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Introduction

> Using ideas as my maps . . .
>
> Bob Dylan, "My Back Pages" (1964)

> Changes in culture and personality go hand in hand with our efforts to achieve a society that is ecological – a society based on usufruct, complementarity, and the irreducible minimum – but that also recognizes the existence of a universal humanity and the claims of individuality.
>
> Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982: 340)

From recollections . . .

I left the United States for Sweden in August 1970 in search of an ecological society. I have not yet found it, but through the years I have caught glimpses, or premonitions, of what an ecological society might be like. This book is, among other things, an attempt to put those experiences into a broader historical and cultural perspective.

When I left for Sweden I had just graduated from a battle-scarred Harvard, having studied history of science and taken part in the antiwar movement and in the more all-encompassing "dialectics of liberation" that filled the air at the time (see Cooper 1968). I had stumbled into environmentalism a couple of years before, attracted by its combination of practicality and vision, its mixing of science and spirituality, and, perhaps especially, by its uncanny ability to make bedfellows of people with the most seemingly incompatible interests.

In those disheartening days, when the shrill, aggressive, voices of extremism were taking over the antiwar movement, and the war itself was intensifying beyond belief, environmentalism served for me to reawaken the spirit of camaraderie and collective creativity that had all but disappeared from radical politics, and were fast disappearing from public life in general. Environmentalism seemed to transcend the ideological disputes and other sources of division, like class, race, gender, and national identity, that were tearing apart the movement I had known, and had felt

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a part of, through much of the 1960s. It was not that the ideologies or social distinctions were not important; it was, rather, that the ways they were being discussed seemed to stem from another era. There was something fundamental about the new kinds of environmental problems that we were beginning to learn about – in our earth, in our skies, in our waters, in our homes, in our food, in Vietnam – that meant that we had to rethink most of the assumptions and beliefs that we had previously taken for granted. In particular, we had to learn to expand our ideas of solidarity and community and our notions of politics and social action so that we might be better able to take into account the diverse array of non-human beings that we shared the planet with.

The environmental movement, which some of us were starting to consider ourselves a part of, was certainly critical of the way things were, but at the same time, it/we were specific, constructive, even hopeful, in many of our emerging visions and practices. Before going off to Sweden, I had made a small contribution by writing a book about steam-powered automobiles as an "answer to air pollution" in which I presented the coterie of people who were trying to revive steam cars. They were an intriguing collection: air-pollution-control officials in California, innovative automobile mechanics, idealistic engineering professors, and even an entrepreneur of renown, William Lear of Lear jet fame, who had set up shop in Reno, Nevada, and was planning to enter a steam car in the Indianapolis 500 (Jamison 1970). I had heard that Sweden, whose government was supporting the Vietnamese, was also developing some interesting approaches to environmental protection, and I wanted to take a look, never imagining that I would stay this long. The book you are about to read is a kind of progress report on the journey thus far.

In the early 1970s much of my time was spent talking with scientists and government officials, who were justifiably proud of how effective they had been in reacting to the environmental crisis, as it was often referred to in those days. Sweden was the first country in the world to establish a state agency for environmental protection, and its parliament was the first to pass a comprehensive environmental-protection law. With some ecologists from Lund, where I was living, I visited a lake near Växjö, where advanced methods of restoration were being applied to a place where the fish had largely disappeared. Later, I ventured further north to what remained of Lake Hornborga, where millions of kronor were to be spent in the following years dredging up what had become an overgrown swamp, so that the cranes that had traditionally stopped there on their way south would one day return (they have). And I spent some days on an island in the Baltic Sea, where scientists were developing an ecological systems

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model of the nature – society interactions in the sea, as an input into the environmental policy process (Jamison 1971a, b, c; Jamison 1973).

Eventually I made my way to a suburban house outside of Uppsala where a young geneticist lived with his family. Björn Gillberg was creating a different kind of environmentalism, writing newspaper articles about food additives and genetic risks, standing outside of supermarkets with leaflets to warn consumers about the dangers lurking inside, and, most dramatically, washing his shirt in coffee creamer on a television program to show what a common household product could (really) do. I remember being struck by the fact that there was no toothpaste in Björn Gillberg's house – he said you didn't need it to get your teeth clean – and I was also struck by how different he was from the scientists and officials with whom I had been spending so much of my time. He was taking science to the streets (Jamison 1972).

