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Global Aid and Faith Actors: the case for an actor-oriented approach to the 'turn to religion'

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Abstract

In this paper I make the case for an actor-oriented approach to understanding faith actors', experience of the 'turn to religion' by the global aid business – driven in large part by the UN system and its member states - over the past couple of decades. I ask, is the 'turn to religion' evidence of the emergence of post-secular partnerships or are faith actors being instrumentalized to serve neo-liberal development goals? I argue that neither option captures the whole story and advocate that the study of religion, development and humanitarianism needs think about how faith actors themselves encounter and shape development discourses and frameworks, translate them into relevant formats and strategically employ them. I take the engagement of faith-based organisations (FBOs) with the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework as a case study to explore this.

Introduction

In the past 20 years, national and international funders have developed an interest in better understanding and cooperating with FBOs [faith-based organizations]. The World Bank, and a number of EU Member States have developed programmes and expertise in this field. Part of the reason for the growing interest in the work of FBOs is the recognition that religious affiliation often plays a major role in the beneficiary societies, and that working with religious leaders in those communities is often the most effective way of reaching local people.[1]

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[1] P. Perchoc, 'The EU and faith-based organisations in development and humanitarian aid.' *Briefing. European Parliamentary Research Service*, 2017, p. 1, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-

This quotation from a European Parliamentary Research Service briefing[2] sums up a major shift that has taken place over the past two decades. FBOs today receive larger portions of global aid budgets for their work compared to the past and are seen as legitimate and valued global development and humanitarian actors.[3] For instance, George W. Bush - during his presidency from 2001 to 2009 – almost doubled funding to faith-based groups, from 10.5% of aid in 2001 to 19.9% in 2005. In the UK, the Department for International Development's (DFID) 2009 White Paper promised to double funding to FBOs reflecting recognition of the 'unique contribution that they can make in both delivering development on the ground, and connecting with communities here and abroad.'[4] In 2013 Christian Aid was the 6th largest recipient of UKAID[5] and in 2011 the evangelical Christian FBO Tearfund reported that £6 million (approximately 11% of its total income) was constituted by government donor funding in 2005 and that this rose to £21 million (approximately 35% of total income) in 2010.[6] While FBOs were donor-funded before this 'turn to religion', it was either not much remarked on or constituted a path of action that was critiqued and even at times deliberately avoided by some donors, out of concern for the ethics of entangling aid with religion.[7]

However, as Swart and Nell write, not only have 'national and international funders… developed an interest in better understanding and cooperating with FBOs' but development studies has also sharpened it focus in this area, with an exponential rise in studies from around 2003.[8] More recently, the study of humanitarianism is also

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service/files/be-heard/religious-and-non-confessional-dialogue/events/en-20171206-faith-organisations-and-development.pdf

[2] Perchoc, 'The EU and faith-based organisations'

[3] J. Le Moigne and M.J. Peterson, 'Donor engagement with religion and faith-based organisations in development cooperation'. *Danish Network on Religion and Development*, 2016 https://www.dmru.org/fileadmin/Filer/Dokumenter/Religion_og_udvikling/DONOR_ENGAGEMENT_WITH_RELIGION.pdf

[4] DfID, *Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future,* Department for International Development, 2009 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/229029/7656.pdf, p. 134

[5] S. Parmanand, 'Top DfID NGO partners: A primer' *Devex News*, 2013 https://www.devex.com/news/top-dfid-ngo-partners-a-primer-81391

[6] A. Robinson (2011) 'Faith-based organizations and government funding – a research note. Tearfund'. http://faithindevelopment.org/doc/FBOs_and_government_funding_-_final.pdf

[7] G. Clarke, 'Agents of Transformation? Donors, Faith-Based Organizations and International Development' *Third World Quarterly* 28:1, 2007, pp. 77–96, p. 84

[8] I. Swart and E. Nell, E. 'Religion and development: The rise of a bibliography.' *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 72:4, 2016, pp. 1-27,

demonstrating a growing engagement with religious topics.[9] Various explanations for this have been posited. First, scholars have come to realize the limitations of the secularization thesis and that modernization and secularization do not necessarily go together. Second, the rise of political Islam has awakened academics and policy makers to the continuing significance of religious identities more broadly. Finally, the increasing NGO-ization of the aid business, as well as critiques of development for focussing on economic development at the expense of more people-centred development, has led to an opening of the development and humanitarian space that has been conducive to faith actors who have shaped themselves into NGOs.[10]

My aim in this paper is to draw upon, critique and develop existing analytical and theoretical tools within sociology and anthropology to develop a new framework for interpreting faith actors' experience of the 'turn to religion' by the global aid business. I argue that the analysis offered by both academics and practitioners has become bifurcated with many viewing the 'turn to religion' as proof of the emergence of post-secular partnerships[11] while others take it as testament that the international aid business instrumentalizes faith actors and to achieve its own goals.[12] For instance, writing about the increased engagement between international actors and faith actors, Haynes calls today's international environment 'post-secular',[13] Ager and Ager say that we are living in a 'post-secular age'[14] and Cloke et al talk about 'post-secular partnerships' to specifically denote instances where 'FBOs deliberately enter into partnership with others' who do not share

https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/3862/8914; B. Bompani. 'Religion and development: Tracing the trajectories of an evolving sub-discipline.' *Progress in Development Studies* 19:3, 2019, pp. 171–185

[9] H. Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians: American Evangelicals and Global Aid* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); M. Barnett and J. Stein, *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[10] Swart and Nell, 'Religion and development, p.2; E. Tomalin, *Religions and Development* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013)

[11] P. Cloke and J. Beaumont, 'Geographies of postsecular rapprochement in the city', *Progress in Human Geography,* 37:1, 2012, pp. 27-51

[12] S. Deneulin and M. Bano *Religion in Development; Rewriting the Secular Script* (London & New York: Zed Books, 2009); M. Juul Petersen and B. Jones, 'Instrumental, Narrow, Normative? Reviewing recent work on religion and development'. *Third World Quarterly* 32:7, 2011, pp.1291–1306

[13] J. Haynes, 'What do Faith-based Organisations Seek at the United Nations? *E-International Relations'* Nov 15, 2013 https://www.e-ir.info/2013/11/15/what-do-faith-based-organisations-seek-at-the-united-nations/

[14] A. Ager and J. Ager, 'Sustainable Development and Religion: Accommodating Diversity in a Post-Secular age', *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, 2016, pp. 101-105 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15570274.2016.1215813?needAccess=true

their faith tradition.[15] Not only are discourses about the post-secular prevalent, but also those about instrumentalization where, as Karam writes, some have 'voiced their unease that this interest in religion may be another passing fad that seeks to capitalize on their strengths and even attempt to change their way of doing things, almost as if a covert attempt were at hand to secularize the religious.'[16] I argue that neither analysis adequately captures faith actors' experience of the religion-development-humanitarian nexus.

