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## The development of the global justice movement in Britain<sup>1</sup>

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Social movements are complex social constructions whose very existence as discriminable phenomena is frequently contested and sometimes unrecognised by the actors who participate in them. Indeed, the social scientist may, with the advantage of distance, theoretical perspective and conceptual apparatus, detect the existence of a social movement when all the actors can see is a confusion of organisations, campaigns and conflicts.

So it is with the global justice movement (GJM) in Britain. We employ that term to identify the loose network of organisations and other actors that are, on the basis of shared concerns, engaged in collective action designed to promote social, economic, political and environmental justice among and between peoples across the globe. The actors involved vary considerably in the degree of formality of their organisation, ranging from political parties and campaign coalitions orchestrated by long-established NGOs to self-consciously ‘disorganised’ anarchists and unaffiliated individuals. The forms of their action range from the lobbying of governments, through highly organised public campaigns, to instances of direct action designed directly to disrupt the activities of the powerful. By no means all the activists we identify as part of the GJM would so identify themselves. Indeed, there is still some reticence among activists to acknowledge the term.<sup>2</sup> But, as we shall demonstrate, there is sufficient evidence of networking, shared concern and collective action oriented toward a common purpose to make it meaningful to speak of the existence of a GJM in Britain.

The intensity of networking among the constituents of the GJM varies both among organisations and over time, but although considerable differences exist over strategy and tactics, they have not

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<sup>1</sup> A French-language version of this text will appear as ‘Le développement du mouvement pour une justice globale en Grande-Bretagne’ in Isabelle Sommier, Olivier Fillieule, Eric Agrikoliansky (eds.), *La généalogie des mouvements anti-globalisation en Europe. Une perspective comparée*. Paris: Karthala (2007). We are grateful to Olivier Fillieule for his translation and for comments on the original. It is principally based upon research we have undertaken in the course of DEMOS, a project funded by the European Commission Directorate General for Research, 6th Framework Programme contract no. CIT2-CT2004-506026.

<sup>2</sup> For example, when asked ‘does your group consider itself to be part of the global justice movement?’, ‘Matthew Coleman’ (pseudonym), who was active in London Reclaim the Streets and more recently in the radical environmental group Rising Tide responded: ‘what is it? I’m not sure I’ve ever heard of that term before’ (interview with Clare Saunders, 8 May 2006).

been so great as to preclude common collective action. The pinnacle of such action to date was the mobilisation targeted at the G8 summit meeting at Gleneagles in Scotland in July 2005. This was the culmination of months of effort stimulated by the belief that, with the UK hosting the G8 summit (at which poverty in Africa was a key theme) and holding the EU Presidency, 2005 provided an unprecedented opportunity to address trade, aid and debt issues. On the Saturday preceding the Gleneagles meeting, under the 'Make Poverty History' (MPH) banner, an estimated 225,000 people marched through the streets of Edinburgh in the largest demonstration the Scottish capital had ever seen. The participants, in a wholly peaceful demonstration that appeared to be more a procession of witness than a protest, came from all parts of the British Isles, more than half of them from beyond Scotland. During the following week, as the G8 leaders assembled and deliberated, numerous protests were staged in Edinburgh, in the immediate vicinity of the conference site, and at other locations in southern Scotland. These latter protests, which in aggregate attracted perhaps 5,000 participants, were coordinated by the recently formed Dissent! network and by other autonomous activists who, in contrast to the organisers of the MPH march, declined to negotiate routes and protocols with the police. The resulting uncertainty provoked the biggest policing operation in Scottish history as police, drawn from forces from all parts of the UK and often in full riot gear, massed to protect property and confront protesters. Yet, despite some skirmishes and instances of property damage, these protests too were almost entirely non-violent.

Because the G8 meeting was the focus for mobilization of all strands of the GJM in Britain, it provided a unique opportunity to assess the relative strengths of its various components. In the event, there was a massive disparity between the size of the MPH mobilisation and the modest number of participants in the various direct action protests during the following week. The tactically moderate supporters of MPH, a campaign coalition of an extraordinarily diverse range of humanitarian, aid, trade, development and environmental organisations, churches, trade unions and political parties, appeared by mid-2005 overwhelmingly to outnumber the supporters and practitioners of more confrontational forms of collective action.

In the course of our research, we interviewed a randomly selected 493 participants in the MPH march. Slightly more than half claimed membership of one or more campaigning organizations, associations or NGOs and, when asked with which of these they most closely identified, 255 respondents named a total of 92 different organizations. The organization most often named – Amnesty International – accounted for just 9 percent, followed by Christian Aid (8 percent), Oxfam (5 percent), CAFOD (5 percent), and the World Development Movement (WDM) (4 percent). Environmental groups together accounted for 11 percent, and socialist groups and left

parties for 9 percent. Both were far outnumbered by those who identified with aid, trade and development organisations (33 percent). Churches or religious groups claimed the primary allegiance of 9 percent (23 percent if faith-affiliated aid organisations are included). Peace and anti-war groups accounted for another 11 percent, but trade unions and anti-racist or ethnic solidarity groups for only 5 percent and 2 percent respectively.