Gillberg represented the Swedish version of the international environmental movement of which I had started to feel a part. Indeed, in the early 1970s, Gillberg *was* the movement, at least according to both his own and much of the Swedish mass media's perception of things. In 1975, when other activists wanted to broaden the fledgling movement and one of them, a left-wing journalist, wanted to alter the orientation of the newspaper that Gillberg edited, taking up environmental issues at the workplace, Gillberg let the journalist go; and at the annual meeting of the national organization that Gillberg headed, a group of activists demonstrably walked out and started their own organization instead.

I too felt that there was something missing in Gillberg's approach to environmental politics. More was required than a natural scientific education and a strong will; there was also a need for a social and economic analysis, and, even more crucially perhaps, there was a need for an alternative vision and an alternative "practice" if environmentalism were ever to appeal to, and alter the consciousness of, the majority of the world's population.

Over the next few years, after moving to an old farmhouse with a big garden outside of Lund, where I have lived ever since, I found myself increasingly drawn to developments in Denmark, where I got my first academic job in 1974, teaching a course in science and society at the University of Copenhagen. Reading Danish newspapers and getting to know some Danish activists, it soon became apparent that the environmental movement was developing quite differently in Denmark. For one thing it was more of an academic affair, strongly based on students and young teachers, especially at the new universities in Aalborg and Roskilde, where environmental issues had come to be linked, according to the

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fashion of the day, to the Marxian "critique of political economy." For another, it drew on a populist tradition of rural resistance that had been mobilized in the nineteenth century, when, among other things, a network of "people's high schools" had been created in the countryside to provide the farmers with a more practical, but also more spiritual, form of education. Perhaps most intriguingly it was more experimental, practicing, more ambitiously than elsewhere in Europe, an alternative, or ecological, way of life, both in the renewable energy "wing" of the movement, as well as at the rural and urban collectives that were becoming such a visible feature of the Danish landscape (Jamison 1977).

In those years I met many Danish activists, people like Oluf Danielsen, a physics teacher at Roskilde and one of the more vocal energy debaters of the 1970s, and also a founding member of the Danish journal, *Naturkampen* (Nature Struggle); Preben Maegaard, a "grass-roots engineer," who established the Northern Jutland Center for Alternative Technology and helped to start the Organization for Renewable Energy (Organisation for vedvarende energi, OVE); and Peder Agger, another Roskilde teacher, of biology, and one of the founders of NOAH, in those days the leading Danish environmental organization, and now the Danish affiliate of Friends of the Earth. Peder also helped to establish the production collective, Svanholm, which is now a center for "ecological agriculture."

As the energy debate heated up in the late 1970s I became more involved in environmental politics, and I experienced the differences between Sweden and Denmark firsthand. In Sweden, we organized our opposition to nuclear energy as a popular front, which came to be dominated by the two anti-nuclear parliamentary parties – the left Communist and the formerly agrarian Center party. I helped to edit a journal that tried to offer a socialist voice, as well as some science and technology perspectives, to the opposition to nuclear energy. I even took part in writing, with some other local activists, a contribution to the Environmental Movement's Alternative Energy Plan, which was supported by the government and which was directed from an office at a government ministry by a young activist, who found our radical alternativism a bit hard to take.

In Denmark anti-nuclear activism, as it developed into a social movement, was more open-ended and experimental. With a group of students I visited some of the sites of alternative energy technology, such as Tvind, in western Denmark, where the world's largest windmill was being built by amateurs at a newly started people's high school. It was, in many respects, the same movement everywhere – "no nukes," or, as we put it in Scandinavia, "atomic energy: no thanks" (*atomkraft nej tack*) – but

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it was striking how the same struggle expressed itself so differently in different countries.

