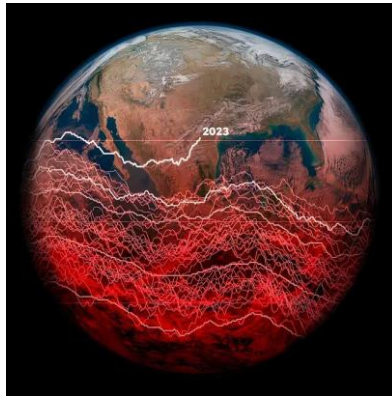


Our Inner Limits – ADDENDUM VII

Bart Flos

OUR INNER LIMITS



ADDENDUM VII

The Big Problem: Overconsumption



The Big Problem: Overconsumption

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OUR INNER LIMITS

ADDENDUM VII

***The Big Problem:
Overconsumption***



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*

The Big Problem: Overconsumption

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 VII

The Big Problem: Overconsumption

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 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.

Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM VII

The Big Problem: Overconsumption

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 VII

The Big Problem: Overconsumption

Chapter 1

The frontal confrontation

1.1

SM425

Another report that won't change a damn thing

I read a report about climate change and it managed to combine the fact that we are in a destructive ‘doom loop’ leading to potential collapse and that ‘there is still a possibility that we might keep the global average surface temperature below 1,5C’, practically in the same sentence. Even worse was the suggestion to revert to geo-engineering, where we inundate Earth’s atmosphere with chemicals, or shield us from the sun, to fix our existential predicament and limit global warming somehow, *without* breaking our filthy habits.

I find it unbelievably ignorant that we dare to suggest geo-engineering as a possible solution to our problems. Nope. Belay that. I want to retract that statement. I do not find it ‘unbelievably ignorant’ at all. I find it stark-ravingly mad that we once again turn to a report from a think tank that tells us that, because we haven’t changed anything at all so far, we’re now actually worse off than we were before.

I apologize. I withdraw that remark as well. I don't find it 'stark-ravingly mad', I find it funny. I find it funny that we've produced millions of climate reports, books, analysis and conferences, which didn't reduce global greenhouse emissions *at all*, and that we yet again produce another one.

So, now what? What are we going to do? Huh? It's only getting worse at every turn and we're still hoping for some miracle that will fix it. What miracle? Where's the tipping point in our collective behavior? If it wasn't so dead serious and grim, it would be funny.

The world has 'pledged' to bring greenhouse gas emissions down to zero around 2050. At least, that's what they say in each climate conference. In fact, CO₂-emissions for fossil fuels and industry are expected to rise to 43 gigatons. Who are we kidding? There's plenty of brilliant, green, innovative and sustainable ideas and initiatives going around, but at some point, you would expect these numbers to start going down. But they're all going up!

This report won't change a damn thing. No report ever has. No book, video, analysis or conference ever has. The only viable question to answer, if we want to escape the vicious circle of sheer stupidity, is: what are we going to do different this time?

1.2

SM427

Daring to use the word ‘impossible’ with an exclamation mark

A saw a post linking to an article that suggested that we, against all odds, considering the extreme weather and climate disasters washing over the planet, the fossil fuel industry abandoning their pledges and promises to phase out oil, gas, and coal and the combined economic plans of the 200 countries of the world to increase the burning of fossil fuels until at least 2050, can still limit global warming below 1,5C. It actually suggested that.

This was my response:

“Do I dare to use the word? Can I respond to this post in such a confrontational manner? Must it be me to rock the boat, rattle the cage instead of just ruffling up some feathers?

I guess so. Here goes:

— It is *impossible* to limit global warming at 1,5C!

There. I said it. I used the word and applied an exclamation point. It is *impossible, unachievable, unfeasible, out of the question, non-viable and unworkable* to limit global warming at 1,5C!

There. I said it again, using synonyms.

