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Religions, poverty reduction and global development institutions

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ABSTRACT Religious traditions have always played a central role in supporting those experiencing poverty, through service delivery as well as the provision of spiritual resources that provide mechanisms for resilience at both the individual and community level. However, the fact that religions can be seen to support social structures and practices that contribute towards inequality and conflict, also underscores a role for religious traditions in creating conditions of poverty. While the Western-led modern global development institutions that have emerged since the Second World War have tended to be secular in nature, over the past decade or so there has been an apparent 'turn to religion' by these global development institutions, as well as in academic development studies. This reflects the realization that modernization and secularization do not necessarily go together, and that religious values and faith actors are important determinants in the drive to reduce poverty, as well as in structures and practices that underpin it. This paper traces three phases of engagement between religions and global development institutions. In phase one, the 'pre-secular' or the 'integrated phase' seen during the colonial era, religion and poverty reduction were intimately entwined, with the contemporary global development project being a legacy of this. The second phase is the 'secular' or the 'fragmented' phase, and relates to the era of the global development industry, which is founded on the normative secularist position that modernization will and indeed should lead to secularization. The third phase is characterized by the 'turn to religion' from the early 2000s. Drawing the three phases together and reflecting on the nature of the dynamics within the third phase, the 'turn to religion', this paper is underpinned by two main questions. First, what does this mean for the apparent processes of secularization? Is this evidence that they are being reversed and that we are witnessing the emergence of the 'desecularization of development' or of a 'post-secular development praxis'? Second, to what extent are FBOs working in development to be defined as neoliberalism's 'little platoons'—shaped by and instrumentalized to the service of secular neoliberal social, political and economic systems, or do we need to develop a more sophisticated account that can contribute towards better policy and practice around poverty reduction?

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Introduction[1]

Religious traditions have always played a central role in supporting those experiencing poverty, through service delivery as well as the provision of spiritual resources that provide mechanisms for resilience at both the individual and community level. Sometimes this involves those motivated by their religion helping other members of their own religious community, but religious practitioners also often extend their support to those from other religions. This has been particularly marked within Christian traditions that aim to gain converts, a phenomenon extending back to various colonial missionary encounters (Manji and O'Coill, 2002; Deacon and Tomalin, 2015; Haustein and Tomalin, 2017). Moreover, the fact that religions can be seen to support social structures and practices that contribute towards inequality and conflict, also underscores a role for religious traditions in creating conditions of poverty (Tomalin, 2013).

The complex ways that religions intersect with poverty has meant that, for the secular global development institutions that have emerged since the end of World War II, religions (in terms of their values and institutions) have proved to be troublesome bedfellows. This is despite obvious areas of shared interest and concern between such institutions and, as I will argue, despite the roots of Western-led global development institutions in the Christian missionary era, which have now been forgotten (Deacon and Tomalin, 2015; Haustein and Tomalin, 2017). While this modern global development industry has tended to be secular in nature and to pay little attention to people's religious values and identities, over the past decade or so there has been an apparent 'turn to religion' by global development institutions, as well as in academic development studies (Rakodi, 2015). This reflects the realization that modernization and secularization do not necessarily go together, and that religious values and faith actors are important determinants in the drive to reduce poverty, as well as in structures and practices that underpin it.

Since the early 2000s there has been a marked increase in interest from secular global development institutions, including development donors and NGOs, in funding and working with faith actors around poverty reduction. Key global poverty reduction initiatives such as the UN Millennium Development Goals, which ran from 2000–2015, increasingly drew faith actors into their activities and faith-based organizations (FBOs) couched their work in terms of these shared global goals. More recently the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015–2030), which were arrived at following the largest public consultation ever held in the UN's history, have involved faith actors more closely throughout the whole process, including in the final discussions in New York about what the goals and the sub-goals would consist of (Dodds et al., 2017; Tomalin et al., 2017, 2018).[2]

The main significance of this paper is that it brings together a discussion of this 'turn to religion' with theories from the sociology of religion to better understand the nature of the current engagement between religions and global development institutions, and the implications that this has for poverty reduction and other development and humanitarian initiatives.[3] My focus is original in that it will not concern the way that different religious traditions might approach development and humanitarian activities, but rather the extent to which they are part of a conversation and field of practice that enables them to join their efforts with those of global development and humanitarian actors in the first place. To better understand the nature of this engagement between religions and global development institutions, I offer an original analysis that traces three phases of religion-development engagement. These are not clear-cut phases, and there is overlap between them. However, they are analytically significant as they enable us to identify the shifting engagement between religions and global development institutions over time, and to make visible the religious roots of the contemporary secular Western development project. In phase one, which I call the 'pre-secular' or the 'integrated phase' seen during the colonial era, religion and poverty reduction were intimately entwined, with the contemporary global development project being a legacy of this, and therefore having religious roots that are now obscured. I am not suggesting that this was itself a 'pre-secular' era, since secularizing processes were well underway by the colonial era, and were already shaping modernity. However, during the colonial era faith actors had a more central and recognized role to play in social welfare and poverty reduction in contrast to the role they have played since the mid-20th century. Moreover, the post-Second World War period marks a key phase in the rise of secularism in the Global North, and a lessening of the hold that religious values and sources of authority have upon individuals and the state. It was at this time that theories of secularization in sociology began to take hold, with both a descriptive and normative function (Berger, 1967). It must also be noted that religious traditions played a role in shaping understandings of development and providing welfare support in pre-colonial settings. However, my aim in this paper is to understand the different phases of engagement between religions and global development institutions and discourses, with the latter having their roots in the colonial era.

The second phase, which I am calling the 'secular' or the 'fragmented' phase, relates to the era of the global development industry which has been founded on a normative secularist position that modernization will and indeed should lead to secularization. This has marginalized the significant role that diverse religious traditions have continued to play in local level development globally as well as forgetting the roots of Western-led global development in the colonial missionary era. The third phase is characterized by the 'turn to religion' from the early 2000s. The so-called global resurgence of religion or revitalization of religion has led to a greater voice for faith actors in public development debates and initiatives, and an 'apparent turn to religion' by global development actors (Casanova, 1994; Berger, 1999; Tomalin, 2013). Secular institutions now recognize that faith actors are there and (some) faith actors have learnt how to engage with the discourse of development and to situate themselves to have an impact.

