

Collapse:  
How Societies *Choose* to Fail or Succeed

Jared Diamond

Part Four: Practical Lessons, Ch 14-16

NIH BCIG  
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# Overview

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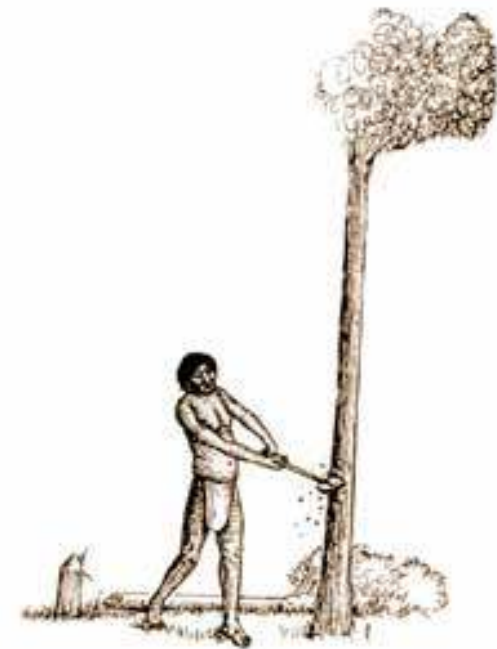
- Ch 14: Why do some societies make disastrous decisions?
- Ch 15: Big businesses and the environment: different conditions, different outcomes
- Ch 16: The world as a polder: what does it all mean to us today?
  - Tipping point choices: societal and individual
  - What can I as an individual do?
- Summary



# Ch 14: Why do some societies make disastrous decisions?

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- 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

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- 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?

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- 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

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- 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?

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- **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.)



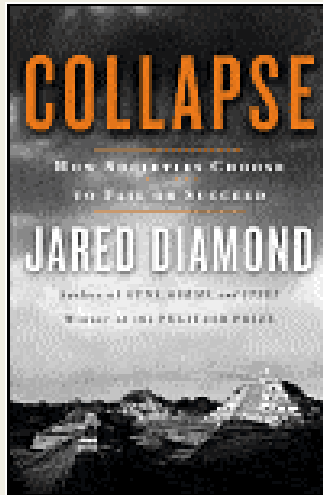
# Summary

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- 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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