— It is *extremely likely* that the average global surface temperature will surpass the 2,5C marker by 2050, triggering climate tipping points along the way, which will cause a ‘runaway climate’ leading to a ‘hothouse Earth’, the point of no return.

There. I’ve said that too.

There are these graphs inundating the internet, depicting greenhouse gas emissions on the y-axis and the time on the X-axis. It shows the actual progression to the left, ever increasing and never letting up, and the predicted progression to the right, with the ‘now’ in the middle. The predicted progression lines are shown as expected progress based on the different future emission scenarios, in turn based on the pledges and promises of the 200 countries of the world.

Most of these future curves take a steep dive towards the zero line, suggesting that we can still make it. As time progresses, the left curve keeps going up and the right curves, being attached to fixed base targets in the future, like ‘net zero in 2050’, are forced to make an even steeper dive down, with completely ridiculous angles, suggesting that we can still make it.

Oh, come on! Néver éver in the history of humanity has any curve declined that sharply due to voluntary actions by the human species. The only time it happens is when a suprasystem collapses in its entirety. In other words: only a disaster of gigantic proportions may drive a curve downward like that. I can’t understand by the life of me why we still keep showing these prediction models

with theoretical straight lines to the bottom. It's pure theory and it's getting more ridiculous every turn we take.

Who are we kidding? There's plenty of brilliant, green, innovative and sustainable ideas and initiatives going around, but at some point, you would expect all of these curves to start going down. But they're all going up!

This report won't change a damn thing. No report will. No book, video, analysis or conference ever has. The only viable question to answer, if we want to escape the vicious circle of sheer stupidity, is: what are we going to do different this time?

1.3

SM430

Do you want to reduce?

Environmental pollution, destruction of the biodiversity and climate change are the great existential problems of our time. But are they actual core problems?

No, they are not. They are symptoms of a much bigger problem: overshoot or overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat. Overshoot can drive a population to extinction. How do you make something like this tangible for every individual on Earth, regardless of origin, culture, ideology, religion and geographical location?

Let's step into the helicopter and start off with an overview position as high as possible.

1 – The suprasystem

That is the planet Earth with 8 billion human individuals. They all have to live, learn, study, work, survive and reproduce. And they have to eat, drink, urinate and defecate. Otherwise, we die.

2 – Society

Every city, province, state and country have revenues and expenses. There are 200 countries in the world with their own priorities to run the economy. International cooperation? Fine. But our own country comes first.

3 – The group

The large groups, our organizations, have revenues and expenses. The small groups of family, household, friends, colleagues and teammates depend on it. Collaborate with other groups? Fine, but our own group comes first.

4 – The individual

Whether you work as an employee, run your own business, receive benefits, retire or roam, you have an income and expenses. And you have to eat, drink, urinate and defecate every day, and be safe, dry and warm. But when push comes to shove, you take care of yourself first.

Wherever you are born as an individual, as a human being you are programmed by evolution and natural selection with a combined basic goal: survival and reproduction. You grow up, look for an income, a house and safe environment, transportation, a partner, children, lots of stuff. More income simply means more of all that.

There are 8 billion individuals on Earth. Every day, 240,000 new ones are added. That brings us to 10 billion by 2050. Every individual wants to become rich, healthy, happy and grow old. We currently burn 100 million barrels of oil, 22 million metric tons of coal and 11 billion cubic meters of natural gas per day. Every day we add 150 million tons of CO₂-equivalent to the atmosphere.

That's all because no one wants to decline or reduce.

Just look at yourself. Have you ever said no to a promotion and/or salary increase? No to an inheritance? No to new customers and assignments? No to the gains on shares? No to easy money? Do you want to hand in 20% of your income and 50% of your savings to save the human species from extinction?

In short: do you want to decline or reduce? Oh, no? That's weird. Why not?

Something to quietly contemplate for a while, I would suggest.