There has been much celebration in the religion and development literature, both academic and practitioner, that faith actors are now viewed as legitimate development partners, invited to participate in policy dialogue and in receipt of donor funding (Clarke and Jennings, 2008; Tomalin, 2013; Clarke, 2013). But what does this 'turn to religion' indicate about apparent processes of secularization? Is it evidence that they are being reversed and that we are witnessing the emergence of the 'desecularization of development' or of a 'post-secular development praxis'? I will argue that despite the apparent 'turn to religion' by global development institutions in this third phase, there has only been a limited or partial integration of religious efforts into global development activities. It cannot therefore be properly understood as evidence for a 'desecularization of development' or of a 'post-secular development praxis'. While global development institutions are taking religion more seriously, they mainly do this through partnering with FBOs that look like themselves, and those FBOs in turn have fashioned themselves to be allowed to participate in secular global development debates and practice. This formal[4] FBO sector consists of organizations which operate (at least in their public facing persona) rather like any other international non-governmental organization, and therefore this 'turn to religion' at the level of global development organizations

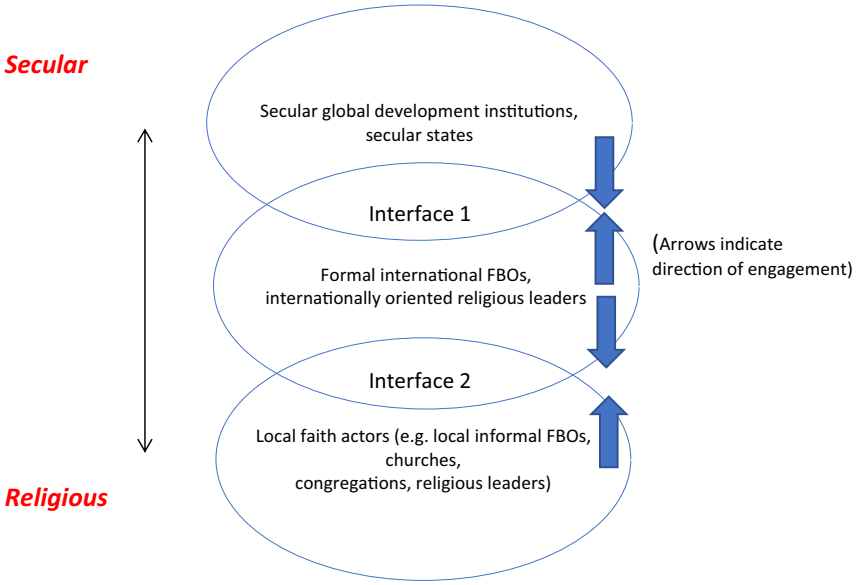

Fig. 1 Religion-Development Domain. This figure shows, from top to bottom, the different parts of the religion-development domain, from secular to increasingly religious, as well as the 'interfaces' where secular global development institutions intersect with international FBOs, and international FBOs intersect with local faith actors

misses out much faith-based activity at the local level, including in places of worship and the congregations of charismatic religious leaders (Clarke and Jennings, 2008; Deneulin and Banu, 2009). Indeed, some commentators are critical that modern FBOs comprise little more that 'neo-liberalism's little platoons' (Cloke et al., 2016). I intend to evaluate whether this a fair assessment, or if we need to instead develop a more sophisticated account that can contribute towards better policy and practice regarding poverty reduction.

While some faith actors prefer to operate on secular terms in their interactions with global development actors and embrace this identity (at the same time not viewing themselves as handmaids of the neo-liberal consensus), other faith actors are critical that they are being instrumentalized by global development institutions to achieve pre-defined goals (that reflect a problematic neo-liberal development model) and that do not take the faith dimensions or the distinct contributions of faith actors seriously (Deneulin and Banu, 2009). There is no doubt more than a little truth in this, but I will argue that the situation is more complex than this portrays it. This paper makes a number of original contributions, comprising a new way of thinking about the religion-development field that is significant for scholars of religion and development, as well as faith-based and secular development actors. It will enable them to see what type of religion-development discourse dominates the religion-development domain (i.e., that which takes place in interface 1 in Fig. 1), who the main actors are, what or who is being left out of the interactions, and therefore where activities could usefully be directed (i.e., towards interface 2 in Fig. 1).

First, what has been missed in studies to date is that international FBOs strategically shift in register between secular modes of communication with global development actors to religious modes with local faith actors. While international FBOs, such as Tearfund, Christian Aid or Islamic Relief, are negotiating and engaging with secular global development institutions to achieve shared goals such as the MDGs or the new SDGs, they also connect with and build the capacity of local faith actors in the Global South, who are disconnected from the global development industry. They thus act as 'brokers operating at the "interfaces" of different world-views and knowledge systems' which 'reveals their importance in negotiating roles, relationships, and representations' (Mosse and Lewis, 2006, p. 10; Long, 2001; Bierschenk et al., 2002; Tomalin, forthcoming). As such, I argue that to view them as the 'little platoons' of neo-liberalism fails to take account of this wider and less visible aspect of their engagement in the religion-development domain. Second, I argue that we need to view the religion-development domain as going beyond a rather narrow focus upon the engagement between global development actors and FBOs, which has tended to capture development policy, practice and studies so far (i.e., within interface 1 in Fig. 1). There is a realm of development-related activity by and between local faith actors and communities that is not easily packaged into the familiar categories of FBO or NGO, and which does not speak, nor is not readily translatable, into the secular language of global development discourses (i.e., interface 2 in Fig. 1 and below). For these reasons, this realm is largely hidden from policy makers, is more difficult to access and research than the formal visible FBO/NGO sector, yet is likely to have a larger impact on people's daily lives in terms of both blocking and driving social change towards achieving frameworks such as the SDGs than any influences from the secular macro level. Third, I will relate these observations to the theoretical literature and will offer a distinctive contribution to the sociology of religion. I will argue that theories of secularization and de-secularization need to be more nuanced to accommodate multiple co-existing types of religious-secular dynamics at play in the broader religion-development domain. The paper brings together existing theories in a novel way and repackages them to make sense of the religion-development domain.

The pre-secular or integrated phase: 'commerce and Christianity'—the religious roots of global development institutions in the colonial missionary era

The story of global development institutions' engagement with religion has parallels with the emergence of the modern welfare state in Britain. Rana Jawad, in her book on religion and welfare in Britain, begins her discussion with an examination of the pre-welfare state era before 1945, arguing that 'social welfare is a much broader and older endeavor than the modern welfare state, with religious values, identities and political mobilization

supplying much of the moral and material resources shaping its pathway' (2012, p. 34).

This resembles the main argument being made here, that modern global development institutions have religious roots that today are obscured. There are also overlaps between the British pre-welfare state setting and the pre-global development setting, in that similar religious discourses and endeavours underpin each, as Britain was at that time a major colonial and missionary nation. By the 18th century many of the same individuals, organizations and Christian denominations feature in both stories, drawing on the Christian traditions of philanthropy, Liberal Anglicanism, Evangelicalism and Quakerism, which promoted social welfare and poverty reduction in Britain and also in the colonies. This includes members of the so-called Clapham Sect at the turn of the 18th century, patronized by famous individuals such as William Wilberforce, the anti-slavery campaigner, to the later married couple William and Catherine Booth, who founded the Salvation Army in 1878 (Tomkins, 2010; Howse, 1952; Hattersley, 1999).