In addition to interviewing marchers, we distributed 2,000 self-completion questionnaires. Analysis of the 564 responses enables us to explore the networks represented in the MPH march.<sup>3</sup> With so many organizations involved and inter-linked in such various ways, representing inter-organizational networks is no simple task, but inter-sectoral linkages are revealing (Saunders 2005b). Unsurprisingly, the sector with which most marchers claimed an organizational affiliation or close identity was aid/trade, and of the 255 respondents who claimed membership or close identification with an aid/trade organization, many were also members of at least one organization from each of the human rights (102), religious (99), environment (84), and peace (22) sectors. The core of the movement thus appears to consist of trade/aid, religion, human rights and environmental organisations. Peace, workers' rights / trade unions, anti-racism, socialist, women's rights, and pro-democracy sectors are connected to core organizations via multiple memberships, but counted many fewer marchers as members / close identifiers. Anti-capitalist organizations were barely mentioned (Rootes and Saunders 2007).

As the results of our survey of MPH suggest, the GJM in Britain is constituted by the confluence of several streams of mobilisation, each of which has a quite distinct history. The most important, in terms of the numbers both of organisations and their supporters and of its longevity, consists of humanitarian, aid, trade and development organisations, many of them associated with the churches. Another embraces leading environmental movement organisations, Friends of the Earth (FoE) foremost among them, which have in recent years become increasingly concerned with issues of social justice as a necessary condition of environmental sustainability and which have, as a consequence, increasingly engaged in common campaigns with humanitarian, aid, trade and development organisations. Also important, but more because of their recent history of staging attention-grabbing events and their confrontational repertoire than for their numbers, are the loosely networked activists and informal organisations variously described as the anti-capitalist or 'direct action' movement. Other streams consist of the peace movement, trade unions, and a variety of left-wing parties and groups of which the most prominent is the Socialist Workers Party

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<sup>3</sup> The predominance of supporters of aid, trade and development organisations and religious groups was even more marked among the respondents to our survey (as distinct from those we interviewed face-to-face), particularly among those marchers who travelled from outside Scotland.

(SWP). Because each of these streams developed separately before the advent of the GJM, it would be misleading to construct a single chronology embracing them all. For that reason, we shall briefly outline the development of each.

### **Humanitarian, Aid and Development Organisations**

Humanitarian, aid and development organisations (HADOs) have a long history in Britain, but this highly developed and organisationally diverse NGO sector has tended to be regarded – and to regard itself – as a ‘lobby’ rather than a ‘movement’. That, however, has changed as the sector has, since the early 1990s, begun more frequently to organise high profile large-scale campaigns.

Humanitarian aid NGOs began to develop in Britain at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Friends War Victims Relief Committee and the British Red Cross. However, it was not until after World War I that more politically contentious HADOs, such as Save the Children, emerged, followed, after World War II, by others such as Oxfam and War on Want. All three organisations made links between war and poverty, and began with relief for refugees and victims of war. From the 1950s, British HADOs combined their relief work with longer-term development projects designed to tackle the root causes of poverty and encourage self-sufficiency, but it was in the 1960s that their public profile increased substantially and they began to make overtly political demands.

Alongside development work that supported projects intended to enhance poor peoples’ self-sufficiency, the 1960s heralded the first large-scale public awareness campaigns on the plight of those suffering from poverty and famine. The most significant, the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, defined itself as ‘a crusade’ (Freedom from Hunger 1964). A coalition of 76 organisations, mostly HADOs, but also including the Labour Party, the National Farmers’ Union, Quakers and womens’ organisations, Freedom from Hunger’s most active members were Christian Aid, Oxfam, Save the Children, War on Want, the Friends Service Council, the UK Committee for UNICEF and the UN Association. With the slogan, ‘Helping the Hungry to Help Themselves’, public awareness / education and fundraising was the remit of the 1,000 local Freedom From Hunger committees, whilst an expert group sought to assess requests for overseas help, develop a project list, and produce educational material for schools. In less than two years, Freedom from Hunger raised over GBP 7 million by organising thousands of fetes, ‘bring and buy’ shops, sponsored walks, door-to-door collections and imaginative stunts. By 1964, work had begun on

247 projects in 61 countries, providing water, seeds and tools to rural areas, veterinary training and food co-operatives (Freedom From Hunger, 1964).

Although Freedom from Hunger significantly raised the profile of humanitarian, aid and development issues, it was mostly focused upon fundraising and practical projects, and as such did not involve overt political campaigning. It also differed from later aid and development coalitions in that it attracted a narrower range of organisational affiliates. Environmental organisations were notably absent, largely because it predated the ‘new’ campaigning environmental organisations – FoE and Greenpeace – and the sustainable development agenda that strongly links environmental and development issues. However, by the mid-1960s, many HADOs were beginning to take a political stance. One causal factor was the establishment of the Disasters Emergency Committee, which co-ordinated fundraising appeals for disasters, and left HADOs with more time to consider political issues. As early as 1965, Oxfam was expressing concern about patterns of world trade, and Christian Aid and War on Want were demanding that at least one percent of GNP be spent on overseas aid.

