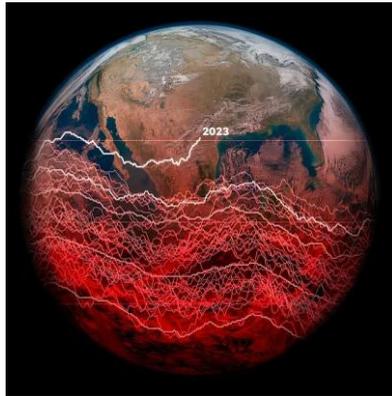


Our Inner Limits – ADDENDUM XII

Bart Flos

SIXTY SIGNS OF SOCIETAL COLLAPSE



Our Inner Limits – Addendum XII



Sixty Signs of Societal Collapse

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Bart Flos

**SIXTY SIGNS OF
SOCIETAL
COLLAPSE**

**OUR INNER LIMITS
ADDENDUM XII**



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
Addendum XII – Sixty Signs of Societal Collapse*

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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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 structure as its predecessor *De kenniskermis – Overleven in een zee van informatie* ('The Knowledge Fair – Surviving in an Ocean of Information'). Short chapters of about 800 words, with QR codes to TED(x) talks, neat pictures and numerous references to other interesting books.

In *Futurology for Fanatics*, I not only discuss the major problems of humanity, but I also provide hopeful solutions. By daring to look 100, 1000 and even 10,000 years ahead, I sketch a picture of the unlimited possibilities that the human species has to shape its own future. The ultimate objective? Preserving our planet to prepare it as a home base for the exploration of the cosmos.

I remember someone calling me a 'naïve idealist' back then. I defended that with fervor at the time, replying that I preferred to call myself an 'incorrigible optimist'. 'Yeah, yeah' <derogatory snort> 'Dream on!' But it was true, I was positioned on a comfortable pink cloud and peaked through rose-colored glasses, which turned out to be a cold metal telephoto lens and microscope. I was blindsighted by hope, optimism and a false sense of security, but it didn't last. It simply couldn't. It wasn't until I got into my helicopter, flying as high as I could and looking down from far above, that the scales fell from my eyes.

Fast forward to 2025

Since the publication of *Futurology for Fanatics*, about a billion people have been added to the world population (we went from 7.2 billion people in 2015 to 8.2 billion people in 2025), we have emitted another 365 gigatons of CO₂ (1 gigaton is 1 billion tons) and atmospheric CO₂ has risen from 399 to 425 ppm (parts per million, as an indication of the concentration of a substance), a catastrophic rise from the 200–300 ppm variance over the past 800,000 years. That has transformed me from an incorrigible optimist to a 'confrontealist', one who confronts others head-on with truth, reality and hard science, with observation and research, with facts and evidence.

During 2020 and 2021, the Corona pandemic years, extensive research has led me to author my sixth book and Magnus Opus, in which I integrated all my previous work. *De mens als grens – Over de onbuigzame barrières van ons bestaan* ('Our Inner Limits' – *On the Unbending Barriers of Being*) was published in December of 2022 and is much less hopeful, unfortunately, but still contains solutions, albeit the last solutions that we have left.

I apologize for not sharing hopeful dreams about the future of the human species this time, preserving its planet and seeking refuge among the stars. It's high time we recognize, acknowledge and confess to what we really are: social group primates and hunter-gatherers who are great at survival and reproduction, but do so at the expense of everything and everyone else. Yes, as a species goes we are single-minded, shortsighted and selfish. It's the nature of the beast and it will be our downfall.

When I delivered the final manuscript of *De mens als grens / 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 we passed the 'elbow' of the exponential curve, pushing us into a state of cascade failure. This implies that from that point onwards, events with the environment, biodiversity and climate would not follow a relatively linear path anymore, but an accelerating, chaotic, totally unpredictable one.

In the sixteen months following the publication of my Magnus Opus, I wrote a thousand 500-word posts on *LinkedIn*, about sixty a month, two a day, every day. That was its own kind of madness I guess, because I was spending up to nine hours a day on social media. I had to stop it, and I did. Cold Turkey. I took a sabbatical from *LinkedIn* for about a year and you can read what that brought me in Part 2 of this book and in the epilogue. Because, naturally, I relapsed.

Between 4th of March and 12th of May 2025, that's 69 days, I wrote another hundred posts to keep the updates flowing. That's 10 posts per week, between 1 and 2 per day, bringing me near my old level of 2 posts every day. What was I doing? My time spent on *LinkedIn* increased considerably again, but this time on my pc instead of my smartphone. Same difference. Not good, because I was trapped in the same pitfall as before.