In our journal we tried to develop a theory of socialist ecology that drew especially on developments in Germany – where anti-nuclear opposition was more left-wing and militant than in either Sweden or Denmark – and in Norway, where environmentalism was a part of a broader movement against European integration. In the process, Norway had also spawned a home-grown form of ecological philosophy, by Arne Næss and Sigmund Kvaloy, that was starting to be called “deep ecology.” From the United States there seemed to be not one but many different kinds of movements developing: revitalized conservation organizations, locally based campaigns against nuclear plants and toxic-waste sites, the media activism of Greenpeace, as well as a number of ideologies that already then seemed to be in competition with one another: the social ecology of Murray Bookchin, the new-age politics of Mark Satin, the appropriate technology of Amory Lovins, the ecofeminism of Carolyn Merchant, to name some of those that I became acquainted with.

Meanwhile, environmentalism in other parts of the world was taking on still other shades of green, which I was able to follow rather closely, in 1978–79, as editor of the *Lund Letter on Science, Technology and Basic Human Needs*. The *Lund Letter* tried to provide a forum for discussion about the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development and, through it, I met not only a wide range of activists and academic “experts” throughout the world, but also came more closely into contact with the world of utopian practice. I went to meetings at the “free town” of Christiania, in Copenhagen, often staying overnight in a converted streetcar, and at the Frostrup camp in northern Jutland, and I soon met communards in Sweden and Norway and Finland who were living the alternative life rather than (merely) talking about it.

A stint as a journalist on the newspaper at the UNCSTD in Vienna in the summer of 1979 served to reinforce the impression that environmentalism was a broad, diverse, and extremely many-headed movement. It was in Vienna that I met Anil Agarwal, for example, who was on his way back home to India to start his Centre for Science and Environment after working in Britain for Earthscan. I also met David Dickson, a journalist for *Nature*, and one of the founders of the radical science movement in Britain, and author of the book that perhaps best captures the spirit of the 1970s: *Alternative Technology and the Politics of Technical Change* (Dickson 1974). In Vienna, I interviewed Robert Jungk, author of *The Nuclear Tyranny*, and listened to Ivan Illich, author of *Tools for Conviviality*, and, at the NGO (non-governmental organizations) meeting, which was my "beat" for the conference paper, I saw many examples of the alternative technology movement that, for me, was such a central part of the environmental activism of the 1970s.

From Vienna, I especially remember visiting the "people's forum" one evening with a fellow-journalist Ziauddin Sardar. It was a kind of gathering of the tribes, with representatives from communes and other countercultural organizations mixing, not too easily, with the more politically minded activists from anti-nuclear and development organizations. I recall that Zia, who was soon to go off to revolutionary Iran and discover another kind of politics altogether, had a rather similar reaction to the people's forum to mine; many of the projects that were on display were exciting and stimulating, but it seemed that the alternative, or utopian, activists had grown far too distant from the political activists. Could the gap between thinking and practicing, between theorizing about and living in the alternative ecological society, ever be successfully bridged?

. . . to reconnections

The 1980s were not kind to environmentalism. Rather than moving forward and gaining new members and enthusiasts, the environmental movement tended to decompose and split apart, for reasons that were not so much internal as external. There were, to be sure, plenty of disputes and debates over how to proceed most effectively. How should the opportunities that had emerged in the anti-nuclear movement – to influence policy-making, to affect industrial development, to empower local communities – best be utilized? Should environmentalists in other countries follow the example of the Germans and build a political party? Did the movement need to become more professional and hard-nosed in its modes of operation, that is, was Greenpeace the model of the future?

Lurking behind all the internal debates, however, was the recognition that a counter-revolution was under way. In Britain, Margaret Thatcher had come to power, and in the United States Ronald Reagan was elected president. Both were not merely anti-environmental but vehemently, aggressively, so. The ministers they appointed defended the rights of the exploiters, and their policies favored de-regulation, privatization, commercialization. The ideology of neo-liberalism, as it has come to be called, subsequently took on many manifestations as it spread around the world. There were both "greener" versions and "browner" versions, as corporate leaders and the public servants they supported developed their responses to the environmental challenge. The strategies that emerged to combine environmentalism and economics have grown into one of the influential "discourses" of our time – sustainable development or

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ecological modernization: what I will be calling here, green business; while the browner versions have supported many a "backlash," from scientists denying the existence of climate change and global warming, to consumers of ever bigger and ever more unnecessary automobiles, to companies moving their operations in the name of globalization to places where environmental controls are less stringent.

