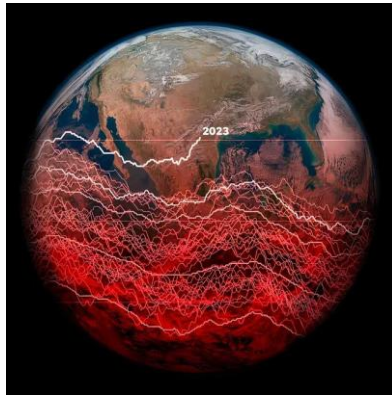


Bart Flos

OUR INNER LIMITS



Addendum IX

The Next Step: Collapse Awareness



The Next Step: Collapse Awareness

Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM IX

The Next Step: Collapse Awareness

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OUR INNER LIMITS

ADDENDUM IX

***The Next Step:
Collapse Awareness***



The Next Step: Collapse Awareness

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 N E X T S T E P : C O L L A P S E A W A R E N E S S

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

Second edition December 2024 (V_9)

Publisher BlijvendBeklijven Boeken

Broederwal 81

5708 ZT Helmond

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Author, final editing, correction, interior work and cover: Bart Flos

Logistics and administration: BlijvendBeklijven Boeken (www.blijvendbeklijven.nl)

ISBN: 9789083207742

NUR 600, 900, 130

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Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM IX

The Next Step: Collapse Awareness

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 'incorrigible 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 CO₂ and the atmospheric CO₂-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.

O u r I n n e r L i m i t s - A D D E N D U M I X

T h e N e x t S t e p : C o l l a p s e A w a r e n e s s

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 IX

The Next Step: Collapse Awareness

Chapter 1

Looking down from above

1.1

SM645

This is not how it works!

I read yet another brave and hopeful post following the same mode of operation: ‘Yes, we’ve made a mess of things with the environment, biodiversity and climate and all, and the situation is dire. But it’s not too late, we still have time, we can still fix this, but it requires that we all act immediately’.

This was my response:

“This is not how it works! Don’t get me wrong, it’s a good post, well authored, with apt facts and figures. But it won’t change a thing.

It’s not that we don’t see it. You must be living under a rock to not see what’s happening around the world. But that’s a suprasystemic view. It’s too big to carry on our shoulders. From a practical perspective, we don’t think that way

at all. We have supralocal concerns: protecting our investments, paying the bills, go to work and school, care and worry about health, family and friends.

The global community doesn't exist! Even the 200 countries in the world are an illusion. We are fragmented and divided into hundreds of millions of small social groups of family, household, friends, colleagues and teammates, that primarily take care of themselves first (*).

It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, powerful or helpless, in general, we all act like that. And that's why we're all headed in the same direction: suprasystemic collapse. Because each of the 80 million specimens of Homo sapiens we add to the already 8 billion every year, thinks and acts the same: wanting to get rich, healthy, happy and grow old. It's simply unsustainable.

Collapse is now locked in. The perfect storm is coming.”

(*) I call that the Fragmentation Problem. Together with the Pronatalism Problem (**) they both hover above our main existential predicament: overshoot of overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat (***).

Environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change are mere symptoms of overshoot. Collapse is locked in. The Fragmentation Problem and the Pronatalism Problem both render it impossible to fix our existential predicament.

In the end it all boils down to this: we were never meant to be with billions. We were meant to roam the savannas in small social groups of, say, max 25 people. The Agricultural Revolution has turned out to be our biggest mistake.

(**) Natalism (also called pronatalism or the pro-birth position) is an ideology that promotes the reproduction of human life as an important objective of being human and advocates high birthrate.

Natalism promotes childbearing and parenthood as desirable for social reasons and to ensure the continuance of humanity. Natalism in public policy typically seeks to create financial and social incentives for populations to reproduce, such as providing tax incentives that reward having and supporting children. [Source: Wikipedia]

(***) If you're interested in the concept of overshoot, see Appendix IV.

1.2

SM652

Do you feel the sheer magnitude of our problem yet?

I saw a post referring to an article debating the status quo with climate change, referring to global CO₂-emissions and global atmospheric greenhouse gas levels. It was yet another message of yes-it's-bad-we're-making-a-mess-but-it's-not-too-late-we-can-still-do-something. So, I responded in kind:

“Disturbing news indeed. I'd like to add two things though.

1 – Safe level is not 350 ppm.

Over the last 800.000 years the atmospheric CO₂-level has been going up and down between roughly 200 and 300 ppm. Our safe level lies between those numbers. These 800.000 years were divided into roughly 8 cycles of 100.000 years each, in which both the atmospheric CO₂-level and the average global surface temperature went up and down.

(The average global surface temperature varied between roughly 10 and 15 degrees C).

