Faith-based Organisations and Climate Action at the United Nations

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own, except where work which has formed part of jointly authored publications has been included. The contribution of the candidate and the other authors to this work has been explicitly indicated below. The candidate confirms that appropriate credit has been given within the thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) are an increasingly salient and active presence in climate action at the United Nations (UN) and the UN itself increasingly seeks out engagement with FBOs. There is a small, but growing body of research which addresses the role of FBOs in climate action at the UN which begins to address but leaves open important empirical and theoretical questions about the boundaries of UN climate action, the way different FBOs frame climate change, and the nature of religious-secular dynamics across UN, global, and local contexts.

In this thesis I begin with the broad question of what roles FBOs play in climate action at the UN. Entailed within this are three important themes: how FBOs frame climate change, how they navigate the global and local dimensions of climate action, and how religious and secular dynamics shape their engagement. Drawing on interviews and participant observation, conducted online at COP26, and website analysis, I develop an overview of the UN-faith-climate space as a broad and complex network with multiple engagement points for FBOs. I find that FBOs play distinctive roles in the UN-faith-climate space through their ability to frame climate change in faith-based, though not necessarily confessional, ways and by acting as important global-local mediators between multiple spheres of climate action. However, these roles are complicated by issues of representation and of the religious and secular dynamics with which FBOs contend. I show how FBOs complicate simple religious-secular binaries in the UN-faith-climate space, yet at the same time do seek to carve out a distinctive faith-based voice. A recurring question is to what extent this voice can be representative, either of FBOs at the UN or of the local interests FBOs often aim to speak for. In response to these tensions, I bring debates on the postsecular to bear on the findings of this thesis as a new way of both framing FBOs' presence in UN climate action and critiquing the norms upon which their engagement rests.

Table of contents

Figures, tables and boxes

Figures

Tables

Boxes

Acronyms and abbreviations

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
ARC	Alliance of Religions and Conservation
COP	Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC)
CRNGO	The Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FBA	Faith-based actor
FBDO	Faith-based development organisation
FBO	Faith-based organisation
IFEES	Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science
ILC	Interfaith Liaison Committee (to the UNFCCC)
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRWW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
LWF	The Lutheran World Federation
MFAC	United Nations Multi-Faith Advisory Council
NDCs	Nationally determined contributions
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OHCHR	United Nations Human Rights Council
PaRD	International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development
QUNO	Quaker United Nations Office
RNGO	Religious non-governmental organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGI-UK	Soka Gakkai International UK
Tzu Chi	Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
UN	United Nations
UN-IATF-R	United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WCC	World Council of Churches
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
XR	Extinction Rebellion

Chapter 1 - Introduction

> *Saving the Earth and its peoples from dangerous climate change is an economic, social and environmental issue – and a moral and ethical one too that goes to the core of many if not all of the world's great faiths.*
>
> Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, 2014

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) are an unavoidable feature in the landscape of global climate politics. Statements such as the one from Christiana Figueres above, extolling the important actual and potential role of religions in climate action, can be heard across UN agencies, governments, NGOs, and by FBOs themselves (Rollosson, 2010; UNFCCC, 2015; UNEP, 2018e; WCC, 2019; FCDO, n.d.; WRI, n.d.). Climate change science and the consensus on anthropogenic climate change is by no means a recent occurrence, scientists have been clear about its existence and human causes since before the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 (Hulme, 2009). However, it is over the last two decades that the severity of climate change has really come to the fore, due to a combination of its real-world effects and increasingly dire assessments from the IPCC with clear guidelines on limits to global temperature increases and explicit timelines for taking action, many of which have now passed or are being moderated (Lenton and Ciscar, 2013; IPCC, 2018b; Mukherji et al., 2023). This has been met with widespread, international responses from activists, NGOs and other civil society actors, many of whom choose to engage with UN processes given the need for a coherent global response. Many organisations involved in climate action at the UN identify themselves as faith-based or religious and the UN has scaled up engagement with FBOs for climate action over the last 10 years (Rollosson, 2010; UNFCCC, 2015; UNEP, 2018e; ILC, n.d.). Likewise, FBOs are clearly carving out a space within UN climate action, as seen most saliently through their regular engagement and activism at events such as the COPs (UNFCCC Conferences) and through faith-based and interfaith statements on climate change (Stückelberger, 2014; IFEES, 2015; UNFCCC, 2015; Francis, 2015; WCC, 2019; Krantz, 2021). Research addressing these groups, whilst it has grown significantly over the last five to ten years, is yet to fully address the multiple roles which FBOs play and tensions which arise across religious/secular, glocal/local and interfaith/faith-specific dimensions in the broad arena of UN climate action (Glaab, 2017; Glaab and Fuchs, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2018; Krantz, 2021; Glaab, 2022; Krantz, 2022; Sadouni, 2022; Hague and Bomberg, 2022). This thesis seeks to address the role of FBOs in climate action at the UN by taking into consideration the broad nature of their engagement combined with analyses of these crosscutting tensions.

In this introductory chapter, I begin by outlining the rationale behind the thesis and the research questions which underpin it. I then include a preliminary note on key terminology and a discussion of the main limitations, before closing with a chapter-by-chapter overview of the thesis.

1.1 Research rationale

Climate change and the urgent need to respond to what many now call an emergency or crisis, has received increasing attention from civil society groups worldwide. The most recent IPCC report was for the first time unequivocal about the human-caused nature of global warming and was even more dire about the current and potential consequences of not acting to limit the causes and effects of climate change (IPCC, 2018b; Mukherji et al., 2023). The need for a coherent global response has led to increased civic interest in the yearly UNFCCC COP conferences and increasingly salient internationally coordinated climate activist movements (Dietz and Garrelts, 2014; Caniglia et al., 2015). Religions, FBOs, and faith leaders have been involved in these responses and high profile events including the release of the papal encyclical Laudato Si' in 2015 and international interfaith statements on the need for climate action, have cemented their position in the landscape of the global response to climate change (Stückelberger, 2014; Maibach et al., 2015; Jenkins et al., 2018; Berry, 2022; Sadouni, 2022). The recognition that climate change is not only a scientific issue, but is also a social, political, cultural and humanitarian one which requires serious moral and ethical consideration has further opened the door for religions to respond (Hulme, 2009; Hulme, 2017). Faith-based engagement with climate action and environmentalism is by no means new; religions have a long history of involvement with environmental and climate movements (ARC, 1986; Beyer, 1992; Tucker and Grim, 2001; WCC, 2005; IFEES, 2009; Bergmann, 2017). But, more recently, the UN has recognised the role of FBOs in climate action and is seeking to engage them through projects such as the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative (UNEP, 2018c), by supporting them in representation at the UNFCCC through the Interfaith Liaison Committee (Glaab, 2017; ILC, n.d.), through climate working groups on existing UN-FBO committees[1] (UNIATF, 2021; UNIATF, 2022), and most recently though the establishment of a Faith Pavilion at COP28 (UNEP, 2023a; Interfaith Coordination Group on Climate Change, 2023). The combination of the continued presence of religions and religious narratives in climate action, of the UN's interest in engaging with FBOs, and vice versa, and of the nature of climate change requiring holistic consideration of moral, environmental, local to global, as well as social and motivational dimensions, all contribute to the path which led to this research.

There is a small, but growing body of research which addresses the role of FBOs in climate action at the UN (Berry, 2014a; Glaab, 2017; Krantz, 2021; Glaab, 2022). These have tended to focus on specific agencies, for example the UNDP (Rollosson, 2010) or the UNFCCC (Glaab, 2017; Krantz, 2021) or specific events, for example the Rio+20 conference (Berry 2014) or COP23 (Krantz 2022). They begin to address but leave open important empirical and theoretical questions about the boundaries of UN climate action, the way different FBOs frame climate change, and on the nature of

[1] For example the UN Multi-Faith Advisory Council (MFAC), the Committee of Religious NGOs, and the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religions and Sustainable Development (UNIATF). I discuss these further in Chapter 4.

religious-secular dynamics across UN, global and local spheres of climate action. In research at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), Berry (2014a) questioned the extent to which FBOs see themselves as distinct from secular NGOs. He concluded by calling for further research on contextual understandings of when and under what circumstances FBOs are 'religious' as well as for research which addresses the reasons and frames FBOs use to engage with climate action and environmental sustainability (ibid, p.282). Focusing specifically on the UNFCCC, Glaab (2017; 2022) looked at how FBOs engage with narratives of climate justice as well as to what extent they challenge the secular norms of global climate politics. In doing so she demonstrated how FBOs merged with and diverged from the climate *justice* movement specifically and argued that FBOs' presence does in fact challenge the secular "doxa" of the UNFCCC. Krantz's research on the quantifiable presence of FBOs at COP and the UNFCCC (2021) and qualitative research at COP23 (2022) showed the distribution of FBOs in UN climate action as primarily Christian and based in the Global North, demonstrated the variety of roles FBOs took on at COP23, and examined to what extent these diverged from those of secular NGOs. Focusing on specific UN events and agencies has allowed for valuable, contextualised analyses of FBOs' engagement but leaves open important questions about their work beyond the 'formal' boundaries of the UN. By not only focusing on the UNFCCC or the COP, by looking at how FBOs engage with local dimensions of climate change at a global level, by looking at faith-based framings of climate change beyond justice, I seek to contribute to and develop this field.

This thesis also builds on research addressing FBOs at the UN in general which, beginning with more quantitative approaches (Berger, 2003; Berger, 2010; Bush, 2017; Beinlich and Braungart, 2018) has expanded to incorporate assessments of how religious-secular and postsecular dynamics shape and affect FBO engagement across UN agencies (Mavelli and Petito, 2012; Haynes, 2013b; Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b). Important questions addressed in this body of research include to what extent FBOs are distinct from secular NGOs, how the UN defines and categorises religion and FBOs, and how FBOs engage creatively with their faith-based identities to facilitate engagement. Carrette and Miall (2017) look at how FBOs' religious markers become strategically more and less visible across UN agencies. Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf (2018) take this further and argue that to understand the religious and secular dynamics of FBOs at the UN requires engagement with postsecular theory and a fuller, contextualised critique of religious-secular binaries. Engagement with these questions and dynamics have been applied to FBOs in the context of peacebuilding, humanitarianism and sustainable development at the UN but are yet to be fully considered in the context of climate action (Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018a; Wilkinson, 2019).

Important gaps have been left open in research on FBOs and climate action at the UN which this thesis aims to fill. Research thus far has focused on specific events or agencies in UN climate action (Berry, 2014a; Glaab, 2017; Krantz, 2021; Krantz, 2022), has looked at specific FBOs in climate action (Brown et al., 2014; Kerber, 2014; Hague and Bomberg, 2022), has addressed the role of FBOs at the UN in general, as separate from climate action (Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b), or has taken a theoretical or normative approach to addressing the

role of FBOs in climate action and the (post)secular dynamics of global climate politics (Kearns, 2011; Wilson, 2012a; Conca, 2022; Wilson, 2022). As such this thesis makes both an empirical and theoretical contribution to this ever-growing field.

In summary this thesis responds to a need for a broad approach to the role of FBOs at the UN which considers their engagement beyond single UN agencies and recognises the multiple ways which FBOs seek to participate in UN climate action. It likewise fills a gap in the research by engaging with how FBOs frame climate change, how they navigate global and local dimension of climate action, and how they negotiate religious and secular dynamics of climate action. These three points have been previously addressed in studies of religion at the UN, in religions and development and in studies of specific FBOs, specific UN agencies or specific events in the climate movement but have not yet been brought together (Veldman et al., 2014b; Haynes, 2014; Glaab, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018a; Wilkinson, 2019; Tomalin, 2021; Wilson, 2022; Conca, 2022; Glaab, 2022). The thesis makes important empirical and theoretical contributions by doing so. I also contribute to a growing body of research addressing the postsecular dimensions of global climate politics by bringing empirical fieldwork with FBOs to bear on the theoretical debate.

1.2 Research questions

The broad aim of the thesis is thus to address the role(s) of FBOs in climate action at the UN. Within this broad aim are several important underlying questions about the boundaries of UN climate action, about the nature of FBOs' understandings and framings of climate change in the context of climate action, and about the binaries which are often assumed, and with which FBOs must engage, when we talk about UN climate action: global/local, religious/secular, faith-specific/interfaith.

This project was initially developed on the basis of the following preliminary research questions:

- What role(s) do FBOs play in climate action at the UN and to what extent is this distinctively faith-based?
- How do FBOs frame and negotiate the categories 'religion' and 'climate change'?
- How do religious-secular and global-local dimensions shape FBOs' role in climate action?

Following further reflection on the theoretical gaps, in terms of how FBOs frame climate change, and in terms of how religious-secular and global-local dynamics shape climate action, the research questions evolved into the following:

- **What role(s) do FBOs play in climate action at the UN?**
- **How do FBOs frame climate change and to what extent is this distinctively faith-based?**
- **How do FBOs navigate across global and local spheres of climate action?**
- **How do religious and secular dynamics affect FBOs' climate action at the UN and can we consider climate action to be postsecular?**

These questions are each addressed in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively but there are also theoretical dimensions to which I return throughout the thesis. The question of the distinction of FBOs from other civil society groups or NGOs in the context of UN climate action has informed each of these chapters, as have considerations of the religious-secular dynamics of FBOs' engagements. There are likewise empirical challenges which have contributed to each question of this thesis and which appear in each chapter, namely of the nature of FBOs' representation and of the boundaries of UN climate action. These crosscutting themes inform my approach to each research question.

1.3 Note on terminology

Here, I provide a brief overview of three key terms which are employed regularly throughout the thesis. I discuss FBO and UN-faith-climate space in more detail in sections 3.2 and 4.2, respectively.

Faith-based organisation

In the thesis, I use the term faith-based organisation (FBO) in a broad sense to include organisations who identify as religious, faith-based or faith-inspired, those who are representative of a particular faith tradition, interfaith organisations or networks, religious councils, religious or faith-based NGOs, as well as religious or faith-based environmental, development, or humanitarian organisations. In Chapter 3, I critically engage with the ongoing debate about the multiple definitions and typologies of FBOs and alternative terms (Clarke, 2006; Occhipinti, 2015; Clarke and Ware, 2015; Wilkinson, 2022). However, I make two key distinctions here. I use FBO, rather than the broader 'faith actor', which is the accepted term in studies of religions and development (Wilkinson, 2022; Wilkinson et al., 2022), as my general focus is not on individual actors, for example faith leaders, but on organisations. Whilst the participants in this research are of course representative of rich individual experiences they are more importantly, in the context of UN climate action, members and representatives of organisations. Likewise, I chose not to use the term religious NGO or 'RNGO', often used in studies of religions at the UN (Carrette and Miall, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b) as many FBOs at the UN are religious or interfaith councils, churches networks, or are connected to religious institutions. They are not simply NGOs who also happen to identify as religious. FBO is likewise the term used by the UNFCCC and UNEP and was generally accepted by participants during interviews; for some as a positive identification and for others a more strategic adoption. In practice, there is much crossover and blurring between these terms and, as I will argue in Chapter 3, the critical question is not *what* we call these groups, but rather how different forms of identification and categorisation affect their engagement in practice.

Climate action

I use the term climate action broadly to refer to any activities undertaken with the aim of encouraging a response to climate change or of limiting the causes and effects of climate change. These include, but are not limited to activism, advocacy, lobbying, climate policymaking and negotiations, climate

and environmental projects, awareness-raising and education on climate change, and climate mitigation or adaption activities. In practice, what it mostly refers to in the thesis is climate advocacy by FBOs, and climate conferences and negotiations run by the UN, but I use it in this broad way to account for the fact that FBOs' activities in the UN-faith-climate space are not limited only to advocacy as I demonstrate in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

UN-faith-climate space

I use the term UN-faith-climate space to refer to the space in which this research is situated and I develop and explain this term in detail in the opening section of Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.1). The UN-faith climate space is a broad and complex network of FBOs, NGOs and UN agencies, projects and negotiators with multiple partnerships and both 'formal' and 'informal' paths of mutual engagement. Included within this are UN agencies which focus on climate change and with which FBOs can engage, for example the UNFCCC, the UNEP and the IPCC, UN projects which seek to engage with FBOs on climate change, for example the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC and the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative, and FBO engagements with the UN beyond 'formal' spaces, for example FBO side events in the 'informal' zones of COP events or COP preparatory webinars run by FBOs. I use the term UN-faith-climate space specifically to expand our notion of what constitutes engagement with the UN on climate action and to recognise the multiple paths of FBO engagement beyond specific UN agencies and UN-led projects. To give a more concrete example, FBOs who are not formally registered with the UN may still engage with climate action at the UN through attending COP events, or by engaging the with projects like the UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative (which does not require formal registration). I use UN-faith-climate space to allow for inclusion of these modes of engagement which to exclude would be an oversight.

Secular and postsecular

In this thesis, I use the term secular in a broad sense to describe institutions, organisations, and spaces. I use it to describe the nature of the UN as an institution[2], i.e. one which does not, in official terms include religion or religious groups. The UN does not forbid the involvement of religious individuals, religious organisations or FBOs in its processes – indeed, there are many FBOs registered and engaged with the UN – but religion or religious affiliation is not an identifier under ECOSOC, nor are FBOs afforded a constituency under UN agencies[3](Berger, 2003; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Beinlich and Braungart, 2018). The UN's mandate is free from religious language and, though arguments can be made about the kind of religion the UN's approach to secularism promotes (see Chapter 7), it does not allow for religion or religious language in official documentation or policy, beyond protection for

[2] In Chapter 4, I highlight the different ways that the UN as an entity has been theorised.
[3] See Chapter 4, where I discuss the structures of the UN-faith-climate space in greater detail, and Chapter 7 where I outline the UN's approach, or lack thereof, to categorising or managing religion.

personal religious affiliation (Haynes, 2014; Baumgart-Ochse, 2018). I also use secular to identify other organisations or institutions which do not profess to have any religious affiliation, or who do not explain their motivation in religious or faith-based terms. For example, during the thesis, I may refer to secular (climate or environmental) NGOs. In doing so, I do not intend to draw a hard and fast division between these 'secular' NGOs and FBOs, but rather employ these categories to highlight instances where faith-based or religious, as an identifier, may interact with, crossover with, or be, by virtue of being religious, distinct from secular NGOs[4]. Finally, I use secular to identify spaces, whether virtual (e.g. webinars run by the UN) or physical (e.g. conferences, events, meetings, for example, the formal Blue Zone at COP26) which are managed and run by secular organisations. I identify spaces in this way in order to open up the possibility to analyse how the secular norms of an organisation, for example not speaking in explicitly religious or confessional language, may inform behaviour or shape language (of FBOs) within of a particular space[5].

I use postsecular[6] as a way of framing the results of this thesis and responding to the developing religious and secular dynamics of the UN-faith-climate space. By postsecular, I do not mean an epochal shift at the UN, or in the global world order, from a secular age to a postsecular age. Likewise, I am amenable to definitions of the secular which allow for the inclusion of FBOs, of religious belief, practice, identity and expression, and which does not entail a narrative of religious decline[7]. However, as will become apparent throughout this thesis, FBOs are not just an option or a presence in climate action at the UN but are actively being sought ought by UN institutions and other secular environmental NGOs as critical partners. I use the postsecular thus to explain a condition in which the "presumed normative superiority of secular reasoning" (Baumgart-Ochse, 2018, p.2) in climate action is actively challenged[8]. I also use it to identify practices (see Cloke and Beaumont, 2013) undertaken by FBOs and, in some cases the UN, which challenge the way that religious-secular dynamics have been negotiated and constructed in climate action thus far, for example, by prioritising particular types of religion or FBO. In using this term, however, I am aware of the critiques and limitations, perhaps most eloquently put by Beckford (2012), as well as Warner et al (2013, pp. 24-25) who argue that the postsecular may imply a static, simplistic or narrow definition of the secular

[4] As I discuss in Chapters 4 and 7, participants sometimes referred to "secular NGOs" as something which they, as *faith-based* organisations, were distinct from.

[5] See Chapter 7, section 7.4, where I engage with the question of to what extent (UN) climate action can be considered a secular context, and the extent to which this shapes FBOs' experiences and roles.

[6] I use "postsecular" rather than the hyphenated "post-secular" as the latter is more likely to imply a temporal dimension, e.g. a shift from a secular to post-secular age, an idea which I am not defending in this thesis.

[7] See for example, Taylor (2007), who advocates for a broad definition of the secular ("Secularity 3") where secularism is not defined by a lack of religion in, or secularisation of, public spaces ("Secularity 1"), nor as a decline in religious belief ("Secularity 2"), but rather as a change in the *conditions* of religious belief, in that non-religious beliefs have become a legitimate option.

[8] I engage with the challenges of the postsecular in Chapter 7.

(or, indeed, of religion), makes undue claims about epochal shifts, is imprecise, or limits the potential for a broad definition of the secular, for example that of Charles Taylor. Though these remain potential theoretical limitations of my approach, in using the postsecular, I do not mean to leave behind a narrow or static definition of the secular; indeed in Chapter 7, I engage specifically with the ramifications and nuanced dynamics of *secular* climate action contexts, before then identifying the potential of a postsecular framing for some parts of the UN-faith-climate space. In sum, I find the postsecular useful to describe how FBOs and religious framings of climate change are increasingly incorporated into UN climate action, to identify practices which challenge how religion has been engaged with by the secular UN, and to offer a new way of challenging the underlying normativity of secular climate action whilst recognising the continued relevance of the secular[9] in this context.

1.4 Limitations

There are important limitations to consider for this thesis, in particular in terms of the representation and distribution of participants, and the research strategy and methods chosen. As I will outline Chapter 3, the question of representation is a difficult one to parse in the context of UN climate action. What a 'representative' sample looks like could mean replicating the demographics of FBOs at the UN, i.e. mostly Christian and based in Europe/North America, or it could mean seeking to represent FBOs who are underrepresented or marginalised in this space. The sample of interview participants is more limited in geographical terms than in terms of faith affiliation. Around half of the FBOs I interviewed were Christian, less than the proportion registered with UN agencies, but almost all were based in Western Europe. Given one of the aims of the thesis is to take a broad approach to UN engagement, a lack of FBO experiences from beyond traditional UN regions limits the range of experiences collected. I sought to account for this by ensuring that the sample of website extracts, which I discuss in Chapters 3 and 5, represented a more diverse range of FBOs in which more than half were based outside of Europe/North America. Likewise, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 6, many of my participants from FBOs in the UN-faith climate space work closely with local faith actors or have large global networks, so the experiences presented in this thesis are reflective of these much broader connections.

The choice to pursue a primarily qualitative approach to the research also has limitations (Bryman, 2012, p.405; Graebner et al., 2012; Silverman, 2013). Whilst qualitative methods result in rich, detailed data, they also raise questions in terms of generalisability beyond the experiences and specific contexts in a given study. By choosing to focus on semi-structured interviews as a primary method of data I was reliant of my participants' accounts of their personal experiences of the UN-faith-climate space. In a similar way, when conducting participant observation of online events and at COP26, I

[9] Knott (2010, pp.20–22), for example, sees the secular, the religious, and the postsecular to be in a "dialectical" relationship where the postsecular may be used to challenged secular norms, but does not imply a doing away with an engagement with secular and religious dynamics.

was reliant on my own perceptions and observations which raises questions around my influence on what is considered important data or information. However, taken together these methods complemented each other as I was able to corroborate FBOs experiences, as emergent in interviews, with observation of FBO activities. Graebner et al (2012) describe the process of analysing qualitative data as "cooking without a recipe" to highlight the way that qualitative data analysis often occurs in iterative and, at times, imprecise ways. To account for this, and the associated possibilities of bias and overinterpretation of data I combined several data sources (interview transcripts, field notes, website extracts) and took a blended approach to data analysis, which I detail in Chapter 3.

An important caveat to the presentation of interview data in this thesis the extent to which individual participants' views are representative of the position of their whole organisation. In this thesis, participants are identified and cited by their organisational affiliation[10]. Here, I explain the rationale behind this approach and address the limitations. In the context of the UN-faith-climate space, as will become apparent thorough this thesis, participants act as representatives of the FBO[11] for whom they work, lead, or are affiliated with. For the presentation of my data, it is therefore appropriate to identify their organisational affiliation in each case where interview data is presented as it is a central part of their role, and as such experiences, in the UN-faith-climate space. The research questions of this thesis centre on the roles and experiences of faith-based *organisations*, rather than of faith-based or religious individuals in UN climate action. A key part of this is understanding how FBOs navigate their role in the UN-faith-climate space and negotiate religious and secular dynamics as organisations, rather than as religious individuals. In the context of UN agencies, for example, it is organisations who seek formal accreditation and affiliation with an FBO is a key way to engage with the broader UN-faith-climate space. Part of my participants' role in this space is, therefore, understanding the message or 'party-line' of their FBO on climate change and presenting this in UN climate action spaces. In order to understand the role of FBOs, I needed to speak to the individuals representing them. During interviews I tried to parse out, with participants, when they were speaking from a personal or organisational respective. Participants were well-versed in presenting and reflecting on these messages, but not at the expense of offering their own personal views and reflections on the approach of their own, or others' organisations. This is not to say that individual experiences, or variation from the viewpoint of their organisation, are therefore overlooked or irrelevant to the research questions at hand; on the contrary, these experiences and views add important critical depth to our understanding of FBOs. Throughout the thesis, I have highlighted personal experiences and moments where tensions or variations occurred within an FBO.

The main limitation of the choice to present interview data by FBO name is the potential homogenisation of each organisation. FBOs, in particular those with a large staff or global reach are

[10] See Chapter 3, where I discuss the approach to sampling, interviews, and interview data in more detail.

[11] Or, in the case of my participant from the UNEP Faith for Earth, a UN-led initiative.

often dynamic, diverse, and, though they may have clearly defined and approved messaging, are not homogenous in terms of individuals' attitudes or views on climate change (Brown et al., 2014). Brown et al (2014), for example, surveyed employees of the international development FBO World Vision and found that attitudes towards climate change varied by region, type of office, and experience. Despite finding general recognition of the importance of climate change, they found that those with less overseas or in-the-field experience showed less understanding of the connection between World Vision's work and climate change; those in country office affected by climate change showed greater understanding and knowledge of climate change impacts. In response to this potential pitfall, I aim to highlight in the thesis, where internal tension or variation in views occur. By supplementing interview data with website analysis and participant observation I aim to give a greater overview of intra- and inter-organisational diversity, but it remains a limitation that, in interview data, the participants' experiences are ultimately, of course, their own.

Furthermore, my focus in this thesis is not on each FBO as a whole and my aim is not to account for the divergence in viewpoints on climate change within individual FBOs, though this would no doubt be a valuable and complementary contribution. Whilst their presence is likely affected by internal organisation dynamics, politics, and tensions, my focus on what happens when those messages are externalised and interact with other FBOs, NGOs, or UN representatives. I address FBOs' presence, often in the form of an individual representative, in the UN-faith-climate space, and how the positions and roles of these FBOs interact with other faith-based and secular groups or representatives as presented and through the experiences and roles of my participants.

Based on the limitations above the question of generalisability still stands. Whilst very specific, individual experiences of FBOs detailed within this thesis may be limited to those participants, I aim to demonstrate key overarching themes which emerged from, and recurred in, interviews and participant observation and which cut across the UN-faith-climate space. As the UN-faith-climate space grows, tensions on global-local mediation, of religious-secular dynamics, and of the distinctiveness of FBOs will not go away and the findings I outline in this thesis will prove useful in framing and engaging with these dynamics.

1.5 Thesis overview

The thesis develops as follows. In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature to demonstrate how my research fits into and builds on existing research. I begin by situating research on religions and climate change in the legacy of research in religions ecology and religious environmentalism. I show how research on religions and climate change diverged in conjunction with language shifts in global environmental politics towards climate change and with the inclusion of temporal and systemic framings and of humanitarian and justice related concerns. I break down research on religions and climate change into theoretical and normative approaches and social scientific approaches. I then attend to how the intersection between religion and climate change has been conceptualised in the

literature thus far by looking at the argument that religions provide the ethical response to climate change, that climate change may be a religious event and that religions can provide the necessary social capital to mobilise communities for climate action. Following an introduction of literature which looks at FBOs at the UN, I explore the specific pieces of research which have addressed FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space, and which have tended to focus on the UNFCCC and the COPs specifically. In the final section of this chapter I engage with literature which focuses on the (post)secular nature of global climate politics and with theories of postsecularism to demonstrate how I intend to incorporate these debates into the thesis.

Chapter 3 is an overview of the theories and methods underpinning this thesis. In the first section I develop an account, drawing in particular on Hulme's (2009; 2015; 2022) approach, of climate change as a multidimensional issue and not a fixed or easily definable problem. I highlight the important cultural, social, political and religious dimensions of climate change and argue that, not disputing that it can be a scientifically measurable issue, it can also be constructed and framed differently across climate politics and the climate movement. This approach informed my fieldwork with FBOs, the questions I asked them and the way I analysed their framings of climate change. I then engage more fully with the notion of what constitutes an FBO and of the underlying question of to what extent religion informs and defines all aspects of FBOs' work. I engage with existing research on typologies and definitions of FBOs and on the construction of religion by and in FBOs. In doing so I argue that religion is not a fixed immutable category and that multiple actors – FBOs, secular NGOs, UN negotiators – in the UN-faith-climate-space may contribute to its construction and to the categorisation of FBOs. My approach to the fieldwork is informed by this contextualised understanding of religion and by an approach to FBOs which is supported by the self-identification of participants. In the second half of the chapter I outline the research design and methods employed. I begin by explaining how the research design evolved, particularly in the context of increased online working and COP postponement, and then provide an overview of the methods I employed in practice. The research design is constituted by interviews with 12 FBOs, one UN representative, and participant observation at webinars over an 18-month period and in-person at COP26. This was supplemented by the development of a database of FBOs and website analysis of a sample of 50 FBOs. I describe my approach to data analysis which took a "blended approach" by combing inductive and deductive coding methods (Graebner et al., 2012; Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019, p.264), before closing with reflections on key ethical considerations.

In Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, I draw on fieldwork data to address the research questions. Chapter 4 addresses the question: What role(s) do FBOs play in climate action at the UN? To answer this question I begin by outlining the UN-faith-climate space as a complex network with multiple actors, including FBOs, UN agencies and civil society groups, as well as multiple engagement points for FBOs on climate action. Importantly I use this space to challenge limited definitions of UN engagement. I spotlight three key engagement points: the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC, the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative and faith-based engagement with COP26. I then

engage with FBOs' experiences to show how the space has developed and examine key tensions which emerge in terms of leadership, representation and in/formal engagement. The second part of the chapter takes a quantitative approach by looking at how many FBOs are registered with the UNEP, the UNFCCC and the IPCC and have attended COP 25, 26, and 27, broken down by faith affiliation and country. Though I conclude that this approach is limited in its ability to provide substantive and nuanced information on the engagement of FBOs with UN climate action, it does demonstrate the majority presence of Christian FBOs based in the Global North. I show that this is more pronounced at the UNFCCC than at the UNEP and highlight the ways that FBOs work within the UN's registration system to include more organisations from the Global South. In the final section of this chapter I return to a qualitative approach and outline FBOs' reasons for engagement with the UN, their roles within the UN-faith climate space, and the challenges they face. Their reasons for engagement with the UN are broken down into legacy, legitimacy and representation. I break down their roles into advocacy, representation and networking, and training and education, each of which has several sub-roles. I argue that of these sub-roles, FBOs consider most important their ability to frame climate change in morally compelling ways, and their ability to engage with and represent local interests in the global context of UN climate action. Despite facing challenges within the UN-faith-climate space, of representation, practical influence, and interfaith tensions, I argue that FBOs feel that recognition by the UN of their role is increasing and that they are able to work strategically within the UN-faith-climate space.

Chapter 5 addresses the question: How do FBOs frame climate change and is it distinctively faith-based? To answer this question I engage with frame analysis to explain and analyse how FBOs engage with the idea of climate change in the UN-faith climate space. In particular I show how FBOs frame climate change in diagnostic (defining the 'problem'), prognostic (proposing a response) and motivational (encouraging action) ways (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow, 2013; Conca, 2022). I also show how they engage in processes of frame alignment in order to develop collective faith-based frames in response to intra- and interfaith tensions. I begin to address how climate change is constructed as an issue by FBOs, for example whether as a specific environmental problem, as a symptom of other global failings, as a crosscutting theme or as the "mother of all issues" (Hulme, 2010, p.171). I also address what kind of severity FBOs attribute to climate change by looking at their use of crisis and emergency. I then engage with FBOs' use of the justice frame, employed by many FBOs but which prompts important interfaith tensions, before looking at the distinction between ecocentric and anthropocentric framings of climate change. Turning to specifically faith-based frames, I argue these attend to the *motivational* task highlighted in frame analysis. I break these down into confessional and constructive (i.e., non-confessional). This first demonstrates the variety of ways which FBOs frame climate change in confessional ways and then demonstrates how they develop non-confessional faith-based frames to facilitate interfaith and faith-secular collaboration. In closing the chapter I argue that FBOs' ability to combine diagnostic, prognostic and motivational dimensions

of frames in morally compelling, though not necessarily confessional, ways is what makes them distinctive in the UN-faith-climate space.

In Chapter 6, I consider how the global and local dimensions of climate action interact with FBOs' engagement in the UN-faith-climate space and address the question: How do FBOs navigate across the global and local dimensions of climate action? I begin by demonstrating the inherently 'glocal' nature of climate change and thus climate action by engaging with the notion of glocalisation (Beyer, 2007; Kearns, 2007; Gupta et al., 2007; Robertson, 2012). I build on previous research which has identified FBOs as mediators within the UN system (Glaab, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018a), as intermediaries in climate action (Smith, 2018; Hague and Bomberg, 2022; Tobin, Ali, et al., 2023) and as brokers and translators in religions and development (Bolotta et al., 2019) to argue that FBOs are important glocal mediators in the UN-faith-climate space. They do so by engaging in iterative processes of engagement between local interests and global climate action and by drawing on wide networks of actors and multiple engagement points at local, national, regional and global levels. Of particular interest here are themes of social capital and representation, and of mobilisation and influence. I then focus on a tool of FBOs' glocal mediation, that is their ability to translate climate messaging. I show how FBOs speak multiple 'languages' and are able to translate the technical language of UN climate policy or of climate science into language comprehensible by and relevant to their own FBO, to local faith communities, or to faith leaders, and vice versa. Importantly these translation process do not occur across simple religious/secular global/local binaries. In exploring the multiple directions of translation I show how FBOs are strategic in their use of language in different contexts and show how religion and religious language become more and less salient across global to local contexts. I address the limitations to FBOs' glocal mediation in the UN-faith-climate space namely of potential overstatements of social capital and influence and of representation. I also demonstrate how some FBOs engage with notions of decolonisation to contend with these limitations. Despite these limitations I conclude that that FBOs are important glocal mediators in the UN-faith-climate space, that they see this as an important part of their role, and that they are well-placed to do so given their wide-ranging connections and ability to translate across multiple contexts.

Chapter 7 addresses the question: How do religious and secular dynamics affect FBOs' climate action at the UN and can we consider climate action to be postsecular? The chapter begins by tracing how religion has been categorised and identified at and by the UN. I do so to provide the framework within which many FBOs are operating when they engage within the UN-faith climate space. I highlight a key debate on whether FBOs should constitute a formal category and highlight the ambivalent responses to this amongst participants. I then turn to analyse FBO experiences to demonstrate how being identifiably faith-based or religious in climate action shapes their engagement. I pay particular attention to the ways that religious markers become more and less salient across different contexts. I then explore how the ostensibly secular context of UN climate action shapes FBOs' role and argue that climate action, compared to other areas of FBOs' engagement at the UN, is a comparatively uncontentious space for expressions of faith-based identity and for interfaith and faith-secular

collaboration. Yet, I show how FBOs may face a paradox when seeking to assert their faith-based distinctiveness without reinforcing a religious-secular hierarchy. As this, and the preceding chapters, have demonstrated, appreciation of religious/secular boundaries are necessary but not sufficient to explain the role and experiences of FBOs in climate action at the UN. As such, in the final section of this chapter, I turn instead to theories of postsecularism. I argue, building in particular on Wilson (2014a; 2022), Habermas (2006; 2008), and Cloke and Beaumont (2013), that the postsecular is critical to understand the role of FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space. It is useful not only in a descriptive but also, more importantly, in a normative sense.

In the concluding chapter of the thesis I begin by reflecting back on the research questions in light of the key findings of this thesis. I highlight the empirical and theoretical contributions made to the broad fields of religions and climate change and religions at the UN, and to the narrower field of religions and climate change at the UN. I conclude by discussing the implications for future research.

1.6 Conclusion

In this opening chapter, I situated the thesis in the context of a small but growing pool of research addressing religions and climate action at the UN. I demonstrated how this research diverges by taking a broad approach to what constitutes engagement with the UN, and by not focusing only on a single agency or event, by engaging with how FBOs frame climate change, and by looking at how they navigate local and global dimensions of climate action. I also demonstrated how I intend to build on theoretical debates, begun in research in religion at the UN and in religions and development, and apply them to the context of climate action. Namely, of how religious and secular dynamics shape FBOs' roles and how theories of postsecularism are useful in both explaining and challenging these dynamics.

The incredibly fast-moving nature of climate action and of FBO engagements with the UN for climate action makes research in this field difficult to parse. The developments in the UN-faith-climate space during the time conducting this research alone have been larger and quicker than I feel I am able do full justice to. Yet the experiences of FBOs explored in this this thesis and the theoretical points of tension with which I engage continue to punctuate FBOs' climate action work at the UN and, I hope, will offer important reflections for researchers and practitioners alike.

Chapter 2 - Religion, climate change and faith-based organisations at the United Nations

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I review existing literature in the fields of religions and climate change, religions at the UN, and research which sits at the intersection of these fields. I begin by addressing how research on religions and climate change emerged from the legacy of religions and ecology and studies of religious environmentalisms but that it diverged in conjunction with the shifts in global environmental politics towards the language of climate change. With this, came a shift towards a more systemic, temporal and humanitarian framings. I divide literature on religions and climate change into theoretical or normative and social scientific approaches before discussing how the religion-climate change nexus has been framed in the literature. I suggest climate change and religion have been connected by framing climate change as a religious 'event', i.e. as something which prompts change in religions, by framing religions as the ethical or moral response to climate change, and by positing that religions offer the practical resources, for example social and economic capital, to respond to climate change. I then address literature which looks at FBOs at the UN before exploring the specific pieces of research which have addressed the intersection of FBOs, the UN, *and* climate action. In the final section of the chapter I touch on research which takes a postsecular framing of the role of religion or FBOs, in civil society, international relations, and global climate politics.

2.2 Religions and climate change: an evolving field

To fully address the research questions and understand what it means for FBOs to engage with climate action at the UN, we must first look at the ways in which religions and climate change are understood in conjunction with one another. I begin by tracing the emergence of the religions and ecology literature and then propose that early research into 'religion and climate change' employs many of the same approaches but diverges in important ways. Unlike religions and ecology, where the focus tends to rest on highlighting environmentally friendly narratives within religious traditions and is often focused on environmental protection and preservation, research on religions and climate change is imbued with a clear temporal framing and takes a more systemic and holistic view of environmental degradation through the lens of climate change (Hulme, 2009). This includes a focus, stemming from environmental and socioeconomic justice movements, on the social and cultural impacts of climate change (Hand et al., 2012; Adger et al., 2013; Apostolopoulou and Cortes-Vazquez, 2018). Though there are many ways to divide the research, (Veldman et al., 2012; Haluza-DeLay, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2018), I will first address what can be classed as theological or normative research then move to the social scientific literature. Following this I propose three ways to understand the religion-climate change nexus in the literature.

Religions and ecology and religious environmentalism

Literature on religions and ecology and religious environmentalism has been emerging since the 1960s, in conjunction with the rise of the wider environmental movement and climate science. It can be seen partly as a response or antidote to Lynn White's 1967 thesis, which connected (Judaeo-Christian) religious beliefs with contemporary ecological decline, by demonstrating the ways in which religious groups were already contributing to the environmental movement and through more normative or prescriptive studies demonstrating the ecological potential of religious beliefs and practices (White, 1967; Jenkins, 2009; Beyer, 2011; Kidwell, 2022). Although eco-theologies were emerging in the 1970s (Gottlieb, 2006; Bergmann, 2015) and organisations such as the World Council of Churches and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) were already involved in environmental activism, it was the beginning of the 'religion and ecology' literature in the 1990s which brought increasing academic attention to the ways in which religions may positively contribute to environmentalism.

The field of religions and ecology arose at a time when, in the international scientific community, the reality of anthropogenic climate change had gained wide acceptance (Hulme, 2009). This can be seen through the formation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1972, the first World Climate Conference in 1979, and the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988[12]. Despite this, use of the term 'climate change' was still mostly restricted to and narrated by those in the natural sciences (Hulme, 2009, p.68) with the focus of religious studies remaining on 'ecology' or 'environment' (Tucker and Grim, 2001; Tucker and Grim, 2017).

Tucker and Grim (2001; 2017) pioneered this field by holding a series of conferences and publications between 1996-1998 leading to the formation of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology in 1998 which continues to be a major resource for research in this area. The core approach of this field may be characterised by the "retrieval", "re-evaluation" and "reconstruction" of religious teachings, beliefs and practices in positive environmental terms (Tucker and Grim, 2017, pp.5–8; see also Gottlieb, 2006; Bedford-Strohm and Deane-Drummond, 2011). These initial research outputs were framed by a clear 'world religions' approach which, though they did incorporate indigenous spiritualities or traditions, did not include the 'dark green' religions or nature-based spiritualities which have since been often associated with the field of religion and ecology (Taylor, 2001; Taylor, 2010); this initial world religions approach has since been criticised for colonialist and reductionist overtones (Masuzawa, 2005; Jenkins, 2017b, p.25). This was a direct response to the already devastating environmental damage caused by humans and, from the outset, was seen as a form of "engaged scholarship" (Tucker and Grim, 2017, p.9) which included environmental activists and ecologists

[12] See Appendix E, where I provide an indicative timeline highlighting key events for UN climate action and FBO engagement.

alongside religious groups. Importantly, the UN attended some events in this series which demonstrates that, from the outset, this is a field which is in dialogue with policymakers and activists.

Religious environmentalism is a separate but overlapping area and a term which is applied in quite divergent ways, though it is generally understood as more explicitly linked to environmental activism (Gottlieb, 2006; Jenkins and Chapple, 2011; Berry, 2013). It is used to identify a range of phenomena including environmental campaigning by religious individuals in secular contexts (see, for example, Nita, 2014 on Christian/Muslim activists), specifically religious environmental activism (for example Smith and Pulver, 2009; Berry, 2013; Hancock, 2018), and academic responses to environmental crises which draw upon religious or theological approaches (for example Gottlieb, 2006; Saniotis, 2012; McFague, 2013). Much research has been dedicated to mapping out or typologising religious environmentalisms; these studies have mostly taken place in the UK and the USA (for example, Smith and Pulver, 2009; Ellingson et al., 2012; Hancock, 2018; Moyer and Scharper, 2019; Kidwell, 2020). To complicate matters there are also several pieces of research highlighting the seemingly religious characteristics of 'secular' environmentalism. This includes the apocalyptic language used by environmental activists (Veldman, 2012), and the suggestion that the (secular) environmental movement itself can or should be defined in religious terms (Bartkowski and Swearingen, 1997; Dunlap, 2005; Dunlap, 2006). Religions and ecology and religious environmentalism can be conceptually messy fields with divergent and overlapping applications of the terms 'ecology' and 'environmentalism' (see for example Jenkins and Chapple, 2011; Bergmann, 2015; Jenkins, 2017) and with the lines between academic research and activism often blurred.

How does climate change diverge?

Research promoting and addressing religious responses to climate change has only really emerged since 2000, though religious groups themselves have been engaging with the idea of climate change since the time of the first World Climate Conference in 1979 (WCC, 2005)[13]. The emergence of this research occurred at the time when international debates on climate change were beginning to scale-up significantly with the Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1994, coming into force in 2004 and increasing global civic interest in the UNFCCC yearly COP negotiations (Cassegard et al., 2017). Climate change diverges from ecology and environmentalism in certain key ways: through its temporal and systemic framing, and through the incorporation of justice and humanitarian concerns (Whyte, 2019; Tajoumi and Reder, 2019; Garrard, 2020).

Hulme (2010, p.171) proposes that climate change is "not 'a problem' waiting for 'a solution'" but that it is a combination of cultural, political and environmental concerns which shape our understanding of the natural environment, how we live on the earth, and our collective goals. An exemplary contrast to this would be ozone depletion (a clear environmental problem) which was

[13] See timeline, Appendix E.

solved via the Montreal Protocol of 1989[14]. Instead climate change is constructed and understood differently across different spheres moving beyond 'environmental protection' and towards something more complex and systemic (Hulme, 2010; Bergmann, 2015; LeVasseur, 2015). This is echoed by Clingerman and O'Brien (2017) as they question whether climate change is "sui generis" – does it require a wholly new type of thinking, a new type of response or can it be responded to by employing the same (or at least similar) ethical and, in their context, theological modes of thinking? Ultimately their conclusion is ambivalent, which supports Hulme's assertions regarding the complexity of the 'non-problem' of climate change. This is complicated by debates about the "policy-neutrality" or "policy-prescriptiveness" of scientific bodies like the IPCC and what the role of climate science can and should be (Hulme, 2009, pp.98–99; Bowman, 2010; LeVasseur, 2015), along with the use of deadlines or tipping points which place climate change within clear, temporal and, what some consider to be, apocalyptic parameters (Hulme, 2009; Lenton and Ciscar, 2013; O'Riordan and Lenton, 2013; Clingerman and O'Brien, 2017). There is often a tension when the adoption of climate science as descriptive of what is actually happening to the earth becomes a normative statement about how the world ought be; it is often suggested that at this point the "human face" of climate change is overlooked (Finan and Rahman, 2009, p.175; Hulme, 2018). I return to discuss the socially constructed nature of ideas about climate change in the next chapter.

At this point another diversion of climate change comes in: the social, economic and humanitarian effects, as exemplified most saliently by the climate justice movement. The connection of justice and environmental degradation is not new, indeed the World Council of Churches' original climate change programme in 1988 stemmed from a process called "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" (Williamson, 1987; WCC, 2005) and arguments for ecological justice, often connected to indigenous communities, have been made since at least the 1980s (Whyte, 2019). However, we now see more explicit links to human rights, justice and socio-economic concerns campaigned under the heading of climate change and in conjunction with climate science (Schlosberg and Collins, 2014; Gach, 2019). This became particularly salient after the publication of the papal encyclical Laudato Si' (Francis, 2015), which used the term "integral ecology" to highlight the inextricably connected human and environmental dimensions of climate change. Tucker and Grim (2017, p.3) argue this helped to inspire a more humanitarian shift in the environmental movement

Research in the area of religions and climate change specifically started with more normative, theological and philosophical work with social scientific investigations only appearing later (Veldman et al., 2012; Berry, 2016; Jenkins et al., 2018). Arguably it first occurred in the Daedalus special issue in 2001 entitled "Religion and Ecology: Can the Climate Change?" which included articles from various religious and disciplinary backgrounds and called explicitly for the inclusion of religious perspectives in the response to climate change. It has taken on a newfound significance over the last decade as the significance and severity climate change scales up and religions and FBOs become an

[14] This is seen by many as the only successful intergovernmental environmental treaty to date.

increasingly salient presence (UNEP, 2018e; Krantz, 2021; Mukherji et al., 2023) It is not merely the case that scholars of religion living through climate change are shoehorning climate change as a "special object" in religious studies (Jenkins, 2017a, p.71). This body of research is a response to longstanding religious environmental movements and an acknowledgement of the changing focus, from environmentalism to climate change action.

Theological and normative research

Whilst much of this literature addresses particular religious traditions, places or communities, three useful review articles speak to the general area of religion and climate change and attempt to demarcate both the ways in which religion and religious studies scholars are responding (Haluza-DeLay, 2014; Berry, 2016; Jenkins et al., 2018). It is important to note that often the ways in which religious groups, institutions, communities are responding may be conflated with the ways in which scholars of religion are responding. Haluza-DeLay (2014) suggests that the field has largely been dominated by literature considered "ethical, normative or theological" (p.252). What he is alluding to is research which continues the approach popular within religion and ecology of "retrieval […] re-evaluation [...] reconstruction [of religious teachings and practices]" (Tucker and Grim, 2017, p.8) but is directed instead to climate change. This comprises tradition-specific literature, where scripture, teachings or practices are invoked as a way to understand and respond to climate change, along with research looking at religion 'as a whole' and proposing ways in which it may be relevant as a response to climate change. Jenkins et al. (2018, p.9.8) proposes that we can divide this literature into "confessional" or "constructive". The former attempts to understand, frame and respond to climate change through the beliefs of a particular religion or "mak[e] climate change matter within the moral cosmology of a religious community" (ibid, p.9.8). The latter is research which aims to be applicable to those of any religion or none, though it may come from a confessional context, often by engaging with ethical or moral religious arguments.

Examples of tradition-specific theological or normative literature are too many to usefully synthesise for the purposes of this review. Many of them build on ideas established by religions and ecology and refer to similar teachings or arguments in response to climate change. This is largely still dominated by Christian theological work addressing climate change (see, for example, Bergmann, 2009; McFague, 2013; Northcott and Scott, 2014; Toroitich and Kerber, 2014). There is a relatively large body of Islamic scholarship addressing environmental issues (Rice, 2006; Saniotis, 2012; Abdelzaher et al., 2017) but less specifically focussed on climate change, though this is starting to grow (Ali, 2016; Torabi and Noori, 2019).

What is more important for this thesis, is scholarship which argues that religion 'in general' has the potential to contribute positively to the fight against climate change, given the way in which religious groups are often engaged with due to their religiosity, not their specific tradition, as seen through FBO projects within the UN (UNEP, 2016a; UNEP, 2018e). Wolf and Gjerris (2009) argue along these lines in an appeal to the ethical, moral and hopeful response to climate change that religions can bring.

They suggest that, where secular ethics merely informs us of our environmental duties, religion can awaken our "ethical consciousness" and provide a much needed "pre-rational" explanation for said duties (pp.125-16). Their argument, whilst largely theoretical and grounded in the potential of religious ethics, does draw on and respond to the work of the UN and the ways in which the UN is already appealing to the ethical dimensions of climate change and seeking engagement with religions for their ethical or philosophical arguments not only their instrumental value. They focus specifically on the work of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the (now defunct) Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), though we can see a continuation of this through UNEP's more recent Faith for Earth initiative which is styled as "[a]n ethical approach to global challenges" (UNEP, 2018c). Posas (2007) also addresses the potential for religion and particularly religious ethics in the fight against climate change, and Schipper (2010) emphasises the importance of religious beliefs and associated perceptions of natural risk in responding to and mitigating climate change.

Social scientific research

Until the early 2010s, there was a paucity of social scientific research addressing religion and climate change with the field largely being dominated by literature considered "ethical, normative or theological" (Haluza-DeLay, 2014, p.252). Yet there was already large body of quantitative research attempting to assess the link between religious identity and beliefs about climate change. There is a vast body of research which approaches religion (or religiosity, or religious/denominational affiliation) as a demographic category, largely conducted through surveys (Greeley, 1993; Guth et al., 1995; Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000; Kim and Kim, 2010; Jones et al., 2014; Hagevi, 2014; Fink et al., 2015; Arbuckle and Konisky, 2015; Tsimpo and Wodon, 2016; Taylor, 2016; Mostafa, 2017; Ergun and Rivas, 2019). Though these studies are divergent in their specific conclusions about the links between religion and environmental attitudes, they act as a caution to researchers not to overstate the link between religiosity or affiliation with environmental attitudes or to lean into assumptions about particular religious traditions being environmentally 'good' or 'bad', particularly where religion may be a red herring over other demographic factors . In this way they, can be complementary to qualitative studies and raise the potential to draw much broader, if somewhat tenuous, conclusions, about wider trends between religion and climate change. An example of this is Maibach et al. (2015) who drew on survey data to suggest that the so-called "Francis Effect" led to an associated rise in concern for climate change amongst Catholics in the USA. It seems what Haluza-DeLay is getting at is the lack of social scientific research which goes beyond religion as a demographic category and seeks to understand how religious beliefs and practices are adapted, changed or appealed to in relation to climate change and how religious communities are practically responding. This type of literature is more recent and was spearheaded by Veldman et al. (2014) in the first social scientific publication dedicated to religion and climate change, which I will address shortly.

Where social scientific research into religion and climate change diverges from religion and ecology or religious environmentalism is that it tends to drop the essentialised notion of (certain) religious traditions being inherently environmentally friendly, which has previously been criticised for romanticism and for importing Western environmental narratives (Tomalin, 2002; Tomalin, 2016). The focus, at least in the social scientific literature, is less concerned with retrieving or reconstructing environmentally friendly narratives, beliefs or practices within religious traditions but with describing the ways in which religions are actually responding to, or influencing responses to, climate change. This has resulted in numerous studies using broadly ethnographic approaches which attempt to understand how climate change is conceptualised and understood in the beliefs and ethics of localised religious communities (for example, Johnson, 2012; Davidson, 2012; Watson and Kochore, 2012; Manandhar et al., 2014; Bomberg and Hague, 2018; Schuman et al., 2018; Onwutuebe, 2019; Chitando et al., 2022).

The first publication dedicated solely to the social scientific research on the subject of religion and climate change was Veldman et al.'s 2014 edited collection, How the World's Religions are Responding to Climate Change. They introduce the book by proposing the ways in which religion in general may be conducive to climate change action in terms of social and economic resources, widespread networks and the ability to elicit activist responses. The chapters are split into eight on the 'Global South', six on the Global North' and two on 'transnational aspects', demonstrating that these responses and case studies are shaped not only by the religion in question but also by their geographical and socio-economic context. Of course, Global North/South here refers both physical geographical location but to the status of (economic) development in the country/region. The focus on context, and in particular the Global North/South divide of the book is not only an important factor to avoid generalisations of any religious tradition outside of the particular geographical and societal setting but is especially useful to note in the context of responses climate change. Given the unequal distribution of the causes and effects of climate change, it seems to make particular sense to approach religious responses in this way. The ways in which climate change is responded to will vary between mitigating against the real effects thereof or promoting efforts to reduce the over-consumption and pollution causing it.

Where previous research tended towards a tradition by tradition, 'world religions' approach to understanding how religious groups may respond to climate change, here (geographical) context is put forward as one of the most important factors in understanding the responses of religion(s) to climate change. The chapters serve as a useful starting point to understand the multiple and varied discursive ways that climate change comes to be important within religious communities. The most useful chapters are those which demonstrate the ways in which religious groups influence policy and engage with climate change as a global phenomenon. Amri (2014), in research on civil society organisations in Indonesia, demonstrates the ways in which religious civil society organisations successfully move between eco-theology, practical mobilisation of resources and engagement with national policymakers to combat climate change. Lysack (2014), in the same book, looks at faith leaders in Canada and

highlights missed opportunities and failures to advocate successfully for climate change at national and international events.

