and poetic or hard-minded as the case requires. This is a work of enormous love and consequence. Every compassion-driven soul who reads it will be stunned by the scope and power of the movement we've inadvertently formed. When, inevitably, my daughters someday feel their hearts broken by the wounded world they have inherited, I will be handing them this book of books."
—David James Duncan, author of The Brothers K and God Laughs & Plays

“Paul Hawken's writings are always at the cutting edge of environmental thought, original, surprising and shot through with optimism. *Blessed Unrest* is an uplifting perspective, engendering wonder and hope. For all of us that are squirming away in our individual small ways, it is inspiring to realize that millions of us can add up to an irresistible force. Read this book and shout 'Hallelujah!'”
—David Suzuki, author of The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature

“On one side the four horsemen of the apocalypse; on the other a vast and nameless uprising of peoples and organizations fighting for justice, places, communities, diversity, and health—the planetary immune system. Paul Hawken's *Blessed Unrest* is not just a good book, it is a necessary book, wise, eloquent, perceptive, sober, and timely but above all, hopeful. A landmark!”
—David Orr, author of Design on the Edge and The Last Refuge

“Paul Hawken has written an important and significant book—intelligent, compelling, moving, and hopeful. In the broad sweep of a history of diffuse and seemingly unconnected events and people, he has found emergent pattern. That pattern, amazing simultaneously in its intricacy and simplicity, gives clarity to the direction humankind is moving in its struggle for survival. Read and regain a sense of optimism for our grandchildren's grandchildren; and be motivated to ensure that they inherit a restored earth and an equitable society.”
—Ray Anderson, CEO of Interface

“Paul Hawken is at the top of his storytelling art in *Blessed Unrest*. By revealing the twin heart of the environmental and social justice movements, he helps us know ourselves in a new way—as competent members of the natural world, intent on recovering from our stumble as a species. Each page yields surprise and ‘of course!’ recognition for what has been swelling beneath our collective ground for over 100 years. I read it in a single sitting, hungry for the next piece of the puzzle, the next 6-degrees-of-separation coincidence. Hawken makes these invisible truths obvious through impeccably researched tales told in the bell-clear prose of a statesman poet. In this chronicle of the groundswell with no name, we have found our Tocqueville, our Twain, and our Sinclair.”
Over the past fifteen years I have given nearly one thousand talks about the environment, and every time I have done so I have felt like a tightrope performer struggling to maintain perfect balance. To be sure, people are curious to know what is happening to their world, but no speaker wants to leave an auditorium depressed, however dark and frightening a tomorrow is predicted by the science that studies the rate of environmental loss. To be sanguine about the future, however, requires a plausible basis for constructive action: you cannot describe possibilities for that future unless the present problem is accurately defined. Bridging the chasm between the two was always a challenge, but audiences kindly ignored my intellectual vertigo and over time provided a rare perspective instead. After every speech a smaller crowd would gather to talk, ask questions, and exchange business cards. These people were typically working on the most salient issues of our day: climate change, poverty, deforestation, peace, water, hunger, conservation, human rights. They came from the nonprofit and non-governmental world, also known as civil society; they looked after rivers and bays, educated consumers about sustainable agriculture, retrofitted houses with solar panels, lobbied state legislatures about pollution, fought against corporate-weighted trade policies, worked to green inner cities, and taught children about the environment. Quite simply, they had dedicated themselves to trying to safeguard nature and ensure justice. Although this was the 1990s, and the media largely ignored them, in those small meetings I had a chance to listen to their concerns. They were students, grandmothers, teenagers, tribe members, businesspeople, architects, teachers, retired professors, and worried mothers and fathers. Because I was itinerant, and the organizations they represented were rooted in their communities, over the years I began to grasp the diversity of these groups and their cumulative number. My interlocutors had a lot to say. They were informed, imaginative, and vital, and offered ideas, information, and insight. To a great extent *Blessed Unrest* is their gift to me.

My new friends would thrust articles and books into my hands, tuck
small gifts into my knapsack, or pass along proposals for green companies. A Native American taught me that the division between ecology and human rights was an artificial one, that the environmental and social justice movements addressed two sides of a single larger dilemma. The way we harm the earth affects all people, and how we treat one another is reflected in how we treat the earth. As my talks began to mirror my deeper understanding, the hands offering business cards grew more diverse. I would get from five to thirty such cards per speech, and after being on the road for a week or two would return home with a few hundred of them stuffed into various pockets. I would lay them out on the table in my kitchen, read the names, look at the logos, envisage the missions, and marvel at the scope and diversity of what groups were doing on behalf of others. Later, I would store them in drawers or paper bags as keepsakes of the journey. Over the course of years the number of cards mounted into the thousands, and whenever I glanced at them, I came back to one question: Did anyone truly appreciate how many groups and organizations were engaged in progressive causes? At first, this was a matter of curiosity on my part, but it slowly grew into a hunch that something larger was afoot, a significant social movement that was eluding the radar of mainstream culture.

So, curious, I began to count. I looked at government records for different countries and, using various methods to approximate the number of environmental and social justice groups from tax census data, I initially estimated a total of 30,000 environmental organizations around the globe; when I added social justice and indigenous peoples’ rights organizations, the number exceeded 100,000. I then researched to see if there had ever been any equals to this movement in scale or scope, but I couldn’t find anything, past or present. The more I probed, the more I unearthed, and the numbers continued to climb, as I discovered lists, indexes, and small databases specific to certain sectors or geographic areas. In trying to pick up a stone, I found the exposed tip of a much larger geological formation. I soon realized that my initial estimate of 100,000 organizations was off by at least a factor of ten, and I now believe there are over one—and maybe even two—million organizations working toward ecological sustainability and social justice.