Post-secular, however we define it, is a misleading term that obscures the way that faith actors who engage with the international system have to modify their language and mission, and reshape themselves as ostensibly secular organizations in these interactions.[17] This is not just a matter of semantics, but is problematic because, although global development and humanitarian institutions are taking religion more seriously, they predominantly and selectively partner with faith actors that are already visible and functional at the international level. As anthropologist of development Olivier de Sardan argues, these actors have 'mastery of the development language' which 'is their ticket for entry into an international network, access to the developmentalist configuration and therefore to the promise of funds and projects.'[18] This leads to an assumption by global development and humanitarian actors that they have ticked the 'religion box' through their work with international FBOs (IFBOs) - i.e. those that work in multiple countries and are connected to the global aid system - while the great diversity of so-called 'local faith actors' (LFAs), who are closest to communities in need but 'have not yet acquired the language spoken in the world of development'[19] are mostly marginalized from mainstream development and humanitarian partnerships.[20] The localization of aid is particularly important and topical at this present time, given the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit's *Grand Bargain* which 'commits donors and aid organizations to providing 25 per cent of

[15] Cloke and Beaumont, 'Geographies of postsecular rapprochement', p. 31

[16] A. Karam (ed.), 'Religion, Development and the United Nations', *Social Science Research Council*, 2011, https://s3.amazonaws.com/ssrc-cdn1/crmuploads/new_publication_3/religion-development-and-the-united-nations.pdf

[17] I. Hovland, 'Who's Afraid of Religion? Tensions between 'Mission' and 'Development' in the Norwegian Mission Society.' In *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, edited by Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) pp. 171-186.
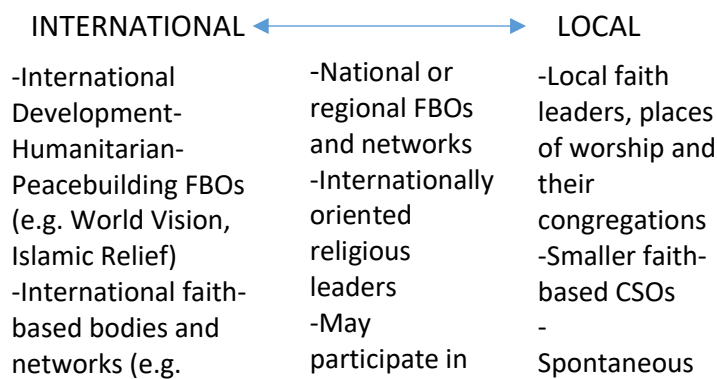
[18] JP. Olivier de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development: Understanding Contemporary Social Change* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2005) p. 183

[19] Olivier de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development,* p. 177

[20] S. Trotta and O. Wilkinson, *Partnering with Local Faith Actors to Support Peaceful and Inclusive Societies* (Washington DC; Bonn: JLI, PaRD, 2019)

global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020.'[21] As figure 1 demonstrates, the category of 'faith actor' is diverse. While international FBOs such as Tearfund and Islamic Relief, as well as many national FBOs in different settings, self-identify as development and humanitarian actors and are familiar with the language of the global aid business, there are countless local faith leaders, places of worship and small faith-based civil society organizations (CSOs), many of whom emerge in response to immediate need, but which are not part of the global aid machinery.

Figure 1: What do we mean by 'faith actors'?

INTERNATIONAL ←————————→ LOCAL

-International Development-Humanitarian-Peacebuilding FBOs (e.g. World Vision, Islamic Relief) -International faith-based bodies and networks (e.g.	-National or regional FBOs and networks -Internationally oriented religious leaders -May participate in	-Local faith leaders, places of worship and their congregations -Smaller faith-based CSOs - Spontaneous

Neither, however, is there evidence to suggest that faith actors are simply passive targets for global development discourses and policies.[22] In order to make sense of this, I propose to apply the actor-oriented approach of the development sociologist Norman Long,[23] which he began to work on in the 1980s. I advocate that the study of the religion-development-humanitarianism nexus needs to move beyond a binary between the 'turn to religion' as either evidence of post-secular partnerships or of the instrumentalization of religion by the secular global aid business, and instead to think about how faith actors themselves encounter and shape development discourses and frameworks, translate them into relevant formats and strategically employ them.[24] Here we encounter the structure-agency dilemma that has been played out across the social and political sciences. An actor-

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[21] https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861
[22] E. Tomalin, 'Religions, poverty reduction and global development institutions.' *Palgrave Communications*, 4: 132, 2018, pp. 1-12, https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-018-0167-8
[23] N. Long, N. *Encounters at the Interface: A Perspective on Social Discontinuities in Rural Development*. (Wageningen: Wageningen Agricultural University, 1980s)
[24] N. Long, *Development sociology: actor perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2001)

oriented approach draws our attention away from the structures that enable, facilitate or compel certain types of development discourse and practice, as the only or most significant factor in our analysis, and rather focuses attention on the way that, as Anderson and Patterson argue, 'development discourse's 'elasticity' enables dominated people to contest, use, manipulate and redefine it'.[25] Rather than relying upon a structural approach to consider the impact of development discourses and frameworks, Long views 'development arenas' as 'social locations or situations in which contests over issues, resources, values, and representations take place'.[26] He proposes an 'actor-oriented interface analysis for understanding cultural diversity, social difference and conflict inherent in processes of development intervention'.[27] The specific development arena I focus on is that of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that replaced the Millennium Development Goals in 2015. Within this I will apply the actor-oriented interface analysis to understand the role played by IFBOs in this domain from their perspective.

