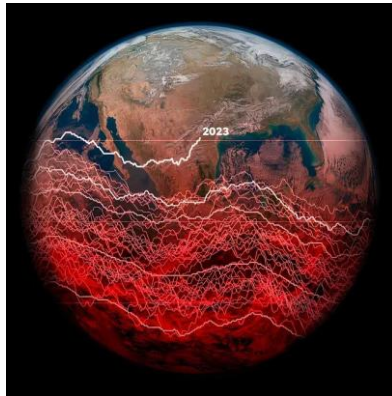


Our Inner Limits – ADDENDUM VIII

**Bart Flos**

# OUR INNER LIMITS



## ADDENDUM VIII

### The Final Taboo: Collapse



The Final Taboo: Collapse

Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM VIII

The Final Taboo: Collapse

**Bart Flos**

**OUR  
INNER  
LIMITS**

**ADDENDUM VIII**

***The Final Taboo:  
Collapse***



**Previously published by Bart Flos:**

*Het anti-klaagboek – Het anti-sleurboek – Het perfecte project  
De kenniskermis – Vooruitkijken voor gevorderden*

*De mens als grens ('Our Inner Limits')*

*The Anti-Complain Book – The Perfect Project*

*De hoogvolwassen organisatie – De klimaatconfrontatie*

*De zelfmoordsoort – The Suicide Kind*

*As addenda to 'De mens als grens':*

*Addendum I – Het begin van het einde: onwetendheid  
Addendum II – De frontale confrontatie: klimaatverandering  
Addendum III – Het grote probleem: overconsumptie  
Addendum IV – Het laatste taboe: ineenstorting*

*As addenda to 'Our Inner Limits':*

*Addendum V – The Beginning of The End: Ignorance  
Addendum VI – De Frontal Confrontation: Climate Change  
Addendum VII – The Big Problem: Overconsumption  
Addendum VIII – The Final Taboo: Collapse  
Addendum IX – The Next Step: Collapse Awareness  
Addendum X – The Last Resort: Collapse Acceptance  
Addendum XI – The Tough Choice: Collapse Resilience*

**T H E F I N A L T A B O O : C O L L A P S E**

*Self-knowledge is the first step to adulthood.*

**Jane Austen**

*Civilization begins with order, grows with freedom, and dies  
with chaos.*

**Will Durant**

*We are only allowed to live on this planet as long as we treat  
all of nature with compassion and intelligence.*

**Aldous Huxley**

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Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM VIII

The Final Taboo: Collapse



# Introduction

In 2015 I published my fifth book, *Vooruitkijken voor gevorderden – Hoop voor de toekomst van mensaap en moederplaneet* ('Futurology for Fanatics – Hope for the Future of Man Ape and Mother Planet'). It is an easy-to-read book with the same design as its predecessor *De kenniskermis – Overleven in een zee van informatie* ('The Knowledge Fair – How to Survive in an Ocean of Information'). Short chapters of approximately 800 words, provided with QR codes and TED(x) talks, nice pictures and numerous references to other interesting books.

In *Futurology for Fanatics*, I not only discuss humanity's major problems, but I also provide hopeful solutions. By (daring to) look ahead 100, 1.000 and even 10.000 years, I paint a picture of the limitless possibilities that Homo sapiens has to shape its own future. The final goal? Preserving our planet to prepare it as a home base for the exploration of the cosmos.

I still remember someone calling me a 'naive idealist' then. I defended this fiercely at the time and replied that I preferred to call myself an 'incurable optimist'. "Yeah, yeah," was the response, "Dream on." But it really was true, I was sitting on a comfortable pink cloud and I was looking through rose-colored glasses, which turned out to be a cold, metal telephoto lens and microscope. It wasn't until I got into my helicopter, flew as high as I could and started looking down that the scales fell from my eyes.

*Fast forward to 2022*

Since the publication of *Futurology for Fanatics* more than half a billion people have been added to the population, we have emitted another 285 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> and the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>-level has risen from 400 to 418 ppm. That has categorically transformed me from an incorrigible optimist to a 'confrontealst', someone who confronts those around him head-on with hard science, with observation, research, facts and evidence.

My own research over the past two years has led me to write my sixth book, my Magnus Opus, which brings together all my previous work. *De mens als grens – Over de onbuigzame barrières van ons bestaan* ('Our Inner Limits – On the Unbending Barriers of Being') is much less hopeful as a plea, unfortunately, but it still contains solutions. These are now the last solutions we have left.