Whilst this type of research is a necessary antidote to the decontextualised approach often taken by research which only addresses religion at the institutional level leading to policymakers taking a homogenised view of each 'world religion' (for example ARC, 1986; Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, 2020) it often overlooks those organisations operating at the intersection of local religious climate action and international climate policy. Smith (2018) begins to address this in an article on faith-based environmental social movements in Indonesia. Here, he situates the movement as neither singularly local or global but operating at the boundary and equally affected by concerns at both levels. He concludes "environmental movements, are rooted in the global context of responses to climate change and the local spaces and places that enable movements to exist and act" (ibid, p.209).

Mapping the religion-climate change nexus

One of the fundamental questions running throughout the literature is how we should understand the link between climate change and religion. It could be responded to by merely asserting that as climate change is affecting, or will affect, humanity as a whole, we must take religion into account to fully understand the cultural and societal impact of climate change (Hulme 2009). I propose three ways that the religion-climate change nexus has been conceptualised in the literature: climate change as a religious 'event', religions as the ethical response to climate change, and religions as offering the practical resources (e.g. social and economic) to respond to climate change.

Climate change as a religious event

By framing climate change as a religious event, the suggestion is that it is both something which can be understood and interpreted in religious terms and that it is something which provokes a change within religious traditions (Jenkins et al., 2018; Conca, 2022). It is already common to talk about the cultural effects of climate change and as a framework through which to understand societal change, where previously it was framed largely in terms of its purely physical effects (Hulme, 2010; 2015). Bergmann (2009; 2015) argues that the cultural and religious dimensions of climate change have been overlooked in policy and other mainstream responses and that those involved in climate change policy and activism must attend to religion as a "significant dimension in any serious response" (2015, p.390). The cultural dimensions of climate change have taken on increasing significance, particularly with the rise of disciplines such as environmental humanities (Hulme, 2015), but there is now more attention on climate change as religious change.

When approaching climate change as a religious event, context becomes increasingly important. There is a distinction between religious communities who experience the physical effects of climate change as a religious event, and those who, yet to experience the immediate physical effects of climate change, see global climate change as framework for religiously inspired action. This becomes

interesting in the context of global climate change advocacy as communities in those areas most at risk due to climate change, one example being Small Island Developing States (SIDS), have relatively little international influence (Oakes, 2019). There are several pieces of anthropological and ethnographic fieldwork which demonstrate clearly how the effects of climate change (for example glacial retreat, extreme weather events, flooding) may be understood as a religious event within local faith communities (Frömming and Reichel, 2010; Manandhar et al., 2014; Schuman et al., 2018).

Climate change has also been posited as something which provokes change in religions (Bergmann, 2009; Conca, 2022, p.264). Bergmann (2015), for example, suggests that we can see climate change as a framework through which to understand religious change. By this he means that climate change forces religious groups to mobilise in new ways, adapt theologically, and intensify their contribution to public discourse around climate change, often through interfaith initiatives (ibid, p.395). It is not necessarily clear that climate change is special in any way, as one could argue that many existential or international 'events' provoke change within religious communities and that religious traditions themselves are not static but constantly evolving socially, theologically and politically. However, the nature of climate change, the way in which it relates to human and non-human existence and the way in which we understand and respond to planetary systems and epochal shifts seems to be directly related to the underlying framework of religious beliefs (Hogue, 2007; Hulme, 2009; Conca, 2022).

The moral or ethical response to climate change

The most relevant argument put forward as to why we should consider religion in climate change is that they provide an ethical or moral depth which, some argue, is simply lacking in non-religious or secular climate change action. The UN is clearly picking up on this through projects such as "Faith for Earth - the *ethical* response to global challenges" (UNEP, 2018, no page, my emphasis) and the report "Environment, Religion and Culture in Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (UNEP, 2016a) which goes beyond appeals to tradition-specific religious teachings or practices (though these do appear) to suggest that "religious principles" (p.14) in general may be useful in grounding and motivating climate change action.

Jenkins et al. (2018, pp.9.6-9.11) suggest that there are three key themes in which we can see the importance of religion for climate change: stewardship, climate justice, apocalypse. Importantly, they propose that these fit into a "constructive" approach as they can be found across a range of religious traditions, including those to which 'religion' may not be a useful category, and are also applied in non-religious contexts. Rather than go into specific religious traditions' approach to climate ethics I will instead address why scholars and policymakers are proposing that ethical and moral arguments per se are the crux of the religion-climate change nexus. The argument here seems to rest on two strands: that climate change is a moral/ethical issue and must be responded to as such and that religions have a particular and perhaps unique jurisdiction over moral/ethical issues. The conclusion is then that religious traditions 'in general' have an important moral voice in climate change action.

The first part of this argument seems reasonable and has been well-established in philosophical debates on climate ethics (O'Hara and Abelsohn, 2011; Berry, 2014b). The second part of the argument appears in two ways. One is to suggest that across religions we find concepts that are uniquely placed to respond to climate change or environmental degradation, such as stewardship and justice (Jenkins et al., 2018; Conca, 2022). The other is to appeal to the persuasive influence that religious moral teachings have on religious adherents. Posas (2007) appeals to both of these. She takes that "[c]limate change is an inescapably moral and ethical issue" (p.2) and begins by arguing that climate change must be addressed ethically. She then proposes that religious teachings can usefully be applied to climate change as positive ethical teaching on moral responsibility and stewardship appear in some form across many religious traditions and that religion has the ability to provide more compelling moral or spiritual reasoning to tackle climate change. Wolf and Gjerris (2009) make this argument more explicitly, suggesting that "[r]eligion can do something which ethics cannot" (p.125). They suggest that, whilst ethics does well at working out and telling us what our duty is, it falls short of providing convincing reasons to do so. Smith and Pulver (2009, p.169), using religious environmentalism in the US as a case study, juxtapose the emphasis placed on the "intrinsic, intergenerational, and spiritual values of nature" with the "the utilitarian and economic values that are stressed more commonly throughout United States culture". It is also the ability of religious groups to take the scientific evidence for climate change and "ground it in the moral and ethical imperative of their faith traditions" (Kearns, 2011, p.415). This echoes Rollosson's (2010) report on the ways in which FBOs and religious leaders engaged in a consultation with the UNDP on climate change at the Windsor summit in 2009, organised by Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC). She suggests that the UN representatives were not only engaging with faith actors due to their practical resources but that they were seeking to add what she calls an "ethos" to the "ethics" of climate change (p. 421). By this she is proposing that religious groups can go beyond 'secular' ethics and provide a deeper motivation for climate action and responsibility.

A separate but related proposal is the use of religious frameworks through which to understand climate change. Menning (2018) for example argues along similar lines to the moral/ethical argument but suggests that it is religious metaphors, in her case framing climate change as a rite of passage, which can motivate positive action and promote moral responsibility, both in secular and "pluralistic" contexts (p.351). This builds on Hulme's (2009, pp. 324-353) proposal that we can draw on religious "myths" to help us better understand the idea, and particularly the plasticity and complexity, of climate change. One of these, "presaging apocalypse" (ibid, p.345), is intended help us better understand and frame the fragility of nature, the language of disaster and tipping points and the failure of political leaders. Wolf and Gjerris (2009, p.5) propose whilst there have been suggestions that climate change can be seen as the "end times" in a Christian sense, it is secular environmentalists who rely more on apocalyptic, and what they perceive as negative, language. They argue that religious groups provide a much-needed narrative of hope through reverence and stewardship for the natural environment. King (2015, p.425) counters this by proposing that "fatalism and apocalypticism" are

distinctly religious ways of understanding and framing the world and that this "eco-religious thinking protects its thinkers by reinforcing the status quo, and creating psychological paralysis". This acts as caution not to overstate or romanticise the positive moral value and climate friendly nature of religious frameworks of moral and ethical teachings (Taylor, 2016; Koehrsen et al., 2021).

Social capital and mobilisation

Finally, there is the assumption, common within research into religions and development, that religions have the necessary social and economic resources at their disposal to help tackle climate change and an associated ability to mobilise or influence faith communities (Veldman et al., 2012; Haluza-DeLay, 2014). This draws on arguments established in the literature on religions and development (Clarke and Jennings, 2008; Tomalin, 2013; Kraft and Wilkinson, 2020; Koehrsen and Burchardt, 2023) that religious groups have large numbers of adherents, access to localised communities and an ability to foster trust. Veldman et al. (2014c, p.5) propose that in response to climate change we must see religions as effective agents given their institutional resources (such as places of worship, schools, social coalitions) and their ability to reach and mobilise a vast audience. Amri (2014) reiterates this in a study of religious civil society organisations in Indonesia and suggests that the core strength of these organisations lies within their grassroots support and ability to mobilise local institutional resources. Other studies have posited that religions, faith leaders and FBOs may be important connectors between the worlds of climate policy and of local interests or local climate activism (Lyons et al., 2016; Hancock, 2019; Hague and Bomberg, 2022; Tobin, Ali, et al., 2023)

The efficacy of this social capital of course relies on the uptake of climate messaging amongst religious communities. Tsimpo and Wodon (2016) attempt to test this question of whether "the faithful follow suit" (p.52) in response to climate change advocacy or initiatives by religious leaders and FBOs. Drawing on data from the World Values Survey, their results indicated that religiosity has more influence than religious affiliation on environmental attitudes and that those with higher levels of religiosity, irrespective of affiliation, tended to give higher priority to environmental issues than their non-religious counterparts. From their results they propose that there is not a great disconnect between religious leaders' statements on climate change and the attitudes of religious communities. Whilst this suggests that engaging with religious leaders and FBOs on climate change may be a fruitful avenue, given the corresponding attitudes of "the faithful", it does not show how this comes about in in practice nor the more nuanced and discursive ways in which religious identity comes to matter in climate action.

Within the area of climate change, we also see renewed interest in the financial assets of faith-based organisations (UNEP, 2016; UNEP, 2018; WRI, n.d.). This is not necessarily borne out of a desire to use these economic resources to fund humanitarian projects, as it perhaps is within the arena of development, but it is to 'green' them and to ensure divestment from fossil fuels and other damaging investments. We can already see this happening with headlines such as "42 faith institutions divest from fossil fuels" (Operation Noah, 2020) and with 'greening' religious investments one of the core

aims of UNEP's Faith for Earth programme (UNEP, 2018c). Linked to this is research which examines religions', religious communities or religious leaders' roles in divestment and sustainable energy transitions (Koehrsen, 2015; Koehrsen, 2018; Urbatsch and Wang, 2021).

2.3 Religion at the UN

Having mapped some of the research into religions and climate change I will now address the ways in which religion has been researched in the context of the UN. Despite the UN actively seeking out FBOs to engage with on climate change, sustainability and environmental matters (Rollosson, 2010; UNEP, 2016a; UNEP, 2018e; Sarmad, 2019) and FBOs playing an increasingly salient role in climate advocacy, research in this area, until recently has been limited. Research which takes FBOs as the starting point is still largely focussed on their work on development, peace-building and humanitarian issues (Berger, 2003; Bradley, 2009; Boehle, 2010b; Boehle, 2010a; Haynes, 2014) whilst studies into non-state actors at in climate action the UN have often avoided addressing FBOs or RNGOs (Clark et al., 1998; Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu, 2002; Nasiritousi et al., 2014; Nasiritousi, 2016; Bäckstrand et al., 2017).

Religious groups have a long history of working in and with the UN with the Holy See having held permanent observer status since the formation of the UN in 1945, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), formed in 1967, constituting one of the largest voting blocs with 57 member states (Carrette and Miall, 2017; Sekerák and Lovaš, 2022). The founding of the Committee of Religion NGOs in 1972 marked a clear point at which religious groups began to carve out a space within the UN institution (Haynes, 2018). The turn towards the "capabilities approach" and the human development index of the 1980s has been suggested to have led to increasing involvement of faith actors due to what was perceived to be a more human-centred approach to international policy and development (Nussbaum, 2009; Tomalin, 2018).

However, there was relatively little research on how religious groups were practically engaging with the UN until religious NGOs were addressed by Berger (2003) followed by Haynes (2014), Carrette and Miall (2017) and Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf (2018b). Haynes (2014) frames the involvement of FBOs at the UN as part of a wider "resurgence of religion" and indicative of a postsecular international policy environment. At the time of writing, he found that FBOs made up 9-10% of NGOs registered with ECOSOC, of which two thirds were Christian or Global North-based. He ultimately argues that FBOs have "dualistic" concerns when it comes to international policy (Haynes 2017, p.168-170; see also Peterson 2010). Here he means that identifiably religious characteristics and faith-based goals are hidden or translated into acceptable secular language in the context of the UN. He further suggests that where the tension lies is not necessarily between the 'religious' and the 'secular', but between FBOs themselves who compete on political, rather than theological grounds. Relatively liberal FBOs will partner not only with other liberal FBOs but with similarly liberal secular NGOs and the same goes for more conservative FBOs (Haynes, 2014; Haynes, 2017). Haynes (2017,

p.1067) later adds that "[t]he 'rise' of RNGOs at the UN is intimately involved with critiques of global governance and the apparent inadequacy of existing mechanisms to bring about improvement." which may also apply to frustrations around the limited potential of UN agencies to respond to climate change (Bowman, 2010; Hulme, 2010; Hermwille et al., 2017).

In a larger scale study of religion at the UN, Carrette and Miall (2017) sought to examine in more detail the ways in which RNGOs (their preferred term over FBO), actually acted out this dualistic role at the UN. They present a more complex picture and suggest that they in fact operate through "chameleon politics" whereby religious language is not entirely minimised at the UN but is used more strategically, becoming "visible" and "invisible" as and when RNGOs perceive it to be appropriate or advantageous to policy advocacy. This fits in with the idea that religious groups may be able to provide a constructive moral or ethical 'weight' to arguments on climate change particularly if this is presented in constructive, rather than confessional language (Jenkins et al., 2018). In their edited collection, Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf (2018a) also focus on the role of what they call RNGOs at the UN, and propose that RNGOs take on more mediatory or more polarising positions depending on the thematic area at the UN. Rather than becoming more and less identifiably religious, they conclude that they "do not lose their religious identity; they learn to adapt to the requirements of their environment." (Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018a, p.190).

Though religious groups have been advocating for climate action, variously, through interfaith statements, attendance and activism at COP events, for decades (see Appendix E for a timeline) it seems that the publication of Laudato Si' (Francis, 2015) marked a turning point in terms of UN and public recognition of the role of religion in motivating climate action. Ivanova (2017) suggests that Pope Francis' associated address at the seventieth UN general assembly marked a point at which environmental policy and religion came together in ways which would have previously not been possible and that the moral imperatives detailed in Pope Francis' claims were repeated by both other faith leaders and policymakers. Prior to the encyclical some felt that religion was being side-lined in mainstream environmental movements with little recognition for the potential of religious groups to elicit positive action or to usefully respond to climate change (Palmer, 2013). Perhaps this uptake can be attributed to the compelling message within Laudato Si' and the embeddedness of social and human issues within it, indebted to the tradition of Catholic social teaching and liberation theology (Francis, 2015; Handley, 2016; Latour, 2016). However, it can no doubt also be attributed to the nature of the religion in question, one which is formalised and well-equipped to engage within UN systems and which fits with expectations of religions at the UN (Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017).

Faith-based organisations and climate action at the UN

Research which addresses the intersection of FBOs and climate change action in and around the UN has started to grow over the last five to ten years and tends to focus on specific events or specific UN agencies (Berry, 2014a; Glaab, 2017; Krantz, 2021; Krantz, 2022; Glaab, 2022; Sadouni, 2022).

Glaab (2017) addresses the role of what she describes as faith-based actors (FBAs) who work within UN systems for climate change action (see also Glaab et al., 2018; Glaab and Fuchs, 2018). Taking the expanding literature on the climate justice movement as a starting point, she addresses to what extent FBAs contribute to this movement in an international policy setting. She conducted discourse analysis of interviews and participant observation with FBAs at climate change events and UNFCCC meetings and compared their operational practices with those of the climate justice movement. Glaab argues that the "religious and spiritual practices [of FBAs] are mutually constituted and constitutive of climate justice discourses and practices" (Glaab, 2017, p. 1115) and that FBAs operate at the intersection of (radical) activism and formal engagement. Here they tend to be less 'radical' than secular climate movements and more willing to engage with political institutions which she suggests is tied up with a need for legitimacy. However, they are able to use "emotional language", challenge "established 'secularised' processes" and advocate for relational climate justice in ways that other civil society organisations cannot (ibid, p.1121). By taking a comparative approach with the climate justice movement, she is able to draw out the interesting and important ways that FBAs draw on and diverge from secular movements. However, it limits the consideration of religious arguments to those concerned with 'justice' and may overlook other ways in which religion comes to matter in these contexts. In a later publication, Glaab (2022) engages with the ways that FBAs challenge what she calls the secular "doxa" of the UNFCCC. She argues they do so not only through their presence at the UNFCCC, but also through using religious reasons to advocate for climate politics.

Krantz (2021), building on previous quantitative studies of FBOs at the UN (Berger, 2003; Peterson, 2010; Beinlich and Braungart, 2018), took a quantitative approach to studying RNGOs attending COPs and registered with the UNFCCC. He found that RGNOs make up around three percent of UNFCCC-accredited NGOs, a lower percentage than is registered with the UN in general via ECOSOC, of which over 80 percent are Christian, and most are based in the Global North. Focusing specifically on COP23, he also demonstrates the range of roles that FBOs take on at the UNFCCC conferences (Krantz 2022). In doing so, he drew together research on non-state actors in climate governance, which has often overlooked FBOs (Schroeder and Lovell, 2012; Nasiritousi, 2016), to assess how FBOs' roles may be distinct from secular NGOs. He showed that FBOs perform many of the same roles as other NGOs at COP, but nonetheless argued that their engagement demonstrated their framing of climate change as a religious issue (Krantz, 2022, p, 186).

In a study expanding the lens beyond specific UN agencies and towards global climate politics, Sadouni (2022) made an important contribution to this field by looking at the role of religions in global climate politics with a particular focus on the transnational dimensions thereof. Taking a theoretical approach from international relations and political sociology, she paid particular attention to the multi-lateral political frameworks and cooperation which shape transnational climate politics; for example between UN agencies, national governments, secular NGOs, FBOs. Using a case study of South Africa, in particular the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI), she demonstrated how religious actors operate across global and local spheres by supporting climate

policy implementation at a local level, by collaborating with local and national governments, but by also situating their work in the world of transnational climate politics.

2.4 Postsecular framings

Research on the role of FBOs in sustainable development, at the UN, and in global climate politics, has often engaged with, or at least made reference to, theories of postsecularism (Cloke and Beaumont, 2013; Haynes, 2014; Ager and Ager, 2016; Wilkinson, 2018; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b; Wilson, 2022). The postsecular has been employed in different ways, as a descriptive state of affairs, as an analytical lens, as a framing of empirical results, or as a normative theoretical argument to critique secularist norms. Here I provide an overview of the postsecular and show how it has been brought to bear on research addressing the role of FBOs; I return to the postsecular in Chapter 7.

Habermas (2006; 2008) introduced the idea of the postsecular as response to and framing of the continued presence of religion in primarily Western European society. He makes a somewhat nebulous distinction between religious and secular citizens and argues that, given the continued presence of the former, the latter must recognise "that we live in post-secular society" (Habermas, 2006, p.15). This, he argues requires an equal epistemic adjustment on the part of both 'secular' and 'religious' citizens. Religious reasons, according to Habermas, ought to be allowed to be used in public by religious citizens, without an "undue mental and psychological burden for those of its citizens who follow a faith" (ibid, p.9); he even argues that religions may be particularly good at "articulating moral intuitions" (ibid, p.10). Importantly, though, to incorporate these religious reasons into more formal policy and political spaces entails translating them into acceptable secular language. Whilst I find Habermas' account questionable in its distinction between religious and secular citizens, and in its assertion of a wholesale shift to a "post-secular" society, it does highlight a dimension of religious-secular dynamic relevant to my analysis in terms of my participants experience of translation, as I demonstrate in Chapter 6.

The postsecular, and Habermas' account in particular, has been criticised for continuing to embody a normative secularist framing of society, for being theoretically imprecise, or by remining overly committed to a religious-secular divide or to a reductionist view of religion (Beckford, 2012; Pabst, 2012; Dallmayr, 2012; Wilson, 2014b; Wilkinson, 2018). Yet Habermas' approach to the postsecular has received much attention in studies of religions and sustainable development and postsecular analysis has been usefully applied to describe, critique, and respond to the role of religions and FBOs in global civil society (Mavelli and Petito, 2012; Cloke and Beaumont, 2013; Wilson, 2014b; Ager and Ager, 2016; Wilkinson, 2018). Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf (2018b), for example, argue that "the most promising approaches [to analysing RNGOs at the UN] are those that have emerged under the heading of 'postsecularism'" as they both attempt to move beyond an analytical reliance on a religious-secular divide whilst still critiquing the construction and implications of such a dichotomy.

Two accounts which engage with postsecularism, at an international level, and at a national civil society and grassroots level, are of use when considering the role of FBOs, particularly in climate action[15]. Both see religion, and FBOs specifically, as filling a gap left open by neoliberal agendas at global and local/national levels (Cloke and Beaumont, 2013; Wilson and Steger, 2013). Wilson and Steger (2013) argue that those very features that marked a transition to what we may consider to be a modern globalised society and which, by extension, were proposed to mark the decline of religion and the success of secularism, in fact helped to spread and increase the influence of religion. FBOs are introduced as demonstrating the "rehabilitat[ion]" of religion into the public sphere as important service providers and campaigners in the wake of the neoliberalisation of the state (ibid, p. 486). They divide religious responses to neoliberal globalisms into three kinds: neoliberal religious globalisms, religious justice globalisms, and neotraditional religious globalisms. The first of these represents an alignment and promotion of neoliberal (market) goals whilst the latter two reject these, the first for what may be considered progressive justice-centred concerns, and the second for traditionalist and ideological reasons. Ultimately, they consider the postsecular to be a useful framework through which to both critique (neoliberal) secular modes of governance and to understand and assess the rise in "religious globalisms".

FBOs as gap-fillers in postsecular society is also reflected in research conducted by Cloke and Beaumont (2013). They look at the postsecular as a way of framing interfaith and religious-secular partnerships in civil society in the UK. They draw on Habermas' notion of crossover ethical narratives and argue that the concept is useful to help understand how secular-religious alliances and mutual discourses may be built. They suggest we are seeing a Habermassian postsecularity - or at least the preconditions thereof - including "crossover ethical narratives" with religions or FBOs breaking out "of their previous position of being 'hushed up' in the public sphere" (ibid, p.41). Importantly, they suggest that we ought to see FBOs not as subordinated but as fulfilling complementary roles in contemporary society. The continued role of FBOs demonstrates the fluidity of religious-secular boundaries and is an example of what they call "postsecular practice" (ibid, p.41). They introduce a faith-by-dogma/faith-by-praxis dichotomy and suggest that the latter is more amenable to and opens possibilities for more postsecular outcomes (p.41-2). This aligns with previous research on religious NGOs and FBOs in the context of the UN where collaboration between FBOs and secular actors is often defined by the practices and activities of the organisations, not the beliefs. Carrette and Miall (2017) suggest political and social positions define interfaith and religious-secular contexts, rather than religiosity or affiliation, whilst Berry (2014), addressing sustainability specifically, suggests that the boundary between religious and secular actors is "permeable" and not clearly defined.

[15] In Chapter 7 I return to the postsecular and reflect on how it can be applied to frame, respond to and critique the role of FBOs in climate action at the UN.

Accounts of postsecularism have also been employed to support critiques of international relations and global climate politics (Bettiza and Dionigi, 2015; Mavelli and Wilson, 2016; Wilson, 2017; Wilson, 2022). Here the postsecular is often put forward as an alternative framing to secularist agendas in international relations entailing a commitment to the inclusion (on complementary rather than subordinate terms) of religion, religious actors or FBOs. Wilson (2017), for example has argued that secularism entails a form of ontological injustice, and instead argues for a postsecular approach allowing for the inclusion of "multiple ontologies" (p.14) in international relations and a move beyond simple religious-secular hierarchies. These accounts of postsecularism underpin much debate in religion at the UN, religions in sustainable development and the role of FBOs. Whilst I am not starting the thesis from a descriptive statement that we are in a "postsecular age" (Morozov, 2008) or by describing climate action as postsecular, these accounts are useful in demonstrating how we might critique secularist norms of climate politics and frame the continued presence of FBOs.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed the development of research on religions and climate change and religions at the UN. Research which addresses the intersection of religions and climate change and religions at the UN represents a small but quickly growing field. In forthcoming chapters, I build on this research by broadening our understanding of what constitutes engagement with the UN for climate action, by addressing how FBOs frame climate change, and by addressing how FBOs navigate the global and local dimensions of climate action. In the final section of this chapter I looked at how the postsecular has been used to analyse the role of religion in contemporary society and to critique a reliance on religious-secular binaries. These approaches will prove useful in addressing how FBOs translate climate action across different global and local spheres, in Chapter 6, and how they negotiate the religious and secular dynamics of climate action, in Chapter 7.

Chapter 3 - Researching faith-based organisations and climate action: theories and methods

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an account of two theoretical points key to the thesis as well as an overview of research design and methods employed. In the first section I focus on how climate change and FBOs have been theorised. I take the approach that climate change is not a singular or clearly definable phenomenon but is open to multiple framings and constructions. I then address how FBOs have been defined thus far and develop a broad definition and typology of FBOs for this thesis. I discuss how we ought think about where the 'faith' is in FBOs and take the approach that neither religion or faith are fixed categories but are constructed and negotiated by FBOs (and indeed by secular NGOs and the UN) in the UN-faith-climate space. I reflect on the debate on FBOs' distinctiveness as a category as an open question running throughout this thesis. In the second half of the chapter I provide an account of methods employed in this research beginning with a reflection on how these were amended from the initial research design. I discuss the development of a database of FBOs and the purposive sampling strategy for selecting interview participants and FBO websites for analysis. I then discuss my approach to the semi-structured interviews and participant observation with particular attention to the blend of online and in-person settings. Whilst data analysis was an ongoing iterative process, I describe in more detail my final approach to analysing and coding the dataset which was a combination of inductive and deductive methods. I close by reflecting on key ethical considerations for the research. During the account of the methods I integrate some disussion of limitations but return to a fuller discussion of the limitations of the thesis overall in the concluding chapter.

3.2 Theorising climate change and faith-based organisations

Constructing and framing climate change

Though climate change is often presented, as for example in the IPCC reports[16], as a scientifically measurable, albeit incredibly complex, phenomenon, it important to account for the social, political, and cultural dimensions which shape and inform the causes, effects and responses thereof. Beyond the language of the IPCC, climate change has been described as a socio-political and multidimensional phenomenon (Hulme, 2010; Hulme, 2022), a "form of life" (Callison, 2014), a "wicked problem"

[16] The IPCC define climate change as "a change in the state of the *climate* that can be identified (e.g., by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period […] due to natural internal processes or external *forcings* […] and persistent *anthropogenic* changes." (IPCC, 2018, p.544, original emphases). This is distinct from the UNFCCC definition which uses on *anthropogenic* climate change as its main definition (UNFCCC, 1992).

(Clingerman and O'Brien, 2017, p.10; Riley and Bauman, 2017; Bauman, 2017; White, 2018), a "religious event" (Jenkins et al., 2018, 9.15) and as a crisis or emergency (McHugh et al., 2021; Feldman and Hart, 2021). Attempts to define climate change have often focused on the need to consider not only the physical or environmental dimensions but also, and perhaps more importantly the social, cultural and political dimensions, in terms of causes, effects, and perceptions. At the onset of greater civic responses to climate change, Dessai et al. (2004) argued that a definition of what constituted "dangerous" climate change must account for its social perception and construction. There have been several changes in the language surrounding climate change including a notable shift towards the incorporation of justice (della Porta and Parks, 2014; Gach, 2019) as well as a more recent shift towards crisis and emergency language (McHugh et al., 2021). These different approaches to defining climate change and the changes in language demonstrate the importance of considering the way climate change is framed and constructed, and form part of the theoretical background for addressing the research questions in this thesis.

Hulme (2009; 2022) traces the social and cultural legacy of climate change and demonstrates how ideas about climate change have been constructed. He argues that whilst climate change, in part, can be understood as measurable changes to the environment or climate, our understanding of it is inextricably shaped by social, cultural, political and even religious factors. In this way climate change is itself "multifarious" (Hulme, 2022, p.xxix). The way it has been approached in climate policy and governance has often been as a problem (or "mega-problem" (Hulme 2009, p.333)) which then assumes a solutionist response. This not only overlooks the idea that climate change may be constructed differently, but also overlooks important the social and political considerations required in any response (Dunlap and Brulle, 2015; Riley and Bauman, 2017). Dunlap and Brulle (2015) have argued that the social dimensions of climate change have been overlooked in IPCC reports and in international climate governance where the focus tends towards scientifically measurable changes to the environment alone[17]. Climate politics and climate policies have likewise been critiqued for their reductionist approach to climate change (Antonio and Clark, 2015, pp.191–193). The idea of climate change as multifarious and as open to multiple framings and constructions underpin my approach in this thesis.

The construction of climate change as a clearly definable problem is a central critique of Hulme and others (Hulme, 2010; Antonio and Clark, 2015; Riley and Bauman, 2017). Hulme (2010, p.171) challenges the idea that climate change should be considered "problem" with a "solution" but that it instead ought to be considered "an environmental, cultural and political phenomenon which is re-shaping the way we think about ourselves, about our societies and about humanity's place on earth". In this way we might consider climate change to be a framework through which more specific

[17] This has arguably shifted with the release of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment report which was much clearer about the human costs of climate change and the need for urgent social and political responses (Mukherji et al., 2023)

environmental and socio-political issues are understood, for example human rights, sustainable development, economic transitions, natural hazards, pollution. Climate change both exacerbates and is exacerbated by existing societal and environmental problems, yet it also often acts as the "mother of all issues" through which we frame them (Hulme, 2010, p.171). In a similar way, Callison (2014), who conducted research on how climate change "comes to matter"[18] takes the perspective that "[t]he meaning of climate change emerges as many assemblages" (p.11). In taking this approach she leaves open the possibility that the meaning of climate change is up for negotiation and construction. It is not a concrete or stable concept but presents with different scope, meaning and significance depending on social, political and religious contexts.

That climate change is not neatly definable and can be constructed differently leaves open much scope for how religions and FBOs engage with climate change and climate action (Kearns, 2011; Antonio and Clark, 2015; Conca, 2022). The theoretical implications for my research are that I have not taken a strict or narrow view on what climate change is. I leave open the possibility for climate change to be framed by FBOs in multiple ways, whether as a distinct and definable problem, as a framework through which other environmental or humanitarian issues are refracted, and with differing degrees of significance. The second research question, addressing how FBOs frame climate change, was specifically designed with the multifarious nature of climate change in mind. Later on in the thesis I engage more fully with the analytical approach of framing (in Chapter 5), of the global/local or 'glocal' dimensions of climate change (in Chapter 6) and of the secular climate action context (in Chapter 7).

Faith-based organisations and faith-based distinctiveness

Another critical theoretical issue for this research is what constitutes an FBO. In this section I engage with how FBOs have been theorised, discuss where the 'faith' is in FBOs and look at whether and if so how they can be understood as distinctive. This is important both in terms of laying the groundwork for the research design and methods but also in terms of setting the theoretical scope for subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Engagement with the concept and studies of FBOs have largely been a response to the recognition of the presence and work of organisations who self-identify as, variously, religious or faith-based, in particular in international development, in local or national service provision, in international relations, and at the UN (Clarke, 2006; Tomalin, 2012; Haynes, 2014; Lehmann, 2019). I find following two definitions most useful and informative for this thesis:

> *[A]ny organisation that refers directly or indirectly to religion or religious values, and that function as a welfare provider and/or as a political actor.*

[18] Callison (2014) conducted research with five groups in North America - Arctic indigenous representatives, climate activists, religious leaders, science journalists, and climate scientists - to understand how climate change was understood and framed in their "vernaculars".

(Beaumont and Cloke, 2012, p.3)

NGOs which describe and understand themselves as religious, referring in their name, activities, mission statements or elsewhere to religious traditions, values and ideas.

(Peterson, 2010, p.5)

Peterson (2010) is technically defining an RNGO here but her definition is in line with my understanding of an FBO; I discuss the possible difference between RNGO and FBO shortly.

FBOs have mostly been theorised from the perspective of international development (Clarke, 2006; Clarke and Jennings, 2008; Tomalin, 2012; Occhipinti, 2015; Bolotta et al., 2019; Wilkinson, 2022) or in studies of religion at the UN (Berger, 2003; Haynes, 2014; Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b). Yet multiple terms are employed to identify FBOs, and there has been much debate on how to define and categorise them. In studies of religion and climate action at the UN, RNGO, FBA and FBO have all been used (Berry, 2014a; Glaab, 2017; Krantz, 2021; Glaab, 2022; Krantz, 2022; Sadouni, 2022). In what follows I look at what the issues are with the term FBO (and the alternatives), how we can or should define them and then address the arguably more important issues of where the 'faith' is in FBOs and what it means to say they are distinctive.

FBO is often used interchangeably with alternative terms such as RNGO (Berger, 2003; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Haynes, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b), FBA (Glaab, 2017; Glaab and Fuchs, 2018), religiously affiliated NGOs (Lehmann, 2019), and faith-inspired organisation (FIO) (Marshall, 2013). RNGO is often employed in studies of religion a the UN as it seen to mirror the NGO terminology of ECOSOC registrations and puts FBOs (or RNGOs in this case) in the same broad category as other NGOs at the UN, but with a religious identifier (Berger, 2003; Krantz, 2021, p.24). However, the term RNGO is narrower than FBO and more limited in that it may exclude religious organisations which do not see themselves as an NGO, for example religious or interfaith councils or religious institutions (Occhipinti, 2015, p.335). Haynes (2014, p.9) likewise critiques the term RNGO on the basis that religion/religious may be an inappropriate marker for some traditions or groups, for example Hinduism and Buddhism. Yet FBO may assume a division between the religious and secular or between public and private religion not recognisable in many parts of the world (Tomalin, 2012; Haugen, 2019). Recognising these shortcomings, I use FBO, following Haynes (2014), to allow for a broader definition than is offered by RNGO, to follow the terminology used by and at the UN[19], and on the basis of self-identification. The debate on terminology prompted me ask all participants for their reflections on the term FBO.

Beyond the term itself, there are different approaches to defining what an FBO is which comprise both typologies and more introspective studies looking at how FBOs are constructed in the literature. Typologies have been suggested as a way of getting around the difficulties of a single definition of an

[19] Despite some arguments that RNGO is more in line with UN terminology, FBO is actually the term employed by the UN when seeking to engage with religious or faith-based organisations (UNDP, 2014; Haynes, 2014; UNEP, 2016a; UNEP, 2018a; UNIATF, 2022)

FBO (Occhipinti, 2015). Clarke (2006, p.840), for example breaks FBOs down into five categories: "Faith-based representative organisations […]; Faith-based charitable or development organisations […]; Faith-based socio-political organisations […]; Faith-based missionary organisations […]; [and] faith-based illegal or terrorist organisations". Later on Clarke and Ware (2015, p.40) proposed a typology based instead based on an the directness of FBOs' connection to religious institutions, congregations or leaders, on scale from "directly linked", to linked but operating separately, to simply self-identifying as "falling within a broad religious tradition". Others have proposed typologies which organise FBOs by level of religiosity, i.e. how much faith or religion imbues or shapes all aspects of an FBOs' work and identity (Bradley, 2009; Hefferan et al., 2009). In contrast to these more top-down approaches which focus either on type or religiosity of an organisation, Occhipinti (2015, p.340) proposes a typology which focusses on the activities of a given FBO which she suggests can be: "Religious policy, networking and cooperation"; "Charitable and development work"; "Political activism and lobbying"; or "Proselytizing and recruitment".

There are issues with all of these approaches, and indeed with the need to develop typologies of FBOs at all (Wilkinson 2022). Clarke's (2006) approach allows for much crossover between types of FBO. An FBO like The Lutheran World Federation, for example, would seem to fit as both "representative", "charitable or development" and "missionary" types as their work covers all of these areas. Typologies which seek to categorise FBOs either by connection to a religious institution or faith tradition, or by level of religiosity are also limited in that inter- or multi-faith organisations, who may not be connected to or based in a particular faith tradition, would be excluded. Likewise, it is unclear, without rich, contextual data how precisely we are to work out the extent to which faith imbues all aspect of an FBOs' work. I find Occhipinti's (2015) more functional, activity-based typology to be the most useful as it avoids assumptions about religiosity and the potential for over-typologising organisations, though within her definition there is still potential for overlap by types of activity. Rather than develop a strict typology of FBOs, I instead focused on the self-identification of individual FBOs but it is useful to indicate some broad, if overlapping, types of FBO based on a revised version of part of Occhipinti's typology but expanded to include a division by theme (e.g. how climate change is addressed). I also include some examples of FBOs for each type:

- ***Humanitarian, charitable or development*** FBOs now expanding their work to climate action (e.g. Islamic Relief Worldwide, CAFOD, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation).
- ***Climate change or environmental*** FBOs where climate change or the environment is the main theme (e.g. GreenFaith, EcoSikh, Green Anglican, Bhumi Global, Faith for the Climate)
- ***Religious policy, networking and cooperation*** FBOs whose work now includes a programme or project focussed on climate action (e.g. World Council of Churches, Religions for Peace, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University)

In each of these types I include both faith-specific and interfaith FBOs. There is of course crossover between these activities but taking the main activities of an FBO and looking at how climate change

comes to be addressed is more useful in addressing the research questions. Of more importance than top-down definitions or typologies are the issues of what and where the religion is in FBOs, and how they are asserted to be distinctive.

In using the term FBO, the question arises how and to what extent religion becomes apparent in their identity and activities and whether the term FBO encourages an essentialist definition of what religion is. The way FBOs have been approached in research and development literature in particular has previously been argued to be based on a normative and narrow understanding of what constitutes religion and FBOs (Jones and Petersen, 2011; Wilkinson, 2022). Fountain (2013) in a paper on the "myth" of religious NGOs argues that practical engagement with and studies of religious NGOs are "plagued by an ongoing ideological bias apparent in the framing and deployment of the concept [of religion]" (p.10). Here the critique is that studying FBOs as a distinct category assumes a sui generis notion of religion as a fixed 'object' to be analysed and overlooks the ways that political and social factors not only shape but construct our understanding of religion (von Stuckrad, 2013; Fountain, 2013). Yet these critiques do not mean that we ought do away with the concept altogether. Indeed, if organisations seek to self-identify as faith-based or religious it would seem disingenuous to claim there cannot be a type of organisation called an FBO. Instead, I take the approach that neither religion or faith are fixed, immutable categories but are constructed and negotiated by FBOs themselves, and indeed by other actors in the UN-faith-climate space. As Haynes (2014, p.4) notes "we need to work from the premise that "faith" per se is not a fixed or obvious category or value, implying a consistent worldview". This more constructive and discursive approach likewise allows for the inclusion of interfaith FBOs who are often not based in or connected to a specific religious tradition but still contribute to the construction of what constitutes religion or faith. In this approach to researching FBOs, religion is therefore a not a sui generis object or clear-cut category but is rather an empty identifier which can be "activated with definitions, meanings, and communicational practices" (von Stuckrad, 2013, p.17).

However, there remains a question on the distinctiveness of FBOs, for the most part distinctiveness from secular NGOs. This is both a theoretical and practical question: how can we talk about FBOs without over- or understating their distinctness and how do FBOs themselves justify their position, if at all, as a distinct category? (Tomalin, 2012; Nordstokke, 2013; Bielefeld and Cleveland, 2013; Clarke and Ware, 2015; Bolotta et al., 2019). Much debate in religions and development literature has been dedicated to exploring how and to what extent FBOs may offer something distinct from secular NGOs (see Wilkinson, 2022). FBOs have been suggested to be able to draw on complex spiritual and moral values, large global networks, social and economic resources, an ability to mobilise followers or engender trust amongst communities and politicians, amongst many other tangible and intangible resources to support their work (Nordstokke, 2013; Veldman et al., 2014c; Clarke and Ware, 2015, p.845). In the context of climate action these characteristics are often cited as what make them distinct from secular NGOs (Kearns, 2011; Veldman et al., 2014c; Conca, 2022). Yet making claims about distinctiveness surely requires both a clear understanding of what FBOs are and what they are

distinctive from (Tomalin, 2012, p.698). In asserting the distinctiveness of FBOs some argue we may reinforce a religious-secular binary, or even hierarchy (Fountain, 2013; Clarke and Ware, 2015; Bolotta et al., 2019, p.245). However, this is not just a theoretical concern but is a practical one as FBOs may seek to assert distinctiveness strategically in order to argue for their legitimacy, secure funding, or achieve greater representation (Bielefeld and Cleveland, 2013). Rather than do away with the potential to engage with the debate on FBOs' distinctiveness for concerns around reifying religious-secular boundaries, I consider this an important question running throughout the thesis. Following Bolotta et al (2019, p.245) I consider the ways that FBOs' distinctiveness and, by extension, a religious-secular divide may be "divergently signified and contested" in different contexts in the UN-faith-climate space.

3.3 Research design and methodology

The research design builds on and speaks to the preceding theoretical discussion, namely through the proposal that neither climate change nor religion are fixed, immutable categories, but are constructed through the framings and actions of FBOs. In order to answer the research questions, I focused on FBO experiences, FBO and UN events, and FBO websites. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews, primarily online but also in person with members of 12 FBOs and one UN representative. I conducted online interviews with 11 participants and in-person interviews at COP26 with two participants. This was complemented with participant observation, online and in-person at COP26, of FBO and UN events and webinars as well as content analysis of the websites of FBOs. Table 3.1 shows a summary of research methods, scope, timescale, and resultant data. The subsequent sections will provide the rationale for the methods, the data analysis process and ethical issues faced.

Table 3.1 Data collection summary

Method	Scope	Timescale	Resultant data
Semi-structured interviews	13 initial interviews with 12 FBOs and one UN representative each 35-60 minutes long One follow-up interview with an FBO Informal follow up conversations by email and in person at COP26	December 2020 – November 2021	14 interview transcripts Emails and additional notes from COP26
Participant observation	~15 FBO webinars; 12 events at COP26; informal and activist spaces at COP26	May 2020 – May 2022	Field notes
Website analysis	50 FBO websites	Websites extracts taken in July 2021	50 FBO website extracts (their 'climate framings')

Initial research design and amendments

It is important to highlight the ways in which changes to the project occurred and shaped the design during the early stages. Given the focus on FBOs working on climate action in and around the UN, initial research plans included fieldwork visits to two UN sites and one UN event: Geneva, Nairobi and COP26. Geneva was chosen as a site with a significant number of UN accredited FBO headquarters and offices as well as the meeting point for several FBO and NGO committees on faith, sustainability and climate change, including the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC (ILC). Nairobi was chosen as it hosts the UNEP headquarters, along with the offices of several international FBOs, and is currently the focal point for the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative. Plans at the two sites included conducting participant observation at FBO and UN-aligned events, making contact with potential participants, and conducting interviews and focus groups with FBO representatives.

At the onset of COVID-19 these plans had to be amended, due to travel restrictions on the research side, but also given the changes in work patterns on the FBO and UN side, which had for the most part moved online. Though the general scope and approach of the research did not change, indeed the focus was still primarily aimed at interviews and participant observation, a content analysis of website data was added to the research design to supplement what was, in the context of the pandemic,

anticipated to be a more limited range of interviews. The next sections will detail the way that the research was conducted in practice.

Database development and sampling

At the outset of the research, a database of FBOs was developed to maintain a record of FBOs who were working climate change action, as well as other environmental initiatives and projects. It was maintained and updated manually[20] throughout the data collection period. The initial database was built from a UNEP list of environmental FBOs which included a wide range of both UN accredited and unaccredited FBOs. I also used NGO accreditation lists from the UNEA[21], UNFCCC and the IPCC to account for FBOs accredited with the UNEA, the UNFCCC and the IPCC, as well as COP25, 26 and 27 delegate lists (UNEP, 2018d; UNEP, 2018b; UNFCCC, 2020; UNFCCC, 2021; IPCC, 2021; UNFCCC, 2022). I continually supplemented the database with other FBOs without UN accreditation but who were known to be working on climate action or environmental sustainability from my immersion in the field. For example, I added FBOs who were in attendance, or speaking at webinars and relevant organisations engaging with faith-based climate or sustainable development networks such as GreenFaith, Faith for the Climate, and the JLI[22]. The database consisted in approximately 430 FBOs and was organised by faith affiliation, geographical location (of the headquarters), nature of engagement with climate change (i.e., whether or not climate change, or environmental issues were the primary theme of a given organisation), and any UN accreditations. From this database, participants and websites for analysis were selected, as I detail below, and it was used to maintain an overview of the global spread of FBOs working on climate change related areas during the research process. The database also formed the basis of the quantitative analysis of FBOs at UN agencies and events, of which I explain the rationale and results in Chapter 4.

Interview participants

Sampling for interviews was conducted via email with personalised invitations and information sheets sent out to approximately 40 faith-based organisations over a period of several months (see Appendix A - Participant Information Sheet). These 40 were an extension of an initial list of 20 organisations, chosen as a purposive sample to represent religious, regional and organisational diversity. This resulted in online interviews with 10 members, employees or representatives of FBOs and one UN representative. Two interviews, conducted face-to-face at COP26, were opportunistic. The interview

[20] Lists of accredited organisations available from the UN, for example COP delegate lists, tend to be provided in either in .pdf format or as an online list (rather than as a downloadable database or spreadsheet) which limited the potential for scraping and led to a manual approach for extracting data.

[21] To be involved with the UNEP, NGOs must apply for accreditation ("observer status") with the UNEA (United Nations Environment Assembly).

[22] The Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI) is a network which conducts research on the intersection of faith and sustainable development.

sample can be considered an "information-oriented" and purposive sample (Bryman, 2012, p.418; Brinkmann, 2013, p.57). That is, the aim was to recruit participants who would be able to provide relevant and useful responses to the questions at hand. Given the number and range of FBOs working in, around and on the fringes of the UN climate space, the intention was to create a sample which would represent a range of faith affiliations, types of FBOs, geographical location, and levels of UN engagement. Key criteria for participants were that they worked in or worked closely with FBOs who conducted work in the area of climate action. The second criterion was that they had engaged on some level, with UN climate action. The second criterion was by nature more flexible. The nature of the UN and the complexities of engagement meant that formal accreditation or evidence of formal participation were not criteria. Instead, I chose to allow for a range of levels of engagement, from decades of attendance at formal negotiations through to informal attendance at COPs.

Table 3.2 shows the breakdown of FBOs by faith affiliation location of their headquarters (see Appendix D for the list of FBOs). What is more difficult to quantify, but which is of importance to this thesis, is the nature of each FBO's engagement with UN climate processes. Whilst this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of the thesis, it is important to note that participants covered a wide range of engagements, from those whose engagement is limited to external protests or marches on the fringes of COP meetings, to those with decades of experience navigating the internal climate policy processes of the UN. It was important to cover this range as the aims here are not to analyse a specific type of engagement of FBOs with the UN, but to explore the different modes and experiences of engagement and associated understandings of climate change and the role of FBOs. Drawing on the typology of FBOs provided earlier in this chapter, the interview sample included four 'humanitarian, charitable or development' FBOs, five 'climate change or environmental' FBOs, and three FBOs whose main activity comes under 'religious policy, networking and cooperation'. As discussed earlier there is crossover between these activities[23]. The sample also included both co-chairs of the Interfaith-Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC, two of the chairs of the climate working group of the UN Multi-faith Advisory Council and the director of the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative; these will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Table 3.2 Interview participants by faith affiliation and country

	Brahma Kumari	**Buddhist**	**Christian***	**Hindu**	**Interfaith**	**Muslim**	**Secular/ interfaith****	**Total**
Geneva	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	4
Kenya	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Norway	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1

[23] For example, here I have counted The Lutheran World Federation as a humanitarian, charitable or development FBO as that is the main experience of the representative who I interviewed, but in reality their organisation also includes religious policy and networking activities.

UK	-	-	1	-	1	2	-	4
USA	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	3
Total	1	1	6	1	1	2	1	13

*Including Lutheran (2), Ecumenical (2), Evangelical (1), and Quaker (1) **Secular/interfaith here refers to a representative from the UNEP Faith for Earth initiative, a UN-led, interfaith project.

Clearly this sample is weighted towards the UK, and the Global North or minority world more generally, and toward Christian FBOs specifically. This weighting can be explained in two ways. First, the subject of the research, that is the FBOs working at a relatively international level on climate action, particularly with the UN, are predominantly Christian and based in Western Europe/North America. Studies on the demographics of FBOs engaging with the UN in other areas have demonstrated this bias (Berger, 2003; 2010). More recently, research addressing the demographics of FBOs engaging with the UN in general has suggested that, as of 2016, 60% of FBOs accredited with ECOSOC are Christian (Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b). Yet, of FBOs accredited with the UNFCCC, as of 2019, 82% are Christian, with 81% of religious NGOs (as they are called in Krantz's study) based in either Europe (46%) or North America (35%) (Krantz, 2021, pp.9–11). However, the knowledge of this weighting (which will be discussed further in Chapter 4), acted as motivation to aim for a more purposive sample which would extend the scope beyond the 'usual suspects'. That was the aim with the ongoing round of invitations which was not representative in the sense of replicating the demographics of the UN-faith-climate space but was representative in the sense that it aimed to represent and include voices from the margins of this space. The second reason for the distribution and weighting of the sample, is the role that responses rates played. Responses were limited and slow across the board but were particularly limited, almost non-existent, for FBOs based in the Global South. Yet, given that the nature of the work of many of these FBOs is, by necessity, global, and that many of the participants work with organisations and faith actors based in the Global South, and wear several 'hats' the voices in this sample speak to a wider experience than that of their own organisations alone.

Website data

A later addition to the research, specifically to support the second research question on how FBOs frame climate change, was the collection and analysis of the websites of 50 FBOs (Salter and Wilkinson 2023). This acted to supplement the data from the interviews by including a broader range of FBOs (in terms of affiliation and location) and provided more data on how FBOs frame climate change and how they frame their engagement with climate action. By extension it also introduced a quantitative dimension to the research, that is in terms of counting the occurrences of specific words and phrases across the website extracts.

A sample of 50 organisations was chosen from the aforementioned database (see Appendix D for the list of FBOs). The sample was, as with the interviews, not randomly selected but was instead a purposive sample designed to account for and include a broad range of religious, regional and thematic variables (Bryman, 2012, p.418). Of these, 27 had climate change and/or the environment as a main theme. The remaining 23 were organisations for whom climate change was a secondary or crosscutting theme of which 16 were classed as primarily development or humanitarian organisations, whilst the remaining 11 were classed as interfaith or religious councils (Salter and Wilkinson, 2023, p.3). Table 3.3 , below, shows a breakdown of the 50 FBOs, the continent in which their headquarters are located, and faith affiliation. Importantly the 'faith affiliation' has not been imposed or assumed but has rather been taken from a given organisation's self-description. 'Global', here is used to indicate organisations who do not have a clearly defined headquarters and list several offices across multiple continents (ibid, p.3).

Table 3.3 Website sample by faith affiliation and continent

	Africa	Asia	Australia/ Oceania	Europe	Global	North America	South America	Total
Bahá'í	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Brahma Kumari	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Buddhist	-	1	-	-	1	2	-	4
Christian	5	3	-	5	1	1	1	16
Hindu	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
Indigenous	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2
Interfaith	3	3	1	1	-	4	-	12
Jewish	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
Muslim	-	1	-	4	-	1	-	6
Shinto	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sikh	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Spiritual	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	8	12	1	10	5	13	1	50

(Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p.4)

This sample of 50 likewise includes most Christian organisations (32%), this was a lower percentage than in the wider database (44%). I also sought to include a greater proportion of FBOs based outside

of Europe and North America (from 29% in the original database, to 54% in the sample 50), which meant a greater range of framings would be included (Salter and Wilkinson, 2023, p.3)

From the websites of these FBOs, the aim was to extract for analysis their main framing of climate change.[24] Published reports or downloadable resources on climate change were omitted to maintain as much equivalence between sources as possible and to avoid unfair weighting towards organisations who have the capacity to produce more resources (Salter and Wilkinson, 2023, p.3). Extracting the data, i.e. the climate framing, from websites was undertaken manually by copying relevant excerpts into individual files ready to be analysed in NVivo. The rationale for this manual approach was the heterogeneity of the FBO websites in the sample. The different structure of each website combined with the different location of each FBO's relevant climate framing would have complicated an automated process. Scraping the websites, for example, would have also required manual intervention to check that the relevant section of each website's text had been captured.[25] The area of the websites from which the climate framing was taken varied; for some it was included in their mission/vision, some had specific pages dedicated to climate change, and some had their framings on pages about other thematic issues (Salter and Wilkinson, 2023, p.3). These extracts were coded and analysed alongside interview transcripts and field notes, a process which I discuss later in this chapter.

Semi-structured interviews and participant observation

Having given an overview of how the sampling was conducted, I now turn to explain the data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method for this thesis. Where structured interviews may allow for more consistency across interviews thanks to the production of a rigid interview schedule, semi-structured interviews allow more "knowledge production" through follow-up questions, divergences, informal discussions and reordering of questions to suit the participants' responses (Brinkman 2013, p.21). Whilst qualitative interviews, in general, always open up the possibility of collecting "rich and nuanced material" (Davidsson Brembourg, 2013, p.312), semi-structured interviews are specifically designed to facilitate the production of data which speaks to the participants' knowledge and experiences, but which is guided by the theories and themes of the research. Taking a narrative, or unstructured approach to the interviews would have overly widened the scope of the research whilst a too structured approach would have limited the participants' engagement within the interviews. As such the interview guide (see Appendix B) was developed to be reflective of the central questions of the thesis, but ultimately a

[24] Two FBO websites required translation for which the Google web translator was used.

[25] Scraping is a data collection process which uses either programming language, such as Python, or scaping software to extract textual data from websites; it is generally employed for extracting a large volume of data and/or for extracting data from a large number of websites (Ignatow and Mihalcea, 2018, pp. 75-80). The process of developing code to extract the relevant sections from each website would likely have proven more time consuming than extracting each section manually as additional checks on each website would still have been required to ensure the relevance of each section.

skeleton thematic structure which participant would then have the opportunity to shape. The interviews allowed the participants to speak from their own experience as much as possible and allowed their understandings of climate change and religion, as well as their role in the faith-climate space to emerge and, to an extent be constructed in our discussions.

