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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Faith framing climate: a review of faith actors' definitions and usage of climate change

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ABSTRACT
Faith actors shape understandings of what climate change is and what responses ought to be pursued at local and global levels and in civil society and policy arenas alike. As an issue which can be described and responded to in multiple and varied ways and given faith actors' role and influence in local and global civil society, this article aims to provide a better understanding of the ways in which faith actors use framings of climate change. Framing is taken to be a broad notion encompassing the ways climate change is defined by faith actors and how it becomes embedded into the language of their faith, operational structures, and development work. Drawing on an analysis of data collected from the websites of 50 faith actors, we found that 45 situated climate change within moral and religious frameworks and 41 emphasized the effects *on* and effects *of* humans. Climate change is taken to be a moral and socio-political issue, and by 18 as a *justice* issue, on which humans have an imperative to act. Despite their diversity, the results indicate a distinctively faith-based ability to situate climate change in moral and religious frameworks whilst remaining connected to the practical effects thereof.

1. Introduction

Faith actors do more than help promote and evoke a response to or action on climate change. They shape understandings of what climate change is and what responses ought to be pursued at local and global levels and in civil society and policy arenas alike (Bergmann, 2015; Berry, 2014; Bertana, 2020; Glaab, 2017; Kearns, 2011). As an issue which can be described, understood and responded to in multiple and varied ways, and given faith actors' role and influence in local and global civil society, this article aims to provide a better understanding of the ways in which faith actors use particular framings of climate change.

'Framing' is taken as a broad notion encompassing the ways climate change is defined and described by faith actors, how it becomes embedded into the language of their particular faith and operational structures, as well as which environmental issues are put under the heading of climate change. It is well established that the ways in which climate change and the environment are framed can have important ramifications for what responses are taken (Lakoff, 2010; Landrum et al., 2016; McKee, 2018). Much like the way religious framings may imbue the development and humanitarian work of faith actors with particular values and influence their approaches, framings of climate change can change the ways its effects are valued and affect the types of action taken by faith actors (Schipper, 2010; Schnable, 2016).

'Faith actors' cover a wide range of types of organizations working in the development sector, but importantly are not only confined to 'faith-based organisations' (FBOs), which

are those formally registered and organized non-profits with faith affiliations (Wilkinson et al., 2022, p. 5). Instead, we choose to use the broader category of faith actors to also include religious institutions and networks that do not have their own faith-based non-profit organizations but still work on climate change, and non-formally registered but organized religious committees, councils, and community structures. This allows us to more comprehensively understand the diversity of climate framings from faith actors.

This article builds on existing research, particularly that which addresses the ways in which faith actors engage with climate change, which has often taken a more in-depth approach on a small number of organizations (e.g. Brown et al., 2014; Schaefer, 2014; Smith & Halafoff, 2020) or has focused on specific events and features of the climate movement (e.g. Berry, 2014; Glaab, 2017; Krantz, 2021). Complementing this background with a wider mapping of the language used by a range of faith actors, this article will help to increase understanding of the ways in which climate change is framed and operationalized. Drawing on data collected from the websites of 50 faith actors, we address the questions: what terms are being used by faith actors to describe and respond to climate change?; do religious, regional, and organizational variables affect the language used and response taken?; and which, if any, framings of climate change are dominant across faith actors? We provide a background on the ways in which religions and faith actors have been considered relevant to climate change and climate action, followed by an overview of the key themes and terms that emerged from the research. The final discussion focuses on addressing the tension between

acknowledging the diversity of framings of climate change employed by faith actors whilst also proposing that, in sum, they remain distinctively faith-based. Climate change is integrated seamlessly into the religious and moral frameworks of faith actors whilst remaining grounded in, and relevant to, the real-world effects and socio-political dimensions thereof.

1.1 Research background

Contemporary research addressing religions' views and actions on climate change stems from the field of religions and ecology, an area which has been emerging since the 1960s in conjunction with the rise of the wider environmental movement and climate science. A core approach of this field may be characterized by the 'retrieval' of latent environmentally positive religious teachings, the 're-evaluation' of teachings in light of environmental concerns, and the 'reconstruction', or creative adaptation, of religious teachings, beliefs and practices in positive environmental terms (Grim & Tucker, 2017, pp. 5–8). This practice can be seen in environmental projects which seek to provide resources in line with the teachings of specific religious traditions (e.g. Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, 2019; UNEP, 2018b). Research specifically engaging with and addressing religious responses to climate change emerged after 2000 (Gottlieb, 2006; Posas, 2007; Toly, 2004; Tucker & Grim, 2001). The emergence of this research occurred at a time when international debates on climate change were beginning to scale-up significantly and is reflective of a wider shift in environmental language towards climate change.

The link between religion and climate change has been framed in various ways and several review papers speak directly to how this connection is understood (Berry, 2016; Haluza-DeLay, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2018; Veldman et al., 2012). Some, echoing research on the value of FBOs to the development sector (Clarke & Jennings, 2018; Tomalin, 2013), emphasize their social and economic resources as beneficial to climate action (Veldman et al., 2014, p. 5). However, much research in this area highlights the more intangible resources of faith actors, namely their ability to mobilize and motivate people on climate change through moral frameworks (Posas, 2007; Schipper, 2010; Wolf & Gjerris, 2009). Kearns (2011, p. 415) proposes that religions provide a holistic and ethical framing of climate change which can serve as an important motivational tool for action both at the local community level and within international climate policy. This is reflected in ethnographic studies attending to the ways in which religious communities are engaging with the idea and actuality of climate change (e.g. Johnson, 2012; Onwutuebe, 2019; Schuman et al., 2018). It is clear that religious worldviews and religious communities provide important frameworks through which to understand and respond to climate change (Haberman, 2021; Hulme, 2017; Veldman et al., 2014).

