Potential for green forest jobs – The example of funeral forests in Germany and in other European countries

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• Definition
• Regional development in Germany
• Technical development as one driver
• Practical experience in Ireland
• Global aspects
• Conclusion
„A funeral forest is a forest which will be used as a funeral environment“

Proposed definition
Development in Germany

Some facts:
• Opening of the first Funeral Forest in Kassel in 2001
• In 2015 more than 330 natural Cemeteries and 170 Funeral Forests in Germany are known
• 2/3 are run by two market leaders
  150 Foresters are permanently engaged
• Ca. 1/3 are run by 37 municipalities
• Unknown numbers of foresters engaged
• Average size of a Funeral Forest is between 30 and 150 ha
• The number of funeral forests is still increasing
Development in Europe

- A systematic overview is missing
- Funeral Forest types on the regional scale in Europe seem to be different
- Most Funeral Forests seem to be widespread in Central and Western Europe
Funeral Forests

• Burying culture is in transition in Europe

• Diversity of Forest and burying culture in Europe
Technical development

New generation of cremation plants are available
• They are more or less zero emission plants and this promotes their broader acceptance in society
  – No odour, no particles and gaseous emissions
  – The chamber is heated by renewables (radiation heat), solar, wind and water
  – Separation and selection of toxic dust (mercury)
  – More transparency of the process and the plant itself
  – Creates up to 6 decent jobs per cremation plant in rural areas
View from a potential Funeral Forest in Ireland

Forest close to Dundalk, Border to Northern Ireland
Visiting potential funeral forest sites in Ireland

Selection criteria:
- Forests in rural areas
- View of water (river, lake or sea)
- Accessibility (electricity, roads)
- No disturbance by noise, traffic etc.
- Space for planting a funeral tree
- Close to a pub/restaurant
- Close to a church and/or a tomb
Global dimension: The case of India

- Polluted water and Air pollution is endangering human health, the economy and the environment due to the traditional burning of bodies in India
- Currently, ca. 7 Million bodies are being burnt every year
- 2-3 m³ of wood per body are needed for the process
- Sustainable solutions are urgently required
Conclusions

• The number of funeral forests will further increase in Europe
• Funeral forests will create decent green jobs in the rural countryside of Europe
Thank you for your attention!

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