An important epistemological consideration in (semi-structured) interviewing is where, and how, knowledge is produced. Davidsson Brembourg (2013, pp.311–312) provides a useful overview of two epistemological positions in the context of interviews (see also Brinkmann, 2013). The first frames the interviewers as "miners" whose aim is to extract information from interviewees, who are seen here as the sole bearers of knowledge. The interviewer here is tasked with designing and delivering the right set of questions to unveil the as yet buried knowledge. In this first case knowledge appears to be rendered static and the role of the interviewer is all but erased from the content of interview itself. The second frames the interviewer as a "traveller", who is partly, if not equally involved in the production of knowledge in the context of the interview. Here, knowledge is not simply waiting to be collected from the interviewee, but is produced, constructed and interpreted by the interviewer in the context of each interview. This constructivist approach acknowledges the contingency of knowledge production and recognises the role of the interviewer in its creation (Brinkmann, 2013, p.12; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p.57).

It may seem appropriate, given the nature of the research, to subscribe to the interviewer-as-miner position. In part the goal of the interviews was to collect descriptions of personal experiences of those working in and with FBOs. As an outsider, for the most part, to this world it would seem natural to say that the bulk of this knowledge lay solely within interviewees and simply needed unveiling. However, this would overlook the ways that particular framings and understandings of climate change, of religion, and of the religious-secular dynamics at the UN may emerge within the interviews. Likewise, it seems naïve to underplay the role that my questions and the nature of the semi-structured interviews (which in practice included some open discussion) framed and in many cases defined the way that knowledge would be produced. As such I take a broadly constructivist approach to the interviews, which framed both the design, delivery and analysis. A feature which emerged during the interviews, and which further confirmed this approach was what Brinkmann (2013, p16) terms the "negotiation of meaning". Brinkmann here refers to the practical and sometimes tricky moments in an interview where the meaning of a phrase or question needs to be clarified and 'negotiated' between the interviewee and interviewer to ensure that discussants are on the same page and are answering the questions that have been asked. To take it further, it seems to me that this negotiation of meaning is not only one which occurs when a question or phrase has been misunderstood (or perhaps badly phrased) but that it occurs at the level of knowledge production. By this I mean that, in taking a constructivist approach, meanings and knowledge are not only produced locally, in the interview, but are negotiated between interviewer and interviewee. By taking this approach I do not intend to do away with the idea that interviewees are experts in their own

experience, but to recognise that the interview itself is a space in which new reflections and (re)framings of their experience may occur.

As the focus in studies on interview methodology tend to focus on in-person interviewing, the online approach, taken for all but two interviews, required additional considerations. Interviewing online has the self-evident limitation of the lack of interpersonal engagement and the lack of perception of body language, potential for misinterpretation or misreading of tone, as well as the more technical limitations of the medium, that is the reliance on relatively consistent internet connection and appropriate hardware (Salmons, 2016; Oliffe et al., 2021). Yet, online interviewing also has its distinct merits. Given the nature of the participants in this study who are often busy with their own work, online interviewing allowed for a flexibility in timing and location which may have put limitations on a face-to-face interview. Separately, whilst there are debates about the influence of space on online interviews (see Janghorban et al., 2014; Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Oliffe et al., 2021), they allowed for participants to choose the place in which to conduct the interview. This choice is often a place in which they feel comfortable and is likely private. Unlike face-to-face interviews, which may take place in relatively public, and perhaps unknown spaces, participants online already feel that they are in a private space which may lead to more candid and open conversations (Oliffe et al., 2021, p.3). Interviews were also followed up with and supported by email correspondence with participants, conversations at COP26 with participants with whom I had previously conducted interviews, and an additional online interview with one participant.

Participant observation was chosen as a complementary method with the aim to foster a deeper understanding of the UN-faith-climate space. Whilst in-person observation allows for more in-depth, ethnographic data collection where one may be fully immersed in the field, it also imposes limitations of space, place and access (Bryman, 2012, p.433; Harvey, 2013). The decision to pursue participation observation online was based on the post-COVID proliferation of preparatory faith-based, interfaith and UN climate webinars, particularly in the run up to and after COP26, and limitations put on travel both for me as a researcher and for FBOs themselves. I observed approximately 15 webinars over a two-year period, some of which were not viewed live but were recorded. All of the online events were open to public registration and most were recorded, which allowed me to return to webinars to collect additional information or seek clarification in field notes. The criteria of webinars selected to attend was that they were either run or co-run by FBOs, or that they were run by the UN with the intention of engaging FBOs, and that they had climate change as a key theme. In preparation for and during the data collection period I immersed myself in the field of these online events and webinars by signing up to multiple FBO and UN mailing lists, following FBOs on social media, and updating the database of FBOs. During the second half of the data collection process I had also begun working as an independent researcher in the broad field of faith and climate/environmental sustainability which

helped me gain more connections and insights into the scope of FBOs and potential events to observe[26].

Observing events online brings questions in terms of the nature of participant observation. Akemu and Abelnour (2020) develop an account of digital ethnography in response to increasingly online modes of working in "modern organizational [sic] settings". They identify two approaches to online engagement with participants and online participant observation: "digital as archive" and "digital as process" (ibid, pp.302). The first approach treats online resources as static archive material, where any engagement is asynchronous and the researcher has no agency. The latter is where the researcher takes on a participant role, for example in online meetings or webinars with synchronous communication. In practice, my online observations drew on both of these approaches and were complementary. Whilst most of my online observations were conducted 'live' and as such allowed a "digital as process" approach, some online events were (re)visited in a "digital as archive" approach. In some cases, even when webinars were observed live, there was limited opportunity for engagement with other participants and as such online observation were more passive (Bryman, 2012, p.446).

Towards the end of the data collection period, and following its initial postponement, COP26 was confirmed to be taking place in Glasgow and was decided as a key site for in-person participant observation. Supplementing the more passive online observation with in-person participant observation was critical as it allowed for immersion in the field and interaction with other participants in the field (Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Bryman, 2012, p.446; Harvey, 2013). I spent six full days at COP26 and attended ten side events in the Green and Fringe areas[27], both of which are fully open to the public. When not attending specific events at COP26 I also spent time immersed in, engaging with and observing activities across publicly accessible areas of COP26, which included joining the Faith and Belief Bloc for the Climate March. The participant observation there complemented the observation of online events as I took on a more active role of engaging with other participants in the field, for example by speaking to FBOs during and after events, in exhibition spaces, and in activist spaces.

During both online and in-person participant observation the main method of recording data was by taking field notes, both written and voice-recorded (Bryman, 2012, p.449). For online events, field notes were written synchronously, refined after the event, then, where necessary, returned to by looking back at event recordings. Guided by Bryman (2012, p.447) and Lofland and Lofland (1995), for in-person observation I took synchronous "scratch notes" and immediately after the event or

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[26] From May 2021 I was working as a freelance researcher, primarily with the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), on a series of projects related to faith actors, environmental sustainability and climate change. Whilst this did not form part of my data collection, it did support and deepen my understanding of the field, helped me gain connections with FBOs, and supported my observations at COP26 through the connections I gained from this work.

[27] I discus the structures of COP in more detail in the next chapter.

interaction, filled theses initial notes out with detailed information and reflections. Field notes were of course framed by the research questions but I also sought to keep note of as much information as possible, even in cases where it was not directly linked to the research scope or questions (Byrman, 2012, p.449). This broader approach led to a richer dataset of field notes which was then refined after the observation, and during the data analysis process. In some cases information in field notes which I had not initially considered particularly relevant went on to come up in interviews and thus formed part of the iterative data analysis process (Silverman, 2013, p.243). The processes of writing field notes thus became, as Maharaj (2016) suggests, a key part of the critical reflection process, where returning to, expanding on, or refining field notes prompted reflections about my initial observations and about the research themes.

Data analysis

In this section, I detail the data analysis process for interview transcripts, website extracts and field notes. The approach taken throughout the data collection and analysis has been constructive and broadly inductive. Throughout the analysis, the epistemological status of the concepts of religion, faith, climate change were not fixed, or drawn solely from existing themes and theories. Instead, as discussed earlier in this chapter, I took a constructive and to an extent discursive approach to the analysis (von Stuckrad, 2013; Wijsen, 2016). Whilst data analysis is often conceived of as a distinct step in research, and indeed that is how I present it here, it is important to note that in practice data analysis began during the data collection process and thus was an iterative process which informed follow-up emails, conversations and observations (Silverman, 2013, p.233; Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019). The process of transcribing interviews[28] and reviewing or revisiting field notes laid the groundwork for the data analysis process and likewise led to greater familiarity with the data (Silverman 2013). By starting to reflect on and engage with the data and its emergent themes during the research process I was also able to see the path towards theoretical saturation. Despite having a relatively small number of interviews, they were rich in information. As Davidsson Bremborg (2013, p.314) argues, a smaller number of well-planned interviews with key participants can be better that a larger number of shallower interviews (see also Brinkman 2013, p. 86). Around halfway through the interviews it was clear that key themes and ideas were repeated by different participants. The interviews, combined with online observations meant that, by the time of in-person observation at COP26 I felt theoretical saturation had been reached; similar themes were repeated and corroborated across interviews and events (Brinkmann, 2013, p.86; Silverman, 2013, pp.100–101).

Analysis of the interviews, field notes and website data were conducted in NVivo, following a qualitative content analysis approach (Nelson and Woods, Jr, 2011; Davidsson Brembourg, 2013; Mayring, 2014; Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019). Coding was conducted via three broad rounds

[28] Online interviews were auto-transcribed in Zoom, but the quality of the transcription was generally quite poor so necessitated a full review of each transcript.

or “cycles” (Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019, pp.264–265) and took what Graebner et al (2012, p.281) call a blended approach drawing on both inductive and deductive approaches. This approach recognises that whilst it is important to let the data speak for itself as much as possible, I was not starting from a blank slate and was guided by the research questions and themes during the analysis. In practice, this meant taking an approach in which coding began inductively and became more deductive in later stages to facilitate more relevant theoretical reflection (Graebner et al., 2012; Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard, 2019).

The first cycle took a primarily inductive approach, that is, to approach the data with minimal or no pre-determined themes and theories, and as such to allow the data to ‘speak for itself’ which resulted in a large number of codes (Bryman, 2012, p.577; Brinkmann, 2013, p.64). The second cycle focused on organising these initial codes into thematic areas meaning that codes were grouped together to reflect a smaller set of wider emergent themes. It is during this cycle that the research questions and the themes entailed within the research questions were introduced to support and organise the codes which emerged through the inductive stages. During a third cycle, I then returned to the data with this thematic framework in place to check for coherency across the themes and for any missed codes. For the interviews, the quantitative dimensions, e.g., counting utterances of specific words or phrases, were less relevant and the analysis instead prioritised the context and discursive nature of the themes and codes. However, for the website extracts I included a quantitative dimension to assess the relative presence of particular words of phrases used to frame climate change, which I present in Chapter 5 (Nelson and Woods, Jr, 2011).

Ethical considerations

Ethical review was applied for and received approval prior to the start of the fieldwork (see Appendix C).

Consent, confidentiality and anonymity were key ethical considerations (Bryman, 2012, p.140; Silverman, 2013, p.161). All potential interviewees were provided with information sheets and consent forms (see Appendices A and B, respectively) in advance of the interviews and consent forms were generally signed just before the interview began. Given the nature of the research, which concerns the nature, role and experiences of FBOs, it was important to collect information from participants on their organisational affiliation(s), role in organisation, as well as their contact details for follow-up questions and discussion. However, participants were given a choice as to what extent they could be identified in research output. Consent forms included an option for participants to be identified, or not, in research outputs by name, their role in their FBO, and the name of their FBOs. All but two participants agreed in principle to be identified by all identifiers; the remaining two chose only to be identified the name of their organisation. Before consent forms were signed, I explained to participants the nature of the research including an explaining that, given the relatively tight-knit nature of (at least at a high level) the UN-faith-climate space and the nature of the research, which necessitated some identification at least by demographic information (e.g. religious affiliation of their

organisation, type of organisation) complete confidentiality in research outputs could not be guaranteed. However, given the focus of the research questions on faith-based *organisations* I decided when conducting the analysis and writing up the research to identify participants only by the name of their organisation and, where relevant, additional affiliations (e.g. ILC)29. In doing so I sought to minimise the potential for participants' identification by name or role in their organisation and to take the same approach for all participants. This did not compromise on the rich individual experiences shared by FBOs which I have included in interview excerpts throughout the thesis but puts the focus on their role as representatives of organisations in the UN-faith-climate space. Interview participants were given the opportunity to see an interview transcript and, in cases where this was requested, I highlighted quotes to be included in the thesis and included an indicative sample of how their interview material would be used in context.

The nature of the research topic was not controversial or sensitive, however, during interviews, some participants shared very personal reflections. In some cases, these included quite strong criticisms of their own, or other, FBOs, of UN agencies or projects, interpersonal conflicts, or short but quite personal life stories or experiences. As participants may be identifiable by their organisation in this research, even where their name and role are omitted, I made the decision to exclude certain parts of the interviews from the written-up research to protect participants from potential interpersonal ramifications. These reflections were often not directly related to the research questions or themes so this did not limit scope of the research. However, these more controversial quotes and reflections did provide background insights on the experiences of FBOs and helped frame my understanding their experiences Related to this, is the extent to which I edited the interview extracts and quotes which have been included. As Brinkman (2013, p.113) notes, "[t]he first rule of authenticity means that data should appear in displays in their original and authentic forms". I have tried to follow this advice as much as possible including pauses, filler words, and repetitions. Some quotes have been edited in minor ways (always clearly indicated with []) to facilitate easier comprehension by the reader, for example where the quote is referring back to an earlier part of the interview which needs highlighting, or to correct minor grammatical errors, for example pluralising words.

Consent in participant observation, where the setting is a larger group of people is by nature more difficult to attain (Harvey, 2013, p.236). All the events I attended, and spaces which I observed and participated in at COP26 were open for the public to access or register to attend. In addition, many of the online events I attended were recorded and thus continued to be publicly accessible online after the live event. In events which required registration I made clear in the form that I was a researcher and, where possible, shared an information sheet. At COP26 I carried and provided information sheets where possible, for example when engaging with smaller groups of people in an exhibition space. For the most part, however, I did not share information sheets as most events and settings were large

[29] See Chapter 1, where I discuss the rationale and limitations of this approach.

groups (or huge crowds, in the case of the climate march) and were often recorded and shared online by the organisers.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined two theoretical points underpinning my approach to the research design and implementation: that climate change, religion or faith, and the category (and distinctiveness) of FBOs are open to negotiation and construction by FBOs themselves and by other actors in the UN-faith-climate space. I argued that, given the multiple ways of identifying and defining FBOs, taking a broad approach focusing on self-identification would be the most useful and highlighted a typology for identifying FBOs by their main activity, in particular whether climate change is a main theme. The research design as outlined in this chapter centres on the experiences of FBOs as gathered through semi-structured interviews. To complement and enrich the interviews I also conducted participant observation at online FBO/UN events and in-person at COP26. To address the second research question in particular I introduced a third method, namely the analysis of FBO website extracts. Taken together these methods resulted in a rich dataset of interview transcripts, detailed field notes and websites extracts. Whilst analysis began iteratively during the data collection period it culminated in a blended approach. That is it began inductively and was later shaped by the research questions and themes. The research questions (see Chapter 1) form the basis of the next four chapters in which I draw on the datasets and analysis as described in this chapter.

Chapter 4 - Faith-based organisations and the UN-faith-climate space

> *It is the frame, it is the organization, it is the biggest umbrella we have, so it's so important to be there.*
>
> [Interview Church of Norway]
>
> *In a sense, the COPs are made for them to do their work. We're just like decoration… around.*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]

4.1 Introduction

Setting out the broad scene of UN-faith-climate space, this chapter draws on data to begin to answer the first research question underpinning this thesis: What role do FBOs play in climate action at the UN? In the first section, I begin by outlining what I call the UN-faith-climate space as a complex and broad network with different actors – FBOs, NGOs, UN staff and agencies – operating across different levels. I address the development of the space, how it has been conceptualised, engage with the ways that FBOs understand and perceive the space and shed light on some key tension points, namely leadership, recognition/representation, and formal/informal engagement. The second section takes a quantitative approach to the role of FBOs at the UN, by looking at the numbers of FBOs, by faith affiliation and region, across the UN. Whilst this approach is important to address as it provides insight into the distribution of FBOs across UN events and agencies, ultimately I consider it limited in its ability to offer substantive reflections on the role of FBOs. It does, however, challenge the idea that there has been a relative rise in the numbers of FBOs at the UN and demonstrate how Christian FBOs headquartered in Europe and North America remain the majority groups but that this is less pronounced at the UNEP compared to the UNFCCC. In the final section, I turn to a qualitative approach to the presence and role of FBOs and present three main points of analysis: reasons for engagement, roles within the UN-faith-climate space, and challenges faced. FBOs' roles are divided into the broad categories of advocacy, networking and representation, and education and training. Within these categories, though I do not discuss them at length in this chapter, I foreground issue-framing and global-local mediation as two key dimensions of FBO climate action which will be addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively. The extent to which we can consider FBOs' roles as distinct from secular NGOs in the UN climate space is an open debate and one with which I engage throughout this chapter. I argue that, whilst drawing hard and fast conclusions about religious-secular divides in the UN climate space may be premature, it is certainly the case that FBOs face challenges to engagement with the UN on climate action.

4.2 The UN-faith-climate space

What I will call the UN-faith-climate space is a complex network of UN agencies, committees, FBOs, NGOs and individuals working on climate action. The aim here is to delineate the UN-faith-climate-space both as the area of research, but also as a construct which has been informed by my fieldwork

and analysis. Whilst we may consider the UN to only consist of its formal agencies, member states and registered NGOs, I consider the UN-faith-climate space to extend beyond specific agencies and events and to include FBOs who engage with the UN in more 'informal' ways and who may not be registered. Given the contested definitions and boundaries of the UN in general (Miall, 2017; Barnett and Finnemore, 2018), taking a broad approach to what constitutes the UN and engagement with the UN is key to understanding the way FBOs work and engage with(in) the UN for climate action. To support the subsequent sections and analysis, I have put together a diagram (Figure 4.1) showing the UN-faith-climate space which shows the key points of FBO engagement. The connecting arrows within the diagram are indicative, but not exhaustive, of the connections between the various bodies within the UN-faith-climate space and are intended in part to show the complexity of the space.

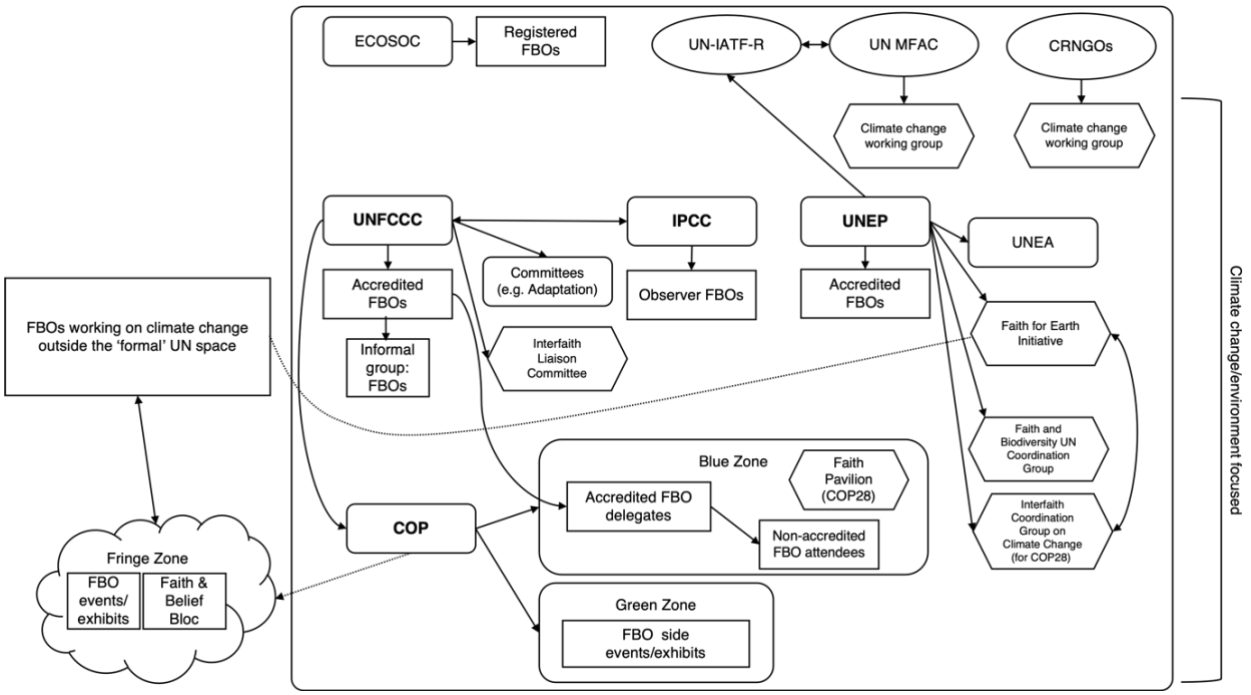

Figure 4.1 Diagram of the UN-faith-climate space
(see Acronyms and Abbreviations list)

The three main UN agencies shown here are the UNFCCC, the IPCC and the UNEP (which includes the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA)). FBOs can become "accredited" or be "observers" to all three which gives them the right to attend, observe and in some cases contribute to the activities and meetings of a given agency, without the full voting rights of UN members (i.e. states). The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (UN-IATF-R), the Multi Faith Advisory Council (UN MFAC), and the Committee on Religious NGOs (CRNGOs) are groups focused on FBO engagement, but not specifically focused on climate change. However, the MFAC

and the CRGNOs have working groups dedicated to climate change[30] and the UN-IATF-R counts the UNEP as one of the 27 UN agencies with which it works (UN IATF-Religion, 2020).

Two groups in the diagram are of particular interest when looking at FBOs in and climate change – the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC (see Box 4.1) and the UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative (see Box 4.2). They are focused on working with FBOs on climate change (Interfaith Liaison Committee) and the environment, with a sub-focus on climate action (Faith for Earth). The Faith and Biodiversity UN Coordination Group and the Interfaith Coordination Group on Climate Change work to engage with the more specific issues of biodiversity and preparation for COP28, respectively.

Box 4.1 Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC

The Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC

The Interfaith Liaison Committee (ILC) was set up by FBOs during the COP in 2013, in part inspired by Christiana Figueres, the then Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, in recognition of the growing FBO presence at the COPs (Interviews with ILC co-chairs; ILC, n.d.). It has two-chairs from UN-registered FBOs, the World Council of Churches and the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University; initially there was third co-chair from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) intended to represent indigenous peoples. It aims to support FBO engagement with the UNFCCC through providing a platform for FBO networking, organising interfaith advocacy and capacity building events, and holding interfaith meetings during the COPs and other UNFCCC events, for example the Bonn Climate Change Conferences. Part of the ILC's mandate specifies the need to emphasise the ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of climate change and to provide spiritual support for COP participants (ILC and Bernard, 2021; ILC, n.d.). One of the initial achievements of the ILC was to attain recognition for FBOs at the UNFCCC as an informal group which allowed FBOs to schedule official meetings as a group in the Blue Zone[31] at COPs.

The main in-person meetings and activities of the ILC happen at the COPs but they also hold a number of virtual events during the year to support FBOs' engagement with their states, each other, and the UNFCCC. On the first evening before each COP the ILC host an Interfaith Talanoa

[30] At the time of writing, the MFAC's other working groups are: gender; multilateralism; peace and security.

[31] The Blue Zone is an area of COP only open to UN and state negotiators and formally registered non-state delegates. It is the area where formal climate policy negotiations take place but also hosts side events and exhibitions, provided they fit with the stimulated policy themes of a given COP.

Dialogue[32]. It is an opportunity to meet other FBOs attending COP, involves prayer, worship and mediation, working groups on specific themes of the COP, and calls for negotiators to consider the ethical, moral and spiritual dimensions of climate change during the forthcoming conference. The resulting interfaith statement is presented to the UNFCCC secretariat and publicised as the COP begins.

Box 4.2 Faith for Earth Initiative - UNEP

Faith for Earth Initiative

The Faith for Earth Initiative was set up by the UNEP in 2019. It is headquartered in the UNEP offices in Nairobi, Kenya and was founded and is directed by UN staff member Iyad Abu Moglhi. Its aim is to "Promot[e] faith leadership, faith-based organizations and communities as custodians of far-reaching, value-based perspectives on environmental sustainability" (UNEP, 2021a). Following the UNEP's triple environmental crisis framework, its three core themes are climate, nature and pollution. Along with organising regular networking and capacity-building events for FBOs, one of its aims is to increase the number of FBOs who are accredited with the UNEP (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth). It coordinates and encourages FBO engagement with the UNEP, with UNEP conferences (e.g. Stockholm+50) and the COPs.

The Faith for Earth Initiative works with the UNIATF-R, the UNESCO Inter-Agency Platform on Culture for Sustainable Development, the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative and has documented FBO engagement with the SDGs, co-developed a course on Faith, Environment and Climate Change, and is now coordinating FBO engagement with COP28. It is also chairing the development of 'Al-Mizan - A Covenant for the Earth' which has been described as "the Islamic Laudato Si'" (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth).

In the run up to COP28 the Faith for Earth Initiative coordinated FBO engagement with COP through the Interfaith Coordination Group on Climate Change, a group which included representatives from 35 FBOs and supported the development the Faith Pavilion, a designated area for FBO events and engagement in the COP28 Blue Zone.

FBOs can of course engage with the UN via the same routes as other NGOs or civil society groups by registering with the UN via ECOSOC and UN agencies, and engaging with UN agencies and events, for example COP, as individually registered NGOs. The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) for example, is the only FBO observer to the IPCC and engages with the work of the IPCC

[32] This was inspired by the Talanoa Dialogue process which was designed to support states in meeting their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets by 2020 and ran from COP21-23. It is a traditional Fijian process and word which emphasises "inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue" (UNFCCC, 2018a) and was initiated when Fiji held the COP presidency.

on the same terms as other NGOs, without a specific faith-based committee or initiative (Interview QUNO).

As outlined in Chapter 3, COP26 (see Box 4.3) was a key site during fieldwork so whist the diagram shows engagement points for FBOs at COPs in general, findings and reflections outlined here are drawn from COP26. Whilst FBOs at COP can engage through the regular NGO channels, of registering to get into the formal Blue Zone, organising and attending events in the public Green Zone, or taking part in the activist fringe areas, COP28 in November 2023 marks the first time there will be an official Faith Pavilion in the delegate-only Blue Zone, where FBO recognition has previously relied on the work of individual FBOs and the Interfaith Liaison Committee.

Box 4.3 Faith at COP26

Faith at COP26

FBOs and faith actors were present across all areas of COP26: the Blue Zone, Green Zone, fringe area, activist spaces and in preparatory and follow-up events. In the Blue Zone, the ILC held daily meetings of the FBO Informal Group and a limited amount of Blue Zone events were supported or led by FBOs. The Green Zone, an official area of COP26 fully open to the public, featured events (co-)led by FBOs including Islamic Relief, ACT Alliance and the All Africa Conference of Churches. Several FBOs and the UN Faith and Biodiversity Coordination Group were present in rolling public exhibits.

The fringe area of COP26, the area outside the UNFCCC Blue and Green Zone buildings organised by activists and civil society groups, was alive with events challenging and going beyond themes of the COP, including performances, activism, exhibitions and FBOs were a salient presence. SGI-UK (Soka Gakkai International), a Buddhist FBO, in conjunction with Make COP Count, a group run by Faith for the Climate UK, organised a series of events in the Fringe Zone 'Sowing Seeds of Hope: Action for Climate Justice' as well as an exhibition 'Seeds of Hope and Action'. Local groups, Interfaith Scotland and Eco-Congregation Scotland, supported events in the fringe and released the Glasgow Multi-Faith Declaration for COP26 in advance of the COP (Interfaith Scotland, 2021).

Throughout COP26, also in the fringe areas, local places of worship and FBOs hosted vigils, services, multi-faith worship and offered quiet spaces for reflection to emphasise the spiritual and moral dimensions of the climate processes and to offer spiritual support to participants. On the COP26 Global Day for Climate Justice, when it is estimated that around 100,000 people joined the climate march, Faith and Belief was included as one of multiple interest blocs and included faith actors of all kinds from activists and members of grassroots faith-based environmental groups to local faith leaders to large youth groups organised by multiple international FBOs, and members of UN accredited FBOs.

Having given a brief overview of the key points of engagement, I will now turn to what I mean by the UN-faith-climate space and what the key tensions points are. Three points make it difficult to define the UN-faith-climate-space and make any definition somewhat fuzzy. First, climate change is addressed in multiple ways across lots of different UN agencies. The key focal points for climate change action at the UN are of course the UNFCCC, and the yearly COPs, the IPCC, as well as the UNEP. Many other agencies of the UN engage with climate change as a crosscutting issue or thematic area[33] but it is these entities for which climate change is *the* key focus, or in the case of UNEP, one of several key foci.[34]

Second, religion or faith and FBOs appear in different forms, roles and guises across the UN[35]; there is neither a standard mode of or route to FBO engagement at the UN, nor is there a standard way of identifying religion or faith (Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b). As detailed above, there are plenty of ways that FBOs can engage with(in) the UN on climate change, whether as an individual NGO, through an interfaith network or through a UN-led or supported FBO initiative, but the ability to categorise or identify religion or FBOs changes in each context and takes different forms which are often outside what we may consider to be formal UN engagement.

Third, that the UN itself has been conceptualised and theorised differently means it is not only difficult to pinpoint unequivocally where the UN begins and ends but it is also difficult to say as what kind of entity we ought think of the UN (Miall, 2017; Barnett and Finnemore, 2018). Miall (2017, pp.26–35) outlines three definitions of the UN - an arena, an actor, a tool - where each attributes to the UN, its member states and observer NGOs varying degrees of power. Barnett and Finnemore (2018) outline a further five theories[36], each linked to a different understanding of global politics, to demonstrate the tensions surrounding what the UN is, can and should be. Yet, of interest here are the parts of the UN relevant to climate change action, where we again find conceptual divergence. Glaab (2022) and Sadouni (2022) approach the UNFCCC and transnational climate politics, respectively, as "Bourdeusian fields" whilst Saerbeck et al. (2020) treat the UNFCCC as an actor which brokers between (non-)state stakeholders and which they argue has an increasingly proactive role in global climate governance. Many circle around strict definitions of the UN climate space by using terms such "transnational climate politics" (Sadouni, 2022), global climate governance (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2012; Nasiritousi, 2016; Bäckstrand et al., 2017), the climate change regime (Breakey and Popovski, 2016), amongst others. However, much research which focuses on inter- or trans-national climate politics recognises the importance and in many cases centrality of the UN. The yearly COPs,

[33] Including the WMO, the UNDP, the UNESCO, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNDRR amongst many others.
[34] The UNEP considers climate change part of the triple planetary crisis, of which the others are pollution and biodiversity loss.
[35] In Chapter 7, I look in detail at the categorisation and identification of FBOs at the UN.
[36] They are the UN "as an agent of great powers doing their bidding; as a mechanism for interstate cooperation; as a governor of an international society of states; as a constructor of the social world; and as a legitimation forum" (Barnett and Finnemore, 2018, p.62)

whether effective or not, remain key events for global decision-making on climate policies, leading climate research is published and disseminated by UN agencies, and climate action and activism often refers to the work conducted by, or recommendations made by the UN.

Furthermore, the space in which I am interested in extends beyond what we may consider to be the formal UN space. Whilst Figure 4.1 shows a boundary around the 'formal' UN space, that is the areas of action which are *directly* connected to or organised by a UN agency, FBOs who do not work directly with UN agencies form part of the broader UN-faith-climate-space. Much ostensible UN climate engagement happens at local, country, or regional levels, beyond the boundaries of UN agencies or events (Nasiritousi et al., 2016; Sadouni, 2022; Interviews LWF, Care of Creation, Faith for the Climate, Operation Noah). Taken together, these points mean that I consider the UN-faith-climate space to be a complex network and one which extends beyond what we may identify as formal UN agencies. Rather than over theorise or reify the boundaries of this space, I briefly turn to FBO experiences of the space before highlighting key tensions.

FBO experiences corroborate the complex network and blurred boundaries of and within the UN-faith climate space. Unaccredited FBOs often work indirectly with the UN as part of interfaith network organisations or by collaboration with FBOs who are accredited UN members. Many FBOs who participate in the UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative, for example, are not accredited with a UN agency, though encouraging greater FBO accreditation with the UNEP is a goal of the initiative (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth). As one interviewee put it "anything that we do with the UN […] comes from being a representative of a network within other networks" (Interview Faith for the Climate). Though, at the time of writing, Faith for the Climate are not registered with any UN agency, they were central in organising UK faith groups in the run up to, during, and after COP26 and were particularly active in the fringe area and in the Faith Bloc at the Climate March. Not only does this inform my broader understanding of the space but it also demonstrates the "network within network" approach that FBOs often adapt (Interviews World Evangelical Alliance; Global One; Church of Norway; Bhumi Global). Faith for the Climate maintain a level of engagement with the UN climate space by capitalising on their representative position as a network of UK faith-based climate groups, but by also fitting into a much wider global network of international FBOs. GreenFaith, a larger US interfaith climate group is cited by Faith for the Climate and other FBOs as a key UN engagement partner who offers space for interfaith and faith-based groups to engage and gain better understandings of UN climate processes. Here it would seem unfair to limit the scope of the UN-faith-climate-space to only those who are formally registered and regularly engaging as it is clear that the picture of what engagement looks like, as we pan away from the more institutionalised UN-initiated committees or initiatives, is much more diffuse.

Even FBOs who are accredited with the UN do not see their climate action as limited to engagement with specific UN events and agencies. One interviewee questioned the boundaries of the UN climate space in discussing the emphasis placed on the COPs and explained that rather than considering COP

as a singular event she thought of it as a process; a process which not only extends over many years but, importantly, extends to work at country and community levels (Interview LWF). The nature of decision making at COP where "it's the high-level political negotiation and sometimes decisions are already made", informed their approach to UN engagement which went from being very "COP focused" to realising that engagement begins at country and even local levels with states and decision makers, years before a given COP.

There are also shifts in FBO engagement between UN agencies. In many cases projects which have begun with one UN agency, have moved around or migrated to others, for example FBO engagement on climate change and environmental sustainability which was initially lead by the UNDP now largely takes place at the UNEP (Rollosson, 2010; UNEP, 2021b; Interview UNEP Faith for Earth). Indeed the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative is now taking the lead on organising FBO engagement at the COPs. Participants from FBOs who have worked with and within the UN system for many years, expressed the way that they managed to find their place in the UN-faith-climate-space through engagement with multiple UN agencies (Interview Global One; Bhumi Global). Here a participant explains their path of engagement with the UN on climate change:

> *We have been engaged from 2010 […] from UNFCCC, slowly, we work with UNFPA. From UNFPA we work with UNHCR. From UNHCR, all the way to… Vatican. And from Vatican, all the way to the UNEP.* [F]*or past two/three years UNEP is our main target, to work as a partnership* […] *UNEP have Faith for Earth. This is [a] very good platform for faith-based organisation. And now we […] prepare, what will be the solid way for faith-based* [groups] *to contribute to Glasgow COP26.*
>
> [Interview Tzu Chi]

Whilst their engagement began with the UNFCCC, perhaps the most obvious place for action on climate change, their path shifted between agencies over time, in part dependent on Tzu Chi's priorities as an organisation, from humanitarian relief to development to reproductive rights to sustainable agriculture. The reference to the Vatican here is likely referring to the significance of Laudato Si' and their associated advocacy work in promoting the role of FBOs in climate action at the UN[37] (see Ivanova, 2017; Abumoghli, 2020). Ultimately Tzu Chi's work on climate change has become aligned with the UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative as it is specifically designed as a platform and network for FBOs. From here they, like many other FBOs, are then able return to engagement with the UNFCCC, mentioned here in the form of COP26, but with the support of the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative and in collaboration with other FBOs. Other participants expressed similar pathways where engagement with the UN on climate action shifted dependent on which UN agencies were

[37] Whilst it is not a UN agency, the Holy See holds permanent observer status. This makes it somewhat anomalous in the UN-faith-climate space as it whilst it is not afforded the same voting rights as other states, it does have a larger platform for speaking and taking part in formal UN meetings than non-state groups or FBOs. It is neither a UN member nor is it considered a non-state actor but rather an observer state (Glaab et al., 2018, p.60; Sekerák and Lovaš, 2022; UN, n.d.).

prioritising FBO engagement as well as based strategically on funding from external organisations such as the Alliance of Religions and Conservation[38] (Interviews Bhumi Global; Global One; Islamic Relief).

There are tension points which complicate the UN-faith-climate space which I will give an overview of here. A discussion point which came up during interviews and observations, was who takes the lead on initiatives to engage with FBOs. The Interfaith Liaison Committee co-chairs were both very clear that it was the UNFCCC, having recognised the increased FBO presence at the COPs, had motivated them to seek more recognition:

> *We were approached by the UNFCCC secretariat to find out "How can we have a kind of relation with the faith-based organisation[s]? Because you are growing, more and more of you are here, and it's also from different religious traditions. Could we have some kind of platform where you can meet and also when you can correspond with the UNFCCC secretariat". So it was initiated by UNFCCC*
>
> [Interview WCC/ILC]
>
> *Christiana Figueres is someone who is very open and very interested […] and so she really pushed for a connection with the UNFCCC and the interfaith*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]

Christiana Figueres, the UNFCCC Executive Secretary from 2010-2016, is mentioned as a key UN motivator for more engagement with FBOs. In a statement given at the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change in New York in 2014, Figueres spoke on the "moral imperative" offered by faith groups to respond to climate change and that it is "through faith and love that we will arrive first at a success in Paris and then beyond that" (UNFCCC, 2014).

However, the Interfaith Liaison Committee is run by FBOs themselves, and whilst they have worked to gain recognition of FBOs as an "Informal Group" under the UNFCCC[39], there is no official UN input in their work. On one hand this seems like a good thing. Limited official UN control over the committee means they are free to set their own agendas, choose with whom they work, and work flexibly across 'informal' and 'formal' parts of the UN-faith-climate space. On the other hand, UN leadership of FBO initiatives may prevent tensions around which FBOs are leading. The Multi-faith Advisory Council, including its climate working group, is run in conjunction with UN representatives; the chairs are four FBO representative and three or four UN representatives. FBO leadership is perhaps more limited, but for some this is an advantage:

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[38] The Alliance of Religions and Conservation ran from 1995-2019 and worked in partnership with the World Bank, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the UNDP (Palmer and Finlay, 2003; Rollosson, 2010; Palmer, 2013).

[39] Non-state or NGO observers to the UNFCCC are organised into constituencies by interest. The nine major groups are: Environmental NGOs; Farmers and agricultural NGOs; Indigenous peoples organizations; Local government and municipal authorities; Research and independent NGOs' Trade union NGOs; Women and gender constituency; Children and youth NGOs. The three informal groups were established in 2016 and are: Faith-based organisations; Education, communication and outreach stakeholders; Parliamentarians (UNFCCC, n.d.).

One of the good things about having the UN Multi-Faith Advisory Council is that we're working with the UN, and you know the UN can take the lead on things […]if we were running ourselves to some extent, who would be the ones leading? So there's a bit of tension there… I suspect there would be.

[Interview Global One]

The Interfaith Liaison Committee is an external body. You know, they're kind of like self-constituted. They can do whatever they want, really. The Multifaith Advisory Council is appointed by the UN and so we have a little bit of a mandate, and so we can actually work within the UN system, whereas The Interfaith Liaison Committee kind of is on the outside trying to get in.

[Interview Bhumi Global]

The UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative is different again as it is an initiative of and run entirely by the UNEP, though it has worked to build a coalition of FBOs, NGOs and researchers to support its programme of work. One notable difference about this initiative is that it is headquartered in Nairobi outside the usual UN locations of Geneva and New York which have historically been focal points for UN-FBO engagement and as such is able to engage with a larger proportion of FBOs based in Africa (Carrette and Miall, 2017). It is not clear here whether either approach, UN-led or FBO-led leads to more, and more equitable participation of FBOs on climate action, but from these trajectories of engagement it certainly seems that, albeit in different forms, the UN agencies have been, and continue to be recognising and encouraging FBO engagement on climate action.

Closely related to the tension around leadership is recognition and representation of FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space. There is no formal recognition of FBOs in the form of an NGO constituency under ECOSOC, the UNFCCC or the UNEP, though the UNFCCC does recognise them as an informal group. Beyond recognition for individual FBOs, recognition also comes in the form of the aforementioned committees and initiatives. Yet recognition of FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space is complicated by issues of representation. I return to this discussion later on in this chapter and in Chapters 6 and 7, but it is important to note that representation is a tension which runs throughout the space, both in terms of the demographics of FBOs in the UN-faith-climate-space and in terms of how and to what extent FBOs as a group are represented. In other words "who sets the agenda for the faith community at the UN when it comes to climate change? And how do we have more equity in in those conversations?" (Interview Bhumi Global).

A final tension in the space is the blurred distinction between formal and informal engagement at the UN and the already raised question of what counts as engagement with the UN. Research on NGOs in in climate action at the UN suggests that engagement often happens through informal channels, for example through building relationships with negotiators or organising side events in the Green Zone and fringe areas of COPs (Hjerpe and Linnér, 2010; Schroeder and Lovell, 2012; Caniglia et al., 2015; Sénit, 2020). As NGOs do not have the voting rights of member states in climate negotiations and no official decision-making power on climate policies they rely on informal channels to influence climate governance procedures. Yet is not clear that there really is a distinction between formal and informal engagement at all. Whilst we are able to identify the Blue Zone at COPs as a 'formal' space, in that to

gain access to it, a given FBO must not only be accredited with the UNFCCC but must be registered as a delegate to attend COP, it is not the case that we should the think of everything outside of the most identifiably formal spaces as informal. Perhaps here it is instead important to note that informal does not mean invaluable or ineffective; as Caniglia et al (2015) have argued, NGO engagement tends to happen through these nominally informal channels. The Green Zone at COP26 was a key space for FBO networking and presenting or piloting new projects. During informal conversations at COP26 it even seemed the preferred place for FBOs: it was "where it happens". The stricter divide between the formal Blue Zone and Green Zone or fringe area was exaggerated at COP26 at Glasgow due to much smaller meeting spaces in the Blue Zone compared to previous COPs and stricter regulations due to COVID-19, but the sentiments expressed about the differences between the activities of the Blue and Green Zone still stand as events in the Blue Zone must adhere more strictly to the themes of a given COP and the Green Zone side events are where NGOs and FBOs are more free to set their own agendas (Hjerpe and Linnér, 2010; Schroeder and Lovell, 2012).

Problematising the boundary between (in)formal engagement does not stop FBOs seeking formal recognition in the UN-faith-climate space, in particular as *FB*Os (as opposed to as NGOs). A better way to understand this tension is to connect it to a desire for long-term and sustained recognition by the UN. One participant explained that when setting up the Interfaith Liaison Committee, the naming protocol was critical to ensure that engagement with faith groups would not be seen as temporary:

> *They wanted to give us the name of Task Force. But usually at the UN when you have a 'task force', it's a group that's created with a particular purpose with a duration of time that's limited. So, I didn't feel it was a good idea, it was an 'interest group'. It was better for me*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]

To complicate matters, FBOs are an "informal group" under the UNFCCC, but the fact that they have a group at all is indicative of a push to formalise FBO engagement with the UNFCCC. We can see a similar trajectory with the UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative, where engagement with FBOs, according to one participant, is now part of the UNEP's wider "strategic approach for the implementation of our program of work and strategy" (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth); the UNEP's 2022-2025 strategy report makes a specific mention of engagement with FBOs where the previous 2018-2021 report does not (UNEP, 2016b; UNEP, 2023b). Reflecting on this change, he goes on to say that "it's now *institutionalised*, rather than being just you know, a project or an initiative that we work on" (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth, my emphasis) which is reflective, as with the Interfaith Liaison Committee, of the desire to seek formal or institutional but importantly long-term recognition of FBOs in the UN climate space.

A final tension, which it is important to touch on when discussing the UN and the UN-faith-climate space, is the extent to which we can or should consider it to be a *secular* space. In general, the UN is considered to be secular and by extension so are the agencies and events, i.e. the UNFCCC, UNEP, COPs, which are focused on climate change and environmental sustainability (Haynes, 2013b;

Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Glaab et al., 2018; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b; Glaab, 2022). Glaab's (2022) analysis of FBOs at the UNFCCC relies on the assertion that the UN in general and the UNFCCC specifically have secular "doxa" in the Bourdeusian sense to which FBOs pose a discursive challenge. There is also an alternative proposition: that we ought to consider the broader UN space, and global civil society, as postsecular either in a descriptive or normative sense (Haynes, 2014; Wilson, 2014b; May et al., 2014; Ager and Ager, 2016; Haynes, 2020; Wilson, 2022). I return to the discussion of religious and (post)secular dynamics of the UN-faith-climate space in more detail in Chapter 7, but it is a thread which permeates and informs forthcoming discussions on the presence and role of FBOs.

4.3 Quantitative assessments of FBO engagement

One way of addressing the presence of FBOs in climate action at the UN is to take a quantitative approach and count the numbers registered with UN agencies. In what follows, I present findings on the numbers of FBOs in the UN climate space and consider the utility of these figures to the wider question of the role of FBOs. Whilst I think it is important to address the quantitative dimensions of FBOs' presence, particularly given the often-conflicting debates on the resurgence of religion and the (post-)secular nature of the UN as well as the importance of considering representation along both faith affiliation and geographical lines, these quantitative findings are ultimately limited to the indicative level and belie richer FBO experiences.

Several previous studies have addressed the presence of FBOs quantitatively by counting numbers of UN-registered or accredited organisations which appear to be faith-based or religious. However, the lack of official identification or categorisation for FBOs, means that different approaches have been taken with relatedly different results. Berger (2003) looked at the presence of religious NGOs (RNGOs)[40] at the UN by looking at ECOSOC and UN Department of Public Information (DPI) registered NGOs and marking out RNGOs through self-identification in interviews, by survey, but, for the most part, on websites. The survey approach was taken up later by Bush (2017) who contacted DPI registered NGOs to ascertain religious numbers. Employing an enhanced version of the name-based identification approach, Beinlich and Braungart (2018) counted the number of ECOSOC registered RNGOs by judging the extent to which religion imbued the mission statement of a given organisation, beyond simply having a religious-sounding name. Importantly, they contested the idea that there had been a surge in FBO numbers at the UN by demonstrating that, whist there had been a rise in absolute terms, likely due to the general growth of civil society and NGOs at the UN, the relative percentage remained about the same[41]. These studies each have their limitations in terms of

[40] Here I use the terminology employed by the researchers which in quantitative studies is generally RNGO. See Chapters 1 and 3 where I discuss my use of FBO terminology.

[41] As of 2012, they found that FBOs represent 9% of ECOSOC registered NGOs, having rested around approximately 9% since 2000, which in absolute terms is a rise to 339 up from 180 (Beinlich and Braungart, 2018, p.30)

under and over-counting FBOs. More in-depth approaches may underestimate religious presence due to lack of respondents or lack of website detail, whilst more surface-level counting approaches may cast too wide a net under which organisations could be considered faith-based or religious. Yet they do offer important reflections on how (not) to address the question of the role of FBOs at the UN.

Of most interest here, of course, are studies which focus more specifically on the UN-faith-climate space. Beinlich and Braungart (2018, p.30), by including website analysis to formulate their quantitative overview of FBOs, found that 15% of ECOSOC registered RNGOs had environmental aims. Yet this does not tell us to what extent they engage with the UN to further these aims or engage with UN climate or environment agencies. Only one study has specifically addressed the quantitative presence of FBOs at the UNFCCC. Krantz (2021), takes the self-identification approach, but leaves it at the level of organisation names. He counted numbers of RNGOs accredited with the UNFCCC and attendance at COP24 with the latter measured both at the level of organisations and individuals and found that RNGOs made up 2.54% of UNFCCC accredited NGOs and 5.18% of COP24 NGO attendees. These percentages are less that the wider ECOSOC registered RNGOs which between 2003 and 2012 have stayed around 9% (Berger, 2003; Bush, 2017; Beinlich and Braungart, 2018)[42]. Only one other study mentions FBOs or RNGOs in its analysis of UNFCCC accredited NGOs and found that between 1995 and 2011 "religious/spiritual" NGOs have made up 2% (Cabré, 2011, p.16).

My aim here is to provide an indicative overview of the numbers of FBOs in the UN climate space. I chose to follow Krantz's approach focusing on identifying FBOs by name alone. I present a quantitative overview of FBO presence across the UNFCCC, the UNEP, and COP25, 26 and 27[43] divided by faith affiliation and continent as defined by an organisation's headquarters. In the main FBO tables here I have not included indigenous organisations, for example organisations which represent, or are based on a group or groups of indigenous peoples, nations, or indigenous spiritual traditions, but have instead included a separate table indicating their number. The rationale to do so is based on the difficulties in separating out indigenous organisations which could be included under an indigenous tradition or spirituality affiliation and others those which would not fit under this label. For example, it is unclear, in Krantz's (2022, pp.19-20) analysis why some indigenous groups have been included as "religious NGOs", for example the Indigenous Education Network of Turtle Island, but others have not, for example the Indigenous Information Network, the Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee, the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact Foundation, amongst others (UNFCCC, 2018b). Importantly, I have not excluded indigenous organisations from the FBO category per se but have not included them in the name-based identification for this quantitative analysis.

[42] At the time of writing, these are the most recently available RNGO/FBO counts.

[43] The sources used were UNFCCC and UNEP accreditation lists, extracted in July 2023 and COP registration lists provided on the UNFCCC website (UNFCCC, 2019; 2021; 2022; n.d.; UNEP, n.d.)

A feature which I have included in this analysis of FBO presence at the COPs are non-accredited attendees. To attend a COP an organisation must first be registered with the UNFCCC after which they are then able to apply to be a COP *delegate* and receive a number of badges for individuals to attend as part of that organisation. When in the field at COP26 and speaking with FBOs it became apparent that many FBO attendees did not have an official accreditation but were 'badge-sharing', i.e. FBOs who had several badges would share them with individuals from organisations who were not registered with the UNFCCC. As such I have included 'attendee' as a separate category[44].

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the distribution (presented internal to each column) of FBOs by faith affiliation. "Secular" has been included as a category in these tables as some FBO delegates (i.e. those who were accredited with the UNFCCC and officially registered to attend the COPs) brought in representatives of secular organisations on their badges, often from underrepresented global majority regions. More will be said on the global-local mediatory role of FBOs in Chapter 6. Table 4.1 presents the numbers whilst Table 4.2 presents the figures as a percentage both internal to each agency or event and as a percentage of total NGOs. Across the board, we can see that Christian FBOs make up the majority but, when comparing UNFCCC and UNEP FBOs, the UNEP is much less weighted towards Christian FBOs and has a greater distribution of other, in particular Muslim FBOs which make up just under 4% of UNFCCC accredited NGOs but almost 15% of UNEP accredited FBOs. However, if we look at the distribution of FBOs over the three COPs we can see slight drop in the overall percentage of Christian FBOs Likewise we can see, in Table 4.1, that the 'badge-sharing' at COP diversifies the pool of FBOs by faith affiliation. For example, there were no Jewish FBOs formally registered as delegates at COP26 or COP27, but in both cases a representative from a Jewish FBO attended by using the badge of an FBO delegate. Table 4.2 shows also show that FBOs as a percentage of all NGOs has remained fairly consistent across COPs. Indigenous groups have official constituencies at both the UNFCCC and the UNEP and Table 4.3 shows that groups which are part of the indigenous constituency make up almost the same percentage of UNFCCC NGOs as all identified FBOs, just under half compared to the percentage of UNEP FBOs, yet they have no IPCC presence. COP attendance is not included as COP lists are not divided by UNFCCC constituency.

[44] This category is *not* included in the percentage-based tables as the total number of all individual non-delegate NGO attendees at each COP was not built into the analysis.

Table 4.1 FBO engagement with UN by faith affiliation [number]

Faith affiliation	**UNEP accredited***	**IPCC observer***	**UNFCCC accredited***	**COP25 delegate**	**COP25 attendee****	**COP26 delegate**	**COP26 attendee****	**COP27 delegate**	**COP27 attendee****
Bahá'í	1		1			1		1	1
Brahma Kumari	1		1	1		1		1	
Buddhist	2		4	2	1	3	2	3	
Christian	31	1	60	30	9	45	35	43	32
Hindu	2						1		1
Interfaith	7		9	1		4	4	5	3
Jewish	1		2				1		1
Muslim	8		3	1	1	3	2	1	2
Secular							2		2
Sikh			1					1	
Spiritual	1		1					1	
Unitarian Universalist			2	1		1	2	2	
Total	**54**	**1**	**84**	**36**	**11**	**58**	**49**	**58**	**42**

*As of July 2023 **Attendee via another UNFCCC accredited FBO

Table 4.2 FBO engagement with UN by faith affiliation [percentage; percentage of total NGOs]

Faith affiliation	**UNEP accredited ***	**% UNEP accredited NGOs***	**IPCC observer***	**% IPCC observer NGOs***	**UNFCCC accredited ***	**% UNFCCC accredited NGOs***	**COP25 delegate**	**% COP25 delegate NGOs**	**COP26 delegate**	**% COP26 delegate NGOs**	**COP27 delegate**	**% COP27 delegate NGOs**
Bahá'í	1.85%	0.09%			1.19%	0.03%			1.72%	0.06%	1.72%	0.06%
Brahma Kumari	1.85%	0.09%			1.19%	0.03%	2.78%	0.09%	1.72%	0.06%	1.72%	0.06%
Buddhist	3.70%	0.18%			4.76%	0.13%	5.56%	0.18%	5.17%	0.19%	5.17%	0.17%
Christian	57.41%	2.81%	100%	0.77%	71.43%	1.89%	83.33%	2.71%	77.59%	2.82%	74.14%	2.46%
Hindu	3.70%	0.18%										
Interfaith	12.96%	0.63%			10.71%	0.28%	2.78%	0.09%	6.90%	0.25%	8.62%	0.29%
Jewish	1.85%	0.09%			2.38%	0.06%						
Muslim	14.81%	0.72%			3.57%	0.09%	2.78%	0.09%	5.17%	0.19%	1.72%	0.06%
Sikh					1.19%	0.03%					1.72%	0.06%
Spiritual	1.85%	0.09%			1.19%	0.03%					1.72%	0.06%
Unitarian Universalist					2.38%	0.06%	2.78%	0.09%	1.72%	0.06%	3.45%	0.11%
Total	**100%**	**4.89%**	**100%**	**0.77%**	**100%**	**2.64%**	**100%**	**3.25%**	**100%**	**3.63%**	**100%**	**3.31%**

*As of July 2023

To further complicate this quantitative assessment, the UNEP have several "major groups" for accredited organisations, including "non-governmental organisations" of which there are 757. If we were to measure FBOs as a percentage of organisations which are part of this group they would make up 7.13% rather than the 4.89% shown in Table 4.2. For the purposes of this analysis, however, the *total* number of accredited organisations (1105) has been taken as other major groups also include NGO-type organisations (e.g. youth, women, environmental) which makes for more useful comparison with UNFCCC accredited NGOs.

Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show FBO presence by continent and by numbers and percentages respectively. Again the difference between the UNEP and UNFCCC and the COP 'attendee' category here are illuminating. As with previous quantitative assessments, there is a dominance of FBOs headquartered in Europe and North America across the board (Beinlich and Braungart, 2018; Krantz, 2021). Yet in Table 4.5 we see that at the UNEP compared to the UNFCCC there is a much higher percentage of accredited FBOs based in Africa and a slightly higher percentage of FBOs based in Asia. Table 4.4 shows that, the 'badge-sharing' at COPs results in greater number of organisations from Africa and Asia and the inclusion of one organisation from Australia/Oceania; in this latter case, a representative of the Methodist Church of Fiji attending on a World Council of Churches delegate badge.

We can also look at the quantitative presence of FBOs in some of the specific UN-FBO initiatives and committees discussed earlier in this chapter. The UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative, for example, is notable in that it engages with FBOs beyond those that are officially accredited with the UNEP. The initiative does, however, encourage and support engaged FBOs to become accredited by the UNEP. In an interview with UNEP Faith for Earth, the increased percentage of UNEP accredited FBOs in the years since its inception was presented as a key achievement and continued aim. We also can compare my results to the aforementioned quantitative studies (Bush, 2017; Beinlich and Braungart, 2018; Krantz, 2021). Comparatively, FBOs make up a smaller proportion of UNFCCC accredited NGOs they do in the wider UN system, yet in the UNEP they make up a higher proportion. While comparing the numbers and demographics of FBOs at the UNFCCC and UNEP it is important to note that gaining UNFCCC accreditation is more difficult than with the UNEP. Caniglia et al. (2015, p.241) suggest that this is due to the more "focused" nature of the UNFCCC compared to the much broader remit of the UNEP and to the emphasis on the need for UNFCCC accredited NGOs to be of "international character". In the case of the COPs there are also practical considerations to take into account. COP25 and 26 posed particular difficulties for NGO attendees, given the last-minute location change in the case of COP25, and the COVID-19 travel restrictions in the case of COP26. These additional considerations complicate conclusions around the quantifiable presence and distribution of FBOs at the COPs.

Table 4.3 Indigenous peoples organisations [number; percentage]

	UNEP accredited*	% UNEP accredited NGOs	IPCC observer	% IPCC observer NGOs	UNFCCC accredited**	% UNFCCC accredited NGOs
Indigenous peoples' organisations	18	1.63%			92	2.89%

* Organisations which are part of the major group "Indigenous peoples and their communities" as of July 2023 **Organisations which are part of the major group "Indigenous peoples organizations" as of July 2023

Table 4.4 FBO engagement with UN by continent [number]

Continent	UNEP accredited*	IPCC observer*	UNFCCC accredited*	COP25 delegate	COP25 attendee**	COP26 delegate	COP26 attendee**	COP27 delegate	COP27 attendee**
Africa	10		6	2		5	5	4	15
Asia	7		9	5		5	4	6	4
Australia/Oceania							1		1
Europe	21	1	38	19	6	29	23	26	8
North America	16		30	10	3	19	15	21	13
South America			1		2		1	1	1
Total	**54**	**1**	**84**	**36**	**11**	**58**	**49**	**58**	**42**

*As of July 2023 **Attendee via another UNFCCC accredited FBO

Table 4.5 FBO engagement with UN by continent [percentage; percentage of total NGOs]

Continent	**UNEP accredited***	**% UNEP accredited NGOs***	**IPCC observer***	**% IPCC observer NGOs***	**UNFCCC accredited***	**% UNFCCC accredited NGOs***	**COP25 delegate**	**% COP25 delegate NGOs**	**COP26 delegate**	**% COP26 delegate NGOs**	**COP27 delegate**	**% COP27 delegate NGOs**
Africa	18.52%	0.90%			7.14%	0.19%	5.56%	0.18%	8.62%	0.31%	6.90%	0.23%
Asia	12.96%	0.63%			10.71%	0.28%	13.89%	0.45%	8.62%	0.31%	10.34%	0.34%
Australia/Oceania												
Europe	38.89%	1.90%	100%	0.77%	45.24%	1.20%	52.78%	1.72%	50%	1.81%	44.83%	1.48%
North America	29.63%	1.45%			35.71%	0.94%	27.78%	0.90%	32.76%	1.19%	36.21%	1.20%
South America					1.19%	0.03%					1.72%	0.06%
Total	**100%**	**4.89%**	**100%**	**0.77%**	**100%**	**2.64%**	**100%**	**3.25%**	**100%**	**3.63%**	**100%**	**3.31%**

*As of July 2023

Given that there is not an FBO constituency under the UN, I have also included here a breakdown of UNFCCC accredited FBOs by their constituency, shown in Table 4.6. What this shows is the diversity of constituencies of which FBOs are a part and the potential pitfalls of categorising FBOs as first and foremost faith-based[45] rather than as, for example, environmental NGOs. There are tensions around the call for an FBO constituency and some may prefer to remain part of these existing NGO groups (Interviews Brahma Kumari, Global One, Bhumi Global, UNEP Faith for Earth). Likewise, it shows the shortcomings of the constituencies themselves which may be insufficient descriptors of their nature as organisations. These constituencies, whilst they are quite broad groups which "should therefore not be considered monolithic blocks; rather, they represent a broad spectrum of interests which also often conflict" (Nasiritousi et al., 2016, p.115), still limit the representative power of FBOs to present themselves with a clear faith-based category. The question remains to what extent this is positive or negative and in Chapter 7 I propose that for FBOs there is a paradox of representation.

Table 4.6 FBOs by UNFCCC constituency [number; percentage]

UNFCCC constituency	**Number of FBOs**	**% of total observer FBOS**
Environmental	33	39.29%
Environmental CAN**	12	14.29%
Farmers	1	1.19%
Indigenous peoples	1*	1.19%
Local government and municipal authorities	1	1.19%
Research and independent	18	21.43%
Women and gender	1	1.19%
Youth	7	8.33%
Not specified	10	11.90%

*As discussed, indigenous organisations have been excluded; the FBO here is SIL International (Christian)
**Climate Action Network

These quantitative analyses are useful as an indication of the numbers of FBOs in the UN climate space. In particular, they illustrate how claims of FBO or religious resurgence may be challenged by looking at relative, rather than absolute numbers of FBOs and show how the demographics of FBO engagement with the UN on climate and environment differs: across UN agencies, i.e. between the UNFCCC and the UNEP; by introducing additional categories of analysis, i.e. the badge-sharing COP

[45] See Chapter 7, where I discuss the category of religion at the UN and participant reflections on the potential for a 'Faith' constituency.

attendees; and across time and place, i.e. between different COPs. However, I find that they are more useful in demonstrating the shortcomings of such an approach to identifying and understanding the presence of FBOs at the UN. These quantitative approaches necessitate an over- or under-categorisation of FBOs and tell us little about the nature of FBO engagement in the UN-faith-climate space. The quantifiable presence of FBOs does not necessarily indicate active engagement (or lack thereof) with the UN on climate change. At the IPCC for example, just one FBO is registered as an observer which may suggest a relatively limited engagement. Yet, in an interview with a representative from said FBO, it became apparent that they were one of only a handful of NGOs who actively participate and give verbal and written interventions during IPCC consultations which suggests a greater participation than the quantitative measure would imply. I now turn to a qualitative analysis of FBOs' roles and experiences in the UN-faith-climate space.

4.4 Reasons, roles and challenges

The final section of this chapter presents a qualitative analysis of FBOs of the UN-faith-climate space centring on their reasons for engaging, their roles and the key challenges. I suggest FBOs see the UN as a critical space for climate action, one which they generally feel is increasingly welcome to FBOs. Whilst they play a range of roles, there are tensions around the extent to which we may consider them to be distinct from the work of secular NGOs. I also begin to foreground the suggestion that, despite the quantitative assessment that relative numbers of FBOs have not increased, engaging with the experience of FBOs themselves tells an important narrative about the increasing salience of faith-based voices.[46]

Reasons for engagement

I asked all interviewees why they chose to engage with the UN for climate action. For the most part, the responses centred on the notion that the UN is an important, if not the most important, arena for international advocacy, decision-making and action on climate change. This sentiment is crystallised in the words of a Church of Norway participant who said the UN, and more specifically the UNFCCC is "the frame, it is the organisation, it is the biggest umbrella we have, so it's so important to be there". Other FBOs echoed similar sentiments which can, though they appeared in more optimistic (it's really important) or pessimistic (it's all we have) guises, largely be characterised as a recognition of the necessity the of the UN for international collaboration and, hopefully, progress on climate action. However, the trajectory of engagement beyond this umbrella reason looks different across FBOs. Three sub-reasons for engagement emerged which I identified as: legacy, legitimacy, and representation.

[46] I return to this discussion in Chapter 7 through a discussion of the ostensible (post-)secularism of the UN-faith-climate space.

Legacy here means that a given FBO has a long history of engagement with, and experience of, the UN, which can be built upon in the context of climate action, or indeed that their legacy includes a history of work on environmental issues. The Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), has a history of peacebuilding and human rights work at the UN which they have built upon to support climate action and climate negotiation processes:

> *QUNO has been presence for, what, 70 years at the UN, and our literature is very much about supporting processes. So in the case of the quiet diplomacy, we were very much the forefront of showing examples of how we have supported these processes in the past*
>
> [Interview QUNO]

Similarly, the World Council of Churches, which has been working with the UN since its inception, and on environmental issues since the 1970s[47], have a legacy of experience working within the UN and have been present at every COP. Their position means that contemporary work within the UN-faith-climate is an extension of their historical engagement. The legacy of engagement not only offers them a well-known and respected position in the UN-faith-climate space, indeed the WCC is given a platform to speak in the plenary as the faith representative at each COP, but it also provides good reason to engage, that is to capitalise on their existing position to encourage action on climate change.

The second sub-reason, legitimacy[48], indicates those organisations for whom engagement with the UN adds legitimacy to their work as an organisation outside the UN and likewise, makes them more legitimate in the eyes of the UN and others in the UN-faith-climate space. Whether or not this legitimacy in either direction is justified is a separate question, but it is certainly the case that legitimacy appears in FBOs' reasons for engagement. A participant from Islamic Relief explained that "for us to be part of that process is something that kind of enhances our work" suggesting that engaging with the UN processes add legitimacy to their own work on climate change advocacy. Here another participant reflects on the legitimacy offered by UN:

> *The UN gives a structure and a framing for the grassroots work you know. And so that's one of the reasons we engage as well is that it gives […] legitimacy to the work, but it also allows us to go to the grassroots and say, well, look, these big organisations are doing it, you know, let's get on board with the agenda*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

The importance of the UN for providing a framing for climate action is evident in Bhumi Global's use of the UNEP's triple crisis approach: "UNEP talk about climate, biodiversity, pollution. They talk

[47] The World Council of Churches introduced their Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation process in 1983 (WCC, 2005)

[48] For an outline of the debate on what legitimacy means for (non-)state actors in climate and environmental governance see Nasiritousi and Faber (2021) and Bäckstrand et al. (2021) who address the extent to which non-state actors perceive the UN as a legitimate institution and vice versa, and the extent to which this affects the efficacy of climate processes.

about triple crisis. And so that's why we went for that as well"[49]. However, the suggestion is not only that the work of FBOs is legitimised by being officially registered with ECOSOC and other UN agencies, but that their work outside the formal UN space, in "the grassroots" is supported by their connection with "these big organisations". The leader of the Faith for Earth Initiative at the UNEP described a similar experience when asked about how the UN was perceived when working with FBOs and grassroots or community groups:

> *To tell you the truth, probably, it's a privilege actually! And they jumped at the opportunity of having UN reaching out to them and working with them. Everybody looks at the UN as a legitimate organisation that brings people together, and as a platform for coordination and cooperation. So since I have started, I have not seen* ***but*** *support, and you know, faith organisations jumping at the opportunity that there is a, you know, the UN flag and coming up with a coordination mechanism. And we are a neutral body that brings people together. So rather than, for example, having a Christian or a Muslim or Jewish organisation asking people to come… they would think there is, an ulterior motive there. But, as the UN, as a neutral body, it comes with no agenda, the agenda is just to bring people together to discuss. So yeah, we have been really pleased with the reception.*
>
> [Interview UNEP Faith for Earth]

Here the legitimacy of working with the UN on climate change comes not necessarily from the potential frameworks offered and prestige of becoming an accredited organisation, but from its neutrality. It seems that the UN is taken to be a neutral space in which FBOs can come together to cooperate and coordinate action on climate change. The UN's neutrality of course is based on its secularism; it is not "a Christian or a Muslim or Jewish organization". The nature of this kind of legitimacy is complicated by the demographics of FBOs represented a the UN and suggestions that the secular nature of the UN may make engagement easier for Christian FBOs Western Europe/North America (Wilson, 2017; Haynes, 2020).

Finally, representation as a sub-reason appeared most for groups who felt that either their own or a particular faith community or region was underrepresented in the UN-faith-climate-space. When asked about the reasons behind seeking official accreditation in the UN system, Bhumi Global explained:

> *because we are the leading Hindu voice in the UN space when it comes to the environment.[…] it's important to make that seat at the table an institutional seat, rather than me as an individual, right? So yeah, so that's why we'll do it. And it's to show by example as well to other groups, Hindu groups*
>
> [Interview with Bhumi Global]

Given the limited representation of Hindu organisations at the UN (Berger, 2003; Peterson, 2010; Carrette, 2017) , importance is placed on gaining "institutional" recognition, i.e. as an accredited

[49] Bhumi Global also favoured this framework along theological lines as it was one which specifically mentioned biodiversity, an issue which was felt to be under-discussed by FBOs and which resonated specifically with their Hindu basis. More will be said on the framing of climate change in Chapter 5.

organisation rather than engaging with the UN as a Hindu individual. The recognition of limited representation also seems to make engagement that much more important not necessarily to act as representative of 'all' Hindus and Hindu communities but to diversify the voices within the UN-faith-climate-space and to act as an example to other Hindu groups. The notion of representation is also cashed out through the idea of a responsibility to facilitate potential and future representation:

> *I feel a responsibility as I am a Hindu in the UN space and I do have, you know, a voice that I can use that to open the door for other not just Hindu organisations, but for other Dharmic traditions as well and other smaller represented faith traditions to, you know the Sikhs, the Jains, the Buddhists and other groups as well. You know to say 'hey, this is how it's done, this is how you can engage with the UN'. So, there's also that responsibility aspect as well for me personally*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

Similar sentiments were expressed by Muslim and Brahma Kumari participants who felt that, as groups with less presence in the UN-faith-climate-space, engagement was that much more important.

Representation also came up with Christian FBOs, particularly for those with strong connections with church communities in the Global South, for example the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Here representation was, as with the aforementioned examples, tied to a recognition of the lack thereof in UN spaces and followed by recognition of the responsibility of Christian, Global North FBOs to either represent groups which could not participate in the UN space or make efforts to facilitate their participation. In part this is representation for its own sake, that is to include a broader and more globally representative pool of FBOs, but it is also has a specific link to the issue of climate change, where the most affected communities tend to the ones who do not have a seat, or have a much smaller one, at the table:

> *I say in every room of where decisions are made, you should have three empty chairs representing the poor people of the world, children in the future generation, and the creation itself, because they are voiceless. Their interests are not taken care of in their different discussions and the system where decisions are made. And I think that is our role as churches, to actually remind decision makers in these contexts, about please, please remember these are the ones who are most affected.*
>
> [Interview WCC/ILC]

FBOs which operate outside 'formal' UN space (see Figure 4.1), for example by organising events in the fringe area of COP26 or by participating in climate marches or other grassroots climate activism on the fringes of the COPs, provided reasons for their decision not to engage with directly the UN. A participant from Operation Noah a UK-based Christian FBO stated "we're just too small […] we just don't have the clout". Despite this they did engage indirectly with COP26 through network organisations including Faith for the Climate and COP Coalition, meaning that whilst they did not engage directly with formal processes they worked with organisations who were directly engaging with COP6: "we're one step back, I suppose". Here the reason for (non-)engagement is the antithesis of the 'legacy' FBOs who can build on longstanding formal engagement with the UN but rather relies on the complex network of the UN-faith-climate space to facilitate engagement in more indirect ways.

Roles and activities of FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space

Observing the activities and movements of FBOs at COP26 one would be forgiven, and not altogether incorrect, for thinking that many of the roles of FBOs are indistinguishable from those of other civil society groups or NGOs. A regular sight in the Green Zone at COP26 were NGO groups with matching jackets or badges, milling around in large groups and planning which Blue Zone negotiations to follow and report on. One such group was the ACT Alliance, an ecumenical Christian network, with their identifiable white and red jackets who, on speaking to one member, I found were diligently attending the Blue Zone from 8am each day reporting on policy points and lobbying their respective state negotiators alongside many other NGOs.

Looking at research on the roles and activities of non-state or civil society actors in climate action at the UN provides a starting point from which to understand the way that FBOs may, or may not, perform distinct roles. Nasitirousi (2016, p.45, original emphases) in her research on non-state actors in global climate governance describes them as "*shapers* of information and ideas, *brokers* of knowledge, norms and initiatives, and *doers* of implementing policies and influencing behaviours", whilst Sénit (2020), in research on the participation of civil society groups in the SDGs explains their role in terms of issue-framing, position-shifting, goal formulation, and influence on future procedures. Both approaches highlight the importance of framing as an activity by civil society and NGO groups and are useful in shaping an understanding of FBOs who operate in the same space as these groups. Based on previous research and interviews, FBOs' roles could easily fit into these frameworks yet they do not assess the difference that being faith-based may or may not make. Looking specifically at FBOs, Krantz (2022) in his interviews with and participant observation at COP22 and COP23 outlines eleven key "functions and goals":

•Networking;

• Expressing solidarity with other social movements;

• Lobbying;

• Virtue signalling;

• Publicizing interfaith statements;

• Bearing public witness;

• Piloting projects—using the COP as an organizational launch pad;

• Publicly framing spiritual beliefs as ecologically minded;

• Public education;

• Self-education;

• And promoting plant-based diets. (ibid, p. 286)

Though he suggests that FBOs were in practice fulfilling many of the roles of other non-state actors[50] these are the eleven he identifies as explicit goals of FBOs. Both Glaab (2022) and Berry (2014a) reported in their research at the UNFCCC and Rio+20 conference respectively that FBOs' roles were often indistinguishable from the roles of other (secular) NGOs with Glaab suggesting, as I also observed at COP26, that FBOs such as the ACT Alliance were undertaking the same activities as many other NGOs at COP and on an initial assessment were not doing anything distinctively faith-based. However, I think it is useful to cast a broader net on FBO roles and activities to begin rather than focusing on those which are perhaps more obviously 'faith-based' before discussing the potential distinctiveness of faith-based activities and to begin to assess as Peterson suggests "how, when and why these actors [or activities] are religious" (Peterson, 2010; Berry, 2014a)

Building on Krantz's list and looking to my analysis of the broader UN-faith-climate space, I divide FBOs' roles into three categories, each with sub-roles and activities, outlined in Table 4.7. These roles and activities are not all on the face of it obviously faith-based or religious yet part of the aim here is to demonstrate both the variety of roles that FBOs fulfil and to begin to discuss if, how and why being a *faith-based* organisation may make the fulfilment of these roles distinctive. I include religious/spiritual practice as a fourth distinct category though in practice there is also overlap with the advocacy category.

[50] For example, those identified by Hjerpe and Linner (2010) and Schroeder and Lovell (2012).

Advocacy	• Issue-framing • Agenda-setting • Lobbying (local, country, regional and international levels) • Preparing faith-based and interfaith statements • Following and documenting negotiations and policies
Networking and representing	• Networking (with FBOs, NGOs, UN staff, negotiators) • Organising events (side events and pre-/post-COP) • Global-local mediation and translation • Representing faith-based/interfaith groups and faith communities • Solidarity with activist groups and social movements
Education, training, and research	• Capacity-building (own FBO, other FBOs, communities) • Education and training (self, own/other FBOs, communities) • Presenting and piloting projects • Research on faith-based climate action
Religious/spiritual practice	

Table 4.7 FBO roles and activities

Advocacy is a critical role for FBOs and many FBO activities, much like the activities of other NGOs and non-states actors (Nasiritousi, 2016; Sénit, 2020), come under the umbrella of advocacy i.e. they are aimed at showing support and calling for (particular types of) action on climate change and changing the minds and actions of state negotiators, communities, other FBOs, and UN officials. Central to FBOs' advocacy, and to FBOs' understanding of their role are issue-framing[51] and agenda-setting. Issue-framing indicates the process of highlighting how, why and which parts of climate change are felt to be important to a given FBO but also highlighting what their faith tradition, or indeed religion in general, has to say about it. Framing is a key technique employed by social movements to advocate for (particular types of) action on particular issues and, in the context of religions and climate change has been touted as a key strength of FBOs given their ostensible strength at speaking in moral, spiritual and normative terms (Benford and Snow, 2000; Kearns, 2011; Snow, 2013; Conca, 2022). I found that FBOs saw their ability to frame climate change in religious or quasi-religious (for example, non-confessional moral, ethical or spiritual) terms as a key part of their role in the UN-faith-climate space. In the next chapter, I present an analysis of FBOs' framings of climate change but suffice to say here that issue-framing, whilst being a key role of FBOs looks different for

[51] In Chapter 5, I discuss what framing looks like by analysing in more detail how FBOs frame climate change and in Chapter 6 I focus on FBOs' roles as global-local mediators.

FBOs across faith traditions, organisational structures and geographical regions, and comes with intra- and inter-faith tensions.

Closely connected to issue-framing is agenda-setting. FBOs have worked to get climate change in general, and more specific issues related to climate change on the agenda in the UN faith space, in their own FBOs, in interfaith networks, and in faith communities. One interviewee put emphasis on her role in putting climate change on the faith-based agenda at the UN, when asked how and why she began working on climate change action:

> *I think it's because I felt there was a real need, and it was a new, in a sense. So most people would say, "Climate change? No, we have enough problems with... Climate change? No, we have problems with …". It was, like, a little bit new. And it needed quite a bit of work for people to understand that… lots needed to be done.*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]

Here advocacy, in terms of agenda-setting, is presented in quite general terms of getting climate change on the policy agenda at all and is referring to her experience "about 10 years ago" (likely between 2006-2010). Yet FBO advocacy has also focused on bringing to the fore particular issues under the umbrella of climate change including human rights, biodiversity, food and diet, indigenous communities and knowledge, gender, economic issues (incl. NDCs) and justice. Decisions on what FBOs advocate for are often iterative process, informed and challenged by their other activities and roles. Though I have broken down the roles into distinct categories above, in practice there is much crossover where networking with other FBOs or UN officials may change or inform their issue-framing and project work or training may inform their lobbying work. Here an interviewee discusses the process of deciding how to prioritise what issues and projects they focus on:

> *Partly it's, you know, 'how can an organisation be seen to be out in front on an issue?'. Partly it's, 'what's the UN saying?', 'what is the UN asking?' Partly it's, what are the members of those organizations, so like the churches or the mosques, the synagogues or the temples, what are they saying they want to work on? So I think, I think it's a mix of things that sets the direction of travel…*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

Decisions around advocacy are affected by other activities of networking with other FBOs, local communities and UN agencies or officials. Advocacy also happens through a variety of channels. Some FBOs, for example the World Council of Churches and the Quaker United Nations Office, given their aforementioned legacy with the UN work independently; some work with the support of umbrella interfaith groups, for example Faith for the Climate's experience with GreenFaith; some work directly with state negotiators from their countries; and some FBOs work with umbrella civil society groups such as Climate Action Now! (CAN), the largest civil society climate group at the UN (Interviews WCC/ILC, QUNO, Faith for the Climate, LWF; Glaab, 2017).

A key part of advocacy is lobbying. Lobbying work begins at the local or regional level and continues to the level of negotiators at COP. FBOs' experiences of lobbying activities reflected their at times contentious and at times highly respected position in the eyes of lobbying targets, i.e. state or regional

negotiators and policy-makers. Most importantly FBOs stressed that trust was a key dimension of their climate advocacy and lobbying activities specifically. Speaking about her experience of lobbing at the local and national levels in Central and South America one participant explained:

> *Not only are we part of the communities, we are the communities. I think this is the strong basis, no? […]communities trust us, no? So also, government trusts us. Faith leaders have a tremendous power to talk to these communities and to facilitate dialogue between different stakeholders, no? Sometimes it is difficult for the government to, I don't know, to call for a meeting, because they have some decision* [to make]. *But if the faith leaders, called for a meeting to talk about climate impacts, maybe they reach more people, more stakeholders.*
>
> [Interview LWF]

According to another participant, the lobbying activities conducted at the Paris COP in 2015 were likewise respected by the US government, who "asked the US State Department to comment: did the presence of faith people at this meeting make a difference? They came back and said yes, we listened to you." (Interview Care of Creation). During a side event at COP26, a representative of GreenFaith Kenya explained the important role that faith leaders and FBOs had in lobbying governments for climate action in general and in preparation for the COP specifically (COP26 fringe event, 4/11/21). Advocacy and lobbying are also an activity which one participant saw as an important part of FBOs' actual and potential role:

> *Now, our objective is, in addition to increasing the advocacy of the faith organizations, we want them to play an active role in pushing their Member States and governments in adopting more ambitious climate actions in accordance with the Paris agreement*
>
> [Interview UNEP Faith for Earth]

Lobbying is also an activity which FBOs with a either a large, international or specialised staff are more able to conduct. The World Council of Churches and the ACT Alliance at COP26 had staff members tasked with lobbying the state negotiators of their respective countries, something which would not be possible without their international spread.

Preparing and delivering faith-based and interfaith statements on the need to act on climate change remains an important and perhaps the most visible part of FBOs' advocacy work, and is often mentioned as a notable part of religious groups' activities in on research on religion and climate change (Jenkins et al., 2018; Hulme, 2022). FBOs in the run up to COP26 published interfaith and faith-based statements stressing the need for climate action through emphasising the moral, religious and spiritual dimensions of climate change. Interfaith statements tend to present issues with homogeneity and often are not reflective of the variety of framings of climate change offered up by different religions. Yet, they are also reflective of the creative ways that FBOs work to develop mutually acceptable but still evidently faith-based language to call for climate action. I encountered scepticism from participants both in terms of the need to prepare statements and on the content and language of such statements. However, these statements remain an important way to demonstrate emphatically a faith-based response to climate change or call to action.

I include the activity 'religious/spiritual practice' as a distinct category, but in the context of the UN-faith-climate space, religious or spiritual practice can take on an advocational and activist character. It is also a crosscutting theme for other FBO activities which may be inspired or motivated by, or indeed considered in their own right a form of religious practice. At COP26, XR Buddhists were outside the Blue Zone entrance each morning meditating, several events organised in the fringe area had specific religious or spiritual content or included time for silent reflection, and FBOs reported including prayer, worship or mediation as part of their work at COP (Interviews WCC/ILC, Care of Creation, Brahma Kumaris/ILC). That these activities take place either in public or at not exclusively faith-based events or meetings is indicative of their advocational potential. A participant from the World Council of Churches explained that meetings with secular environmental NGOs regularly started with prayer and one of the mandates of the ILC itself is to provide spiritual support for participants at climate conferences. However, religious practice can also support faith-based climate advocacy work in that it is intended to guide and focus the advocacy itself. Reflecting on his understanding of evangelical groups' activities at the COPs a participant makes an initial distinction between the more obvious faith-based activity of prayer compared to other activities. Yet prayer is what guides their advocacy and networking at COP:

> *There are always some prayer times, there's always worship. But there's also stuff that anyone else would be doing. You know, visiting the exhibits, talking to representatives, and that sort of thing so there's parts of it that are distinctly faith-based. And we would like to think that […] we would really believe that prayer makes a difference, and so spending time in prayer in the morning will result in being guided by God and by the Holy Spirit through the day and who we talk to.*
>
> [Interview Care of Creation]

It is not the case that FBOs' advocacy work is always identifiably faith-based and unique because of it, but FBO climate advocacy may have a direct basis in faith (Berry, 2014a; Glaab, 2022). Krantz (2022) even argues that any activities conducted by faith actors can be considered faith-based. FBOs see their ability to emphasise the moral dimensions of climate change as key to their advocacy and previous research has argued that their capacity to engender trust and mobilise communities is something FBOs can draw on in advocacy work (Kearns, 2011; Veldman et al., 2012). But the extent to which their faith-based identity is apparent changes strategically across different contexts in the UN-faith-climate space:

> *And in the multilateral spaces […] our first voice isn't a faith-based organisation. It's based on the professionalism of our work over the decades, and so it is a kind of matter of trust, I think. In some spaces, it gives you moral strength, I suppose, in other spaces it's suspicious.*
>
> [Interview QUNO]

An additional feature which differentiates FBOs' advocacy work and which was a sentiment expressed by FBOs during interviews is that they are not 'interest' groups: "what I see is our kind of additional value to COPs is that we are not representing a special interest" (Interview WCC). According to another participant, "the faith sector […] is seen as not one of the usual suspects talking

about climate change, so they're not conservationists, environmentalists, or even human rights activists. So it's kind of a new voice that brings a new perspective" (Interview Faith for the Climate). What is meant by this is that unlike environmental or human rights NGOs for example, FBOs are not issue-driven in the same way. This is not to say that they are not invested and focused on climate action but that their motivation to do so is perceived to be driven by their faith, rather say than being singularly focused on human rights, the environment, or other issues being multiplied by climate change. Speakers at a recent webinar of the ILC, hosted at the UNFCCC Bonn Climate Change Conference, discussed how FBOs were distinct as their arguments for climate action were not seen as political, but rather came from a moral perspective which may be more palatable to negotiators at the UN (UNFCCC, 2023).

The advocacy activities outlined are generally normative in that they are intended to produce or facilitate a particular result or response. However, one notable activity conducted by QUNO sits somewhat outside this normative remit and yet is also clearly a faith-based activity. At the UNFCCC, QUNO offer a neutral space for state negotiators to talk by employing the Quaker approach of quiet diplomacy. QUNO's wider work focuses on framing climate change as a peace and justice concern and advocating for climate action, yet their quiet diplomacy is necessarily separate:

> *[…]at the triple C, we were clearly not advocating… we were clearly not telling negotiators what they should do. And I think that that was different from most of our NGO colleagues, because we made the decision at the triple C, that the space we could be helpful, was the quiet diplomacy, as opposed to advocating for other issues, because so many other wonderful NGOS were doing that.*
>
> [Interview QUNO]

However, whilst this quiet diplomacy is a space for negotiators to discuss climate processes, QUNO do still aim to "focus a quiet diplomacy discussion in a way that upholds the social justice side and the human impact of […] their decisions, how it connects." Whilst this is not clear advocacy, they are using quiet diplomacy as a space in which to facilitate careful reflection and discussion on the impact of negotiators' decisions.

The next category, networking and representing, includes key activities undertaken by FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space which often support or are necessary conditions of their advocacy work. The emphasis on networking and building relationships amongst civil society actors, NGOs and FBOs has been recognised by others (Hjerpe and Linnér, 2010; Caniglia et al., 2015; Krantz, 2022), and I present it again here to demonstrate its particular importance to FBOs. The UN-faith-climate space, though broad and loosely defined, at times appeared relatively small in terms of the representative voices heard at high levels within the space. It became quickly apparent as I conducted fieldwork in the UN-faith-climate space that it was a small pool of FBOs and individuals who represented the 'faith' voice at the UN. Many of my interviewees knew each other, worked on the same committees or initiatives, and regularly appeared as speakers at UN-faith-climate events, such as preparatory webinars for COP and side events at COP26. Whilst networking is perhaps most salient at in-person

events such as COP26, it is key to FBOs' climate action work in the broader UN-faith-climate-space. For FBOs, networking is particularly important if they seek to be recognised as faith-based given their limited recognition as a distinct group at the UN. Building relationships with other FBOs came across in interviews and observations as a key way to build up the faith voice in UN climate action and allows FBOs to share the limited entry points to engagement with the UN. For example, the World Council of Church's intervention in the COP plenary, whilst it began as their own intervention, has now become the de facto intervention of the 'faiths' in the Blue Zone, with the World Council of Churches engaging with the ILC and other faith groups to develop an interfaith statement to deliver using their platform (Interview WCC/ILC).

However, networking does not only happen with other FBOs. Glaab (2017; 2023) showed how FBOs worked with the umbrella climate NGO Climate Action Now! (CAN) and splinter group Climate Justice Now at the UNFCCC to facilitate their climate advocacy work and to show solidarity with the wider climate movement. Carette and Miall (2017) in their research on religious NGOs in the UN at large, argue that they were more likely to collaborate with other NGOs along "ideological rather than religious aims" where the priority is finding common ground rather than collaborating along faith-based or interfaith lines per se. At COP26, events where FBOs were present or co-organisers in the Blue Zone were often based on collaborations with secular NGOs and many events in the Green, fringe, and activist spaces at COP26 were shared with secular climate and environmental activist groups where collaboration, networking, and activism was driven by shared interest rather than shared identity.

A key part of FBO activities at COPs was organising side events. Previous research on NGOs at the COPs has outlined the important functions that these events fulfil including capacity-building, sharing and reporting on new projects, foregrounding new items which may later be discussed by negotiators, and acting as "linkage mechanisms" to bring participants together to discuss potential projects and climate policy points (Hjerpe and Linnér, 2010, p.178). For FBOs, these side events are also an opportunity to show their presence and work as faith-based groups in a way which is free from the thematic restrictions of the Blue Zone. During COP26, an entire side event in the Green Zone was organised by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) during their first COP. Despite it being only the first year they were accredited with the UNFCCC and able to attend a COP, they were able to capitalise on side events to highlight the work of their own FBO and their member churches in a dedicated event.

FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space emphasise their critical role in educating their own FBO and faith community on climate change. Capacity building entails supporting FBOs and communities to engage with climate processes, for example through advocacy. The somewhat impenetrable nature of formal UNFCCC negotiations, in part due to the technicality of language and the limited access and intervention space offered to NGOs, means that to engage with them requires a level of knowledge and capacity (both in terms of skill and time) which many FBOs do not have. Frequent events in the

run up to COP26 were demonstrative of the ways that FBOs who already have experience working with and within the UN try to build capacity in a wider pool of FBOs. An event run in conjunction with the Lutheran World Federation and the Interfaith Liaison Committee, "Ramp up to COP26", specifically looked at how FBOs could best engage with COP processes and formed part of a series of webinars designed to help FBOs understand and prepare for COP. The interfaith network organisation Faith for the Climate counts capacity building with faith communities in the UK as a key part of their work and were critical in organising the Make COP Count group that supported FBOs to engage with COP26. Education and training are also important FBO activities and came up in interviews as a key part of their responsibility to their own faith community and faith groups in general. FBOs often work to (re)produce climate science-aligned educational material to present to faith communities, and in the run-up to COP26, for example, a coalition of FBOs and faith leaders worked with the IPCC to facilitate the translation of climate science into educational materials and workshops for FBOs and faith communities (Interview QUNO).

Events like COP are critical moments for NGOs to present or pilot new projects to a wide audience (Hjerpe and Linnér, 2010; Schroeder and Lovell, 2012). FBOs likewise take COP and webinars surrounding COP as opportunities to report on climate change projects and present new ideas or thematic avenues for future projects (Krantz, 2021). COP26 provided an opportunity for FBOs to present projects both directly related to climate but also shows how, especially in the case of humanitarian and development FBOs, their existing projects or programmes of work were affected by climate change. A side event at COP26, co-organised by Islamic Relief and the Church of Sweden, specifically focussed on the intersection of gender and climate change which both acted as a reporting of Islamic Relief's projects and as an opportunity to emphasise the need for FBOs and faith leaders to take gender into account in their projects and advocacy.

Research is a more limited part of FBO activities but supports them in developing new projects and highlighting the work that their communities or member organisation are conducting. Bhumi Global, for example, conducted a piece of research looking at Hindu perspectives on the environment and climate change to help develop their thematic approach to climate action, whilst the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative in the run up to COP26 looked at the ways FBOs were planning to engage before, during and after COP in order to facilitate mutual support between FBOs with more and less experience of UN climate processes.

In the overview of FBO activities above, I have focused only on those activities which take place within the UN-faith-climate space. It is not intended as an exhaustive overview of all FBO activities related to climate change or environmental sustainability. It is thus important to note that many FBOs undertake conservation or environmental practice and humanitarian work as core parts of their climate action and, further, that in many cases they may see these activities as not only motivated by religious belief or reaching but as forms of religious or spiritual practice. Many rich studies demonstrate how environmental activities, conservation and humanitarian action are embedded into, or emerge from the

religious practice of individuals, communities, and FBOs (see, for example, Palmer and Finlay, 2003; Adu-Gyamfi, 2011; Dove et al., 2011; Majeri Mangunjaya and Elizabeth McKay, 2012; Mukul et al., 2012; Mcleod and Palmer, 2015; Schnable 2016; Conde et al., 2017; Lowman and Sinu 2017; Awuah-Nyamekye, 2019; Lemche and Miller, 2019; Wilkinson et al., 2022, amongst many others). Likewise, proponents of spiritual ecology argue for stronger recognition of, or return to, the spiritual nature of conservation practices (Sponsel, 2012; Sponsel, 2014; Mickey, 2020; Coggins and Chen, 2022).

In excluding conservation from the breakdown of activities, I do not mean to suggest that these activities are *not* undertaken by FBOs, nor that they are not critical to many FBOs' climate work. Rather, I mean that these activities do not physically take place within the UN-faith-climate space and only become apparent in this space through an FBOs' *reporting* on said activities. For example, during interfaith webinars and at events at COP26, FBOs presented, discussed, or proposed environmental, conservation or humanitarian activities. Many of these were presented as integral to their religious practice and identity as organisations. For example, at COP26, the Muslim development organisations Global One and Islamic Relief both reported on the importance of Islamic Farming as a part of their environmental and humanitarian work, whilst the Christian conservation organisation, A Rocha Ghana, had an exhibit in the Green Zone explaining the religious and spiritual nature of their conservation practices. The point here, is that the main activity related to conservation undertaken in the UN-faith-climate space was one of *reporting* on conservation, environmental and humanitarian activities. Bracketing off activities which take place outside this space is important for this thesis, as my focus is on the work and experiences of FBOs, and FBO representatives in the UN-faith-climate space, rather than work of each FBO as a whole. It is likewise important to note that this bracketing is not intended to be normative, in the sense of implying that conservation practice, for example, is disconnected from an FBOs work in the UN space or is not a legitimate form of religious practice. It is intended to represent the analysis and resultant specific activities cited by FBOs, and observed by me, in the UN-faith-climate space.

Of all the roles and activiti24/07/2024 09:01:00es taken on by FBOs, the ones which came up mostly consistently and which FBOs saw most as where their distinctive value lay were in their ability to frame climate change in moral, ethical, and spiritual or religious terms, and in their ability to mediate between local faith communities and international climate policy. These two themes form the basis of Chapter 5 and 6, respectively, where I discuss in greater detail both what they look like in the UN-faith-climate space and argue that FBOs may be particularly well-suited to them.

Challenges faced by FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space

It almost goes without saying that engaging with and within the UN-faith-climate space is not without its challenges. Here, I outline the key challenges faced by FBOs. As with the roles that FBOs play, there are some challenges which are faced by NGOs and civil society groups in general, and some

challenges which are more specific to FBOs. Looking to the existing literature on the role of FBOs at the UN, sustainable development, and climate action, challenges to FBOs are often cited along the lines of historic non-recognition of religion or reluctance to engage with FBOs, instrumentalism, lack of influence, and internal tensions around language (Glaab, 2017; Tomalin and Haustein, 2019; Khalaf-Elledge, 2020).

It seems that FBOs working on climate change or environmental sustainability may be less likely to face the suspicion by the UN that is faced by FBOs working on humanitarian and development initiatives, given the longstanding and at times romanticised connection made between religions and the environment. Yet there was a feeling amongst participants that, whilst FBOs in the climate space may not be perceived by the UN, negotiators, and secular NGOs as "tricky" or contentious in the way that Khalaf-Elledge (2020) found amongst secular development practitioners, they remained a quirk of the NGO space with limited dedicated space or recognition. There was a perceived ambivalence to the presence of and engagement with FBOs:

> *In some spaces, it gives you moral strength, I suppose, in other spaces it's suspicious.*
>
> [Interview QUNO]
>
> *But they* [the negotiators] *always find it helpful that such people* [FBOs] *exist, they always find it… I think, humbling, the way we do our work. But, in a sense, they also find it not fully relevant* [laughs]*, to the to the issue at hand. And they can be quite bothered when they are busy, and you know they don't want to hear.*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]

A connected worry in research on religions and sustainable development is that where FBOs are not perceived as suspicious, they will instead be instrumentalised, and that the UN and other NGOs will co-opt their social and economic resources, access to communities, and religious-spiritual narratives for their own development aims (Tomalin and Haustein, 2019). This is not only a practical but also a conceptual challenge; studies of FBOs' role in environmental sustainability and development have been criticised for their overly romantic or instrumental approach to religion (Jones and Petersen, 2011; Mavelli and Petito, 2012). However, instrumentalism was not a concern raised by participants in the UN-faith-climate space where, despite the aforementioned ambivalence to engagement, they felt that secular NGOs and UN representatives or agencies were more ready to fully engage with FBOs than in other thematic areas at the UN, which I discuss more in Chapter 7.

FBOs also face challenges of representation, both in terms of being recognised as faith-based or religious and also in terms of which religions and regions are represented amongst FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space. In the fringe zone at COP26, speakers at an SGI-UK and Faith for the Climate-led event, which included representatives from Global South FBOs, argued that "we need a Global South COP" to rectify the consistent underrepresentation of FBOs from areas most affected by climate change. Despite organisations like the Geneva-headquartered World Council of Churches having attended and spoken at every COP, COP26 was the first time that the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) was registered and able to attend. Despite this, many minority-world-

headquartered FBOs use their global networks to try and facilitate more engagement with unrepresented regions and work to mediate and translate between the interested of local faith communities and global climate policies[52]. As mentioned earlier, representation of FBOs or 'the faiths' in general may also prove paradoxical. Despite some FBOs arguing for official recognition, there are others who worry that it would reify religious-secular boundaries, categorise FBOs as always first and foremost faith-based, and necessitate a representative faith voice which may come from the already dominant FBOs. This paradox of representation speaks to the tensions on religious-secular and postsecular dynamics which will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The desire for representation of religions and FBO introduces another challenge expressed by FBOs: the language used to describe and respond to climate change. FBOs highlighted difficulties in deciding on the phrasing of interfaith statements and interventions at the COPs given the need to express sentiments which were faith-based enough to highlight FBOs' distinct voice, and not to fall into platitudes which could be mistaken for the words of secular NGOs but not so tradition-specific as to cause intra- or inter-faith tensions. Language was also recognised by the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative as "definitely one of the major challenges that we have been facing in our work".

Another challenge which is more internal to FBOs is how to maintain a level of organisation and strategy that is able to play the UN climate action game without compromising on their values and identity as FBOs. The organisational challenge appears in different ways. Some FBOs are small or run largely by volunteers, which necessarily limits the breadth or depth of their activities in the UN-faith-climate space. Likewise, working on UN-FBO initiatives such as the Interfaith Liaison Committee or the Multi-faith Advisory Council is voluntary, meaning that FBOs with large staff or dedicated UN offices are able to dedicate more resources to engagement with the UN on climate action. Organisations such as the Hindu environmental FBO Bhumi Global and the Muslim development organisation Global One are each largely run by one, or a handful, of people, whilst the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative is run by volunteers. These represent a stark contrast to highly resourced organisations with large staff like the World Council of Churches, the Quaker United Nations Office, the Lutheran World Federation, or the Bahá'í International Community, who have staff members dedicated to and specialised in engaging with the UN on climate action. This is not to say that FBOs with a larger staff or more resources do not also face challenges as FBOs, or that they are as a result more effective, but rather that their large organisational structures are more UN-engagement-ready than those of small or volunteer-run FBOs who may have to be more selective about their avenues for engagement on climate action.

Beyond the resources and staff of an FBO, the ways different FBOs from different faith traditions are structured shapes and challenges engagement with the UN, where Christian FBOs were perceived as being structured in a way which better facilitated work with the UN:

[52] Global-local mediation forms the thematic basis of Chapter 6.

Christian organisations are very well organised, because Christianity works hierarchically. Muslims don't work like that. Jews don't work like that. Hindus don't work like that. So you have a small Hindu organisation that will be very active around one topic or the other. But it's not like, you know, the infrastructure of the Vatican, or the infrastructure of the Franciscans, or the Dominicans, or the World Council of Churches.

[Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]

The problem is that most faith-based at COPs are Christian, because […] we are also structured like the UN structures. I mean, the whole Western structure is like the Christian structure. You know who is on the top and you know who is on the bottom. So you know when you have this hierarchy that you sort of address… 'Oh we have this Bishop there, and we have this Archbishop there, and we have this Pope up there, and then we have this Executive General Secretary, we have this President there, we have this Prime Minister there' […] So it's easy to find the Christians. But who are the Muslim representatives? Who are the Jewish? Even who are representative for Hindus?

[Interview WCC/ILC]

In addition, FBOs face the same challenges as other NGOs and non-state actors working on climate action at the UN. Namely, how to influence states and decision makers, how to get consensus on climate advocacy issues, how to change minds about climate change and environmental sustainability, and how to make climate action happen (Böhmelt and Betzold, 2013; Glaab et al., 2018; Sénit, 2020; Bäckstrand et al., 2021; Böhler et al., 2022; Sadouni, 2022). Some have found that non-state actors' ability to influence decision makers is limited (Sénit, 2020) whilst others have suggested that NGOs have the potential for influence, provided that they are sufficient in number without becoming too heterogenous and as such diffusing their advocacy points (Böhmelt and Betzold, 2013). There are more general tensions and challenges around what the perceived role of civil society can and should be in international and UN climate change politics (Nasiritousi, 2016; Nasiritousi et al., 2016; Bäckstrand et al., 2021): are they in practice able to offer sufficient challenges to the status quo and push for changes to the climate policy status quo, or are they simply decoration in a climate policy regime in which they hold no real power? These questions and challenges are perhaps even more salient for FBOs where they are working not only to achieve some of the same collective goals of civil society but are often working to achieve recognition of their faith-based identity. Tangible and causal influence or effectiveness of advocacy are notoriously difficult to measure; whilst I do not purport to do so here, in Chapter 5 I discuss the extent to which FBOs feel their framings may have uptake.

Despite the challenges faced by FBOs, most of these challenges were framed in a wider lens of progress, over the last 10-15 years, towards more FBO recognition in general, to more strategic organisation of faith-based climate action, and towards greater action on (or at least recognition of the need thereof) on climate change and the environment. The following excerpts demonstrate these dimension of progress:

So what I've noticed […] when I started engaging with the UN about six years ago, or more than six I can't remember anyway. What I noticed was the lack of respect. That was what I initially encountered, I felt that there was a lack of respect. "Oh, you're an NGO, oh you're a faith-based NGO, okay, not interested", this sort of attitude. The lack of

*engagement, the feeling that, you know, we weren't important at all. So I think there's been a **huge** shift within the UN itself.*

[Interview Global One]

I think it has been a development at least. Because ten years ago, I think it [faith-based climate action at the UN] *was a little bit, not that organised, it has* [become] *more organized*.

[Interview Church of Norway]

We're trying to work with many other partners, ecumenical and interfaith, and now our work, it looks more consistent at the UN level, than 5/10 years ago.

[Interview LWF]

People are talking about climate change now in a way that 10 years ago I wouldn't have imagined. So you know, things are… they're not moving fast enough but they're moving ... they're not moving fast enough in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. They are moving faster in terms of engaging and grasping the imagination of people of what's happening and what they can do that. That is phenomenal, I think.

[Interview QUNO]

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has taken a broad approach to address the question: What roles do FBOs play in climate action at the UN? By first outlining the UN-faith-climate space as a complex and broad network of FBOs, NGOs, UN agencies, and individuals, I have shown the key engagement points for FBOs engagement (with)in the UN on climate change and complicated the idea that the engagement with the UN on climate action is clearly demarcated. Key tension points within the space include leadership of (UN-)FBO initiatives, representation and recognition of and by FBOs, and the fuzzy distinction between formal and informal engagement all of which are punctuated with overarching debates on the (post)secular nature of the UN, its agencies, and global civil society. Addressing the quantitative presence of FBOs at UN events and agencies took us some way in understanding the demographics of FBOs and the majority Christian/Global North presence, yet it also showed some of the creative ways that FBOs work within the constraints of formal accreditation to bring FBOs from unrepresented regions to the COPs. Ultimately, I argued that quantitative measures were limited in their ability to provide a more substantive understanding of FBOs' presence and roles.

The final section outlined the broad range of roles and activities that FBOs take on whilst also demonstrating their reasons for engagement with the UN and the challenges they come up against, both as members of civil society and also as FBOs specifically. To demonstrate their largely advocational role, I began to discuss the extent to which their roles may be considered distinctive or different to their secular counterparts both in their advocacy work and also in the areas of networking, representation, and education and training. FBOs face many of the same challenges as other civil society groups who struggle with issues of influence and participation in global climate action decision-making. Yet we also saw that FBOs face particular challenges in terms the salience of their faith-based identity, language, and representation. Despite this, broader framings of progress permeate

FBOs' understanding of their roles and positions in the UN-faith-climate space. In closing, I leave open critical questions to be addressed in forthcoming chapters: How do FBOs frame climate change and to what extent can we consider them to be distinctively faith-based?; how do FBOs navigate between global and local spheres of climate action?; how do religious-secular dynamics affect FBOs' climate action and is the postsecular a useful framing?

Chapter 5 - Faith-based organisations framing climate change

The key is hearts and minds, absolutely. It's that moral imperative. It's that, you know, moral compass that you know the faiths come from.

[Interview Global One]

We don't think that climate change is the greatest challenge to humanity; we think how we live sustainably and justly on the earth is, and that climate change is a symptom.

[Interview QUNO]

5.1 Introduction

A key feature of FBOs' climate action and advocacy work is their ability to frame climate change in ways which draw on and align with their faith but which also aim to motivate climate action amongst faith communities, other FBOs, and negotiators at the UN. This chapter addresses the second research question: How do FBOs frame climate change, and is it distinctively faith-based? Given the emphasis placed upon framing as part of FBOs' role in climate action, both by FBOs themselves and by previous research (Rollosson, 2010; Kearns, 2011; Glaab and Fuchs, 2018), and given the "multifarious" nature of climate change (Hulme, 2022, p.xxix), it is important to address how FBOs engage with the idea of climate change, to what extent their frames may be distinctively faith-based, and how particular variables including religious affiliation and type of organisation[53] may affect these frames or prompt tensions in interfaith and faith-secular contexts. I begin by outlining how frame analysis, an approach from social movement studies, is a useful way to analyse how FBOs engage with the idea of climate change, in particular the distinction between diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. I then address the key themes and tensions which emerged in climate frames by drawing on data from interviews, website analysis, and participant observation. The penultimate section addresses to what extent we can consider these frames to be distinctive or unique in virtue of being faith-based, before closing with some reflections on whether these frames may have uptake, i.e. fulfil their advocational function, in the context of the UN-faith-climate space. I demonstrate that FBOs frame climate change in ways which emphasise its holistic and multidimensional character and blend prognostic, diagnostic, and motivational framings, but that there are intra- and inter-faith tensions which occur in framing processes. Ultimately, I argue that, notwithstanding difficulties assessing the practical uptake of frames, FBOs frame climate change in distinctively faith-based ways by using moral, spiritual and religious, but not always confessional approaches.

5.2 Framing climate change

[53] By "type of organisation" I mean distinctions such as humanitarian and development-focused FBOs; environmental or climate-focused FBOs; religious policy, networking or cooperation-focused FBOs. See Chapter 3 for an outline of the types of FBOs included.

In Chapter 2, I laid out how climate change is considered to be much more than an environmental problem. It has clear humanitarian, development, political, social, cultural, economic, and intergenerational dimensions, all of which can inform and affect its causes, effects, and responses. Social theorists Antonio and Clark (2015, p.185) have even suggested that "[a]ll its facets are socially mediated; even its status as a public "problem" is socially constructed in multiple ways and contested by different groups".

Analysing how climate change is engaged with by FBOs can be supported by drawing on the idea of framing, a core concept within social movement studies which has been used to analyse climate activism and advocacy. Framing is used by social movement scholars to identify processes of meaning construction (Benford and Snow, 2000, p.614). In this way, it is both an analytical concept, as well as the "*conscious* strategic effort" of groups to develop and present a particular understanding of an issue in ways which resonate with advocacy targets and motivate action (Conca 2022, p.262, my emphasis). FBOs see framing as a key part of their climate advocacy work in the UN-faith-climate space, as highlighted in the previous chapter: "The key is hearts and minds, absolutely. It's that moral imperative. It's that, you know, moral compass that, you know, the faiths come from." (Interview Global One). It is also something which I observed FBOs doing in practice at COP26; in one case, for example, starting an event by saying "this is a spiritual emergency as much as it is a climate emergency" (Faith in Action Panel, COP26, 5/11/21). The emphasis placed on FBOs' ability to frame climate change in religious, spiritual, or moral terms, combined with the variation with which FBOs frame climate change prompted, further analysis of FBO websites to include a broader range of FBOs in terms of affiliation, region, and type of organisation[54].

In order to understand the structures and functions of frames, I turned to frame analysis which entails analysing both framing processes and frames[55]. Frame analysis has been used in studies of the way climate change is communicated[56], in studies of the climate movement, and has also, albeit more rarely, been used in studies of FBOs (Hannigan, 1991; Beyer, 1992; Kearns, 2011; Kearns, 2011; Reder, 2011; Schnable, 2016; Conca, 2022). It has been applied to FBOs in the context of grassroots development and humanitarian work, where religion is suggested to offer important frames or "ways of organising and rendering meaningful the problems" of leaders and practitioners, for example, by framing development work through ideas of charity or calling (Schnable, 2016, p.21). It has also been applied more specifically in the context of religion and environmental or climate activism. Though he

[54] See Chapter 3 where I discuss the website sampling and analysis methodology.

