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COP30's mutirão is an opportunity to bring faith and climate policy closer together

Kristian Noll, Partnerships and Impact Coordinator at the LSE Religion & Global Society Research Unit, examines COP30 as a key opportunity to bring faith communities and climate policymakers together.



This year's UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate conference, COP30, takes place at a critical juncture in international climate governance.

The conference in Belem, Brazil, marks the ten-year anniversary of the Paris Agreement, under which countries pledged to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. It also takes place against the backdrop of a **rapidly worsening** climate crisis, in the wake of a landmark legal decision by the **International Court of Justice** on the matter of the climate crisis, and a shifting **and unstable global geopolitical landscape**.

The COP30 presidency, led by Ambassador André Aranha Corrêa do Lago, seems to recognise that present circumstances call for a different approach to environmental policymaking, one in which the 'whole of society' is involved. Accordingly, Corrêa do Lago has introduced in a series of **letters** the concept of a "*Global Mutirão*" in the lead-up to COP30. Based on a term from the Tupi-Guarani language meaning 'collective efforts,' this year's climate proceedings will, in the words of the president, "mobilise civil society organizations worldwide to integrate local actions with global climate goals."

This initiative should be welcomed, not least because it permits a reconsideration of how effective the existing paradigms of thought defining global climate governance are. As the *mutirão* progresses, political theory will encounter alternative sources of knowledge and imaginative frameworks for making sense of the climate crisis. If done properly, these encounters could inform new responses to the climate crisis and provide opportunities to communicate with constituencies previously excluded from conversations about the future of our planet, both critical aspects of environmental governance.

At the LSE RGS unit, we have been working for over five years to understand how faith communities and religious stories can contribute (and are contributing) to international climate policy development. The COP30 *mutirão* represents an excellent opportunity to reflect on the impact of these interventions and the potential for faith-inspired climate advocacy going forward, but sustaining this approach will require the explicit and continued inclusion of faith. Here are three reasons why.

First, religious narratives offer an imaginative framework for making sense of and responding to the climate crisis. Relevant on both an individual and collective level, faith narratives and traditions bring longstanding abstract concepts – for instance, stewardship, morality, values, and justice – into contact with present realities, thereby encouraging personal responsibility and a resilient hope in a way political visions are unable to do. This hope and conviction can, in turn, inspire innovation and collaboration and, in the **words** of Corrêa do Lago, "transcend outdated mindsets whilst preserving shared values and innovating towards a new planetary renaissance."

Second, faith can unite people across sectors, backgrounds, life experiences, generations, and perhaps even political persuasions. Ensuring the continuity of the 'whole of society' approach to climate response necessitates not only a common vision but also a common motivation. Our research again indicates that faith leaders and communities are uniquely positioned to reach across significant divides to draw representatives from different backgrounds into a framework of common understanding. Of course, divisions exist within and between communities, particularly in regard **to political responses** to the crisis. These differences should not be discounted, but neither should they be overemphasised. Given that over **80%** of the global population claims to be religious and that a **majority** of even conservative Christians who oppose climate action believe in caring for

earth, perhaps tapping into faith narratives rather than political language will prove more unifying than economic, political, or even scientific narratives have.

Third, faith communities have already been taking action to address the climate crisis, both on the global and on the local levels. Globally, evidence of a largely responsive constituency abounds.

Faith communities are **restoring** natural landscapes and making places of worship more sustainable, and shaping international environmental policy through active **participation** in international environmental summits, and also reinvesting their **substantial capital** into more sustainable portfolios. As of 2025, over **35%** of global fossil fuel divestments are from faith-based organisations.

While it may be tempting to consider these as commendable actions implicit in living a 'religious' life, the comprehensive and practical nature of faith-based climate action makes it much more than charity. Indeed, I argue it embodies what Corrêa do Lago **sees as the 'spirit' of *mutirão***: "joining hands and taking responsibility for positive change, rather than just advocacy, demand, and expectation." Insofar as faith leaders and communities have experienced *living* out this action while advocating for it, perhaps they can provide an example for the international climate community.

Building international consensus and convening a broad set of stakeholders is critical to addressing a global issue like the climate crisis. The COP30 presidency should therefore be commended for adopting of *mutirão* guiding framework for this year's conference. However, the success of this governance approach rests on its longevity and the extent to which a 'whole of society' approach remains a priority for climate governance going forward.

In past years, faith communities **have** been recognised as important players in climate governance due to their moral influence, management of material assets, and community influence. These contributions remain relevant this year as well. However, insofar as *mutirão* represents a re-orientation of the approach to environmental governance at the international level, COP30 presents faith communities with an unprecedented invitation to speak into the heart of climate policy. This opportunity cannot be missed.

Photo by Roberto Huczek.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, not the position of LSE Religion and Global Society nor the London School of Economics and Political Science.

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About the author

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