It was, however, only in the 1970s that overt political campaigning really took off. War on Want began its successful campaign model of vigorous research, lively presentation of results and aggressive lobbying. It exposed the unethical practices of several multinational companies, raised awareness of the implications of aggressive marketing of baby milk products in poor countries, and highlighted the social and ethical problems with the arms trade. The most significant and enduring political venture of the decade was the World Development Movement (WDM), which began to develop in the summer of 1969 when HADOs, including Oxfam, Christian Aid, and War on Want, teamed up with the Overseas Development Institute, the Catholic Institute for International Development and the Voluntary Committee on Overseas Aid and Development to launch a new campaign coalition, Action for World Development. It was intended that the coalition would work to achieve objectives set out in a *Manifesto for Aid and Development*, which demanded an increase in national aid budgets and political action on aid and trade.<sup>4</sup> In part, it was motivated by local ‘World Poverty Action’ groups, of which there were over 100 by 1972, which wanted a national office to support and co-ordinate their efforts (WDM 1997).

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<sup>4</sup> WDM continues to believe that ‘the fundamental causes of world poverty cannot be overcome without changes to the policies and practices of governments and business interests in wealthy industrialised countries like Britain. So, free from charity law, WDM undertakes campaigns that change the policies of governments and companies which keep the poor marginalised’ ([www.realworld.org.uk/wdm.html](http://www.realworld.org.uk/wdm.html) accessed 23.09.2005).

The *Manifesto* stated the need to take political action on the causes of poverty, but the Charity Commission was quick to point out that Action for World Development infringed charity laws. In its annual report, the Charity Commission stated categorically that if charities engaged in political activity, ‘their action will be in breach of trust’ and that ‘those responsible could be called upon to recoup to the charity any of its funds which have been spent outside of its purposes’ (Black 1992:154). In response, the founder members rapidly agreed that a separate organisation should be established to carry out the political work that they deemed so important (Macdonald 1972). Thus, although the World Development ‘Movement’ was born, the constraints of the Charity Commission prevented other organisations from working openly in partnership with it, thus precluding its development as a fully-fledged movement. Even though not a network of organisations and so not a ‘movement’ in the social scientific sense, WDM was sometimes able to act as a co-ordinating body for other HADOs. One such co-ordination resulted in the 1983 General Election *Guide to Where the Parties Stand* and an accompanying questionnaire to be addressed to candidates, which were widely used by local campaigners associated with a variety of HADOs.

During the 1980s, the Charity Commission appeared to have ‘an incipient desire to contain’ charities (Black 1992:269), and this pulled War on Want into the affray. War on Want resolved its disputes with the Charity Commission by selling its overtly political print unit to its workers who ran it as a workers’ cooperative, and by establishing War on Want Campaigns Ltd, a limited company funded by donations but without charitable status (Luetchford and Burns 2001). Oxfam seemed unperturbed by the Charity Commission’s warnings, and although it was unwilling to join War on Want’s campaign for a relaxation of charity law,<sup>5</sup> it continued, into the 1980s, to involve itself in campaign coalitions, namely the Campaign for Real Aid, and the Disarm for Development coalition.

The Campaign for Real Aid was launched in January 1982 by the Independent Group on British Aid, whose most prominent members were Oxfam, WDM, Christian Aid and the Overseas Development Institute. It sought to shift the emphasis of aid campaigns from quantity to quality, and in the process to expose its finding that ‘British aid is becoming heavily weighted towards helping British firms win ... contracts in poor countries’, and to demand that British aid be based on need rather than the economic interests of Britain’s former colonies (Clark 1982:4). It attempted to mobilise the public, encouraging them to write to MPs and local newspapers, form local Real Aid campaign groups, stage demonstrations and give talks at local group or society

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<sup>5</sup> Like WDM, War on Want always firmly believed that poverty and politics were inseparable.

meetings. However, it appears that the Campaign was unable to secure as much public sympathy and support as had the Freedom From Hunger coalition, for it was not autonomous Campaign for Real Aid groups but local supporters and groups of pre-existing HADOs that spearheaded most of its work (Clark 1983).

The Disarm Development Coalition, also launched in 1982, included Oxfam, War on Want, Volunteers Action, WDM, and the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, and produced a report challenging the West's selling arms to poor countries and contrasting low aid budgets with the considerably greater arms budgets. However, unlike the Campaign for Real Aid, the coalition failed to develop further because it was silenced by the Charity Commission.

Thus, by the early 1980s, links were being made between the issues of aid / trade and peace and war. Links were also beginning to develop with other social movement sectors. Oxfam in particular, through its work with Amazonian rubber-tappers, noticed that poverty was often directly related to environmental degradation, and began to make conceptual links with the concerns of the environmental movement. Oxfam was also linking issues of debt and agriculture into its ever-broadening agenda. War on Want also began broadening out in the 1980s, by developing linkages with the peace movement and trade unionists, establishing a Trade Union Committee, and controversially providing a grant to a community suffering the economic effects of strike action.

The 1980s also brought the first ever large-scale mobilisation on aid and development issues. In 1982, WDM organised a 10,000-strong mass lobby of parliament, followed by an extensive letter-writing campaign seeking to influence the Prime Minister in the run-up to the first summit of world leaders on development at Cancún, Mexico. Using the report of the Independent Group on British Aid, WDM pushed the aid agenda by writing concise briefings and asking local campaigners to write to MPs expressing concern over the inadequate quantity and quality of British official aid.