[55] 'Frames', 'framing(s)' and 'frameworks' are often used interchangeably in the literature. Where possible, I refer to the *process* of developing and employing frames as 'framing' and the *outcome* as the 'frame'. For example, FBOs may engage in framing processes to develop a collective faith-based understanding of climate change. The result of this framing process would then be a particular frame, for example, climate justice.

[56] Hulme (2009, p.226-229), for example, highlights the importance of the "idea of 'frames' and 'framing'" in shaping ideas about what climate change is, its scope, and the importance attributed to it.

did not call it frame analysis, Beyer (1992, p.13) highlighted the potential resources that religious narratives and frames could offer those in the environmental movement to "conceptualise […] problems and mobilize to deal with them". Kearns (2011, p.415) has likewise argued for the potential of religions to take the "scientific consensus on climate change […] and ground […] it in the moral and ethical imperative of their faith traditions". Making the link between framing and religious groups in climate politics explicit, Conca (2022) suggests that religions may offer useful and "innovative" frames to motivate action on climate change, in particular, through the ideas of an "injured earth" and "vulnerability".

Frames are used to ascribe meaning to the issues of a given social movement in a way which aligns with their aims (Snow et al., 2013, p.470). Caniglia et al. (2015, p.237, original emphasis) suggest that the "most basic way that movements change the social landscape is through *framing* grievances in ways that resonate with members of civil society" and in this way they change the "hearts and minds of society". Framing processes can also help groups negotiate their collective understanding of an issue and the responses, actions, or changes required. In the context of advocacy, frames have been identified as important tools; the development of *collective* frames in particular has been shown to be important for advocacy success (Junk and Rasmussen, 2019, p.484).

Frames can be diagnostic, i.e. by defining and identifying the problem including cause or blame attribution; prognostic, i.e. suggesting a solution or response to the problem; and motivational, i.e. encouraging or providing reasons for action or even highlighting "the moral priority of doing so" (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow, 2013, p.472; della Porta and Parks, 2014, p.21; Conca, 2022). Of course these are not mutually exclusive; frames can include diagnostic, prognostic and motivational features. The climate justice frame is an example which della Porta and Parks (2014) consider to be demonstrative of the way diagnostic and prognostic dimensions can be blurred. Rather than just describing the scientific reality of climate change, they suggest that a climate justice is at once diagnostic and prognostic where the problem (unjust global systems) is blended with the response (ending unjust global systems) (ibid, pp.24-4). The processes of developing collective ways of framing and reinforcing those frames have been described as frame alignment and frame (or value) amplification, both of which are important tasks for FBOs seeking representation in the UN-faith-climate space (Snow et al., 1986; Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow, 2013).

Frame analysis as an approach is not without its critics and limitations. I address these critiques here and explain how I aim to avoid the associated pitfalls. Though it has taken on widespread significance in studies of social movements, and to an extent become characteristic of the field, it has been criticised for taking too vague or imprecise approach, for overlooking discursive micro-details, ideological motivations, and cognitive or social processes, as well as for essentially being the same as other analytical approaches, e.g. discourse analysis, but by another name. (Steinberg, 1998; Björnehed and Erikson, 2018; van Dijk, 2023). Van Dijk (2023) argues that frame analysis, and the use of 'frames' in studies of social movements is essentially no different to that of discourse analysis. He

goes on to suggest that those employing frame analysis would reap richer and more precise conceptual results were they to instead focus on discourse and deepen their analysis to the value- and cognitive-based elements of frames. As evidence of this limitation, he argues that what tend to be identified as single frames may be employed using different discourse or language in different contexts (ibid, p.165).

To address these limitations, I have attempted, in this chapter to breakdown frames by their specific function and to be precise in my analysis of each function and aim to, using participant reflections on the processes of frame development, alignment and tensions to elucidate the underlying motivations and beliefs behind the frames. In doing so I do in fact address the social and, to an extent, cognitive (in the sense of value- or belief-driven) bases of these frames. My responses to Van Dijk's concern that frame analysis is either just the same as discourse analysis but weaker, or that frame analysis risks grouping together different discourses under one frame, is twofold. First, frame analysis has already been employed in the climate movement to analyse how climate change is framed and, as such, is an important tool to demonstrate, and compare, how FBOs contribute to this field. Frame analysis, unlike discourse analysis, which focuses more on the "relationship among communicational practices and the (re)production of systems of meaning (von Stuckrad, 2013, p.15), introduces the important dimension of the process of developing collective frames and their function. Second, the critique that the same frame may be reproduced using different discourses is not really a limitation, but rather a point of critical interest. Without highlighting the connecting frame, different discourses may not be understood as being intended to function in the same way. In this chapter, I provide examples (for example, of non-confessional yet still, motivationally, faith-based frames) where participants intend to employ the same frame but may use different religious or non-religious discourse to do so.

In a similar vein, Bjornhead and Erikson (2018, p.111), though less critical of frame analysis in general, argue for greater recognition of institutional and temporal dimensions. This chapter does not have the scope for a study of the long-term development of, and changes in, FBOs' frames, nor does it incorporate a boarder analysis of the process of FBOs' development of climate frames and their institutionalisation within organisations[57]. However, a key part of my analysis in this chapter has been to highlight areas where tensions occur between different FBOs and individual FBO representatives, and to demonstrate, where it became apparent in the research data, the *process* of developing collective frames in the UN-faith-climate space, where possible, over time. This process often involves a certain recognition of institutionalisation, for example, the frames presented in website extracts may differ from the frames discussed with me by my participants, and the frames employed in formal UN spaces may differ from those in informal interfaith spaces.

Another critique stems from a historical overlooking of religion in social movement studies, as such this critique is largely to do with the field as a whole, rather than the specific method of frame

[57] See Chapter 1 – Limitations, where I discuss the potential pitfall of homogenising organisational viewpoints through participant interviews.

analysis. Yet, if the method has be developed without consideration of religion in mind could it be the case that it is in some way inappropriate for analysing my participants' and FBOs' frames? (Hannigan, 1991; Hancock, 2023). Hancock (2023) carefully address the way religion has been constructed by social movement scholars and argues that, whilst frame analysis in and of itself is not problematic for religions – indeed, religious groups may employ many of the same techniques and frames as other social movements – care should be paid to not reify the boundaries of what constitutes religion and enforcing a religious/secular boundary. Having already outlined my relatively broad and constructive approach to FBOs and religion in Chapter 3, my application frame analysis here does not imply a reified or narrow understanding of religion, nor am I using it to argue that religions, in general, are social movements by virtue of employing an approach from social movement studies. Other researchers have already pointed to key ways that religions(s) and FBOs offer important frames (Schnable, 2016; Conca, 2022) and frame analysis itself remains useful to identify processes regardless the limitations of the field. In this chapter, I intend to demonstrate the areas where functions of frames are blurred, and where those frame which may not appear 'religious' have underlying religious motivation; far from reifying the category of religion or a religious/secular divide, I instead highlight the blurring of these categories.

5.3 Themes and tensions in frames

In this section, I outline the key themes in FBOs' climate frames from interviews, website analysis, and observations, and point to areas where tensions emerge between the frames of different FBOs. I cover diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational elements of frames with the latter primarily demonstrated through specifically faith-based frames which I divide into confessional and non-confessional. The differences and tensions between frames are often along inter- or intra-faith lines, but we can also see differences emerging by the type of FBO (e.g. humanitarian vs. environmental). These tensions caution us against overstating the singularity of a faith-based voice in the context of the UN-faith climate space, and against emphasising faith as the main determiner of a given organisation's framing of climate change. Yet these tensions and the resolution thereof, or what Snow (2013) calls frame alignment, are demonstrative of the ways that FBOs seek to carve out distinctive faith-based frames in secular climate action spaces.

Climate change, environmentalism, and urgency

Given the "multifarious" nature of climate change and frames thereof, it is important to understand how FBOs structure it as an issue, whether that be as the headline problem, as one of many issues related to environmental sustainability, as a symptom of other systemic problems, or as a crosscutting theme which affects their existing areas of work. In UN messaging on climate change, for example, the UNEP treats it as one of three environmental issues in their triple planetary crisis framework. Here the three concerns of biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change are put forward as the key environmental issues, but climate change is not the overarching one. The UNFCCC, in contrast, tends

to take a broader framing under which environmental issues are considered constitutive of climate change. Linked to its structure as an issue is the severity attributed to it, which in frames becomes apparent though the language of (climate) crisis or emergency. These have taken on increasing prevalence and in many cases replaced climate change as the headline or diagnostic frame (Feldman and Hart, 2021; McHugh et al., 2021).

Climate change was framed by some FBOs as one of many issues related to environmental sustainability, or as a subset of what they thought of as the broader issue of the environment. Speaking about the need to address the *environmental* crisis, a participant suggested that:

> *[I]f we can solve that then, you know, gender is resolved, food is resolved, poverty is resolved, like it's... It's kind of like the silver bullet. If we know how to treat the Earth, then we're going to know how to treat everyone on the Earth. You know?*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

For Bhumi Global, a Hindu environmental FBO, the environment is the headline issue and they follow the UNEP triple crisis approach of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity (Bhumi Global, 2021). Another participant makes a similar argument, that the environment is "broader than climate change" and suggests that their decision to focus on climate change was informed by its more specific focus on "impacts to the most vulnerable people" (Interview LWF). Here the decision to focus on the 'narrower' issue of climate change is informed by their development and humanitarian work, yet the idea that climate change is a narrower issue remains.

A different approach to removing the headline focus on climate change was to adopt the symptom frame, where climate change is not a definable problem in and of itself but a symptom of other global failings. One participant said that they "don't think that climate change is the greatest challenge to humanity, we think how we live sustainably and justly on the earth is, and that climate change is a symptom" (Interview QUNO). A similar frame is likewise used in the website framing of the Bahá'í International Community, who say it is "of the most pronounced symptoms of our ailing global order". Others framed climate change as an umbrella or connecting issue:

> *I think this is the interesting exercise with climate change. Because it brings everybody to the table, it brings economy, brings business, it brings, youth, it brings women, it brings the vulnerable people, brings* [the] *topic of migration, brings the topic of biodiversity, brings the topic, you know, everything has to come to the table when you're dealing with climate change.*
>
> [Interview Braham Kumaris/ILC]

Here it seems that is it not just the case that climate change is defined as a problem with wide ranging effects for different groups, but that climate change itself is inherently a holistic or overarching issue and one to which "everything *has* to come to the table" in responding to it.

Climate change has become the phrase of choice for some FBOs simply because they see it as a factually or scientifically correct description. One participant described how what we can consider to be the 'diagnostic' framing has changed over his 20-year engagement with the evangelical

environmental movement: “early on we wrestled about: should it be global warming, should be climate change? I think we settled pretty much on climate change, almost by consensus, because it’s an accurate descriptor” (Interview Care of Creation). The key motivator in this case is to use the most accurate description to speak about climate change, rather than rethink its structure as an issue altogether. We can also see this in FBO website extracts that refer to external bodies, such as the UNFCCC or the IPCCC, (12/50 FBOs) or who make reference to climate science (9/50 FBOs), to support their framing of climate change (Salter and Wilkinson 2023, pp.6-7). By referring to bodies like the UN, or aligning with the language of climate science, FBOs are adding legitimacy and “empirical credibility” to their frames (Benford and Snow, 2000, p.620).

Closely connected to how climate change as an issue is structured is the severity or urgency attributed to it. The last decade has seen an astronomical increase in the presence of crisis and emergency language in framings of climate change (Feldman and Hart, 2021; McHugh et al., 2021). Whilst climate justice may be seen as a blurring of diagnosis and prognosis (della Porta and Parks, 2014), it seems the language of climate crisis/emergency could be seen as a blurring of the diagnostic and motivational dimensions of framing in that it describes the nature and severity of the problem and motivates an urgent response, without being immediately clear on what the ‘prognosis’ ought to be. Concerns have been raised about the prevalence of emergency language to the effect that it motivates an urgent response without being clear about what that response ought to look like, for example, by overlooking the need to address multiple injustices in service of achieving net-zero (Hulme, 2019; McHugh et al., 2021).

For FBOs, crisis and emergency frames can be useful framing or campaigning tools – “climate emergency is the best, direct, simple language to communicate” (Interview Tzu Chi) – and in other cases are treated as simply descriptive statements reflective of the severity and reality of climate change – “[a]nd I think it’s coming to where science says we are today, we are in an emergency situation” (Interview WCC). In other cases, FBOs felt galvanised to line up with the language of and show solidarity with the broader climate movement: “then Extinction Rebellion came along, and it reminded us that we need to tell the truth about the situation. So we’ve gone back now just talking about it… as a radical, the climate crisis, climate emergency” (Interview Operation Noah).

The language of emergency, crisis, and other modes of attributing severity to climate change were key features of the website frames. Thirty-five out of 50 FBOs embedded this into their framing by referring to: risk/danger (17), crisis (14), destruction (12), and emergency (9) (Salter and Wilkinson, 2023, p.4). The Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA, 2020), for example, states that “the environmental crisis [...] pose[s] a huge threat to the survival of the entire continent of Africa”, whilst the Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers (n.d.) speaks of the “unprecedented destruction of our Mother Earth”.

The various frames of emergency and crisis did not seem to have an obvious basis in the faith tradition of a given FBO and tended to be expressed as descriptive statements, as campaigning tools,

or as lining up their frames with the wider climate movement. I found just one example of faith intersecting with an emergency/crisis frame: at the beginning of an event in the Green Zone, when a speaker from Islamic Relief stated that "this is a spiritual emergency as well as a climate emergency". Yet this statement acts more to highlight the critical effects and demands that climate change and climate action places on people of faith and spirituality, rather than as a descriptor of climate change itself. In an earlier interview with Islamic Relief the same participant had stated that "my faith will be threatened due to climate change", referring to the increasing temperature limiting her ability to complete the Hajj.

Despite divergences on whether climate change is a single environmental issue, a symptom of other problems, or the "mother of all issues" (Hulme, 2010, p.171), FBOs come together on framing climate change in generally holistic and multidimensional terms, and on the need to connect it to existing concerns in a way which resonates with communities: "what we found is if we approach it as a separate issue, it doesn't work. Because, as I said, you know, people think of it as something not relatable" (Interview Global One). The decision of whether to call it an emergency or crisis prompted some tensions, but in interfaith contexts one participant explained that "I call it the climate crisis. I call it the climate emergency, but we've learned not to be precious about these terms" (Interview Faith for the Climate), implying a flexibility in frames to facilitate broader engagement, a feature which I found to be characteristic of interfaith cooperation.

Justice

The justice frame, though by no means new, has become an important mode of describing and responding to climate change (della Porta and Parks, 2014; Schlosberg and Collins, 2014; Gach, 2019; Caney, 2020). As discussed in Chapter 2, justice has long been used in the environmental movement as a way to point to the unequal effects of environmental destruction and call for an end to the unjust systems which cause such problems. The more specific focus on *climate* justice has emerged since the late 1990s and is often used in conjunction with other permutations of the justice frame, including environmental, ecological, and inter-generational justice (Schlosberg and Collins, 2014; Jafry et al., 2019; Tokar, 2019). It has likewise been a key focus of previous research into the ways FBOs contribute to the UNFCCC, where FBOs have been "constitutive" of climate justice discourses (Glaab, 2017, p.1115). Justice was a term for framing climate change which came up during 10 out of 13 interviews, to varying degrees of positivity or ambivalence, and was referred to by 18 out of 50 FBO websites. It was likewise a key frame for several faith-based events at COP26; SGI-UK[58], for example, organised a series of interfaith events in the fringe zone on the theme of climate justice.

FBO websites were reflective of the different types of justice used to frame climate change. Just 10 specifically used the term *climate* justice, with other uses of justice including eco-justice, socio-

[58] The UK branch of Soka-Gakkai International focuses on "socially engaged Buddhism" organised an exhibition as well as a series of interfaith panels in the Fringe area of COP26 (SGI-UK, n.d.)

environmental justice, ecological justice, and intergenerational justice (Salter and Wilkinson, 2023, p.4). Omitted entirely was use of the phrase *environmental* justice which may be attributed to the general discursive shift towards climate justice over the last decade (Schlosberg and Collins, 2014; Gach, 2019). FBOs used the justice frame on their websites to point to the extent of the unequal effects of climate change and as such to describe a problem, but also to suggest a mode of responding (Salter and Wilkinson, 2023, pp.4–5). The Bahu Trust (n.d.), for example, emphasises the need to "tackle climate injustices", thus making (in)justice the core problem to be addressed.

During interviews, FBOs were able to give reflections on their use and understanding of justice as a frame. For some, justice was clearly linked to and grounded in their faith, whilst others aligned their use of the justice frame with its application in the broader climate movement. A participant from the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) emphasised that they "approach climate change as a peace and justice concern and coming from the Quaker testimonies. Our approach is very grounded in Quaker testimonies" and that "the greatest challenge is not climate change, the greatest challenge is how we live sustainably and justly on earth. And that is a real call amongst Quakers". Here justice, and the need to address unjust ways of living, take precedence as the issues to be addressed, rather than treating the "symptom" that is climate change (Interview QUNO). Justice is presented as being directly motivated by Quaker testimonies and, though aligning with calls for climate justice in the climate movement, for this participant it is an intrinsically faith-based frame.

FBOs that take (climate) justice as their headline frame also recognised the different dimensions of justice and the directions which justice could take. A participant from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), who use "climate justice" as the headline for their programme of climate change work, explained that "climate justice is a multi-dimensional concept, so it's related also to gender justice, to economic justice to intergenerational justice, you know? So, this is the way we are framing our climate justice" (Interview LWF). Considerations of (in)justice are seen as inseparable from accounts of climate change, and justice itself is seen as the key to foregrounding the globally unequal effects. This account of the justice framing was informed by LWF's social and economic development work and my participant's personal experience of this work in Latin America, where the unjust effects of climate change are unavoidably salient and will have direct impacts on their existing programmes of work. The justice framing is important "because poor people or vulnerable people are affected in a… in such a way that they can't deal with this impact".

However, justice was also seen as just one way, among many, of framing climate change. One participant saw it as a more limited framing and that was just one piece of the wider climate change puzzle:

> *It's not only climate justice work, but I think it has been also enlarged, because we meet each other, we get impulses from our contacts, and this is also about indigenous peoples, knowledge, wisdom, it's also about forests and oceans. Not only climate justice per se.*
>
> [Interview Church of Norway]

Others use justice in a very practical sense to address what a transition to a sustainable future can and should look like:

> *The word I would use is just transition, as to what will happen post-this you know… we're specifically speaking on issues around how we're going to change things and, for us as an, as an organisation and as people […] as much as we want a zero-carbon economy and as much as we talk about the words environmentalism, climate change, all those - which are… which do interplay within the kind of the different various things - I think one thing that is, which is, for me, which is so profound is the matter of social justice*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief Worldwide]

Aside from a passing mention of the "Islamic teachings on justice and stewardship", justice here was presented in a similarly practice-driven way to other humanitarian and development focused FBOs. The key concern was taking justice into consideration for the communities that Islamic Relief work with and support and as a lens through which to filter any response to climate change, in this case for example a *just* transition to a sustainable future.

FBOs employ the justice frame as it captures many dimensions of climate change and, aligning with the argument made by della Porta and Parks (2014), it is at once a diagnosis of the problems and root causes of climate change and its unequal effects, and also necessitates a prognosis, i.e. ending unjust systems and ways of living. It is often, though not always, tied up with specifically faith-based ways of framing climate change where using the justice frame (or choosing *not* to use it) is explained with theological or spiritual justifications. This leads us to the areas where we see tensions in the use of the justice frame.

Previous research has suggested that justice as a framing of climate change is *perceived* as being "Abrahamic" or as having Christian, Jewish and Muslim roots (Marshall et al., 2016; Glaab, 2017); yet this assertion is based on research conducted with faith leaders and faith representatives in the UK and not on theological or scriptural work. However, in FBO frames of climate change, justice was primarily used by these faith groups. In website extracts, justice was exclusively used by Christian, Muslim, and Jewish FBOs, and it was cited in interviews as a point of contention in interfaith settings. So regardless of whether justice, theologically speaking, is an exclusively Christian, Jewish and Muslim concept, there was a perception amongst Hindu and Brahma Kumari participants that it was less aligned with their traditions:

> *We really try to avoid using climate justice because we feel that although, although the justice framing is in Hinduism, it's not as pronounced or is not as much a focus as it is for maybe Christian and Muslim organisations, right?*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]
>
> *Spiritually, we are not so big on climate justice. It's not our school, it's not our vision. […] it doesn't move my heart […] everybody having a right works more for me, you know, everybody has a right works better than climate justice.*
>
> [Interview Braham Kumaris]

Yet it is not only the theological or spiritual basis of justice which prompts tensions. FBOs also noted tensions around the politically loaded nature of justice and its lack of clarity as a term:

> *What is a subject of discussion is whether we work on climate justice. So the word justice trips people up. What do we mean by justice? And it's kind of politically loaded as well. Does that mean that you're aligning with a very left-wing project or are you going to include, you know, other parts of the political spectrum?*
>
> [Interview Faith for the Climate]
>
> *The tradition in WCC has been on justice […] where we were on the march, now everybody screams about climate justice. And that makes it more difficult. What do we mean by climate justice? What is climate justice? So we have to identify what climate justice is about, also. And I don't think that we […] totally agree on everything when we talk about climate justice, what we mean about it.*
>
> [Interview World Council of Churches]

Eco- and anthropocentric frames

Closely connected to the focus on justice, which is generally linked to a recognition of the unequal effects of climate change on people,[59] is the relative presence of people and environmental issues in climate frames, which can also be understood as a distinction between eco-centric and anthropocentric frames. The distinction between these approaches has been recognised as a feature of the broader climate movement and has begun to shift, in legal and rights-based responses to climate change, , towards more eco-centric frames (Popovski, 2016).[60] It has likewise been alluded to in the religions and ecology literature, albeit criticised for essentialism, where Dharmic, nature-based, and "dark green" religions have been suggested as being closer to nature and more ecocentric, in contrast to more anthropocentric religions such as Christianity (White, 1967; Tomalin, 2002; Taylor, 2010; Tomalin, 2016).

Anthropocentric frames are ones which, to varying degrees, highlight the effects of climate change on people, the effects of people on the environment, and that put people at the centre of responding to climate change. Sadouni (2022, p.12) claims that "[i]f religious actors have focused on the issue of climate change and made it a priority in their actions, it is because of the poor who are most vulnerable to – and therefore the first victims of – climate change". Her assertion is corroborated by participants from FBOs such as the Lutheran World Federation and Islamic Relief Worldwide, who see climate change inseparable from, if not constituted by, its (hugely unequal) effects on people:

> *I think environment is broader than climate change and so we are focused on climate change and the climate change impacts in many different countries, especially the impacts to the most vulnerable people*

[59] Justice is not inherently or exclusively connected to people and there is some blurring across the different types of justice. Ecological justice, for example, tends to focus on justice for non-human animals and nature. But in general, and in its environmental, intergenerational, social, and climate permutations, justice is tied up with the unequal suffering of people and communities.

[60] We can also see this through the increasingly salient campaigns for ecocide laws (largely led by Stop Ecocide International; see also the faith-based Faith for Ecocide Law).

[Interview LWF]

A participant from the Christian group, Operation Noah, distinguished themselves from secular groups by taking an approach which focused on people, in particular people in the Global South, rather than 'just' the environment:

> *Christian groups have always talked about what's happening, you know, people are dying now in the Global South. I think Extinction Rebellion and many other groups have been sort of lambasted for not talking about that. But I think the Christian groups have always… I mean, I didn't know what they were talking about, when they started, 'cause I think Chris… Any organization that I've been a part of they've always stressed the fact that people are dying now, and that should be your number one reason for acting.*
>
> [Interview Operation Noah]

Ecocentric approaches are ones which, to varying degrees, put nature, the environment, or environmental issues at the centre of frames of climate change. Ideas of interconnectedness, the intrinsic value of the natural world, a shift away from humans as the central consideration of climate change, or even a focus on biodiversity could be indicative of more ecocentric frames of climate change. A participant from a Hindu FBO, for example, explained that they felt that biodiversity was more in line with Hinduism "theologically" (Interview Bhumi Global).

On FBO websites, the distinction between anthropocentric and ecocentric approaches was primarily evident through mentions of environmental issues and issues related to people; each of these themes were broken down into sub-themes detailed in Figures 5.1 and 5.2. Whilst not perfectly analogous to the eco-/anthropocentric distinction, as many environmental issues were brought up *because* of their effects on people, it allows for exploration of the relative importance of the environment and people in climate frames.

Under environmental issues, natural hazards and extreme weather occurred most, alongside global warming and agriculture. I use the phrase 'natural hazards' here[61], but FBOs use a variety of terms including natural disasters, climate-related hazards, and environmental disasters. Natural hazards were introduced not only as demonstrative of climate change, but to highlight their hugely unequal effects on people. In all but one case, 'disaster' was used to highlight the manmade vulnerabilities which have created environments in which natural hazards such as cyclones, floods, and droughts could lead to disasters (Salter and Wilkinson 2023, pp.5-6). Reference to global warming and greenhouse gases (GHGs) tended to occur together in the website excerpts with global warming appearing variously as "synonymous to climate change, as a specific feature of climate change, and as distinct environmental issue" (ibid, p.5).

Forty out of 50 FBO websites mentioned people in their framing of climate change, both in terms of effects *on* and effects *of* (ibid, p.5). The most frequently occurring sub-themes were vulnerable

[61] Natural hazard is the accepted term in risk and disaster studies as natural disaster, whilst still used colloquially, eliminates the human causes of disasters. It is generally argued that hazards can be natural but only become disasters due to human failings (see Chmutina and von Meding, 2019).

communities and poverty or inequality, and both performed a similar function. Climate change is presented as an issue which affects vulnerable communities more but also increases existing vulnerabilities. Likewise, poverty and inequality are put forward as both exacerbating and being exacerbated by the effects of climate change (ibid, p.5). The ACT Alliance (n.d.) states quite clearly in the opening sentence of their framing that "[c]limate change exacerbates poverty and inequality", whilst the Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology Network (2016) states that "equality and vulnerability [are] both intensified by climate change". Livelihoods were brought into the frames to highlight the tangible effects of climate change, and the primary focus was on the actual and potential destruction of "human habitations" (IFEES, 2021), food or water sources, indigenous ways of life, and local agriculture (Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p.5). Climate change was framed as a development issue, primarily by organisations already conducting humanitarian and development work, to highlight climate change as an issue which might reverse existing and preclude future development work. This was particularly evident in organisations for whom (action on) climate change was presented as a crosscutting theme and not as a distinct programme of work, where other humanitarian or development programmes could be rendered untenable due to the effects of climate change. Yet development was also recognised as a cause of climate change where it is economically "unbridled" (AJWS, 2021) or reliant on unsustainable agriculture or fossil fuels (Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p.5).

Reference to people, in framing terms, also fulfils the "attributional" task of identifying blameworthy parties (Benford and Snow, 2000, p.616). For the most part this was in general terms, by making reference to the fact that those in the minority world or Global North have historic and contemporary responsibility for climate change whilst others focused on particular dimensions of human activity, for example by reference to the role of corporations, industry, and of unsustainable models of economic growth (Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p.5). The theme of responsibility for climate change often becomes a motivational call, where responsibility for climate change is presented as motivation for collective action by an FBO and their faith community.

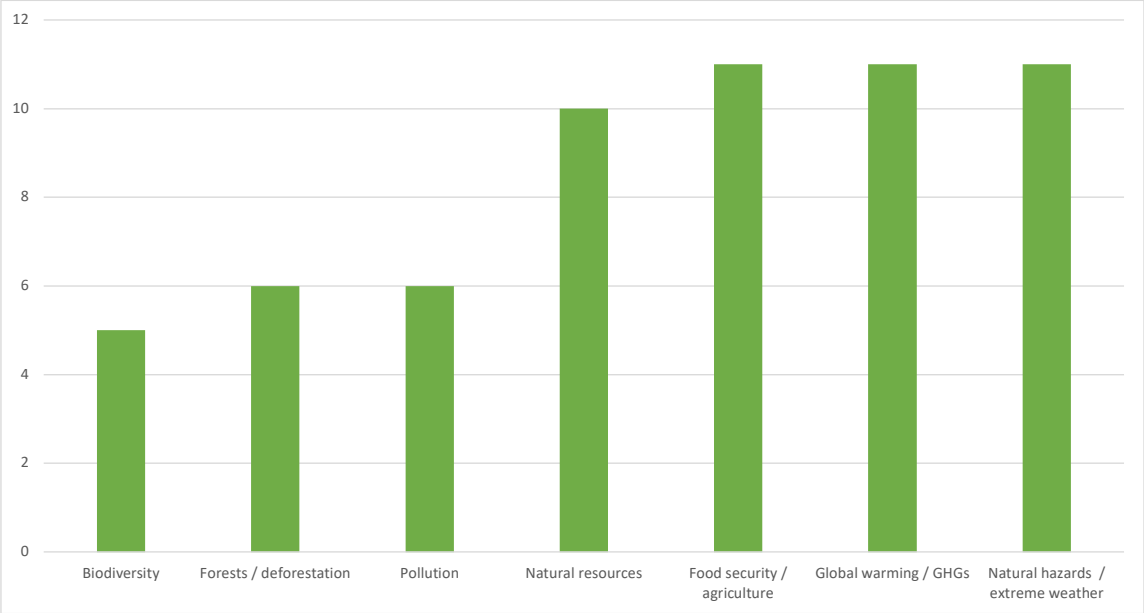

Figure 5.1 Environmental issues by number of faith actors

(Source: Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p.6)

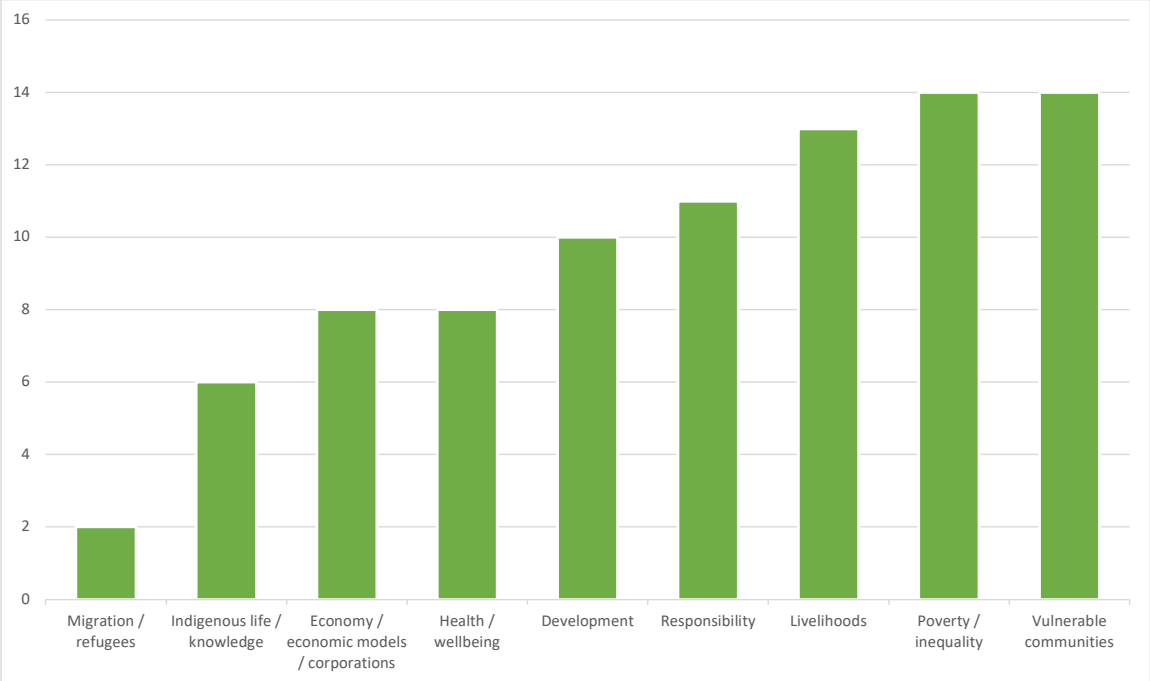

Figure 5.2 People sub-themes by number of faith actors

(Source: Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p.6)

The tension between eco- and anthropocentric frames was not so much an interfaith tension, though this did come up, but rather an intra-faith tension over time. FBOs suggested, variously, that their tradition (or indeed religious groups in general) had historically either been too eco- or too

anthropocentric and were now becoming, or needed to become, more anthropo- or ecocentric. Christian participants tended to highlight their historic focus on people or anthropocentric approaches and suggested that they were now actively trying to shift their focus towards more holistic, eco-centric, or environmental frames.

> *Earlier, that we maybe had a more humanitarian or anthropocentric way of reflecting on these things, and also our politic*[al] *positions was maybe more anthropocentric, I think we have learned from indigenous knowledge from, also from Orthodox, from other traditions that we are part of the same creation and that we, the biodiversity dimension for instance, the forest, the ocean, the ecosystems are… as important as the, this more narrow, humanitarian perspective, because everything is woven, is interconnected. So, this is something that I've learned myself at least, and it's also something that we learn from the broader ecumenical context, from the interfaith approach. I met with some Buddhist friends here, they also have more of this holistic approach. And we can learn it also from our own indigenous Sami culture in Norway and that they… they're part of the nature, they have… So I think, we have enlarged this humanitarian approach to be a more holistic approach these days*
>
> [Interview Church of Norway]
>
> *One of my concerns is that we… not develop an approach to environmentalism that is only concerned with human beings, even if it is the poor. You know, we ought to be caring for God's world. Because God told us to. Even if there were no poor people involved. You know, it happens that a more flourishing world would be better for the poor. But even if it weren't, we ought to be doing it because God commanded us to*
>
> [Interview Care of Creation]

Yet the imperative in the latter case does not come from the influence of other religions, or from a desire to have a more environmental frame in line with ideas of interconnectedness or holism, but "because God commanded us to".

The need for a shift towards a more ecocentric approach was also argued for by Hindu, Buddhist, and Brahma Kumari interviewees. The suggestions here were generally that faith-based climate action had historically taken too anthropocentric an approach as guided by the majority Christian groups in the UN-faith-climate space, and that a more ecocentric approach was needed, not only as a more appropriate framing of climate change, but to be more inclusive of the variety of worldviews in the space (Interviews Bhumi Global; Brahma Kumaris; Tzu Chi).

Yet, others made arguments in the complete opposite direction: that faith groups had historically been too focused on the environment, at the expense of full recognition of the effects of climate change on people and critical socio-political dimensions. During an interfaith event in the fringe zone of COP26 (4/11/21), the emerging consensus was that climate change had too long been considered by FBOs as 'just' an environmental issue with prognostic frames of environmental protection and conservation, and that there needed to be a drastic shift towards a justice-centred and human-focused frame which would result in an associated prognosis of systemic socio-political change.

Yet, FBOs whose faith traditions had an ostensibly ecocentric worldview have still argued for the human and humanitarian dimensions of climate change, but have done so via secular and rights-based routes:

> *When we first started, there was a very strict border between human rights and climate change. And… what happened is that we were very clear that human rights had to be a cross-cutting issue, of climate change, from the beginning. And, so, we started the advocacy for special… for having a special rapporteur, studying human rights and climate change. And 10 years ago, it was unheard of. But now it's become something that even countries are working on, but it took 10 years. And I'm happy to say that I think there is a resolution that would [be] table[d] by some governments around that language, but I said it took over 10 years.*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris]

What this shows is that though some eco- and anthropocentric frames may have a theological or spiritual basis, it would be incorrect to assume that the way climate change is framed by FBOs is always faith-based in character and motivation.

Responding to climate change

FBOs also framed climate change in more obviously prognostic ways by advocating for particular responses. Figure 5.3 shows a breakdown of the types of responses to climate change in FBO website extracts.[62] The categories include specific activities (e.g. lobbying, education, tree-planting), themes or focal points of repones (e.g. youth engagement, renewable energy activities, lifestyle change), and specifically faith-based responses (e.g. using religious teachings, interfaith work, prayer) (Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p.7). Responses mentioned most frequently were public engagement and awareness raising, education or training, advocacy, and promoting lifestyle change or individual responsibility. All of these sub-themes, rather than being activities which directly address the environmental or humanitarian effects of climate change, are focused on raising the profile of climate change as an issue and motivating action. Profile-raising occurs in several directions: towards policymakers in the case of advocacy, towards religious or community leaders in the case of training, and towards communities in the case of public engagement and education (ibid, p. 7).

[62] Website extracts were coded for mentions of responses, that is where a particular action is suggested as something that ought to be done, regardless of whether a given FBO is already doing it.

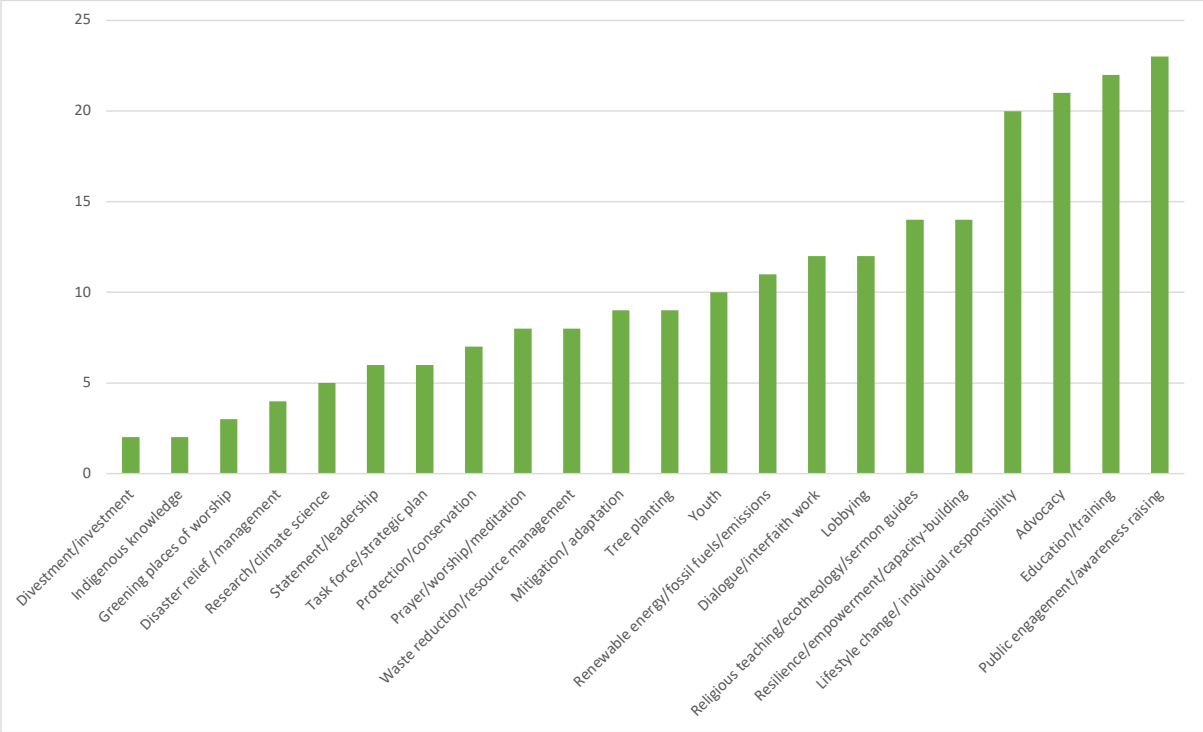

Figure 5.3 Responses by number of faith actors
(Source: Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p.8)

In interviews, participants also emphasised the importance of these profile-raising responses to climate. One participant explained that raising the profile of climate change is an activity which should be considered one of FBOs' key strengths and modes of responding to climate change (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth). Yet, the emphasis on profile raising here is less to do with its importance as an activity in general and more to do with the idea that it is the kind of response that FBOs are particularly good at or well-suited to given what he sees as their moral and social capital and ability to mobilise faith communities.

In line with the holistic diagnostic frames, in interviews FBOs tended to be critical of solutionist or problem-solving responses to climate change (Hulme, 2010; Riley and Bauman, 2017). Instead they emphasised the need for responses to climate change to entail socio-political transformation and holistic or systemic change: "real transformation, as opposed to…what we see often is treating symptoms but not the disease" (Interview QUNO).

There were no specific intra- or interfaith tensions in terms of responses brought up by interviewees. However, some FBOs highlighted faith-related, pragmatic reasons for advocating responses to climate change, for example, "Brahma Kumaris don't [do] too much about divestment because we're not specialised in wealthy people" (Interview Brahma Kumaris). In contrast, there has been a push amongst Christian groups, and in particular the Anglican communion, in recent years to divest their much larger assets away from fossil fuels. Whilst these are not religiously motivated reasons in a

theological or spiritual sense, the responses are tied in a practical sense to the specific faith communities.

Other themes which occurred in interviews were the importance of lifestyle change, the need to amend unsustainable and unjust socio-economic systems, and the need to address the humanitarian impacts of climate change. Lifestyle change was presented as a particular focus for the Tzu Chi Foundation, with emphasis placed on the need "to go back to the original, frugal life" and encouragement to switch to a vegetarian or plant-based diet. The response here was presented as directly linked to the foundational basis of Tzu Chi itself who focus on personal, practical action and "social engagement" as an expression of "Buddhism's new sutra" (Interview Tzu Chi). Diet change was also brought up by QUNO where, in the context of an IPCC, meeting they were the only group to bring up what some have argued to be the somewhat taboo subject of diet (Krantz 2022). Yet this was not presented as being grounded in faith, but rather as highlighting the lesser-discussed diet-related findings of IPCC reports (Interview QUNO). Diet and lifestyle change was brought up as a point of tension by another participant as an example of a tension between the practice of their faith and alignment with climate advocacy campaign as an FBO:

> *For example, this year, like every year, we celebrate Eid-ul-Adha. And Eid-ul-Adha is where you have to sacrifice an animal. And somebody said to me today, […] 'do you have any advocacy messaging?' And I said, 'do not eat meat'. So it goes against our campaign, right? So yeah that's difficult because, for me, consumption of meat, is one of those things that you know with methane, and energy, and emissions, and all the other kind of stuff, it goes against what we say. And he said 'ohh, probably won't involve you in the campaign this year'*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief Worldwide]

Faith-based frames: confessional and constructive

The most identifiably faith-based frames are those which employ religious or spiritual concepts, frameworks or narratives. A key point that emerges is that FBOs were not simply using religious narratives to respond to climate change but were making action on climate change central to their faith. Here I find a distinction proposed by Jenkins et al. (2018) useful.[63] They suggest, albeit in a review of scholarship on religion and climate change, that religious framings of and responses to climate change can be "confessional" and/or "constructive", where confessional refers to tradition-specific religious language or teachings and constructive indicates language which may be considered broadly religious or spiritual, but which may have uptake in interfaith and secular contexts.

Whereas the frames discussed thus far tend to fall either on the diagnostic (i.e. defining the problem) or prognostic (i.e. suggesting a response) side, it is faith-based frames which attend to the task of motivating action. Benford and Snow (2000, p.617) consider motivational frames to provide a "rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate

[63] See Chapter 2, where this approach is discussed further.

vocabularies of motive". I suggest that this is precisely the task being undertaken by FBOs in their use of more explicitly religious or faith-based frames. Faith-based frames also fulfil the task of value amplification, that is, the "identification, idealization, and elevation of one or more values presumed basic to prospective constituents" in order to mobilise action; amplification takes place to increase understanding of and promote these values within a given social movement or, in this case, within FBOs or in collective FBO advocacy in the UN-faith-climate space (Snow et al., 1986, p.469; Snow, 2013).

Confessional frames

During interviews, I asked participants to explain both how they understood climate change and how their understanding of and action on climate change was connected to their personal faith and the faith affiliation of their organisations. The structure of their responses was indicative of the seamless integration of climate change and an associated imperative to respond in the "native ethical concepts", religious narratives, or theological reasoning of their traditions (Jenkins et al., 2018, p.9.8). The website excerpts likewise demonstrated the way that confessional language is brought in to frame and motivate action on climate change but without the personal motivation present within interviews; 28 out of 50 website excerpts used religious beliefs, teachings, or other confessional language in their framing (Salter and Wilkinson 2023).

Three types of confessional framing emerged, as well as two structures of motivation. According to my analysis these were:

- Use of religious teachings, specific stories, excerpts from religious texts
- Use of religious concepts (e.g. stewardship, sin, consciousness, Mother Earth)
- Reference to a given religious tradition as a whole

By 'two structures of motivation' I mean that the confessional frames took on the motivational task either through *explicit* or *implicit* instruction. By 'explicit' I mean using phrases which include a clear imperative and by 'implicit', phrases where the imperative is not stated clearly but alluded to, for example by highlighting the sacredness of the natural world and as such implying a need to protect it.

Reference to or quotes from specific teachings, scripture, or stories occurred in both interviews and in website excerpts but to a lesser extent than more general references to values or concepts, or to the given religion as a whole. Just seven out 50 website extracts made specific reference to texts, scripture, or stories in their frames. Both the World Council of Churches and Tearfund use biblical references, to the garden of Eden and Esther, respectively, whist Catholic groups JENA and the Laudato Si' Movement both use Laudato Si' rather than making reference to biblical texts. The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science (IFEES) and Islamic Help both use verses from the Qur'an to support their frame, and EcoSikh use an extract from the Guru Granth Sahib.

The religious teachings here are used on an organisational level and are intended, given their position on the websites of faith actors, to demonstrate the relevant parts of a given religion's text(s) to climate

action. Interviewees, in contrast, tended to bring in references to specific teachings or scripture to explain their personal motivation for engagement with climate action. Discussing the basis of her work on climate change, one of my participants said that for her "it was the first verse of the Bible. It just hit me as I was walking down the street one day" (Interview Operation Noah) and another participant made several references to the Qur'an throughout our interview to frame her personal motivation and Islamic Relief's basis for climate action (Interview Islamic Relief). For example "in the Quran it does specifically speak about 'corruption has appeared on land and sea as a result of people's actions' so I feel that that is completely what we're doing around consumerism". Similarly, a participant from a Hindu FBO recounted a story of from the Bhagavata Purana, discussed further below, to help explain his understanding of climate change (Interview Bhumi Global).

More common than reference to specific texts or stories was reference to religious concepts or values. Website excerpts were coded for recurrent religious concepts used to frame climate change, which were balance/interdependence (17), creation (13), stewardship (11), gift/sacred (3), and Mother Earth (3). Stewardship was referred to exclusively by Christian and Muslim FBOs in interviews and by Christian, Muslim and Jewish FBOs in website excerpts. FBOs used the notion of stewardship not only to invoke a response to climate change but also to indicate how inherent environmental concerns were to their faith. One participant highlighted stewardship just one of many ways that Islam can contribute to framing and encouraging action on climate change saying that "in the Islamic teachings […] God tells us that, actually, we have to be stewards of this earth" (Interview Islamic Relief).

In most interviews with participants amongst for whom stewardship would be theologically relevant, the adherence to or mention of stewardship, was less pronounced. Participants instead focused on care of creation or using on the existence of a creator to imply the need for care. A Lutheran participant, for example, highlights that her organisation's "theological basis" is that "we need to take care of the creation" (Interview LWF). Likewise, a participant from an evangelical Christian group explained why he prefers the use of 'creation':

> *We like terms that use creation because it implies a creator. And as soon as you bring a creator into the picture, you've got a sense of responsibility. So caring for God's creation, I think, is something that is probably going to stay around for a while. At least, I hope it will.*
>
> [Interview Care of Creation]

Other concepts invoked to frame climate change focused less on the act of caring or stewardship, and more on human-nature relationships, interconnectedness and balance including Mother Earth, Mizan, and consciousness:

> *The vulnerable amongst us are the ones that are threatened by the disruption of the world's, what we call, Mizan balance*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief]
>
> *The Brahma Kumaris have a very unique take on it. We have a feeling that what's important is for people to become aware of the correlation between climate change and*

> *[…] consciousness […]. Our relationship with ourselves isn't right, and therefore our relationship with nature isn't right.*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris]
>
> *Climate change – Mother Earth is suffering.*
>
> [Interview Tzu Chi]

Though rarer, confessional narratives were also used not only to motivate a response, but to emphasise the *causes* of climate change; here, the concept of sin is invoked to explain the 'problems' and as such to imply that a response must be faith-based:

> *Environmental problems are sin problems. And if environmental problems are a consequence of human sin… And you can pick up this theme in any number of secular environmental writers as well. Will talk about greed, you know, they'll talk about arrogance. They may not use the word sin, but the thought is there anyway. If the problem is sin, money won't solve it. Policies won't solve it. The UN won't solve it. Washington can't solve it. It's going to have to be the church. People of faith getting out there and exercising their faith. So that's what my faith has to do with it. And if you took my faith out, I wouldn't have anything to offer.*
>
> [Interview Care of Creation]

A final way in. which FBOs use confessional frames was by reference to their faith tradition as a whole. This was by either suggesting that their particular tradition is particularly well-suited to framing and responding to climate change, or by making action on climate change a non-optional part of their faith. In the latter case, I mean that rather than pointing to particular teachings or concepts to motivate action on climate change, the faith tradition is presented as inherently and holistically environmental or climate-responsible.

One participant said, "I think the environment is probably, it's probably *the* biggest thing that a Hindu worldview can contribute the most towards. […] I do think that's where we can add the most value." (Interview Bhumi Global). To support this assertion, he recounted a Hindu story from the first book of the Bhagavata Purana:

> *The Earth personifies herself as a cow, and religion, Dharma personifies himself as a bull, and they have a conversation. And the cow is the earth, and the cow is distraught. It's being beaten, it's dark, and it's in a really unhealthy state. And the bull, which represents religion. You know, traditionally, a bull has four legs, but the bull only has one leg, because the other three legs of religion have been destroyed in the current state, right? So, the four legs are truthfulness, austerity, cleanliness* [and mercy[64]] *and a King arrives. And he sees the earth in a bad state, and he sees the bull with only one leg. And he's like, what the hell is going on here? You know, I think, this is not a healthy situation. And a conversation takes place. And one reason that the Earth is unhappy is because the legs of religion are broken right? So we feel like in order to restore a whole… a wholesome Earth, like literally for the Earth to be healthy, religion needs to be strong. Or spirituality needs to be strong, right?*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

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[64] "In the age of Satya (truthfulness) your four legs were established by the four principles of austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness." (Vedabase, n.d.)

Here, the religious framing of climate change and environmental destruction goes beyond using religious teachings to promote a response to climate change: it suggests that environmental protection and an understanding of balance is inherent to Hinduism, and further, that achieving such balance requires religion, or spirituality, "to be strong".

Several website excerpts suggested that action on climate change or broadly environmentally positive attitudes were inherent to and a non-optional part of their faith. The Bahu Trust (n.d., my emphasis) begins its framing by stating that "The religion of Islam is *inherently* environmental" whilst the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (2020, my emphasis), say that "If our initiatives are to be both effective and *truly Catholic*, they need to take deep roots in the reality of those who suffer". This pattern appears likewise in the Association of Shinto Shrines (n.d.), who say "Shinto has always made one of its highest priorities coexistence with nature", and Hazon[65] (n.d.) uses the phrase "Jewish tradition compels us to respond." Making the connection between action on climate change and a given faith tradition as a whole is a stronger motivational claim than reference to either texts or concepts, as it extends climate action from an activity inspired or motivated by particular teachings or values to something that is integral to a given faith.

An imperative or instruction to act was often apparent in the structures of these confessional frames, either in explicit or implicit ways. Some participants made statements along the lines of "we need to take care of the creation" (Interview LWF); "we ought to be caring for God's world. Because God told us to" (Interview Care of Creation); "God tells us that, actually, we have to be stewards of this earth" (Interview Islamic Relief). However, instruction or an imperative to act also appeared in implicit ways. In one sense, implied instruction covers all of these confessional framings as they all imply a particular relationship with the natural world or ascribe value to it and other humans, whether that be through highlighting the importance of balance or Mizan, emphasising our interconnectedness with Mother Earth, or the sacredness of creation. These fulfil the motivational function of framing by implying the need to act and motivating a response to climate change because of the value ascribed to those things to which climate change poses a direct threat (Snow, 2013). One interviewee highlighted the two ways she believed Christianity performed this implicit moral function: "there's two main reasons [to act]: God made it and we're meant to love our neighbour" (Interview Operation Noah). Neither of these statements is an obvious instruction to act on climate change per se, but it is taken as a given that once you have a worldview in place which entails an idea of creation and neighbourly love, action on climate change should follow.

Within confessional faith-based frames, there were less obvious interfaith tensions, but participants highlighted some *intra*-faith tension points, for example between different Christian groups, on the best way to frame and respond to climate change. Speaking from experience of international

[65] Hazon is a Jewish environmental organisation which, since the data collection, has merged and been renamed Adamah.

ecumenical work on climate change a participant from the World Council of Churches reflected on the variety of Christian frames and tensions:

> *Christianity has a lot to contribute to the discussion on [climate change]…. I mean, stewardship is something that I really want to take out of the vocabulary to talk about, because that is what Christians always talk about, stewardship. And, but also, just to say the other part… is that I also think some could use stewardship in a good way. And if it's done in a good way, OK, I'm fine. Or if it's the moral kind of web of life that we are so integrated in the dependency, and you can find it in psalms and so on. Great, that's also a way of moving forward. And the third I would say is the kind of solidarity, the justice aspect, you can get it from the gospels, from the prophets, and so on. And that is also a way forward, but you don't have to be… But at the same time, you need some critical eye on your standpoint. And also, to have to accept… So in interreligious work we… The first thing that I learned was that we cannot say creation. Because for a Hindu it's not a creation. And for Buddhists as well. So then I often use Mother Earth. And "Oooh, we don't worship Mother Earth, that's dangerous". But when… and such… especially conservative Christian theologians. And I say "well the Pope talks about Mother Earth, Saint Francis talks about Mother Earth, it's not so dangerous to talk about Mother Earth and Brother Moon, or whatever". I mean, it's there. We have it in our tradition, so it's not dangerous. It's not worshipping the nature… like a thing. And I think that's… and if you start that kind of thinking progress I think also you will... you will take step forward*
>
> [Interview WCC/ILC]

This is a clear example of the process of frame alignment where interfaith work for climate action necessitates a negotiation and development of collective ways of framing climate change (Snow et al., 1986; Benford and Snow, 2000). In other cases, there is a similar tension where one participant felt that frames used in interfaith contexts needed to be:

> *[F]aithful to my tradition rather than adopting the language of you know, another religious community which, which may resonate with me on a personal level but doesn't actually align strongly with the tradition that I'm trying to represent in that space.*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

Constructive frames

One of the key ways that FBOs frame climate change in faith-based ways is through constructive, i.e. non-confessional, framings. In the context of the UN, this is how FBOs suggest that they are seen by their secular NGO and civil society colleagues and by UN staff or negotiators: "this is how I come across to people, the *ethical* aspect of things" (Interview Braham Kumaris/ILC). I class these frames as faith-based as they have clear religious, spiritual, or theological undercurrents and motivation but are presented in ways which do not imply a particular affiliation and which may have uptake across interfaith and secular contexts. Examples of constructive faith-based frames and concepts which have been put forward by others as either appearing across multiple traditions or having the potential to be employed in secular contexts include: stewardship, apocalypse, intergenerational justice, a preferential option for the poor, the idea of an injured earth, and vulnerability (Reder, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2018; Conca, 2022). Constructive frames are important in the context of the UN-faith-climate space; it is a space which necessitates interfaith cooperation and representation and, as such, a move beyond the specificity of individual faith traditions, whilst remaining identifiably faith-based or spiritual.

