

# Optimist!

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**Q**uite unexpectedly I found out that I am actually an optimist. To write about how we as humanity make our existence on the planet impossible on many more fronts than just the climate, I regularly have to look into the abyss of human behaviour. A fellow professor recently 'concluded' that, unlike bees, we humans are a downright pest. Virtually everything we've built over the past few centuries in engineering, industry, and education—civilization—has contributed to exactly where we are today: polycrises!

Admittedly, these aren't exactly the optimistic reflections you think of with an optimist. Right, but I regularly speak to people who know all this, never speak about it, let alone write about it, and who answer my question why not that there is nothing that can be done about it. "Look from a distance", they say, "in that immense universe there is one small planet on which nature proliferates and where a foolish ape species celebrates, bending everything to its foolish hand". "Too bad then", they say, "but hey, cheer up, you belong to those party animals just like us, are you in?" "ChatGPT, OpenAI, well, it costs a few hundred trees per second, but we die anyway. Join us, enjoy some fun novelties, or would you rather fly a plane or drink a beer?"

## Party animal

Well, I'm not much of a party animal, probably because of 'my' autism, but I certainly love life, and even the elephant in the room (regular readers of this column know I mean technology). But, I can't help it, I love people above all, and the beautiful animals around my house, our dogs and horses, the ducks next door, the birds in the garden and the cats, though sometimes their murderous ways make me sad (I give them the tastiest food, hopefully that will make them a little tame). Of course nature, even human nature, is much more than what I list here, but I believe we are all connected and we need to rediscover our place in the whole. Not by dominating the ecology, by ruling the world, but more as indigenous peoples. But I have no idea how to do that, and I am already much too old to take my place in a more ecologically sustainable existence.

Yet I believe in it, in a world in which man is not a plague, in which we do not take away all diversity with cheap 'copy-paste' mass production to worship a system world that makes everything uniform everywhere and in which we wrongly believe that we are working to establish heaven on earth. And secretly I sometimes have to laugh at our delusions of grandeur, silly monkeys that we are. Probably also "my" autism...

Optimists believe we can change, turn the tide. It is a feeling, a belief, and in the absence of evidence and certainty, a trust (because trust, like faith, is only necessary when you have no certainty). But after that feeling, the heart, comes the head, the knowing, and then the hands, the working. The Inner Development Goals show the way. This week my "brother-in-arms" Arjan Middelkoop told me about a wonderful company – a demolition company, by the way – that has embraced the Inner Development Goals, including removing the on-board computers from the trucks, so that the drivers experience much less stress and control. They now drive more calmly and independently, and this has already led to less absenteeism.

The company has also started working exclusively in its own region in order to reduce the number of miles driven. There are now bicycles on the site, instead of machines, with which employees can move quickly. Examples like this of the power of IDG - Detech technology - fuel my optimism. When we start to see the (tempting, addictive) elephant in the room, we will discover that we often don't need it, I sincerely believe in that. Or am I perhaps a little too optimistic?