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Non-fiction  
Environment / society

Book Synopsis for  
**A MATTER OF SCALE**

by

**Keith Farnish**

## Purpose

This is not an environmental book, even though it is concerned with the environment. It is not a book to save the world, even though the world is clearly in trouble. Ultimately, *A Matter Of Scale* is a book about survival; about ensuring that every individual human has the means to save herself or himself from the crisis that is unfolding.

And there most certainly is a crisis; like the waves of a surging river; small and irregular at first, but growing larger, creating whirlpools, rising in treacherous white water, and eventually inundating everything in its path.

People know that the climate is changing, that species are being removed from the Earth at a rapidly increasing rate, that entire ecosystems are becoming shadows of their former richness; they know, but they do not understand. The environmental crisis is closing in on humanity from all directions, yet the crisis barely registers on this culture's list of problems. As we stand, humanity is doomed to a collapse that will leave only a few nomads, and a toxic, barely survivable Earth in its wake.

So why is nothing being done beyond changing light bulbs, recycling and buying organic food? It's certainly not for a lack of good reasons. Humans have no motivation stronger than survival, yet the culture that dominates has created a set of priorities that value financial wealth, the possession of superfluous goods and short, cheap thrills, above that most basic need. In short, we are prepared to die in order to live a life that is killing us.

*A Matter Of Scale* is all about changing this. It describes, in crystalline detail, what our actions are doing to the very things on Earth that we depend on for survival, at scales that we rarely contemplate. It shows, unequivocally, that the primary motivation for being human is to ensure our survival. It provides the keys to unlock the lost connections between our most basic instincts, and the impending waves that threaten to engulf us. It arms us with the tools to free us from the culture that has blinded us for centuries, and which will allow us to live lives that will give the Earth, and ourselves, a future.

Environmental authors rarely manage to take that final leap into providing unequivocal, long-term solutions, preferring instead to leave readers with even more questions. *A Matter Of Scale* proposes something far more: something radical, fundamental and frightening; something long-term, exhilarating and absolutely necessary.

This book is not for the faint-hearted, but no other problem has ever been in such a critical need of a solution.

## About The Author



Keith Farnish is an environmental writer, philosopher and activist who, in a former life, was a business continuity and IT security manager, and before that an uncommonly enthusiastic Geography graduate. He lives in Essex, UK, with his wife and two children, and has rediscovered his love of Geography.

He has been involved in environmental issues for many years, for a large part of that as an active member of various environmental organisations, and is continually striving to minimise his impact on the natural world.

He also has a deep interest in human rights, and the way in which this is closely wrapped up in the protection of the global environment.

Keith founded The Earth Blog ([www.theearthblog.org](http://www.theearthblog.org)), intended as a source of inspiration for people who want to be challenged, and offering uncompromising solutions to difficult problems. He also writes The Unsuitablog ([www.unsuitablog.com](http://www.unsuitablog.com)), a blog that aims to expose all types of environmental hypocrisy, and The Sietch, a widely read USA-based web site.

In 2006, Keith co-founded Green Seniors ([www.greenseniors.org](http://www.greenseniors.org)) alongside Joyce Emery of Iowa, USA. Green Seniors' aim is to mobilize the millions of environmentally aware seniors around the globe into using their experience and free time to make a positive difference.

Cover Concept

This cover art was commissioned and produced exclusively for A Matter Of Scale.

**Keith Farnish**

**A Matter  
Of Scale**



**A Book. A Solution. A Future.**

## Table Of Contents: Sections

Total length: 97,000 words + references

The main elements of the book are sections, rather than chapters. Chapter headings are listed on the next page for completion.

### Part 1: The Scale Of The Problem

Life on Earth exists on a vast continuum, with individual organisms ranging from the sub-microscopic to those, which are truly colossal. Each organism functions as part of a complex web of interconnected ecosystems, some of which are global in extent. Humans are very effective agents of destruction, having demonstrated the ability to demolish habitats, pollute ecosystems and change the global climate. This section of the book shows how humans are affecting key organisms across the whole range of scales – including viruses, bacteria, nematodes, bees, fish and boreal forests – and how, consequently, this is adversely affecting human life.