We, the species *Homo sapiens*, entered the biosphere about 300.000 years ago. We were able to survive, procreate and evolve because of these relatively stable and safe numbers. A cycle of 1.000 centuries is more than enough time for a

species to adjust. However, we have raised the CO₂-level by 50% in just 1 century! That's 1.000 times faster than ever before. A species cannot adapt to that level of acceleration.

2 – *Our measure of degree is wrong*

We should stop measuring the progress and 'successes of our climate change actions based on CO₂-emissions or global average surface temperature. The first is the cause, the latter the consequence. We should, instead, only atmospheric CO₂-level as the ultimate driver of global warming, if needed combined with the global average surface temperature and the Earth's energy imbalance. If those 'Global Warming KPI's' don't go down, we have failed our mission to mitigate climate change. Currently, the angle of ascent is increasing, in other words, the rise of atmospheric CO₂-level is accelerating, so is the average surface temperature and the energy imbalance.

I would suggest to the participants of the COP28 to focus solely on the following climate change mitigation strategy, with global atmospheric CO₂-levels as an example:

– *Baseline: status quo.*

Current level is 420 ppm and rising with 2-3 ppm each year, reaching the 500-ppm marker somewhere around 2050.

– *First order of business: level out the ascent.*

When must we reach the 'level out point' and how long will the 'plateau phase' be?

– *Second order of business: manage the descent.*

What level of decline is the target to reach the ultimate goal of 300 ppm or lower?

To achieve that we must, of course, stop adding additional CO₂ to the atmosphere, currently about 100 million tons daily from fossil fuels and industry alone.

And to conclude:

— If we want to bring the atmospheric CO₂-level back to 300 ppm in 2050, the reduction rate is 4 to 5 ppm each year, twice as much as we are raising it to date. That is the minimum target, if we want to avoid suprasystemic collapse.

— If we're hesitant and want to bring the atmospheric CO₂-level back to 300 ppm by 2100, the reduction rate is 1 to 2 ppm each year, slightly less than we put in to date. But then we probably won't be able to avoid global societal collapse.

Please note: any kind of carbon capture technology is a delusion. We would have to remove and store 100 gigaton of CO₂ per year for 25 years straight. That's impossible. Instead, we must stop emitting CO₂ all together and let our planet absorb, rotate and recycle it as it did for many millions of years.

Now, I ask you: do you feel it, the sheer magnitude of our problem yet?"

1.3

SM656

A proposal for a new set of global warming KPI's

Perhaps we should rethink the way we communicate about accelerated global warming, especially where it pertains to our perception of 'global average surface temperature'. Allow me to explain.

1 – '1,5C of global warming' is abstract

Not in terms of science. We can measure global average surface temperature quite adequately and precisely. But it is a combination of land surface and ocean surface temperature. Land heats up way more quickly than water, so the differences are enormous. The global average ocean surface temperature is still below 1C, but global average land surface temperature is already 2C to 3C (and the arctic region is heating up to five times as fast as the overall average).

2 – '1,5C of global warming' is less suitable

People in general don't understand what that figure actually means. It is global warming with reference to 'preindustrial levels', but it also refers to the average global temperature on earth, being about 15C, before we started heating it up. When we say '1,5C of global warming' we therefor actually say 'the global average temperature on Earth has risen from 15C to 16,5C'

Be that as it may, people in general don't see that as 'bad' per se. It's sounds like 'a little', like 'what the heck are fussing about?'

My conclusion: for practical purposes we should not use temperature as the primary unit of measure. So, what do I propose as alternative?

Well, actually, I would suggest we use two new Global Warming KPI's (GWKPI) to measure the effectiveness of our mitigation strategy, but still keep the global average surface temperature in there, because of its significance to the concept as such.

Here we go:

1 – GWKPI1 – Earth Energy Imbalance

The sun sends us heat in the form of radiation. Our atmosphere absorbs and/or reflects that heat. When the atmosphere absorbs more heat than it reflects, it heats up. It's really that simple.

2 – GWKPI2 – Global average CO₂-level

I know there are more greenhouse gases, such as methane, nitrous oxide and water vapor, but CO₂ hits us more in the face.

3 – GWKPI2 – Global average surface temperature

Even though it takes somewhat more of an effort to understand what 'global warming is at 1,2C' actually means, we shouldn't still incorporate it in our trio.

For the accompanying graphs click here:

<https://www.demensalsgrens.nl/grafieken/>

Despite all of our efforts to mitigate global warming, these three values have only been going up. If they don't start to level out at some point and subsequently decline, all of our big talk about renewables is just a lot of smoke and dust.

The only question that should have been on the agenda of COP28, for everybody there, including the oil sheiks and fossil fuel lobbyists, is:

'When do you expect the Earth's energy imbalance to be restored, the CO₂-level to drop below 300 ppm and the average global surface temperature to go back down to 0,0C?'