I'm sorry that this time I don't share hopeful dreams about the human species, which first preserves its planet and then seeks refuge among the stars. But it is time that we recognize, acknowledge and confess what we are: social group primates and hunter-gatherers, who are extremely proficient at surviving and reproducing. At the expense of everything and everyone. It's the nature of the beast.

*Fast forward to 2024*

When I delivered the final manuscript of *Our Inner Limits* to my publisher in October 2022, I could not have imagined how quickly things would get so much worse. The year 2023 is the year that we passed the 'elbow' of the exponential curve. This means that from now on, events affecting the environment,

biodiversity and climate will no longer follow a relatively linear path, but a chaotic, completely unpredictable one.

Since the publication of my sixth book, I have written almost 1.000 posts on *LinkedIn*, about 60 per month, 2 every day. In order not to let them go to waste in the endless timelines, I have included them in eleven addenda to *Our Inner Limits*: four in Dutch and seven in English. In these addenda I'm taking you on that accelerating path of decline as we embark on a journey from ignorance to climate change to overconsumption and collapse.

I would have liked to tell you something different, but it's not 2015 anymore. It is no longer 1970 either, when we could still do something. Or 1990, pretty much humanity's last chance to avoid collapse. I was forced to give up the 'hopeful future of man ape and mother planet'. In turn, I hope you'll stick with it to work your way through the addenda, because it's a story that needs to be told. Science, truth and reality now tell us that we have actually waited too long. It is too late. Collapse is now locked into the system.

With these eleven addenda, I hope to arm you not only with facts and evidence and the latest insights from the scientific community. I especially hope that it will make you and your loved ones more collapse aware and resilient to what is coming. Because our future is no longer a few hundred years away, or in the next century, or at the end of this century, or in 2070 or 2050. Our future takes place in the next ten years.

To conclude, I don't think it would be prudent to wish you 'much reading pleasure'. I wish you lots of wisdom and strength instead.

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The Final Taboo: Collapse

# About this book

The great thing about writing a post on *LinkedIn* is that, even more so than on Twitter and unlike Facebook, you are forced to limit your message to about 500 words (3.000 characters) for a post and about 200 words (1.250 characters) for a comment. *Schrijven is schrappen* ('To write is to delete' – thank you Simon Carmiggelt) is, as it were, enforced here, accurate to the very punctuation mark and that is good. Because it forces authors to shorten the message to a length that should be manageable even for the hurried, overloaded, *I'm-very-busy*-reader, without losing sight of the core message.

This book is an addendum, a supplement to my sixth book *Our Inner Limits*. There are a total of eleven addenda, four in Dutch and seven in English. The English addenda are not direct translations of the Dutch addenda. On *LinkedIn* I often respond to English posts in English. Sometimes I translate them into Dutch, but they also stand alone. The same applies the other way around: sometimes I translate a Dutch post into English, sometimes I do not. So, if you speak the English language – and who doesn't in the Netherlands? – and if you want to be completely informed, read all eleven. (If you don't master the Dutch language, I'm glad I am able to offer you seven English addenda. The gist of my message is just the same).

At an average reading speed of about 250 words per minute, each subchapter in this book will only take you a few minutes. So, I would like to say: do you have a little less time now? Then choose a few chapter titles that appeal to you and spend ten or fifteen minutes on them. Each post stands alone and all I did was put them into a book template and made sure that the information I referenced and responded to was not lost. So, you can pick up the addenda and

put them away whenever you want. In any case, it is best to take in the information in steps. I wouldn't want you to be overwhelmed.

Because the addenda are published as PDF books, the website links remain active. So, you can step out and take a trip to related information elsewhere and look for further depth there. In addition, you can find more links and information that apply generically in the appendices.

Each of the eleven addenda is the size of an average management book, between 30.000 and 40.000 words. The layout is like a complete book, so if you prefer to read on paper, you can easily submit the PDF as a print file to a print shop and voilà, you have a physical book in your hands, *easy peasy*.

The almost thousand posts were written from October 2022 through March 2024. All posts are presented in more or less chronological order and even though I present them in the form of a book, it is still a relatively loose collection of stories, insights and reflections. So don't be surprised by repetition and progressive insight. For a more structured foundation of my view on the coexistence and collaborating of the human species, I recommend that you read my book first or check out the website, which acts as a management summary to my book.

Each addendum is classified into 11 fixed chapters:

1. *The frontal confrontation*
2. *The collapse*
3. *Economy versus ecology*
4. *The Almighty Algorithm*
5. *Distraction, deception, doubt and deceit.*

6. *The climate collision*
7. *About climate stupidity*
8. *Looking down from above*
9. *Pollution, waste and destruction*
10. *Global consultation doesn't work*
11. *Science, truth and reality*

Please note: not all chapters appear equally in all addenda.