Given the variations across research and practice on faith and climate it is important to address the ways in which climate change itself is understood. A simple approach is to point to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and to frame climate change as a purely physical if incredibly complex process (Hulme, 2017, p. 240). Indeed,

many faith actors choose to engage with the formal processes of UN climate negotiations where their engagement is often framed as one which can provide ethical weight to secular climate policy processes (Krantz, 2021; Rollosson, 2010). However, the last two decades have seen a notable shift towards ethical and holistic framings of climate change. In this vein, Hulme (2010, p. 171) proposes that climate change is more than an environmental issue and 'not "a problem" waiting for "a solution"', but that it is a systemic 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. This has been coined by some as an 'intersectional' approach to climate change whereby multiple connecting issues, interests and power structures are not only relevant to climate change but are part of the definition of climate change itself (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014).

The cultural and societal elements of climate change are echoed by Adger et al. (2011, p. 116; 2013) who emphasize that climate policy must put localized cultural factors at the forefront of decision-making and engage with communities to understand 'what matters'. Here, climate science does well at describing and measuring the 'problems' but may not be best placed to define the appropriate response. Climate adaptation and mitigation measures which do not take local and cultural factors into consideration may be more damaging to local, and particularly indigenous communities (Whyte, 2019). The shift towards a holistic and ethical framing of climate change and the emphasis on local considerations in climate policy (Etana et al., 2021; Peterson et al., 2010; Scally & Doberstein, 2021) is reflected in research on faith actors. Mangunjaya et al. (2015) address the role of faith-based environmental groups in Indonesia and suggest that faith actors do particularly well at navigating between the global arena of climate policy and activism and the local concerns of their communities. Here the ability to speak several 'languages' and to integrate or switch between different framings of climate change is presented as an important, if not unique feature of faith actors (see also Berry, 2014; Glaab & Fuchs, 2018).

The increasing prevalence of the language of climate justice may be seen as reflective of this shift towards climate change as an ethical and socio-political issue (Porta & Parks, 2014). Yet, speaking about environmental issues in terms of justice is by no means new for faith actors. Following the first World Climate Conference in 1979, the World Council of Churches formed their programme on *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* and concerns around justice have formed an important part of socio-environmentalist movements dating back to the 1970s (Sandler and Pezzullo, 2007). Glaab (2017), on the role of faith actors in climate advocacy at the UNFCCC, emphasizes the discursive and constructive role that faith actors play in debates around climate justice. Emerging alongside the emphasis on justice there have also been calls to decolonize the ways in which we frame, engage with and respond to climate change and to put voices and knowledge from those most affected by climate change, indigenous communities, and those in the majority world at the forefront of climate action (Chao & Enari, 2021; Satyal et al., 2021; Schipper et al., 2021).

Given the variety of faith-based engagements with the idea and actuality of climate change, for the purposes of this article climate change is taken to be 'multifarious' (Hulme, 2022, p. xxix). That is, it is not constituted by measurable changes to the environment alone and is open to framings which highlight intersecting moral, social, political and religious dimensions.

2. Methods

This project aimed to review a wide-ranging and diverse group of faith framings to help orient the climate work of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), a network interested in research on faith actors' roles in development. An initial database of faith actors was compiled from existing sources which included those working in the environmental, humanitarian and development sectors along with religious institutions and interfaith networks. The database was first set up using a list of humanitarian and environmental faith actors produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2018a). This was supplemented by additional organizations who are part of the JLI network and faith actors accredited by or registered with the UNFCCC, IPCC and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

The main analysis was conducted on a sample of 50 organizations (see Annex) chosen from the main database of 430; 125 organizations were omitted immediately for no mention of climate change on their website. The sample was not random but was instead a purposive sample with an aim to account for faith actors based in both the Global North and South, those with climate change as the main theme or not, and to include a range of faith affiliations (see Table 1). Christian faith actors based in the Global North were well-accounted for in the database so we chose to increase the proportion of actors from other regions and traditions to allow for a broader range of climate framings which may otherwise remain unrepresented. Of these, 27 had climate change and/or the environment as a main organizational thematic area. The remaining 23 were organizations for whom climate change was a secondary or crosscutting theme of which 16 were classed as primarily development or humanitarian organizations, whilst the remaining 11 were classed as interfaith or religious councils. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the sample, the continent in which their headquarters are located, and faith affiliation. Importantly, 'faith affiliation' has not been imposed or assumed but has been taken from a given organization's self-description. 'Global' is used to indicate organizations who do not have a clearly defined headquarters and list offices across multiple continents.

