

Submitted Abstract

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>> **SYNTHESIZE** MOUNTAINS OF KNOWLEDGE <<

Abstract

This was the despairing cry of the French sociologist A. Asselin and she tackled the problem by making documentary films about her topics of research - thereby opening up completely new horizons for communicating her issues.

In the late 1930's, the Austrian geographer and anthropologist Erika Hubatschek (1917-2010) was not satisfied with the existing photographs in her field of research. So she took her own photographs - which today are all historic documents - for a strictly scientific purpose as illustrations of her geographical and anthropological research into the making of the alpine landscape and the life and work of mountain farmers. Much later, Erika realized the extent to which her 14 000 negatives were a mirror of a time bygone, and she started to exhibit them throughout Europe and the US. In her later years, she was considered as much as a "photographer" as a scientist and her work was also widely recognized for its artistic value, leading to many international exhibitions, even in the Leica Gallery in New York. Her photographic work from 1939 to 1962 is particularly interesting on account of the wide range of topics it covers: from rural history to agro-sociology, from architecture to anthropology, from gender studies to ecology.

How can we today deepen the impact of scientific research by linking it to forms of communication based on artistic expression?

I am now presenting Erika's main topic, LIFE ON THE STEEP SLOPE, in various different ways:

Exhibits of photographs and large-size canvas prints

Richly illustrated books

Thematic trails

Visual readings

Documentary films

My own ongoing visual project is Himalay'Alps 1::2::3, a visual bridge over distance and time. It is the comparison between women's work in mountain areas (Alps/Himalaya) over a period of approx. 80 years: is it "same-same" as they say in India, or what differences in tools, methods of working, social organisation, climatic influences and changes can be observed?

We have never before had so many different tools for arts-based scientific communication at our disposal: from classical formats like photographs and slides to video, films, blogs and installations - with all of these we can come closer to the public and allow people to discover new aspects of scientific research.