This was also the case in colonial settings. European colonialism shifted from a focus on trade to imperial expansion over almost all of Africa and large parts of Asia in the 19th century, with Christian missions and advocacy groups playing an increasingly important role in this expansion, as well as in responding to the human exploitation it created, thus infusing 'the emerging imperial colonialism with religious sentiment from the start' (Haustein and Tomalin, 2017, p. 77–78). In Africa this process was rooted in the British anti-slavery movement, a 'curious alliance of Enlightenment humanism and evangelical outrage' (Reid, 2012, p. 28; Drescher, 2009, p. 205–241). While the slave trade was outlawed in 1831 and slave ownership throughout the Empire in 1833, it was clear by the late 1830s that slave raiding and trading in Africa had actually increased. A new generation of anti-slavery advocates took on this cause, adopting 'commerce and Christianity' as a new guiding slogan, 'wrapped in a providentialist theology about the God-given British mission to the world' (Haustein and Tomalin, 2017, p. 78; Stanley, 1983; Porter, 1985; Follett, 2008). The underpinning aim was that in establishing 'legitimate trade', through a combination of entrepreneurial and missionary effort, the slave trade would be undermined and brought to an end. The Clapham Sect member Thomas Fowell Buxton (1768–1845) provided the founding manifesto for this idea in his *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (1840):

> Let missionaries and schoolmasters, the plough and the spade, go together, and agriculture will flourish; the avenues to legitimate commerce will be opened; confidence between man and man will be inspired; whilst civilization will advance as the natural effect, and Christianity operate as the proximate cause of this happy change (Buxton, 1840, p. 511).

In Asia the trajectories were similar, although in South Asia the devastating impact of the Indian Mutiny in 1857 played a decisive role in the emergence of the close relationship between 'commerce and Christianity' (Stanley, 1983). Between 1857 and 1858 there was a marked increase in donations to missionary societies in the UK and in the recruitment of missionaries, where 'it was perfectly clear that the road back to imperial prosperity followed the path of Christian duty, that a Christian government of India was "the only safe policy"' (Stanley, 1983, p. 87). Where 'Christian government was not, however, the only constituent of the Indian insurance policy: economic development was equally indispensable' (1983, p. 87). Evangelicals in England supported the construction of India's rail network at this time, with an aim to grow the cotton industry and thereby undercut the slavery-reliant US cotton farms, as well as to provide a means for the spreading of Christianity into remote and isolated areas in India. Thus, 'many Christian observers…yoked together commerce and Christianity in their remedies for India's malaise' (Stanley, 1983, p. 89).

Regarding this 'pre-secular phase' of religion and global development engagement, two points can be noted. First, in both the case of Africa and South Asia we can see that 'religions were invoked as an ally or even central ideological justification for the colonial "civilising" project' and, in the colonies, 'other religions were judged on their compatibility with this "civilising" project, which sparked "modernising" movements within some religions, asserting their reformist potential and compliance with European social and economic visions' (Haustein and Tomalin, 2017, p. 81). Secondly,

> religious institutions became key providers of the welfare services which functioned as crucial indicators of the 'civilising' project, providing health care, education, vocational training, as well as local information and advocacy… [and]…in many ways occupied the same structural position that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have today (Haustein and Tomalin, 2017, p. 81; Manji and O'Coill, 2002).

The global institutions that today fund and play a significant role in defining and shaping international development policy and practice are a legacy of the colonial missionary era. Some organizations have direct heritage from this era, and have Christian roots. For instance, while Oxfam has Quaker origins (Black, 1992) and the Red Cross Calvinist ones (Forsythe, 2005), others take their starting point and motivation from a belief in the spread of Western modernity, itself having Christian roots. Largely, however, these organizations do not recognize or draw attention to their Christian roots and, as I will argue, the 'turn to religion' by development studies, policy and practice is not a realization of this Christian heritage. What I am presenting here is a history of the Christian roots of global development institutions and practices that emerged after the Second World War, but which had their origins in the colonial period. While other religious traditions have also helped shaped conceptions of development in different settings and in supporting social welfare (and played a strong role in this respect during pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras) they are not a focus of this paper.

The secular/fragmented phase of the engagement between religions and global development institutions

The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of the next phase of engagement between religions and global development institutions, in which there was a gradual fragmentation of these organisations' working relationships into separately pursued secular and religious development activities. This included, particularly in Western nations, a declining profile for faith actors in terms of strongly publicly supported and recognized service provision, where they faced a new social, political and economic landscape that served to redefine their role both at home and abroad. Jawad suggests that, in the UK, the war had 'imposed the most damaging impact on associational life and the basic infrastructure of the church and British families' (2012, p. 45). While up to this point the Church had been the main provider of social services, now this was beyond its capacity, not least because of the drain that the war had placed on the input of human resources in the life of the churches (Prochaska, 2006, 2011), which led to the 'physical destruction of the religious infrastructure that had supported the day-to-day running of "practical Christianity"' (Jawad, 2012, p. 46).

Despite this, key figures who played a role in justifying and setting up the Welfare State in 1948, such as Archbishop William Temple, did not dissociate the new welfare system from the Church, arguing that 'the State is under the Moral Law of God, and is intended by Him to be an instrument for human welfare' (Jawad 2012, p. 45). This type of explicit Christian articulation and conceptualization did, however, all but disappear in the following decades. We can see a similar pattern on the international stage, where change was also occuring for the churches and their foreign missions. As with the domestic work that churches were able to do in Britain, the Second World War had a negative impact on mainline church missionaries overseas. Moreover, this was happening in settings where colonialism was waning and the nature of foreign mission shifting, with indigenous-led churches and movements for conversion starting to emerge (Keyes, 1999, p. 94).

Alongside the shifting role of faith actors, social change and shifts in global political structures meant that the emerging global institutions that were seeking to help nations recover from the war, to deal with the demise of colonialism and to resist the 'threat' of communism, as well as the organizations they gave rise to, were increasingly underpinned by a belief that modernization and secularization would go together. The role of religion at the level of the state and, increasingly, in public life more widely, was thought to be on a diminishing trajectory, with the prediction being made that eventually it would disappear from people's private life-worlds as well (Berger, 1967).

However, the lessening of the hold of religion on emerging global development intuitions was more of a gradual than a sudden change. For instance, US President Truman's global development programme, announced in his second inaugural address of 1949, which is often taken to mark the beginnings of the global development industry, still included a fair amount of religious sentiment. In this speech, he outlined his 'bold new program…for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas', echoing the earlier colonial rhetoric and structures of the 'civilizing' mission, while at the same time framing this in a modernist language of prosperity, based on scientific and economic rationality in the name of human progress (Haustein and Tomalin 2017: 82). However, after spelling this out in modernist and scientific language, he then turned to religion, invoking the Biblical Sermon on the Mount ('Our allies are the millions who hunger and thirst after righteousness' (Truman, 1949, cf. Matthew 5:6)), one of the two Biblical texts he had rested his hand on when taking the oath of office. Moreover, he closed with:

> Steadfast in our faith in the Almighty, we will advance toward a world where man's freedom is secure.
>
> To that end we will devote our strength, our resources, and our firmness of resolve. With God's help, the future of mankind will be assured in a world of justice, harmony, and peace (Truman, 1949).