By the mid 1980s, British aid organizations were more extensively campaigning against rules of the emergent international economic order that they believed were disadvantageous to the world's poor. 1989 saw the first national campaign on debt, coordinated by War on Want, Third World First and FoE. At the start of the 1990s, even the religious-inspired and previously non-radical Christian Aid began overtly to challenge the World Bank and IMF, and to pressure major banks to cancel the debts of poor countries. Christian Aid, Oxfam, Action Aid, the Catholic Institute for



International Relations and WDM were all active in the international campaign against the 1986-94 Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations (Wilkinson 1996:254), but more direct antecedents of the GJM in Britain were the campaigns against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and the Jubilee 2000 coalition (Raghu and Skanthakumar 2001:16).

The MAI aimed to create uniform rules on market access and legal security, remove barriers to investment flows, and give corporations the right to sue states that ‘unreasonably’ limited investments or capital flows. In 1997, British NGOs became concerned that MAI would give disproportionate power to transnational corporations (Bray 1998) and that protection of local markets, health and environments would not be considered sufficient reasons to restrict trade (Farnsworth 2004:60). This brought together a broad alliance of religious, environmental, trade union and aid organisations, including WDM, Oxfam, WWF, Northeast England Greens, FoE, Corporate Watch, UNISON (the major public sector trade union) and Christian Aid. This campaign, which anticipated the range of interests that have become characteristic of the GJM, was the springboard from which wider and deeper critiques of the global economy were launched. Tactics included conventional lobbying, extensive letter writing, through to direct action. As part of a growing transnational network of NGOs, the organizations involved moved on to critique the WTO and GATS.

Jubilee 2000, the iconic global solidarity mobilisation of the last years of the century, grew out of the British Debt Crisis Network. Led by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), Christian Aid and WDM, members of the Network lobbied to secure improvements in World Bank and IMF debt policies through Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiatives (1996). However, resistance by creditors made these difficult to implement. This lack of progress persuaded NGOs that the issues needed a higher public profile. In 1996, the Trade Crisis Network was formed, with tentative support from CAFOD and Tearfund, aid organizations linked to the Catholic and evangelical churches respectively. In 1997, a formal campaign coalition was launched, its more than 70 supporting organisations including trade unions, international aid and women’s organisations, and the Green Party (Peters 2000).

The initial priority of Jubilee 2000 was to ensure that unpayable debts were written off by 31 December 1999 and that all other debts were reduced to levels consistent with sustainable human, environmental, and economic development (Pettifor 1998, 2001). This was no simple reformist agenda. Jubilee’s critique of the G8, IMF and World Bank assimilated the anti-debt movement to a

broader, if still emergent, movement critical of international financial institutions, the agenda of neo-liberalism and the lack of democracy within international financial institutions.

It was, until very recently, more accurate to refer to aid and development NGOs collectively as a “lobby,” rather than a “movement” (Edwards 1999:167). The charitable status of most of these organisations, maintained principally in order that they and their supporters might benefit from tax concessions, constrained them to advance their most politically contentious campaigns via proxies such as WDM. However, during the 1990s, aid and development NGOs became increasingly vocal critics of neo-liberal agenda, and in 1995, in response to lobbying by War on Want, the Charity Commission relaxed its grip. Whereas in the 1970s, the Charity Commission sent a clear message that charities should stick to “bandaging the wounds of society rather than try to prevent them from being inflicted in the first place”, it conceded in its 1995 report that charities could advocate or oppose changes in law and policy if this helped them to achieve their charitable objectives. Had this change not been made, the global justice movement as we know it today may not have materialized (Luetchford and Burns 2001:108-9).

In retrospect, it is possible to see that even before these changes, HADOs constituted a movement, albeit one whose forms of expression were limited by external constraints. The ‘lobby’ has become more obviously a movement as aid, trade and development organisations have increasingly adopted strategies and tactics commonly associated with social movements, alongside their lobbying activities, as part of an expansion of their action repertoire. This can, in part, be viewed as a response to the emergence in Britain of a more participatory form of society in which increasingly large numbers of people have participated in protest or have come to accept it. The actual level of social movement mobilization varies from issue to issue, but in survey after survey the British have professed a continually rising approval of non-violent forms of protest and an increasing willingness actually to participate in protest.<sup>6</sup> As the massive marches organised by the Countryside Alliance<sup>7</sup> in 2002 and 2004, and the anti-war demonstrations of 2003 confirm, it is

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<sup>6</sup> The proportion saying they would go on a demonstration in response to an unjust law rose from 8 per cent in 1983 to 17 per cent in 1994 and 20.5 per cent in 1998 (Jowell *et al.* 1999: 320). Indeed, in 1994, 8.9 per cent said they had gone on a demonstration in such circumstances (Curtice and Jowell 1995: 154), and by 2000 this had risen to 10 per cent (Bromley, Curtice and Seyd 2001: 202). In response to a differently worded question in 1996, 31 per cent said they ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’ would go on a protest march or demonstration, and 5.5 per cent said they had actually done so in the previous five years (Jowell *et al.* 1997: 320).

<sup>7</sup> The character of the Countryside Alliance is disputed, but as well as drawing attention to a plethora of rural grievances ill-understood in urban Britain, its principal mobilising issue was the proposed ban on hunting with dogs which finally became law in England in 2005.

not only in responses to surveys that the British testify to their willingness to take action to protest what they perceive to be injustices.