Even more insidiously, however, neo-liberalism helped to mobilize what was already afoot in some parts of Europe, and in some parts of the environmental movement: a populist reaction. By now, populist parties of the far right have taken power in many municipalities in France, Austria, and Norway, and they have become significant parliamentary actors in most European countries, as well as in many other parts of the world. Mixing patriotism with racism, and defending national sovereignty against the European Union and other transnational bodies, the populist reaction has become a force to be reckoned with – both in Europe and the United States. Populism has served to infect many environmentalists with what might be called a traditionalist, or neo-nationalist, bias, and as its political influence has increased, the public concern with the environment has tended to decline. Indeed, populism has helped to inspire in Europe an anti-ecological mobilization against "green" taxes on energy use and motor fuel, for example, among those who feel that their livelihoods are threatened by certain kinds of environmental policies emanating from the European Union bureaucrats in Brussels. In the United States, populism has fed into the revival of evangelical religion that has been extremely important politically for the past twenty years.

It has not been easy for environmentalists to navigate among globalists and populists, innovators and traditionalists, but somehow we and they have managed to keep going. Most of the people I met in the early days, for instance, are still active. Björn Gillberg has developed a form of counter-expertise through the years, by which he has contributed his particular skills and talents to the resolution of many environmental controversies in Sweden. He has helped to bring polluting companies to court, and he has advised citizens' groups about their rights. Most recently, he has become a discussion partner with corporations, encouraging them to clean their production processes and develop "environmentally-friendly" products (Gillberg 1999).

Across the water, Peder Agger and Oluf Danielsen are still at Roskilde. They have been active in a range of rather unique public arenas in which environmental issues have been discussed in Danish society: the Technology Board, now Technology Council, where citizen involvement in technology assessment, especially through the so-called consensus conferences, has attracted international attention; the Ecological Council,

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which provides policy pronouncements and advice to government as well as publishing the journal *Global økologi* (Global Ecology); and the Green Fund, which gives support to a wide array of grassroots projects. All three institutions are conspicuous for their absence in Sweden (and, for that matter, in the United States and Britain, as well as most other countries).

Anil Agarwal has long been one of the most respected voices of Southern environmentalism, with his active involvement in international networks and organizations, while the Centre for Science and Environment serves as a model of critical environmental knowledge production and dissemination. David Dickson produced another influential book – on the politics of American science – and served a spell as editor of *New Scientist*, and is now back writing for *Nature*. Ziauddin Sardar, who has done so much over the past twenty years to teach us about the relations between science and Islam, is editor of *Futures*. Vandana Shiva, who spent a semester with us in Lund in the early 1980s, has been at the forefront of a Third World environmental activism that has intensified over the past decade, while Amory Lovins, from his Rocky Mountain Institute, now professes a belief in "natural capitalism," a form of green business that has become an ever more significant part of the ecological culture.

This book is, in many ways, their story, or, to be a bit presumptuous, our story. For I, too, have tried to keep the banner flying through the years, primarily by writing about the environmental movement, and what I have come to call its *cognitive praxis* (Jamison *et al.* 1990; Eyerman and Jamison 1991). In the 1980s, I wrote about the "knowledge interests" that had developed within environmental movements, and in the 1990s I have tried to follow those interests as they have increasingly left the movement space behind (Jamison 1996; 1998). Most recently, I have explored the politics of participation in relation to sustainable development, as well as the transformation of environmental activism, in a number of different European countries, which has given me the immediate incentive to write this book and try to work out what it all means. I have also had occasion to see what happened to the visions of those "steam people" I wrote about in the late 1960s (Hård and Jamison 1997).

