa et al. (2019) conduct a systematic review of 32 articles, and typologize transition intermediaries into five ideal types, according to five dimensions, namely these actors’ processes of emergence, contexts, goals, normative positions, and development over time. While consideration of these five dimensions is of relevance to this Special Issue, sustainability transitions represent a potentially overlapping but distinct policy problem to climate change. Indeed, these fields crucially entail different actor combinations, incentives, and may even involve competing interests (Farstad 2018; Tobin 2017, 42). Moreover, as Kivimaa et al. (2019, 1072–1073) note in their suggestions for future research, there is a lack of understanding around the “(political) strategies [that] are needed to guarantee ... intermediary functions will be carried out”, and the “battles within and between intermediaries”. We respond directly to these calls for new research on intermediaries’ strategies for securing influence, and on the neglected relationships between these actors and others. Thus, there is a need for a specific understanding of intermediaries acting on climate change, from which we can then examine their strategies, interactions, and impacts.

As outlined in the Introduction to this article, *climate intermediaries* are “go-betweens’ that operate between different types of actors and/or between levels of governance, acting directly or indirectly to affect stakeholders’ behaviour and/or policy goals on climate change”. Let us break down that definition. We understand climate intermediaries to be “go-betweens” by building on the work of Abbott, Levi-Faur, and Snidal (2017) on regulatory intermediaries. According to Abbott, Levi-Faur, and Snidal (2017, 19), regulatory intermediaries stand between policymakers and their policy targets. We expand this understanding of regulatory intermediaries to propose that climate intermediaries can intermediate between multiple types of stakeholders, not necessarily only between policymakers and their policy targets, and aim to change the respective behaviours of these stakeholders by interacting with them.

Climate intermediaries’ stakeholders include policymakers (politicians or bureaucrats) and/or policy targets (citizens or non-state groups) alike. Furthermore, climate intermediaries need not be groups comprising multiple actors; a single individual could be a climate intermediary within a given context (in this issue, see Eitan and Fischhendler 2022). Thus, their status is inherently *relational*; any type of actor identifying or identified as a climate intermediary can be one, depending on the nature of their interactions with other actors. For example, traditionally one may not think of a football club as a climate intermediary. If, however, a football coach were to petition the local council for better flood protection of their football fields and/or encouraged the fans and employees of the club to take climate measures, we would define the club, and the coach in particular, as a climate intermediary. Climate intermediaries may operate between levels of

governance, such as the local, national and global, and/or between actors within the same or differing levels of governance. A single climate intermediary may be orchestrating multiple such bidirectional relationships at once. Through this definition of climate intermediaries, each article in this Special Issue analyses the dynamics shaping the climate policy process from a shared understanding of climate intermediaries.

Intermediaries are traditionally incorporated into a policy process because they possess relevant capacities. Regarding regulatory intermediaries, Abbott and Snidal (2009) identify four categories of capacity, which in turn have been summarized by Abbott, Levi-Faur, and Snidal (2017, 20–21). The first category is *operational capacity*, which includes the ability to deliver services (also as part of policy delivery) and facilitate the policy targets' compliance with policy. Second, intermediaries can possess specialized *knowledge* about policy-relevant norms and how to facilitate the implementing of policies. Third, intermediaries are *independent* from the policymakers and/or the policy targets. Fourth, intermediaries increase the *legitimacy* of policymaking because they aggregate and articulate the interests of members or a wider range of stakeholders. In this Special Issue, we specifically analyse neglected climate intermediaries, to discover whether they demonstrate different or additional capacities beyond those that have already been conceptualized by Abbott, Levi-Faur, and Snidal (2017) regarding regulatory intermediaries. To make this contribution, we thus need to understand the strategies, interactions and impacts of intermediaries that have been identified by research so far.

2. Our three research questions: strategies, interactions, and impacts

As we introduce the concept of climate intermediaries in this Introduction, there is no direct research to underpin our understanding of these actors' political strategies. Nevertheless, several literatures can provide early insights, which each underpin our three Research Questions (RQs).