Be that as it may, I never wanted my posts to get lost in the endless timelines of social media, so I included them in twelve additional books, twelve addenda to *Our Inner Limits*, four in Dutch and eight in English. I added two 'management summary versions': *De zelfmoordsoort* (capturing the first four addenda in Dutch) and *The suicide kind* (capturing addenda IX, X and XI in English). By summarizing the addenda I wanted to provide the esteemed reader with a more condensed version of my vision on humanity, without omitting the possibility to take each addenda on its own. You have that choice.

The year is now 2025 and I would have liked to tell you a different story, that ‘we’re on the right track’ and that ‘everything’s going to be swell and dandy soon’. But it's not 2015 anymore. It's not 1970 anymore either, when we had plenty of opportunities to turn things around. It's not 1990 anymore either, pretty much humanity's last chance to avoid societal collapse. I have been forced to give up the 'hopeful future of man ape and mother planet' and replace it with a far more *confrontealistic* vision in our future.

With *Sixty Signs of Societal Collapse*, I aim to arm you with facts and figures, based on the latest insights from the scientific community and smack you in the face with it. However, above all, it is my mission to make you and your loved ones more resilient to what’s coming. Because our dire future is no longer several hundred years away. It will not wait until somewhere in the next century, or until the end of this century, or until 2070 or 2050. We’ve been só successful in postponing our actions on a global scale and we have moved societal collapse way ahead of schedule. It will now already take place in the next couple of decades.

We have no clue about what’s coming our way. And we are totally unprepared.

About this book

The great thing about writing a message (a post) on *LinkedIn* is that, unlike Facebook or Instagram, for example, 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, Dutch journalist, author and poet) is enforced, as it were, accurate to the punctuation mark and that's good, because for an author it's educational. It forces one to shorten the message to a length that should be 'processable' even for the hurried, overloaded, *I'm-busy-busy-busy* reader.

I have captured my 1,100 posts in twelve addenda, four in Dutch and eight in English, however, the English addenda are not direct translations of the Dutch ones. On *LinkedIn*, I often respond to English posts in English. Sometimes I translate them into Dutch, but they also stand on their own. The same applies the other way around: sometimes I translate my Dutch posts into English, sometimes I don't.

In this book, the twelfth and final addendum to *De mens als grens / Our Inner Limits*, I will update you and accompany you on the accelerating path of decline that we have so apparently chosen and so passionately devote all our energy to. We will take a final journey from ignorance via climate change to overconsumption and collapse, though I have chosen a somewhat different form and structure this time. In *Sixty Signs of Societal Collapse* you will be able to explore a wide variety of 'checklists' of...:

- *Reasons and things*
- *Do's and don'ts*
- *Examples and attributes*
- *Difficulties and misconceptions*
- *Stages and rules*
- *Questions and distractions*
- *Topics and facts*
- *Tips and tricks*
- *Trends and KPI's*
- *Steps and levels*
- *Ways and stages*
- *Fallacies and commandments*

...about our collective behavior as a species on this planet. Each 'checklist' is meant to rattle your cage, to provoke you, to – by lack of more appropriate words – *grab you by the throat and force you* to sit back, relax (if you still can) and contemplate it for a while. It will be most interesting to observe what you are going to do right after you have exposed yourself to the existential challenges in this book. Perhaps you will not just go about your business 'as usual and as planned', but change something in your behavior, or on in your plans for the future. Perhaps you will surprise yourself.

Perhaps.

At an average reading speed of about 250 words per minute, each chapter in this book will take you only a few minutes to process. So I would like to say: do you have a little less time now? Just choose a few titles that appeal to you and spend ten or fifteen minutes on them. Each post stands on its own and the only thing I did was to assemble them within the confounds and structure of a book,

ensuring that they won't get lost in the cold, dark realms of cyberspace. So, just pick up this book, read a few chapters and then put it away for a while. Whatever you do, it is best to gradually absorb the knowledge and information. I wouldn't want you to get overwhelmed. Or depressed.

Not all journeys are similarly enjoyable to make and this particular journey, you reading this book, is one of the beginning of the end, of head-on confrontation, of major existential problems and of the ultimate taboo: the collapse of human civilization as we know it today, society by society, including yours. However, this doesn't necessarily imply an 'end of the world'-scenario: the extinction of the human species. That ultimate consequence is not a guaranteed outcome of suprasystemic collapse, but we can no longer rule it out. Perhaps we never could.

Finally, whereas in *De mens als grens / Our Inner Limits* I leave it up to my dear readers to draw their own conclusions on where the human species is headed, in *Sixty Signs of Societal Collapse* I am more explicit, downright confrontational and way more 'smack in the face'. Because as a self-proclaimed *confrontealst*, I passionately believe that only a frontal confrontation with truth and reality might open our eyes to what is inevitably coming our way.