From the websites of these 50 faith actors, the aim was to extract for analysis their 'climate framing', that is, their definition of and engagement with climate change. 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 organizations who have the capacity to produce such resources. The area of the websites from which the framing was taken varied; for some it was included in their mission/vision, some had specific pages dedicated to the issue, and some had their framings on pages about other thematic issues. For all, the text selected was judged by the authors of this article to be that which contained the organization's main framing of climate change, even in cases where it may be referenced in other areas of the website. Whilst the initial lists and searches were in English, two of the websites, included in the sample to account for regions which would otherwise have been excluded, required translation for which the Google web translator was used.

Qualitative coding and content analysis were used to analyze the sources in NVivo (Graebner et al., 2012; Nelson & Woods, 2011). The analysis was informed by an understanding of climate change as multidimensional and multifarious, to allow for a broad range of terms and themes to emerge. The coding process consisted of three cycles. The first cycle took an inductive approach to allow the framings to 'speak for themselves' without imposing pre-existing frameworks in which each source was coded for any language used to describe and respond to climate change, broadly conceived. The second cycle took a blended approach in which the sources were revisited to check the initial codes for omissions and to order codes into thematic areas, detailed in section 3.1. The sources were revisited a third time, with the framework in place to check the consistency of the themes. By taking a blended approach (see Graebner et al., 2012, p. 281; Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019, p. 264), we were able to balance between developing codes inductively and subsequently be guided by the thematic framework.

2.1 Limitations

A key limitation of the research is that it is focused exclusively not only on those faith actors who have an online presence but who have a significant enough website to discuss climate change. Many smaller or grassroots faith actors conducting valuable work on climate change may not have enough of an online presence to describe their climate framings. In addition, the searches were conducted in English and, correspondingly, all but two of the sources were in English. Relying on websites likewise means that their framing may not always correspond with evolutions in thinking that have not yet been updated on their website. Nevertheless, the website framing is the one chosen to communicate to an external audience about their position on climate change. Whilst the sample of 50 included more Christian organizations than others at 32%, this was, in fact, lowered from the number of Christian actors which appeared in the initial searches (44%) and adjusted to include a higher proportion of organizations based outside of Europe and North America (29% in the original database, to 54% in the sample of 50), to heighten the range of actors represented. Yet, it remains the case that faith actors who have established websites from which a relatively clear climate framing can be extracted are mostly Christian organizations based in the Global North. Pursuing this purposive sample, though not proportionally representative of the initial database or international faith-based climate advocacy (see Krantz, 2021), allowed for the inclusion of a broader range of faith actors and likewise, a broader range of framings.

Table 1. A breakdown of the religious affiliation and geographical location of the 50 actors analyzed.

	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

3. Findings on faith-based climate framings

This section is organized in line with the research questions: what terms are being used by faith actors to describe and respond to climate change?; do religious, regional, and organizational variables affect the language used and response taken?; and which, if any, framings of climate change are dominant across faith actors? The first section maps the language used to frame climate, organized into six themes. Next, the ways in which religious, regional and organizational variables affect the framings are addressed. The third research question is addressed throughout the section, and returned to in the discussion, which focuses on the distinctiveness of faith-based framings.

3.1 Climate framings

3.1.1 Conceptual framing of climate change

Conceptual framing is used here to mean phrases and framings which draw on values, beliefs, and religious concepts, which indicate the type of value ascribed to climate change and the environment. 45 out of 50 faith actors included what can be considered a conceptual framing of climate change. Of these, 28 used religious beliefs, teachings, or confessional language in their framings; for example, The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) emphasize 'Jewish values such as tikkun olam (repairing our world) and tzedek (justice)' (COEJL, n.d.). 12 described it as a moral or ethical issue, including the Australian Religion Response to Climate Change (n.d.) who describe it as 'not only a scientific, environmental, economic and political issue' but 'also a profoundly moral and spiritual one', and Islamic Relief (n.d.) who put it as one of 'the greatest moral, social and environmental issues facing humanity'. The sources were also coded for recurrent terms used to frame climate change; these were protection/care (22), balance/harmony/interdependence (17), creation (13), stewardship (11), gift/sacred (3) and Mother Earth (3). Acting as a counterpoint to the more positive, value-driven language, an additional element of the conceptual framing of climate change is the emphasis on its severity. With the language of crisis and emergency increasingly salient, it is not surprising that 35 out of 50 faith actors embedded this into their framing by referring to: risk/danger (17), crisis (14), destruction (12) and emergency (9). The Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA), for example, states

that 'the environmental crisis […] pose[s] a huge threat to the survival of the entire continent of Africa' (CYNESA, 2020), whilst the Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers (n.d.) speaks of the 'unprecedented destruction of our Mother Earth'.

Whilst there can be a debate on the extent to which faith imbues and inspires all elements of a given organization's work (Berry, 2014, p. 277; Occhipinti, 2015, p. 337), these climate framings demonstrate that religious and spiritual concepts are being directly invoked to both *explain* climate change and to *evoke a response* to it. The framings often open by reminding the reader of the religious principles which are relevant to climate change, and many have dedicated sections explaining how to engage with religious teachings on the environment. EcoSikh (2021) begin with specific reference to the environmental teachings of Guru Nanak who 'laid the foundation for a sacred vision for the environment' and Islamic Help include a section addressing the question 'What is the Islamic perspective on the environment?'. These conceptual framings seem to act as a call, both to accept the reality and severity of climate change and to frame it as an issue in which faith has a direct role to play. Faith actors are situating climate change firmly within the moral or religious framework of their organization and treating it as more than a measurable, scientific phenomenon. Though this was not always confessional or faith-specific, what came across in the framings was a definition of climate change which was explicitly moral in character and thus inseparable from the imperative to act on it.