Although we should locate his invocation of religion in the context of American 'Civil Religion' (Bellah, 1970), rather than a straightforward continuation of Victorian Christian sentiment, it is noteworthy that Truman's modernism is 'far removed from a fully secular development agenda, which did not rest in scientific progress alone…[but]…drew heavily on Christian views of social justice and eschatology' (Haustein and Tomalin, 2017, p. 82).

While Truman's speech is often taken as marking the beginning of global development efforts, it was in fact pre-dated by the setting up of multilateral global development institutions, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions governing global financial processes—the IMF and the World Bank (1944)—as well as by the United Nations (1945). These were the means for delivering the new development agenda already underway and rehearsed by Truman in his inaugural speech. However, even here we find vestiges of a religious underpinning. Carette demonstrates that the UN has a colonial legacy, employs imperialistic discourses and is built on Judeo-Christian foundations (2017; Carrette and Miall, 2017). He argues that this Judeo-Christian foundation is one important reason why there are many more contemporary Christian FBOs linked to the UN than those from Hinduism or Buddhism, since there is a 'hidden Judaic-Christian and Western-bourgeoise assumption' shaping the historical 'secular structures and discourse of the UN and civil society' (2017, p. 215; Deacon and Tomalin, 2015).

While these multilateral institutions comprise the first layer of global development institutions, a second layer is comprised by the development and humanitarian donor agencies of individual states (e.g. the USA's USAID and the UK's DFID). However, these are secular institutions that employ scientific and rationalistic logic and approaches to governance and aid provision. A third layer of global development institutions is located in civil society and includes the NGO sector. It is here that we also find NGOs that have a faith basis, which have become more powerful voices in civil society in the last couple of decades. Since the 1980s we have seen a growth in global civil society and a rise in NGOs and other community-based organizations which increasingly play a role in this broader development bricolage, as resistance against the contradictions in the mainstream development model but also as facilitators of it through engagement in the UN, for instance, as well as being in receipt of funds from donors for which they are accountable. The final layer is the private sector, where businesses or foundations set up from the profits of businesses are increasingly becoming funders of development and facilitators of poverty reduction.

By the 1980s a critique began to appear of the marginalization of religion in development institutions from both faith groups and academics, reflecting broader shifts within the sociology of religion where the secularization thesis was beginning to be reappraised (Shiner, 1967; Martin, 1965; Greeley, 2003). The 1980 publication of a special issue of the journal World Development on the topic of religion bucks the trend. In the introductory article, Wilber and Jameson, argue that unless approaches to development are consistent with 'the inherited moral base of society' (1980, p. 468), which is shaped by religion, they are likely to be ineffective. For them, the 'moral base of society' comprises the collectively agreed-upon value system, which means that a society can function and reproduce itself over time and, in most developing countries, they argue, this continues to be shaped by religion (1980, p. 471). In addition to this discussion about the importance of religious values and practices in shaping people's understandings of what counts as development and how to achieve poverty reduction, other critics argue that the global development industry was missing a trick by not engaging significantly with faith actors who held trust in their communities, resources and networks.

Not only was religion largely absent in the programmes of donors and NGOs, but also within development studies. Ver Beek carried out a content analysis of the three leading development studies journals between 1982 and 1998 (see Table 1), 'finding only scant reference to the topics of spirituality or religion' (2000, p. 60).

However, if we repeat this analysis for the period 1998–2017 for World Development, the combined figure for religion/religious shoots up to 690. This confirms that something has changed, and that religion is now a serious topic for development studies, suggesting in turn that it has become more relevant for development policy and practice at the level of global institutions.

Table 1 Frequency of words relating to the 'religious' in development studies journals, 1982–1998 (Ver Beek 2000, p. 68).

Keywords Journals 1982–1998	Environment	Gender	Population	Spiritual/ spirituality	Religion/ religious
World Development	83	85	89	0	5
Journal of Development Studies	19	46	38	0	1
Journal of Developing Areas	18	32	43	0	10

The 1980s also saw the rise of 'human development', with the first human development report launched by the UN in 1990.[5] This was influenced by the Capabilities Approach of Amartya Sen, which measures development in terms of 'human capabilities'—the things that people can and cannot do in life—where an earlier emphasis on economic development was more strongly accompanied by other measures of wellbeing and development (Sen, 1990; Nussbaum, 2011; Deneulin and Shahani, 2009; Tomalin, 2013). Another landmark project that gave rise to a broader and multidimensional perspective on poverty and underdevelopment was the World Bank's Voices of the Poor study, which ran from the early 1990s to 2000. At the same time, this research highlighted the important work that faith groups were doing and that 'in ratings of effectiveness in both urban and rural settings, religious organizations feature more prominently than any single type of state institution' (Narayan et al., 2000, p. 222; Tomalin, 2013, p. 46–47).

An emphasis on human development and a broader conception of how to achieve poverty reduction was clearly reflected in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): eight international development goals that all 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations agreed to achieve by 2015. As the 2000s marched on, we increasingly saw faith groups responding to the MDGs and global development institutions courting their input into achieving them. There was a much stronger message from the global development intuitions that if the MDGs were to succeed, there needed to be greater involvement of people and organizations, including those that are faith-based (Haynes, 2008, p. 38; see also Clarke, 2007, p. 80; Alkire and Barham, 2005; Boehle, 2010). More recently, the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have attracted the contribution of faith actors from the start. These are 17 goals that were established in 2015 following the largest civil society consultation ever held by the UN, and a greater coordinated effort from within the UN to engage with civil society actors, including those of faith, as they come into play, including the setting up of the UN inter-agency task force on engaging faith-based actors for sustainable development (Karam, 2014, 2016; Dodds et al. 2017). However, a key question facing faith-based organizations and other faith actors involved in the SDG consultations, and now in their interpretation and implementation, is the extent to which their voices have been incorporated, or whether the SDG framework is too far removed from the needs of local communities to reflect their interests, including the way that faith shapes understandings of and approaches to 'development'. Early findings from a current research project 'Keeping Faith in 2030: religions and the Sustainable Development GoaIs' suggest that the picture is complex and varied, with some faith actors (i.e., religious minorities in India) viewing the SDGs as a tool to build civil society and hold the state accountable for providing equitable services and protecting the rights of the most marginalized, while others are critical of the fact that their religious identities are being sidelined within their engagement with the SDGs in international forums (Tomalin et al., 2017, 2018). I will return to this latter point below, as it relates to one of the key concerns underpinning this paper: whether engagement with faith actors by global development institutions is really evidence of the 'desecularization of development' or of the emergence of 'post-secular development praxis', or if it is an instrumentalization of faith that is being used to serve secular neo-liberal goals.