To avoid the critique offered by scholars, including Rossi, that the compartmentalization of 'aid givers' and 'aid recipients' in Long's interface analysis 'as if they were social groups governed by different, or even incompatible logics'[28] is reductionist and polarizing, a number of steps are taken. First, alongside adopting an actor-oriented interface analysis, I build on the work of Kraft and Smith,[29] who draw attention to the crucial role that 'faith-based organisations (FBOs) play in acting as intermediaries between international donors and local faith communities (LFCs).' I extend their analysis by locating it within the literature on development brokers and translators, advanced by anthropologists of development in the early 2000s, including Lewis and Mosse, Olivier de Sardan and Bierschenk.[30] Despite the relevance of this body of literature to understanding the role that

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[25] E. Anderson and A.S. Patterson, 'Instrumentalizing AIDS empowerment discourses in Malawi and Zambia: an actor-oriented view of donor politics' *International Affairs* 93: 5, 2017, pp. 1185–1204, p. 189

[26] Long, *Development sociology,* p. 59

[27] N. Long, *The Multiple Optic of Interface Analysis. UNESCO Background Paper on Interface Analysis*, 1991, p.1

[28] B. Rossi, 'Aid Policies and Recipient Strategies in Niger.' In: D. David and D. Mosse (eds.), *Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Development.* (Bloomfield: Kumarian, 2006) pp. 27-50, p. 27; Olivier de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development,* p. 12-13; D. Lewis and D. Mosse, *Development brokers and translators: the ethnography of aid and agencies* (Bloomfield, Conn., Kumarian Press, 2006), 10-11

[29] K. Kraft and J. Smith, 'Between international donors and local faith communities: Intermediaries in humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon'. *Disasters* 43(1), 2019, pp. 24-45.

[30] Lewis and Mosse, *Development brokers and translators;* Olivier de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development;* T. Bierschenk, J. Chauveau and J. Olivier de Sardan, *Local Development Brokers in*

FBOs play as intermediaries and brokers, it has not yet been widely adopted to establish an analytical framework for interpreting the 'turn to religion'.[31] This analysis will allow me to articulate the distinctive role that many members of FBOs report that they have as intermediaries who shift register between the interface of secular development language and the faith inspired language of their local faith partners. The SDGs are a particularly good vehicle for exploring the localisation of a global framework and the role that development intermediaries and brokers play in this. Finally, I acknowledge the influence of Bourdieu upon Long's actor-oriented interface analysis and suggest that bringing Bourdieu more strongly into the analysis is useful for two main reasons. First, it weakens critiques that an actor-oriented interface analysis neglects 'broader issues of power and structure'.[32] For Bourdieu, human agency is influenced by objective structures in societies but also internalized subjective structures and he proposed 'a science of dialectical relations between objective structures…and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them'.[33] He used the term habitus to refer to this learnt set of dispositions that individuals use to navigate their way in society comprising a 'structured and structuring structure'.[34] I will argue that Bourdieu's 'thinking' tools, in particular the concepts of habitus, field and capital,[35] offer a way of theorizing the 'turn to religion' by the global aid business that avoids the trap of essentializing it as either evidence of post-secular partnerships or the instrumentalization of religion.[36] Second, Bourdieu's theory of fields offers a way of thinking about Long's interfaces as locations where mediation, translation and brokerage take place which means that attention is drawn to overlapping interests and shared languages between different actors in development-humanitarian domains, rather than rigid divides and opposing agendas.

Africa: The Rise of a New Social Category (Arbeitspapiere / Working Papers Nr. 13 Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, 2002).

[31] E. Tomalin, 'Religions, poverty reduction'; G. Bolotta, C. Scheer and M. Feener, 'Translating religion and development: Emerging perspectives from critical ethnographies of faith-based organizations', *Progress in Development Studies* 19, 4, 2019, pp.243-263

[32] Lewis and Mosse, *Brokers and Translators*, p. 10

[33] P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1972] 1977), p. 3

[34] P. Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology.* Translated and edited by M. Adamson (Cambridge: Polity, [1987] 1994), p. 170

[35] M. Grenfell, ed. *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 1; Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*

[36] E. Tomalin, 'Religions and Development: A Paradigm Shift or Business as usual?' *Religion,* forthcoming

In the first section I argue that the 'turn to religion' by global development and humanitarian actors has been selective and normative. With respect to the UN, for instance, Haynes tells us that if faith actors want 'to gain entry into debates and discussions at the UN […they…] must accord with the UN's secular, liberal and irreligious values.'[37] Not all faith actors can or want to do this, or even know that it is possible, and are therefore unable to directly engage in a meaningful way with the global level that impacts so many of their options. Since the early 2000s a cadre of international faith-based organizations (IFBOs), who secularize their mission and language in their interactions with global development and humanitarian actors, has emerged. In the second section I briefly discuss two excellent recent ethnographies of IFBOs: Freeman's *Tearfund and the Quest for Faith-Based Development* and King's *God's Internationalists: World Vision and the Age of Evangelical Humanitarianism.* I use these studies to examine how these IFBOs navigate their place within the secular global development and humanitarian sphere as faith actors.[38] I will demonstrate that the 'language spoken in the world of development'[39] is experienced by faith actors as a 'secular lexicon' that can threaten what they consider to be distinctive about their faith identity and approach. At the same time, however, they shift register between secular development language and faith language, enabling them not only to connect with their volunteers and supporters who are receptive to a faith register, but also the local faith actors they partner with, who are mostly marginalized from the global aid project. In the final section, I draw on recent fieldwork, which examined faith actors' engagement in the consultation, negotiation and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, to demonstrate that IFBOs play an important, but not much recognised role, as development and humanitarian agents who, to extend the work of Lewis and Mosse, act as 'brokers operating at the "interfaces" of different world-views and knowledge systems…negotiating roles, relationships, and representations.'[40]

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[37] J. Haynes, 'Faith-based Organisations at the United Nations' *European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI Working Paper RSCAS* 2013/70, p. 6 https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/28119/RSCAS_2013_70.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[38] D. Freeman, *Tearfund and the Quest for Faith-Based Development* (London and New York, Routledge, 2019) and D. King, *God's Internationalists: World Vision and the Age of Evangelical Humanitarianism* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

[39] Olivier de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development*, p. 177

[40] Lewis and Mosse, *Development brokers and translators,* p. 10; Long, *Development sociology;* Bierschenk, Chauveau and Olivier de Sardan, *Local Development Brokers;* Tomalin, 'Religions, poverty reduction*'*

Religion-development-humanitarian engagement: selective and normative

The fact that faith actors are now seen as legitimate partners for global development and humanitarianism has been celebrated by both academics and practitioners.[41] While some have argued that this increasing presence of faith actors in the global public sphere is evidence of post-secular partnerships, I am doubtful for two main reasons. First, at the level of global development and humanitarianism, this 'turn to religion' is selective as it typically misses out much local faith-based activity, for instance, in places of worship and the congregations of charismatic religious leaders. As figure 1 shows, faith actors relevant to the global aid business extend beyond IFBOs and internationally oriented faith leaders although this has tended to be where the global aid community has focussed its attention.

