

Collapse: How Societies *Choose* to Fail or Succeed

Jared Diamond

Part Four: Practical Lessons, Ch 14-16

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Overview

- Ch 14: Why do some societies make disastrous decisions?
- Ch 15: Big businesses and the environment: different conditions, different outcomes
- Ch 16: The world as a polder: what does it all mean to us today?
 - Tipping point choices: societal and individual
 - What can I as an individual do?
- Summary



Ch 14: Why do some societies make disastrous decisions?

- Failure to anticipate
- Failure to perceive that a problem has arisen
- Rational bad behavior (ISEP)
 - Conflicts of interest between elites and the masses
- Disastrous societal values
 - Religion
- Irrational failures
- Unworkable solutions
- Poor leadership
 - Isolated elites



Ch 15: Big businesses and the environment: different conditions, different outcomes

- Resource extraction
- Non-renewable: depletion and damage from extraction
 - Oil: Pertamina (Indonesia) vs. Chevron (Papua New Guinea)
 - Hardrock mining
- Renewable: sustainable harvest strategies are possible
 - Logging and the Forest Stewardship Council
 - Seafood and the Marine Stewardship Council
- Conclusion
 - Public is responsible for the behavior of big business (short supply chains help)



Ch 16: The world as a polder: what does it all mean to us today?

- The most serious problems
 - Loss of natural resources
 - Half world's forests gone
 - Ceilings on energy, freshwater and photosynthesis
 - Harmful substances: chemicals, species and gases
 - Increase in human population
- The past and the present are different
- Reasons for hope
 - Problems are human-caused and not intractable
 - Problem stage is perceptible not crisis-level
 - Globalization
 - Increasing public environmental thinking worldwide



Tipping point choices: societal and individual

- Long-term planning
 - Successful: US air pollutant reduction, Asian tropical diseases and China, Bangladesh family planning
- Willingness to reconsider core values
 - Unsuccessful: Norse did not rethink European, Christian, pastoral
 - Successful: Tikopia Islanders expunged pigs, Britain and France as former world powers, Japan abandoned military tradition, Russia abandoned communism
 - Can the US forsake isolationism and consumerism?



What can I as an individual do?

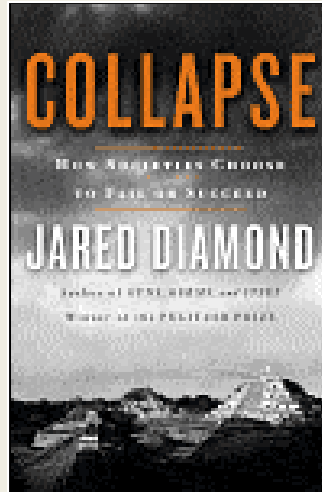
- **Politically**
 - Vote
 - Communicate thoughts to legislative leaders once a month
- **Economically**
 - Buy or don't buy as a consumer
 - Example: demand for FSC-certified wood products exceeds supply
 - Be an activist (embarrassment more powerful than force)
 - Vacation in environmentally-principled locales
- **Socially**
 - Dialogue these issues in your social circles
- **Philanthropically**
 - Support environmental causes (FSC, WWF, Zero Population Growth, Trout Unlimited, etc.)



Summary



- Societies have made and still make poor decisions regarding environmental resources for many reasons
- Big business is the lever for extracting environmental resources and must be governed by the public
- Humanity rapidly advancing on a non-sustainable course
 - Resource consumption dramatically exceeds replacement and full demand is understated
- As societies and individuals, we must engage in long-term planning and (painfully) rethinking of core values



Thank you

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