By any conventional definition, this vast collection of committed individuals does not constitute a movement. Movements have leaders and ideologies. People join movements, study their tracts, and identify themselves with a group. They read the biography of the founder(s) or listen to them perorate on tape or in person. Movements, in short, have followers. This movement, however, doesn’t fit the standard model. It is dispersed, inchoate, and fiercely independent. It has no manifesto or doctrine, no overriding authority to check with. It is taking shape in schoolrooms, farms, jungles, villages, companies, deserts, fisheries, slums—and even fancy New York hotels. One of its distinctive features is that it is tentatively emerging as a global humanitarian movement arising from the bottom up. Historically social movements have arisen primarily in response to injustice, inequities, and corruption. Those woes still remain legion, joined by a new condition that has no precedent: the planet has a life-threatening disease, marked by massive ecological degradation and rapid climate change. As I counted the vast number of organizations it crossed my mind that perhaps I was witnessing the growth of something organic, if not biologic. Rather than a movement in the conventional sense, could it be an instinctive, collective response to threat? Is it atomized for reasons that are innate to its purpose? How does it function? How fast is it growing? How is it connected? Why is it largely ignored? Does it have a history? Can it successfully address the issues that governments are failing to: energy, jobs, conservation, poverty, and global warming? Will it become centralized, or will it continue to be dispersed and cede its power to ideologies and fundamentalism?

I sought a name for the movement, but none exists. I met people who wanted to structure or organize it—a difficult task, since it would easily be the most complex association of human beings ever assembled. Many outside the movement critique it as powerless, but that assessment does not stop its growth. When describing it to politicians, academics, and businesspeople, I found that many believe they are already familiar with this movement, how it works, what it consists of, and its approximate size. They base their conclusion on media reports about Amnesty International, the Sierra Club, Oxfam, or other venerable institutions. They may be directly acquainted with a few smaller organizations and may even sit on the board of a local group. For them and others the movement is small, known, and circumscribed, a new type of charity, with a sprinkling of ragtag activists who occasionally give it a bad name. People inside the movement can also underestimate it, basing their judgment on only the organizations they are linked to, even though their networks can only encompass a fraction of the whole. But after spending years researching this phenomenon, including creating with my colleagues a global database of its constituent organizations, I have
come to these conclusions: this is the largest social movement in all of human history. No one knows its scope, and how it functions is more mysterious than what meets the eye.

What does meet the eye is compelling: coherent, organic, self-organized congregations involving tens of millions of people dedicated to change. When asked at colleges if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science that describes what is happening on earth today and aren't pessimistic, you don't have the correct data. If you meet the people in this unnamed movement and aren't optimistic, you haven't got a heart. What I see are ordinary and some not-so-ordinary individuals willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in an attempt to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world. In the not-so-ordinary category, contrast ex-president Bill Clinton and sitting president George W. Bush. As I write this, Bush is on TV snarled in a skein of untruths as he tries to keep the lid on a nightmarish war fed by inept and misguided ambition; simultaneously the Clinton Global Initiative (which is a nongovernmental organization) met in New York and raised $7.3 billion in three days to combat global warming, injustice, intolerance, and poverty. Of the two initiatives, war and peace, which addresses root causes? Which has momentum? Which does not offend the world? Which is open to new ideas? The poet Adrienne Rich wrote, "My heart is moved by all / I cannot save: / So much has been destroyed / I have cast my lot with those / who, age after age, perversely, / with no extraordinary power, / reconstitute the world." There could be no better description of the audiences I met in my lectures.

This is the story without apologies of what is going right on this planet, narratives of imagination and conviction, not defeatist accounts about the limits. Wrong is an addictive, repetitive story; Right is where the movement is. There is a rabbinical teaching that holds that if the world is ending and the Messiah arrives, you first plant a tree and then see if the story is true. Islam has a similar teaching that tells adherents that if they have a palm cutting in their hand on Judgment Day, plant the cutting. Inspiration is not garnered from the recitation of what is flawed; it resides, rather, in humanity's willingness to restore, redress, reform, rebuild, recover, reimage, and reconsider. "Consider" (con sidere) means "with the stars"; reconsider means to rejoin the movement of heaven and life. The emphasis here is on humanity's intention, because humans are frail and imperfect. People are not always literate or educated. Most families in the world are impoverished and may suffer from chronic illnesses. The poor cannot always get the right foods for proper nutrition, and must struggle to feed and educate their young. If citizens with such burdens can rise above their quotidian difficulties and act with the clear intent to confront exploitation and bring about restoration, then something powerful is afoot. And it is not just the poor, but people of all races and classes everywhere in the world. "One day you will know what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice," is Mary Oliver's description of moving away from the profane toward a deep sense of connectedness to the living world.

Although the six o'clock news is usually concerned with the death of strangers, millions of people work on behalf of strangers. This altruism has religious, even mythic origins and very practical eighteenth-century roots. Abolitionists were the first group to create a national and global movement to defend the rights of those they did not know. Until that time, no citizen group had ever filed a grievance except as it related to itself. Conservative spokesmen ridiculed the abolitionists then, just as conservatives taunt liberals, progressives, do-gooders, and activists today by making those four terms pejoratives. Healing the wounds of the earth and its people does not require saintliness or a political party, only gumption and persistence. It is not a liberal or conservative activity; it is a sacred act. It is a massive enterprise undertaken by ordinary citizens everywhere, not by self-appointed governments or oligarchies.

Blessed Unrest is an exploration of this movement—its participants, its aims, and its ideals. I have been a part of it for decades, so I cannot claim to be the detached journalist skeptically prodding my subjects. I hope what follows is the expression of a deep listening. The subtitle of the book—how the largest social movement in history is restoring grace, justice, and beauty to the world—cannot be answered by one person. Like anyone, I have a perspective based on biases accumulated over time and a network of friends and peers who color my judgment. However, I wrote this book primarily to discover what I don't know. Part of what I learned concerns an older quiescent history that is reemerging, what poet Gary Snyder calls the great underground, a current of humanity that dates back to the Paleolithic. Its lineage can be traced back to healers, priestesses, philosophers, monks, rabbis, poets, and artists "who speak for the planet, for other species, for interdependence, a life that courses under and through and around empires." At the same time, much of what I learned is new. Groups are intertwining—there are no words to exactly describe the
The complexity of this web of relationships. The Internet and other communication technologies have revolutionized what is possible for small groups to accomplish and are accordingly changing the loci of power. There have always been networks of powerful people, but until recently it has never been possible for the entire world to be connected.