Even if we are unconvinced that development has become 'desecularized', as I will argue below, a predominantly economics-focused view of development pursued by global development institutions emerging since the end of the Second World War has gradually given way to a greater consideration of 'bottom-up development' and 'human development', which, although not completely replacing economic models of development, seeks to measure and pursue it in terms of a broader set of factors, and to consult a wider range of individuals. This, I argue, played a role in paving the way for the 'turn to religion', the nature of which is unpacked in the next section of this paper (Tomalin, 2013, p. 36).

The 'turn to religion'—'the desecularization of development' or 'post-secular development praxis'?

Rather than disappearing or completely diminishing in significance, religion continues to exist alongside modernizing and globalizing processes, often adapting and even intensifying in response to changing social, economic and political environments. Globalization has given rise to the emergence of diverse styles of religiosity that were not predicted by modernization theory and, in modern global societies, we find religion that is traditional and conservative as well as that which is modern and liberal; religion that is institutionalized as well as that which is not; religion that is publicly influential as well as that which is privatized; and 'religion that is specifically enacted as religion' and other social forms that may have religious functions (Beyer, 2007: 100). Moreover, there are many setting within which religion has not withered away and died, and continues to play a role alongside development, nor is it necessarily antithetical to development and progress in these settings. For example, Pentecostalism and its prosperity gospel suggest a significant role for religion in Latin America and Africa in boosting economic success and poverty reduction.

Events such as the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Satanic Verses controversy in the early 1990s, the influence of the Catholic Church on reproductive rights issues, the rise of nationalist Hindu politics in South Asia, the watershed event of 9/11, the rise of the religious right in the USA and of ISIS in the Middle East are but a few of the examples that suggest a revitalization of religion or a renewed role for it in political and public life (Tomalin, 2013, p. 5–8). Debates about the 'global resurgence of religion' have been building momentum since the 1980s, if not earlier (Thomas, 2005), including those concerning the extent to which there has been an actual resurgence or whether there has just been the appearance of one because Western governments and the media are taking more notice of religions globally. While this factor is an important one to this debate, there is also concrete evidence that, overall, religion has not disappeared in the way that it was predicted to.

It has been well documented that, over the past decade or so, there has been a perceptible 'turn to religion' by global development actors (Clarke and Jennings, 2008; Clarke, 2013; Deneulin and Banu, 2009). While there is no doubt that global development institutions increasingly seek to engage with faith actors, in terms of inviting them to contribute to development debates as well providing funding, this is not just all on the 'pull' side, with faith actors increasingly being seen to be pushing themselves into development debates and attempting to influence policy and practice. A space appears to have opened in civil society for a greater participation of (some) faith actors in development, where secular institutors now recognize that faith actors are there and (some) faith actors have learnt how to engage with the discourse of development and to situate themselves so as to have an impact. However, what does this mean for the apparent processes of secularization? Is this evidence that they are being reversed and that we are witnessing the emergence of the 'desecularization of development' or even of a 'post-secular development praxis'? While I will argue that something really has changed since the early 2000s—not least the radical upturn in academic publishing in this area—in the remainder of this paper I am going to challenge the idea that this can be viewed as a straightforward 'desecular' or 'post-secular' turn. Although there has been a 'turn to religion' by global development actors, this has prioritized, and is underpinned by, a secular world view and secular modes of communication.

In order to advance my argument, it is necessary to introduce some nuance into the discussion of the implications of the resurgence of religion for secularization theory. The failure of traditional categories of social theory to accommodate contemporary global religious forms has given rise to calls for a 'new paradigm' in the sociology of religion (Warner, 1993; Berger, 2014). The sociologist Peter Berger famously revised his position from one that accepted the inevitability of secularization as a fact of modernization, which he defined as 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols' (Berger, 1967, p. 107). In his later work, Berger recognized the resurgence and continuing significance of religion as a social and public force, arguing that 'the world is as furiously religious as it ever was and, in some places, more so than ever', and proposed that we are witnessing a process of the 'desecularization of the world' (Berger, 1999, p. 2; 2004). However, I argue that the idea that the revitalization of religion indicates a wholesale 'desecularization of the world', or even a gradual return to some kind of pre-secular era, is not able to account for the actual nature of contemporary global religious forms and the character of the religion-development field. The idea of the move towards a total desecularization masks the fact that instead of societies and institutions no longer being secular, what we are faced with is the co-existence of secular discourses alongside religious discourses, with some places where those secular discourses are stronger and other places where the religious has a firmer influence. To bring more subtlety into the debate, drawing upon the work of the sociologist of religion Casanova, I argue that secularization is multidimensional, consisting of three possible types of secularizing processes: differentiation (i.e., the separation of realms of modern life into distinct subsystems with their own function and rationality; privatization (i.e., where religion becomes less significant in the public sphere); and the decline of individual religious belief and affiliation. Casanova's analysis is focused on the Global North, and he argues that only one of these types of secularization has been reversed or has been less intense than we originally thought, namely the privatization of religion (i.e.,the decreasing public presence and influence of religion). He argues that the other types of secularization (differentiation and the decline of individual religious belief and affiliation) have occurred, so talking about desecularization only makes sense with respect to the deprivatization of religion (Casanova, 1994). However, this analysis is too simplistic, as it does not take account of the fact that in the Global South the decline of individual religious belief and affiliation has been much less marked than it has in the Global North, and that religious authority continues to be a strong force in many people's lives there.[6] Also, in some settings in the Global South, there has been a less pronounced and slower rate of privatization of religion than in others, and to talk about a 'resurgence of religion' in the public sphere makes little sense in settings where it was never in decline.

I suggest that this analysis can be further refined by reflecting upon whether and which type of secularization has occurred at different interrelated levels of society—the macro, meso and micro-levels—and to apply this to our analysis of the engagement between religion and global development actors and institutions. In terms of sociological analysis, the macro-level refers to national and global systems, and includes states and multilateral organizations involved in global development policy and practice. The meso-level is the level of national, regional and international associations, organizations and movements which play a role in shaping social, cultural and political concerns. It is the realm of civil society where NGOs and FBOs influence and deliver development processes and outcomes. Finally, the micro-level is where one finds the individual, in interaction with others in families and communities, and includes more proximate local organizations, including smaller civil society organizations and places of worship, often playing a key role in development and humanitarian activities (see Fig. 2).