Strength and honor!

Bart Flos, Helmond – July 2025

On the concept of 'suprasystemic collapse'

In this book I am going to use the term 'suprasystemic collapse' quite a lot, and for good reasons, as I will explain now.

And yes, you are right, 'suprasystemic' is not spelled right. It must be 'supra-systemic', with a hyphen. But when you look that up on the internet you will probably find something like 'supra-systemic pulmonary hypertension'. And when you look up 'supra' you will find something like 'an academic and legal citation signal used when a writer desires to refer a reader to an earlier-cited authority'.

Both valid definitions, but not quite what I mean.

When you look up 'suprasystemic collapse' (without the hyphen) you will find the same as above, and you will find references to my work (books, articles, websites, posts, comments). That is because I have cornered the phrase 'suprasystemic collapse' in the context of 'the ultimate consequences of human-caused climate change and accelerated global warming'.

'Supra', by the way, is latin for 'above'. I was searching for a term that would emphasize the ultimate, the 'highest' consequence of the collective actions of the human species on and around this planet. 'Super(-)systemic' didn't cover it, because it sounded just a tad too cheerful ('Super! Gimme some collapse now!')

So, to be clear, in my definition, 'suprasystemic collapse' is:

The total, fatal and final collapse of human civilization as we know it today, as a result of exceeding the carrying capacity of our habitat, a concept known as overshoot or overconsumption (Rees e.a.).

'Cascade failure' precedes 'suprasystemic collapse'. 'Extinction' follows suprasystemic collapse.

'Cascade failure' or 'cascading failure' is 'a failure in a system of interconnected parts in which the failure of one or few parts leads to the failure of other parts, growing progressively as a result of positive feedback. Such a failure may happen in many types of systems, including power transmission, computer networking, finance, transportation systems, organisms, the human body, and ecosystems' [Source: Wikipedia]

'Extinction' or 'species extinction' is 'the termination of an organism by the death of its last member' [Source: Wikipedia] I like that definition, because it is so concise and succinct. By the way, the extinction of the human species is the ultimate, but not the *guaranteed* consequence of suprasystemic collapse.

Suprasystemic collapse is the result of an escalating, accelerating chain of global events:

- *Overpopulation leading to overconsumption*
- *Overconsumption leading to cascade failure*
- *Cascade failure leading to suprasystemic collapse*
- *Suprasystemic collapse leading to the downfall (and possible extinction) of humankind*

And on that bombshell I suggest that we proceed to the first sign of societal collapse. Good luck!

1

Seven Things We Can Still Do Whether We Are Doomed Or Not

Yes, I've had the audacity to publish a series of books with ominous titles such as 'The Beginning of The End: Ignorance', 'The Frontal Confrontation: Climate Change', 'The Final Taboo: Collapse' and 'The Suicide Kind – Why We Are All Doomed (And You Too!)

And yes, I've heard time and time again that 'you can't predict the future!', to which I always reply: 'I concur, but I'm not doing that, I'm simply extrapolating the data'. And finally, yes, you can have a conversation with me about all that, without me ranting and raving about (caps warning!) DOOM and DAMNATION all the time, or crying out loud that we're all going to DIE soon.

It doesn't matter whether you are a (climate change) denier, skeptic, optimist, scientist, pessimist, confrontalist (*) or doomist, this post is dedicated to all of you.

Here are the seven things:

1 – Work less

Stop chasing ghosts at work. Stop working late. Stop drowning in your mailbox. Just remember: all of your work and worries will be obsolete within a decade.

2 – Buy less

You don't need more than one smartphone, laptop, pc, tv, house, car, watch, bike, boat. Possess less. Get rid of all that superfluous stuff. Remove the clutter. Create breathing (and dancing) space.

3 – Worry less

Stop worrying about things you can't influence. Stress less. Take care of things in the here and now. Steer away from grinding thoughts. Don't carry the weight of the world on your shoulders (anymore).

4 – Internet less

Reduce your screentime to 1 or 2 hours a day. Stop that mindless zapping. Don't be a couch potato. Stop the binge watching. Resist the Almighty Algorithm and delete social media apps.

5 – Enjoy more

Enjoy what you have while you still have it. Relax more. Force yourself out of the office. Enjoy the silence, even when in company. Take pleasure in small, seemingly unimportant things.

6 – Cherish more

Cherish your loved ones while they are still around. Make an effort to stop what you're doing when they call for you, even when you don't have the time. Make the time.