The chapter “Blessed Unrest” is an overview that describes how this movement differs from previous social movements, particularly with respect to ideology. The organizations in the movement arise one by one, generally with no predetermined vision for the world, and craft their goals without reference to orthodoxy. For some historians and analysts, movements only exist when they have an ideological or religious core of beliefs. And movements certainly don’t exist in a vacuum: a strong leader(s) is an earmark of a movement and often its intellectual pivot point, even if deceased. The movement I describe here has neither, and so represents a completely different form of social phenomenon.

The next three chapters are glimpses of some of the movement’s roots. One cannot do justice to its history in a clutch of books, much less a few chapters. America has been the home of some of the most important progressive efforts in history—women’s suffrage, abolition, civil rights, food safety—but you would not know that, given the narrowness of scope of today’s education. My survey reflects the views of a North American because it is the only history I can adequately present. This bias is important to acknowledge, because global history is invariably skewed when seen through the eyes of Western culture, no matter how hard one tries to be objective. There are other histories, African and Native American, English and Japanese, Brazilian and Mediterranean, all equally valid, and all with their own particular inflections. In India, for example, environmentalism is a social justice movement, concerned with the rights of people to the land and its bounty. In 1991 Sunita Narain, the director of the Center for Science and the Environment in New Delhi, called global warming environmental colonialism, and was one of the first to question whether environmental management should be based on human rights rather than legal convention. In the United States the environmental movement found itself faced with a backlash when it was accused of placing the rights of the animals and plants on the land before those of people. Ron Dellums, an African-American congressman from Oakland, California, asked the Sierra Club, “I know you care about black bears but do you care about black people?” In Germany the green movement became an organized political party, and its members now hold positions at the highest echelons of government. In the global South, environmentalism is a movement of the poor, with peasants leading campaigns that include land reform, trade rights, and corporate hegemony. The environmental movement began in England as a series of public health campaigns during the Industrial Revolution. In Italy, it concerns the dynamics between la città and la campagna; in South Africa, it is inextricably bound to social justice issues embedded in the country’s history. My purpose in recounting some of the threads of the past is not merely to extol great personages such as Darwin, Gandhi, Rachel Carson, or Thoreau, but to recognize the importance of connection and coincidence. Long ago, small and seemingly inconsequential actions took place that eventually changed the world—outcomes the original actors might never have imagined. One such occurrence was Emerson’s encounter with the Jussieu family of scientists in Paris, a little remarked-upon event whose influence, as we will see, eventually wends itself into the civil rights movement 123 years later. In a time when people feel powerless, a history of altruism can be a balm because it reveals the power of helpful and humble acts, a reminder that constructive changes in human affairs arise from intention, not coercion.

“Indigene” and “We Interrupt This Empire” concern globalization. “Indigene” is concerned with indigenous cultures. Their traditional lands represent the greatest remaining sanctuaries of life on earth, and resource-hungry corporations are commercializing and destroying these biological arks. The cultures that have coevolved with these environments are resisting the encroachment, uniting with alliances of nonprofits to bring accountability and limits to unchecked development. “We Interrupt This Empire” focuses on organizations that are engaged in protecting citizens, workers, and environments from the juggernaut of free market fundamentalism.

The final two chapters look at the entire movement from two perspectives. “Immunity” uses the cellular metaphor of how an organism defends itself as a plausible way to describe the collective activity of the movement. The immune system is the most complex system in the body and provides a useful model for examining the properties of these groups. The terms environment and social justice encompass innovative organizations that are replete with ideas and inventive techniques, and a few are explored here. I also consider the weakness of the movement, how its multiplicity and diversity may hobble it as the world descends into violence and disorder. “Restoration” describes the biological principles that inform all forms of life, including human beings, and uses these principles as a framework to bring a different
vocabulary to the movement. In biologist Janine Benyus's quintessential summation, "life creates the conditions that are conducive to life." It is fair to ask whether that might not be a suitable organizing principle for all human activity, from economics to trade to how we build our cities. While it is risky to rely on life sciences to explain social phenomena, it is equally risky to assume that the standard language that has served to chronicle past social movements is sufficient to describe this one. The individuals featured in this book all try to do good, but this book is not only about doing good. It is about people who want to save the entire sacred, cellular basis of existence—the entire planet and all its inconceivable diversity. In total, the book is inadvertently optimistic, an odd thing in these bleak times. I didn't intend it; optimism discovered me.

There is vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. . . . You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open. . . . [There is] no satisfaction whatever at any time. There is only a queer, divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others.

—Martha Graham to Agnes de Mille, Dance to the Piper

How is one to live a moral and compassionate existence when one is fully aware of the blood, the horror inherent in life, when one finds darkness not only in one's culture but within oneself? If there is a stage at which an individual life becomes truly adult, it must be when one grasps the irony in its unfolding and accepts responsibility for a life lived in the midst of such paradox. One must live in the middle of contradiction, because if all contradiction were eliminated at once life would collapse. There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light.

—Barry Lopez, Arctic Dreams

I am large, I contain multitudes.

—Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”
Clayton Thomas-Müller speaks to a community gathering of the Cree nation about waste sites on their native land in northern Alberta, toxic lakes so big you can see them from outer space. Shi Lihong, founder of Wild China, films documentaries with her husband on migrants displaced by construction of large dams. Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez, a member of the Maya-Kaqchikel people, fights for full accountability for tens of thousands of victims of death squads in Guatemala. Rodrigo Baggio retrieves discarded computers from New York, London, and Toronto, and installs them in the favelas of Brazil, where he and his staff teach computer skills to poor children. Biologist Janine Benyus speaks to 1,200 executives at a business forum in Queensland about biologically inspired industrial development. Paul Sykes, a volunteer for the National Audubon Society, completes his fifty-second Christmas Bird Count in Little Creek, Virginia, joining fifty thousand others who tally 70 million birds on one day. Sumita Dasgupta leads students, engineers, journalists, farmers, and Adivasis (tribal people) on a ten-day trek through Gujarat exploring the rebirth of ancient rainwater harvesting and catchment systems that bring life back to drought-prone areas of India. Silas Kpanan’Ayong Siakor exposes links between the genocidal policies of President Charles Taylor and illegal logging in Liberia, resulting in international sanctions and the introduction of certified, sustainable timber policies.

These eight individuals, who may never meet and come to know one another, are part of a coalescence comprising hundreds of thousands of organizations. It claims no special powers and arises in small discrete ways, like blades of grass after a rain. The movement grows and spreads in every city and country, and involves virtually every tribe, culture, language, and religion, from Mongolians to Uzbeks to Tamils. It is composed of families in India, students in Australia, farmers in France, the landless in Brazil, the Bananaeras of Honduras, the “poors” of Durban, villagers in Irian Jaya, indigenous tribes of Bolivia, and housewives in Japan. Its leaders are farmers, zoologists, shoemakers, and poets. It provides support and meaning to billions
of people in the world. The movement can’t be divided because it is so atomized—a collection of small pieces, loosely joined. It forms, dissipates, and then regathers quickly, without central leadership, command, or control. Rather than seeking dominance, this unnamed movement strives to disperse concentrations of power. It has been capable of bringing down governments, companies, and leaders through witnessing, informing, and massing. The quickening of the movement in recent years has come about through information technologies becoming increasingly accessible and affordable to people everywhere. Its clout resides in its ideas, not in force.

Picture the collective presence of all human beings as an organism. Perceiving that organism are intelligent activities, humanity’s immune response to resist and heal the effects of political corruption, economic disease, and ecological degradation, whether they are the result of free-market, religious, or political ideologies. In a world grown too complex for constrictive ideologies, even the very word movement to describe such a process may be limiting. Writer and activist Naomi Klein calls it “the movement of movements,” but for lack of a better term I will stick with movement here because I believe all its components are beginning to converge.

The movement has three basic roots: environmental activism, social justice initiatives, and indigenous cultures’ resistance to globalization, all of which have become intertwined. Collectively, it expresses the needs of the majority of people on earth to sustain the environment, wage peace, democratize decision making and policy, reinvent public governance piece by piece from the bottom up, and improve their lives—women, children, and the poor. Throughout history, armies, corporations, religious rulers, and political zealots have overpowered the majority world, which in our upside-down world we consider to be minorities.

The definition of the term social justice has been debated for centuries. In this book, social justice means the implementation and realization of human rights as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ratified by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, with the addition of the right to a productive, safe, and clean environment; the right to security from political tyranny; and the right to live and express one’s own culture. The thirty Articles of the Declaration proper state that people have a right to freedom and liberty, that no one shall be enslaved or held in servitude or subjected to torture or cruel and degrading punishment. Everyone has the right to be recognized as a person by law, not subject to arbitrary detention or exile. People have the right to receive asylum if persecuted in their home country. Citizens in all countries have the right to education, livelihood, and fair working conditions, including the right to join a trade union and receive a living wage.

Human rights, by definition, apply to everyone who belongs to our species, wherever they are found. Concern for human rights is not a recent phenomenon, though its history has been grossly uneven, a chronicle written over time in the face of tyranny, barbarism, and setbacks. Historical landmarks of human rights date from deep into the past, from Hammurabi’s Code in ancient Babylon (in what is now Iraq) to the Enlightenment philosophies of the West. Between those times, Buddhist and Hindu teachings brought forth precepts of ecological responsibility; Confucius proposed a form of universal education; the Greeks practiced democracy and first raised the idea of natural laws pertaining to human rights; and early Islam established limitations on the authority of rulers, and advocated an independent judiciary to protect and respect human dignity. Historically, however, religious and political movements that invoke the common good have tended to exclude certain groups: women, homosexuals, lower castes, enslaved people, or those born with disabilities, and many continue to do so to this day. Groups that populate the movement, in contrast, largely understand human rights from the viewpoint of the oppressed, not from that of the elite.

Along with gross violations of human rights are other endless indignities that billions endure: loss of water for agriculture, theft of local resources by government and corporations, incursions of mining companies that pollute, political corruption and hijacking of governance, lack of health care and education, big dams that have displaced millions of poor people, loss of land, trade policies that bankrupt small farmers, and more. What people want in their place is universal: security, the ability to support their families, educational opportunities, nutritious and affordable food, clean water, sanitation, and access to health care. According to more than 190 nations in the world, these are not entitlements; they are rights.

The movement for equity and environmental sustainability comes as global conditions are changing dramatically and becoming more demanding. We are the first generation to live on earth to witness a doubling of population in our lifetime. The babies born within the next thirty hours of your reading this sentence will replace the 250,000 people lost in the tragic tsunami of December 26, 2004. Nearly 3 billion more people will join the current population of 6.6 billion within fifty years, and the world has
yet to figure out how to take care of those already here. By the middle of this century, resources available per person will drop at least by half. Since the eighteenth century, many labor-saving processes and methods have been instituted, and although human productivity has soared, hundreds of millions of potential workers and contributors to society feel overlooked and unneeded. Every week 1.4 million people pour into the world's slums to join a metastatic mass of squatters. The stark, bland statistic that cites 3 billion people receiving less than $2 a day is heard so often that it no longer elicits a response, but it remains true, compelling, and appalling.