Constructive frames can also be thought of in terms of FBOs' ability to add a moral imperative to climate frames; this could be explicitly, for example, through ideas of duty, care or responsibility, or implicitly, through ideas of sacredness or intrinsic value. Rolloson (2010), reflecting on the contribution of faith groups to climate action at the UNDP, calls this their ability to add "ethos" to (secular) "ethics" by introducing the "deeper values" which encourage action.

In website extracts, FBOs framed climate change in constructive ways by emphasising its moral, ethical, or spiritual significance. Twelve out of 50 described it as a moral or ethical issue; Islamic Relief (n.d.) call it one of "the greatest moral, social and environmental issues facing humanity" and the Australian Religion Response to Climate Change (n.d.) frame it as "not only a scientific, environmental, economic and political issue" but "also a profoundly moral and spiritual one" (Salter and Wilkinson 2023, p. 4). By 'diagnosing' climate change as a moral and spiritual issue, the implication is that there is an associated moral imperative to act. The use of 'moral' in particular is a key term for constructive framings, as it implies a faith-based moral imperative without the need to refer to specific religious teachings or concepts.

In interviews, FBOs suggested that, in the context of climate action, their ability to add a moral imperative and frame climate change in moral, if not necessarily confessional ways, was a key part of their approach to climate advocacy:

> *And you know people, they just… When they look at things from a religious perspective and they understand that it's a duty […] The key is hearts and minds, absolutely. It's that moral imperative. It's that, you know, moral compass that you know the faiths come from.*
>
> [Interview Global One]
>
> *We have a moral framework, you know, in ways that maybe civil society organisations don't. We have reach across the world, a moral voice, that, again, civil society organisations oftentimes don't.*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]
>
> *It's a really powerful and important voice and interfaith not just you know the ecumenical…which is also there and doing great work too… but it's really the interfaith. You know that moral voice beyond the political voice*
>
> [Interview QUNO]

However, it is not only at the UN level or in secular or interfaith contexts that constructive or non-confessional climate frames were presented as useful to FBOs. A participant from the Church of Norway said he found the climate justice framing useful not jusr in climate policy spaces but also in his congregation and community in Norway, saying that "it's not *too* religious, but it's easy to grasp". Here we can see that whilst the religious grounding of climate framings is important to FBOs at the same time they recognise that sometimes they need to avoid being confessional, not only in climate policy spaces, but also amongst community groups who may find overly theological or confessional language difficult to grasp.

Non-confessional frames are used by interfaith groups and in interfaith contexts where there is a need to undergo a process of frame alignment to facilitate collaboration or collective representative in secular contexts and to frame climate change in a way which is acceptable in interfaith or secular contexts without excessive compromise on their own beliefs or positions (Snow 2013). Participants suggested that more tensions arose in this context than with confessional frames, as constructive frames are often intended to be representative of 'the faiths' in general. In seeking to present an interfaith framing of climate change on their website, a participant from Faith for the Climate reflected on the tensions which arose:

> *I remember one of the messages that we had on the website where initially we said you know people of faith see the planet as the creation and the gift, you know, and we are good stewards and one of our Buddhist trustees said 'I can't sign up to this wording because I'm a Buddhist, I don't have a creator, I don't believe in this. This is not the wording I would use'. So I've rewritten that and you can see on the landing page, I've tried to come up with a frame that works for everyone 'cause you don't want to lose the Abrahamics, but you also don't want to alienate the Dharmics*
>
> [Interview Faith for the Climate]

Accordingly, their website now reads "People of faith see our planet as a gift, and believe we have a sacred responsibility to show solidarity and support for those who have done the least to cause climate change but are suffering its worst impacts" (Faith For The Climate, n.d.). The revised frame remains identifiably faith-based through the notions of gift and sacred responsibility but without the exclusionary theological language of creation.

A critical point which emerges in FBOs' climate frames, and one which helps to understand the areas where tensions arise, is the extent to which a frame is *perceived* to be confessional, or theological, in a faith-specific (or faith-exclusionary) way. FBOs may be happier to discuss, in 'secular' terms, the importance of human rights or biodiversity but less comfortable when these become justice or interconnectedness, ideas which for some groups may be more at odds with the worldview of their tradition. Developing a common language is not only a task undertaken by interfaith FBOs but is a critical task of FBO representatives in UN climate action, as is finding a balance between frames which are either overly faith-specific or constructive to the point of no longer being identifiably faith-based. To do so is not only for FBOs to present their distinct contribution to climate action, but to contribute to said action more effectively through a coherent and aligned position (Snow et al., 1986; Benford and Snow, 2000; Junk and Rasmussen, 2019).

5.4 Faith-based distinctiveness

Having outlined the key themes and tensions in FBO climate frames I now turn to discuss how and to what extent we can consider them to be distinctive by virtue of being faith-based. I argue that it is through FBOs' ability to integrate multiple intersecting issues related to climate change and put them in constructive terms that we see FBO frames as distinctive.

There are, of course, many ways which FBOs could be considered unique or distinctive in the context of climate change action. Others have argued that we see this through their social and, in some cases, economic capital, their ability to mobilise communities for action, or through some faiths' special (often romanticised) connection with or understanding of the natural environment (Veldman et al., 2014b; Haluza-DeLay, 2014; Hulme, 2017). However, in the context of framing climate change, it seems that it is the ability to frame climate change in moral, ethical and faith-based, yet non-confessional, ways that FBOs see their distinct value compared to secular NGOs:

> *We have a moral framework, you know, in ways that maybe civil society organisations don't. We have reach across the world, a moral voice that again, that, again, civil society organisations oftentimes don't. So, I do feel that. I do feel that. And also, that I think the faith groups can push the needle on things in ways that you know, civil society and business groups and other groups can't. And so, to dilute the faith groups with the civil society sector really dilutes our message and our ability to get out that moral voice.*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

The UNFCCC itself has also argued, along similar lines, that "[FBOs] ensure that there is a reminder of the moral and ethical responsibility at all levels" (UNFCCC Deputy Executive Secretary, Ramp up to COP26 webinar, 3/11/20). We can see the use of faith-based constructive frames in interviews and in website extracts, as detailed in the preceding section. Whilst confessional frames are those which are most obviously faith-based and distinguishable from secular approaches, the constructive frames are those which are employed in interfaith and secular contexts where it may not be possible or effective to use confessional language. To do so does not imply a watering down of faith but rather a process of frame alignment.

Yet even if it is in their frames where FBOs see their value, there are different reasons why they see these framings as distinctively faith-based. For some, as detailed above, it is in their moral language and literacy, and the associated ability to add a motivational element to climate frames through explicit or implicit moral imperatives.

In other cases, FBOs also understand their frames to be unique not only in content but due to the fact that they draw on longstanding faith traditions and a history of ideas and environmental understanding. There are several ways to understand this appeal to longstanding tradition, whether in terms of a legacy and influence in society, longstanding practice at working through questions which are now relevant to climate change, or an ability to frame climate change with a longer temporal perspective than secular advocacy groups. Tajoumi and Reder (2019), for example, have suggested that religions have the potential to add weight to climate change frames not only through their moral resources but through their ability to add a "temporal dimension" to our understanding of nature and humanity's past and future relationship with it. In the preceding quote, a participant from the Hindu FBO Bhumi Global explains that "we're also a little bit different [from civil society organisations] as well, in the sense that our histories are different, in the sense that, you know, some of the traditions go back thousands of years". A participant from the World Council of Churches suggested that religions are well-placed to frame and respond to climate change as they have been engaging with similar

questions of human-nature relationships, of responsibility, and of existence for far longer than secular groups. Hogue (2007, p.120) takes this further to argue that climate change is in its nature a religious concern, as it "puts radical questions to life — questions that concern life's meanings and purposes in reference to life's foreground, background, and distant horizon, questions that evoke the true fragility and contingency of life".

FBOs also see their ability to frame climate change as reliant on their ability to speak 'beyond' the climate science, whether in complementary or superseding ways. The idea here is that whilst climate scientists may do well at describing the scientific reality of climate change, they are less able to speak in normative or moral terms about what ought to be the response:

> *It's happened now and then, that science turns to us to say "we can do all the facts but we can never really get it out, we don't have the values, we don't say 'do this or that', we just say 'this is how it is' and then do whatever. But you can actually have a moral authority to say 'we should do this'*
>
> [Interview World Council of Churches]
>
> *The scientists have done everything they could. You know they diagnosed the problem. Like doctors, they had even proposed some solutions. But the scientist - and here we come back to the illustration with my doctor. OK, I go to my doctor and he says your blood test don't look so good. You've got problem A, problem B, problem C, and this is what you can do: I can prescribe this medicine, you need to change your lifestyle, you need to lose some weight and get exercise and so on. But the doctor won't come home with me. The doctor will not be there when I wake up in the morning to say, have you taken your pills? He won't be there in the afternoon to say now, how about that exercise you were going to do? And that's the problem the scientists have. They can analyse and they can propose, but they can't change society. It's up to the rest of us, which means business people, politicians and especially Church leaders.*
>
> [Interview Care of Creation]

FBOs' ability to add value and a moral imperative to climate science was recognised in the run up to COP26, where climate scientists and faith leaders were brought together in an event intended to equip religious groups with the descriptive facts and translate them into the moral frames of their respective traditions (Interview QUNO). An entire Faith-Science project was likewise organised in conjunction with the Vatican and the UK and Italian Governments in the run-up to COP26.[66] Yet, though these collaborations reference faith leaders' ability to frame the climate research in normative terms, they are also, or perhaps primarily, reliant on the potential reach of such figures and leaders and their continued respect from governments and state negotiators, rather than their discursive normative capabilities.

> *I think it's something that that the faiths have that perhaps other groups don't have is this requirement to act because it's the right thing to do, the values-based rather than the outcomes-based. I guess at some point, we may already have got there, it is too late, right? So what's the point? What's the point of doing anything? Because we've had it. But as a Christian, I think you can never say that. One, because, you know, you never know. You never know what miracles might happen. And another reason is you do the right*

[66] Faith and Science: Towards COP26 (FCDO, n.d.)

> *thing because it's the right thing to do. And it's in solidarity with the people that are dying now, the species that are being exterminated now, in solidarity with them, and out of love for them. You do what is right and you act, and you push for, you speak the truth, and you push for action, even if it might be too late. So, I think that's something that faith groups… probably have that… that secular… I'm not quite sure what… well you probably would do that, many secular people would think like that as purely values-based action, and I think a lot of Extinction Rebellion is that, without needing the faith.* ***But it's easier to explain if you have a faith I think***
>
> [Interview Operation Noah, my emphasis]

The idea that the duty to act and value-driven action are "easier to explain if you have a faith" seems to appeal to Hogue's (2007) suggestion that questions of climate change and environmental destruction are the kinds of issues with which religions are particularly well-placed to engage as they draw on thick, worldview-driven accounts of human-nature relationships, care, or responsibility, and are literate at addressing the kinds of questions that climate change raises.

A final way in which FBOs may be seen as distinctive in their framings of and engagements with climate change is their apolitical approach. This is not to say that religions or FBOs are apolitical, but rather that, in some cases, they may be *perceived* as apolitical compared to secular climate groups. At an Interfaith Liaison Committee panel at the UNFCCC Bonn Climate Conference in 2023, where FBOs were discussing the importance of adding a moral imperative to the climate conferences, one of the panellists, said, of the faith-based moral imperative that "it's not necessarily political, it's from the heart". The idea of FBO framings being "from the heart" came up in interviews with FBOs who saw themselves as framing climate change beyond politics. Glaab (2017; 2022), in her research into FBOs at the UNFCCC, suggests that FBOs are perceived as less radical and political than (some of) their secular environmental counterparts. During a mass civil society walkout at COP in Warsaw, faith groups were one of only a few civil society blocs to remain at the COP (Glaab 2017, p.1120). She proposed that being faith-based is already a radical enough position, and that FBOs may thus moderate their approach in the UN context. Yet it also seems that, by presenting positions not dissimilar from more secular climate activist groups but framing them in moral rather than political terms, FBOs may appear less political. The key point here is not actually being apolitical but being perceived by negotiators or policymakers as apolitical and capitalising on this distinctive advocational potential.

Whilst there are many ways in which FBOs may be unique in their ability to frame climate change, previous research and some FBOs themselves caution us to not overstate their importance or division from secular NGOs (Fountain, 2013; Berry, 2014a). During interviews, FBOs, though often making the case for arguing for their special value *as FBOs*, were also self-critical about the extent to which they were or could be the sole purveyors of moral or spiritual frames, or about the extent to which they were distinct from secular groups by virtue of their frames. One participant reflected that "the faiths, we definitely think there's something special and different about us" (Interview Bhumi Global), and another said that "in my experience, there isn't such a big divide between secular activists and faith-based activists. Because even secular environmentalists see something sacred in the climate and

the environment" (Interview Faith for the Climate). In the latter case, however, it seems that, if secular climate activists are happy to recognise the sacredness of the environment, then whilst this may mean FBOs are not unique in proclaiming it, it does strengthen the potential uptake of their frames.

Another concern is that in emphasising FBOs' ability to frame climate change as distinctive and to be able to do so in moral terms, we risk reducing FBOs, and by extension religion, to simply their moral function (Reder, 2011, p.38). This could risk overlooking the propensity for change within religious traditions and, in practical terms, instrumentalise their moral capital. However, this is just one facet of FBOs' engagement with climate change and, in the context of climate advocacy at the UN, to emphasise FBOs' ability to frame climate change in constructive and moral ways is not to reduce them *only* to their moral function. Indeed, making the argument for distinctive frames relies on a thick account of their climate framings as rooted in worldviews, faith, traditions, and longstanding ability to engage with questions relevant to climate change, rather than a thin, functional, or instrumentalised account of their moral capital where the differences between secular and faith-based groups may become less apparent.

Reflecting back on the idea of framing from social movement studies, it seems that part of FBOs' distinctiveness comes in their ability to blend diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. We can, of course, see this in parts of the secular climate movement, in particular in the use of climate justice, where diagnostic and prognostic are combined, and FBOs are by no means the only part of the climate movement who propose that climate change is a moral or ethical issue on which we ought act. But, in the context of climate frames, FBOs are able to appeal to a thick, worldview-driven framing of climate change and the environment and present it in confessional as well as constructive ways with a moral or ethical imperative. This is certainly where many FBOs see their distinct value. The remaining question is really to what extent these frames can or do have uptake.

5.5 Uptake of faith-based climate framings

As discussed in the previous chapter, the measurable effectiveness of FBO advocacy at the UN was not part of my analysis. However, given the advocational function that frames are meant to fulfil, i.e. changing how issues are framed in policy or the vernacular, changing the minds of negotiators, stakeholders, or communities, it is important to reflect on how and to what extent they have uptake. The function of frames differs by context, of course, where website framings are intended to present a given FBO's key standpoint and represent less of the nuances, tensions, and frame alignment which happens in practice. Likewise, the way climate change was framed by participants blends both their personal motivation and understanding of climate change with that of their FBO. Participants recognised that there was often a distinction between the two, which they negotiated in the context of climate action, whether faith-specific or interfaith, to support the process of frame alignment.

We can point to previous research on the uptake and success of frames, as well as research on the influence of FBOs and faith leaders, to reflect on to what extent frames in this context may have uptake. Benford and Snow (2000, p.620), for example, argue that the *credibility* of a framing is down to its "consistency, empirical credibility, and credibility of the frame articulators". Following this approach, it seems reasonable to argue that FBO framings are empirically credible. FBOs often build on or refer to the scientific reality as the springboard for their frame, before grounding it in religious, moral or spiritual frameworks. The consistency dimension is evident in the resultant frames that come out of the process of frame alignment in interfaith contexts. Whilst there were clear intra- and inter-faith tensions, FBOs tended to be strategic with and happy to negotiate their frames for the benefit of a stronger representative faith voice at the UN. Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf (2018a, p.191) suggest that these are "conflicts of interpretation rather than conflicts of principle". The credibility of the articulators is more difficult to assess but we can hypothesise, given the legacy and longstanding engagement of some FBOs at the UN, that they have a certain amount of credibility amongst UN officials, negotiators and other NGOs. FBOs' experience of their legitimacy, as discussed in the previous chapter, seem to corroborate this, though such credibility may be limited to organisations with a UN legacy, such as QUNO or the World Council of Churches.

Credibility of frames, however, tells us little about practical influence. Research on the influence of NGOs and civil society actors' advocacy at the UN paints an ambivalent picture on the influence of civil society on UN negotiators, states, and policies. Sénit (2020), in her research on the development of the SDGs, showed that civil society actors only had "moderate" influence on policymaking with low influence on "issue-framing" and "position shifting", i.e. affecting the ways in which policymakers framed SDG issues and affecting the positions states took, respectively, but had high influence on shaping *future* discussions and procedures. The limited influence on re-framing issues is grounds for pessimism in terms of assessing the impact of FBOs' climate framings and advocacy success. Yet, she did find that the areas where civil society actors had the greatest potential for influence were though engagement in informal negotiations, areas which I observed and which came up in interviews as critical for FBOs. Whilst FBOs were able to make 'formal' contributions at COP26 in the form of a short interfaith contribution to the plenary, their engagement with UN and state negotiators often came in the form of informal conversations, or indeed informal relationships built up in advance of the COPs and outside the formal UN space. The majority of FBO-led events likewise took place in the 'informal' Green Zone or fringe areas, which have been recognised by others to have potential influence on shaping future, formal, UN climate procedures (Hjerpe and Linnér, 2010; Schroeder and Lovell, 2012). Likewise, changing the minds and approaches of policymakers and negotiators 'in the moment', e.g. at COP itself, was generally recognised by FBOs themselves as limited in its impact.

Junk and Rasmusson (2019), in research on lobbying in Europe, found that success of frame uptake was predicted by what they call "camp level" framing, i.e. as a collective group, rather than by the efforts of individuals to frame a policy issue. Of critical importance is the ability to frame an issue in

collective and consistent ways as a group or "camp". FBO efforts to present themselves as a representative faith group in the UN-faith-climate space, and to align their frames into a collective faith-based (constructive, rather than confessional) approaches, would thus suggest a greater chance of influencing policymakers and negotiators at the UN and in global climate politics. The downsides of this approach are that it risks homogenising the diversity of faith-based framings in service of practical advocacy success. Participant interviews were often reflective of the tension between strategic faith-based advocacy and faith-specific, if ultimately divergent, climate frames, and engaged in process of frame alignment not only to coherently present a 'faith voice' but to facilitate intra-/inter-faith and faith-secular cooperation.

Looking to the issue of climate change itself, Conca (2022, p.263) raises the concern that framing may be limited by the sheer scale, both physical and "sociocultural" (and arguably political), of climate change. His concern is that regardless of the transformative and innovative potential of faith-based frames, translating them into the kind of action which will have tangible effects on limiting climate change is difficult, if not impossible, as is the task of translating or scaling up these frames from religions or FBOs to policy- or decisionmakers. Yet FBOs are not reliant on frames alone to motivate action (though this is something they feel is important); they are also able to draw on global-local networks of religious communities, representatives, and organisations through which to translate these frames into action. FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space in particular are adept at moving between and working in different areas, from international climate politics to local faith communities, and are as such already addressing the 'scaling up' concern; the next chapter deals with their global-local mediatory role. As for the practical concern that climate change is too big an issue to be addressed with "innovative" frames alone (Conca, 2022, p.263), I'm not certain that this is an issue which is unique to FBOs as opposed to being something which affects activists, lobbyist and those advocating for climate action at all levels.

Regardless of measurable uptake, it remains the case that FBOs saw framing climate change as a key part of their role and experience in the UN-faith-climate space, and that it was something they felt distinguished them from other (secular) NGOs or civil society groups. The fact that, beyond the formal negotiation spaces at the UNFCCC, initiatives like the UNEP Faith for Earth initiative are actively promoting FBOs' voice and climate frames suggests that whether or not it has influence on actual global climate policymaking or decisions, it is an approach which is valued by the UN.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have addressed the question: How do FBOs frame climate change, and is it distinctively faith-based? Drawing on the notion of framing both as a conscious practical process and as an analytical tool, I have shown how FBOs engage with diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames in the context of climate action. Whilst FBOs all tended to frame climate change in holistic and multidimensional ways, there was some divergence on whether it should be considered a crisis or

emergency, specific environmental issue, symptom of systemic global failings, or the headline issue under which other environmental and humanitarian concerns are subsumed. Justice was a favoured frame amongst many FBOs, but there are different perspectives on whether or not this was faith-based. It proved problematic for some groups who did perceive it as theologically motivated but coming from a tradition with which they did not align. Differences also became apparent in the extent to which eco- or anthropocentric frames were adopted, with different groups arguing that FBOs ought to move towards more environmental or more human-centred frames. Confessional frames were the most identifiably faith-based mode of framing climate change, and FBOs used teachings, concepts, and even reference to whole faith traditions to motivate action on climate change with both implicit and explicit instructions to act. Yet it was in non-confessional or constructive approaches where FBOs saw their particular value in the UN-faith-climate space, through their ability to add a moral imperative to climate change in ways which would be acceptable in interfaith and secular contexts. Throughout the chapter, we saw examples of frame alignment processes where, particularly in interfaith contexts, FBOs negotiated their frames to present a consistent, coherent, but still identifiably faith-based framing of climate change. This often required FBOs to be flexible with their frames, even if they recognised that they were not perfect confessional representations of their own tradition.

I argued that it is in FBOs' ability to present climate change in faith-based non-confessional ways and their blending of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames that they are distinctive in the UN-faith-climate space. Despite the somewhat ambivalent outlook regarding the potential uptake of FBO climate frames, FBOs' strategic flexibility with their frames to present a coherent faith-based voice at the UN suggests a great potential for influence. Yet concerns around representation and homogenisation of FBOs as a group remain. Framing is an important element of FBOs' climate advocacy, but it is bolstered by their ability to translate these frames across different contexts and to act as global-local mediators in the UN-faith-climate space, which I discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 - 'Glocal' mediation and strategic translation

> *It's not 'we' that are here in our own value […] we are actually just the top of the grassroots. So we are the grass tops.*
>
> [Interview WCC/ILC]
>
> *How can […] these people [be] involved in these global processes? That's why we have this local to global to local approach.*
>
> [Interview LWF]

6.1 Introduction

FBOs are often cited as having important connections to local faith communities with an assumed ability to represent their interests, mobilise them for climate action, and translate the language of global climate politics (Nordstokke, 2013; Veldman et al., 2014b; UNEP, 2021b). Underlying these assumptions are concerns related to the instrumentalisation of FBOs' social capital by secular organisations, overstatements of their connections, questions of what is meant by a global-local dichotomy, and of what representation of local interests by FBOs on a global level can and should look like (Balchin, 2011; Adger et al., 2011; Jones and Petersen, 2011; Smith, 2018; Wilkinson, 2022; Wilkinson et al., 2022; Tobin, Ali, et al., 2023).

This chapter addresses the research question: How do FBOs navigate across global and local spheres of climate action? In the first section, I address the 'glocal' dimensions of climate action before drawing on my participants' experiences and fieldwork data to explain how FBOs act as mediators between the global and local spheres of climate action. In particular, I highlight the diversity of actors with whom they work and how they operate iteratively across local and global contexts. I then explore why FBOs may be particularly well-placed to do so by turning to ideas (and assumptions) about their social capital, representation, mobilisation and influence. In the penultimate section, I argue that an important way that FBOs mediate between global-local contexts is through strategic translation in multiple directions, for example, from global climate politics to local interests, from secular climate policy to faith-based framings. In closing I draw attention to the limits to FBOs' global-local mediation, namely representation, capacity, and practical impact. Yet I also show how some of my participants seek to challenge and, in some cases, decolonise the norms of UN climate action. I argue that FBOs are important global-local mediators in the UN-faith-climate space, that they see this as an important part of their role, and that they are well-placed to do so given their wide-ranging connections and ability to translate across multiple contexts.

6.2 Glocalisation and faith-based climate action

Climate change, in its causes, effects and responses, is an issue which is at once inherently global and local (Gupta et al., 2007). A call often heard in climate action is to 'Think Globally, Act Locally', with some arguing that we should not only act locally but think locally as well (Kearns, 2007, p.306;

McKee, 2018, p.465). Yet policy responses to climate change cannot only happen at local or regional levels and demand global political cooperation. This happens most evidently under the auspices of the UNFCCC conferences and attempts at ratifying international commitments to limit the historical, contemporary and future causes and effects of climate change. To fully account for the inherently global and local dimensions of climate change is both an epistemological and practical challenge which it seems global climate politics has not yet been successful in addressing (Dessai et al., 2004; Bowman, 2010; Adger et al., 2011). The epistemic burden often falls on the shoulders of international civil society or activist groups who seek to represent and speak for the localised causes and effects of climate change on a global stage (Beyer, 2011; Nasiritousi, 2016; Bäckstrand et al., 2017).

Theories of globalisation have been employed to explain and analyse the global-local dimensions of climate change (Gupta et al., 2007; Beyer, 2011; Wilson, 2022; Sadouni, 2022). However, a focus on globalisation has been critiqued for encouraging cultural homogeneity, for not taking into account the incredibly diverse local dimensions of climate change, and for prioritising global knowledge and solutionist responses (Hulme, 2010; Robertson, 2012). Robertson (2012) introduced the idea of glocalisation as a moderator to his earlier writings on globalisation (1992) and it is a framework through which we can better understand the global-local dimensions of climate change and climate action. Glocalisation is a useful framework for emphasising the "heterogenising" rather than "homogenizing" aspects of globalisation (Beyer, 2007; Robertson, 2012, p.181). In the case of climate change, a framework of glocalisation helps emphasise that it is at once a global and local phenomenon and that at every facet (causes, effects, responses) both local and global dimensions should be considered.

The call for glocal responses to climate change is one to which some argue religions are well-placed to respond. Kearns (2007, pp.304, 322) argues that religious environmentalisms are paradigmatic examples of glocalisation in that they challenge the idea of globalisation as cultural homogeneity and "embod[y] the dialectic of the local and global". Beyer (1992; 2011) suggests that religions may offer important resources with which to understand and frame environmental problems in the context of an increasingly globalised world, though he remains cautious about their uniqueness qua religion. Religions have also been suggested as well-placed to respond to the glocal dimensions of climate change because of their social, and in some cases economic, capital, and their ability to mobilise and influence individuals and communities at different levels of climate action (Wisner, 2010; Veldman et al., 2014c; Veldman et al., 2014a; Mangunjaya et al., 2015; Schaefer, 2016; Bomberg and Hague, 2018; Smith, 2018).

More recently, FBOs have been discussed as important mediators, intermediaries and brokers at the UN, in sustainable development, and in climate action (Glaab et al., 2018; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b; Bolotta et al., 2019; Hague and Bomberg, 2022; Tobin, Ali, et al., 2023). In the book on religious NGOs at the United Nations, subtitled "Polarisers or Mediators?", Baumgart-Ochse (2018) uses the term "mediators" to indicate instances where FBOs employ more mediatory and less

confrontational approaches to policy negotiation and advocacy the UN. Importantly, it is not used to mean a "neutralist stance" but rather the capacity to negotiate between different stakeholders and "contribute to the understanding" of complex issues (ibid, p.3). The case of FBOs' engagement with the UNFCCC is introduced as an area where FBOs (internally to the UN) take on this mediatory, rather than polarising role (Glaab et al., 2018; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018a).

In research outside the UN, FBOs have been suggested as important, yet underlooked, climate intermediaries (Hague and Bomberg, 2022; Tobin, Ali, et al., 2023; Tobin, Farstad, et al., 2023; Tosun et al., 2023). Climate intermediation is not restricted to a particular kind of actor but is a role played by any organisation or individual who plays some role in climate policy processes; intermediaries "function as "go-betweens" by linking different types of actors and levels together to affect climate goals and behaviour" (Tosun et al., 2023, pp.688, 693; Tobin, Ali, et al., 2023, p.627). The concept has been applied to FBOs by Hague and Bomberg (2022) in a study of Scottish faith-based actors (FBAs), and to Muslim communities in the UK by Tobin, Ali, et al. (2023). Both studies argue that faith-based groups play important roles in climate intermediation by connecting climate policy to local communities, and vice versa.

FBOs have also been put forward as important brokers and translators of multiple competing norms and interests in development. Bolotta et al. (2019), following Lewis and Mosse (2006)[67], apply the analytical frameworks of translation and brokerage to ethnographies of FBOs in development. In doing so they demonstrate how FBOs (re)negotiate the norms of (secular) international development by brokering between multiple interests and by engaging in dynamic processes of translation, for example from conflicting religious reasons into a "smooth" narrative or from local faith-based aid into terms of international accountability (ibid, pp.254-257). Importantly they use these ethnographies to challenge a simple division between religious and secular actors in development and to demonstrate how processes of translation themselves are multidirectional and challenge typological divisions of faith-based and secular organisations.

It is important to note that the frameworks of glocalisation and of the potential (inter)mediatory and brokering role of FBOs are complicated by assumptions about what constitutes 'local' and 'global' or 'religious' and 'secular', and to what extent these are assumed to be connected. As Bolotta et al. (2019, p.245) note, studies of FBOs in sustainable development serve to demonstrate how the "religious-secular divide gets divergently signified and contested at global, national and local levels". Wilson and Steger (2013) argue likewise that forces of globalisation complicate the categories of religious and secular, and instead turn to a postsecular framing; in Chapter 7, I focus specifically on these religious-secular dynamics.

[67] Mosse and Lewis (2006) develop an anthropology of development to respond to criticisms of existing approaches as, variously, too "instrumental, populist and deconstructivist" (p.2). They instead take an actor-oriented approach focusing brokerage and translation (see also Long, 2003; Mosse, 2013).

Given the need for glocal engagements with climate change combined with existing assertions about FBOs' potential in this area, how then do FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space navigate across these spheres and contend with these challenges?

6.3 Faith-based organisations as glocal mediators

In this section, I analyse my participants' experiences to show first *that* and then *how* FBOs are glocal mediators in climate action. I use the notion of mediation not to suggest conflict resolution but to capture the various ways that FBOs, successfully or unsuccessfully, operate across multiple interests in multiple spheres, not just by taking the local to the global, but also by taking the global to the local (Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b; Tosun et al., 2023). In doing so, I build on the work of Baumgart-Osche and Wolf (2018b), Glaab (Glaab et al., 2018; Glaab, 2022) and Bomberg and Hague (2022) to draw attention to the ways that FBOs seek to act as mediators in the UN-faith-climate space.

My participants see the global-local, or glocal, dimensions of their work as critical; in Chapter 4, I already highlighted global-local mediation as one of the multiple roles FBOs play in the UN-faith-climate space. There are different ways of visualising how FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space are situated; Figures 6.1 and 6.2, below, are two ways of doing so.

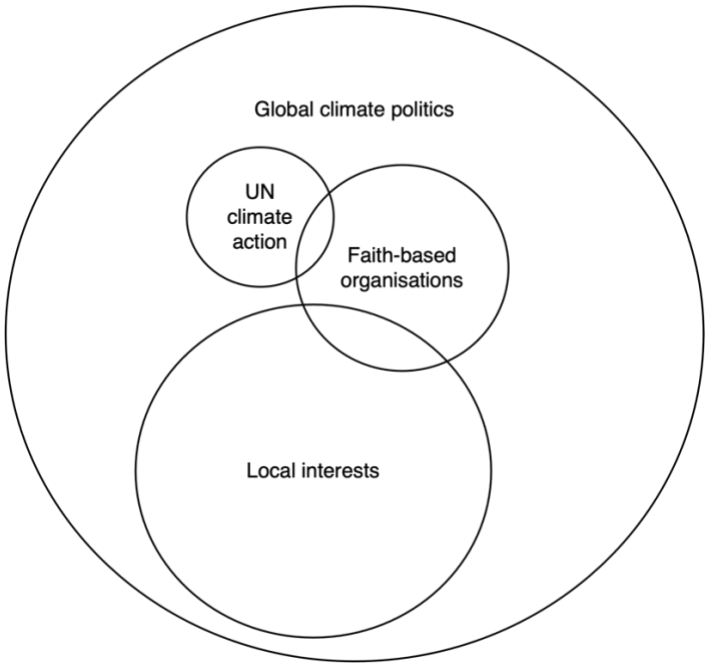

Figure 6.1 Global climate politics, UN climate action, FBOs and local interests

Figure 6.1 demonstrates a model where global climate politics is the all-encompassing sphere in which local climate change-related interests, UN climate action and FBOs exist and operate. Yet this model is limited as it suggests a homogenous sphere of globalised climate politics, where all interests are assumed to be captured under the global umbrella (Robertson, 2012). Wilson (2022), for example critiques an overreliance on a globalised model of climate politics as prioritising a homogenous (secular) ontology whilst subordinating diverse local interests. Figure 6.2 also shows FBOs as a

connector between local interests and UN climate action but removes the idea of a global sphere of climate politics. UN climate action takes place at a global level but is a small pinnacle of engagement, often taking place in a different realm to the heterogenous local dimensions of climate change and climate action. This model more accurately represents the experiences of my participants and is reflective of the huge and diverse number of local interests and engagement points for FBOs which I found when developing the database[68], many of which are not captured by the more nebulous idea of global climate politics.

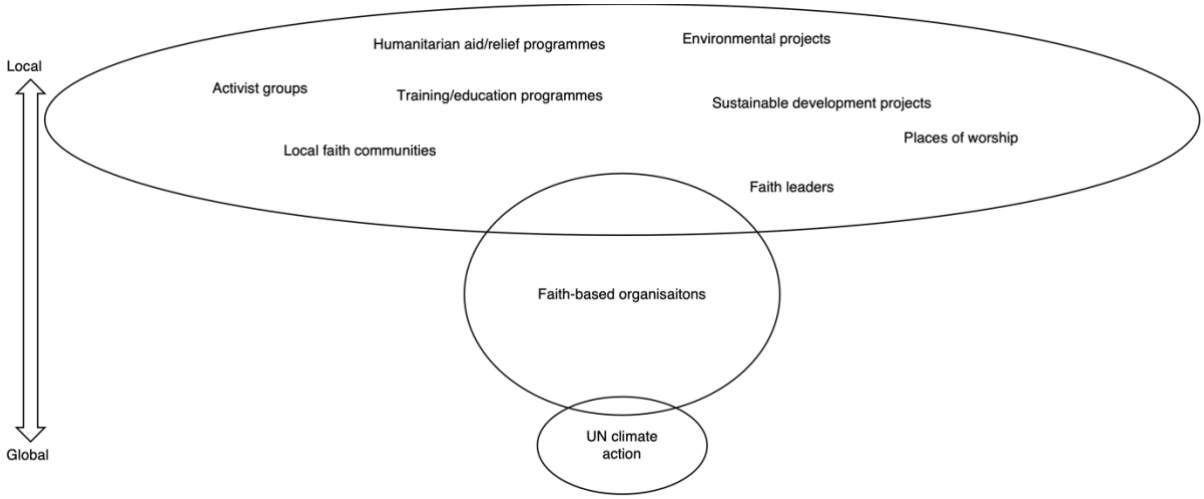

Figure 6.2 FBOs as glocal mediators

The first way that FBOs act as glocal mediators is by bringing the local to the global. This is both in practical terms, by bringing representatives from local communities affected by climate change (or communities seeking action on climate change) into the UN-faith-climate space or, in more epistemic terms, by framing their global-level engagement as an extension or representation of local interests. During an interview at COP26, one of my participants used the idea of "rooting" to explain how he understood his engagement with UN climate action:

> *When we maybe bring along some colleagues from Pacific or Malawi or where it is. Sometimes they meet together with us. It make*[s] *our statements stronger, I think. As a kind of climate witness from* [the] *South. So I think that is one kind of rooting. The other one is from back home* [in Norway]. *That people are praying, are working, are trying to do their best in environmentally friendly way. Both these kind of rootings is important.*
>
> [Interview Church of Norway]

Here, the emphasis on being rooted at a local level implies that they are not just performing a representative function but are in fact growing out from their roots in local interests and communities. Likewise, a distinction is made between different "kind[s] of rootings": roots in communities

[68] See Chapter 3, where I discuss the database of FBOs. It was not a formal part of the analysis but parts of it formed the basis of the quantitative analysis in Chapter 4 and it was the source from which the sample for website analysis was extracted.

experiencing the effects of climate change in the Global South, and roots in communities who may not yet be experiencing dangerous climate change but who still seek climate action. Another participant expressed a similar position of growing out of the grassroots:

> *It's not 'we' that are here in our own value… we are not the ones… we are actually just the top of the grassroots. So we are the grass tops maybe, that could see a bit further, but we are still very connected to the roots.*
>
> [Interview WCC/ILC]

The idea that they, as a representative of an FBO, are not really there "in [their] own value" pushes bringing the local to the global further, and challenges the idea that they are distinct entities as separate from the communities who they emerge from or seek to represent. This performs the normative function of decentring high-level global climate politics and puts the focus on the local. By recognising these diverse 'rootings' they challenge the potentially homogenising effects of globalised climate politics (Hulme, 2010; Robertson, 2012; Wilson, 2022). Other participants recognised the need to root climate action at a local level with one explaining that COP processes must start at the "community level, the country level, regional level, so on… […] That's the way to influence the COP" (Interview LWF) and another that "[w]e do as much as we can to connect with people on the ground and we also bring people's voices" (Interview QUNO). At COP26, FBO-led panels and events in the Green Zone and fringe area demonstrated the importance of bringing voices and from the Global South. The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), appearing or the first time as a an official delegate, ran an event which included speakers introducing case studies from churches in Kenya, Zambia and Rwanda whilst in the fringe zone, faith-based events, often led by UK-based FBOs, focused on bringing in voices from the Global South.

However, these local-to-global dimensions were also described as iterative processes where participants sought to also bring the global to the local, and where the engagement was framed as a dynamic process (see also Smith, 2018; Hague and Bomberg, 2022). One participant described her engagement as "this local to global to local approach" and two other participants highlighted the iterative nature of their engagement with global and local actors:

> *We try to have evidence at the local level: what is happening with [these] people in terms of climate impacts. Then we try to reach the global level. And then we go back to the local level with the changes, right? This is the approach that we follow*
>
> [Interview LWF]
>
> *In a sense, what we're doing at the UNFCCC, is you know first trying to have the grassroots faith people become aware of the challenges of climate change, which really they're not. So we have to bring this education in a sense. And, so we have to bring this education to the clerics of the organisations. And we also have to hear what they're doing because, globally, some people are doing amazing work. So we try to bring the two together, you know what people do locally and what… and the challenges that there are*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]
>
> *It's dialectical, shall we say. […] We wrote a bishops' letter on climate change in 2014. And the response from that actually went also to the congregations, who read this, and all these people on the ground who are not sort of… They are not seeing on these issues.*

> *And then it suddenly comes with a bishops' letter and they say, hey I know this, I want to be a part of this. And then you have the feedback back from… and that feedback goes back up to the top so to say. And you say we have to change this and that we have to look for this and that we have to do more. So it's a dialectical, both ways. So it's not just that the grassroots are affecting the tops, it's also that the tops are taking steps that* [are] *a bit out of the comfort zone, sometimes. And then it also brings something back. So I think it's very dialectical.*
>
> [Interview WCC/ILC]

In these examples, the emphasis is not on a monodirectional representation of local interests, neither is it simply two dimensions of global>local, local>global, but is instead an iterative, dialectical process where engagement with climate action on one level is affected by the other and both develop and move forward precisely because of this iterative engagement (Sadouni, 2022; Hague and Bomberg, 2022). FBOs here are not only extensions of the local, neither are they solely climate advocates at the global level but operate in and between both spheres. Robertson's (2012, p.192) critique of globalisation that "much of the promotion of locality is in fact done 'from above'" is challenged, first by the notion of rootedness in the local, then by the dialectical processes of global-local mediation which is better captured through a framework of glocalisation.

Yet, with whom this mediation takes places varies hugely between different FBOs,[69] and between the different local spheres with which FBOs engage. When speaking of the global-local dimensions of FBOs' climate action, it is easy to jump to the assumption that global means secular climate politics/policy, and local means faith communities affected by climate change in the Global South (Wilkinson and Kraft, 2020). The experiences above complicate these assumptions. FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space do work with local faith communities in the Global South/majority world, but they also have multiple points of engagement and networks at local, national, regional and global levels. In Table 6.1 I provide examples of FBOs, and the actors with whom FBOs work at different levels and in Box 6.1 I provide three examples of FBOs who are representative of different models of engagement in the glocal climate action context.

Participants were often working in coalitions or networks of FBOs and NGOs, as well as with UN initiatives to support their work. This reinforces their glocal connections and reach but also necessitates an ability to mediate across even more interests. Preparatory webinars for COP26 demonstrate the diverse partnerships forged by FBOs, which often included large faith-based development organisations, religious councils, individual representatives or faith leaders, UN agencies, climate scientists and researchers, and secular NGOs from local to global levels. My participants saw these multiple connections as key to their work, in part due to the multidimensional nature of climate action, for exmaple:

[69] See Chapter 3 where I provide a breakdown of participants, the website analysis sample, and in the wider database, by faith affiliation, location and type of organisation (e.g. development/humanitarian, religious council, environmental).

> *We also tr[y] to work with multistakeholder approach, because in Central America we involve the government, the academy, the Lutheran university, we involve the agricultural bank and we involve also civil society and member churches there. So I think, because climate has many, many…. um…. You can approach climate change by many angles, right?*
>
> [Interview LWF]

The UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative also recognised the multiple points of engagement with FBOs and was, at the time of our interview, establishing a coalition[70] of engagement which would include faith leaders, youth representatives, FBOs, and researchers, in order to be able to work both "from the top […] and from the bottom to, you know, have a coherent approach" (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth). The multistakeholder approach and FBOs' engagement with multiple actors further emphasises their role as mediators, as they are often the connecting point for groups who may not otherwise engage with each other or whose interests may be different, for example between climate scientists or UN negotiators, secular environmental NGOs, or even high-level faith leaders with local faith communities, faith-based development projects or local climate activists. One participant described a central part of his role as a "connector and enabler. A great deal of what I do, I feel like I'm in an old fashion switchboard" (Interview Care of Creation).

[70] The UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative have recently changed their name to Faith for Earth Coalition.

Table 6.1 Examples of actors and FBOs at local, national, regional and global levels

Level	Actors	Examples
Local	Places of worship; congregations; faith communities; local activist groups; local (faith-based) environmental, sustainable development, humanitarian projects	Green Congregations, Norway; Eco-Ministry of the Church of South India; Eco-Temples (International Network of Engaged Buddhists); Islamic Farming project Kenya; Brahma Kumari Renewable Energy Plant, India
National	Interfaith/faith-specific networks; religious institutions; state/government managed faith-based projects; religious states	Faith for the Climate UK; GreenFaith Kenya; Australian Religious Response to Climate Change; Catholic Rural Youth Movement Germany; EcoCongregation Scotland; Faith And Science Towards COP26 (UK Govt.); Holy See/Vatican
Regional	Interfaith/faith-specific networks; representative bodies; religious councils/networks; regional environmental/climate NGOs	Pacific Conference of Churches; All Africa Conference of Churches; Religions for Peace; Southern African Faith Communities Environment Initiative (SAFCEI); Inter-religious Climate and Ecology (ICE) Network (Pan-Asian); Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM); Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)
Global	International development/humanitarian FBOs; environmental FBOs; religious councils/networks; interfaith networks; international NGO-led projects; UN-led FBO initiatives; FBO-led initiatives at the UN	Islamic Relief Worldwide; Lutheran World Federation; Tzu Chi Foundation; Ummah for Earth; Bhumi Global; World Council of Churches; Muslim Council of Elders; World Resources Institute (WRI) Faith and Sustainability Initiative; WWF Beliefs and Values Programme; International Partnership on Religions and Sustainable Development (PaRD); UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative; Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC

For FBOs who have programmes of sustainable development or humanitarian aid, climate change is often not the main focus when they work with local communities. Climate action is instead integrated into their existing programmes of work. In doing so, they mediate between multiple interests at local to global levels. Participants from two Muslim development FBOs explained how climate change may not be a primary concern for communities with whom they work with one asking "are people going to be bothered about climate change, when they're trying to survive, when they're trying to, you know, find security or safety? I don't know, you know." (Interview Global One). Later she goes on to explain that:

> *I think what we found is if we approach it as a separate issue it doesn't work. Because, as I said, you know, people think of it as something not relatable. If we bring it to them as part and parcel of what they're doing, like, for instance, I'll give you one example. When we were doing our community houses in Kenya and Bangladesh, we asked the community what they wanted. […] So these were solar powered, solar panelled, community houses. And we had a cooperative of women who were taught how to maintain it. And you know and it's still going in today. […] So, you know just trying to connect in that way, and then you know, add the clean energy element.*
>
> [Interview Global One]

Here, despite advocating for climate action and engaging with climate policy at a global, UN level[71], when working with local communities climate action is instead framed as part and parcel of their existing work, and not as a distinct issue. Another participant, despite advocating for less, or indeed no, meat consumption as part of her climate action work at the global level when working at the local level she explains:

> *You know, in communities that have little, you have to think about what is it that you can do in those spaces, you know. If, for example, meat is something that they've not had for a whole year, you can't say to them that actually you can't eat meat.*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief Worldwide]

For participants from FBOs who have worked or currently have programmes of work which focus on sustainable development or humanitarian aid, there was often a perception that local communities "wouldn't be interested in climate change" (Interview Brahma Kumaris). The emphasis here is not that they would not be interested in climate change as a phenomenon but rather that the language of climate change needed translating into more relatable terms, which I discuss in more detail in section 6.4.

[71] Global One sits on the climate working group of the Multi-Faith Advisory Council (MFAC) to the UN and engages with COP processes, including active participation in the recent COP28 Faith Pavilion.

Box 6.1 Three short case studies of FBOs in the glocal context

'Global to local to global': The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

LWF is a communion of 150 of Lutheran churches across 99 countries. Its work includes humanitarian and development programmes, justice and peace programmes, under which its climate action work falls, as well as theology, mission and communion building. Climate change is treated both as a crosscutting theme to their humanitarian and development work but also as its own distinct workstream called Climate Justice. Its engagement with the UN on climate action is focused around sending delegations (often with a youth focus) to the COPs each year but also running capacity-building events for local communities, churches, and other FBOs to support pre-COP preparation and post-COP work. It also works to lobby governments before COP, and encourages church leaders to do so as well, and capitalises on its network of churches to spread climate messaging and encourage action. Yet it also builds climate action into existing development projects. LWF combine both a wide network of churches with development and humanitarian work and engage in climate action at every level form the formal UN to local communities.

'High-level engagement': Bhumi Global

Bhumi Global is a Hindu environmental organisation who focus on the triple crisis, following the UNEP, of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Its work now focuses on high level engagement at the UN and sits on the UN Multi-faith Advisory Council (including the climate working group) and coordinates the UN Faith and Biodiversity Working Group. It has a history of grassroots environmental action in India, including several 'environment weeks' at pilgrimage sites, but for the last ten years has focused on UN level climate and biodiversity action. Its focus on high-level engagement was in part a question of capacity but was also informed by a perceived need to have Hindu representation at the global UN climate action level. This is not to be representative of all Hindus, but rather to ensure that Hindu worldviews and approaches to climate action, in particular incorporating a focus on biodiversity, have a voice at the UN level. More recently Bhumi Global have sought to begin working 'down' to the local level again by researching Hindu perspectives on climate change and with plans to develop environmental resources for Hindu communities. Bhumi Global are an example of an FBO who have made the strategic decision to focus on high-level engagement with the UN in the context of limited capacity and limited Hindu representation in the UN-faith-climate space. Yet this more singular focus on high-level engagement remains informed by experience previous grassroots work and by an associated understanding of local interests.

'Network within other networks': Faith for the Climate UK

Faith for the Climate is as UK-based interfaith network focused on climate change. It comprises a wide network of UK faith communities, individuals, leaders and FBOs in the UK. Its work is

grounded in, and began at, the local level. The focus is on connecting those working on faith and climate in the UK, mobilising faith communities for climate action and supporting faith communities (or individuals within faith communities) with capacity building, education, and mobilisation. They also regularly organise and take part in climate activist events. Faith for the Climate were key in supporting UK faith groups with preparations for attending the Green Zone and fringe and activist spaces of COP26, organised panels in the fringe zone and an exhibition stand the Green Zone. Its engagement with the UN is supported by a 'network within other networks' approach as it works with GreenFaith, a larger US interfaith environmental group, and other international FBOs as well as the ILC to engage with UN processes. Faith for the Climate are a good example of an FBO who are grounded in local faith communities but seek to engage upwards by building on global networks of FBOs and engaging with the UN in strategic, and what may be perceived as more indirect ways.

Having established that my participants see glocal mediation as an important part of their role in climate action, yet that it looks very different across contexts, I now explore why FBOs may be particularly well-suited to performing this glocal mediatory role. Hague and Bomberg (2022) showed that faith-based actors in Scotland perform their intermediary function through representation, mobilisation and what they call "aggregation" (i.e. translation). Others have argued that religions and FBOs have important social capital, in terms of large communities or networks, which can be capitalised on in order to both represent local interests at a global level, and to mobilise and influence local communities for climate action (Wisner, 2010; Veldman et al., 2014a; UNEP, 2018e). These claims are often backed up with what have been criticised as oversimplified statistics related to global religious adherence – 80-84% of the world adheres to a faith[72] – as well as assumptions about the extent to which FBOs' or, more often, faith leaders' messages have impact and influence at local levels (Maibach et al., 2015; Tsimpo and Wodon, 2016; UNEP, 2018e; Torabi and Noori, 2019; Birdsall and Beaman, 2020; Wilkinson, 2022, p.93). Yet more contextualised research on religions and sustainable development and religions and climate action suggests that international FBOs do have strong links with local faith actors (Veldman et al., 2014b; Heuser and Koehrsen, 2020; Wilkinson and Kraft, 2020; Schliesser, 2023).

I found that participants did argue that their glocal mediation was constituted, if not made distinctive by the social capital of FBOs and religion. This was explained both in qualitative terms, for example their strong connections with local communities or groups, and quantitative terms, for example the numbers of people in their faith tradition or actors in their networks. During interviews, participants used statements such as:

[72] For example, the UNEP's "Why Faith and Environment Matters" page opens with "[s]piritual values drive individual behaviours for more than 80 per cent of people" (2018e).

> *[W]hen we're looking at Islam and climate change […] I think it really does profess to the faith of the 1.7 or 1.8 billion, right now, who are professing their faith as Muslims.*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief Worldwide]
>
> *[Y]ou've got 1.8 billion Muslims. So being able to encourage them about their faith, from an environmental perspective, is incredible.*
>
> [Interview Global One]

The All Africa Council of Churches likewise explained their influence in quantitative terms as representing "140 million Christians across the continent" and "204 member churches" (UNEP Our Road to Glasgow, 05.2021). The quantifiable impact of religions was also emphasised by the UNEP in reflections on the impact of Laudato Si' and the potential impact of the forthcoming Al-Mizan Covenant[73]:

> *So that* [the Al-Mizan Covenant]*will bring, in addition to the Catholic Church and the Christians, that would bring up to 4 billion people having two documents - comprehensive documents - looking at environment, people, and the planet, with other interrelated issues. We have started discussing with the Hindus as well, doing something similar. So if we succeed with the Hindus as well, then we will increase that to be 5.5 billion people having a sort of a guide, guiding book, on the relationship between what they are facing on a daily basis, their, you know, their living, and what the religions are saying, So this is how we're taking it.*
>
> [Interview UNEP Faith for Earth]

The extent to which we can consider high level faith-based statements or international FBOs representative of or having direct influence on such huge and varied populations is questionable (Tsimpo and Wodon, 2016; Koehrsen and Burchardt, 2023). It is in some ways reflective of the culturally homogenising effects of globalisation of which scholars calling for glocal responses to climate change are critical (Kearns, 2007; Hulme, 2010; Robertson, 2012). Some FBOs recognise this limitation. A participant from the Hindu FBO Bhumi Global recognised the limitations of their representative potential just by virtue of being Hindu and sought to address it by conducting a survey of Hindu environmental attitudes, "[b]ecause we realised that there's never actually been like a global survey on what Hindus, think about the environment, right? No one really knows, we just assume, right?" (Interview Bhumi Global). Both Bhumi Global and the Brahma Kurmari representatives felt that there was an assumption that they would be representative of Hindus and Brahma Kumaris worldwide, yet both recognised that this relied on a monolithic view of those affiliated with their faith tradition and a model of religion as being structured in relatively hierarchical ways with clear leadership and representative structures (Interviews Bhumi Global; Brahma Kumaris; see also Carrette, 2017).

Speaking in terms of numbers of religiously affiliated people seems limited, yet if we look at individual FBOs themselves, it becomes clear that many are in fact made up of large and wide-

[73] Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth is a statement presenting an Islamic perspective on the environment and sustainable development currently being drafted by Islamic scholars and Muslim environmentalists in conjunction with the UNEP (UNEP, n.d.).

reaching networks. This is particularly the case for FBOs who are made up of networks of churches, for example the World Council of Churches, the ACT Alliance,[74] and the Lutheran World Federation who have networks of 352, 145, and 150 member churches, respectively.[75] Here FBO claims to global reach are not reliant on common religious affiliation alone, but it is that the FBOs themselves are constituted by these large church networks. As a participant argued "not only are we part of the communities, we are the communities" (Interview LWF).

