Introduction

No historical analysis of post-1945 NGOs would be complete without a discussion of NGOs active in the field of international development and humanitarianism. Although this chapter refers to international development and humanitarian NGOs as ‘humanitarian, aid and development organisations’ (HADOs), it does not dispute their status as NGOs. Indeed, they are probably the single category of organisations least problematically assigned the label of NGO – they are deliberate socio-political actors (even if historically constrained by charity law), they are non-violent, and, although the largest and most respected HADOs may accept some funding from state departments, they are not wholly dependent on it. Their status as NGOs is often taken for granted to the extent that much scholarly work on NGOs has focussed almost exclusively on HADOs.

Yet, as I illustrate in this chapter, they are not just NGOs; they have increasingly become part of the global justice movement – a network of individuals and organisations that engages in collective action to address injustices resulting from the neo-liberal agenda. This chapter demonstrates how HADOs have become part of the global justice movement, an observation manifest by their campaigning against perceived negative effects of neo-liberalism, and increasing use of overtly political coalitional forms. Strangely enough, they have not lost their voice, influence or reputation by engaging in public protest, but rather, they have used the strategy of public protest alongside their more conventional repertoires to increase their organisational influence, broadening and deepening their critiques and mobilisation strategies simultaneously.
Despite this, leaders and analysts of HADOs have generally regarded them to be engaged in ‘advocacy’\(^4\) rather than to be a part of a social or political movement. This is because they are mostly bureaucratised formal organisations, and were historically tactically moderate – engaging mostly in the three pronged approach of fundraising, public awareness and humanitarian relief. In the past they were involved in overt political campaigning only to a limited extent\(^5\) because of the constraints of charity law, their willingness to accept government funding, their tendency to be distracted by emergency appeals, and because the complex issues they raise are difficult to relay to a public audience.\(^6\) In the course of the last decade or so, however, HADOs have increasingly supplemented these tactics with overt political campaigning which is considerably more visible in the relatively recent HADO coalitional networks of Jubilee 2000, the Trade Justice Movement (TJM) and Make Poverty History (MPH) than it was in earlier HADO ‘campaigns’.

Although it contradicts the conventional wisdom of political sociology – that social movements begin radical and become institutionalised\(^7\) – this ‘back-to-front’ trajectory is not unique to the HADO sector. Mold (this volume), for example, shows how the voluntary drugs sector evolved from church philanthropists with high powers of social persuasion, to defining drug abuse as a social and political problem, and culminating in the emergence of new overtly political campaign networks. Similarly, Rootes (this volume) discusses how the environmental movement grew from the conservation efforts of social elites, whose networks endowed them with political influence, into a broad-based movement. This trajectory should not be viewed as regression from status and influence; but instead as a means of increasing public support that can, in turn, actually enhance influence, if not status. It also demonstrates to us there is no clear-cut distinction between the terms NGO and social movement organisation (SMO): organisations with voice and influence that are networked and which make use of public protest can be both NGOs and SMOs simultaneously, even though the two terms are not completely synonymous.\(^8\)

The development of British humanitarian, aid and development organisations

Despite having differing styles and issues, British HADOs, tend to have followed similar trajectories that can be best explained as general phases of development. I shall identify five main phases in the development of British HADOs, each of which is significantly more politicised than its