RQ1: What are the strategies of climate intermediaries for shaping climate action?

First, the literature on lobbying provides a useful starting point, and – while not specific to intermediaries – posits that actors may assume different strategies according to level of access and desired end goals. For example, *inside-lobbying* is based on personal contacts with bureaucrats and politicians (Knill and Tosun 2020). In contrast, *outside-lobbying* includes media activities and campaigning in favour of or against a particular policy (see Doyle 2013). We may expect non-institutionalized intermediaries, such as minority religious groups in certain countries, to pursue outside-lobbying as they likely lack the personal contacts to conduct inside-lobbying (in this issue, see Tobin et al. 2023). Second, inside – and outside-lobbying assume that an actor seeks to influence *policymakers*, neglecting the strategies of those who circumvent policymakers entirely (e.g. “quiet activism”, see Steele et al. 2021). That literature likewise neglects the strategies of regulatory intermediaries established *by* policymakers, for which lobbying is less pertinent. Alternatively, climate intermediaries may intermediate entirely between non-state actors, without engagement with state actors, according to their strategic preferences and goals. In short, a climate intermediary will devise strategies according to the Political Opportunity Structure they perceive themselves as facing (Kitschelt 1986). In doing so, climate intermediaries may juggle their strategies on other issues

or towards or actors. Indeed, climate intermediaries may play a form of “two-level game” (see Putnam 1988) with those bodies they are intermediating between, where the expected actions or preferences of one group influences the strategies they employ with another. More research is therefore needed to determine the strategies of neglected climate intermediaries for shaping climate policymaking.

RQ2: How and why do different climate intermediaries, overlap, coordinate, collaborate and compete with one another?

Our second research question pertains to the ways in which intermediaries interact with other actors. Again, climate intermediaries are a new concept, but existing literature on intermediaries can help to establish early expectations. Intermediaries can act as agents between different parts of society (Fehren 2010), as well as interacting with each other (Huber-Stearns, Goldstein, and Duke 2013, 105). Furthermore, the nature of these interactions is rendered more complex because intermediary actors can assume several roles at once, involving numerous relationships with multiple other bodies (Raj-Reichert 2020, 655). Thus, intermediaries hold the potential to play significant collaborative roles within climate policy networks. Relatedly, but in contrast, they can also play obstructive roles within networks of actors, and pursue outcomes that are not necessarily beneficial or preferred (Page and Fuller 2021). Indeed, for example, intermediaries may disrupt or block action by behaving as gatekeepers (Hiteva 2017), or “privileged partners” (Sovacool et al. 2020).

RQ3: What are the impacts of climate intermediaries?

Our final question pertains to the impacts of climate intermediaries’ activities. Again, related literatures may help us to develop expectations. First, Burns and Tobin (2016) suggest three main measures for identifying change in environmental protection, namely through changes to budgets (“means”), policy outputs, and policy outcomes. We suggest that all three may apply here: climate intermediaries’ activities may lead to changes in budgets allocated to climate action; they may impact upon the number (“density”) or ambitiousness (“intensity”) of policy outputs (see Bauer and Knill 2012); and/or they may impact directly on changes in the outcomes to policies, which in this case would mean direct reductions in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.

Second, Underdal’s (2002) exploration of environmental regime effectiveness includes a different meaning of “outcome” to mean changes in human behaviour. Climate intermediaries may impact upon human behaviour by, for example, changing values at a community or population level around the salience or social acceptance of climate action.

Third, regarding impacts within networked governance, Sørensen and Torfing (2009: 242) highlight six features of effective governance, namely capacities to: develop a shared understanding of a policy problem; generate feasible policy options; avoid excessive costs (overlapping somewhat with “means”, above); demonstrate effective policy implementation; adjust to changing demands and conditions; and facilitate future cooperation (see Farstad et al., in this issue). Climate intermediaries may pursue any such impacts.