(*) Key Performance Indicators

1.4

SM667

The Fragmentation Problem: **Why there are no solutions to our** **global problems.**

If you follow the news about the environment, biodiversity and climate, your sentiment will vary between 'we are doomed!' and 'it's not too late, we can still fix it'. Wherever you stand on the scale between those two extremes, we can all see that something serious is going on. Scientifically speaking, we now know exactly what that is and what we need to do to turn the tide.

And yet nothing really changes on a global scale. Everything appears to have only gotten a little worse at every turn. Why is that? Three examples:

1 – The environment

Microplastics and PFAS molecules have now been found everywhere on Earth, even at the North and South Poles, in the deep sea, high in the atmosphere and in our bloodstream. The cumulative effect of this type of environmental pollution threatens the health and fertility of countless species, including the human species.

2 – Biodiversity

Animal and plant species around the world are becoming extinct at a rate thousands of times higher than ever before in the history of our planet. Insects,

amphibians and mammals are disappearing at an accelerated rate, some even before we have discovered them.

3 – The climate

With the excessive emissions of greenhouse gases resulting from our wasteful way of life, we have managed to upset the natural balance our habitat: the climate is warming at an unprecedented rate. This can now be seen all around us, no place on earth remains unaffected and it is even accelerating.

These three 'problems' are in fact only symptoms of a process that we call overshoot or overconsumption: when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat. That is our réal Big Problem. Why can't we get this resolved? Why is it just getting worse?

That's because we might be able to see, recognize and explain it as one Big Problem, but there is not one Big Problem Owner. In reality, overconsumption is spread out, or fragmented, across hundreds of millions of Small Problem Owners. Everything we see as a 'global problem' falls back on hundreds of millions of small social groups of family, household, friends, colleagues and teammates, each driven by their own set of social, cultural, political and economic vested interests. The world community does not exist!

I call that *The Fragmentation Problem*.

It explains why every Big Problem, every attempt to prevent our own demise, is splintered time and time again across hundreds of millions of small, local self-interests. And that is why nothing changes at all on a global scale. You cannot solve a big global problem with hundreds of millions of small problem owners. And if a problem has no solution, then it is not a problem; it's a fact.

PS I sometimes jokingly call the Fragmentation Problem the 'WHOOPS', the 'World's Horrifically Overwhelming Overarching Problem (Shit)'. In an overarching sense, it even transcends the problem of overshoot or overconsumption:

- *If we can't solve the WHOOPS, then we can't solve overconsumption.*
- *If we can't solve overconsumption, we can't solve environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change.*
- *If we can't solve environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change, we can't prevent our own extinction in the long term.*
- *If we can't prevent our own extinction in the long term, then what's the point of it all?*

Whoops.

1.5

SM673

A question of conscience for all of us

Since the publication of my 6th book *De mens als grens* ('Our Inner Limits') in December 2022, I have authored almost 700 posts about the accelerated deterioration of the environment, biodiversity and climate on the one hand and the exponential development of artificial intelligence on the other. Of course, LinkedIn's Almighty Algorithm discovered this a long time ago and now I only see posts (and advertisements) about that. That's just how social media works.

Recently there was a post from a tech geek, an enthusiastic, fanatical and passionate supporter of artificial intelligence (AI). This time his post included a number of recommendations of AI apps that 'make you smarter'. Now I regularly write about AI and anyone who follows me will know what I think about it. AI apps like ChatGPT don't make us smarter, they make us dumber. The more AI we use, the more we squander our autonomy, skill, independence, creativity and intelligence. We don't do anything ourselves anymore! We just ask the AI to do it for us. It makes us lazy, self-righteous and short-sighted.

So, I told him that in a comment and a repost. To be clear: I always remain polite, at least polite without being vague, hypocritical or making fun of my opponent. My approach is head-on confrontational, for sure, but always intended to engage in rational discourse. So, what do you think happened? BAM! Everything disappeared. My comment, the discussion with others about this, my repost with comments, everything gone. The person in question had blocked me without even starting the debate.

Before you accuse me of hypocrisy: yes, I do that too, blocking. When I'm being chased by climate trolls and bullies who insult, threaten and ridicule me personally, I block them. It purges the timeline, everything disappears, the person in question is not notified and it really feels like a cleansing as soon as you press the 'BLOCK' button. Brilliant.

Is it? Brilliant? Because it's so easy. It avoids confrontation, it inhibits rational discourse and we all reside in our own truth silos and echo chambers, surrounded only by like-minded people. I block climate trolls because they are threatening to me, this AI fanatic blocked me because he thought I was threatening to him (which is what we think nowadays when we receive even the slightest criticism) and so everything remains the same.

This is the question of conscience that I would like to ask the dear reader: is this the world we want to live in? That we block each other until we are all convinced, safe in our echo chambers, surrounded by like-minded people, that we have a monopoly on the truth and no longer even discuss it with each other?

I'm just asking. What do you think about this?

Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM IX

The Next Step: Collapse Awareness

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