It is against this background that aid, trade and development organisations have become disinhibited about adopting increasingly political conceptions of their roles and in which they have been willing to associate themselves with the GJM.<sup>8</sup> The inevitably political nature of the concerns of aid charities is now more widely accepted, especially by a centrist Labour government that, despite the abandonment of left-wing shibboleths, still accepts the desirability of economic redistribution and the eradication of poverty. The increasingly unabashed politicism of humanitarian, aid, and development organisations is thus the product of both an endogenous development of their understanding of the issues, and the exogenous pressure of events on the one hand and relaxation of constraints on the other. A similar process of transformation has taken place in the environmental movement (Rootes 2005, 2006).

### **The environmental movement**

The environmental movement has contributed to the development of the GJM in Britain both directly, through the increasing involvement of environmental movement organisations in campaign coalitions on global justice issues, and indirectly, through the exemplary value that its successes during the 1980s and 1990s had upon more tactically conservative aid and development organisations.

British environmental organisations became more aware of the significance of social justice issues as a consequence of their growing understanding of the social, economic and political obstacles to the realisation of their goals of environmental protection, particularly in the less economically developed countries in which vulnerable habitats were concentrated. Thus in 1987, FoE and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), in the course of a long-running struggle to protect rainforests, embarked upon a joint campaign with Survival International and Oxfam to scrutinise

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<sup>8</sup> The most all-embracing of recent campaign coalitions, Make Poverty History (MPH) ([www.makepovertyhistory.org.uk](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org.uk)), which campaigned for trade justice, cancellation of the debts of poor countries, and more and better aid, at its peak in 2005 embraced more than 500 groups and organisations including the Jubilee Debt Campaign, the Trade Justice Movement (TJM – itself a campaign coalition), and many humanitarian and aid charities, campaigns, trade unions, faith groups, student unions and local groups, and enjoyed prominent celebrity endorsements. MPH, like TJM, was a “virtual” organisation that scarcely existed beyond its website and the campaign events it organised.

policies of the World Bank and British development agencies and to forge links with local groups representing the interests of the indigenous peoples of rainforest areas (Lamb 1996: 134).

As their understanding of the requirements of effective action on environmental issues has become increasingly sophisticated, and as the power of national governments has been eroded by transnational organisations and multi-national corporations, so British environmental organisations have come to see themselves as part of a global movement dealing with global issues that extend beyond the strictly and narrowly environmental. Especially since the early 1990s, the coordination of British environmental organisations in transnational networks has increased (Rootes 2004, 2005). WWF played an important role in the preparatory conferences for the 1992 Earth Summit and, as a direct result of the UNCED process, widened its ambit to work with other NGOs to form a common agenda on development and environment. In 1993 WWF and FoE joined five leading aid NGOs to produce a report demanding fundamental changes in foreign and domestic aid policy (Rawcliffe 1998: 217).

Although the agenda and strategic alliances of several leading environmental organisations have been transformed as their appreciation of social justice issues has grown, the changes have been especially marked in WWF and, even more so, in FoE (Rootes 2006). From the mid-1980s, FoE broadened its portfolio to include mainstream political issues such as economy and health, and became increasingly involved in campaigns to promote human rights and economic development in the global South. This was in line with the views of its members who, FoE's research suggested, were often members or supporters of organisations such as Amnesty International or Oxfam, but not necessarily of other environmental groups. Past successes on environmental issues emboldened FoE to expand its agenda, and as its considerable interaction with other groups increasingly extended beyond the environmental movement to include aid and development charities, organised labor, and 'the socially progressive sector', so these linkages helped to set FoE's international agenda (Rootes 2006). In 2003, FoE adopted a five-year action plan whose strategic aims are to integrate well-established work on sustainability and bio-diversity with a concern for environmental justice at home and abroad (Saunders 2005a:122-3).

Although, unlike some aid NGOs, FoE saw the value of anti-globalisation protests that helped to open public debate on otherwise neglected issues, it was careful to avoid involvement in disruptive confrontations at international summits. FoE has, however, since 1997 campaigned, alongside aid and development charities, against the MAI and GATS, it has long been a critic of the WTO, and it participated fully in the Make Poverty History coalition in 2005.

Because its issue range is so broad and its reach more nearly global, the impact of corporate-dominated globalisation is most apparent to FoE. Whereas the broadening of WWF's agenda has principally been dictated by its own analysis of the necessary conditions of environmental sustainability, FoE appears to have changed as a consequence of its external associations as much as because of the imperatives of its programmatic concerns. FoE is at once a national organisation committed to meeting the concerns of over 200 local groups, at the centre of the network that is the British environmental movement, and an active member of a transnational network that strives to make common cause between environmental activists in the North and the global South. As such, FoE undertakes many of its campaigns in partnership with others.