Their social capital and reach were also presented in more contextualised, qualitative terms, as specifically connected to them being FBOs, and as distinct from other NGOs in climate action at the UN: "[w]e have reach across the world that […] civil society organisations oftentimes don't" (Interview Bhumi Global). Here, despite on one hand being concerned about expectations to speak for and represent Hindus worldwide, there is also a desire to assert distinctiveness on the basis of shared affiliation and previous grassroots works with Hindu groups. Another participant compared FBOs with large church networks to other NGOs in Norway, who may lack the global reach and find it more difficult to bring "witnesses" to global climate action:

> *I think that is an important part that we have contacts in with church groups in the Pacific, in the southern Africa, in all over in Brazil, which are sister churches, as we call them, and some of these witnesses are here amongst us. And we are amplifying, trying to do that. And I think that is because some of the other, let's say Norwegian, NGO's, they don't have this kind of extended network.*
>
> [Interview Church of Norway]

For both the World Council of Churches and the Church of Norway, it is not just the case that these FBOs are constituted by church networks, but that their representatives at the UN also have their own congregations. Their reach and representative potential are thus presented in two ways: through their participation in a network of churches, and through their direct connection to a specific church community or congregation. It is also something which my participants thought makes them distinct from other NGOs and more specific "interest groups":

> *[O]f course there are much likeness with other NGOs. We have our friends from the ACT Alliance that are following the text and the negotiations like any other NGOs and they do a good job. And we also have the LWF youth section will come and do stunts… like some other NGOs does as well. But also, with WCC, I mean we… we're representing, we bring men in funny hats and colours and so on, to sort of say "we are something different". But what I see is our kind of additional value to COPs is that we are not representing a special interest. If you are WWF, you have an interest to protect nature. Ok, that's your thing. If you're there for like Amnesty International roles and being active on climate change, it's a part of their… to bring up the issue and people getting into prison because the human rights are violated. But if you are representing a church or faith communities, you're at the same time also bringing the voices of those on the very grassroots level. And many members. And for me that has been some… so important to remind us all*

[74] The Church of Norway representative in the sample works closely with ACT Alliance, an ecumenical humanitarian network.

[75] There is crossover between ACT Alliance, WCC and LWF member churches.

[Interview World Council Churches]

Their networks and outreach are also framed by the UN as yet untapped resources which are above and beyond those of other civil society groups: “there's no match in their outreach” (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth).

Another feature of FBOs’ global-local reach is their potential ability to mobilise communities for climate action and the question to what extent their social capital or quantitative reach translates into influence (Wisner, 2010; Veldman et al., 2014a; Hague and Bomberg, 2022). Research on the measurable influence of FBOs or faith leaders on communities is ambivalent (Maibach et al., 2015; Tsimpo and Wodon, 2016; Koehrsen, 2021; Koehrsen and Burchardt, 2023). Yet there are also several context specific studies which show that FBOs have had an impact on local communities’ climate and environmental action (Lyons et al., 2016; Bomberg and Hague, 2018).

It is easy to overstate the extent to which having large networks, or quantifiable global presence actually turns into practical influence. A participant from the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative argued for the trustworthy nature and unequivocal impact of faith leaders amongst local faith communities:

> *[W]e have recognised that there is a power that we are not using appropriately: the power of speech and the economic power of faith based organizations. We know that you know religions do exist in every corner of the world. Whether there is a, you know, an imam or a priest or a monk, or whatever. Everywhere in any village you go, you will find a faith leader, that is trustworthy and that is… that has the power of the word. So, whatever a religious leader says, it will be, you know immediately, it will go to the hearts of the people, and it will not be argued.*
>
> [Interview UNEP Faith for Earth]

Whilst this is just one facet of their justification and strategy to engage FBOs at the UNEP, it presents somewhat simplified account of the way faith leaders work, the impact they have on communities, and the extent to which their messages are automatically adopted and “will not be argued”.

For my participants from FBOs with church networks, the idea they are part of the local communities was used to argue for their mobilising potential. Churches were often highlighted as important sites of community mobilisation:

> *If you have a sermon, you know, you’re talking to a whole community […]. And it's nice, you have that ability to reach out to them in the church that you might not get in a normal situation, normal society*
>
> [Interview Operation Noah]

Another participant argued that, rather than being a challenge to mobilise communities for climate action the “[l]ocal level is very easy, because you just follow their daily pattern” (Interview Tzu Chi). Here Tzu Chi’s focus on social action is seen to bolster their ability to mobilise communities not by focusing on climate messaging but by making climate action relevant to everyday concerns of preparing food, budgeting and improving health and that the result was that “it's more easy for us, to convince them.”.

Yet, it is not just a case of mobilising communities for climate action and towards sustainable behaviour, participants also sought to influence states and state negotiators for climate action. Several participants, during interviews and at COP26 events, suggested that FBO representatives and faith leaders had an ability to influence those at national and regional levels, including states, and religious institutions. These processes often rely on the aforementioned iterative process of allowing global and local issues to be in dialogue with each other. A participant from the Church of Norway gave an example of FBOs advocating for higher NDC contributions from the Norwegian government at the international level at COP, which then translated down to local civil society level in Norway though church networks and the media, and then which became a 'bottom-up' advocacy, from church communities, for NDCs (Interview Church of Norway). The potential influence on states is recognised by the UNEP who want FBO representatives to play "an active role in pushing their Member States and governments in adopting more ambitious climate actions" (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth). During side events at COP26, several speakers from FBOs argued for stronger engagement with state negotiators and governments with one speaker arguing that faith leaders' respected status in the eyes of many governments represented an important resource in terms of influence and that "faith leaders freak people out" (Global Justice - Climate Justice, 11.2021).

6.4 Strategic translation

In this section, I demonstrate how FBOs strategically translate climate messaging across different spheres of climate action. An important element of FBOs' role in the UN-faith climate space is their ability to translate between the different spheres of climate action. I include translation in this chapter as it is an activity which becomes most important in the context of global-local mediation. The idea of translation has been applied to FBOs and religions or religious individuals previously in the context of climate action (Hague and Bomberg, 2022), in studies of religions and development (Wilkinson, 2018; Bolotta et al., 2019; Tomalin, 2021), in studies on religions at the UN and global civil society (Boesenecker and Vinjamuri, 2011; Bettiza and Dionigi, 2015) and in normative accounts of so-called postsecular society (Habermas, 2006). For Habermas (2006, p.10), translation is an "institutional proviso" of what he considers to be postsecular society. He argues that, given the continued presence of religion and religious individuals, their reasons must be incorporated into civic life and society. Yet at a certain point, i.e. to be considered relevant to policy and formal politics, they must be translated; a burden he claims should fall equally on both 'religious' and 'secular' citizens and that "without a successful translation there is no prospect of the substantive content of religious voices being taken up in the agendas and negotiations within political bodies and in the broader political process" (ibid, p.11). In contrast, Bolotta et al. (2019) use translation not as a process reliant on static binaries but as framework through which to analyse the ways that FBOs move between, dynamically engage with and reformulate multiple norms. In this section I demonstrate that FBOs' understanding of translation sits somewhere between these approaches in that it is often a strategic, conscious process between distinct languages but that it is also multidirectional and complicates static religious-secular, global-

local binaries. FBOs approach to translation thus looks less like the simplified model in Figure 6.3 and more like the multidirectional model in Figure 6.4.

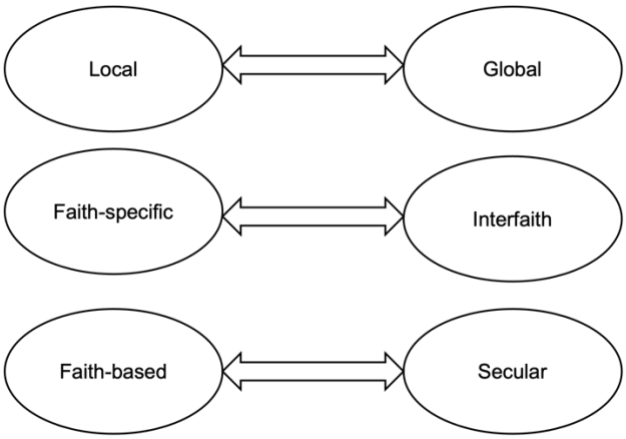

Figure 6.3 Binary model of translation

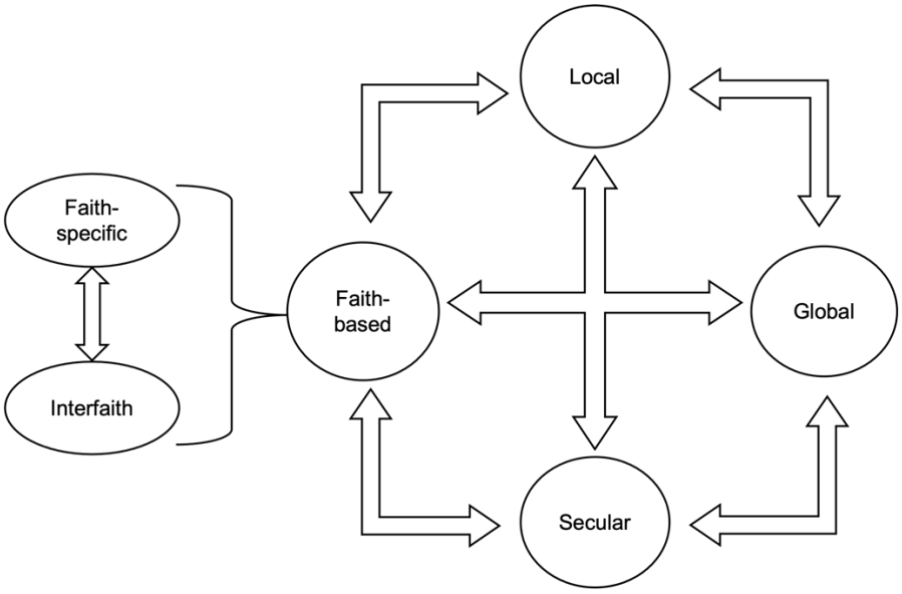

Figure 6.4 Multi-directional model of translation

Translation came up with 10 out of 12 participants, with some specifically using ‘translation/ing’ to describe their shifts in language and others hinting at the practice of translation by reflecting on how their language changed across different spheres of action. FBOs translate between global and local, religious and secular, faith-specific and interfaith contexts and ‘languages’. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how FBOs engage in processes of frame alignment in interfaith contexts to develop coherent framings of climate change, but as we look to the broader global-local context, translation becomes more apparent. However, these are somewhat simplified binaries and in practice these often blur together and FBOs are, as we saw in section 6.3, operating and mediating between multiple contexts where local does not necessarily mean religious, nor global secular. It is not the case that

FBOs are just translating between the religious language of their organisations and the secular policy language of the UN but they are also translating between the language of the UN and of local communities (and vice versa), between different FBOs, between global-level FBOs and local faith communities. As one participant put it:

> *It almost feels as though you have to be multilingual, in an English multilingual space, to be able to get everybody on that journey around climate change. So it's, it is difficult, from the communities who suffer it, to the communities who donate to it, it's a very, very different language.*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief Worldwide]

In what follows, I outline some of the key ways that FBOs engage in processes of translation.

As part of their mediatory role, FBOs translate the scientific and policy language to local communities. There was a consensus that the language of the UN, of climate policy and of climate science was generally very technical, required time to understand and engage with, and was a language which many local communities did not speak. Speaking from experience with the ILC and with UNFCCC negotiators, one participants said that "it's all very specialised language, and mandates" (Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC). Another said, of the language of climate policy and science that "the language in general can get quite alienating. It can get quite technical right? And people get paralyzed if they don't know the right terms to use. If they feel they don't know the science" (Interview Faith for the Climate). During a side event at COP26 run by the AACC, there was a discussion on the limited understanding of technical climate language amongst local faith communities, despite many already engaging in environmentally sustainable practices, and an associated need to make terms such as mitigation, adaptation and other climate and environmental language relatable (AACC panel, 11.2021). The challenge of language was also recognised by my participant from the UN side:

> *[D]efinitely one of the major challenges that we have been facing in our work is the language that we use. And we keep saying that our reports, our own reports, the international reports and scientific reports are not easily comprehended… comprehended by you know the regular people and the faith leaders.*
>
> [Interview UNEP Faith for Earth]

Participants saw it as part of their role to take of the task of translating it and not only make it understandable but making clear how and why it is relevant:

> *I think it is important that faith communit[ies] know more about what's the meaning of all these UN processes, no? Because it's really difficult to understand, takes time, and also UNFCCC processes, they have their own language*. […]
>
> *UNFCCC negotiations are difficult to follow, no? Because you need to invest a lot of time and you need to have the previous knowledge, no? So, on that level, they are taking the decision for all of us. So that's why it is important to translate what they are saying for people who can't understand this kind of language and provide them the possibility for them to raise their voice. It's something that will affect things, that decision, no? So yeah, we need to have this kind of role in the community office, no? How can we translate the COP [so that] faith leaders could participate, or youth can participate? How can we translate the finances, climate finances, in such a way that these people*

could give their opinions and participate on that? How can we translate the losses damages and the approaches of insurance… to this… at a community level, no?"

[Interview LWF]

FBOs recognised that these "UN processes" were important to local communities, but that without appropriate translation would remain opaque. This is not to say that the translation process occurred so that local communities could then engage directly with the UN, but rather that they could then be more fully involved in the iterative process of global-local mediation and have their voice represented more accurately by FBOs at the UN level. In a preparatory COP webinar, a CAFOD representative affirmed that "COP matters for local people" and that it "needs to be translated to those grassroots communities" for whom the high-level policy issues of climate action would have direct impact in terms of land access, agriculture and natural hazards (05.2020).

Translation appeared in specific ways, for example by translating specific policy points into resources for faith leaders and faith communities. One of my participants, for example, explained her organisation's focus on preparing materials explaining the NDCs:

[F]or some faith communities, you can probably listen or hear that well, 'we are faith communities, we don't want to be involved in the political negotiations'. But I think we need to, we try to make these… We're trying to […] give them this information so and then connect these processes to our faith identity. So, for example, for the NDCs last year we developed some material about what is the NDCs what is the… how is the process, no? What suppose the government needs to do, no? But also we include 'why?' Why you as a faith community, as a church leader as, as a church need to involve for that, no? So I think this is important, and this is the added value for us. I mean because you can find a lot of information about the UN processes, but you cannot find information about this process and the faith aspect.

[Interview LWF]

However, this goes beyond just explaining what the NDCs are in understandable terms, but also explains why faith communities should be involved and how it connects to their faith identity in terms of creation care and justice, as well as church leaders' connections to local communities and potential access to NDC decision-makers (LWF, 2020).

Another form of translation is to make it relatable to the issues already faced by local communities, something which was important for FBOs with sustainable development or humanitarian programmes. I already touched on this in the previous section, in terms of mediating between multiple interests, but it can also be understood as a process of translation:

[W]e did a project around WASH and faith, and we looked at, from Hindu, Christian, and Muslim perspectives, you know? And then tried to sort of teach people through their own religious perspective, how to keep the environment, clean, you know? […] And then you know, again, conservation of water comes into this, so it was around: How do you conserve water? How do you get clean water? How, you know. So all of these ways, we were sort of plugging in. And I think, you know, these things are you know really important. And it's relatable to people.

[Interview Global One]

Here the translation is not only into a single "faith-based" language but is actually into the language of several faith communities combined with the language of practical concerns and sustainable development needs in an interfaith WASH[76] project. Through this process, climate action is not done away with but becomes something "relatable".

In one case, in the context of work with evangelical church communities in the USA, it was not that the language was too policy driven or too technical per se but that the phrase 'climate change' at all was perceived, in some cases, as controversial:

> *[W]hen I'm talking to ordinary laypeople in churches and so on… the language becomes quite important. We know that for some people, climate change can be a trigger word, and they're not going to listen to a single word after they hear that you know so. So then you gotta be a little bit more careful. When I'm doing presentations and I'm talking to what might be a more conservative audience, I'll spend a lot more time talking about the Bible. You know, why God made the world, what humanity's role is in the world, what sin has to do with this, what Jesus' sacrifice might have to do with the whole environmental thing.*
>
> [Interview Care of Creation]

A similar sentiment was expressed by a participant from the Church of Norway who, when working with evangelical groups in the USA, focused on "creation" rather than climate change or crisis, as he would with activist groups at COP26, to "bridge build" (Interview Church of Norway). In these cases, the translation is into confessional faith-based terms, for example from 'climate crisis' or 'climate change' to 'stewardship' or 'creation care' and is strategically removed from the language of global climate policy. Rather than seeking to translate in order build capacity amongst communities who may want to ensure global climate processes consider their interests, the approach here is to simply make climate change matter at all.

Translation to the local level, however, does not always mean speaking in overtly faith-based or confessional language. As I demonstrated with examples from participants from FBOs working on sustainable development, the translation was into a language of practical concerns. My participants often distinguished between translating to communities being affected by climate change and translation to communities who they wanted to act on climate change, but who were not yet directly affected (Interviews Islamic Relief Worldwide; Global One). A participant from the Church of Norway explained that, when engaging with church communities or congregations in Norway he liked using the term justice because it was not "too religious" whereas when working with church leaders or even with multi-faith groups of religious leaders, he may employ a more theological language. Likewise, participants explained that they use different languages with communities who may be donors and communities who may be experiencing the effects of climate change (Interview Islamic Relief Worldwide).

[76] WASH stands for water, sanitation and hygiene.

That the language at the UN level becomes more technical means that FBO representatives who work on climate action, and who want to engage with the UN, require a certain level of capacity to develop an understanding and 'be on top of" the UN climate language and processes. Yet they must also be able to translate and explain these processes to others, their own FBO, and wider faith community. As highlighted in Chapter 4, FBOs who are well-resourced[77] (or who have dedicated volunteers) are able to dedicate more time to understand and engage with UN processes. The technicality of the UN language was recognised by one of my participants who has focused specifically on human rights and climate change[78]:

> *They're* [the wider faith community] *not interested in… what I'm, I have to interest myself in which is advocacy for human rights language into the Article Six. It's like "article six, you know, it's like boring stuff". It's like because I work there I've had to learn how to… what's important, even for me, and even for them. But to explain why it's important means a certain level of understanding of the UN policy, the UN functioning*
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]

Participants also explained how they sought to translate *into* climate policy language and to translate the interests of local communities into a language relatable to actors in global climate politics or to UN negotiators, as well as to translate their own faith-based framings of climate change into a language perceived as more acceptable in UN climate action contexts. In the last chapter, we saw one way this happened through the constructive (i.e., non-confessional) framings of climate change which FBOs employ in the UN-faith-climate space:

> *When we make a statement at the IPCC or the Human Rights Council it's very short and concise but where it connects is the ethical voice and the human impact voice and the urgency voice and the call that the moral call to conscience and the moral call to action now*
>
> [Interview QUNO]

Here my participant from QUNO, who has longstanding experience engaging with the UN and is the only FBO observer to the IPCC, is conscious to translate their Quaker-inspired peace and justice framing of climate change into terms which are more in line with the expectations of the IPCC, in this case, by focusing on the moral and ethical imperatives of climate change. In a similar way, FBOs who worked with politicians, state negotiators or secular civil society actors focused on using "language which is easier for politicians to access", for example human rights and climate crisis in contrast to the theological language they use with faith leaders or in interfaith and ecumenical contexts (Interview Church of Norway; Brahma Kumaris). This element of translation seems to get close to

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[77] Many FBOs have dedicated UN engagement offices, for example the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) and the Quakers (QUNO). See Berger (2021) for a detailed case study of the BIC at the UN.

[78] Article 6, in this quote, refers to the article of the Paris Agreement which focuses on commitments to national emissions reductions, mitigation and adaption (UNFCCC, 2016). The OHCHR in conjunction with NGOs and FBOs sought to enshrine human rights protections into Article 6 (Geneva Environment Network, 2018)

what Habermas (2006) was describing, of translating religious or faith-based reasons, at a certain point, into a language acceptable at a policy level. However, as we have seen this is only one element of translation and FBOs do not only translate in this direction. Likewise the 'burden' of translation is not only on FBOs themselves.

The translation is not only conducted by FBOs, but also by the UN. Part of the UNEP faith for Earth's aims is to translate the technical language of climate science into religious and faith-based language and to translate "these reports or these you know… understandings, these policies, the scientific evidence and so on, into a simple language related to the language of the sacred scripts" (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth). However, it is not the case that this translation happens in one direction, but that they are trying to bring both into conversation with each other: "we identify what the science is saying and as well as what the scripts are saying and make that connection between them" (UNEP Faith for Earth). This is evidenced in the series of thematic papers the UNEP have released describing how different faith traditions understand particular environmental issues but is also evident through the forthcoming Al-Mizan Covenant. During an interview with a participant from the UNEP Faith for Earth, he argued that the papal encyclical Laudato Si' was, to date, the only religious document to fully address the SDGs, before the SDGs had formally been launched[79] (Interview UNEP Faith for Earth). Yet this reverse-engineered perspective on Laudato Si' as a Catholic reflection on, or translation of, the SDGs, has informed the approach to the Al Mizan covenant. The covenant is intended to be an Islamic perspective on the (environmental) SDGs and can be seen as a form of translation, from the language of climate action and sustainable development, into the language of Islamic theology (UNEP, n.d.).

FBO representatives in the UN-faith-climate space are well-equipped to engage in these translation processes precisely because they operate across multiple spheres of local to global climate action and have the religious and policy literacy combined with an understanding (and often experience with) local communities. My participants themselves recognised that speaking multiple languages was a strength for their work in the UN-faith-climate space, and that it also enabled them to more fully represent local interests at a global level:

> *I think our language and our literacy brings us the… closer to be able to challenge, some of those places. […] [I]n UN spaces, a different type of language is used. With our communities a different type of language is used. With our donor communities, a different type of language is used. With our volunteers, a different type of language is used.*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief Worldwide]

At a local level, in some cases, the language and literacy became more important than expressing faith identity, where ability to speak in 'religious language' facilitated engagement rather than identifying with a particular religion. One of my participants, speaking about previous experience conducting

[79] Laudato Si' was published in May 2015 and the SDGs were announced in September 2015, then officially adopted in January 2016.

grassroots work in India, said: “it was more the language that opened doors for us, rather than us being a faith-based organisation” (Interview Bhumi Global).

The translation processes were often well-thought out and were strategic in that they were intentional and aimed at facilitating better understanding of, and local engagement with UN processes, but also at bringing local interests, or faith-based motivations for climate change to the UN context. It is not just the case that FBOs were translating, as with Habermas’ (2006) model, from religious into secular language, but that they were translating between local and global interests, between interfaith, ecumenical and faith-specific contexts, between faith leaders, politicians and faith communities. Whilst the need to translate their more obviously faith-based language into secular climate policy terms at the formal end of UN engagement applies, it is by no means the only mode or direction of translation. These processes demonstrates what Bolotta et al (2019, p.255) call the “complex hybridization” of assumed categories of religious-secular/global-local and of the way that FBOs are often at the “intersection between conflicting moral lexica and belief systems that need to be translated in multiple directions” (p.256). Translation is an important and strategically employed element of FBOs work in the UN-faith-climate space which supports their glocal mediation, and I argue that FBOs are good at doing so as they are able to speak multiple languages of faith communities, of secular civil society groups, of faith leaders, politicians, and UN negotiators.

6.5 Limits to glocal mediation and decolonisation

There are of course limits to FBOs’ glocal mediation efforts, particularly in terms of representation, capacity, and measurable impact. I summarise these here and discuss how FBOs have tried to overcome these, in particular, through discissions of decolonisation.

Representation is an issue which I return to thorough this thesis as it permeates all aspects of FBO engagement in the UN-faith-climate space: how is religion represented at the UN, which faith traditions and regions are represented by FBOs, can or do FBOs at the UN represent local interests? The continued dominance of Christian and Global North based FBOs at the UN, on the face of it, calls into question the extent to which we can consider FBOs at this global level representative of local interests, in particular local communities in the majority world/Global South and those already affected by climate change, for example small island developing states (SIDS) (Oakes, 2019; UNEP, 2021c). As I have demonstrated in this chapter, and in Chapter 4, FBOs have sought to overcome this by working within UN systems to bring more participants and voices from the Global South, and the UNEP Faith for Earth initiative has sought to engage with more FBOs from the Global South and to support them in registering with the UN. Yet it remains an open question the extent to which this addresses the more qualitative, epistemic question of representation beyond the quantifiable.

I have already touched on the extent to which we can consider FBOs to have an impact, either on global climate politics or on mobilising local faith communities and have suggested that whilst there may be limitations, many FBOs do have large networks and global reach on which they can capitalise

for climate action. The extent of their influence is difficult to measure. Overstating the potential influence of FBOs, or faith leaders, as we saw in the case of the UNEP, may lead to unfulfilled expectations in cases where "the faithful [do not] follow suit" (Tsimpo and Wodon, 2016, p.51). Koehrsen and Burchardt (2023, p.12) are dubious about claims to FBOs' or religious leaders' direct influence on faith communities and use the lukewarm if not outright negative reception of Laudato Si' amongst some parts of the Catholic church, including bishops, national churches and congregations, to problematise the assumed "Francis effect" on public opinions about climate change (see also Maibach et al., 2015; Nche, 2022).

Another limiting factor I have touched on already is one of capacity. In the preceding section, I demonstrated that FBOs felt that engaging with the UN required significant effort, not only in terms of learning the language but also in understanding how to translate the UN climate processes to their own, or other, FBOs and to local communities, as well as in dedicating time and resources to maintain fluency. It is for these capacity reasons that some FBOs with fewer staff members or resources have made decisions to focus their engagement only at the UN level (See Box 6.1 - Bhumi Global) in order to be able to fully engage with the UN. The desire to maintain a UN presence is greater for those FBOs from faith traditions who remain in the minority in UN spaces, for example Hindu, Brahma Kumari and Buddhist groups (Peterson, 2010; Carrette, 2017).

There is likewise an ambivalence surrounding global-level UN climate action amongst FBOs, as I already touched on in Chapter 4. For some there is a recognition that whilst it may be a necessary feature in the landscape of climate politics, it remains limited in terms of its potential to facilitate actual responses to climate change. One participant, whilst acknowledging the legitimacy that the UN may bring to climate action, in terms of an authoritative voice on policy and science, said that "we know it's not going to take place at the UN" (Interview Bhumi Global). The critique of UN and global level climate politics was reflected by others who criticised the unavoidably power and money-driven nature of much of the policy negotiations and that "even as faith people, we live on this earth with these politics and these power games" (Ramp up to COP26, 11.2020). Some critiques of UN climate action rested not on the potential to facilitate actual responses to climate change but rather on the nature of UN processes:

> *I think one thing that I have learned just by doing this piece of work with the UN is the bureaucracy is incredible. Like one word, or one sentence, and the number times, things have to go back and forth and… I think that's a great difficulty, but you know, I think that's, I guess, that's the UN for you isn't it?*
>
> [Interview Global One]

Despite these critiques there was also a hopefulness in the potential for progress at a global level particularly given that more FBOs from the Global South are getting a seat at the table or are able to engage indirectly with UN processes through initiatives such as the UNEP Faith for Earth. Speakers from an FBO in the Global South/majority world, the AACC, was "concerned by mistrust surrounding COP negotiations" and, having achieved their aim of being a formal delegate at COP26,

with the aim of representing African churches and church networks at the UN, felt that critiquing the processes delegitimised their global-local representative potential (AACC panel 11.2021; UNEP workshop 05.2021). Others recognised the shortcomings of the global-level UN system but saw the interfaith and faith-based voice as critical for challenging the high level focus of the UN and the "highly political and highly lucrative" nature of global climate action (Interview QUNO).

Recently, there has been a push to decolonise climate action with recognition of the need to engage in non-extractivist and equitable ways with communities affected by climate change, to recognise the important complementary potential of local knowledges and worldviews and to address the colonial legacies which have contributed to climate change (Whyte, 2019; Chao and Enari, 2021; Nogueira-Godsey, 2021; Murad, 2023). These calls were also brought up by participants who felt climate action remained too focused on and lead by the Global North. At an interfaith FBO event in the Green Zone at COP26, in response to the lack of representatives from countries outside Western Europe and North America, a speaker argued that "we need a Global South COP"[80] (Faith in Action Panel, 11.2020). Participants from FBOs with partners and programmes in the majority world/Global South recognised that, despite their efforts at bringing in local communities, voices and representatives, UN climate action remained dominated by Christian organisations based in the Global North and that, despite Christian FBOs' efforts at inclusion there needed to be more parity between different FBOs:

> *Who sets the agenda for the faith community at the UN when it comes to climate change? And how do we have more equity in in those conversations? […] from a geographic point of view, like from a geopolitical point of view, but also from like, a religious point of view as well*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

Even where FBOs were engaging with local communities in iterative ways they recognised the shortcomings of the system within which they were operating and to an extent reliant on. Despite FBOs mediating between multiple interests at local, national, regional and global levels and strategically translating climate action between multiple languages, they still engage with the UN system and seek to decolonise the nature of FBO representation and the language of climate action in that space. Two of my participants explained that:

> *So much of the terminology of the UN is very Western approaches and it doesn't really have room for others, you know? And I think that's changing and that needs to change, but we still got a long way to go*
>
> [Interview Global One]
>
> *I really do think that the language needs to decolonising in these spaces, because often it is language that cannot be… projected back to communities, because communities do not understand this language*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief Worldwide]

[80] This was a topic of debate for COP26 in particular as NGOs from the Global South faced additional barriers to attendance in the COVID-19 context.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that my interview participants, and FBO representatives observed in the field, see themselves as important glocal mediators in the UN-faith-climate space and that they are able to do so by capitalising on multistakeholder relationships and faith-based or interfaith networks. Whilst I demonstrated that they sought to bring local interests to the global level, and in many cases saw their own work as inseparable from their roots in local communities, these processes are iterative. They seek to bring both the local to the global and the global to the local, and saw this mediation as a dynamic, continuous process which informed their work at each level. In demonstrating their glocal mediation I also sought to complicate the idea that local necessarily meant faith-based, or affected by climate change, and demonstrated the variety of interests between which FBOs mediate. We can understand FBOs' strength in glocal mediation through their social capital and their potential ability to represent, mobilise and influence faith communities. Notwithstanding the potential to overstate FBOs' reach or over-rely on quantitative measures of social capital, I suggested that FBOs do in fact have access to wide networks and, in the case of church-based FBOs, are constituted by these networks. In the latter half of the chapter I focused on a feature of FBOs' glocal mediation, that is their ability to translate climate action between multiple 'languages'. These translation processes are dynamic and multidirectional in that they occur between religious-secular, global-local, faith-based-interfaith 'languages'. There are of course limitations to their glocal mediatory roles which I outlined in terms of representation and capacity as well as the perceived limitations of the UN to properly address climate change. For some of my participants, and many FBO representatives at COP26, there was a recognition of a need to decolonise climate action both in terms of language and of the continued Western/Global North-centric nature of climate politics. Through their iterative processes of glocal mediation and in their efforts to translate climate action across multiple glocal languages it seems FBOs are attempting to take on this challenge, yet there was also recognition of a reliance on, and to an extent complicity in a system which may not be fit for purpose.

Chapter 7 - Religious and secular dynamics of climate action

[I]n my experience there isn't such a big divide between secular activists and faith-activists. Because even secular environmentalists see something sacred in the climate and the environment.

[Interview Faith for the Climate]

I think the faiths, we definitely think there's something special and different about us.

[Interview Bhumi Global]

7.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at how participants engage with, and negotiate, the religious and secular dynamics of the UN-faith-climate space and addresses the final research question: How do religious and secular dynamics affect FBOs' climate action and can we consider climate action to be postsecular? I begin by briefly tracing the different ways that religion as a category and identifier has been constructed in the UN and in global climate politics before moving to explore what my participants' experiences tell us about the nature of being faith-based, to varying degrees of salience, in climate action. Then, I discuss whether and if so how the ostensibly secular nature of (UN) climate action shapes FBOs' engagement and expressions of religion or faith-based identity. I consider whether climate action may be a comparatively uncontentious or welcoming space for FBOs and expressions of religion. Throughout these sections, I show how religious-secular boundaries are necessary but not sufficient to understand the experiences of my participants in climate action; they renegotiate, cross and complicate religious-secular, and interfaith boundaries in climate action whilst still asserting their faith-based distinctiveness. Finally, I propose that engaging with theories of postsecularism is critical to understand the nature of the UN-faith-climate space. I argue that the postsecular is fruitful both in a descriptive and normative sense for FBO experiences of climate action.

7.2 Categorising religion at the UN

In order to more comprehensively address the question of how religion is negotiated by FBOs and how religious-secular dynamics affect FBO engagement with climate action, it is useful to first address how religion is and has been categorised at the UN. Whilst my primary focus rests on the experiences of FBOs, tracking the legacy of the category of religion at the UN will help to better understand the contemporary context in which FBOs who engage with international climate action operate. Recent UN projects designed specifically to engage with FBOs[81] combined with an increasingly salient faith-based voice in global civil society (Lehmann, 2016; Haynes, 2017) seem to highlight the changeable (across time but also across agencies) nature of what constitutes religion at the UN. Given the centrality of the UN in global climate politics, the involvement of FBOs in environmental programmes and climate action would be better understood if we grasped the historical

[81] See Chapter 4.

and conceptual roots of the UN's framing of religion. The idea of religion and FBOs by the UN affects the ways in which these groups are perceived and engaged with and will also affect the terms on which they are able to advocate at the UN.[82]

The UN, with a complex organisational structure and multiple specialised agencies, commissions and independent bodies does not have a singular understanding of religion or approach to working with religious groups.[83] However, there are several approaches that have been taken of which we can see a legacy in contemporary faith-based projects and through the ways in which FBOs navigate their role and expressions of faith-based identity. There are multiple factors at work when we consider the role of religion at the UN and all have aided in shaping the current position of FBOs, and in this case, those FBOs involved in climate action.

Models of religion at the UN

One of the first ways in which religion has explicitly been discussed by the UN is in a legal and human rights sense (Årsheim, 2016; Lehmann, 2018). Although this may seem quite distinct from the use of religion when engaging with FBOs in climate action,[84] this rights-based framing of religion can be seen to slip over into other areas of the UN and gives a good indicator of the expected nature of religion at the UN. Årsheim (2016) traces the use of religion as applied by the UN special rapporteurs on the freedom of religion and belief, which he suggests can have far-reaching implications for what religion is considered to be and what is considered to be religion by the UN, NGOs and member states. Religion appears to be distinct from other human rights protections for discrimination in that it is treated as an "individual elective" (ibid, p.7). This does not mean that is not considered worthy of protection, in fact there are wide-reaching protections for 'religion or belief' as detailed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which encompass all manner of religious (and non-religious) belief beyond established religious traditions. What it does mean is that religion is considered to be an individual, private matter, worthy of protection whilst it remains as such. It seems that when religion becomes public or involves outward practices or manifestations, it may be subject to legal restrictions grounded in ideals of public safety or the rights of other individuals. Arsheim (2016, p.8) suggests it promotes a "radical

[82] See Chapter 4 where I discussed the points of entry for advocacy at the UN.

[83] The nature of the UN itself is also up for debate as evident in the work of international relations theorists. Miall (2017, p.26) puts forward three common approaches to understanding the UN: as an arena (for states, NGOs and global civil society to come together), as an actor (with its own voice and mission), as a tool (a device of already powerful states).

[84] The connection between freedom of religion and belief and climate change is rarely made in the literature. Peterson (n.d.) in a working paper links freedom of religion and belief (FoRB) to the successful implementation of SDG13 – climate action – and argues that the effects of climate change can challenge FoRB but that FoRB is also essential to successful international climate action. The idea, which has been reflected in events such as the International Ministerial Conference on FoRB in 2022, is that the more freedom religious groups have, the better they can engage with and respond to global crises.

individual[ist]" approach which he traces back to the human rights conventions of the mid-late 20th century. By taking such an individualist approach, the UN appears to avoid the complex task of defining or categorising what constitutes 'religion' in general as it is subsumed under seemingly wide protections for personal 'religion or belief' (see also Grüll and Wilson, 2018). In doing so, religion is reduced, at least in a legal sense, to nothing more than private belief which has implications for expectations at the UN and presents a limited view of what constitutes religion in general. However, Lehmann (2018, pp.7–8) suggests that in recent years the language of human rights and freedom of belief has largely fallen out of the religion-at-the-UN debate, replaced instead by discourses of interreligious dialogue and "harmony and understanding". Yet it marks a starting point for understanding religion as framed by the ideal that it is at its core a matter of personal belief with public expressions of faith and religious practice seen as optional extras.

Whilst this has given us an insight into the more foundational notion of how religion is managed by the UN, there is more to be said about the ways in which religion is framed beyond private belief and official categorisation. Beittinger-Lee (2017a, pp.119–125), albeit with an ultimate interest in the role of religious NGOs at the UN and not religion per se, contends that that, despite a lack of official categorical recognition by the UN, religion plays, and has always played a definitive role. Unlike those who study the role of particular religious traditions at the UN, or those who study the role of religious NGOs or FBOs, she proposes that the role of religion is not limited to the involvement of individual religious traditions or faith-based actors but that religion in and of itself has a distinct if invisible role. Beittinger-Lee (2017, pp.123-124) details three potential models which can be seen employed variously at the UN: secularist, culturalist and religious. The UN has historically taken the first of these approaches, informed by post-Westphalian ideals of secular – here assumed also to mean *neutral* - governance (Haynes, 2014, p.176; Beyer, 2016). This is more in line with the rights-based approach where religion is considered a private, if protected, belief. However, this particular instantiation of secularism is by no means universal and has been critiqued by postcolonial scholars, amongst others, for perpetuating a Western Judaeo-Christian ideal of religion under the guise of secular neutrality (Asad, 2003; Wilson, 2017).

Beittinger-Lee's (2017a) culturalist model asserts that religion can be subsumed under the category of 'culture' and dealt with by UN agencies such as UNESCO[85] (Beittinger-Lee, 2017). Boehle (2010) suggests that UNESCO has historically been one of the leading voices on understanding and engaging with religious groups with the focus largely resting on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and protection of sacred land or architecture. This is particularly interesting in the case of indigenous traditions for which religion is an even more contentious term and which have often found protection for spiritual land with UNESCO which would be denied under the provision of freedom of 'religion or belief' (Kraft, 2017). However, it is clear that religion remains distinctly outside of the structures of

[85] This approach of categorising religion as culture is also reflected in the work of the UNFPA's "Culture Matters" project which sought to engage with FBOs and communities (UNFPA, 2005).

the UN, an artefact of so-called global or local communities' culture, something to be recognised, monitored, but not necessarily to be engaged with in partnership or integrated within UN decision- or policy-making processes. Unlike the first approach, this at least affords certain protections to religious practices, beliefs, materials and architecture but seems to reduce it to nothing more than these as it is still bracketed out of UN processes and seen as an object for protection or a tool for intercultural peacebuilding.

Finally, the religious model is proposed, which has been argued for by many FBOs seeking formal recognition along with state-based religious actors such as the Holy See and the OIC[86] (Beittinger-Lee, 2017, p.124). This model accords religion its own category and for FBOs to be recognised as distinctly *religious* and not just as other civil society actors within the UN system, as I discuss in the next section. But committing in any more substantive way to a categorisation or identification of religion brings with it new challenges, laid out in the critique of the 'world religions' paradigm and postcolonial critiques of secularism, that religion becomes either an extension of or antithesis to the existing secular structures and the idea of what religion 'is' is once more framed by dominant (Euro-centric) narratives (Asad, 2003; Masuzawa, 2005).

If we take individual UN organisations or agencies as the starting point we can see some of the above models in practice but we can also see cross-cutting themes, that is a pragmatic, functionalist approach to religion emerging where religion is engaged with, and perhaps defined, on the basis of its potential to aid in the delivery of UN goals (Jones and Petersen, 2011; Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017). In the context of climate action, as discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, this often rests on the social, economic, and particularly moral capital which FBOs are seen to offer.

In addition, there is an ongoing debate about the reality of contemporary secularism of the UN with some arguing that the state of international relations and by extension the UN can now be considered postsecular, or that the postsecular is an important way to analyse and respond to the continued presence of religion(s) and to the inadequacies of secular(ist) approaches to global challenges (Mavelli and Petito, 2012; Haynes, 2013b; Wilson and Steger, 2013; Wilson, 2014b; Ager and Ager, 2016; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b). Haynes (2014, p.44), for example, describes the UN as a "secular organisation in a postsecular world". I return to the postsecular in the final section.

Calls for a faith constituency

Connected to Beittinger-Lee's (2017) religious model described above, is the campaign by FBOs to secure official recognition as a category at the UN. Despite many faith-based and interfaith events,

[86] The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (previously Conference) (OIC) is a group of 57, mostly Muslim majority, states, with a permanent delegation and voting bloc at the UN. They are often used as a case study in the blurring of state and religion as they act as states in the secular UN system but also seek to foreground their religious identity (Bettiza and Dionigi, 2015; Beittinger-Lee and Miall, 2017).

projects and declarations within the UN, religion remains unacknowledged as an official identifier or category for NGOs with consultative status.[87] Groups such as the Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development, the Multi-Faith Advisory Council, the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative, and the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC already engage with FBOs by virtue of them being faith-based yet these do not amount to an official constituency or category of NGO.

I discussed the call for formal recognition of religion, or faith, as a category with seven out of twelve participants. However, there was no clear consensus on whether or not formal recognition was a worthwhile campaign. Three of my participants felt it was an important part of their work at the UN. FBOs are currently an "informal group" within the UNFCCC (see Chapter 4) yet these participants felt that it was important to push for faith to be recognised as a "major group" because:

> *To dilute the faith groups with the civil society sector really dilutes our message and our ability to get out that moral voice. And I think by separating us out into a separate group will allow us to have a lot […] more airtime […] to share what our perspectives are.*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]

A similar sentiment is echoed by another participant:

> *We do want to get another constituency into the UNFCCC because faith matters in these spaces, and I think, if we become another constituency, alongside women and indigenous people, we'll be able to have more say on what we can do with our communities, vast communities, on issues around climate change.*
>
> [Interview Islamic Relief]

Both participants here see the lack of formal recognition as a barrier to their work on climate change *as FBOs* but, rather than thinking about the UN at large, are instead focused on just the UNFCCC. The leader of the UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative, whilst recognising the potential issues concerning increasing the division between (secular) NGOs and FBOs that may arise as a result of formal recognition, is still "hoping that the Economic and Social Council of the UN would consider FBOs as a standalone category". Here the motivation comes from recognition of their existing presence at the UNEP[88] and that:

> *That is a huge power. So raising their voices and their presence would make a good sound or voice in terms of looking at the matter and recognising them, as such. As a standalone sector.*
>
> [Interview with UNEP FFE]

However, two of my participants specifically cautioned against the call for a more formal category: from the Brahma Kumaris (and co-chair of the ILC) and from the Muslim organisation Global One (and co-chair of MFAC[89]). Their objections were largely reflective of the challenges I proposed to

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[87] ECOSOC recognises 15 different categories of NGO but religious or faith-based is not one of these. (See Chapter 4).

[88] At the time of the interview, he stated that FBOs represented 12% of UNEA accredited NGOs– see Chapter 4 for a quantitative overview of FBOs at the UNEA.

[89] ILC – Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC; MFAC – UN Multi-Faith Advisory Council.

Bettinger-Lee's religious model: that formally identifying religion as a category would simply bring about new, or multiply extant issues around who defines what religion is and who speaks for religious groups, or that the UN system was too entrenched in its secular approach to allow for such a change. Speaking from longstanding experience co-chairing the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC, one participant said:

> [T]*he people who come into the UNFCCC to start with, they want to fight that war* [to get a faith constituency] *And we have to say "yes, it's a good war to fight, you can go ahead"* [laughs]. *But we've learned that it's not, the best use of your time. Because it's been accepted a long time ago and that's how the UN works, when something has been accepted. So I kind of managed to get a status under the UNFCCC faith-based organisations have the status of* [informal group]
>
> [Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC]

Here, it is more about the unlikelihood of the secular UN system accommodating religion as an official group rather than issues around what such a group would look like, and she qualifies it with a broader outlook on the role of religion globally, saying "80% of the people have a declared religion and 95% of them have a religious positioning in life. So, in a sense, *we are the biggest group anyway*, you know?" (ibid, my emphasis). However, Global One and co-chair of the MFAC says:

> *I worry, sometimes* […] *because we can say "yeah it should be a distinct category", or whatever. But then who's going to be leading? You know, one of the good things about having the UN Multi-Faith Advisory Council is that we're working with the UN, and you know the UN can take the lead on things* […] *if we were to be… running ourselves to some extent, who would be the ones leading?*
>
> [Interview Global One]

Despite concerns about who would lead or represent an official faith constituency at the UN, the assumption here is that the UN itself, presumably in part due to its secular nature, is a better and more neutral choice.

A further two of my participants were equivocal about the need for formal recognition: one from QUNO and from WCC (and co-chair of the ILC). Both recognised the important role that the FBOs had to play in the UN climate space, and highlighted the lack of formal recognition, but did not go so far as to say that arguing for formal recognition should be a key priority. What is interesting here is that the only participants who had specific opinions on this matter were non-Christian FBOs or, in the case of the UNEP Faith for Earth, an initiative based outside of Western Europe/North America, in Nairobi, with a large contingent of non-Christian FBOs. However, the split of opinions who were specifically for or against recognition, does not follow a pattern neither along religious affiliation lines, nor along UN engagement lines. I suggest that organisations who have a much longer established presence at the UN, in this case the WCC and QUNO, and have gained recognition for their not obviously faith-based work, or perhaps whose work can look, to the UN, more 'secular' it is less pressing to gain official recognition. Yet for the Hindu and Muslim participants, along with the relatively newer Faith for Earth Initiative the issue of formal recognition is more important.

Formal recognition as a constituency may bring other challenges not specific to FBOs. Flavell (2023), in reflections on the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) to the UNFCCC, paints an ambivalent picture of a having dedicated constituency. Despite the WGC's success in advocating for the gendered effects of climate change, she argues that it has also limited the potential for intersectional approaches and encourages an "atomisation of experience" (ibid, p. 399). Important intersections between other constituencies, for example Youth and Indigenous Peoples, are forced apart due to the constituency-driven approach. If FBOs were to become a constituency, whether with the UNFCCC, the UNEP or ECOSOC, they may be likewise limited in their ability to advocate for climate action in intersectional ways and be pigeonholed into being first, foremost, and only faith-based.

The debate on the need for formal recognition or categorisation of religion under UN systems is a neat microcosm of the much broader debate on the position of religion and FBOs at the UN and participants here demonstrated that FBOs themselves are not in agreement over the need for or terms of such recognition. Having laid out the wider context of religion and religious recognition in the (secular) UN I now turn to the religious and secular dynamics on climate action through the experience of FBOs.

7.3 Negotiating religion in climate action

Here, I engage with my participants' experiences in order to show how religious and secular dynamics are negotiated in the context of climate action. A possible concern here, is that there is ultimately no difference between the religious-secular dynamics of FBO engagement with the UN in general, and the religious-secular dynamics of climate action in particular. In the subsequent section, I address how the secular climate action context shapes how FBOs engage and then suggest that there is in fact something particular about the religious and secular dynamics of climate action. I argue that a religious-secular divide is a conceptually inadequate framing of FBO experiences of climate action at the UN, but that it is not yet clear, given FBO desires to remain in some sense distinctively faith-based, what framing it may be useful to take.

We can identify religion and religious expression at different levels in the UN-faith-climate space. Here I do away with one notion of religion in climate action, that is talking about religion *per se*, as separate from the contexts in which it is engaged with. In the literature on the religion and/at the UN, religion is occasionally spoken about in a fairly generalised and non-specific way, with the assumption that it refers to something sui generis (Fountain, 2013; Beyer, 2016). This approach makes what we mean by religion rather difficult to pinpoint and generally implies a 'world religions' and decontextualised approach. I focus instead on specific contexts and experiences of FBOs themselves; when I do talk about religion here I mean it this sense. Previous research also takes this approach when analysing the role of FBOs in the UN climate space and uses 'religion' in a general sense when it is actually shorthand for FBO experiences or contextualised instances of religion(s) or religious expression (see for example Glaab 2018; 2022).

I addressed one way of doing so in Chapter 4, by taking a quantitative approach and simply counting what looks like an FBO. Yet this top-down approach tells us little about how my participants, and by extension FBOs, themselves negotiate their identity and engage with religious and secular dynamics. Here I instead focus on the ways FBOs express themselves as faith-based to demonstrate the fluidity of religious-secular dynamics in the context of climate action at the UN. I build on Glaab's (2022, p.272) analysis in which she questioned the utility of a religious secular binary (or hierarchy) in her research of FBOs at the UNFCCC: "do power relations manifest only along that simple hierarchy or are the classifications that are based on cultural capital more fluid and ambiguous ultimately challenging the presumed doxa?". She does not go so far as to say that the ambiguity of the binary pushes us to a postsecular framing, something which I explore in the closing section of this chapter.

Many participants, as well as speakers in events I was observing, were not only very happy to show their faith-based identity in the context of climate action but also saw this as integral part of their work. Largely the way this become apparent is how they frame the nature of being faith-based and to what extent they consider it to be distinct or define themselves against the secular. One participant expressed that "we can work [within the UN] and say openly that we are a faith-based organisation" (Interview LWF) and another said, in the context of working with negotiators at the UNFCCC that "I'm Brahma Kumari, I am I'm not hiding it" (Interview Brahma Kumaris/ILC). During interviews, participants often used the phrases 'as a X' when describing their work in the UN-faith-climate space for example "As a Hindu, as a Hindu organization", "as a Muslim organization", "as a Muslim "as a Christian", "as a church person". These were used both to contextualise their experience of climate action work but also to motivate their framing of climate change. Another made their faith inextricable from their practice of climate action saying, "if you if you took my faith out, I wouldn't have anything to offer." (Interview Care of Creation).

Aside from participants expressing their faith-based identity at an organisational level, that is, as representatives or members of FBOs, individuals also expressed their faith-based identity. At COP26 the Malawi state delegation included a church leader who expressed during the plenary discussion at a side event that he was grateful to be included (secular) state delegation (AACC panel, 11.21). Other states have previously included faith leaders in their delegation. During an interview with the US-based evangelical group Care of Creation, for example, we discussed their relationship with religious leaders who had attended previous COPs with the Philippines delegation. Previous research on models of religion at the UN has posited that religious-secular binaries become blurred at the state level, most obviously through examples such as the Holy See and the OIC (Bettiza and Dionigi, 2015; Beittinger-Lee, 2017b; Beittinger-Lee and Miall, 2017). Here, in the context of a COP state delegation we see new forms of blurring where it is not states themselves that are considered religious but states do legitimise the voices of faith leaders by including them in their official COP delegation.

In other cases, participants felt that they either did not want to, or dis not feel the need to express their faith-based identity in climate action. One of my participants, for example said that "in the

multilateral spaces […] our first voice isn't a faith-based organisation. It's based on the professionalism of our work over the decades, and so it is a kind of matter of trust" (Interview QUNO). FBOs with longstanding experience in the UN system may be able to bypass the potential pitfalls of being first and foremost faith-based, even if it has become less controversial in recent years. The Quaker United Nations Office and the World Council of Churches are FBOs with longstanding engagement with the UN. Having gained legitimacy for their work on areas such as peacebuilding, human rights, and humanitarian and development issues, the need to headline that they are faith-based or religious may not be as pressing.

Carette and Miall's (2017) research on religious NGOs at the UN argued that religious identifiers become, strategically, visible and invisible across different contexts something which they refer to as "chameleon politics" (p.7). Yet, here, it seems that it is not the case that FBOs are strategically 'hiding' their faith-based identity but rather than they already have enough legitimacy from other, not identifiably faith-based areas of work (areas of work which are valued by secular NGOs and by those within the secular UN climate space) that they simply do not need to assert any distinctiveness on the basis of being faith-based. The sentiment is more in line with what Berry (2014a) found in research at the Rio+20 conference, that FBOs felt that their roles were not necessarily distinguishable from those of other NGOs and they did not feel the need to define themselves as first and foremost faith-based. For organisations who are able to capitalise on their longstanding legitimacy within the UN, the question arises as to whether this engagement challenges religious-secular binaries for climate action or whether these FBOs have in fact become 'secularised' and are able to capitalise, whether intentionally or not, on their ability to seem less obviously religious.

Where some did not need to foreground their religious identity, other FBOs felt that their tradition-specific faith-based identity was either unavoidable or needed more justification. A participant from Islamic Relief felt that their position as a Muslim organisation needed more explaining than their Christian counterparts, given what she felt were potentially negative assumptions around risk factors of Islamic organisations: "I think there's always going to be expectations put on us as aid organizations, and I think as a Muslim organization that expectation is always going to be that much higher" (Interview Islamic Relief). Later in our interview we discussed how they expressed their identity as an organisation in the UN space "you wouldn't call us an Islamic NGO, because then we'd get lumped up with something… terrorism based".

The extent to which and reasons why FBOs express their faith-based identity is complicated by the issue of representation: which faiths get the opportunity or platform to express themselves and under which circumstances? As we saw in Chapter 4, the UN-faith-climate space, on a quantitative level remains dominated by Christian FBOs from the Global North/minority world. One participant explained this by reference to the history of the UN system and its relationship with religion: "we recognise that you know the UN came out of a certain situation in the world. Certain faith groups kind of had the first mover advantage in terms of getting recognition within the system and certain

traditions, mainly Eastern and indigenous are kind of like playing catch up" (Interview Bhumi Global). Wilson (2022 pp.107-109) argues that, if global climate politics stems from a secularist approach which defines religion on a model of Western Christianity, then FBOs who do not fit this "accepted mold [sic]" may be limited on a practical, i.e. getting a seat at the climate politics table, and ontological, i.e. being allowed to be considered both religious and legitimate, level. FBO experiences, of remaining underrepresented in the UN-faith-climate space and of needing to justify their position more than their Christian counterparts seem to corroborate these assertions.

In some areas of the UN-faith-climate space this is starting to change. The UNEP's Faith for Earth initiative includes a greater proportion of FBOs from the Global South/minority world and non-Christian FBOs than are represented in the wider UN or than are formally registered with agencies such as the UNFCCC; the interfaith network Faith for the Climate is made of less than fifty percent Christian organisations (Interviews UNEP Faith for Earth; Faith for the Climate) whist the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC is co-chaired by a representative from Brahma Kumaris. Whilst this does not necessarily translate into more opportunities for expression of religion from and representation of non-Christian FBOs, it is important to highlight that these opportunity structures provide the framework within which expressions of faith in climate action are able to happen.