Finally, we may consider changes in the representation of diverse voices within a policy community. A lack of representativeness can lead to multiple policy challenges, including a marginalization of less powerful groups such as indigenous communities (e.g. Figueroa Huencho 2022), tokenistic or instrumentalist policies that are ultimately

ineffectual, and the permanence of gatekeepers who are unwilling to introduce the policy experimentation needed to address climate change (Voß and Schroth 2018). Any of these potential impacts, and more beyond those covered by the above existing research, may be pursued by climate intermediaries deliberately, or may manifest unintentionally.

3. Types of climate intermediaries

To analyse the strategies, interactions and impacts of climate intermediaries, it is prudent to acknowledge the wide diversity of types of such actors. As explained earlier, there cannot be a finite list of types of climate intermediaries, as any actor identified or identifying as such an actor may be one, depending on the relational nature, and intent of, their interactions. Here, as a springboard for future research on climate intermediaries, we summarize the existing literature on the activities of the following types of intermediaries within the climate policy process:

- Interest groups
 - (a) “Public” interest groups: e.g. E/NGOs; social or community movements; activist networks
 - (b) “Private” interest groups: e.g. business groups; trade unions
- Faith-Based Actors
- Media outlets
- Funding bodies
- Political parties

Not all of these intermediaries are analysed by the articles of the Special issue. However, an overview of previous research on some of the different types of intermediaries is included here, as it allows us to identify potential explanations from research to date for our research questions and the research gaps explored in the Special Issue.

First, *interest groups* are organizations that seek to bring public policies more in line with the interests of their members, via a variety of strategies. In the literature, they go by numerous names, such as lobby groups, interest associations, pressure groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social movements and activist networks (Knill and Tosun 2020). Such interest groups may be “public” or “private” regarding the goals they seek to achieve, and their tactics for pursuing these goals. For example, NGOs, are “public” interest groups that seek to pursue goals that are not exclusively limited to their members and are usually non-profit organizations. NGOs, especially ENGOs, have widely researched within the existing literature on intermediaries and climate governance (Berny and Rootes 2018; McDonald 2016; Wurzel and Connelly 2010).

Yet, NGOs need not be E/NGOs to intermediate regarding climate change; they may exist for reasons disconnected to climate change, yet prioritize climate action as a secondary goal. The strategies employed by E/NGOs can vary markedly, according to the forms of action they employ and the source of their resources (Diani and Donati 1999). As E/NGOs are formally constituted, some may enjoy easier access to policymakers due to their perceived legitimacy, potentially leading to inside-lobbying being a preferred strategy for policy change. Others, such as Greenpeace, employ protest and civil disobedience strategies despite their formally constituted status (Carter 2018). Nevertheless, E/NGOs

pursuing disruptive outside-lobbying strategies may as they institutionalize over time, alongside increases in their incomes and degree of professionalization (Van Der Heijden 1997).

Social movements, such as Fridays for Future, are also public interest groups but differ from NGOs because although they are composed of a network of individuals and organizations (potentially including NGOs, political parties, religious groups etc.), they are not formally constituted. Compared to NGOs, the scope of action of a social movement is much greater (Kriesi 2011). However, in contrast to NGOs and interest groups, social movements have difficulties in gaining access to institutionalized policy arenas and therefore must rely on outside-lobbying strategies, such as organizing protests.

Activist networks employ a “voice” strategy, as groups to which formal channels of interest intermediation are not accessible (Klemenčič and Park 2018; Steele et al. 2021). Activism in climate change governance is a strategy typically adopted by local-level actors (Tosun and Schoenefeld 2017). From this perspective, intermediaries can help to scale up the policy demands or policy experiments from the local to higher levels of government (Hargreaves et al. 2013).