### Part 2: Why It Matters

Humans, like all other life forms on this planet, act in order to benefit the continuation of their genes. Humans, unlike all other life forms on this planet, have managed to go beyond what seems possible for such an insignificant species. Our attitude to ourselves and our environment is no longer about survival, it has become selfish. However, selfish behaviour is not sustainable; within a limited catchment area like the Earth, selfish behaviour will be self-defeating. This section describes all of these aspects of human life, and then explains why, even with our ability to suppress natural instincts, what ultimately matters is what matters to us.

### Part 3: Making The Connection

Despite our knowledge of the imminent collapse of the global ecology, and despite the desire to ensure our continued survival, humans seem incapable of connecting these two inseparable factors. This part describes first, in theory, how the two factors are connected, and then in practical terms, how humans can allow themselves to make the connection. The final chapter in this section will explain why humans have become manifestly incapable of making the connection, and thus acting for good, because of the economic, socio-religious and political systems that infect every part of our lives.

### Part 4: How To Survive

The only acceptable outcome for humanity is one in which humans reduce their impact on the planet, such that they are able to continue to remain part of the global ecosystem. The other option is self-annihilation. Humans have a choice, but in order to make this choice they must reject the systems that are preventing them from choosing the outcome. This section will describe, at a range of levels never assembled before in one place, how humans can break down those systems, leaving us free to choose our destiny – one that will give the Earth, and us, a future.

## Table Of Contents: Chapters

### Part 1: The Scale Of The Problem

1. One Ten Millionth Of A Metre
2. One Millionth Of A Metre
3. One Thousandth Of A Metre
4. One Hundredth Of A Metre
5. One Metre
6. One Hundred Metres
7. Beneath And Beyond

### Part 2: Why It Matters

8. What Are We?
9. Who Are We?
10. Why Does It Matter?

### Part 3: Making The Connection

11. Why Connect?
12. How To Connect
13. Why Can't We Connect?

### Part 4: How To Survive

14. Getting Angry
15. You Are The System
16. Making The Change
17. Being Ourselves

## Sources

Given the scale of the project, a vast range of different sources have been used in the preparation of this book, including:

- Philosophy, environmental theory and environmental polemic text books
- Scientific journals and text books
- Governmental, international body and representative NGO documentation and papers
- Subject specific web sites
- Newspapers, magazines and periodicals (for reportage)
- Personal correspondence

At the last edit there were around 350 unique references in the book.

## Comparative Literature

The following texts have some relationship to the work either in part or in whole:

- Richard Fortey, “Life: An Unauthorised Biography”, HarperCollins, 1997

”Life” takes a narrative, wide-ranging approach to many different aspects of life on Earth, something I have mirrored in Part One of A Matter Of Scale, focussing on six specific organism types at six different scales.

- Derrick Jensen, “Endgame Volume I: The Problem Of Civilization” and “Endgame Volume II: Resistance”, Seven Stories Press, 2006.

The “Endgame” books are direct and uncompromising attacks on the nature and manifestations of civilization. Jensen’s philosophy echoes much of my own, which is reflected in the latter parts of the book; although I tend to take a slightly less emotive approach in my writing.

- Richard Dawkins, “The God Delusion”, Bantam Press, 2006

It is the analytical methodology that Dawkins takes in breaking down the failures of religion which I have particularly used in Part Two: Why It Matters, in relation to the needs of humanity. It is not enough just to state a point of view; like Dawkins I have attempted to produce a similarly watertight case for my subject.

- Franz J. Broszmitter, “Ecocide”, Pluto Press, 2003

”Ecocide” presents an inarguable case for the condemnation of the behaviour of civilized humans, in particular, in his book. This is reflected throughout A Matter Of Scale, using a similarly wide variety of examples from history and the present day.

- George Monbiot, “Heat: How To Stop The Planet Burning”, Penguin, 2006

Although a relatively mainstream environmental thinker, Monbiot has a readable and passionate style in his writing, particularly in “Heat” which I have reflected in my own text. The audience for “Heat” and also “The God Delusion” are most similar in demography and scope to my own work.