FoE considers its international network a key strength that distinguishes it from other environmental organisations. Because FoE International is a federation of autonomous national organisations, it encourages the expression of a diversity of national and regional views from which other partners might learn. This has exposed FoE to the concerns and perspectives of its partners in the global South to a greater degree than is true of members and supporters of more hierarchically structured transnational organisations. Moreover, its local and regional groups within Britain encourage pluralism and provide conduits for the input of new perspectives and concerns. Even in larger cities, local activist milieux are often multi-issue, with close ties between activists campaigning on a variety of humanitarian, development, social justice and environmental issues. This, in many cases, has produced thematically pluralistic activist communities whose common commitment is to activism or to a meta-critique of capitalism rather than to a single-issue domain (Doherty 2004, Rootes and Saunders 2005). FoE's involvement in such local networks allows perspectives and knowledge acquired by activists there to percolate upward to the national organisation. Thus FoE is peculiarly responsive to grassroots concerns, but also more receptive to the views and concerns of grassroots activists *outside* FoE and even beyond the environmental movement. Its openness as an organisation, nationally and internationally, and the centrality to its identity of its relationship with its grassroots members and international partners, mean that FoE quite readily makes common cause with other groups campaigning against inequalities and injustices globally. This helps to explain its prominence in the GJM (Rootes 2006).

As well as the direct contributions of environmental organisations to the alliances that have constituted the GJM, the environmental movement has contributed indirectly by example. The rise during the 1970s of campaigning environmental movement organisations such as FoE and, especially, Greenpeace had a considerable impact not only upon more well-established

conservation organisations but across the voluntary sector generally. Enterprising in their use of mass media to mobilise public opinion in order to put pressure on governments and corporations, and unabashed in their willingness to employ direct action in order symbolically to confront the powerful, the new campaigning environmental organisations attracted widespread public support and approval. Their success encouraged NGOs in other sectors to broaden their tactical repertoires. The subsequent rise, during the 1990s, of more confrontational direct action on environmental issues was further encouragement, particularly when it became clear that activists campaigning against the building of roads enjoyed considerable public support and favourable media coverage (Rootes 2003b). The apparent success of these campaigns helped to legitimate the unconventional tactics they employed. More institutionalised environmental organisations saw that the ‘radical flank effect’ created by the emergence of direct action groups such as Earth First! could increase their political leverage, and their experience was to be a bridge to wider alliances within the GJM as it later emerged.

### **Anti-capitalist and direct action organisations**

Perhaps the most significant antecedents of the modern anti-capitalist movement are the anarcho-punk and radical environmental movements. Indeed, some of the personnel are the same. Anarchists and punks proclaimed the virtues of squats and self-sufficiency as achievable utopian alternatives. However, British punks were most especially characterised by their disdain for authority. Their propaganda recommended sabotage such as jamming bank locks with superglue, but they achieved greatest visibility during the Stop the City (STC) spectacles of 1983-4, which were similar to, and important precursors of, the J18 protest of 1999. The four STC actions saw ‘thousands of anarchists, anti-militarists, peace punks, rebels and refuseniks lay siege to the City of London in a series of militant and angry demonstrations that demanded an end to war, profit, capitalism and oppression’ (<http://www.nosir.org.uk/index.html> accessed 10 December 2005).

Anarchists’ and direct activists’ opposition to international financial institutions was preceded by campaigns in the 1980s against privatisation of public services that escalated under GATT (the precursor to the WTO) (Plows 2004:98). Many activists, and most of the British media, believed that the J18 Global Day of Action protests of 1999 were without precedent in the history of the anti-capitalist movement. The STC demonstrations indicate, however, that neither the mobilisation of significant numbers of anarchists in riotous direct action nor the targeting of international financial institutions was novel. Both were part of an anarchist project years before the ‘Battle of Seattle’.

Punk's anarchistic rejection of authoritarian structures continues to permeate the direct action component of the British GJM. Indeed, some regard anarchism as 'the heart of the movement, its soul, the source of what's new and hopeful about it' (Graeber 2002:62). Although they may not be 'new', principles such as autonomy, disregard for authority, and bottom-up democracy have remained key to the radical wing of the movement.

The years between the STC and J18 protests saw the rise of a radical environmental movement that began using direct action to oppose road developments, but ended up directly addressing capitalism as the root cause of ecological problems (Welsh 2004:331). Reclaim the Streets (RTS) emerged out of the radical green movement when in 1992 London-based activists sought to demonstrate their disdain for car culture in solidarity with anti-roads protesters elsewhere. RTS initially hosted parties on the site of London's M11 roads protest, and painted cycle lanes on roads, but later adopted street parties as a form of protest against car culture *and* capitalism. Often this involved staging a car crash or erecting tripods to block roads, and reclaiming public space for parties that included free food, makeshift 'beaches' for children to play on, jugglers, fire spinners and sound systems. If RTS represented the drift of radical environmentalists to a more direct attack upon capitalism, the coalescence of anti-capitalist forces was stimulated by the policies of the Conservative government (1979-1997). Its attempt to introduce a poll tax provoked a massive and apparently successful campaign of civil disobedience, its uncompromising commitment to building new roads revitalised direct action within the environmental movement, and its Criminal Justice Bill (1994), by proposing to criminalise trespass and rave parties, created a pool of dissatisfied youth including new age travellers<sup>9</sup>, hunt saboteurs, squatters, environmental protesters and ravers (Rootes 2003a). It was in this context that RTS's tactic of street reclaiming attracted so many sympathisers. Its success in Britain inspired emulation across the world and it subsequently became a feature of many summit protests and counter-summit events.