“Private” interest groups are organizations that seek to affect policymaking in a way that pursues the special preferences of their members. These groups often come in various forms, representing, for instance, enterprises or professions. In most cases, private interest groups are equated with *business groups*, but *trade unions* also fall under this category as they act on behalf of their members, and/or employees within a given trade (Knill and Tosun 2020). Trade unions provide a useful illustration of the potentially competing interests towards climate mitigation that can exist *within* a climate intermediary actor that comprises multiple members (Hampton 2018). For example, even though unions hold a medium-to-long-term interest in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and could use the issue to develop “a new sense of purpose” within modern economies (Snell and Fairbrother 2010, 413), union members may feel concerned that climate mitigation efforts may lead to reductions in production within their area of employment, say, heavy industry. As a result, unions have been found to disagree as to the prioritization of the climate threat in relation to other union issues (Snell and Fairbrother 2011, 87–90). Hampton (2018) suggests that in cases where UK unions have mobilized around climate mitigation, these activities often derive from the steps taken by committed *individual* representatives within unions. This finding reflects the important reality that within all types of intermediaries, the decisions, strategies and effectiveness of individual members are likely to play an important role in determining the overall involvement of the intermediary within the climate policy process.

Another membership-based type of intermediary is Faith-Based Actors (FBAs), such as religious groups, charities and religious foundations, which have received increased academic attention during the 2010s (Kidwell 2020). Evidently, FBAs work on a wide range of topics, but among these climate change has become more relevant as the relationship between climate change and social justice has become more apparent (Glaab 2017). In turn, religious groups are drawing more attention amongst scholars for their roles in climate governance (in this issue, see Hague and Bomberg 2022; Tobin et al., 2023). For example, Bomberg and Hague (2018, 582) argue that churches “enjoy a distinct set of resources – comprising tradition, rituals and symbols shaped by theology and doctrine – which are not wholly captured by other explanations of climate mobilisation”. These

churches thus bridge the gap between climate objectives set at the local or national level, and the citizens whose everyday practices play a role in the achievement of these goals, making them potentially powerful climate actors. Indeed, religious groups representing minority faiths within a country, for example Muslims in the UK, may facilitate a more influential role for individuals who would otherwise be marginalized in the policy process, but there has been limited research on this topic (Koehrsen 2021).

Most *media outlets* can be classed as non-membership-based intermediaries. The role of the media in intermediating climate policy is two-fold. First, the media provides a tool for NGOs and social movements, in particular, to express their views on government (non-)action. This intermediation can occur either by successfully lobbying external media organizations to cover stories, or alternatively, ENGOs and social movements may create their own non-mainstream media outlets (see Doyle 2013). By assuming the dual role of climate activist and journalist, the influence of media outlets demonstrates Raj-Reichert's (2020) argument, noted in Section 1, that intermediaries can assume multiple roles in the policy process. Via either of these outside-lobbying strategies the media can be understood as an instrument for interest intermediation. Second, media organizations may have their own policy preferences, and present the news and information accordingly. For example, Poberezhskaya (2015) and Yagodin (2021) show that the media coverage of climate in Russia is biased and reflect the government's stance of this issue. Likewise, Bolsen and Shapiro (2018) show that polarization has become entrenched within US news media towards climate change, reflecting the "ideological" agendas of the dominant broadcasting networks.

Funding bodies can act as intermediaries by providing incentives to both policymakers and policy targets to change their behaviour in particular ways (Howells 2006, 717). For example, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has promoted pro-environmental policy reforms within the countries that borrow from it. The EBRD intermediated between the European Union (which adopted the abstract goal of promoting environmental protection through its lending policy) and the borrowing countries (Obydenkova, Rodrigues Vieira, and Tosun 2021). Funding bodies can also act as intermediaries between national and sub-national interests. For example, Hodson and Marvin (2012) outline how the Greater Manchester Climate Agency drew on multiple streams of funding to advance low-carbon transitions, such as through business and infrastructure development, and behaviour change. Similarly, funding bodies can be an important means of stimulating and facilitating climate innovation in the private sector (e.g. Polzin, von Flotow, and Klerkx 2016). However, being relatively nascent forms of intermediary within the climate governance system, these actors have been underexplored by existing research.

Finally, the literature on climate politics often emphasizes the role of executives, while the role played by *political parties* is relatively neglected (Carter et al. 2018; Farstad 2018). Political parties might not immediately be thought of as climate intermediaries, seeing as they can constitute a country's government. However, both inside and outside of government, a key function of political parties is to liaise between their members, members of society, and the government (see Caillaud and Tirole 2002). Moreover, several parties, for example smaller niche or radical parties, do not wish to be "parties of government" but instead have as their main focus the desire to change policy in a certain area (Abou-Chadi and Orlowski 2016; Strom 1990).