3.1.2 Justice and other key terms

Various other key terms were used to frame climate change: justice (18); sustainable/ity (10), ecology/ical (9), nature (7) and ecosystems (4). The phrases that were categorized under this theme are those which serve as focal points for framings. They have clear connections to climate change and are as such important to recognize but did not fit squarely under other thematic areas. The language of climate justice has been an increasingly important mode of responding to climate change (Caney, 2020; Porta & Parks, 2014). However, only 10 faith actors specifically used the phrase 'climate justice'. Other uses of the term included eco-justice, socio-environmental justice, ecological justice and intergenerational justice. A notable omission in the sample was the use of '*environmental* justice' which could be attributed to the discursive shift towards '*climate* justice' over the last decade (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). Justice was used by faith actors both to indicate the

extent of the unequal effects of climate change and thus to describe a problem, but it was also used to indicate a mode of responding. Framing justice as a central problem to be addressed, the Bahu Trust (n.d.) emphasizes the need to 'tackle climate injustices', CASA India (2021) references 'climate justice related issues', and the Lutheran World Federation (2021) described climate justice as a 'crosscutting priority'. For the most part, however, justice is used as a framework or guiding principle through which climate change must be understood and responded to. Though justice could reasonably be categorized under the 'conceptual framing' theme as it suggests a moral and in some cases confessional call, or indeed under 'people' as it relates to the globally unequal effects thereof, it appears as a distinct category here instead as the climate justice movement has taken on its own specific character and role (Glaab, 2017; Porta & Parks, 2014).

3.1.3 People

Closely connected to the issue of justice, an unavoidable theme in framings of climate change is its effects on people and communities. The emphasis on people occurred in two directions: the impact of climate change on people, and the impact of people on climate change. 40 out of the 50 actors mentioned people in some way in their framing of climate change. People, here, are used in a broad sense to include reference to groups or communities, socio-economic development, health, as well as human responsibility for climate change; see Figure 1.

The two most popular themes were vulnerable communities and poverty/inequality. These were both used in a similar way to frame and explain climate change. Climate change is framed as something which both affects vulnerable communities much more but also acts as a multiplier of these very vulnerabilities. Similarly, poverty and inequality are described as exacerbating the effects of climate change whilst at the same time also being exacerbated by the effects of climate change. The Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology Network (2016) states that 'equality and vulnerability [are] both intensified by climate change' whilst ACT Alliance (n.d.) states as the opening line of their framing 'Climate change exacerbates poverty and inequality'. Closely linked to vulnerability and poverty, livelihoods are included in the framings to demonstrate the more tangible and concrete effects of climate change. The main focus was the damage and existential threat of climate change to 'human habitations' (Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), 2021) as well as food and water sources, local agriculture and indigenous ways of life. Though some emphasis was put on the importance of encouraging sustainable livelihoods, and the effects of unsustainable livelihoods on climate change, the former mostly occurred in the response to climate change whilst the latter was expressed in terms of unsustainable development and responsibility.

Development was included in the framings of climate change, primarily by those organizations who conduct development and humanitarian work, to propose that it may both reverse previous, and prevent future development efforts. It was particularly relevant where climate change acted as a crosscutting theme of an organization such that not addressing

it would make existing programmes of work untenable without addressing climate change. The Jesuit Justice and Ecology Network Africa (JENA, 2021) specifically describe climate change as both a 'humanitarian and development emergency'. However, development was also presented as a conduit of climate change in cases where it is unsustainable, economically 'unbridled' (American Jewish World Service (AJWS), 2021) and reliant on industrial agriculture or fossil fuels. Connected to the idea of unsustainable models of development, the role of people in causing climate change was also discussed. This was both in broad terms, citing the fact that people, primarily in the minority world or Global North, are responsible for climate change, and in specific terms by referencing the damaging role of economic models and corporations. Although it is now unequivocal that climate change is anthropogenic, where faith actors reiterate this in their framings the descriptive claim becomes a moral imperative to take responsibility and act. The Laudato Si' Movement (2021) follows this model by taking the 'scientific consensus that climate change is caused by human action' and responding to this with a moral commitment through their emphasis on 'ecological conversion'.

This theme demonstrates that climate change is seen as inextricable from its effects on people and as much more than its purely physical characteristics. Though this may not seem a particularly radical suggestion – indeed the IPCC itself has long emphasized the risk to the 'global poor' (Mastaler, 2011, p. 66) – faith actors here are not just pointing to the effects of climate change on people. Climate change is considered a distinctly human and humanitarian issue and they are making these effects central to their very definition of climate change. From the outset, these framings of climate change make any response inseparable from addressing existing inequalities, environmental vulnerabilities, and poverty.