To those calling for more trade and global economic growth to salve such damning deficiencies, it should be pointed out that both have been promoted vigorously throughout the past twenty-five years, yet during that time inequities in the world have only worsened. “It's as though the people... have been rounded up and loaded onto two conveyors of trucks (a huge big one and tiny little one) that have set off in resolutely opposite directions,” writes Arundhati Roy. “The tiny convoy is on its way to a glittering destination somewhere near the top of the world. The other convoy just melts into the darkness.” With the industrial capitalist system busily dividing the world in two, its priorities do not encompass either justice or the environment. Most of the world’s children are poor, and most of the poor are children. More than 1 billion people in the world want jobs and cannot get them; for those who are employed, twice that number do not receive a living wage. Two billion more people will join the workforce in the next twenty years. In the United States, teenage employment is at its lowest level since 1948. Only two-thirds of U.S. workers between twenty and twenty-four were employed in 2005. Only one species on earth does not have full employment and that is Homo sapiens. When informed of the world’s chronic unemployment, one third-grader asked, “Is all the work done?”

If there is a pervasive criticism of global capitalism that is shared by all actors in the movement, it is this observation: goods seem to have become more important, and are treated better, than people. What would a world look like if that emphasis were reversed? This book explores a movement cultivating innovative, sometimes brilliant, social technologies that would accomplish just that reversal by returning people to the heart of the world and of life. It comprises design as much as action, imagination as much as organization. It also entails a courageous defense of human rights. It stresses innovation with a focus on everyday life: the demands and pleasures of learning, taking care of others, preparing food, raising children, taking journeys, and doing meaningful work. These timeless ways of being human are threatened by global forces that do not consider people’s deepest longings.

When I’m discussing the movement with academics or friends in the media, the first question they pose is usually the same: If it is so large, why isn’t this movement more visible? By that they mean, why isn’t it more visible to news media, especially TV? Although global in its scope, the movement generally remains unseen until it gathers to take part in demonstrations, whether in London, Prague, or New York, or at annual meetings of the World Social Forum, after which it seems to disappear again, reinforcing the perception that it is a will-o’-the-wisp. The movement doesn’t fit neatly into any category in modern society, and what can’t be visualized can’t be named. In business, what isn’t measured isn’t managed; in the media, what isn’t visible isn’t reported. Media coverage of the death of Pope John Paul and the election of Pope Benedict easily surpassed all coverage devoted to this movement over the past ten years, yet the number of people directly working and indirectly involved with this movement is greater than the number of people active in the Catholic Church. The papacy has history and specificity; the movement is about the future.

For most people, to understand something new requires a cognitive antecedent. When members of the Me’en tribe in Ethiopia were shown a coloring book that included an illustration of a local antelope, they didn’t recognize the animal. They would smell the paper, twist it in their hands, feel its texture, listen to its sound, and even taste it gingerly, but they couldn’t discern any animal from its picture alone. When anthropologists transferred the drawing to cloth, a material with which the tribe was familiar, a few of the tribespeople could make out something. A twenty-year-old woman gazed at the outline as a scientist traced the animal with her finger, and although she could see a tail, leg, ears, and a horn, when asked what the illustration represented, she had no idea. Scientific experiments repeatedly show that groups of educated, urbanized people pay no attention to unfamiliar objects directly in front of them if they focus too strongly on familiar ones. What we already know frames what we see, and what we see frames what we understand. The Industrial Revolution went unnamed for more than a century, in part because its developments did not fit conventional categories, but also because no one could define what was taking place, even though it was evident everywhere.

Another reason the movement is hard to identify is that it is not an outgrowth of any particular ideology. This is the first time in history that a
The end of the twentieth century saw the collapse of big ideologies, and into that vacuum now flow a number of different forms of populism, which variously invoke the Bible, Allah, Ram, nationalism, or free markets as their basis for legitimacy. Neoconservatives, radical Islamists, the Christian Right, and economic fundamentalists share the ability to supply people with surrogates for failed ideologies. These groups act aggressively on our behalf, it is contended, because they know what is best for us. Radical Islamists view those opposing their theocratic vision as infidels who can legitimately be killed. The Christian Right regards non-Christians as needing salvation and redemption that can be delivered by God's laws, which only it fully understands. Neoconservatives believe that ordinary citizens cannot be entrusted with the reins of power, that a small group of superior individuals should rule over the majority of inferiors, using religion and the perpetual threat of war to create a Potemkin village of populism. Supporters of corporate-led globalization want to impose their market-based rules and precepts on the entire planet, regardless of place, history, or culture, in the belief that economic growth is an unloyed good, and that it is best accomplished with the minimization or elimination of interference from government. These groups share a fundamental distaste for democracy and seek expediency, not plebiscites. Just as religion creates God in its own image, the pseudo-populists want to create a world that mirrors their simplified imaginings.

In Unpopular Essays Bertrand Russell wrote, "Man is a credulous animal and must believe in something. In the absence of good grounds for belief, he will be satisfied with bad ones." Each type of pseudo-populism comes into being to improve or save its respective adherents from the absence of a moral or social framework, which means that even if we don't understand them fully, we are expected to place our faith in them. Although these pseudo-populist organizations are relatively small, they manage to influence governments, invoke terror, and control large sums of capital. Relatively speaking, none of them has a large following, but they do have intense ones. In a global context, all stand on the most narrow of pedestals, and all have successfully seized key levers of power.