Particularly when outside of government, parties exhibit many of the features of interest groups: a common conception of political parties is that they collect and analyse views in relation to policy problems, offer positions on them and attempt to change policy in line with their positions. These positions are shaped by the party's fundamental beliefs or "ideology". However, political parties can also seek to shape the views of their members, voters and the public. Particularly when it comes to climate policy, and especially in countries such as the US and Australia where right-wing populists have been strongly opposed to climate action (Dunlap, McCright, and Yarosh 2016; Tranter 2013), the "chicken and egg"-question of the direction of influence between parties and their voters remains. Moreover, as a consequence of limited comparative data on political parties and the climate issue (Carter et al. 2018; Farstad 2018) most studies are small-N (Båtstrand 2014; Birchall 2014; Carter and Little 2020; Farstad 2019; Ladrech and Little 2019). Due to the limited scope and comprehensiveness of the literature on political parties and climate change, we therefore have a limited understanding of parties' strategies and interactions with other intermediaries, as well as their influence on policy (Jensen and Spoon 2011; Schulze 2021).

4. Conclusion: an overview of the special issue

As every possible type of actor may assume the role of climate intermediary, this Special Issue deliberately pursues a "most different" to the types and locations of actors (Sawright and Gerring 2008). In doing so, the special issue proffers an exploratory opening gambit regarding the strategies, interactions and impacts of climate intermediaries, such that further studies may build on these findings. This special issue contains six case study analyses of *neglected* climate intermediaries, drawing from Europe, the Middle East, Central America, and Oceania. Below, we introduce the foci and contributions of each paper. While every article addresses each of the Special Issue's three Research Questions to some degree, two articles especially contribute to RQ1, two articles focus on RQ2, and two articles provide particular insights in response to RQ3.

First, emphasizing new insights in response to Research Question 1, Eitan and Fischhendler (2022) investigate the role of climate intermediaries in binding communities together when promoting infrastructure projects, specifically renewable energy schemes. Their case study is found within Israel, thus helping to address the lack of climate policy studies that examine this important yet often-overlooked country. By identifying the key climate intermediary as an individual person, the article demonstrates the utility of having a broad conceptualization of what can be considered a climate intermediary, such that patterns of intermediation can be found between levels and contexts, regardless of the type of actor assuming the role. Eitan and Fischhendler find that the individual operated in four different policy arenas, including by synchronizing across governance levels, specifically the local and national levels, thus demonstrating the important role of climate intermediaries as a means of bridging scales. Moreover, they identify the negotiating mechanisms employed within each arena, thus answering our first Research Question regarding the strategies employed by climate intermediaries.

Second, Hague and Bomberg (2022) provide further insights into the strategies employed by climate intermediaries, through their study of Christian faith-based actors. Their article underscores the reality that climate intermediaries may exist for

reasons disconnected to climate change – in this case, religious worship – but can still assume the role of climate intermediary. The authors examine the case of Scotland, during a particularly heightened period of climate change engagement in the nation due to the hosting of the UN’s 26th Conference of the Parties in Glasgow. Hague and Bomberg elaborate a useful new framework by examining the strategies used to implement three capabilities of climate intermediaries – representation, mobilization, and aggregation. As in the Eitan and Fischhendler (2022) article, Hague and Bomberg emphasize the important role played by climate intermediaries in bridging different policy levels, but here the focus is on intermediaries’ ability to link the domestic and international levels. As such, the article represents an important counter-focus to Putnam’s (1988) study of international state actors within two-level games. Whereas Putnam focussed on negotiators, Hague and Bomberg reveal how non-state actors can play simultaneous two-level games within complex, multi-actor climate negotiations.