7 – *Wonder more*

Don't wonder about what might be, but about what already is. Ponder about your own existence. Be curious about the way things are. Ask yourself 'What is time, gravity, light, fire? What is now?'

It doesn't matter where you stand on the scale between incorrigible optimist and eternal doomist, we can all dedicate ourselves to what actually matters. Because believe me, when the shit finally hits the fan and everything comes tumbling down, you want to be able to say that you did all of the above when you still had the chance.

Think about it. And good luck!

(*) A confrontalist is someone who frontally confronts you with reality, truth and science: environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change, as symptoms of overconsumption, when a species exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat and is punished by cascade failure and suprasystemic collapse.

2

Five Do's And Don'ts To Enhance The Rational Discourse And Rattle The Cage Of The Bullshitter

Once again I found myself shouting at the journalists on tv:

- *“No, no! That’s not even a question!”*
- *“Come on, follow up. Push through! Don’t back down now!”*
- *“Watch out! Don’t let him get away with that load of crap!”*
- *“Oh, for Peet’s sake, she’s not answering the bloody question!”*

We are missing só much opportunity to expose the ignorance, the shortsightedness and the sheer stupidity that permeates today’s rational discourse. I strongly believe we should have a little bit more fun with it.

(By the way, I wonder why I keep calling it a ‘rational discourse’. We might as well admit that we’ve descended into the dark realm of personal opinions and gut feelings being judged equally valid as science fact, logic, truth and reality).

So, to all journalists and conversationalists, here are the five do's and don'ts:

1 – Ask open questions (don't ask closed questions)

Not: 'Were you very angry when that happened?'

But: 'How did you feel about that?'

Not: 'Shouldn't we resolve this by acting now, rather than later?'

But: 'What are you going to do about this?'

2 – Ask for the facts on the matter (don't provide the facts on a platter)

Not: 'Clearly, trickle down economics have never ever worked as promised, so...'

But: 'What is a specific example in recent history of trickle down economics being effective?'

3 – Ask for the definition of key aspects (don't provide the definition you have)

Not: 'As you very well know racism/ fascism/ communism/ Marxism/ misogyny/ woke/ diversity/ equity/ inclusion (DEI) is clearly defined as...'

But: 'How would you define racism/ fascism/ [etcetera]?'

4 – Ask your questions again and again and again (don't accept not getting an answer)

Not: 'You are clearly dodging the question, so let's move on...'

But: 'I'm sorry, that is not what I asked. My question was...'

And again. And again. And again.

5 – Ask about purpose and added value (don't ever be insulted, indignant or overwhelmed by your opponent)

Not: 'I resent that accusation! I want you to take that back. Clearly I am not...'

But: 'What is the purpose of that remark? What is the added value of your accusation/ insult/ ad hominem attack?'

Whatever you do, stay absolutely calm when you apply these techniques.

Keep smiling, don't interrupt, stay friendly at all times. Don't raise your voice and be cool. Bullshitters absolutely hate it when you rattle their cage in this manner. It is great fun to watch them sweat and squirm a little.

Of course, none of this will bring our living environment back from a state of cascade failure and no amount of rational discourse will prevent the suprasystemic collapse of our global infrastructure, but may we at least, please, I beg of you, have some laughs and a few beers on the way down?

I believe so.

3

Three Examples Of Things That Appear To Be Good But Are Actually Bad

I used to call myself an incorrigible optimist, back in 2015, when I published my most optimistic book on ‘hope for the future of man ape and mother planet’. I viewed the world through rosy glasses, comfortably sitting on a pink cloud, covered in glee, delight and optimism. Not anymore.

So, to share my personal transformation with you, here are the three examples:

1 – ‘We must all be allowed to go from poor and sick to rich and healthy’

Watch this famous dynamic graph as presented by Hans Rosling from the Gapminder Foundation:

<https://lnkd.in/e8UUBmBN>

If you’re not careful you’ll be all caught up in misplaced enthusiasm and

optimism. What you see is the result of accelerated population growth and overconsumption, leading to prosperity and wellbeing on the one hand, and environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change on the other. It ultimately leads to cascade failure and suprasystemic collapse.

2 – ‘Economic growth must be encouraged at all times’

It’s been five years since the Corona pandemic began. It forced us all into prolonged lockdowns and it messed with the global economy. All bad things, right? Sure, we were forced to take a step back from our freedoms to cope with restrictions and reductions. We simply had to.

But observe the depictions of economic growth curves over the past decades, with that clear dip in the year 2020. All these graphs are alike: when you connect the growth curve before and after the Corona dip, you’ll see that not only did we completely recover from the pandemic, but the overall growth trend of the global economy was unaffected.