Global civilization is endangered by these isms. Climatic stability may be lost for centuries to come, poverty increases, fisheries collapse, megacities teem with influxes of rural refugees, water tables fall, and hunger and malnutrition grow, even in the richest country in the world. The twentieth century saw the greatest rate of destruction to the environment in all recorded
history. It was also the cruelest, harshest, and bloodiest century in history. Eighty million were slaughtered from the beginning of the century through World War II, since then, more than 23 million people (mostly civilians) have been killed in more than 149 wars.\textsuperscript{14} Endless research speculates about the exercise of war, but little is concerned with the maintenance of peace. We study different forms of greed, including neoclassical economics, but rarely the harmonization of human needs. For every dollar spent on U.N. peacekeeping, $2,000 is expended for warmaking by member nations. Four of the five members of the U.N. Security Council, which has veto power over all U.N. resolutions, are the top weapons dealers in the world: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia.\textsuperscript{15}

In contrast to the ideological struggles currently dominating global events and personal identity, a broad nonideological movement has come into being that does not invoke the masses' fantasized will but rather engages citizens' localized needs. This movement's key contribution is the rejection of one big idea in order to offer in its place thousands of practical and useful ones. Instead of isms it offers processes, concerns, and compassion. The movement demonstrates a pliable, resonant, and generous side of humanity. It does not aim for the utopian, which itself is just another ism, but is eminently pragmatic.

And it is impossible to pin down. Generalities that seek to define it are largely inaccurate. Understandably, the movement defies conventional typologies. Its liberal leaders are often devout; its conservative leaders propose radical solutions. The movement crosses over hoary, razor-wired political boundaries. Should the idea of using renewable sources to achieve localized energy independence be categorized as radical, conservative, ecological, good long-term economics, or socially equitable? If the movement in all its diversity has a common dream, it is process—in a word, democracy, but not the democracy practiced and corrupted by corporations and modern nation-states. It is, rather, a reimagining of public governance emerging from place, culture, and people. What binds its constituents is a modus operandi that could be called the autonomy of diversity. Groups with varying outlooks and discrete goals cooperate on key issues without subordinating themselves to another group. While the key to its strength and success is this very diversity, it also leaves the movement singularly vulnerable.

However adaptive, diversity can also prevent connection, cooperation, and effectiveness. Inevitably there is jockeying for position and territory, and lack of collaboration, especially when organizations are forced to compete for scarce resources. There is narcissism, when small groups begin to stare into the waters of just causes and imagine themselves to be saviors. And because they are led and managed by human beings, there is gossip, churlishness, and backbiting. Within the movement are some who are sophomoric, callow, and atavistic. Small, splinter "liberation" groups have committed crimes such as arson, and proudly boast of it. Strongly held beliefs can breed fanaticism as easily as genuine breakthroughs. Unfortunately every misstep made in the name of social justice or the environment has received a disproportionate amount of publicity. In 2005 the \textit{Los Angeles Times} devoted one hundred times more coverage to a vandalistic spree by three unaffiliated students who damaged or destroyed 125 SUVs than it did to the landmark \textit{U.N. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment}.

While issues grow in importance, a balkanized movement does not match the scale of the problems. This is particularly obvious with respect to climate change. On one hand, the practical implementation of hands-on energy reduction needs to be implemented on a local scale. But the major policy changes and initiatives that must be undertaken at the national and international levels with respect to public transportation, oil company subsidies, and renewable energy are stymied by the corruption of politicians and special interests; as yet there has been no coming together of organizations in a united front that can counter the massive scale and power of the global corporations and lobbyists that protect the status quo.

Another potentially negative aspect of diversity is that the movement is mocked and misunderstood for the sheer number of causes it espouses. As in the parable of the blind men and the elephant, it is impossible to fully comprehend the totality of the movement, which cannot be perceived as a whole. Describing only the parts they see, the media use labels like environmentalists, small farmers, mothers, special-interest groups, agitators, protesters, minorities, idealistic youth, the "Prius set," peasants, indigenous people, greens, academics, activists, aging hippies, liberals, and children. When the media first began to cover the Women's Suffrage movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote, "All the journalists, from Maine to Texas, seemed to strive with each other to see which could make our movement the most ridiculous."\textsuperscript{16} Nothing has changed since then, but even if the stereotypes were true they would not be complete. Missing are the visions and values that make this movement active and pervasive.
Politicians and the media assess strength by the capacity for bruising single-mindedness, not by breadth of interests or goals. The NRA is powerful, but that doesn't mean that people who address human trafficking in Burma, loss of sea turtles, desertification, and climate change must be regarded as ineffectual. Unless a movement champions a specific objective, it is often dismissed as a children's crusade without clout. When you link issues such as waste incinerators, sweatshops, endocrine disruptors, water pollution, and mountaintop removal, you may be judged to have too much on your plate. In fact, you could be thinking, as Aldo Leopold advised, "like a mountain," perceiving the rich complexities of a system and the interrelatedness of social and environmental problems within it. If one analyzes the challenges facing the world in systemic terms, the intelligence of implementing permaculture, microlending, green taxes, ecological footprinting, and fair trade becomes evident.

Conversely, if problems are viewed atomistically, the same strategies and solutions can be dismissed as idealistic or impractical. Creating genetically modified organisms to address hunger, building pebble bed nuclear reactors to address global warming, or waging opportunistic wars to establish democracies are all forms of downstream thinking that predicated today's dilemmas because none of them address the sources of the problem. In software, such fixes are called kludges, workarounds to repair bugs, expedient patches that may work for a time. Kludges do not address root causes but layer on Band-Aids to modify undesirable effects, ultimately forming a distressed whole. Fixing the intractable problems besetting the world will require a convergence of social intelligence and natural science, two qualities traditional politics lack.

The as yet undelivered promise of this movement is a network of organizations that offer solutions to disentangle what appear to be insoluble dilemmas: poverty, global climate change, terrorism, ecological degradation, polarization of income, loss of culture, and many more. The world seems to be looking for the big solution, which is itself part of the problem, since the most effective solutions are both local and systemic. Although the groups in the movement are autonomous, the coming together of different organizations to address an array of issues can effectively become a systemic approach. Although the movement may appear inchoate or naively ambitious, its underlying structure and communication techniques can, at times, create a collective social response that can challenge any institution in the world.