Second, there is evidence that the way that global institutions engage with faith actors tends to be normative and instrumental and that there are certain modes of religious communication that are not facilitated in this interaction.[42] Those working for faith-based organizations often claim that they 'leave their faith at the door' when they communicate with secular development actors.[43] As Freeman notes, this amounts to rules of engagement that

> have posed a number of challenges for many Christian FBDOs [faith-based development organisations], often leading to them setting up special 'secular' work streams which can receive government funding, while more 'faith-based' work which includes evangelism is funded from individual donations. It has also led to what Ingie Hovland[44] has called a kind of 'schizophrenia' as FBOs use different language and discourse to speak to different audiences.[45]

To illustrate this, it is helpful to briefly examine the best-known version of post-secular theory, advocated by the political philosopher Habermas. Habermas argues that society is becoming increasingly post-secular, and that secular and faith actors need to participate in a 'complementary learning process', where 'both sides can…then take seriously each

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[41] G. Clarke and M. Jennings, *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular* (New York and Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Tomalin, *Religions and Development*.

[42] S. Deneulin and M. Banu, *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* (London: Zed Books, 2009); M. Juul Petersen and B. Jones, 'Instrumental, Narrow, Normative?'

[43] C. Clarke, 'Agents of Transformation? Donors, Faith-Based Organizations and International Development, *Third World Quarterly* 28:1, 2007, pp. 77–96, p. 84

[44] Hovland, 'Who's Afraid of Religion?'

[45] Freeman, *Tearfund and the Quest*, p. x

other's contributions to controversial themes in the public sphere'.[46] While this process of 'communicative action' might seem to suggest that individuals are able to share their perspectives in their own voices, and that different forms of knowledge are respected, he has been widely criticized for promoting a secularist position. He writes, for instance, 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.'[47] As Dillon argues, however, this necessitates that 'religious citizens' have to translate 'their religious norms into a secular idiom.'[48] He continues that it appears that religious-secular dialogue is 'not possible without putting one's faith in parenthesis.'[49] This analysis, I argue, helps to make sense of the type of interaction that is going on in the 'turn to religion' by the global aid business. It engages selectively with faith actors that can take part in the right kind of 'communicative action'.

Habermas' version is not the only theory of the post-secular, although it has been the most influential, with sociologist of religion Beckford arguing that when the term became popular in the late 1990s there were some 'common concerns' but that the 'concept quickly acquired diverse and divergent meanings.'[50] While the range of interpretations of what post-secular means is certainly a product of the varied contexts and engagements that the term is employed to understand, I argue that, however we define it, it is not well suited to label the engagement between faith and global actors as evidenced by the 'turn to religion'. The term can also be critiqued for reflecting a bias towards an interpretation of social change in the Global North and taking this as the norm when in much of the Global South religion has remained influential in both the public and private spheres. However, this is not my main concern here. While a space has opened up for faith actors to enter secular spheres that have previously eschewed religious contributions, I argue that to use the term post-secular is disingenuous as it masks the fact that when faith actors engage

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[46] J. Habermas, 'On the Relations Between the Secular Liberal State and Religion', in H. de Vries and L.E. Sullivan (eds) *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006) pp. 251-260, p. 258

[47] J. Habermas, 'Notes on post-secular society', *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25:4, 2008, pp. 17–29, p. 28

[48] M. Dillon, 'Jürgen Habermas and the post-secular appropriation of religion: a sociological critique', in P. Gorski (ed) *The post-secular in question: Religion in contemporary society* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), pp. 249–278, p. 258

[49] Dillon, 'Jürgen Habermas', pp. 264

[50] J. A. Beckford, 'SSSR Presidential Address Public Religions and the Postsecular: Critical Reflections', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 51:1, 2012, pp. 1-19, p. 2

with the international system they modify their language and mission, reshaping themselves as ostensibly secular actors in these interactions. As an article in the Economist tells us 'the UN has retained a secularist jargon and ethos, so that even religious bodies have to use secularist language when they make arguments on the East River.'[51] Fears over the potential secularization of their work has been a very real concern of IFBOs as they become mainstreamed into the global development and humanitarian system and receive larger amounts of funding from secular donors. I will briefly explore this through examples given in two recent studies of international development/humanitarian organizations.

Negotiating a faith identity in a secular space

In order to give some evidence to support this discussion, the two recent books I will briefly explore are Freeman's *Tearfund and the Quest for Faith-Based Development* and King's *God's Internationalists: World Vision and the Age of Evangelical Humanitarianism*. Each provides a rich account of the organization's history, drawing on published sources, archival research and interviews. Each also covers many themes, but both clearly articulate the internal tensions that arise in negotiating a faith identity in a secular space. As Freeman writes,

> many in Tearfund perceived a tension between the organisation's faith-based nature and receiving funds from secular sources and were concerned whether accepting money from secular funders would influence the nature of its work and cause it to "secularise" [and] that receiving this type of funding would limit their ability to act freely in a Christian manner.[52]

And indeed, as 'Tearfund emerged into the broader humanitarian field, seeking institutional funding, signing up to international codes of conduct and taking part in broader coalitions, it was indeed faced with 'secularising' demands as many had feared.'[53] This included the requirement that in signing up to international standards and codes, 'in what ways and in what situations, it was possible and appropriate to evangelise. This, after all, was of fundamental importance to Tearfund as an evangelical organisation, and yet it appeared to

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[51] Erasmus, 'Religion and the UN Visions of a new world - Faith has surfaced in the global organisation but it hasn't brought peace', *The Economist*, Oct 8th 2013 https://www.economist.com/erasmus/2013/10/08/visions-of-a-new-world
[52] D. Freeman, *Tearfund and the Quest*, p. z
[53] Ibid, p. x

have just signed up to standards that ruled out evangelism.'[54] Tearfund's partners also faced the same questions, but 'as a result several of them had to make changes in the way that they worked, such as stopping distributing Bibles during development work or preaching at disaster sites. In this way these local, Southern religious organisations became subjectivised to global norms.'[55]

King's history of World Vision illustrates many of the same themes where, as the organization 'professionalized, leadership carefully insisted how efficiency and accountability did not undercut the organization's Christian identity.'[56] With increasing professionalization, nonetheless, King underscores the point that 'World Vision never hid its Christian identity, but explicit language about mission now fell into the background' and it dropped 'the "evangelical code words" on which World Vision had often relied.'[57] However, he argues against seeing this 'evolution through a narrative of secularization' is too simplistic and instead that World Vision 'strategically spoke in multiple registers as it sought influence among its various audiences.'[58]

> The reality, however, is that an organization functions within not only one field but rather multiple fields—often simultaneously. For example, World Vision has operated within an American evangelical subculture, a collection of missionary agencies, a global evangelicalism, large-scale fund-raising nonprofit organizations, and a secular development INGO network. Understanding World Vision fully requires investigating the multiple contexts and networks in which it operates and the various audiences to which it articulates its identity.[59]

While secularization and instrumentalization is a real fear within many IFBOs as they professionalize, I propose that an actor-oriented interface analysis can assist in uncovering the interactions that IFBOs have with their multiple audiences from their perspective. As Long writes:

> The analysis of power processes should not therefore be restricted to an understanding of how social constraints and access to resources shape social action.