If you've worked your way through all eleven books, you'll have taken a journey from ignorance to climate change to overconsumption, collapse and acceptance. Not all journeys are equally enjoyable to make and this journey is one of the beginning of the end, of frontal confrontation, major existential problems and the very last, ultimate taboo: the collapse of human civilization as we know it today. That, by the way, does not necessarily mean 'the end of the world': the extinction of the human species. But it has now become a serious option indeed.

Finally: while in my book *Our Inner Limits* I leave it to the dear reader to draw their own conclusions about where the human species is going, I am much more explicit in these eleven addenda, more 'right to your face' and perhaps a bit blunt here and there. Because as a self-proclaimed *confrontealist*, I passionately believe that only a frontal confrontation with truth and reality can, perhaps, open our eyes to what is coming our way.

Good luck and success!

Bart Flos, Helmond | February 2025

Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM VIII

The Final Taboo: Collapse



# Chapter 1

## The frontal confrontation

### 1.1

### SM523

### Are we really that obtuse?

A saw a post linking to an article that promoted an extensive list of hopeful books about the environment, biodiversity and climate with different titles and subtitles, but all with the same core message:

*“Yes, we made a mess of things and the situation is really bad, getting worse every day. It’s understandable that we feel helpless and powerless to stop it. It invokes feelings of despair and doom. But you may rejoice, because help is on the way. Yes, believe it or not, it’s nót too late, we can still dó something. But we really got to snap to it, start doing something about it right away, if we don’t want things to get out of control. Here’s how we go about that”.*

This was my response:

“Is this the best we can do?”

*Ok. Let's sum up:*

- We have exceeded the carrying weight of our habitat for over 70 years now (\*).
- We organized countless international conferences and summits on the environment, biodiversity and climate.
- We did nothing effectively, *zilch*, with the conclusions out of these conferences.
- We keep subsidizing the fossil fuel industry.

*As a consequence:*

- We are pushing global warming way beyond 2C/3C of warming, creating a 'runaway climate' and 'hothouse earth'.
- The atmosphere, biosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and cryosphere have already entered a state of cascade failure, the prelude to suprasystemic collapse.
- The jetstream is meandering, the oceans are overheating, acidifying and deoxygenating, the global ocean currents are destabilizing.
- The extreme weather and climate disasters washing over our planet will increase in frequency and intensity.
- Our technological infrastructure, most of which is above ground, is extremely vulnerable to the elements, especially when those 'elements' get destructive powers.

*Which implies:*

- Large parts of our planet will become uninhabitable for human life.
- We drag countless innocent species and plants with us in our own accelerated extinction.

- Billions of people are forced to migrate away from the shores and towards the arctic regions.
- Conflict, crisis and war will ensue.
- Catastrophic releases of methane deposits due to permafrost thaw will eventually render our atmosphere toxic for millions of years.

Luckily, now we have this list of books. We're saved! Hallelujah! Let's all read them and do what they say. Let's come together and save our planet so it remains livable for us, our children and our grandchildren. But wait. This book is 3 years old. That one is 5 years old, and look, this one dates back even 15 years. But they all dictate what we need to do, they all have the solutions inside. And look, some of these books refer to other books that are 20, 30 or even 50 years old. Wait, what the h...?

Really? Are we really that obtuse?"

(\*) Overshoot or overconsumption: when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat. Environmental pollution, destruction of the biodiversity and climate change are symptoms of overshoot. Overconsumption is always met with collapse; it's locked into the system. If you're interested in the concept of overshoot, see Appendix IV.

## 1.2

### SM532

## On the difference between promises and reality

I once again saw a report on what needs to be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in general and CO<sub>2</sub> in particular to 'net zero'. They always look the same: on the left the historical CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and on the right the different 'emission reduction scenarios' based on intentions and promises.

It provokes a derogatory snort from me (my apologies), because the historical trajectory of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on the left shows a clear gradual increase in recent years, consistent with global population growth and GWP growth (Global World Product, the sum of all GDPs), while most of the planned future reduction scenarios on the right (based on intentions and promises of the 200 countries of the world) suddenly and miraculously go steeply downwards, in the direction of the 'net zero emissions' targets.

This was my response:

“It is mind-boggling that we keep harboring the hope that we’ll still be able to stay below 2C of warming, let alone 1,5C. Such a graph is the pinnacle of hubris, ignorance and stupidity of the human species.