Whether or not religious identity is explicitly expressed in the context of UN climate action, it is certainly the case, as was discussed in the context of climate framings in Chapter 5, that some FBOs define themselves distinct from secular NGOs (Glaab, 2017; Glaab, 2022). This approach to understanding FBOs has resulted in much debate on the extent to which we can or should consider FBOs as a distinct category as separate from NGOs. Fountain (2013), for example has criticised the over-emphasis on religious or faith-based as the key identifier for such organisations which in turn perpetuates a religious-secular dichotomy and constructs FBOs as an Other. Whilst there is plenty to criticise about a conceptual and practical over reliance on a religious-secular binary (McLennan, 2007; Beyer, 2013; Wilson, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse, 2018), these critiques may undermine FBOs' own agency and admission that, in many cases, they do want to be seen as religious or faith-based and that it is these very identities and approach which make their contribution to climate action important (Glaab, 2022, p.279).

However, I found that it was often the case that my participants defined themselves not as distinct from secular groups but from other religions or FBOs. Here, they are not reliant on a religious-secular binary to be distinct in their faith-based identity but instead highlight the internal diversity of FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space. One participant spoke about the need to find a voice in the UN-faith-climate space which was "uniquely Hindu" and in some cases felt more at home working with secular NGOs on biodiversity than with ostensibly anthropocentric Christian FBOs (Interview Bhumi Global). Haynes (2014, p.51) suggests that FBOs at the UN "compete" with each other on ideological lines and collaborate with secular NGOs and with other FBOs not on the basis of being faith-based, but on "ideological" grounds. Whilst I do think that these ideological differences are less apparent in

the context of climate action, as I will argue in the next section, we can see hints of FBOs seeking to distinguish themselves from each other, or arguing for a greater appreciation of their heterogeneity:

> *I think if you're a faith-based environmental organisation and you're not bringing something that authentically, represents your faith then it's like…*[…] *You know if, like, for example, if the Hindu group, and the Jewish group, and the Buddhist group, and the Muslim group, and the Sikh group all look and sound the same way, then it's like 'what's the point?', you know? Like, bring something unique, right? And, at the moment what I'm seeing is like a lot of these big groups kind of look and sound the same, right. And I'm like, you know it's just like, maybe like some of the window dressing is different, you know, you wear this kind of hat, I wear that kind of hat, I wear this robe, you wear that robe…. But like essentially, they're all saying the same thing. I'm like yeah, I'm not really into that anymore, you know? I'm like yeah what's your unique selling point?*
>
> [Interview Bhumi Global]
>
> *[I]t would be nice if we could have some kind of concept that is more showing the kind of… the ideological or spiritual uniqueness or what-do-you-call-it from those like people of faith or different traditions*
>
> [Interview WCC/ILC]

Another participant distinguished her FBO as "totally different from the traditional Buddhis[m]" saying that "Tzu Chi is very unique because we are coming from [a] social movement" with a focus on social action rather than spiritual practice (Interview Tzu Chi). Arguing along similar intra-faith lines, a participant, when working with secular environmental NGOs had to introduce himself as "an evangelical, but I'm not one of those evangelicals" (Interview Care of Creation). Some defined themselves as the 'real' faith-based groups in opposition to humanitarian and development FBOs which were Christian in name only: "relief agencies want to use their 'man with the collar and the funny hat and nice title' to push them forward and say, 'we are a Christian organisation, look what we are saying'." (Interview World Council of Churches). These examples show that there are multiple boundaries across which FBOs operate and categories against or with which they define themselves. Whilst acknowledging a religious-secular binary is necessary to explain some FBO engagement in the UN-faith-climate space it is not sufficient to understand the ways they negotiate their faith identity.

It is not just individual FBOs who engage with religious and secular dynamics. Whilst individual FBOs may seek to carve out a position which is distinct from other FBOs, rather than secular NGOs, when they operate as a group, as what interviewees often termed 'the faiths', attempts at distinction from secular groups becomes more apparent. Interfaith groups and networks are the most obvious case of FBOs grouping together and identifying themselves as a category. UN-led faith-based initiatives and committees also seek to group FBOs together into a distinct category to be engaged with for example the Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC, the Faith for Earth Initiative, the Multi-faith Advisory Council or the Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development. These initiatives rely on the assertion that there is something particular about FBOs which is distinct from other (secular) civil society groups. As I discussed in Chapter 4, FBOs often speak about their uniqueness by virtue of being faith-based, primarily along the lines of their moral and value-driven approach and global-local networks and reach which, some argued, was lacking in

secular organisations. Organising as a representative group serves both to highlight the important contribution that religions have to offer to climate action, yet is often tied up with the practical benefit of collective representation, something which is critical to civil society groups in the UN system (Bäckstrand et al., 2017; Junk and Rasmussen, 2019). A participant from the Interfaith Liaison Committee explained that "it's not because I'm a Brahma Kumari that they [the UN] consider what I stand for, but it's because I do the coordination of all the religions, then they can't really ignore me". Here the grouping of religions takes on a strategic character rather than a thicker identification with a specific faith-based identity. Another participant, speaking from experience at COP, said "COP addresses many, many topics, many issues, so you can't be alone [at] COP. So you must link with interfaith groups […] ecumenical partners" (Interview LWF). Whilst the individual expressions of faith identity are not completely side-lined, the collective grouping of religions or faiths takes precedence.

Despite FBOs often talking in terms of 'the faiths' in climate action, they do also question, broaden, or contest the boundaries of what constitutes religion. The inclusion (or not) of indigenous groups in the faith-based/religious category was one area of contestation where some FBOs felt that indigenous groups were being prioritised over minority 'world' religions which remain underrepresented at the UN, for example Hinduism, and others found it self-evident that indigenous groups ought be considered under the faith-based umbrella (Interviews Church of Norway; Bhumi Global; COP26 Green Zone events). However, indigenous groups such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change, the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee and the Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council have been involved in UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative, and often appear as signatories on interfaith declarations (Stückelberger, 2014; UNEP, 2018c; UNEP, 2019)

The inclusion and categorisation of FBOs is ripe for issues around who gets to define religion and FBOs. Two outstanding concerns become apparent. The first, that religion is defined on the terms of the secular UN whose cultural legacy is intertwined with Western Christian ideals and as such religion becomes (even if implicitly) defined on the model of Western Christianity (Lehmann, 2016; Wilson, 2022). The second, that religion is defined in terms of what it can offer and results in a reductionist, functionalist, or instrumentalist definition of religion (Jones and Petersen, 2011; Wilkinson, 2022; Tobin, Ali, et al., 2023).

The collection of experiences above highlight these twin concerns and I suggest that FBOs face several paradoxes in the UN-faith-climate space. The first, that in advocating for their distinct faith-based identity in, and contribution to climate action, they rely on and reify a religious-secular boundary and risk siloing themselves to be only faith-based. Secondly, that in advocating for their diversity of approaches and tradition-specific faith-based identities, they may simultaneously weaken their collective advocacy potential as 'the faiths' by becoming too heterogenous. Finally, that emphasising their distinct faith-based resources, for example their moral capital and global-local

reach, they risk allowing for a reduction of their faith traditions to *only* these resources. As the UN-faith-climate space develops further, as it seems on track to do, these are paradoxes which will continue to be reckoned with by FBOs.

Religious and secular dynamics, though often at play, are by no means clearly defined and are blurred, negotiated, redefined and at times reified in the different contexts of climate action at the UN. As Glaab (2022) suggested the religious-secular "hierarchy" is not the only boundary across which power relations and categorisations become apparent. Despite the paradoxes outlined above, climate action may even be comparatively uncontentious for interfaith and faith-secular collaboration and for expressions of religion or faith-based identity. Before discussing this I address how the secular climate action context affects these dynamics.

7.4 The secular climate action context

A question that arises from the preceding discussion how these tensions are shaped by the secular(ised) context of climate change action. There are two contexts at play here, one is the secular UN and associated civil society space and the other is the secular framings of and responses to climate change. These two are of course, for my purposes, intertwined, but it is important to note the two strands of the debate. We can see where they come together in the highly technical and scientised language of the IPCC and the UNFCCC where much of the framing of climate change has historically rested on the appraisal and presentation of climate change through numbers, timelines, temperature rises, and a whole host of climatic statistics and measurements (Hulme, 2009; Bowman, 2010; Whyte, 2019; Garrard, 2020; Wilson, 2022). That climate change has been approached in this way is not in itself problematic, but it has been widely acknowledged that a scientific approach *alone* does not naturally lead to an appropriate policy response, nor does it account for the social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions of climate change (Hulme, 2009; Bowman, 2010; Antonio and Clark, 2015; Hulme, 2022).

Wilson (2022, pp.104, 109) considers the field of international climate politics to be defined by a secular ontology reliant on a hierarchical secular-religious binary and a subordination of religion to the "inferior half" of several dichotomies ("human/nature"; "reason/emotion", "modern/traditional"). Rather than just being an ideology of excluding or subordinating religion, secularism is instead an "all-encompassing ontology" which "govern[s] our conceptualizations of and responses to the phenomenon labelled climate change" (p.105). Whilst the secular nature of climate action can be understood through its highly scientific and technical framing we can also understand it as secular by the centrality of secular international bodies, such as the UN, in shaping climate politics. In her research with "FBAs" (Faith-based actors) at the UNFCCC, Glaab (2022, p.269) suggests that, if we consider the UN to have a secular "doxa" in the Bordieusian[90] sense, the presence and engagement of

[90] Glaab (2022) frames the UNFCCC as Bourdeusian field characterised by secular doxa. See Chapter 4 where I discuss ways of understanding the structures of the UN.

FBAs could be considered a challenge to the secular doxa of the UN. If the contention here is that FBAs in her research may constitute a challenge to the secular doxa of the UN, it is not yet clear to what extent these challenges hold and if they do, why engaging with the postsecular as a conceptual framing to understand and describe the context in which these challenges are able to take place is not proposed; I return to the postsecular in the last section.

There are two possibilities which arise from my analysis of FBOs in the context of secular climate action. The first is that FBOs are *limited* in their ability to engage in identifiably faith-based ways by the secular nature of climate change action. The second is that FBOs offer a *complementary* voice which the secular, scientific and technical language of climate change action is unable to fulfil. The latter, complementary role, has previously been proposed by Cloke and Beaumont (2013) who argued that FBOs emerged to fill a gap in the context of secularised Western European cities through a process of postsecular rapprochement. Both possibilities are evident in different contexts.

The limited possibility is evident through cases where FBOs are able to engage only if they adopt the secular scientific or policy language of the UN and are not explicit about their faith identity or faith-based framings of climate change. Participants felt that this was historically the case but that attitudes within the UN have begun to shift over the last decade or two:

> *Many years in the past, you are trying to avoid to say, 'ah we are faith organisation'. But now this is part of your identity […] we can work and say openly that we are a faith-based organisation*
>
> [Interview LWF]
>
> *What we have seen over the years, being active on this from the religious side, is that in the start we had to explain every time why we're here – 'Why are you at COP? Church? That has nothing to do with… we want to have good decision, we want to have technique.*.
>
> [Interview WCC]

FBOs who work directly with UNFCCC negotiators also commented on the need to speak in technical policy language in order to substantively engage (Glaab 2022; Interview Braham Kumaris). Yet it is less clear here that this is specifically to do with being faith-based. Secular NGOs not specialised in the language of climate policy may also be limited in their capacity to engage. Participants recognised that it was often more to do with capacity, size, or the dedication of volunteers which dictated an ability to learn and engage with technical climate policy language and not necessarily limitations put on them by being faith-based. Yet secular NGOs may here be comfortable being open in their identity, aims and values, where, historically at least, FBOs may not (Interviews LWF; Berry, 2014; Baumgart-Ochse, 2018).

The complementary role suggestion more accurately explains the experiences of my participants in the secular UN climate space. Rather than necessarily adopting the secular technical language of climate policy, though this does occur, participants were often confident in stating their distinct complementary role. This complementary role consists of their ability to frame climate change in

morally compelling ways (Rollosson, 2010; Glaab, 2017), as discussed in Chapter 5, and their ability to mediate across global-local spheres of climate action (Kearns, 2007; Smith, 2018; Bolotta et al., 2019), as discussed in Chapter 6. One of my participant from an interfaith group suggested that, unlike secular NGOs in the UN climate action space, FBOs were not seen as the "usual suspects" and concluded that "we kind of fill that gap" (Interview Faith for the Climate). In a similar way, climate scientists were often discussed as the describers or analysers where FBOs saw themselves as the (complementary) motivators or the moral authorities.

Whereas Glaab (2022) saw FBOs a challenge to the secular doxa of UN climate action, here it seems that FBOs see themselves as complementary. Despite suggestions that the scientised language of climate change and environmental sustainability precludes more obviously religious forms of FBO engagement or subordinates them (Wilson, 2012b; Wilson, 2022), I instead consider the climate action may, compared to other areas of UN-FBO engagement, be comparatively open to identifiable forms of religious expression, identity and engagement, a point to which I now turn.

Climate action as less contentious for FBO engagement

It is clear that there are multiple ways that religion and religious identity is negotiated by FBOs in the UN-faith climate space and that it is an area in which religious-secular boundaries are blurred, negotiated and at times capitalised on by FBOs themselves. Though we see these dynamics occurring in other areas of FBO engagement at the UN and in global civil society (Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Wilkinson, 2019), I suggest that climate action may be comparatively uncontentious for FBO engagement. This will lead me, in the final section, to argue that the postsecular is an apt framing of the UN-faith-climate space.

Previous research suggests that this not the case in other areas of the UN (Haynes, 2013b; Haynes, 2014; Ager and Ager, 2016; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Beittinger-Lee, 2017a; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b). Beittinger-Lee (2017a, pp.124–127) suggests that the UN has tended to be reluctant to engage with FBOs in areas of socio-economic development which touch on issues of gender or sexual and reproductive health and that, despite engagement increasing with the introduction of the MDGs and SDGs, it is often criticised as an instrumental or functional form of engagement. In addition, the secular liberal aims of the UN have, according to Haynes (2013), prompted a division between liberal and conservative FBOs which is particularly evident in the issue of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). The division between 'good' and 'bad' FBOs has itself become criticised as a theme in research on religious engagements with the UN and religions and development (Wilkinson, 2022). In the context of international relations and global politics beyond the UN system some argue that religion has historically been perceived as somewhere between irrational or irrelevant to dangerous (Hurd, 2008; Wilson, 2017; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018a). Yet I found that these tensions and divisions of good and bad FBOs did not occur amongst FBOs the UN-faith-climate space.

FBOs may be seen as less contentious here as their framings of and responses to climate change are perceived as congruent with if not constitutive of the messages of the broader climate and environmental movement (Hulme, 2009; Hulme, 2017; Glaab, 2017). The history of the environmental and climate movement is replete with quasi-religious or spiritual language, sacred framings of the environment and arguments for climate action to become more value-driven or 'religious' (Schneider, 1986; Beyer, 1992; Kearns, 1996; Taylor, 1998; Dunlap, 2006; Hulme, 2009). In Chapter 4, I argued that FBOs' distinctive framings of climate change came from their constructive frames and ability to imbue climate discourse with a moral imperative. As these are, amongst those advocating for action on climate change, generally positive and uncontroversial positions it seems that climate action may a unique space faith-secular and interfaith collaboration.

During interviews a recurrent theme was that, for my participants, climate change was an easy area for religious-secular and interfaith collaboration compared to other advocacy themes:

> [W]*hen you talk about gender it's different, no? Because many different ecumenical or interfaith partners have their own perspective about gender and the women's participation. But when you talk about climate so it's like we all agree*
>
> [Interview LWF]
>
> *So on the whole, in general I haven't found you know, on the environmental side I haven't found you know those* [political] *conversations coming up with myself and other faith communities around this. But you know when it comes to other issues here, we have had conversations, heated conversations often.*
>
> [Interview Global One]
>
> [I]*n my experience there isn't such a big divide between secular activists and faith-activists. Because even secular environmentalists see something sacred in the climate and the environment and they immediately… you know, they come to build alliances a lot quicker than, say, in the LGBT movement, between secular and religious actors. It's a bit more difficult to build coalitions there. In this space, it seems a bit easier.*
>
> [Interview Faith for the Climate]

As the above interview excerpts show, climate action is likewise perceived as an uncontentious space for *interfaith* collaboration where potential tensions on gender, reproductive health or geopolitical concerns either do not arise or are bracketed off for the sake of united climate advocacy. But this is not only an experience of participants from FBOs in interfaith contexts but a perception shared by my participant from the UNEP Faith for Earth:

> *The most common issue that is addressed by religions is the issue of environment and the creation and the responsibility of people to protect. If you talk about any other thing that you might find major differences between religions, but specifically environment is something that is very common among all religions. So you know, building on that commonality we really easily mobilise interfaith collaboration. And this is what we have seeing the easiness and you know, bringing people from different religions to talk about the same thing and agree and move forward and collaborate and so on.*
>
> [Interview UNEP Faith for Earth]

Given the perceived agreement of religions and FBOs on climate change and the environment, the question arises whether this perceived agreement actually reifies a religious-secular binary in the context of climate action. In turn, is there a risk of homogenising the diversity of FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space if the perception is that all religions agree on the issue of climate change? The tensions which arose around different framings of climate change in Chapter 5 show that, whilst FBOs may find it less contentious an area for interfaith collaboration, is still marked by a diversity of approaches. It remains a transitory space in terms of the inclusion of non-Christian FBOs or FBOs from the Global South/majority world, and one which remains shaped if not limited by the practical and conceptual frameworks of the UN.

7.5 Towards a postsecular framing

In this final section, I turn to the idea of the postsecular as a way of framing the religious and secular dynamics of the UN-faith-climate space, not only explored in this chapter, but also in the findings discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. By drawing on theories of postsecularism I seek to use them not only to explain the findings of this thesis but to offer a way to respond to the outstanding challenges and concerns related to FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space. Given the permeability of religious-secular boundaries combined with increasing debate on the postsecular nature of international relations and global civil society (Mavelli and Petito, 2012; Wilson and Steger, 2013; Haynes, 2014; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2018b), is it useful to frame climate action in this context as postsecular? To phrase the question another way, why has FBO engagement in climate action *not* been framed as postsecular? Recent studies of the role of religion in transnational climate politics (Sadouni 2022), and in FBOs at the UNFCCC (Glaab, 2017; 2022) highlight the continued, if not increased, relevance of religion(s) to climate action and suggest that, to varying degrees, they challenge secular or secularist approaches to climate action. In her study of faith-based actors (FBAs) at the UNFCCC, Glaab (2022, p.279) argues that:

> *The presence of FBAs is not just a challenge to the secular order, but from a Bourdieusian perspective it can even be interpreted as a dissolution of the secular doxa that privileges rationalism and scientific and technical knowledge in international conference settings.*

In a similar vein, Sadouni (2022, p.23) argues that "a strictly secularised reading […] precludes an appreciation of the impact on the local and international scene of the decisions and actions led by religious actors". I turn instead to the descriptive and normative tools of postsecular analysis.

The postsecular is a framing which has been discussed increasingly in research on religions and development (Ager and Ager, 2016; Wilkinson, 2018; Tomalin, 2018; Samson and Warganegara, 2021); religions and international relations (Hurd, 2008; Mavelli and Petito, 2012; Pabst, 2012; Haynes, 2013a; Wilson, 2014b; May et al., 2014; Mavelli and Wilson, 2016); and in studies of faith-based organisations (Beaumont and Cloke, 2012; Haynes, 2013b; Cloke and Beaumont, 2013). The postsecular can take the form of an analytical lens, a descriptive state-of-affairs, a way to critique

secularism or secularist goals, and as a normative commitment to engage with religion (conceptually or practically) (Mavelli and Petito, 2012). Wilson and Steger (2013, p.485) argue that the postsecular can be "both a description of and response to [the] global epistemological and ontological challenges" of the continued presence of religion and of the limitations of secularist framings. I address the ways in which both descriptive and normative approaches to the postsecular are useful to understand the UN-faith-climate space before arguing for a normative conception of postsecular climate action. To be clear: I am not arguing for a more general account of the postsecular as a state of affairs, or that my findings are evidence of a wholesale postsecular age of climate action. Rather, I am invested in highlighting the limitations of an approach which explains the roles of FBOs in climate action only through a religious-secular binary and find the postsecular a necessary tool with which to do so.

The descriptive postsecular claim either entails a resurgence of religion following an ostensibly secular age, or a change in the role of religion in societies (Habermas, 2006; Habermas, 2008; Wilson, 2014b). This claim has often been revised or restated that we are not witnessing a resurgence of religion in absolute terms, but that there has been a change in the way religion manifests in the public sphere (Habermas, 2006; Beaumont and Cloke, 2012; Cloke and Beaumont, 2013). Entailed within these claims are reckonings with the failure of the secularisation thesis as evidenced by the continued relevance of religion, in some form, to individuals, to the public sphere, to politics, and in responding to societal challenges at local to global levels (Habermas, 2006; Morozov, 2008; Cloke and Beaumont, 2013; Wilson and Steger, 2013). Hurd (2008, p.12) argues for example that the postsecular, rather than being an 'age' is more of a reckoning with the "contours of the secular". The descriptive postsecular claim has been criticised for, variously, implying an empirically questionable temporal journey from a secular to postsecular age, for being theoretically imprecise, for continuing to embody secularist norms and for entailing a reductionist or instrumentalist model of religion (Beckford, 2010; Beckford, 2012; Dallmayr, 2012; Mavelli and Wilson, 2016, pp.252–253; Wilkinson, 2018).

Despite these criticisms, the continued presence and increased salience of FBOs in UN climate action and their role in the broader UN-faith-climate space prompts me to turn to the descriptive postsecular to account for these developments. As Sadouni (2022, p.23) and others have argued, a framework which relies on secularist assumptions about the category and role of religion does not account for the ways in which FBOs challenge secular (and global) climate action norms through mediating between multiple glocal interests, framing climate change in constructive faith-based ways, negotiating their faith identity in climate action, and acting as a complementary, not subordinate, presence in global civil society (Ager and Ager, 2016; Wilson, 2022).

As I established in Chapter 4, claims of religious resurgence in the UN-faith-climate space are difficult to measure, not only because of the heterogenous nature of the space and the multiple points of (in)formal engagement, but also due to the difficulty in defining and identifying FBOs across UN agencies. Increases in FBO presence are likely to be to be absolute, not relative, and better accounted

for by increased numbers of civil society actors (Lehmann, 2016; Beinlich and Braungart, 2018). A postsecular framing which relies only on a simple religious resurgence claim therefore seems weak.

However, if we point back to the experiences of my participants[91] it seems that there has been a shift in their comfort with being identifiably faith-based in the UN system and in climate action contexts in particular. My participants are not only more explicitly identifying themselves as faith-based or religious but are organising and presenting themselves as an increasingly legitimate voice in the UN-faith-climate space, without compromising on their faith identity (both tradition specific, and interfaith). They are not simply doing so by adopting the behaviours and norms of secular NGOs but are advocating for their distinctive value as *faith-based* organisations. Furthermore, there have been a swathe of projects instigated by the UN themselves over the last decade to engage FBOs on climate change and environmental sustainability. It was the UNFCCC's Christiana Figueres herself who recognised the importance of FBOs at COP and proposed establishing the now FBO-led Interfaith Liaison Committee, the UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative seeks to highlight the important role of FBOs (both as normative/moral and practical actors for environmental sustainability), and COP28 for the first time included FBOs in the formal Blue Zone as a Faith Pavilion. Beyond UN agencies, FBOs continue to play critical roles in framing climate change in moral and ethical terms, as shown in Chapter 5, and as global-local mediators and translators of climate action, as shown in Chapter 6. The embrace of FBOs by a secular institution and the critical, complementary role of FBOs in global climate politics can be described as postsecular in that it implies a recognition of the continued relevance of religion in general, and to FBOs' ability to 'fill the gaps' left open by singularly secular understandings of and responses to climate change in particular (Wilson, 2014a; Mavelli and Wilson, 2016; Ager and Ager, 2016).

An immediate concern is, if the postsecular is in part about describing (or advocating for) a breaking down of religious-secular binaries, how do we account for the fact that in practice many FBOs do want to assert their distinct religious value and seek to present themselves as a distinct faith-based category? Is the postsecular therefore at odds both with the work of secular institutions who want to assert their secular scientific neutrality in describing climate change and with the aims of FBOs who seek to argue for the distinctiveness of their roles? To present a distinctive faith-based voice, FBOs rely on a religious-secular binary which many accounts of postsecularism seek to problematise (May et al., 2014).

I suggest that engaging with the postsecular as a normative commitment or practice can both explain and respond to the outstanding challenges of the UN-faith-climate space. The normative side of the postsecular focuses on how religions ought to be engaged with and argues that we should be acting in a postsecular manner or what Cloke and Beaumont call "postsecular practice" (p.41). Entailed within this normative postsecularism is a critique of the secular or, more specifically, secularism as

[91] See Chapter 4 where I show that FBOs have become more comfortable being identifiably religious over the last two decades.

inappropriate for societies in which religion continues to play a role (whether through continuity or resurgence) and particularly in religiously and secularly diverse societies (Habermas, 2006; Cloke and Beaumont, 2013; Mavelli and Wilson, 2016). Tied into this are critiques of secularism as prioritising privatised, individualistic modes of religion which is argued has in turn leads to the privileging of a privatised individualist model of religion under secularism (Habermas, 2006; Cloke and Beaumont, 2013; Wilson, 2022). The latter has led to the integration of postcolonial theory in critiques of secularism and to see the postsecular as a useful if not necessary framework decolonial work (Lloyd and Viefhues-Bailey, 2015).

I find it useful here to turn back to the idea of complementary roles and as well as the "multiple ontologies" approach advocated for by Wilson (2017; 2022) wherein multiple religious and secular ontologies co-exist, rather than being structured along a hierarchy. A postsecular framing of climate action, whilst it helps account for the limited nature of a framing hinging *only* on religious-secular dynamics, does not mean this distinction does not or should not exist. Rather it helps us understand the ways that FBOs have come to have multiple roles in the UN-faith-climate space, some which are complementary to secular or scientific approaches whilst remaining distinctly faith-based, others which blur or challenge religious-secular binaries.

A related issue is that the postsecular risks embodying the norms of secularism by prioritising particular forms of religion in climate action. Critics of the postsecular have argued that it retains an ultimately secularist agenda by arguing for the inclusion of religion in the public sphere in a relatively limited, functional sense which advantages a Christian Euro-centric and individualist notion of religion (Pabst, 2012; Wilkinson, 2018). In the context of the UN-faith-climate space, therefore, does an increase in faith-based projects, or an increase in FBOs' salience in climate action really challenge the norms of religious engagement at the UN or offer a wholesale challenge to a secular approach to climate action?

What these concerns are getting at can be understood through representation and representativeness, issues which I have returned through throughout this thesis. It remains the case that FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space are mostly Christian and mostly based in Europe or North America. But, in the context of climate action these norms are in fact in the process of being changed and challenged. The Faith for Earth Initiative, based in the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi includes a much higher proportion of FBOs from non-Christian and, particularly Muslim groups, from those based outside the 'usual suspect' regions of Western Europe and North America, and works with FBOs who are not formally registered with UN agencies. Likewise many participants from FBOs took seriously the task of challenging the norms of who represents faith at the UN and sought to move beyond a framing of climate change which operated only on the terms of the majority faith groups, instead taking up either a constructive or a "multiple ontologies" approach (Wilson 2017; 2022) where what constitutes a faith-based framing of and response to climate change is not defined by the majority groups. Furthermore, FBOs do seek to expand the remit of and responsibility for global climate politics

beyond the secular structures of the UN by engaging in iterative processes of global-local mediation and translation, as discussed in Chapter 6.

In the context of the UN-faith-climate space we can see instances of postsecularism as both in a descriptive sense but can also propose it as a normative commitment on the part of FBO representatives themselves and UN agencies who seek to engage with FBOs as partners for climate action. It is clear that FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space are grappling with many of the concerns raised by accounts of the postsecular and that, whilst the UN as an institution remains nominally secular, there is sufficient engagement with FBOs to require a new way of both framing their presence and critiquing the norms upon which their engagement rests.

7.6 Conclusion

It is clear that there are multiple ways that religion and religious identity is negotiated by FBOs in the UN-faith climate space and that it is an area in which religious-secular boundaries are blurred, negotiated and at times capitalised on by FBOs themselves. In this chapter, I returned to the UN as an institution as a starting point to understand the construction of religion as a category, outlined the historical rights-based approach to religion and demonstrated how engagement with religion as a category has shift, from more individual belief, to a feature of culture(s), to more recent arguments for inclusion of religious organisations as their own definable category. The debate on whether religion or faith-based ought to become a dedicated constituency was demonstrative of the tensions surrounding what such a categorisation could or should look like. Having set the scene of the broader conceptual landscape, I then turned to the experiences of religious expression and identification of FBOs themselves. Whilst FBOs at times sought to be distinctly faith-based, I showed how individual FBOs in the context of climate action often defined themselves not against secular NGOs, but against other FBOs. Yet I also demonstrated that when operating as 'the faiths' there was greater pressure to present themselves as a distinct faith-based category as separate from secular NGOs.

I addressed how the ostensibly secular climate action context shapes FBOs' engagement with climate action by considering that it may open opportunities for limited or complementary roles. I argued that FBOs increasingly positioned themselves as adding a complementary dimension to climate action rather than necessarily adopting secular UN norms. Taking it further, I suggested that climate action, compared to other thematic areas at the UN may be a particularly uncontentious space for interfaith and faith-secular collaboration and that FBOs felt more comfortable to be identifiably faith-based in this space. In closing, based on a recognition of the limitations of a reading reliant on religious-secular binaries alone, I considered whether a postsecular framing of climate action was useful. I argued that, given the way FBOs simultaneously blur religious-secular and global-local boundaries in the UN-faith-climate space whilst often, and arguably increasingly, seeking to carve out a distinctively faith-based voice, the postsecular is an important way of framing these developments. Likewise, that FBOs, and some UN projects, are already taking on the normative challenge of postsecular engagement and

that, going forward the postsecular is an important way to continue critiquing the norms upon which their engagement rests.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

8.1 Findings and contributions

This thesis began with the aim of investigating the role(s) of FBOs in climate action at the UN. Within this broad aim were key thematic questions centring on the way FBOs frame climate change, how they navigate the global and local dimensions of climate action, and how religious and secular dynamic shape their work. Key crosscutting themes throughout the thesis were debates on the distinctiveness of FBOs, on the representation of FBOs in climate action at the UN, and of the postsecular nature of climate action. By focusing on the experiences of FBOs themselves, complemented by observations of UN-FBO events and COP26 as well as website analysis I was able to draw on a rich dataset to address these themes.

I demonstrated the broad nature of engagement of FBOs with the UN for climate action and questioned the extent to which we can consider the UN to be a clearly demarcated space. In my account of the UN-faith-climate space I showed how FBOs have multiple engagement points with the UN for climate action, many of which would be considered 'informal'. Whilst they face many of the same challenges as other NGO or civil society actors advocating for climate action, their engagement is also complicated by the negotiation of their faith-based identity and of issues of representation. I explored how FBOs frame climate change by combining diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames and by using non-confessional language to facilitate interfaith and faith-secular collaboration and uptake of their frames. Framing is key to social movements and climate activists in general but takes on particular significance for FBOs who see their ability to put climate change into worldview driven and morally compelling terms as a distinctive feature of their work. Despite several interfaith tensions, FBOs were often flexible in how they describe climate change and worked strategically to develop coherent faith-based frames, even where these were not exact reflections of their own tradition or beliefs.

Where previous research has hinted at FBOs as potential mobilisers, translators, and global-local representatives (Beyer, 2011; Reder, 2011; Veldman et al., 2014b; Conca, 2022; Sadouni, 2022), I examined this in more detail and argued that FBOs act as glocal mediators and are able to, strategically, translate climate messaging in multiple directions. FBOs are not simply representatives of local interests on a global level but operate in iterative ways with multiple stakeholders at local, national, reginal and global levels. They take on a mediatory role in that they work between multiple, and sometimes competing interests. Importantly, the glocal dimensions of FBOs' engagement reveal how religious-secular binaries are blurred, challenged and at times reified across different levels of climate action. FBOs, as part of their glocal mediatory role, translate climate action in multiple directions. In seeking to mediate between global and local spheres, FBOs challenge the potentially culturally homogenising narratives of global climate politics, yet they are also still reliant on this very system which remains centred on actors in the minority world.

The religious and secular dynamics of FBOs' engagement with climate action are signified differently at global and local levels (Bolotta et al 2019). But by taking the UN institution as starting point I showed how different categorisations of religion continue to shape the role of FBOs at the UN. Despite some suggestions that FBOs ought to have their own constituency or category within the UN system I revealed important tensions around who would lead or represent such a constituency. FBOs' negotiation of their faith-based identity in climate action does not only rely on asserting their distinctiveness as a group from secular NGOs, as has been argued by others in studies of religion at the UN in general (Haynes 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017). Many sought to demonstrate the diversity of FBOs in the UN-faith-climate space by distinguishing themselves not from secular NGOs, but from other FBOs. However, the limited nature of NGO participation in UN climate action also means that, to successfully engage, FBOs do often need to operate as 'the faiths' and rely on their difference from secular groups to do so. Going forward, it is important to be aware of the paradoxical nature of FBOs' representation in climate action at the UN. Despite being a less controversial space for FBO engagement than other areas of the UN, there are tensions around what this engagement looks like. In seeking to represent themselves as a singular faith-based group, FBOs may homogenise their diverse perspectives on and framings of climate change or rely on already dominant voices to represent them. Yet if they seek to highlight their distinct faith-specific positions, they may become too heterogenous and minimise their strength as a coherent bloc, something which is necessary for successful cooperation by civil society in the UN system.

The religious-secular and postsecular dynamics of climate action ran throughout this thesis. Previous research has sought to apply theories of the postsecular to the role of FBOs in sustainable development, to international relations and as a critique of (secular) global climate politics (Cloke and Beaumont, 2013; Wilson and Steger, 2013; Wilson, 2014a; Ager and Ager, 2016; Wilkinson, 2018). I argued that the postsecular was an important way of framing the findings of this thesis. FBOs blur and challenge religious-secular boundaries through their engagement with climate action. Yet they also capitalise on this very binary to act as a distinctive complementary voice and response. The postsecular acts as a way to describe how FBOs and the UN are already engaging in these complementary roles yet, going forward, it is also useful to help us critique the norms upon which this engagement rests.

This thesis makes both empirical and theoretical contributions. Where previous research has focused on specific agencies or events for studying FBOs in climate action at the UN (Berry 2014; Glaab 2017; Krantz 2022), I demonstrated how FBOs engage with multiple UN agencies, in often creative, strategic and informal ways, and expands our notion of what constitutes UN engagement. It makes empirical contributions by providing new data on FBO experiences in UN climate action, on how a wide cross-section of FBOs frame climate change and by outlining FBOs' approach to global-local engagement with climate action. The thesis also makes theoretical contributions in terms of analysing FBOs' approach to climate change through the lens of frame analysis and through a framework of glocalisation and by highlighting key features of their engagement namely glocal mediation and

strategic translation. The theoretical contributions are also supported by the overarching themes of fluid religious-secular boundaries, representation and faith-based-distinctiveness which permeated discussions throughout this thesis and led to the conclusion that we ought to frame these developments as postsecular. In doing so I contribute to a growing body of literature looking at the role of religion and FBOs in climate action at the UN and to research addressing the postsecular dimensions of global climate politics.

8.2 Avenues for future research

There are innumerable interesting and important paths that future research in this area could take. The quickly developing nature of climate politics, activism and of FBO involvement with the UN alone provides a constant source for new empirical investigations. However, there are three areas which I think would prove particularly useful directions and which I have either not or have only begun to address in this thesis.

The first is the intersection between indigenous peoples' organisations or indigenous spiritual traditions and FBOs in UN climate action. Much research in the area of religions and ecology and of research into responses to climate change has centred on the critical role and experiences of indigenous knowledges, indigenous peoples, and indigenous spiritualties. This has often focused on the complex hybridisation of belief systems in environmental protection or climate action and how indigenous knowledges are, or should be, taken into account in response to climate change (Kronik and Verner, 2010; Green and Raygorodetsky, 2010; Green and Raygorodetsky, 2010; Drew, 2014; Manandhar et al., 2014; Whyte, 2019; Inaotombi and Mahanta, 2019). These have often been criticised for instrumentalising or romanticising indigenous traditions, for operating in extractivist ways with indigenous knowledges, and for applying a world religions lens to indigenous practices and spiritualities. However, at the UN, indigenous peoples represent their own consistency, indigenous peoples' organisation are considered important voices on climate change and climate justice and are often found working in partnerships with FBOs. There is little research examining what these partnerships look like, to what extent they are equitable, what they mean for the categories of religion, faith, or spirituality, or how they may affect responses to climate change.

Another avenue for future research would be one which looks at how FBOs, in particular within the last year and going forward, are contending with the increasing expansions and to an extent neo-liberalisation of climate action at the UN. Whilst it did not form part of the data collection in this thesis, at COP28, FBOs for the first time had a Faith Pavilion the formal Blue Zone. Yet as the UNFCCC climate conferences become increasingly dominated by corporate interests and result year on year in quite disappointing outcomes, to what extent are FBOs actually complicit in or able to challenge this system? I began to address this in parts of the thesis on FBOs in the global-local context, but, as the space develops, future research should pay particular attention to the increasingly political and neoliberal dimensions of global climate action.

A final area of research which emerges as possibility is one which addresses how FBOs based in the majority world or Global South are navigating within the UN system for climate action. This could be addressed in part by examining in more detail projects such as the UNEP's Faith for Earth initiative which seeks to engage more FBOs from outside of the dominant UN areas, or agencies such as the UN Office for South-South Cooperation. It could also be done through more thorough research of the experiences of FBOs themselves, especially those which are limited in this thesis. There is already much research examining and critiquing the role of 'local faith actors' in sustainable development and FBOs in UN climate action often seek to engage with or represent local faith communities. Questions to be addressed in such research could continue the theoretical work developed in thesis on the implications of religious-secular boundaries, on the potential instrumentalisation of faith actors for climate action and, most importantly could engage with decolonial critiques and methods (for example Fine et al., 2008; Ritenburg et al., 2014; Chao and Enari, 2021).

While these avenues of future research will prove valuable, in this thesis I have demonstrated key tensions which emerge in the UN-faith climate space and which are likely to continue shaping FBOs' work on climate action at the UN. I have demonstrated key roles that FBOs play and have brought theoretical debates to bear on new empirical research. The findings will contribute to a rich and growing picture of FBOs' experiences and roles in UN climate action and will, I hope, equip both researchers and practitioners alike with important considerations for future research and engagement.

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Appendix A – Information sheet

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Religion as a strategic response to climate change? Addressing the changing role of faith-based organisations at the United Nations and beyond

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Contact for further information:	*Jodie Salter*	*J.O.Salter@leeds.ac.uk*	*+44 (0)777 242 6247*

Purpose and aims of the project

- This project addresses the role of faith-based organisations (FBOs) in climate change action and activism, particularly at the United Nations.
- There is existing research on the involvement of FBOs with the United Nations, particularly focussed on humanitarianism and socio-economic development, but research addressing FBOs' involvement in climate change action at the UN is limited. This is despite long-term involvement by FBOs with climate change action and UN climate change projects seeking FBO involvement.
- The main aim of this project is to broaden our understanding of how FBOs are engaging with international climate change action, particularly at the United Nations for example through UNFCCC and UNEP. Of particular interest is whether and how FBOs adopt distinctively 'faith-based' climate change activism.
- A second aim is to better understand how FBOs connect international climate change action at the UN with grassroots activism and initiatives.

Why have I been chosen, and do I have to take part?

You have been chosen as your organisation is of interest and relevance to this research project.
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can withdraw up to four months after the interview or focus group without giving a reason.

What do I have to do?

I would like to interview you about your experience of working in, or with, a faith-based organisation focusing on climate change action and activism. You will take part in a video-call interview lasting last approximately 30-45 minutes. You may be asked to take part in a follow-up interview, but this will be optional, and it will not affect your initial participation should you choose to decline.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no foreseeable risks or disadvantages in participation.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of taking part are in allowing the researcher to gather information and write about the ways in which faith-based organisations (FBOs) are contributing to climate change action and activism at the United Nations. You will be able to request access to the final thesis and any associated publications based on this research. We also can discuss the possibility of co-producing a short case study of the work your organisation is doing on climate change.

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Use, dissemination and storage of research data

All the contact information that we collect from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored separately from the research data.
You will be able to choose your preferred level of anonymity for the interview/focus group transcripts and this will be preserved in the research data and in all future research outputs.
In the consent form you can specify whether you would like any or all of the following to remain anonymous: name, role in organisation, name of organisation.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The main output of this research will be a PhD thesis which will be made publicly available on the **White Rose eTheses Repository**. The data may also be used in future research outputs, for example conference presentations, journal publications, and academic blogs, providing you agree to this in the consent form and with the agreed level of anonymity.

Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The audio-recordings will be stored on a secure server at the University of Leeds to be used for the purposes of analysis only and will not be used in any research outputs.
Transcripts of interviews and focus groups will be anonymised as per your request in the consent form and will be used for illustration in research outputs.

Who is organising/ funding the research?

This research project forms part of a PhD project funded by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) via WRoCAH (White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities). The AHRC is part of UKRI (UK Research and Innovation). The project is supervised by Professor Emma Tomalin and Dr Stefan Skrimshire at the University of Leeds.

You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep. Thank you for taking the time to read the information and for your consideration.

Appendix B – Consent form

Jodie Salter – tr12js@leeds.ac.uk
School of PRHS, University of Leeds

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Participant consent form

Religion as a strategic response to climate change? Addressing the changing role of faith-based organisations at the United Nations and beyond	Initial next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 15/07/2020 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research up to months after the interview or focus group session without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. *To withdraw please contact Jodie Salter at tr12js@leeds.ac.uk or +44(0)-------. Should you choose to withdraw any data collected will be destroyed and will not be used in this project or any future projects.*	
I understand that I am free to decline if I do not wish to answer any particular question or questions.	
I agree to the interview being audio-recorded and/or recorded in notes for analysis only.	
I [GIVE] [DO NOT GIVE]* permission for the *name of my organisation* to be linked to my responses in the research materials, thesis and any subsequent publications. I [GIVE] [DO NOT GIVE]* permission for *my role in the organisation* to be linked to my responses in the research materials, thesis and any subsequent publications. I [GIVE] [DO NOT GIVE]* permission for *my name* to be linked to my responses in the research materials, thesis and any subsequent publications. **Delete as appropriate. If you request these identifiers to be anonymised, they will not be linked to your responses in the research.*	
I agree for the transcripts to be stored securely and used in future research outputs, for example conference presentations, journal publications, and academic blogs, according to the anonymity preferences requested in this form.	
I agree for transcripts to be deposited in the Research Data Leeds repository so they may be accessed by other researchers, according to the anonymity preferences requested in this form.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.	

_____	_____	_____/_____/_____
Name of participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____/_____/_____
Name of person taking consent**	Signature	Date

**To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant will receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form. A copy of the signed and dated consent form will be kept with the project's main documents in a secure location.

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Appendix C – Interview guide

Interview themes

- The reasons for involvement in climate change activism or advocacy; whether and if so, how this is linked to the religion/faith of the organisation. Here they will be able to confirm whether they consider FBO to be an appropriate term for their organisation.
- How and why they engage with UN processes to advocate for climate change action (i.e. through UN faith-based or interfaith projects, or independently through attendance at UN events such as COP or other climate negotiations).
- To what extent they consider their activities and resources to be distinctively faith-based and whether this is particular to the context of climate change action.
- Whether and if so, how they work with local faith actors or communities to communicate climate change messaging, or to advocate for them at an international level.

Interview schedule

Each interview will open with a general introduction, confirmation of the receipt of the information sheet and signing of the consent form. I will reiterate the aims of the research, the withdrawal terms, the anonymity options and the research dissemination plan. Question Set A will be used for FBO representatives and Question Set B will be used for any UN representatives.

Question Set A

- What sort of climate change activism or advocacy have you been involved with?
    - Do you consider this to be motivated or influenced by the religion/faith of your organisation and if so how?
    - Do you consider FBO to be an appropriate term for your organisation?
    - What do you think about 'climate change' vs 'environmentalism'?
- Have you previously engaged with UN climate action? (give examples if necessary – campaigning at UNFCCC events, attendance at COPs, engagement with UNEP projects, and specify that this can be both in cooperation and protest)
    - If yes, did you work independently, with an interfaith/faith network, with secular organisations, or were you contacted to be part of a UN initiative?
    - Why did you decide to engage with the UN for climate change action?
    - Are there particular expectations placed on faith-based organisations in the context of climate change?
- Do you consider the climate action activities of your organisation to be distinctively faith-based or religious?
    - If yes, how?
    - Does the mode of engagement and language used differ across UN/FBO contexts?
    - Do you refer to religious, moral, ethical concepts?
- Do you work with local faith actors or communities in the context of climate action?

- What form does this take? (e.g. communicating climate change policy, advocating for communities affected by climate change)
- Does being a faith-based organisation provide legitimacy to this engagement?

Question Set B

- What sort of climate change activism or advocacy have you been involved with?
  - What do you think about 'climate change' vs 'environmentalism' vs 'sustainability'?
  - What do you think about FBO/faith actor/RNGO terminology?
- Why did you decide to engage with faith actors/faith-based organisations?
  - Why do a specific project?
  - What sort of faith actors do you engage with?
  - Was this already going on at the UN/UNEP/UNFCCC?
  - How does it fit into the wider (secular) UN structures (i.e. more aligned with other faith-based initiatives/environmentalism)
  - What is the reception of the project within UNEP/the UN/amongst faith actors?
- Do you consider the climate action activities of FBOs to be distinctive or unique?
  - If yes, how?
  - Does the mode of engagement and language used differ across UN/FBO contexts?
  - Do you refer to religious moral ethical concepts (and how does this work across multiple faiths)?
- Do you work with local faith actors or communities in the context of climate action?
  - What form does this take? (e.g. communicating climate change policy, advocating for communities affected by climate change)
  - Does being part of the UN shape or affect this engagement?

Each interview will end will with an opportunity for the participant to raise any points which they feel they have not had the chance to discuss and would like to add. Participants will also be able to ask me any questions about the interview specifically or research project in general. I will again reiterate the terms set out in the information sheet and consent form.

Appendix C – Ethics approval

From: **AHC Research Ethics** AHCResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk
Subject: FAHC 19-083 - Ethics Committee Favourable
Date: 7 August 2020 at 16:20
To: Jodie Salter [tr12js] tr12js@leeds.ac.uk
Cc: AHC Research Ethics AHCResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk, Emma Tomalin E.Tomalin@leeds.ac.uk, Stefan Skrimshire S.Skrimshire@leeds.ac.uk

AE

Dear Jodie,

FAHC 19-083- Religion as a strategic response to climate change? Addressing the changing role of faith-based organisations at the United Nations and beyond

I am pleased to inform you that the above research ethics application has been reviewed by AHC Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion based on the documentation received at date of this email. Reviewers noted that you had made all requested alterations in your V2 documentation.

Please retain this email as evidence of approval in your study file.

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted and approved to date. This includes recruitment methodology; all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. Please see http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/download/179/amendment_form or contact the Research Ethics & Governance Administrator for further information (ahcresearchethics@leeds.ac.uk) if required.

Ethics approval does not infer you have the right of access to any member of staff or student or documents and the premises of the University of Leeds. Nor does it imply any right of access to the premises of any other organisation, including clinical areas. The committee takes no responsibility for you gaining access to staff, students and/or premises prior to, during or following your research activities.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, risk assessments and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited.

If you require this confirmation in letter form, for example to show to external funders, then please do email me. I am happy to provide this if required.

It is our policy to remind everyone that it is your responsibility to comply with Health and Safety, Data Protection and any other legal and/or professional guidelines there may be.

I hope the study goes well.

Very best wishes,
Erin

FREC | University of Leeds
Email: ahcresearchethics@leeds.ac.uk
Web: https://leeds365.sharepoint.com/sites/ResearchandInnovationService/SitePages/Research%20Ethics.aspx

Appendix D – List of organisations

Interviews

Bhumi Global
Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
Care of Creation
Church of Norway
Faith for the Climate UK
Global One
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Operation Noah
Quaker United Nations Office
The Lutheran World Federation
UNEP Faith for Earth Initiative
World Council of Churches

Website analysis

Source: Salter, J. and Wilkinson, O. 2024. Faith framing climate: a review of faith actors' definitions and usage of climate change. Climate and Development. 16(2), pp.97–108.

ACT Alliance
African Council of Religious Leaders
Agency for Honoring Environment and Natural Resources of the Indonesian Ulema Council
All Africa Conference of Churches
American Jewish World Service
Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact
Association of Buddhists for the Environment
Association of Shinto Shrines
Australian Religious Response to Climate Change
Baha'i International Community
BAHU Trust
Bhumi Global
Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa
Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh
Church of South India Department of Ecological Concerns
Church's Auxiliary for Social Action
Coalition of the Environment and Jewish Life
Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité
Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers
Creation Stewards International
Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association
EcoSikh
Faith for the Climate
Ganga Action Parivar
Global Interfaith WASH Alliance
Green Muslims
GreenFaith

Hazon
Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology Network
Inter-Religious Council of Kenya
Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development
Interfaith Power and Light
Interfaith Rainforest Initiative
Isha Foundation
Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences
Islamic Help
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network Africa
Justice Peace Integrity of Creation
Laudato Si' Movement (prev. Global Catholic Climate Movement)
Lutheran World Federation
Red Eclesial PanAmazónica
Religions for Peace
Soka Gakkai International
South African Faith Communities Environment Initiative
Tearfund
World Council of Churches
World Vision International

Appendix E – Timeline

1945 - Formation of United Nations
Article 71 of UN charter defines space for NGOs within ECOSOC

1965 - UN Development Programme
UNDP formed with a focus on economic and technical development

1972 - "Limits to Growth"
Published by the Club of Rome on the ecological implications of unrestrained growth

1972 - Formation of the UNEP
United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Sweden resulting in the formation of UNEP

1979 - World Climate Conference, Geneva
First major international meeting on climate change hosted by World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)

1987 - Montreal Protocol adopted and ratified to prevent ozone depletion.
One of the most (and possibly only) successful intergovernmental environmental treaties

1988 - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPCC is formed by WMO and UNEP

1990 - Human Development Report
Report published by UNDP following a turn to the "capabilities approach"

1990 - IPCC releases first report and calls for a global treaty on climate change at the second World Climate conference

1990 - UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) adopted in Rio, Brazil with 154 signatories

1992 - UNCED Earth Summit, Rio

1994 - Kyoto Protocol
COP3 - Kyoto Protocol adopted at COP3 with 150 signatories including legally binding emissions targets for developed nations

2000 - Millennium Development Goals
MDGs adopted including *"7. To ensure environmental sustainability"*

2005 - Kyoto Protocol comes into force in the year of COP11 / CMP 1

2009 - UN Human Rights report
OHCHR publishes report on the effects of climate change on human rights advocating "human rights-based approach to climate change"

2009 - COP15 in Copenhagen
Copenhagen Accord produced emphasising the importance of responding to climate change but without any legally binding targets

2010 - UN Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development
UN-IATF-R initiated with 19 members including UNEP

2011 - COP17 in Durban, South Africa
Durban Platform for Enhanced Action extends targets to developing nations

2012 - Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development

2013 - Interfaith Liaison Committee to the UNFCCC
ILC established following COP19 in Warsaw

2015 - Sustainable Development Goals
SDGs agreed including *Goal 13 — Climate Action*

2015 - COP21 Paris Agreement made and signed in 2016
UNFCCC spreads #faith4climate to encourage faith-based responses

2017 - Faith for Earth Initiative launched by UNEP

2018 - IPCC releases special report confirming the importance of the 1.5C warming goal

2019 - COP25 (CMP15/CMA2) takes place in Madrid with key decisions postponed

2021- IPCC 6th Assessment Report confirms unequivocally that human activity has affected the climate and caused global warming

2021 - COP26 takes place in Glasgow

2022 - COP27 takes place in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt

2023 - Interfaith Coordination Group on Climate Change launched by the UNEP Faith for Earth Coalition to support interfaith engagement at COP28

2023 - COP28 takes place in Dubai, UAE

2023 - Faith Pavilion at COP28 - first official faith pavilion in the Blue Zone

The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis - 1967
Lynn White's article published

Committee of Religious NGOs - 1972
Inaugural meeting of the CRNGO at the UN

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation - 1983
World Council of Churches initiates a programme to centralise these issues

IFEES founded - mid 1980s
Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science

The Assisi Declarations - 1986

World Council of Churches Climate Change Programme - 1988
Programme launched with a focus on justice and ecumenical responses to climate change

GreenFaith founded - 1992
One of the first international interfaith environmental NGOs

Interfaith participation - 1992
Ecumenical and interfaith participation at UNCED conference (Earth Summit) in Rio

Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) launched- 1995

Religions of the World and Ecology - 1998
Final conference in this series attended by UNEP

Religions and Ecology: Can the Climate Change? - 2001
Special issue of Daedalus journal published

ARC partners with UNDP - 2007

Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto - 2008

Interfaith Declaration on Climate Change (for COP15) **- 2009**

Climate Justice for Sustainable Peace in Africa - 2011
African faith leaders meet and release a statement at UNEP, Nairobi, before COP17

Interfaith call for action before COP17 - 2011
Geneva interfaith forum call for action on climate change

Fast for the Climate - 2013
Interfaith representatives and FBOs at COP19 call for action

Interfaith Climate Summit, New York - 2014

Hindu Declaration on Climate Change - 2015
Adopted at the Parliament of the World's Religions, Melbourne, Australia

Papal encyclical Laudato Si' - 2015
"Integral ecology" and Catholic social teaching brought to bear on climate change

Islamic Declaration on Climate Change - 2015
Adopted at the International Islamic Climate Change Symposium

Interfaith Declaration on Climate Change - 2019
For COP25 in Madrid with 30 signatories

ARC dissolved - 2019

Fossil Fuel Divestment - 2020
42 faith institutions from 14 countries announce divestment

Road to Glasgow events - 2020-21
FBOs organise a series of events in advance of COP26

Faith and Science: Towards COP26 - 2021
UK Govt. and the Vatican bring faith leaders and scientists together before COP26

Faith for Ecocide Law launched - 2021
International interfaith organisation campaigning for ecocide laws

Faith and Belief Bloc at Global Day for Climate Justice - 2021
Faith groups take part in the climate march at COP26

Multi-faith letter for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty - 2022
Organised by GreenFaith and signed by FBOs and faith leaders

Papal encyclical Laudato Deum - 2023
Calls for much stronger response to the "global climate crisis"

Global Faith Leaders Summit - 2023
200+ people take part in a ceremony signing an interfaith statement for COP28