3.1.4 Environmental issues

Many of the faith actors mentioned environmental issues within their framing of climate change; Figure 2 shows a breakdown by number of faith actors. Whilst these environmental dimensions may be considered constitutive of climate change, they appear as a distinct category here as for many in the sample climate change is not just an environmental issue but is also, or primarily, a humanitarian, socio-political, and moral one. Natural hazards and extreme weather were referred to most frequently to substantiate the explanation of climate change. The term natural hazard is used here but in fact faith actors used a range of terms including 'environmental disasters', 'climate-related hazards' and 'natural disasters'. Though appearing as a distinct category here, it is important to note that natural hazards were, for the most part, introduced specifically because of their hugely unequal effects on a global scale. In all but one case 'disaster' was used specifically to indicate the human-created vulnerabilities which have shaped an environment in which environmental hazards such as floods and droughts could lead to disasters. Global warming and greenhouse gasses (GHGs) often occurred together in the framings. Global warming was used variously as synonymous to climate change, as a specific
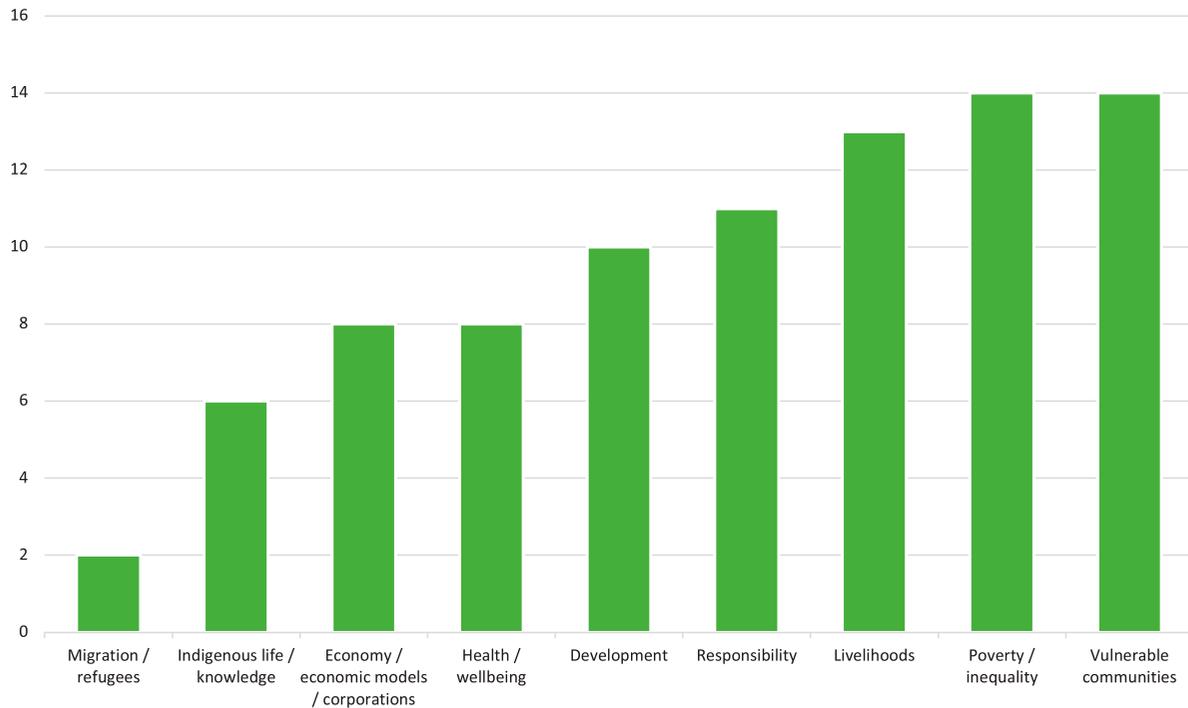
Figure 1. People sub-themes by number of faith actors.

feature of climate change, and as a distinct environmental issue. Emphases on the importance of food security and agriculture appeared at the same frequency in terms of the need for sustainable models of food production, the damaging effects of climate change on local agricultural land and, to a lesser extent, the damaging effects of unsustainable agriculture and continuous farming. For some, these environmental issues are subsets of climate change but for others climate change is one of many environmental issues; Bhumi Global (2021), for example, states their mission is 'to address the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution'.