1.4

SM431

What we really need to do

I believe we, the human species, in general and on average, don't understand the gravity of overshoot or overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat (*). We have a tendency to focus on environmental pollution, or on destruction of the biodiversity, or on climate change. But those are mere symptoms of overshoot.

Spreading messages of hope, especially when they are technology based, or economy based (or both), are particularly dangerous, because it robs us from our sense of urgency, direction and purpose.

Here's what we really need to do to mitigate overshoot:

- 1 – All poor people must remain poor.*
- 2 – All rich people must abdicate their wealth.*
- 3 – Population growth must become population decline.*
- 4 – Economic growth must become economic decline.*
- 5 – We all must decrease our income by 20%*
- 6 – We all must give up 50% of our savings.*
- 7 – We all must go in complete lockdown for another ten years.*

That is the energy-equivalent of our collective effort to actually do something about our existential problems. Who's first in line to volunteer? Instead of spreading fairy tales about the solution to our existential predicament we

would all be wise to change our attitudes from pre-apocalyptic prevention to post-apocalyptic mitigation.

Do you want some more frontal confrontations with reality?

– There are 8 billion individuals on this planet. Every day 220.000 new ones are added. That brings us to 10 billion people by 2050. Every individual wants to become rich, healthy, happy and grow old.

– We currently burn 100 million barrels of oil, 22 million metric tons of coal and 11 billion cubic meters of natural gas every day.

– Each day we add 150 million tons of CO₂-equivalent to the atmosphere.

– Current CO₂-level in the atmosphere is 420 ppm and rising. That brings us to 500 ppm in 2050. The past 800.000 years Earth's atmosphere has never exceeded the 300-ppm marker.

– The average surface temperature is currently 1,2 degrees C above preindustrial levels. We might see the 1,5 degrees C barrier broken within the next decade. That brings us to more than 2 degrees of warming in 2050 and 3 to 4 degrees warming by the end of the century.

– Each tenth of a degree C we warm the atmosphere, the risk of a catastrophic cascade of climate tipping points grows larger. Climate change will escalate into a runaway climate, a 'hothouse Earth', that's beyond our ability to repair.

In the 4,5-billion-year history of our planet, 99,99% of all species has become extinct. We are by no means an exception to that fact. But we are the only species that accelerates its own demise. That's not an achievement of any kind. That's sheer stupidity.

(*) See Appendix IV.

1.5

SM436

Gen Z is not going to change millions of years of evolution

I read an article from an author and entrepreneur in which he put his hope of improving the status quo of humankind into ‘Gen Z’, the new, fresh and young generation. ‘OK’, he argued, and I’m paraphrasing here, ‘with all these young minds taking the streets and calling for action, something will change now. It must be, they’re the young ones!’

This was my response:

“The tone of the message below is hopeful, because it suggests that the newest generation of people will do away with the biggest existential threat of our time: overshoot or overconsumption, when a species exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat. I hate to burst your bubble here, but I cannot for the life of me understand why evolution and natural selection is completely left out of the narrative here. Have we completely forgotten our common heritage?

Let’s get something straight: Homo sapiens, the human species, is programmed by evolution and natural selection over hundreds of millions of years. Its mindset is that of a social group mammal, a hunter-gatherer. Homo sapiens, the ‘wise, modern thinking man’, walks the planet for something like 300.000 years, a mere 0,007% of Earth’s existence. ‘Modern times’ covers only 0,07% of that period.

Sure, we have seen drastic changes in cultural aspects of human behavior. Growing up in 1823 or 1923 is vastly different from 2023. But make no mistake: being addicted to the internet and being glued to a smartphone doesn't negate the fact that our brain still thinks and acts like a hunter gatherer.

We are quite the schizophrenic species. On the one hand we are great in international cooperation and we dominate the entire planet. But we are also, in general and on average, fundamentally single-minded, short-sighted and selfish. When push comes to shove, we only care about ourselves and our small social groups of family, household, friends, colleagues and teammates. And we are only interested in the short term and in what's nearby.