Macro-level secularization, in the sense of differentiation, has occurred in many nation states worldwide, particularly in the Global North, as well as at the level of the broader environment of global institutions, such as those focusing on development and global economic processes (see Fig. 2). Even in societies in the Global South, where this type of secularization has been less prominent at the macro/state-level, or 'where religious authority has been re-exerted over other institutional spheres' (Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 9), participation 'in a highly secularized global institutional environment' appears to place limits on the successful assertion of religious authority at the macro level (Chaves, 1994, p. 766; Mellor and Shilling, 2014, p. 9–10). Accordingly, global development institutions are part of an overall secular systemic order and this impacts upon how they interact with faith-based actors. By contrast, at the meso-level, which is the level of civil society and the public sphere—the primary domain of faith-based organizations—secularization in the sense of the privatization of religion is less pronounced than it was originally predicted to be in the Global North, and may never have occurred in the first place in the Global South (see Fig. 2). As Mellor and Shilling argue, 'this distinction between macro-level structural differentiation and meso-level religious vitality usefully enables us to identify distinctive religious trajectories within society and acknowledge the significance of patterns of de-secularization within certain limits' (2014, p. 8). Indeed, as Casanova and others note, macro-level secularization can lead to meso-level deprivatization or desecularization, where, for instance, the marginalization or rejection of religious voices by secular systems at the macro-level can lead to a strengthening of faith responses in civil society as they seek to contest macro-level differentiation/secularization (Casanova, 1994, 2006, 2012). Finally, at the micro-level, particularly in the Global South, levels of religious authority are high and there is less evidence of micro-level secularization than in Global North (see Fig. 2).

I argue that there is a mutually reinforcing and interdependent dynamic tension and field of dialogue between the increasing prominence of religious voices in the public sphere (especially in

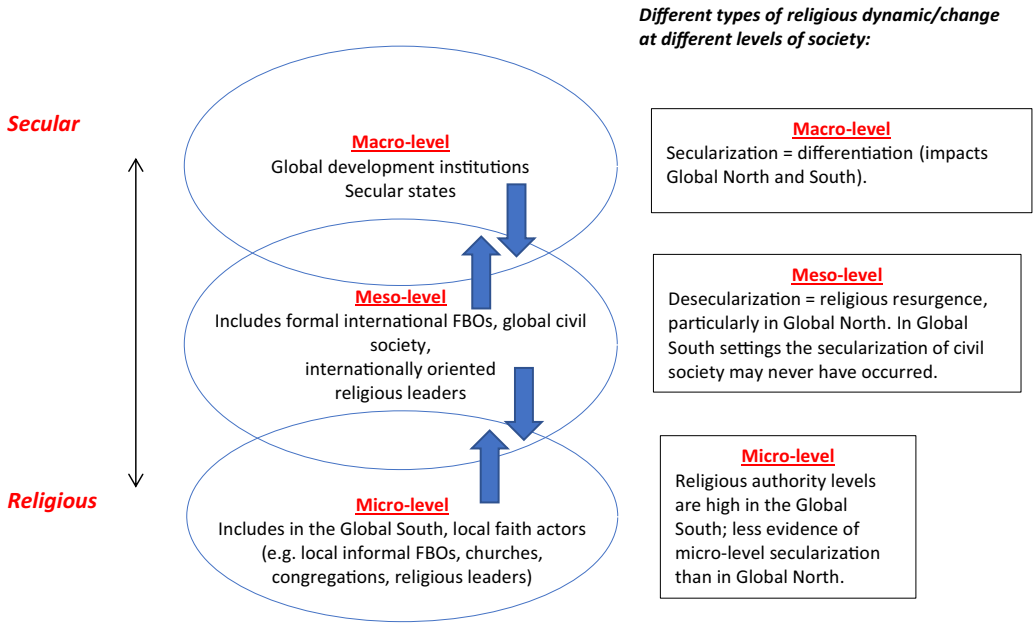

Fig. 2 Desecularization of development? This figure develops Fig. 1, adding in the three levels (macro, meso and micro) and outlines the extent to which different types of secularization have occurred at the different levels

the Global North where the deprivatization of religion has occured) pushing out to the macro-level secular institutions, with those institutions maintaining their secularity yet at the same time seeking to manage religious pluralism and voices in the public sphere, at least partly by engaging with them to achieve their ends. In turn, as Mellor and Shilling note, there is an 'increasing tendency of many religious organizations to conform to, or reshape themselves in the light of, distinctively secular social, cultural or political concerns' (2014, p. 9). This is not captured by simple theories of secularization or desecularization. Instead, in discussing the limits of existing theories, it is important to be clear which aspect of the secularization thesis has been reversed and which level of society we are talking about, in order to account for the co-existence of secular discourses alongside religious discourses.

It is useful here to look briefly at what we mean by 'post-secular', in order to support my argument that the turn to religion is not evidence of a straightforward 'post-secular development praxis'. This is a term that was brought into the mainstream through the work of the philosopher and social theorist Jurgen Habermas (2008, 2006). Dillon tells us that 'he is not the only one to use this language, and there has been a tremendous amount of hairsplitting over what exactly the term means and how it is related to the secular, secularlisation, secularlism, secularistic and post-secularism' (2012, p. 255). The main focus of Habermas' work has been 'on the nature of, and complications to, participatory democracy in an increasingly bureaucratic and consumer society in which the forces of capitalism typically push back against and triumph over the pull of democratic ideals' (Dillon 2012, p. 249). Underpinning his thought is a theory of communicative action, where reasonable deliberation on both sides of a debate or position can lead to fruitful social action (Habermas, 1995). During the first part of his career, he paid no serious attention to religion and viewed it as a separate realm to the public sphere, the location where rational debate and communication could take place. By contrast, religion, being governed by emotion and irrationality, had no part to play in public debate that aims to improve societies. However, by the start of the 21st century, Habermas begins to revise this position and to consider the role that religion can play in providing a rational critique of society and therefore sees it as a critical actor in democratic social change. This revised view was famously articulated in an encounter between Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (who became Pope Benedict XVI in 2005) and Habermas in Munich in 2004 (XVI and Habermas, 2006), building on earlier comments by Habermas in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy (2001).