But how powerful can a movement ultimately be if it sidesteps tribal/state/nation divisions and replaces them with a network of associations that has no center? Some believe that to address meaningfully existing political and economic institutions, the movement must centralize to present a viable alternative in scale. Many others would argue that traditional, hierarchical forms of organization that require homogeneous agendas and goals are outdated throughout the modern world, and that this movement is a harbinger of change. The answer may lie in the middle; it will depend on many factors.

Even though the origins and purposes of the various groups comprising the movement are diverse, if you survey their principles, mission statements, or values, you find they do not conflict. As a test, I have randomly chosen groups, found their values statement or the like, then printed them up and posted them on a wall, one after another. This exercise was useful in helping identify the unity underlying the diversity. The movement does not agree on every topic, nor will it ever, because that degree of consensus would begin to transform it into an ideology. New groups do not check in with a master organization to see if their mission statement is acceptable. What its members do share is a basic set of fundamental understandings about the earth, how it functions, and the necessity of fairness and equity for all people dependent on the planet's life-giving systems.

Although many progressives regard the ideas of Friedrich Hayek, Nobel Prize-winning economist and éminence grise of free-market economics, as anathema, he was one of the first to recognize the dispersed nature of knowledge and the effectiveness of localization and of combining individual understanding. Since one person's knowledge can only represent a fragment of the totality of what is known, wisdom can be achieved when people combine what they have learned. Hayek felt that viable social institutions had to evolve (we might now say "coevolve") to confront the problems at hand rather than reflect theories at mind. During World War II some made moral distinctions between Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, but Hayek saw them both as identical examples of totalitarian states. His concerns about totalitarianism are applicable to the large multinational institutions of today: transnational corporations, the WTO, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to name a few. They can be viewed as totalitarian because they encompass economic development and human needs under a uniform rubric. Although Hayek did not anticipate corporate-sponsored totalitarianism fed by religious zealotry or corporate control of media invoking the mantra of free markets, he did foresee a remedy for
the basic expression of the totalitarian impulse: ensuring that information and the right to make decisions are co-located. To achieve this, one can either move the information to the decision makers, or move decision making rights to the information. The movement strives to do both.\textsuperscript{18} The earth’s problems are everyone’s problems, and what modern technology and the movement can achieve together is to distribute problem solving tools.\textsuperscript{19}

Any contemplation of the history of the world says different things to different people. Because the accumulation of past records, events, and remembrances is so vast, no one person can encompass global history, not in this lifetime or many. We are left instead with frameworks, lenses through which historians arrange the past to create a coherent narrative. Two such lenses will likely dominate our future attempts to understand our past: social justice and humanity’s relationship to the environment.\textsuperscript{20} Both address exploitation, and both frame the history of people’s attempts to free themselves from abuse. We face today a dilemma about what standard will constitute the most salient evidence of progress. Will it be single measures of material accumulation, such as GDP, or will it be the health of the earth and its inhabitants? Social justice and attending to the planet proceed in parallel; the abuse of one entails the exploitation of the other. Slaves, serfs, and the poor are the forests, soils, and oceans of society; each constitutes surplus value that has been exploited repeatedly by those in power, whether governments or multinational corporations.

Our fate will depend on how we understand and treat what is left of the planet’s surpluses—its lands, oceans, species diversity, and people. The quiet hub of the new movement—its heart and soul—is indigenous culture. The acknowledgment of aboriginal cultures is not a romantic gesture or wistful plea, nor does it value Neolithic cultures above modern ones, or native spiritual practices above other sacred traditions. Just as a wheel cannot turn without a stationary hub, the movement reaches back to the deep and still roots of our collective history for its axe. Indigenous people have a different sense of time because they remember a different history, and that memory brings an uncommon appreciation of their place in time. Simply stated, they possess patience. Things come and go; conquests, ideas, and leaders arise and fall away. For indigenous people, in the time that defines one’s life, the relationship one has to the earth is the constant and true gauge that determines the integrity of one’s culture, the meaning of one’s existence, and the peacefulness of one’s heart. In most indigenous cultures there are no separate social and environmental movements because the two were never disaggregated. Every single particle, thought, and being, even our dreaming, is the environment, and what we do to one another is reflected on earth just as surely as what we do to the earth is reflected in our diseases and discontent. C. S. Lewis wrote, “What we call Man’s power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument.” It is because of this split between people and nature that the social justice and environmental arms of the movement have arisen as separate, each with its own history. Indigenous cultures provide the basis for understanding the two as one.

Unlike indigenous cultures, whose worlds are local, intimate, familiar, we live in the age of giants. In one day alone we pump 85 million barrels of petroleum out of the ground, and then burn it up. And on the same day we spew the waste of 27 billion pounds of coal into the atmosphere. One hundred million displaced people now wander the earth without a home. One company, Wal-Mart, employs 1.8 million people. ExxonMobil made nearly $40 billion in profits in 2006, enough money to permanently supply pure clean drinking water to the 1 billion people who lack it. We have consumed 90 percent of all the big fish in the oceans. Bill Gates’ home covers one and a half acres and cost nearly $100 million.

