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Back Story:

When was the last time you spent a moment in silence? Away from honking cars, braking trains, people and their buzzing cellphones, barking dogs, loudspeaker announcements, arguments, laughter, sirens?

In the Western world, it has become almost impossible to find silence. We are exposed to the noise of civilization, even in remote places. I noticed this during our first trekking tour in western Greenland when my wife and I were completely alone with our backpacks, our tent, and our food for weeks. There's nothing but an empty landscape, sometimes an animal, smaller and bigger lakes, fjords with icebergs, and, in the background, the inland ice.

According to the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, almost one in two people nowadays feel annoyed by the noise. The US political magazine *The New Republic* writes, "Sound is ambient, elusive, enveloping. Even the softest drone can echo cacophonously if it worms itself into your head."

More than seven billion people live on earth, and that number is growing. The earth is heating up, and with it, sea levels are rising. Storms are becoming wilder, droughts longer, and water scarcer. Not long ago, scientists found plastic particles as far away as in the Antarctic Ocean. Glaciers are melting away. People are fleeing because of water-stress from wars or from miserable economic conditions in their countries. Writer T.C. Boyle described the most powerful man in the world as a clown. George Orwell's 1984 reappears in book charts. The Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists is at two minutes before twelve. The clock was only once nearer to twelve, which was in 1950 - the world was then on the brink of an atomic war.

At that time, between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, Swiss philosopher Max Picard wrote: "Nothing has changed the nature of man as much as the loss of silence." More than 100 years before him, German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer stated: "Noise is the most impertinent of all forms of interruption; it is not only an interruption but also a disruption of thought." Today? Silence has become a luxury. We are even willing to pay money for services and products that promise silence.

I capture silent moments with my camera. The simpler the subjects, the better. For me, silence and simplicity go hand in hand. It is quite possible that this is an escape from reality, a reaction to excessive demands, but I believe noise is a troublemaker that reduces the quality of life.

From a technical point of view, my photographs are not too difficult to capture. What distinguishes them is the moment in which I take them. These moments are unpredictable. That makes the difference. I take pictures when there are no shadows because I think that the quality of light and tones are much stronger.

I look for silent locations that are accessible by foot. There are still places far from the hustle and bustle, even in overcrowded regions such as the Alps in the heart of Europe. To locate such places is one thing; to be there at the right time is another. In all cases, my method of photographing reduces life to what fits in my backpack.

I understand silence as a luxury; not being available from time to time is a priceless benefit.