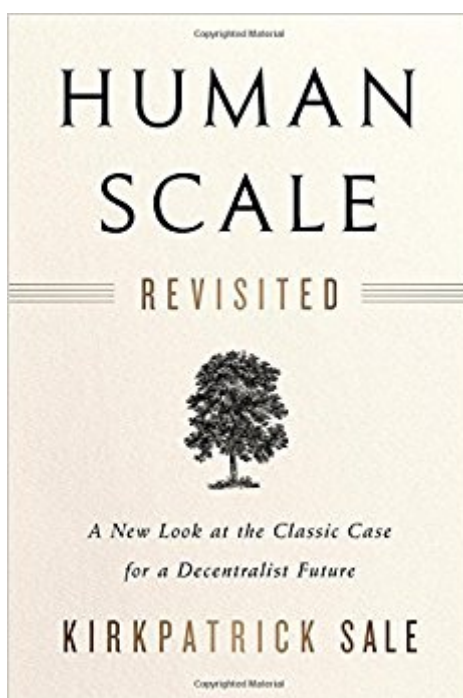


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Human Scale Revisited: A New Look At The Classic Case For A Decentralist Future



Synopsis

Big government, big business, big everything: Kirkpatrick Sale took giantism to task in his 1980 classic, *Human Scale*, and today takes a new look at how the crises that imperil modern America are the inevitable result of bigness grown out of control—and what can be done about it. The result is a keenly updated, carefully argued case for bringing human endeavors back to scales we can comprehend and manage—whether in our built environments, our politics, our business endeavors, our energy plans, or our mobility. Sale walks readers back through history to a time when buildings were scaled to the human figure (as was the Parthenon), democracies were scaled to the societies they served, and enterprise was scaled to communities. Against that backdrop, he dissects the bigger-is-better paradigm that has defined modern times and brought civilization to a crisis point. Says Sale, retreating from our calamity will take rebalancing our relationship to the environment; adopting more human-scale technologies; right-sizing our buildings, communities, and cities; and bringing our critical services—from energy, food, and garbage collection to transportation, health, and education—back to human scale as well. Like *Small is Beautiful* by E. F. Schumacher, *Human Scale* has long been a classic of modern decentralist thought and communitarian values—a key tool in the kit of those trying to localize, create meaningful governance in bioregions, or rethink our reverence of and dependence on growth, financially and otherwise. Rewritten to interpret the past few decades, *Human Scale* offers compelling new insights on how to turn away from the giantism that has caused escalating ecological distress and inequality, dysfunctional governments, and unending warfare and shines a light on many possible pathways that could allow us to scale down, survive, and thrive.

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Customer Reviews

Kirkus Reviews- "The modern world is dysfunctional because, in part, it is scaled for the convenience of machines and despots and not us. Since publishing *SDS* (1973), his classic study of the radical student organization of yore, philosopher Sale (*After Eden: The Evolution of Human Domination*, 2006, etc.) has been much concerned with matters of local governance and autonomy, advocating the atomization of government to smaller and smaller levels of decision-making. In this book, a revised version of a polemic first published in 1980, he looks at all the ways that we work at the wrong scale. Big universities, for instance, rank low on the roster of scholarly achievement. [Cities](#) that grow beyond 100,000 tend to break down. As for bureaucracy? Sale coins a term, 'Eöprytaneogenesis,' to cover maladies wrought by government, which by rights should be solving problems rather than creating them. Because it is so broad, the author's argument is often diffuse; Sale is at his best when, in good syndicalist spirit, he pushes for responsibilities as well as rights, as when he reminds readers that no government ever willingly gave up rights, which instead were won in rebellion and struggle, whether of colonies, unions, or individual heroes. By the same token, Sale is too credulous of altruism as opposed to government interventions: it is arguable that private organizations do better at blood drives than social service agencies, though the debate becomes moot when we consider that the Red Cross, a hybrid of the public and private, does the brunt of that hard work. A provocative book with many points to ponder the next time you're caught in traffic or on hold with the insurance claims department." [Like Schumacher's](#) *Small Is Beautiful* but packed with countless examples and careful theory on how to create a truly democratic community from the bottom up, Sale's charming update of his classic *Human Scale* is the best single book on how to build a localist world. A must read! [Gar Alperovitz](#), author of *What Then Must We Do?*; cofounder, *The Democracy Collaborative* "Human Scale" was once ahead of its time, but this updated edition is just in time. While the mainstream assumes that the worldwide grassroots repudiation of globalization will mean war, racism, and poverty, Kirkpatrick Sale's classic book shows how true localization can lay the foundation for peace, harmony, and prosperity. This is indispensable reading for anyone who cares about replacing Big Brother with small-scale democracy." [Michael H. Shuman](#), author of *The Local Economy Solution* "Is it possible to improve a classic? Kirkpatrick Sale has done so with this erudite,

provocative, and, ultimately, hopeful exploration of human-scale alternatives to soul-deadening Bigness in agriculture, architecture, business, education, government. . . . You name it, Sale knows it. —Bill Kauffman, author of *Bye-Bye, Miss American Empire* and *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*

Kirkpatrick Sale is a prolific scholar and author of more than a dozen books—including *A Human Scale*, *Rebels Against the Future*, and *After Eden: The Evolution of Human Domination*. He has been described as the “leader of the Neo-Luddites,” is one of the pioneers of the bioregional movement, and throughout his career has been a regular contributor to *The Nation*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *CounterPunch*, *Lew Rockwell*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *The Utne Reader*, which named him one of 100 living visionaries. Sale is currently the director of the political think tank the Middlebury Institute for the study of separatism, secession, and self-determination.

Everyone should read this book. It’s an extraordinary look at what happens to civilization and what can go wrong when things become overgrown, too big, too much, and too diverse. Not healthy for humans or for all life on the planet. We need to rethink how we do things and this book gives you that perspective.

I had the opportunity to read *HUMAN SCALE* in its first incarnation when it was originally published back in 1980. Then, it was a much needed attempt to not only slow down the rapid growth of our institutions which were drifting further and further away from people the institutions purported to serve but to highlight the damage being done to society by turning a blind eye to what was happening. What was a cautionary book then has become a necessary call-to-arms now. Much of the book has been updated, necessary because the problems have been exacerbated. Since our country already is torn into two seemingly separate entities—one red, the other blue—a further re-alignment according to geography and interests into far smaller entities is not a far-fetched idea. It is, instead, a workable, sustainable answer to a problem, indeed, a dissolution, that only grows more severe as the years pass. Read the book. The writing is clear, concise, and always compelling. You’ll soon be gazing out the window wishing it could be. And it can.

A good companion to Nassim Taleb’s work on ‘anti-fragile’. Basically, big and complex = fragile.

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