However, economic growth leads to population growth ultimately leading to overconsumption, cascade failure and collapse.

3 – ‘We must always strive for total freedom for everybody everywhere’

Free speech, free will, the free market – we cherish our liberties. But we don’t seem to realize that some form of restraint has to be put on all of our freedoms, on all of us, in order to avoid excess, abuse and abolishment.

– When we stop enforcing ‘law and order’ unto our (social) media, free

speech will lead to the uncontrolled expression of thoughts and ideas, even when they are explicitly discriminating, damaging and demeaning.

— When we stop enforcing some kind of limitation on our liberties in case of a pandemic or other global disaster, we will only worsen its outcome and prolong its duration.

— When we allow the neoliberal, capitalistic, consumeristic, growth-economic free market to further infiltrate our societies, we will accelerate cascade failure and suprasystemic collapse.

We should stop viewing these three examples of human behavior as inherently good, as something to aspire for, because they are in fact expediting our own demise. Of all the things we can do, that might as well be the most ignorant, shortsighted and stupid.

4

Ten Attributes That Make Us Truly Unique (But You Won't Like Number 10)

What makes us truly unique as a species? First, let's take a look at what truly distinguished us from other species on this planet and then reconvene on the other side.

1 – The arts

Music, theatre, cinema, literature, architecture, sculpture, painting – we are the only species on this planet engaging in activities that don't seem to have any added value to survival and procreation.

2 – The sciences

Physics, chemistry, biology, Earth sciences, astronomy, geology, meteorology, climatology – without the sciences we would all still be circling the central pole on the village square daily, asking our deities for a fruitful harvest.

3 – Space travel

We are the only species on this planet able to escape Earth's gravity with

crewed and uncrewed spacecraft to visit other planets and venture among the stars.

4 – Self-awareness

Who am I? Where do I stand? What do I want? — No other living being on this planet explores these existential questions, wrestling with it for all of eternity.

5 – Empathy

Being able to truly place ourselves in the position, the feelings of others distinguishes us from other living beings that act solely on survival and procreation instincts.

6 – Love and affection

By bonding with each other, creating our own offspring, experiencing deep affection and attraction, we experience true love in a way no other species does.

7 – A sense of past, present and future

We have the ability to remember the past, learn from it in the present to apply it in the future to avoid making the same mistakes again.

8 – An awareness of death and suffering

Our ever growing knowledge of the true nature of illness, disability, aging, deterioration, decay and death allows us to understand, treat and mitigate them.

9 – Complete dominance over the planet

With our vast structures and mighty machines we have conquered the world and thereby subjugated all flora and fauna.

10 – Expediting our own demise

Our unique abilities have made us thrive, but it has also made us an enemy of ourselves. Economic growth leads to population growth leads to overconsumption, which in turn leads to cascade failure and collapse, expediting our own demise.

(I told you, you wouldn't like number 10, didn't I?)

— When we are moved to tears by our arts, expelled forward by our sciences, able to escape Earth's gravity to reach for the stars...

— When we are able to truly understand, respect and love one and other and build communities that bring out the best in us...

— When we have a deep understanding on how our planet works, what makes our living environment tick, what connects water, air and land...

...then why for Peet's sake are we still trying our utmost to mess up a perfectly good deal by polluting the environment, destroying the biodiversity, changing the climate, engaging in conflict and war over territory, resources and might and beating each other over the head out of spite, intolerance and ignorance?

Just asking.

[...]

BLURB

By now, even the biggest skeptic must admit that our collective behavior as a species is having a devastating effect on our planet. Environmental pollution, biodiversity loss, climate change – we keep destroying our living environment with a vengeance and it's getting worse at every turn. What's wrong with us?

Even when we openly acknowledge the total mess we've made, we simply refuse to drive it to its final conclusion: that overshoot or overconsumption (when a species exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat) inevitably leads to collapse. It's a natural law, and it's happening to us, the human species, in the here and now.

In *Sixty Signs of Societal Collapse*, author, public speaker and self-pronounced climate confrontalist Bart Flos uncovers the precarious relationship between individuals and their surrounding social groups, societies and systems. Suprasystemic collapse is an unimaginably large all-destructive event, but it starts small and local: with you.

'The sad thing about it all is that we've had plenty of opportunity to fix our global problems, but we kept debating it without actually changing anything', says Flos. 'And now it's too late. The only choice we've got left is a taboo subject in its own merit: collapse awareness, acceptance and resilience. I'm trying to break through that forbidden barrier by smacking us in the face with facts, truth and reality.'

This book will protect you from the overwhelming amount of ignorance, short-sightedness and stupidity that's going around. So, beware to be smacked.