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[54] Ibid, p. x
[55] Ibid, p. d
[56] King, *God's Internationalists*, p. 104
[57] Ibid, p. 153
[58] Ibid, p. 155
[59] Ibid p.14

Nor should it lead to the description of rigid hierarchical categories and hegemonic ideologies that 'oppress passive victims'. Standing back from the tendency to empathise ideologically with these hapless victims, one should, instead, explore the extent to which specific actors perceive themselves capable of manoeuvring within given contexts or networks and develop strategies for doing so. This is not to fail to recognise the often much restricted space for individual initiative but rather to examine, within the constraints encountered, how actors identify and create space for their own interests and for change.[60]

Rossi's critique that Long's interface analysis reduces our view of the development-humanitarian domain to a conflict between different life worlds that have no common ground is misleading since 'roles are more flexible […] and are continuously renegotiated depending on context and intersubjectivity'[61], needs to be considered and is relevant for my analysis of how faith actors negotiate their faith identity in secular spaces. In fact, it is misleading and reductionist to view any space as distinctly and rigidly secular or faith-based and actors instead encounter both secular dynamics and languages across all development and humanitarian spaces. For instance, as I discuss below, faith spaces are increasingly opening up within the global development-humanitarian domain, with the UN's Strategic Learning Exchange around faith and the SDGs, being one example. Moreover, faith actors do not always talk to other faith actors using a faith lexicon: much of the work that IFBOs do with local communities, even where they share a faith tradition, is not religious in any way. However, there is evidence to suggest that certain ways of communicating dominate in different spaces and people adapt their register accordingly.

However, as King notes, with respect to World Vision, this shifting register is not just about 'hedging its bets' but instead reflects a firm belief in their competency to navigate between faith and secular spaces, having 'a unique role to play in all these spheres.'[62] Extending the work of Bierschenk et al. to the religion-development-humanitarian domain, I argue that IFBOs are 'brokers of development' in the sense of 'intermediaries who take advantage of the position at the interface between two social and cultural configurations.'[63]

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[60] Long, *Development Sociology,* p. 184
[61] Rossi, 'Aid Policies', p. 46
[62] King, *God's Internationalists*, p. 155
[63] Bierschenk et al, *Local Development Brokers*

Interfaces within the religion-development-humanitarian domain are not fixed and oppositional boundaries, but locations or, bringing Bourdieu into the discussion, 'fields', where actors come into contact around development and humanitarian policies and programmes, and brokers have a key role to play. Development brokers, according to Olivier de Sardan, 'speak the local language (since they claim to 'belong to the grassroots', to be aware of its 'needs' and to share its aspirations), but they must also master the development language (which is a prerequisite for their communication with donors).'[64] In the next section I take an example from my own recent field work on the role that FBOs have played in the consultation, negotiation and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and view this as an 'interface situation' which, according to Long, provides 'the means by which individuals or groups come to define their own cultural or ideological positions vis-à-vis those espousing or typifying opposing views'[65] as well as being the social and conceptual locations where translation occurs.

Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals: consultation, negotiation and implementation

Background and research methods

The data that will analysed and interpreted using an actor-oriented interface approach comes from a research project I co-led between 2016-2019, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK, called 'Keeping faith in 2030: Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'. This research did not cover every interface within the religions and SDG domain, but instead mostly focussed on the interface between the global aid system and FBOs, mainly international but also national, who have 'mastery of the development language'.[66] The SDGs came about following several years of discussion and negotiation. This began in 2012 as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were reaching their 2015 cut-off date. An intergovernmental 'Open Working Group' (OWG) was set up and, alongside this, the UN Secretary General launched a High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons to guide the discussions on the post-2015 agenda. The process included civil society actors, through their involvement in the OWG consultations, as well as via thematic and regional consultations that fed into the negotiations. These consultations aimed to reach a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, NGOs,

[64] Olivier de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development*, p. 182
[65] Long, *Development sociology*, p. 70
[66] Olivier de Sardan, *Anthropology and Development*, p. 182

the private sector, media, universities, think tanks and the general public. Additionally, it was documented that over seven million people took part in a survey up to the end of 2014 on the www.worldwewant2015.org website, which was also to feed into the UN consultations.[67]

The 'Keeping Faith in 2030' project, involved three workshops,[68] in the UK, India and Ethiopia, with representatives from national and international FBOs already working in development and humanitarianism rather than local faith actors, to discuss how they were involved in the consultation and negotiation process to set the SDGs as well as how they were interpreting, adopting and implementing them in their work with local communities.[69] Each workshop followed the same format so that comparisons could be made, and were comprised of small group workshop sessions that addressed the same series of questions in each setting. The sessions were recorded, and detailed notes were taken. We also carried out ten key informant interviews, in the three workshop locations as well as in New York, from where the SDG process was co-ordinated. Ethical permission for this research was granted by the University of Leeds Research Ethics Committee. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using the software NVivo. Participants in both the workshops and the interviews were promised anonymity. The main research questions from this project that are relevant for the discussion in this paper are: given 'the turn to religion' by global development policy and practice what role did faith actors play? Are they being instrumentalized or are we seeing post-secular partnerships?

Findings and discussion

In all of our workshops, participants indicated that their awareness of and participation in the SDG consultation process was very low; this was particularly the case in Ethiopia. This pertained both to global and country-level consultations. Most had not been aware that consultations were happening. Where they had participated, this was rather incidental and based on personal connections or professional networks. They had not been invited to participate as faith actors or to present a faith perspective but, instead, attended in the

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[67] F. Dodds, D. Donoghue and J. L. Roesch (2017) *Negotiating the Sustainable Development Goals*. London and New York: Routledge.