3.1.5 Reference to external entities

Though, for the most part, faith actors frame climate change in their own language or in the language of their existing programmes, 19 faith actors supported this with reference to a variety of external bodies, organizations, or agreements. Of the references made, 12 mentioned the UN, 9 use climate science to support their framing, whilst the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement and Laudato Si' were each referenced by 2 faith actors. During the research process, in July 2021, the Global Catholic Climate Movement changed its name to the Laudato Si' Movement which further elucidates
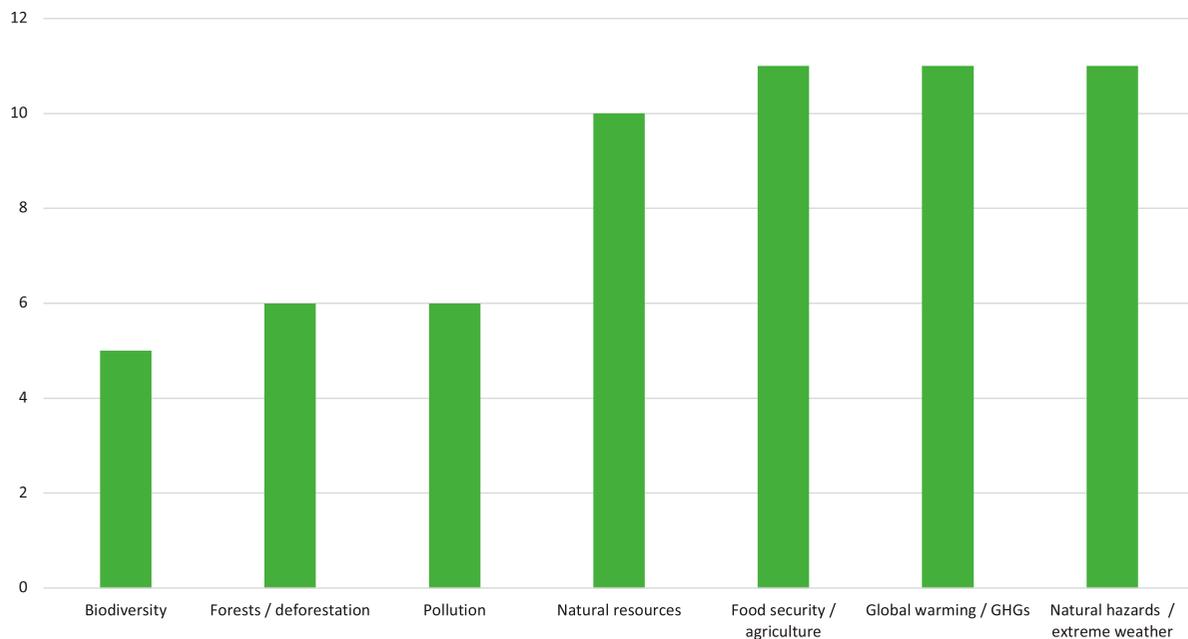
Figure 2. Environmental issues by number of faith actors.

the centrality of Laudato Si' in their framing of climate change. By referring to external and, for the most part, global entities it seems that faith actors are adding weight and legitimacy to their climate framings. Ganga Action Parivar, for example, specifically explains the IPCC's consensus on climate change before detailing the practical implications of climate change in terms of the localized issues of biodiversity and deforestation. Those who refer to climate science, particularly the IPCC reports and '1.5C', are reinforcing the scientifically informed reality of climate change to the public but are also showing their relevance and legitimacy in the world of global climate policy, by 'speaking the language' of scientists and policymakers. Faith actors are engaging with global narratives of climate change without compromising on local environmental concerns.

3.1.5 Responses to climate change

Many of the faith actors, as part of their framing of climate change, also discussed the activities they implement to respond. Responses were grouped into 22 categories some of which account for specific activities (e.g. tree-planting, lobbying, education), some of which are the focal points or themes of a given response (e.g. renewable energy, youth engagement) and some of which are specifically faith-based responses (e.g. prayer/worship, religious teachings). Figure 3 shows the responses by the number of faith actors who mentioned each one in their framing. That they have mentioned a particular response does not necessarily mean they have an ongoing project in that area and may simply be a reference to previous work or plans for future projects.

The most common responses were public engagement and awareness raising, encouraging lifestyle change or personal responsibility, education or training, and advocacy. What connects these four most common sub-themes is that, rather than being explicitly environmental activities, for example, tree planting, they are all focused on increasing the profile of climate change as an issue. Raising the profile of climate change 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 awareness-raising, education, lifestyle change, and public engagement. Advocacy was specifically described as relating to policy and policy changes at local, national, and international levels. Where faith actors are often described as mediators or translators between local communities and policymakers (Beyer, 2011; Bolotta et al., 2019), the emphasis on advocacy is a clear example of faith actors using their role and influence to engage 'upwards' and to press for changes to climate and environmental policies. Importantly, this advocacy is framed as coming from a faith perspective and is often tied up with an associated moral imperative. Public engagement and awareness-raising occur in a different direction and are focused instead on raising the profile of climate change and its effects within the organization, within faith communities and within wider civil society.

3.2 Variables

Addressing the second research question – do religious, geographical, and organizational variables affect the language used and response taken? – this section explores to what extent these markers affect the framings of climate change. Organizational variables here are taken to be the differences in each faith actor's programming and themes, divided primarily by whether or not climate is the main theme of a given organization. The section below highlights those areas where the differences become most apparent.

We found that organizational variables had the greatest effect on how climate change is framed. Faith actors with climate change as the main theme of their organization tended to refer less to the effects of climate change on people, specifically in terms of development and poverty/inequality, in their climate framings compared to other faith actors. The focus instead was more on the specifically environmental effects of climate change. However, for the sub-theme of people's *responsibility* for climate change this trend was reversed; faith actors whose main area was climate change were more likely to emphasize human responsibility for climate change. This difference was particularly notable both in terms of the recognition of the ethical/moral dimensions of climate change and with the reference to religious or spiritual language to frame climate change. Non-climate focused organizations were more likely to reference environmental issues in their framing, particularly natural hazards and extreme weather. This may speak to a more practical and practice-driven framing of climate change likely coming from experience conducting humanitarian and development programmes in areas affected by climate change. However, this trend was reversed for organizations headquartered in Asia, where it was the faith actors focusing on climate change who were more likely to discuss natural hazards and extreme weather than their non-climate focused counterparts.