For Habermas, the failure of modernity and the contradictions it creates has given rise to critical public voices that aim to do something about it, and one of these voices is religion (2001; Dillon, 2012). His position here is both descriptive and normative, where he posits that we live in an increasingly post-secular society, where secular and faith actors need to engage in a 'complementary learning process', where 'both sides can…then take seriously each other's contributions to controversial themes in the public sphere' (2006: 258). The idea of a 'complementary learning process' seems to respect all forms of knowledge and allow individuals to share their perspectives in their own voices, suggesting a level playing field between religious and secular modes of communication. However, Habermas has been widely criticized for ultimately holding on to a secularist position, which can be seen through his claim that 'in a constitutional state, all norms that can be legally implemented must be formulated and *publicly justified* in a language that all the citizens understand' (2008, p. 28). As Dillon argues, this amounts to 'religious citizens' having to translate 'their religious norms into a secular idiom' (2012, p. 258). Habermas does stress that 'secular citizens can under certain circumstances learn something from religious contributions' (2006, p. 10) and that persons who are neither willing nor able to divide their moral convictions and their vocabulary into profane and religious strands must be permitted to take part in political will formation even if they use religious language' (2008, p. 28–29). However, Dillon remains critical that 'despite this remarkable conciliarity gesture toward religion' (2012, p. 259) Habermas' 'core expectation…is that religious individuals, when they participate in the public sphere or in public debate, should discard the specifically religious vocabulary that penetrates their experiences, worldviews and everyday language' (Dillon 2013, p. 495). This process of 'communicative action' thus necessitates that individuals should engage in secular rational debate, so religious actors must ensure that their faith-

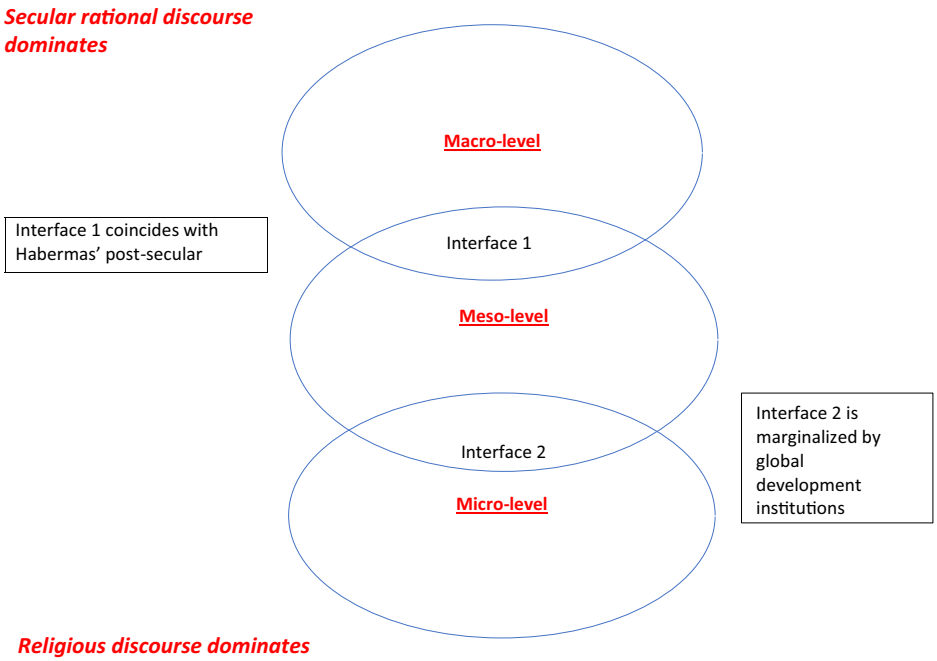

Fig. 3 Post-secular development praxis? This figure develops the previous two figures. It shows that interface 1 coincides with Habermas' post-secular, where secular rational discourse dominates, and interface 2 is where religious discourses dominates, but is marginalized by global development institutions

inspired ways of thinking and knowing are translated into secular rational language and concepts. Here 'the emotional dimensions of religion and their intertwining with spirituality and tradition thus call into question the conceptual viability of the post-secular' (Dillon, 2012, p. 264–265) as a domain of 'mutually reasoned communication' (2012, p. 264). As Dillon helpfully points out, Ratzinger himself draws attention to religious-secular and inter-religious dialogue as 'not possible without putting one's faith in parenthesis' (2012, p. 264; Donadio, 2008).

In fact, this scenario looks like the engagement I have been describing between religious actors and global development institutions, where those working for faith-based organizations often claim that they 'leave their faith at the door' when they communicate with secular development actors (Clarke, 2007, p. 84), and they do this in order to be able to participate in global development discourses. While many commentators draw attention to the fact that increased dialogue between faith and secular actors is an important part of social debate, and that improving it would be beneficial, the Habermasian approach tends to leave out much religious communication and engagement in marginalizing 'the centrality of spiritualty emotion, and tradition' (Dillon, 2012, p. 250).

In both Habermas' post-secular society and the realm of engagement between religions and global development institutions that I have been examining in this paper, much about the lived reality of religious experience and modes of communication is marginalized (see Fig. 3). There are numerous other things ocurring that are not captured by this interaction (see interface 1 in Fig. 3) and I therefore question whether this is really a post-secular interaction as it still prioritizes secular modalities. The evidence suggests that macro-level institutions in contemporary global society, including global development institutions, continue to be secular, while at the meso-level—the public sphere or civil society—religions play a role that needs to be accounted for and worked with, and that some faith actors are adapting their discourse and practice in order to have an impactful place in a civil society that exists within a macro-level secular social order. However, this is not a field of 'post-secular development praxis', nor is the 'turn to religion' by global development actors evidence of the 'desecularization of development' *per se*. First, global development institutions remain secular, not least by virtue of ignoring their religious past. The presumption that modern global development only took shape after the Second World War with US President Truman's second inaugural lecture and the setting up of the Bretton Woods Intuitions, can obscure its colonial and religious roots. Second, there is evidence that the way that global institutions engage with faith actors tends to be instrumental, and that certain modes of religious communication are not facilitated in this interaction. What about faith actors at the micro-level of society who are marginalized in global civil society and that have less of a voice at the macro-level, because of where they are located geographically, the kind of organization they are and/or the nature and way they might have of articulating their needs and views?

This is a pressing area of concern for international FBOs. While they increasingly have a voice at the macro-level, albeit one that has been shaped to fit the discourse and practice of secular global development institutions, they can also shift in register to connect with local faith actors. This enables them to harness resources and support activities to facilitate development and poverty reduction, as well as to be in a position to engage in dialogue and to act as brokers where local faith actors are generators of inequality and conflict. This is taking on a renewed saliency in this era of the SDGs, which attracted the contribution of faith actors from the start. However, in order for the SDGs to be meaningful for diverse communities in the Global South, religious modes of communication, not just religious actors, need to be part of the SDG discourse, since religion plays such a key role in the factors that support and block the SDGs. If we take another look at Fig. 3, my argument is that, instead of primarily focusing attention on 'interface 1' (otherwise corresponding with Habermas' 'post-secular' realm, the realm of engagement between global development institutions and formal international faith-based organizations, which, as I have argued, is not convincingly 'post-secular'), development studies, policy and practice needs to take more notice of 'interface 2' (see Fig. 3). This social and

conceptual space where international FBOs and local faith actors intersect—or the 'interface'—has been recognized by anthropologists of development as a site of 'common interest', as well as having the 'propensity to generate conflict due to contradictory interests and objectives or unequal power relations' (Long, 2001, p. 69). This is where global development goals such as the SDGs become visible to diverse communities in the Global South and, in order to be achieved, they need to be translated into modes of communication that include the significant role that religious sources of authority play in people's personal and private lives.