[68] Reports from the three workshops can be downloaded here: https://religions-and-development.leeds.ac.uk/research-network/

[69] E.Tomalin, J. Haustein and S. Kidy, 'Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals' *Review of Faith and International Affairs*. 17:2, 2019, pp.102-118.

same capacity as other civil society organizations (CSO). As one interviewee at the UN in New York told me, 'if you ask me frankly, there was no coordinated process in which inputs have been taken, in context of faith communities, that is the truth.'[70]

On the whole, the formal negotiation processes at the UN in New York, which took place between in two phases between March 2013 to February 2014 (to agree the basic text) and March to July 2014 (to firm up and agree the text),[71] treated faith actors as civil society actors, their religious identity making little noticeable difference. As an interviewee who was involved in the final negotiations told me:

> Within the NGOs, how visible were faith groups? I'm asking myself. I honestly couldn't say that they were that visible, that's not to say that they weren't there, but I have a clearer sense of the faith community as it were from a couple of side events, which I addressed around that time.[72]

Despite the strong NGO presence, however, this interviewee reported that 'I'm pretty certain that there wasn't a specific contribution made by anybody from a faith background'.[73] This does not mean to say FBOs were not in the room and indeed I heard on several fronts that World Vision had been prominent. Another interviewee at the UN told me that

> World Vision in particular did two things, they basically started their own consultations internally within their own World Vision networks, about the post 2015 and what kind of development, what were the issues they wanted to make sure were on the table. So, they kind of raised awareness within their own networks and communities, which I thought was really smart and I think they were the only ones who did that to be honest, from the faith based NGOs. And then the second thing they did was they deliberately targeted the UN headquarters in Geneva, in New York and targeted individuals, heads of agencies on the issues they work on, so they work a lot on maternal mortality, on HIV/AIDS and children, so they targeted these particular UN entities, which work with them already on these issues…wanting to meet with them and consult with them and put their own issues onto the table… they started getting

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[70] Interview 1, New York, 20/4/17
[71] Dodds et al., *Negotiating the Sustainable Development Goals,* p.33
[72] Interview 2, New York 21/5/17
[73] Interview 1

very actively involved in everything civil society related in the UN, so any initiative

that involved civil society, general society, World Vision was there and sometimes

they were the only faith based actor at that civil society event. [74]

This confirms King's observation in his history of World Vision, that they have become adept at managing their faith identity in a secular space. An interviewee from World Vision also confirmed this, explaining that

the fact that we have a faith identity in no way excluded or created any obstacle for

us being involved there, but I guess we were involved and around the table because

we're a large international development NGO, not explicitly as a faith voice. So our

faith identity shapes a lot of what we can bring to the table but that's not the reason

why we're invited into the room.[75]

Although World Vision did engage in some spaces where there was 'an explicit identification of the faith basis for engaging but that that was quite a small percentage of our overall engagement.'[76] The main place where faith engagement around the SDGs has been formally nurtured with the UN system, is the UN Interagency Task Force on Engaging Religion for Sustainable Development (UNIATF), which is part of the United Nations Development Group. An interviewee explained that

the taskforce existed since 2010 officially [but] the series of engagements across the

UN system, to make the case for why religion matters in the first place, conceptually,

practically etc., technically started in 2007, then it became formal as a process of [a]

explaining what religion is, [b] explaining why and how it matters, [c] helping the

different UN entities, of which there are over 60, get their own wisdom about how to

engage better and even how to track their own engagement because many of them

are engaged but the headquarter office wouldn't know, in London, Geneva,

whatever, they wouldn't know.[77]

This interviewee emphasized that since 2007 'we've actually allowed the faith-based organizations themselves to own their faith identity a lot more than they had themselves

[74] Interview 3, 19/5/17
[75] Interview 3
[76] Ibid
[77] Interview 1

owned up to it. They had been so much ensconced in being an NGO and being accepted and acknowledged and doing the work and being part of the NGO world.'[78] Thus, spaces were opening up in the UN for faith actors to be faith actors, and this was requiring some readjustment and uncertainty about when to bring the faith dimension in and when to hold back. She continued that 'it's a really important dilemma that wasn't there on the map just a few years ago, before we normalized the engagement.'[79] Emerging from the UNIATF in 2010, was an initiative called the Strategic Learning Exchange, which was to provide opportunities for UN staff and FBO staff to learn from each other and to take stock of both successful and problematic partnerships. This was not only an opportunity for FBOs to connect with UN staff, but also with each other and 'the learning wasn't just for the UN, the learning eventually…it started a process of internal reflection in their own organisations.'[80] These initiatives were timely for the emergence of the post-2015 consultations and in 2012, as Karam writes, a request was made by the UN Development Group 'to convene a consultation that would help identify the particularities of religious development organizations in relation to the UN's post-2015 development agenda processes.'[81] As an interviewee explained:

> it was really deliberately about convening the multitude of faith based partners in different countries including here, but our offices in the Arab region, offices in African region, offices in Latin America region started doing that as well in 2012, systematic consultations with faith based partners, "We're looking at beyond the MDGs, what do you want to tell us? What are the lessons you want to bring to the table? What are the issues you think need to be brought onto the table?"[82]

In May 2014, an informal two-day meeting titled 'Religion and Development Post 2015: Challenges, Opportunities and Policy Guidance' was held in New York, in the closing months of the SDG consultation process, that ended in July 2014. Given the timing of this event, it appears to have had more of a focus on collaborations and partnerships that could be formed as the SDGs were rolled out and implemented rather than upon shaping the goals. Nonetheless, while some limited consultation of faith actors as faith actors did

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[78] Ibid
[79] Ibid
[80] Ibid
[81] A. Karam (2014) *Religion and development post 2015*, 2014
https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/DONOR-UN-FBO%20May%202014.pdf, p. xiv
[82] Interview 1

take place, rather than them all being bundled into broader civil society consultations, an interviewee at the UN in New York lamented that

> we deal with civil society and we deal with faith based groups, as if they're not the same and the convenings, the consultations, the capacity building, the knowledge management that takes place, the policy advocacy takes place separately, which I think is remarkably stupid but there you are, that is where we're at now.[83]