Changing our culture doesn't change our genes. It takes hundreds of thousands to millions of years for the random mutations in our DNA to change our behavior as a species. The modern age hasn't even begun to make a difference.

Every one of the 2 billion individuals that are added to the current 8 billion by 2050 will want to get rich, healthy, happy and grow old. That implies striving for a safe environment, schooling, a partner, house, land, offspring, transportation, heating, cooling, a smartphone and lots of stuff. And when we have all that, we want more. Because nobody wants to decline. That's our evolutionary conundrum. Gen Z is not going to change anything about overshoot.

If you find that gloomy, negativistic even, there's a straightforward way to hold me to it. Just watch the yearly global emissions of greenhouse gasses. If all of these hopeful stories about a Brave New World are true, you would expect them to go down at some point.

Just check it out on a yearly basis and prove me wrong. I would love to bow my head and say 'I'm sorry, I was wrong. We are actually doing something about overshoot.'

Really. I would."

1.6

SM442

Like we will always have time to fix our problems

I saw yet another post in my timeline describing the disturbing events all around the planet with the extreme weather and climate disasters increasing in frequency and intensity. In order to meet the targets and goals set for 2030 someone argued that ‘we have to make haste’, ‘get things moving quickly’ and ‘really speed up our efforts’ if we still wanted to reach those targets and goals.

This was my response:

“You say ‘There is still 7 years of time’, referring to the year 2030. And we have more deadlines in 2040, 2050, 2060 and 2070. What I find interesting is that in some strange way, these deadlines all end with a zero, as if at exactly 00:00 hrs the crossed barrier triggers a worldwide sounding alarm bell or something. Let’s get real and do some project management, shall we?

Originally all countries pledged to be carbon neutral with zero emissions by 2050, but India, China and Russia, good for more than 2/3 of global emissions, wiggled themselves out of that agreement and have pushed their deadlines to 2060 and 2070. But let’s ignore that for now. If we want to reduce our CO₂ emissions to 50% in 2030, we have to go back from 54 gigaton of CO₂-equivalent to 27 gigaton. That’s 3,9 gigaton per year, or 320 million tons each month.

Currently we add 150 million tons of CO₂-equivalent to the atmosphere each month. The current economic planning of the 200 countries in the world aim for an increase (!) of emissions of CO₂-equivalent of 320 million ton each year or 27 million ton each month. So, what do you mean ‘there’s still time?’ I don’t follow. On and by the way, the 28th climate conference this year is chaired by an oil sheik, for crying out loud. I’m just saying.

Environmental pollution, destruction of the biodiversity and climate change are symptoms of the overarching problem: overshoot or overconsumption, when a population exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat.

‘We still have time’ = false hope.

Overshoot is currently in its accelerating phase. Focusing on either symptom, like making biodiversity appear more important than climate change or vice versa, doesn’t add value.

‘People Power’ doesn’t exist. In the current growth-economic suprasystem the people have no power at all.

‘The most brilliant thing the devil did was to convince people that he doesn’t exist’.

The most devilish thing the Big X ever did was to introduce the slogan ‘A better world / environment / climate starts with you!’ Brilliantly done. There’s no specific emergency that will ‘hit’ us in any year in the future. Suprasystemic infrastructural collapse is an accelerating phenomenon. Each generation will be exponentially worse off than the previous one. But overshoot is not a

meteorite. No big explosion will follow. Each year will get exponentially worse until we're beyond ecological repair.

Something to quietly contemplate, I would suggest.

PS – It's not that I only see problems. I do have solutions as well and I provide with lots of them in my book *De mens als grens* (Our Inner Limits). Overshoot is the result of a low mature civilization. Just as an organization can be low in maturity, an entire civilization can be as well. We need highly mature individuals to form highly mature groups that build a highly mature society and suprasystem.”

Our Inner Limits - ADDENDUM VII

The Big Problem: Overconsumption

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