- *We’ve had 27 international climate conferences (COP) and none of them made the slightest difference. None. The 28th COP is chaired by an oil sheik, for crying out loud!*
- *None of the climate reports, analysis, books, articles and posts ever produced have made any difference. None of them broke our habits.*
- *The world population is at 8 billion people, growing to 10 billion in 2050.*
- *According to the collective economic plans of the 200 countries of the world, the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent will increase from 54 gigaton in 2022 to 62 gigaton in 2050.*
- *The atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>-level is 420 ppm, rising to 500 ppm in 2050 (preindustrial levels were at 280 ppm).*
- *The atmosphere, biosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and cryosphere have entered a state of cascade failure, the prelude to suprasystemic collapse (\*).*

And, somehow, we still think that by some great miracle we’ll be able to steeply decrease greenhouse gas emissions. That we will suddenly come to our senses and voluntarily decline, reduce and diminish. Really?”

(\*) Environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change are symptoms of overshoot or overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat. Overconsumption is always met with collapse; it’s locked into the system. If you’re interested in the concept of overshoot, see Appendix IV.

## 1.3

### SM548

## Is this the best we can do?

I saw a post with the following header:

*“US Electric Vehicle Sales Reach Breakthrough Pace: 10 years to sell the first million EVs, just ONE year for the third million. What an incredible pace!”*

This was my response:

“Now wait just a minute here. Apparently, we can’t think of anything better than replacing the 1,6 billion combustion engine vehicles in the world by EV’s. It requires fossil fuels to build them, rare metals to fuel them, people to maintain them. It will keep the current infrastructure intact – roads and highways, bridges and tunnels, power stations, intercity connections – and it will keep creating traffic jams, requiring more roads. It is classic inside the box thinking. Thinking outside the box, however, would mean:

– *Reducing the total number of vehicles to a few hundred million, whilst scaling up public transportation and returning half of the transportation infrastructure back to nature.*

– *Reducing world population with 1% each year (instead of the current 1% yearly increase), bringing us to 6 billion people in 2050 (instead of 10) and 1,3 billion by 2200 (the ideal number).*

— *Realizing that environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change are mere symptoms of overshoot or overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat (\*)*.

Meanwhile, we still add 150 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent to the atmosphere daily, rising to 170 million tons in 2050.

Is this the best we can do?”

(\*) See Appendix IV.

## 1.4

### SM577

## Well, it could have been worse, right?

I have argued on a regular basis that we have produced countless books, reports, analysis and conferences on the topics of environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change over the past half century, but that none of them have had any influence at all on (1) the increasing global greenhouse gas emissions and (2) global atmospheric greenhouse gas levels, (3) the rising average global surface temperature, (4) the growth of the GWP (the Global World Product, the sum of all GDP's, Global Domestic Product) and (5) the growing world population.

Somebody commented as follows:

*“As I agree in principle with you, but I am going to argue that climate reports, books, activism do have an effect. Without all this effort the situation would be even worse. It is not good now and there are significant big problems – but we could have 3% or more of emissions growth year on year, instead of the 1% now.”*

This was my response:

“I’m sorry, but your reasoning is flawed. Forgive me for being blunt here. One of the weakest arguments, maybe the weakest, which can be brought up in any kind of long-term development, where a large system is on track of collapse, is saying that ‘if we had done nothing, it could have been far worse’. The



symptoms of that kind of reasoning are always similar: isolating specific statistics, omitting and twisting data, focus on minute details and local levels, false comparisons and window dressing.

In 2022 global CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions we're at 37,5 gigaton, an all-time high. Based on the economic plans of the 200 countries of the world, this will rise to 43 gigaton in 2050. That's even less than 1% of increase per year, because that would bring us to 49 gigaton per year. But that's irrelevant too.

Cumulative global CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions are 1,500 gigaton, rising to 2,500 gigaton in 2050. CO<sub>2</sub> stays in the air for thousands of years. Current atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>-level is 420 ppm, rising to 500 ppm in 2050. Preindustrial levels were at 280 ppm. The jetstream is meandering, the oceans are overheating, acidifying and deoxygenating, the ocean currents are destabilizing.

Those are Earth's Management and Control Systems that we have been overloading for over 70 years now. There's no on/off switch here, no reset button or an edit/undo function. Once such a large and complex suprasystem starts to degrade, there's no stopping it. It will trigger massive disruptions until it reaches a new equilibrium. 2023 is the year we passed the 'elbow' of the exponential curve. We have waited too long, it's too late. Our suprasystem will collapse.