Thus, there are spaces for faith actors to own their faith identity within the UN and these were operationalized during the SDG consultation and negotiation process, but they are siloed from the mainstream processes that remain secular and are where faith actors switch from a faith to a secular register. However, as Karam writes this separation is also a response to calls for a 'safe space' as opposed to an 'ordinary consultation' based on the 'realization that no conversation about any aspect of religion, especially when based on contemporary real-life situations in diverse contexts, could avoid political sensitivities.'[84] It is important, however, not to give the impression that faith values cannot be felt in secular UN processes and are always neatly partitioned in a separate location. In reality, boundaries are more porous and there is evidence that faith actors can impact secular processes from a faith perspective without explicitly invoking religious language, for instance, speaking of '"family values" - not of serving God.'[85] It is particularly within the domain of reproductive health and sexual rights, that alliances of some faith actors have coalesced and sought to influence the UN and donor initiatives, increasingly using scientific arguments rather than religious to make their case.[86] And of course the fact that donors actually need FBOs to implement their policies on the ground, arguably gives them some agency in the ways in which they engage with donor policies. This is confirmed by one of my interviewees who explained,

> The faith-based organizations themselves are now like, "Hey, we've got a place at the table! We're wanted! We're liked! More, we want more and we want to tell you what we want now, so it's nice that you finally see us but hey, we've got a list of things we want, it's not just that you want us to rubber stamp your stuff and don't you

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[83] Interview 1
[84] Karam, *Religion and development post 2015,* p. xv
[85] Erasmus, 'Religion and the UN Visions of a new world'
[86] J. H. Bayes and N. Tohidi, eds. *Globalization, Gender, and Religion: The Politics of Women's Rights in Catholic and Muslim Contexts* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); J. M. Vaggione, The Catholic Church, contemporary sexual politics and development in Latin America. Tomalin, E. ed. *The Routledge handbook of religions and global development*. London: Routledge 2015) pp. 167-180.

dare think you can instrumentalize us that way", so "we've got a few things that we want you to make sure that you do as well"… they're not just going to come and be silent and look good for the photo, but they have things, they have issues, they have ways of doing things, they have concerns about the way that the UN is doing or not doing certain things.[87]

In the remainder of this section I return to an actor-orientated interface analysis of the religions-SDG development domain and will consider how the representatives of the FBOs who attended the three project workshops, who were mostly international with some national organizations present, negotiated their engagement with the SDG framework, in their work at the global level as well as the local level. In general, the workshop participants did not see the secular articulation of the SDGs at the global level and their involvement as ostensibly secular actors as evidence of instrumentalization and their alienation from the process. Indeed, there was a strong articulation from our Indian participants that the SDGs should be 'secular', particularly where religious conflict and the marginalization of some faith groups was a growing concern. In such settings the commitment to secularism is an important public value where 'one of the purposes of secularism is to provide a language in which people of very different metaphysical views can communicate'.[88]

However, participants at the workshops (who were representatives of national and international organizations) were beginning to work with local faith communities to sensitise them to the SDGs. It was at this particular interface (working with communities not familiar with global development discourse) that the translation of the SDGs into faith-relevant language was salient, particularly on issues where attitudes rooted in interpretations of religious traditions might get in the way of promoting greater gender equality or interfaith dialogue. Reflecting on SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and how he tackles social norms around domestic violence using Islam as a resource, a Muslim IFBO interviewee in India, who was also present at the workshop in Delhi, told me:

> 'How it is justified to beat your wife? … Prophet's life is the best life, you know', I said. 'Can you give a single example where prophet has beaten any women or his

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[87] Interview 1
[88] Erasmus, 'Religion and the UN Visions of a new world'

> wife or daughter? Any example?' I ask them. They say 'no.' 'Then why you beat your wife?'

As a Muslim organization, he argued, they had a special role to play in sensitising communities around the SDGs as 'we will have a better acceptability than compared to the other organizations… certain credential also, so that gives an advantage when you are with a Muslim community, they accept us, they are accept that we are not talking something rubbish.'[89] He considered that they are playing a role 'in terms of bridging the gap between the local faith communities and the state and the international actors.'[90]

A Christian IFBO interviewee in India also talked about their role in bringing the SDG conversation to Churches and Christian communities in India but that

> no church is talking about SDG, church only talks about the Bible and religious group talks about the spiritual life but the SDG is totally missing, while the humanitarian organisations are talking about the SDGs…if you take random interview with the faith leaders, they may not be able to say what is SDG, whereas the biggest responsibility lies on the faith leaders… That is totally new topic to them, so they are really eager to learn more about, so we help them our best to sensitise about what is SDG, how you can contribute, the churches and people they are a little bit contributing but how they will meaningfully engage, that has to be translated, that needs to be translated.[91]

Figure 2: Faith actors and the SDG domain

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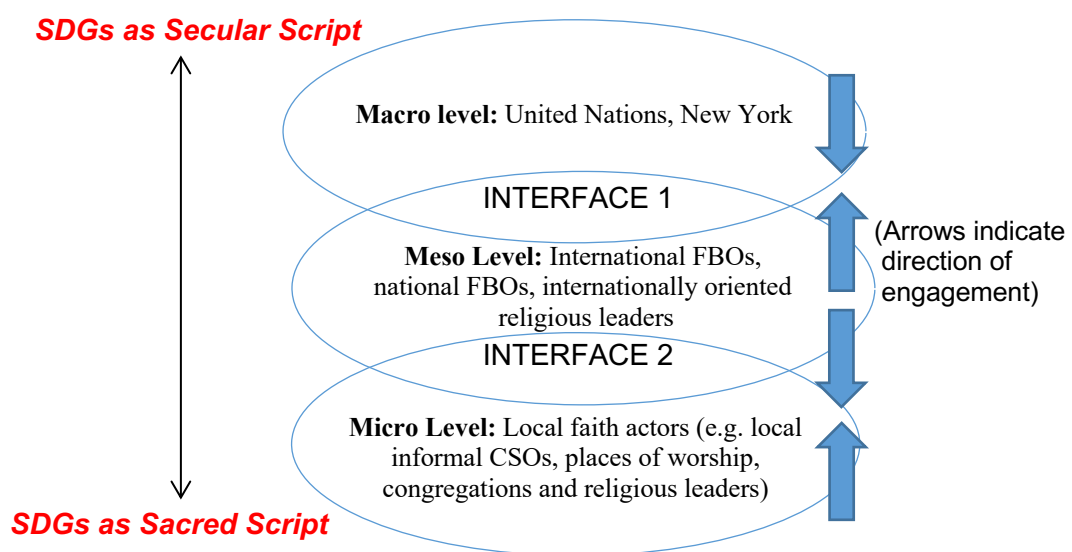
[89] Interview 5, New Delhi 5/12/17
[90] Ibid
[91] Interview 4, New Delhi 4/12/17