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<sup>9</sup> 'New Age travellers are a hybrid phenomenon. ... Part alternative lifestyle, part youth subculture and part new social movement, their lifestyle and politics emerged out of the 1960s counterculture. ... [They] desire to live a nomadic way of life, principally in the rural areas of Britain or in towns that have a strong "alternative" scene'. Elements of the 1970s counterculture of free festivals, hedonism, squatting and communal living 'looked back into English history' to associate themselves with what they 'saw as a tradition of nomadism, freedom and revolt'. First attracting attention with the 1982 'peace convoy' from the Glastonbury festival to the Greenham Common peace camp, they have been represented as 'hippies' who have adopted 'a lifestyle modelled on the idea of the wandering gypsy'. Free festivals and the celebration of the summer solstice at Stonehenge became their chief gathering points, but the commercialisation of festivals and the prohibition of gatherings at Stonehenge has tended to disperse them. (Hetherington 2000:4-5).

A practical demonstration of the anti-capitalism of the new generation of protesters came in 1996 when RTS responded to pleas for support from striking Liverpool dockworkers. Their protracted strike (1991-1998) against casualisation of the workforce was unique in the networks it fostered with the direct action movement. RTS saw that:

the power that attacks workers through union legislation and casualisation is the same power that attacks the planet with over-production and consumption of resources ... this power is capital (Schnews 2004a:1995)

In September 1996, the dockworkers marked the first anniversary of their lockout by demonstrating in collaboration with Reclaim the Future, an alliance of direct action protesters including anti-roads, RTS and animal rights activists, Kurdish groups and trade unionists. This was followed in 1997 by a RTS Social Justice march and workshops in support of Liverpool dockers and strikers at a London hospital and furniture manufacturer, which linked labour issues with the plight of the homeless, asylum seekers, pensioners and the environment.

The Zapatista rebellion in Mexico further helped to mould the direct action movement as part of a struggle for global justice. Zapatista consciousness spread to Britain from 1994 onwards, and became an entrenched part of the discourse of some British radical activists as a result of their attendance at Intercontinental Encuentros Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity conferences held in Chiapas in 1996 and Spain in 1997. These conferences were a gathering of movements from across the globe, including the Brazilian landless, Italian autonomists and British direct action protesters. Their overall theme was opposition to neo-liberalism, with sub-themes of culture, education, information, land rights, ecology and labour. British Earth First! and RTS activists were also among the tens of thousands of Zapatista supporters who accompanied the Zapatistas as they travelled from Chiapas to Mexico City in Spring 2001 (Chesters 2002).

Such sharings of experiences among anarchists, punks, eco-activists, RTS protesters, trade unionists, trade justice and environmental NGOs, and indigenous movements across the globe, laid the foundations for the 'summit hopping' spectacles that were to follow, and for which the GJM became famous. In Britain, however, they became infamous, mainly because of the property damage that so often accompanied them. J18 not only disrupted the work of London's finance district, but left a trail of physical damage to buildings and vehicles, and injuries to people. The



November 1999 solidarity action with the ‘Battle of Seattle’ was no less disruptive, resulting in the incineration of a police vehicle.

Such riotous behaviour, although mild by international standards, generated negative press coverage and justified repressive policing. As a constructive alternative, direct activists set out to fashion creative and playful versions of ‘active non-violence’. These first appeared at the demonstration at the IMF and World Bank meeting in Prague in September 2000. Dressed in scanty outfits as pink and silver fairies, British activists formed their own march and, dancing to samba music, upon reaching the police cordon tickled police officers’ toes with pink feather dusters. If this was a new twist on the theme of ‘manufactured vulnerability’ developed in earlier environmental protests (Doherty 1999), it was not the only response to what activists perceived as repressive policing. Another group of British activists was inspired by the Prague actions to form the Wombles, who have gained media attention by their practice of wearing conspicuously padded clothing in order to protect themselves from aggressive policing.

The Prague demonstration was described as ‘the biggest self-generated mobilisation of British people to a political situation in another country since the Spanish War’ (Schnews 2004b:197). It was also the first summit protest attended by the SWP front organisation, Globalise Resistance. The subsequent decline in the numbers of British participants in summit protests has been attributed to the involvement of Globalise Resistance, as direct activists gradually withdrew as an expression of their distaste for its politics and tactics (Schnews 2004b:197). Probably at least as important, however, is widespread dismay at the violence that has attended many summits. Many direct activists have also tired of the police reaction to protests, both at home and abroad. In Britain, in response to past violence, even peaceful and non-violent demonstrations have often brought out riot police, and the Terrorism Act (2000) has given police the power to stop, search and collect intelligence on protestors. By the time of the G8 summit in 2005, the radical wing of the GJM had become a shadow of its former self.

### **Peace and anti-war movements**

The peace movement has widely been seen as a contributor to the development of the GJM. In Britain, it was long dominated by a single organisation, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

(CND), which began as an elite-directed campaign in 1958 and later developed into a mass membership organisation with an agenda broader than its name implies. Always internationalist, it was, from its inception, strategically oriented toward securing the commitment of the Labour Party to unilateral nuclear disarmament. Since Labour abandoned unilateralism in 1989, CND's long embrace of Labour has loosened and it has become more closely associated with the socialist left. Although it remains the mainstay of anti-war activism, it is no longer so dominant as once it was.

