



SIEBENQUELL

When Landscapes change – inside and outside



Extensive forests are a scenic feature of my homeland. To this day, our children remember the paths we took from door to door through the forest, when we rode our bikes from where we lived at the time to their grandparents' house. Even when they later returned home as adults, they loved to walk through the familiar forest.

For a few months now, I have been sending them photos again and again with the question: Do you recognise the path? Then they react the same way I always do when I'm out and about: The surroundings seem strange and we are disoriented. And there is a reason for this: there are no more spruce forests. The great spruce dieback after years of drought and the necessary logging and clearing have radically changed our forest. Many people I meet complain about this: They pass sections of path and suddenly no longer know their way around. Parts of the forest are now foreign to them. They miss the familiar image. Many also mourn the »dark fir«, which had indeed made up large parts of our forest in its mono-culture.

But there I pause and inwardly I do not concur. Every walk I take through the forest, which has changed so much, expands my heart. It is true that the landscape has changed a lot, but for me it has become much more beautiful. Where it used to be gloomy, it is now bright. The sky above me is wide and not just a narrow strip. Where I used to walk through a dark tunnel, I now have wide vistas and can see connections with the naked eye and let my eyes wander over the diversity of the landscape.

Questions come to mind: What do mono-cultures do to us? Why can I only see the negative when something changes? What frightens me?

We easily grow accustomed to uniformity and soon it appears to us as the true reality. We then no longer feel that it is one-sided and narrow. If at some point these monotonous cultures are torn open or even torn out and »windows« open up, this unsettles us; indeed, we even resist it. Because in the external as well as in our internal landscapes, we can cope more easily if everything is and remains as it was, as far as possible. How often it is taken as a compliment when someone is told that they have not changed at all.

We resist change - also in ourselves, in our soul landscapes. Yet, it could be that we foster an inner culture that has become one-sided and meagre and is gradually drying us out. It no longer nourishes. Then it can happen that a crisis from the outside shakes everything within us. This is painful and also threatening. But if I courageously leave behind what no longer serves life and, thus, create new spaces, I will discover »nooks« within myself that were previously in darkness and with wonder I will breathe into a breadth that was unimaginable in the tunnel of my supposedly safe previous world. Can I accept the light and the breadth or do they frighten me?

How helpful and invigorating it can be to read Psalm 18: like the exciting, prayerful account of a birth - a total, saving change into life! Then the worshipper can say: »He brought me out to a wide-open space, set me free, for His pleasure I was. . . . and stands me on the heights.« And finally, »You lengthened my strides beneath me«.

The forest is allowed to change and so are we - may it be a change toward more life! Because that is what new living spaces are for: they entice us outside and inside to more liveliness, to a new shaping of a greater diversity.

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