Third, and turning to pay particular attention to the second Research Question, Solorio and Tosun (2022) shift the focus of their analytical gaze away from inter-level dynamics and onto the relations between different types of actors, such as trade unions and business associations, and national government. Specifically, they turn to the neglected case of intermediary relations under three Mexican presidents, between 2006 and 2022. By combining with the literature on policy styles (Howlett and Tosun 2018; Richardson 1982; Tosun and Howlett 2022; Tosun, Galanti, and Howlett 2022) they show that different *individual* presidents elicited varying emphases within *national* policy styles, which in turn altered how climate intermediaries could relate with government and each other. This contribution is important: climate intermediaries do not operate in a world of their own choosing, but rather must consider the structural dynamics in which they find themselves.

Fourth, and continuing this consideration of the roles of structural dynamics on the relationships established by climate intermediaries, Tobin et al. (2023) show that climate intermediaries may be blocked from intermediating with certain actors due to societal inequalities. Their analysis derives from interviews with Muslim community actors in the UK, where Muslims are the second-largest religious community by population but face myriad structural inequalities. Through their intersectional framework, they find that despite deliberate efforts to act as climate intermediaries, Muslim communities may be invisibilized and/or instrumentalized when engaging with state actors and “mainstream” environmental non-governmental organizations. Muslim communities have been especially neglected in the existing literature on climate public policy. Yet, if climate policy is to become representative and effective, particularly in countries where Muslims are minoritized, climate policy practice *and* research will benefit from wider engagement. Indeed, this critique of current climate policymaking may also be applied to the importance of engaging, listening to, and supporting other communities who are marginalized from shaping the policy process, including women, People of Colour, and people with disabilities (Stephens 2020). As such, the study of climate intermediaries may be a new means of examining how such perspectives can be brought into policy studies, by focusing on actors that often operate “behind the scenes”.

Fifth, and with particular consideration of the *impacts* of climate intermediaries in response to RQ3, the articles by Farstad et al. (2022), and by Hall and Meng (2023) analyse finance within climate intermediation. In both articles, the contributing

authors provide greater conceptual development by examining the prospect of climate intermediary reproduction, in which intermediaries, such as funding bodies, can in turn create new intermediaries that influence policy discourses in new directions.

In their article, Farstad et al. (2022) ask to what extent Norway's bespoke "Klimasats Fund" – the study's focal climate intermediary – promotes local climate action, and to what extent it contributes to achieving Norway's climate mitigation target. In so doing, they explore how policymakers "metagovern" governance networks, thus linking to the literature on intermediaries as part of orchestration (Abbott et al. 2016). They find that the logic of funding bodies aligns more closely to incentivization than hard regulation, which may limit its potential for transformation. Yet, they also focus on the potential of climate intermediaries to act bi-directionally, by providing a conduit for information up and down levels of governance.

Finally, Hall and Meng (2023) continue this empirical focus on climate finance, but on the other side of the planet to Farstad et al., by analysing the *Aotearoa Circle's* Sustainable Finance Forum (SFF) in Aotearoa New Zealand. The SFF is a climate intermediary that convened stakeholders to take part in the development of a Sustainable Finance Roadmap. Hall and Meng (2023) find that the SFF was successful in providing a strategic intervention to overcome regime-level barriers to transition. The SFF does so by "visioning", convening and coordinating stakeholders. As a further empirical contribution, the authors explore how the role of climate intermediaries may change depending on the stage of the transition process at hand. Indeed, they find that climate intermediaries may adapt to different stages, according to their strategic priorities. In this case, the SFF adapted by creating further climate intermediaries, as part of the reproduction process we note above.

In sum, the six articles that follow this Introduction article explore a range of climate intermediaries, at different levels of governance, across Israel, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, and the UK. In doing so, they offer further conceptual refinement as well as providing answers to the Special Issue's three guiding research questions. They demonstrate the analytical utility that can be enjoyed by possessing a common conceptualization of what it means to be an intermediary within the climate policy process. We subsequently draw together the overall findings of this Special Issue on climate intermediaries in the policy process in our Conclusion article (Tosun, Tobin et al. 2023). We hope that scholars will continue to develop the insights regarding climate intermediaries – neglected or otherwise – that have been begun by our contributing authors.

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