As illustrated in figure 2, FBOs who speak the development language shift register in their interactions with different actors in the SDG domain, and depicts two of the possible interfaces or, to use Bourdieu's terminology, 'fields', that FBOs encounter or participate in within this domain. While the use of diagrams to depict complex social systems is arguably reductive, such visualisations are also helpful for analytical purposes if their limitations are recognised. These FBOs engage with the SDGs as a secular script in their interface with donors and INGOs (interface 1), but also as a potentially sacred script in their interface with other faith actors, including local faith actors (LFAs) in the Global South, where the SDG framework is being reformulated in a faith language (interface 2). The framing of the diagram as a movement between sacred and secular scripts, should not be taken to imply a dichotomous relationship between the two, but rather as a shifting scale within which secular or religious languages dominate and are publicly acceptable. Thus, interface 2, between FBOs and LFAs, does not only involve religious modes of communication but is a field of social action where actors can more freely use faith language alongside other types of communication, to achieve shared aims. There are examples of the global aid business directly interacting with local faith actors, and therefore it would be misleading to suggest that these relationships are only facilitated by the mediation of FBOs. However, there is evidence that FBOs have a distinct advantage in their engagement with local communities, which can include a faith dimension that is difficult for secular actors to realize. First, a shared faith perspective can create trust between different parties where there might otherwise be suspicious of the relevance of global frameworks at the local level. Even where parties might not share the same faith tradition, faith language in general can elevate FBOs' legitimacy. Second, the capacity to translate global frameworks into local religio-cultural languages, particularly in settings where a faith perspective provides a rationale to work towards social change as well as sometimes being an impediment to social change, improves the chances of the success of the SDGs.

From the perspective of the macro level of the global aid business, the interface with FBOs around the SDGs is dominated by a secular rationality, although as we have

seen this interface is sometimes erroneously depicted as post-secular, as faith actors are increasingly part of the picture. However, I argue that binary theories of the secular and the post-secular are unable to adequately capture this reality of shifting register within the religions-SDG domain and that an actor-oriented approach requires that we develop a new framework for interpreting this from the point of view of FBOs. Since a faith logic is part of their worldview - the depiction of this interface as either secular or post-secular makes little sense. Instead, as I have argued elsewhere, Bourdieu's theory of habitus, fields and capital offers a distinct advantage for understanding contemporary religious dynamics in the public sphere, in enabling us to view society as a whole, as neither religious nor secular, but as a social world of intersecting fields within which a religious or secular habitus may or may not dominate.[92] Through his observation of the social world, Bourdieu developed 'a unique individual set of conceptual terms to be employed in the course of analysis and discussion of findings […] which he called his "thinking tools"', in particular the concepts of habitus, field and capital.[93] These 'thinking tools' offer a way of viewing the social world as a series of intersecting fields where individuals are able to perform with varying degrees of 'success' – in terms of strategizing to achieve desired ends – according to their individually acquired habitus and the deployment of their varying forms of 'capital' (symbolic and economic, social and cultural).[94] I argue that this theoretical framework helps interpret the experience of FBOs in the SDG domain. As depicted in figure 2, FBOs move between the interfaces or 'fields' of secular global development policy and practice and that of local faith actors – where they use religious modes of communication, which is one of the factors that marginalizes those local faith actors from direct participation in global development discourses and practices. Moreover, those local faith actors have not acquired the 'capital' of the secular development language. Thus, local faith actors find that their habitus - learnt set of dispositions - and capital combination make it difficult for them to participate in global development discourses. However, compared to local faith actors, the habitus and capital combination of FBOs enables them to more successfully engage in the field of secular global development and to play a role as development brokers and translators.

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[92] E. Tomalin, 'Religions, poverty reduction'

[93] Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu,* p. 1; Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice.*

[94] P. Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in J. Richardson (ed) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), pp. 241–5; Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu*; Long, *Development sociology.*

Conclusion

The process of professionalization that many FBOs engage in as they become larger and better known, which includes the downplaying of the faith dimension in some public interactions, can even result in it not being widely known that some are indeed 'faith based', if it is not obvious from their name. As one of my interviewees at the UN in New York told me, a senior colleague had informed her that 'I didn't realise that World Vision was a religious organization', to which she replied 'Hello? We've been working with them for years!'[95] My main aim in this paper has been to make the case for an actor-oriented approach to understanding the faith actors' experience of the 'turn to religion' by global aid actors over the past couple of decades. Commentators imply that the 'turn to religion' is evidence of the emergence of post-secular partnerships or that faith actors are being instrumentalized to serve neo-liberal development goals. Haynes, for instance, combines both in his analysis, calling today's international environment 'post-secular'[96] but at the same time asking:

> To what extent are FBOs willing to 'sign up' to the UN's official 'liberal' and 'secular' values, in order to gain entry into debates and discussions at the UN? The point is that FBOs must accord with the UN's secular, liberal and irreligious values, and this is obviously a problem for entities whose very raison d'être has its foundation in religious values.[97]

Using an actor-oriented approach, I have argued that neither perspective captures the whole story and advocate that the study of religion, development and humanitarianism needs to think about how faith actors themselves encounter and shape development discourses and frameworks, translate them into relevant formats and strategically employ them. An examination of the engagement of FBOs with the consultation, negotiation and implementation of the SDG framework, confirms the findings of other studies that they shift register from secular to faith language depending on the nature of the particular interface or field. These social and conceptual spaces where different groups intersect have been recognized by anthropologists of development as sites of 'common interest' as well as

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[95] Interview 1
[96] Haynes, 'What do Faith-based Organisations Seek'
[97] Haynes, 'Faith-based Organisations at the United Nations', p. 6

having the 'propensity to generate conflict due to contradictory interests and objectives or unequal power relations.'[98] However, I also want to draw attention to the ways that these interfaces or fields are also locations where development agents come into being, propelled to take on certain forms and roles according to their experiences within these encounters. This includes the cadre of IFBOs that have emerged since the late 1990s/early 2000s, that have been the main focus of this paper, and who have learnt to negotiate their role as faith actors in a secular space and to shift register when communicating with different audiences. However, there are other relevant agents within the religion-development-humanitarian domain who experience and are shaped by the 'turn to religion' in different ways. Further ethnographic research is needed to provide secular global development and humanitarian actors with 'reflective insights'[99] into how their policy interventions are interpreted and incorporated by faith actors in the Global South, including national and local faith-based organizations and faith actors (see figure 1). We also need to better understand how and why non-religious actors engage with faith actors and the impact that FBOs and religious discourses have on the agendas of secular development actors. Such evidence could add support to the argument that there is a complex or incomplete secular habitus.

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[98] Long, *Development sociology,* p. 69
[99] Lewis and Mosse, *Development brokers and translators*, p. 1