On the role of religious affiliation, the differences across traditions were more difficult to pinpoint partially due to the variety of faith affiliations in the sample and that for some affiliations only one faith actor was included. Here, rather than look at the broader themes it is easier to focus in on a selection of specific concepts which recurred across a given faith affiliation. Justice, stewardship, and creation were terms evoked almost consistently across Christian faith actors. However, an emphasis on stewardship also occurred in the framings of Muslim and Jewish faith actors. Some of the least used terms are those which showed the greatest specificity to particular faith groups. 'Mother Earth' was used by EcoSikh, the Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers, and the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation alone whilst the connection between 'consciousness' and climate change was invoked only by the Brahma Kumaris Environment Initiative (2021). Whilst these represent a small number in this sample they may speak to a much larger population in terms of religious communities, often in areas where the effects of climate change are most severe. These traditions remain underrepresented amongst UNFCCC accredited FBOs (Krantz, 2021, pp. 12–15). The importance of incorporating local faith-based and indigenous framings into discussions on climate change is well-established (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2019; Bertana, 2020; Brugnach et al., 2017; McNaught et al., 2014) and the fact that these framings are not 'dominant' makes it that much more important to recognize them.
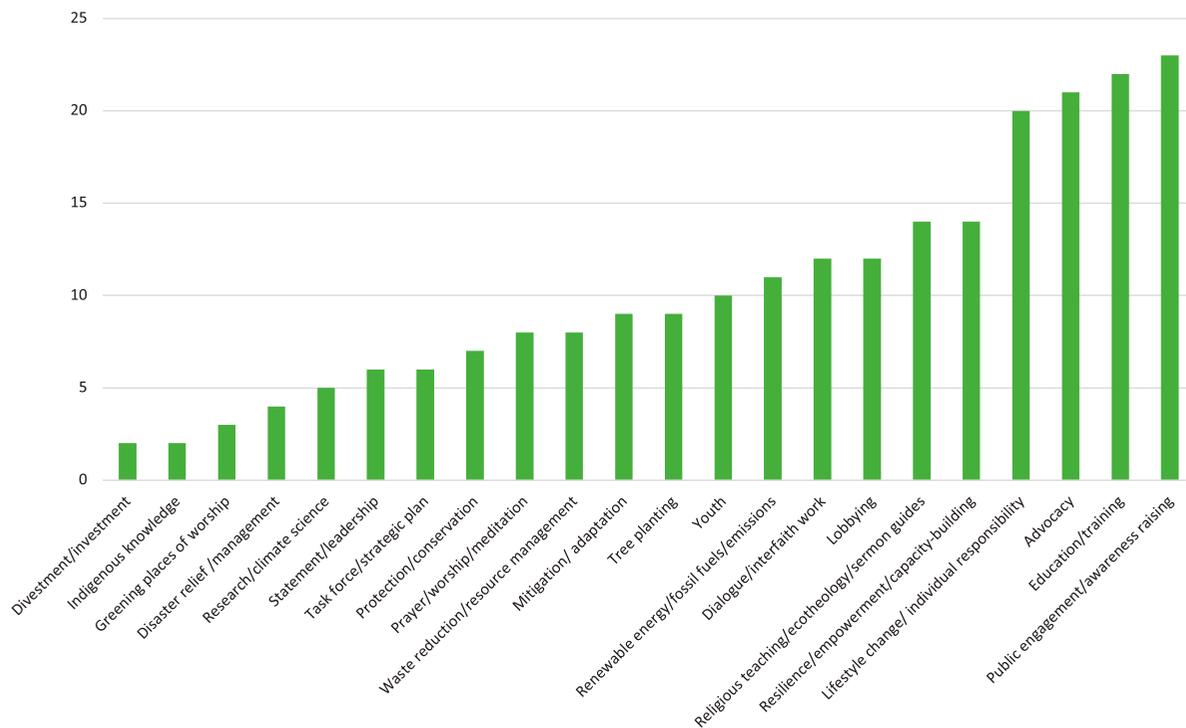
Figure 3. Responses by number of faith actors.

4. Discussion: distinctively faith-based framings?

The preceding sections demonstrated the range of terms used in climate framings by faith actors. In the following analysis, we address a tension which emerges throughout the sample: to recognize the ways in which these framings of climate change may be considered distinctively 'faith-based' but to do so without leaning into assumptions about the homogeneity of faith actors. By looking not at the specific language used but at the structures of the framings, we begin to see the ways in which faith actors are presenting a distinctive mode of framing climate change. This occurs first in the embeddedness of (broadly conceived) moral, religious or spiritual frameworks and secondly in the ability to integrate into these frameworks the scientific, practical and on-the-ground realities of climate change.

The role of religious and spiritual frameworks in motivating climate action and framing climate change has been well-documented at local and international levels (Berry, 2014; Bertana, 2020; Glaab, 2017; Mangunjaya et al., 2015). Whilst this study does not address the measurable impact of such framings, it is clear, given the majority use of religious and moral frameworks in their framings, that faith actors here are taking the scientific reality and effects of climate change and 'grounding it in the moral and ethical imperative of their faith traditions' (Kearns, 2011, p. 415). Faith actors may be seen as a bridge where faith-based understandings of climate change are connected to the practice of engaging in climate action. This grounding in religious and moral imperatives is reflective of a division, suggested by others (Jenkins et al., 2018, pp. 8–13), that we can see both confessional and constructive language used by faith actors when discussing climate change. Confessional here refers to tradition-specific religious language or teachings, whilst constructive refers to language which may be considered broadly religious or spiritual, but which may have uptake both across faiths and in secular contexts.