Conclusion

The main significance of this this paper is that it brings together a discussion of the 'turn to religion' by global development institutions with theories from the sociology of religion to better understand the actual nature of the current engagement between religions and global development institutions and the implications that this has for poverty reduction and other development and humanitarian initiatives. My focus has not been on the way that faith traditions approach poverty reduction, but on the extent to which they are part of a conversation and field of practice that enables them to join efforts with other development and humanitarian actors to participate in this in the first place. I offered an original analysis in tracing three phases of religion-development engagement. First, I drew attention to a 'pre-secular' phase of the engagement between religions and global development institutions, where there was a greater integration between the work of faith actors and development efforts. Second, I demonstrated that the emergence of the global development industry from the end of the Second World War rested upon a separation of religion from the development activities of global institutions, despite their religious roots. Third, I examined the 'turn to religion' by global development institutions and, with reference to social theories in the study of religion, I argued that this turn is not evidence of the desecularization of development or the emergence of post-secular development praxis, not least because the secular global development institutions do not recognize or draw attention to their Christian roots, and they only engage with faith actors that look like them.

Instead, global development institutions maintain their secularity through engagement with faith actors who have in turn secularized their discourses to become legitimate global development actors. While we could argue that this is problematic for instrumentalizing religions to serve neo-liberal development goals, the situation is more complex and interesting than this. I argue that the realm of communicative action between religions and global development institutions that has strengthened since the 'turn to religion' from the early 2000s is only one vector in a global development praxis. Just as interesting and significant is the engagement between these newly empowered and enabled religious development actors, who are increasingly funded and promoted by the secular institutions that they engage with, yet can move between the world of secular rational global development at the macro level, and that of local faith communities and identities and the micro-level. The interaction they have had with global development institutions has strengthened their role as civil society actors at the meso-level, as well as their capacity to use religious modes of communication to engage with local faith actors that cannot participate in these global development discourses and practices. They are 'brokers of development' in the sense of 'intermediaries who take advantage of the position at the interface between two social and cultural configurations' (Bierschenk et al., 2002, p. 9; Tomalin, forthcoming). In this regard, I argue that faith-based development organizations are more than neo-liberalism's 'little platoons' and, in this paper, I have developed a more sophisticated account that can contribute towards better policy and practice concerning poverty reduction (Cloke et al., 2016; Hackworth, 2012).

This paper has made a number of original contributions, comprising a new way of thinking about the religion-development field (see Fig. 1). First, what has been missed in studies to date is that international FBOs strategically shift in register between secular modes of communication with global development actors to religious modes with local faith actors. That these FBOs do not just have one mode of communication, but instead can operate using different modalities, is important for both faith actors and global development actors to recognize so that they can forge effective alliances on relevant issues and collaborate with marginalized communities to improve their social, political and economic inclusion. While international FBOs, such as Tearfund, World Vision, Christian Aid or Islamic Relief, are negotiating and engaging with secular global development institutions to achieve shared goals such as the MDGs or the new SDGs, they also endeavour to connect with and build the capacity of local faith actors in the Global South who are disconnected from the global development industry and who may not give same priority to all elements of the SDGs or even know about them. Second, I have argued that although local development institutions tend to think they have taken religion into account if they bring international FBOs to the table ('interface 1' in Fig. 3), this misses much religious activity at the local level, where religious modes of communication are widespread and sources of religious authority highly influential. In order to broaden our understanding of the religion-development domain, I suggest that greater attention needs to be paid to understanding 'interface 2', where international FBOs engage with local faith actors in order to facilitate poverty reduction and sensitization to development frameworks such as the SDGs. Not dealt with in this paper is the very important observation that this 'interface 2' is not just a domain where the ideas of secular global development are simply passed down to local communities in culturally appropriate ways, but also a domain where alternative approaches to development and progress are being debated and negotiated, albeit in the shadow of secular frameworks such as the SDGs (Mosse and Lewis, 2006).

The third and final contribution of this paper has been to relate these observations to the theoretical literature in the sociology of religion. As I have argued, the failure of traditional categories of social theory to accommodate contemporary global religious forms requires a 'new paradigm' in the sociology of religion (Warner, 1993; Berger, 2014). The paper does not offer a new theory or 'new paradigm', but brings together existing theories in a novel way, repackaging them to make sense of the religion-development domain. I have argued that theories of secularization and de-secularization need to be more nuanced to accommodate multiple co-existing types of religious-secular dynamics at play in the broader religion-development domain. Macro level social theory is useful for making us aware of the global social structures that play a role in shaping activities at the meso and micro-levels, including those relating to religions and development. However, our analysis should not let macro-level structures over-determine the possibilities that we might imagine are possible at other levels of society. While macro-level differentiation limits the way that global development institutions can engage with faith actors and places limits on the way that faith actors articulate their public engagement, at the meso- and micro-levels of society religious actors can interact on their own terms (albeit within an overall global secular social order). It should be noted, though, that 'interface 2' is a field that we, as researchers, know less about than the interaction between religions and development at the level of global institutions—'interface 1' (see Fig. 3). This is where

research has tended to be focused, and were policy interventions have been directed. While the field of religions and development studies is still emerging, it now needs to move to this next stage of increased focus on local faith actors whose activities relating to poverty reduction are removed from direct engagement with global development institutions. This is harder research to undertake, and is likely to do little to simplify our search for coherent theories to account for the impact of religious dynamics globally.

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Notes

1 This paper is a revised version of the author's Professorial Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Leeds, UK, on 30 November 2017.
2 See http://religions-and-development.leeds.ac.uk for details on a research network - 'Keeping Faith in 2030: religions and the Sustainable Development GoaIs'—that aims to enhance international and cross-sectional exchange about the role of religions in defining, implementing, and safeguarding sustainable development, as codified in the SDGs. Accessed 24/10/18.
3 The research that informs the discussion in this paper comprises over a decade of work on religions and development, including research projects, and attendance at numerous academic and practitioner events. Accessed 24/10/18.
4 The distinction between formal and informal FBOs relates to whether or not the organization is formally registered under charity legislation or if it is instead an informal organization.
5 http://hdr.undp.org/en/global-reports
6 It is important to note here that the conclusion about declining religious belief and practice as having taken place, or what we today call the increase in the number of 'nones', is actually more complicated. The rise of the 'nones' has been mainly in the Global North, with the USA rising more slowly than Europe, However, it is predicted that 'in the coming decades, the global share of religiously unaffiliated people is actually expected to fall' as the overall continuing growth in 'nones' is overtaken by the rate of growth of religious groups globally (Lipka and McClendone, 2017). The increasing popularity of religion in China is major factor in this prediction.

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