

Game Changer 1: Environmental Breakdown

Transcript

The first of our Game Changers is Environmental Breakdown, and you can think of this as our physical environment, destabilized. This is happening because of a number of trends that are coming together, climate change among them, of course. We also have sea level rise, which we're already beginning to see and feel. We're concerned about island nations losing their land, literally. Coastal areas and real estate markets are already beginning to respond to the reality of sea level rise. Climate change also has increased weather variability. Most of us understand that as more frequent and more extreme weather events, hurricanes, things like that.

And then we have warming temperatures. Even in the midst of all of us right now having rather extremely hot summers in the United States. Then of course we've got trends around economic development. The world is becoming more middle class, and we are consuming more, and extracting more resources, demanding more resources, contributing to what has been a long run of contamination of our environment. In the backdrop, we've got the twin trends of urbanization and litoralization. We are now a predominantly urban species, and we are building these massive cities along the coasts. Coastal areas are among the most at risk for both sea level rise and some of these extreme weather events.

And so Environmental Breakdown confronts us with a future where we're looking at our most populous and most critical areas for our countries being at particular risk for these threats. And at the same time, we know from a long history of natural disasters and similar events that our most vulnerable populations are always the most at risk. So we expect them to be increasingly at risk, and continue to be the most vulnerable populations as we're moving into the future. And then we've got ecosystem shifts, habitat shifts, extreme weather, and disruptions to all these different systems, so we have an increasingly vulnerable food supply chain. And so Environmental Breakdown becomes one of the key big strategic issues that the country—and just about every sector in the country—is going to have to come to grips with.

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