In a development that both reflects and contributes to the GJM, since 2001 a network of groups has collaborated to organise days of direct action aiming to close down the biennial Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi) arms fair in London. Its rallies have included speakers from CND, Globalise Resistance and Amnesty International, and Greenpeace, RTS and the Wombles, have taken associated direct action. Opposition to the war in Iraq has broadened the network. Direct actions against the war were underway by the beginning of 2003; the Greenpeace flagship, *Rainbow Warrior*, blocked the departure of military supply vessels, and there were demonstrations and blockades at many military airfields. Protests reached a peak when, on 15 February 2003, the Stop the War Coalition, CND and the Muslim Association of Britain co-ordinated a march that attracted some two million people, the biggest demonstration ever seen in London (Rootes and Saunders 2005).

Widespread protests against the Iraq war provided radical direct activists with unprecedented opportunities to broaden their appeal. Environmental organisations, the Green Party, muslim, ethnic minority and human rights groups, socialists and no borders activists rallied to the cause. However, if the anti-war movement can be framed as part of the broader movement for global justice, it had many of the characteristics of a classic peace movement, mobilising vast numbers of people in the build-up to the conflict but rapidly losing momentum thereafter. As a mobilisation of moral protest, it overlapped considerably with the later mobilisation of MPH and, given that the anti-war protests mobilized so many people, it is scarcely surprising that almost half the participants in the MPH march had previously participated in an anti-war demonstration. Nevertheless, a well-advertised anti-war demonstration in Edinburgh the day after the MPH march attracted only 1,500 people. Moreover, although the anti-war coalition was broader than previous peace mobilisations, it did not include most of the aid organisations so prominent in the GJM and it remains an ambiguous constituent of the GJM in Britain.

### **Trade unions and the left**

Internationalism has long been a principle of British trade unionism, but although some unions have contributed significant organisational resources to the major campaigns of the GJM, the involvement of their members – and the adhesion of other GJM supporters to trade unions – has been distinctly muted. Similarly, there has been little demand for social centres for the unemployed, and concern with ‘precarious’ employment has been more marginal to the GJM in Britain than elsewhere in Europe. The most plausible explanation is that Britain differs markedly from most European countries insofar as unemployment is low and has remained so for more than a decade. Moreover, trade union power in Britain was decisively broken by the sustained onslaught of Conservative governments from 1979, and unions have since shown little appetite for ambitious new political projects.

The role of left socialist groups and parties in the GJM has been controversial. The SWP looms large in some accounts of the GJM, most notably in those of British participation in the first European Social Forum in Florence (e.g., della Porta 2005). Such accounts almost certainly overestimate the significance of the SWP which, although it has been energetic in the formation of “united front” organizations, has not been able to hegemonise the movement. Focused upon large national campaigns which it could not realistically hope to dominate, the SWP has sought to encourage popular mobilization and, by injecting a revolutionary socialist critique of capitalism, to move those campaigns toward the left. However, suspicion of the SWP’s motives and aversion to its brand of socialist politics has led both radicals and reformists to keep a wary distance even when campaigning against a common enemy. Although the SWP actively discouraged the formation of autonomous local social forums, believing that they were premature in view of the state of development of working class consciousness in Britain and fearing they would distract from the mobilisation for the European Social Forum (Gillan 2006a, b), it seems unlikely that local forums would so easily have withered had they been deeply rooted. If the SWP has been unable to hegemonize the movement, nor does it appear that its presence has divided or poisoned it in the way its sharpest critics allege. The divisions in the movement reflect the prior histories, commitments, values and action repertoires of its diverse constituents, and to these the machinations of the SWP and other left groups are at best peripheral.

## **Conclusion**

It has been suggested that “the master frame [of the movement] is a democratic one designed to increase ... accountability and input into the decision-making processes of organizations perceived to be promulgating the negative effects of globalisation.” (Brooks 2004:562). Thus framed, the

movement is broad enough to encompass a wide variety of organisations and activists, from anarchists, socialists, and communists, to those concerned with environmental, peace, religious, feminist, homeless, indigenous rights, migration, race and social justice issues, the labor movement, and urban squatters. However, if some strands of the movement are focused upon building democracy from below, others, including the aid organisations, are more pragmatically focused upon policy reforms than upon radical institutional change. In fact, it is a notable feature of the GJM in Britain, by comparison with its counterparts in Italy, France and Spain, that the ‘movement for democracy from below’ is so weak. Local social forums, in particular, are few and weakly developed. As the events of July 2005 demonstrate, the GJM in Britain is broad and deep, but it is a movement numerically dominated by the members and supporters of relatively well institutionalised aid, development and humanitarian organisations.

The story of the development of social movements in Britain has sometimes been told as one of an unfolding sequence of interlinked mobilisations and campaigns (Lent 2001), a long wave of protest which is both conditional upon and has contributed to the development of a less deferential and more participatory form of society in which the boundaries of legitimate political expression have been progressively pushed beyond the strictly conventional (Rootes 2003a). Nevertheless, the GJM is not simply the culmination of a well-established process, and to see it thus would be to underestimate the novelty of the GJM and the contribution to it of an NGO sector that was little involved in earlier waves of social movement action. Of these, only the peace movement mobilised any substantial number of the religious, and even it attracted little interest or support from aid organisations. To the extent that it has drawn in people and NGOs that were hitherto unmobilised in social movement activity, the GJM, far from being simply a continuation and outgrowth of earlier social movement mobilisations, is a significant innovation.

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