The atmosphere, biosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and cryosphere have entered a state of cascade-failure, the prelude to suprasystemic collapse. The extreme weather and climate disasters that currently wash over the planet, will not let up, they will keep growing in frequency and intensity. And what are we doing? We keep pumping greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere at a rate of 150 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per day, polluting the environment with

synthetic chemicals and destroying the biodiversity with mass special extinctions.

And we're focusing on renewable developments, that still need fossil fuels to produce, whilst crying ourselves to sleep at night, mumbling that 'if we hadn't done anything, it would have been far worse!' I honestly do not believe that we understand what's coming our way.

I'm not just being overly dramatic here. The concept of overshoot or overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat, is well-known and intensively researched. If you're interested, see Appendix IV.

## 1.5

### SM578

#### **Why not write a strongly worded letter?**

I saw yet another passionate speech floating by in my timeline, describing the dire situation that we're in with human-caused climate change, that we have made a mess of things and that it has gotten worse at every turn, but that it is not too late, we can still do something if only we start now.

This was my response:

“Strong speech. Good words. All true. Well said. To the point. Excellent job. Al Gore made a similar speech. Greta Thunberg did too. Years ago. Also great.

We have produced countless climate books, reports and analysis containing powerful speeches written by clever, knowledgeable people. We have organized countless international conferences on the environment, biodiversity and climate. People spoke on these events powerfully, passionately and frantically. Exceptionally good speeches indeed. Emotional. Dramatic. With all the good words. The climate COP28 is chaired by an oil sheik, and I wish I was not making that up. If it weren't so serious, we would all have a good laugh about it and carry on.

This oil sheik is going to give a speech too. Undoubtedly well-articulated, powerful, with all the right words. He might even address the worsening situation, you know, with the climate and all, outside, where the weather is and climate disasters rule the planet. After the COP28, scandals will arise. That

despite the climate shit getting worse every day, the fossil fuel industry will have lobbied in the backrooms to power down the rhetoric, economize and politicize the final report.

Somebody will probably give a powerful speech about that too. Or write a strongly worded letter.

## 1.6

### SM584

## Best books ever written not changing anything

I saw someone posting a list of ‘best sustainability books ever written according to Goodreads - Part 2’. This was my response:

“Yes. Excellent books. And so many! I could easily add another 300 from the bibliography of my latest book and then add it to the pile. Now imagine having a list of all the books written about the environment, the biodiversity and the climate over the past half century, since we became aware that we were exceeding the carrying capacity of our habitat, a concept called overshoot or overconsumption.

Look, all of these books have a publication date. Now, please plot these dates as a marker in the graph I added in the comment section. What conclusions do you draw? And where do you think this is going? If you were to extrapolate the trend of this graph, say a few decades into the future, adding all the new books coming out and all the international conferences being organized, like the COP28 in November, what would happen, do you think?

There’s no lack of in-depth analysis, well-meant initiatives, tantalizing technologies, brilliant ideas and elaborate project plans — we’ve got them all. And we’ve been having them for more than half a century now. At what point do you think, will the global emissions of greenhouse gases, the global

atmospheric greenhouse gas levels and the global average surface temperature start to go down? Just asking.”

Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM VIII

The Final Taboo: Collapse

In 2015, author, public speaker and change specialist Bart Flos published his fifth book, *Vooruitkijken voor gevorderden* ('Futurology for Fanatics'). In this book he paints a hopeful picture of the limitless possibilities of the human species *Homo sapiens* to shape its own future.

*Fast forward to 2022*

Since the publication of that book, things have quickly gotten out of hand with the environment, biodiversity and climate. It prompted Flos to write his sixth book: *Demens als grens* ('Our Inner Limits'). It was much less hopeful as a plea, unfortunately, but it still contained solutions to turn the tide.

*Fast forward to 2024*

"After the publication of *Our Inner Limits*, I could not have imagined how quickly things would get so much worse. The year 2023 is the year that we passed the 'elbow' of the exponential curve. What we are left with now is chaos and unpredictability. I wrote almost a thousand posts about it and I didn't want them to get lost in the endless timelines of our social media platforms," says Flos.

This is one of the eleven addenda to *Our Inner Limits*, in which Flos's posts are included in book form. It takes you on a head-on confrontational journey from ignorance via climate change to overconsumption and collapse. We will break the last ultimate taboo together: daring to say that we have waited too long, that it is now too late and that we will have to suffer the consequences of our destructive collective behavior as a human species.

**Want to learn more? Go to [www.demensalsgrens.nl](http://www.demensalsgrens.nl)**