Not surprisingly, people don’t know that they count in such a malordered, destabilized world, don’t know that they are of value. A healthy global civilization cannot be constructed without building blocks of meaning, which are hewn of rights and respect. What constitutes meaning for human beings are events, memories, and small dignities—gifts that rarely emerge from institutions, and never from theory. As the smaller parts of the world are knitted into one globalized unit, the one thing we can no longer afford is bigness. This means dismantling the big bombs, dams, ideologies, contradictions, wars, and mistakes.\textsuperscript{21}

In the midst of such giants a worldwide gathering of ordinary and extraordinary people are reconstituting the notion of what it means to be a human being. While they are organizing themselves into the largest movement in the history of the world, the movement only happens one person at a time. But how does one become an environmentalist or human rights campaigner? There are no missionaries. There are no postings offering lessons. Concerned individuals have to work it out for themselves and find colleagues who will mentor them. Movements are the expression of changed
attitudes, and how each person comes to realize his responsibility to a greater whole is a unique experience. All social justice organizations can trace their origins back some 220 years ago, when three-fourths of the world was enslaved in one form or another. In 1787 a dozen people began meeting in a small print shop in London to abolish the lucrative slave trade. They were reviled and dismissed by businessmen and politicians. It was argued that their crackpot ideas would bring down the English economy, eliminate growth and jobs, cost too much money, and lower the standard of living. Critics also pointed out that abolition was being promoted by a small group of self-appointed troublemakers and extremists who had no expertise in trade or commerce. But the audaciousness of this first expression of civil society was eventually rewarded, and six decades later slavery was legally forbidden almost everywhere.

Today the world faces a task that is exponentially more difficult than the abolition of slavery: the prevention of irreversible losses of planetary capacity to support life. The arguments against the abolition of slavery that were proffered in the Houses of Parliament at the end of the eighteenth century are almost exactly the same as the arguments put forward today about why our economy can’t move away from fossil fuels to renewable energy, provide living-wage jobs for all, or defend the skies, forests, and waters. If we are to survive, every citizen must be enlisted to accomplish this task, and that will not be possible unless we cease the worldwide war on the poor and mark a road to recovery that brings respect, dignity, and self-worth to all. For better and worse, we now occupy a human planet, one in which most evolutionary forces are guided or misguided by our hand. Weather is not only a process that we’re subject to but also a complex dynamic for which we have unwittingly and suddenly become stewards. Human agency will alter the fate of all living beings because no part of the planet is unaffected by our activity. Although the egregious levels of corruption and violence visited upon us in daily headlines suggest otherwise, we can be grateful that humanity is a learning organism.

On February 15, 2003, between 6 million and 10 million people took to the streets in eight hundred cities around the world to protest the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It was the largest coordinated public demonstration in history, with estimates of 2 million demonstrators marching in Rome alone. Two days later in The New York Times, Patrick Tyler wrote that the demonstrations were “reminders that there still may be two superpowers on the planet: United States and world public opinion.” It was a good line, and others seized upon it, from U.N. secretary general Kofi Annan to Jonathan Schell. But can the two entities be aptly compared? There is only one superpower on earth, as defined by indices of military and financial might; compared to it the movement is an unarmed pauper, but it is driven by an infrapower, a stirring from below that could be described as a physiological response of the body politic. Every reader of this book is probably a part of it, even if indirectly. To see what is invisibly in front of us requires a shift in our conception of change and power.

A familiar biological tease argues that a hen is an egg’s way of making a new egg. Likewise, have we evolved plants to create agriculture, or have plants used agriculturists to evolve themselves? From a coevolutionary perspective, both propositions are true. What is the difference between a squirrel burying acorns across the forest and humans planting potatoes across the globe? Who is master, and who is servant? Is it the acorn’s or potato’s idea to be nutritious, or the creature that buries them? Evolution is not about design or will; it is the outcome of constant endeavors made by organisms that want to survive and better themselves. The collective result is intoxicatingly beautiful, with oddities, and surpassingly brilliant, yet no agent is in control. Evolution arises from the bottom up—so, too, does hope. When fire destroys a forest, the species and plants that were lost will reassert themselves over time. Seeds that have lain dormant for decades and that germinate only when subjected to intense heat will come to life, burst into foliage, and bloom in the spring. These plants may have deep taproots that bring up minerals, or broad leaves that create a canopy to help preserve topsoil from sun and rain. The older the forest, the more resilient its capacity to regenerate. Humanity is older than the oldest forest. Its capacity to adapt and restore is vastly underestimated. Evolution is optimism in action.

Being compelled to make more of ourselves is the human lot. This book asks whether a significant portion of humanity has found a new series of adaptive traits and stories more alluring than the ideological fundamentalisms that have caused us so much suffering. Stories told too often begin to lose their force, as do societies, but humankind can also create a new narrative. As William Kittredge writes, “A society capable of naming itself lives within its stories, inhabiting and furnishing them. We ride stories like rafts, or lay them out on the table like maps. They always, eventually, fail and have to be reinvented. The world is too complex for our forms ever to encompass for long.” How many new stories and groups will it take before the world recognizes its evolutionary potential, not just its baseness? Because
stories are greater than we are, their capacious narratives give us wiggle room to dream. It is why children's eyes light up and gaze far off when we read them tales of elves, kings, and Ents. Our families and communities connect us to the old and new stories, and guide us to "lean into the light."

This movement is a new form of community and a new form of story. At what point in the future will the existence of 2 million, 3 million, or even 5 million citizen-led organizations shift our awareness to the possibility that we will have fundamentally changed the way human beings govern and organize themselves on earth? What are the characteristics of leadership required when power arises instead of descends? What would a democracy look like that was not ruled by a dominant minority? What would a world feel like that created solutions to our problems from the ground up? What if we are entering a transitional phase of human development where what works is invisible because most heads are turned to the past? What if some very basic values are being reinstilled worldwide and are fostering complex social webs of meaning that represent the future of governance? These are but a few of the questions collectively posed by a movement that has yet to recognize it is a movement.

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No Sierra landscape that I have seen holds anything truly dead or dull, or any trace of what in manufactories is called rubbish or waste; everything is perfectly clean and pure and full of divine lessons. This quick, inevitable interest attaching to everything seems marvelous until the hand of God becomes visible; then it seems reasonable that what interests Him may well interest us. When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.

—John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*

*We should be cutting lies instead of trees.*

—Jerry Martien, *Salvage This*