For while a great deal has been written about environmental problems and environmental politics, the actual historical trajectory of environmentalism, the dynamics of what I have come to think of as an emerging ecological culture, has tended to be neglected. Different authors have focused on different aspects of the social and cultural transformations that have been taking place over the past thirty years in the name of ecology and, as a result, all too often the forest has tended to be reduced to the trees. Instead of thinking like a mountain, and recognizing that "land

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is community" as Aldo Leopold put it so many years ago, all too many tend to defend their own private pieces of land (Leopold 1949). Among those who have analyzed the situation, too many authors have all too often tried to fit their stories into their own professional "discourse" or personal life-world.

There is also, as in so many other topic areas, a huge difference between American writings, with their patriotic enthusiasms and their sticking to the "facts," and European writings, with their cosmopolitan sophistication and speculative theories. Americans tend to see the rest of the world as peripheral, while many Europeans, as a kind of reaction to the American media barrage, retreat into a rather ineffectual provincialism. As an American who has lived in Europe for thirty years, I have continually been struck by the discursive dissonances, the interpretative imbalances, between the hemispheres. While Americans, for example, tend to neglect the importance of history, the past weighs heavily on many a European. All that seems to be new comes from North America, while Europeans take on the task of defending all that is old. What makes it across from both sides is thus often neither the best nor the brightest but more like the loudest and the most extreme. So while there is by now a voluminous literature on environmental politics, there still is room, even a need perhaps, for a book that explicitly tries to make connections: across disciplines and social roles, across countries and continents, across the generations, and, perhaps most importantly, across the divisions that have continued to grow between activists and academics, practitioners and theorists, the doers and the thinkers of the emerging ecological culture. There is a need, in short, for a collective memory, a usable past, an attempt to fashion a narrative of our own that might just bring us a bit closer together.

Among other things, this book tries to put into a broader historical and comparative perspective the making of what I call green knowledge in Sweden, Denmark, and the United States. In all three countries, as well as in all the other places that I will, on occasion, try to bring into the narrative, there has been an ongoing political battle for many years now, a battle for recognition, for acceptance, for influence. But there has also been a battle at the level of ideas – a cognitive battle – and, at both levels, it is not so clear who or what has won. Have the Björn Gillbergs, Amory Lovinses, and Peder Aggers of the world been forced to change their message and their mission so that they could be taken seriously in high places? Or have their activities helped to change our contemporary political cultures, making them "greener," more aware and conscious of environmental problems?

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Put in this way, the answer must be a firm yes – to both questions. Yes, the activism has changed; many of those who were involved in the environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s have become less radical (but also perhaps more realistic) in the things they say and the things they do. But yes, environmental activism has also helped to change fundamentally the ambience of our late modern, or postmodern, or not-yet-modern, industrial societies. In bringing environmentalism out of the cold and into the establishment, activists and former activists have played important roles in processes of institutional and policy reform, scientific and technological innovation and, on a more personal level, in changing values, beliefs, feelings, and behavior.

It is this circuitous process of social change, this long march through the institutions, this dialectical tension between incorporation and resistance, that forms the subject-matter of this book. I want to emphasize the diversity of processes involved, the contradictions and ambiguities, the differences among the participants that are all too often neglected, and which need to be explicitly recognized and discussed if they are ever to be overcome. There are strong forces of fragmentation and separation at work, and the greater the differentiation the more difficult it seems to retain a sense of unified purpose or to articulate an underlying meaning or coherence in environmental politics. If diversity makes some of us strong, it also seems to make many of us confused and disillusioned.

. . . and conceptual tools

This book builds on a number of earlier efforts to comprehend the relations among science, technology, and the politics of the environment. It was in a research program on Technology and Culture in the early 1980s that I first encountered what I have come to see as a fundamental, and highly debilitating, bifurcation in the ways in which these matters are understood, both in the academy as well as in the world outside. In the industrialized countries of the North, our perspectives have been dominated by the hegemony of a technocratic world-view, which posits a global *technological imperative*, propelling the world forward in a never-ending pursuit of newness and innovation and progress. In the early 1980s, the technocrats were beginning to reassert themselves after being on the defensive through much of the previous decade. Economists, for example, were rediscovering the writings of Joseph Schumpeter and engineers were envisioning cleaner technologies and the dawning of an information society. At the Research Policy Institute at the University of Lund, where I was working, several economists were joining together to develop what