Confessional framings of climate are of course the easiest to mark as faith-based and are those which appeared most frequently across tradition-specific faith actors. What is interesting is how these confessional framings appeared. Many faith actors did more than apply religious language to climate change but presented action on climate change and environmentally positive attitudes as a non-optional part of their faith. Two examples demonstrate this well. The Bahu Trust (n.d.) uses the following phrase as the first line in its framing:

> The religion of Islam is inherently environmental. At the Bahu Trust, we believe that preserving the environment is an act of worship, the faith of Islam gives a clear mandate to protect and look after nature.

Whilst the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (2020), centering the effects of climate change on people, states:

> The environmental crisis does indeed pose a huge threat to the survival of the entire continent of Africa […] If our initiatives are to be both effective and truly Catholic, they need to take deep roots in the reality of those who suffer.

Here the use of 'inherently environmental' and 'truly Catholic' demonstrate that climate and environmental action are presented as not only embedded in the values and frameworks of each organization but in their faith as a whole. Climate action here is not just an activity undertaken by faith-based organizations or NGOs but is presented as an integral part of the beliefs and practices of each faith community.

However, the sample also demonstrates how faith actors present religious or spiritual and moral framings of climate change in constructive ways, that is, beyond their own faith group. Interfaith groups consistently demonstrate this as they frame climate change not in the religious language of a particular faith but rather in a way which alludes to religious and spiritual values without being explicitly confessional. Again, it is useful here to provide two examples. The Australian Religion Response to Climate Change (n.d.) says:

> We recognise that climate change is not only a scientific, environmental, economic and political issue – it is also a profoundly moral and spiritual one: the Earth's ecosystems are intrinsically precious and beautiful and deserve protection.

The Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (2018) affirms this:

> We emphasise the spiritual and moral imperative to care for the Earth and the community of all life […] we are united in our diversity through our shared commitment to caring for living Earth.

The use of 'moral' in these extracts is a key term for constructive framings of climate change, that is, without mentioning specific religious concepts or teachings. Likewise, the use of 'Earth'; here the emphasis placed on caring for the Earth and describing the intrinsic value of the Earth gives a sense of universal and non-confessional sacredness without explicit mention of the divine or the sacred. By appealing to their ability to speak the language of morality and sacredness, faith actors may appeal to those of other faiths but are also able to frame climate change with a language that has uptake with secular groups (Rollosson, 2010). It seems that faith actors are doing more than, for example, importing an IPCC definition of climate change and slotting it into their existing work or using it to support their programmes, though of course some make reference to it. Faith actors are engaging with climate change in a much richer way and extend Grim and Tucker's (2017, pp. 5–8) suggestion of retrieving, re-evaluating and reconstructing religious teachings to seamlessly connect the conceptual and practical framings of climate change.

Yet, there is still variation on what climate change is and which particular environmental issues and actions are considered a part of it. A key point that emerged is that the existing themes and programmes of faith actors shape the ways in which they frame and operationalize climate change and act as important predictors both for how climate change is defined but also how it is responded to. It has been suggested that humanitarian and development organizations with existing connections to and rapport with policymakers are able to raise the profile of climate change by framing it as more than a niche, purely environmental concern (Herbeck, 2014, p. 334). This is evidenced within the sample by faith actors, for example the American Jewish World Service and Islamic Help, who approach climate change as a crosscutting theme and as inextricably connected to, if not constitutive of, the development and humanitarian crises already faced by the communities with which they work.

Despite this operational diversity, the confessional and constructive imperatives which imbue the framings combined with the ability to mediate between global and local concerns remain a distinctive feature of faith actors' climate framings. The call often heard in the climate action space to 'Think Globally, Act Locally', that is, to consider the health of the whole planet and to take action at a local level, is clearly being taken to heart in the climate framings of these faith actors. However, faith actors seem to be going further and doing what McKee (2018, p. 465) encourages: to not only act locally but to think locally as well.

5. Conclusion

In their diversity, the climate framings of these faith actors are reflective of the increasing recognition of climate change as a multifaceted, socio-political, cultural, ethical and environmental framework through which global and local concerns are refracted. Yet taken together they also indicate a distinctively faith-based ability to weave multiple and intersecting dimensions of climate change into moral and religious frameworks. Analyzing the climate framings of 50 faith actors revealed the variety of themes and terms which is in turn reflective of the far-reaching implications and effects of climate change. Conceptual framings occurred most frequently and were those that employed religious, spiritual, moral or ethical language and made these a core part of faith actors' engagements with climate change. These conceptual framings occurred alongside recognition of the concrete effects of climate change on people and the environment. Here, faith actors are making moral – and often explicitly confessional – frameworks central to their understanding of climate change yet at the same time grounding this in the practical effects thereof. The responses mentioned by faith actors suggested that raising the profile of climate change, through advocacy, public engagement and education, are key priorities. The integration of conceptual frameworks into the description of these responses indicates that faith actors are using their distinctively faith-based resources to motivate action on climate change.

Disclosure statement

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Annex

List of organisations

Association of Buddhists for the Environment
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 Shinto Shrines
Australian Religious Response to Climate Change
Bahá'í 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
GreenFaith
Green Muslims
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