



Workshop invitation

From above: on a scientifically privileged position

*Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Linnésalen,
12-13 January 2017*

The dream of an “Apollo’s eye” in viewing the earth goes back to antiquity, but in the modern period technologies have enabled a production of scientific knowledge literally from above, e.g. from mountain tops, balloons and satellites. Seeing the world in overview is a modern capability shaping symbols and narratives of the earth and global contexts. Our sense of the global has a deep historicity, affecting what we can think, feel and say about planetary scales.

The aim of this workshop is to explore the modern history of scientific technologies, cultural practices and aesthetic conventions that produced extra-ordinary views from above. The workshop focuses on the period 1750-2000 and investigates what a history of observations from an elevated position looks like. Instruments, at times intertwined with the vessels which carry them, have a history which give them meaning far beyond the task of measurement. Positions involving overview have been considered privileged. Accordingly, the workshop also aims at exploring imagery as well as cultural narratives of overview relating the highs and the skies to power, indeed to ideas about freedom, paradise, afterlife and the eternal.

The meeting is organised as part of the research programme “Science and Modernization in Sweden: An Institutional Approach to Historicizing the Knowledge Society”, hosted by the Center for the History of Science at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Stockholm, is also the venue for the meeting. The theme ties into ongoing research in the programme and at Stockholm University, KTH Royal Institute of Technology and University of Gothenburg.

We invite abstracts of 1-2 pages and a short cv, deadline 10th June 2016. Notice of acceptance will be given no later than 24th June 2016. The workshop will not have precirculated papers however we envision a tight and thematic schedule with engaged comments and discussions. Depending on the interest and outcome of the accepted papers we will consider moving forward with a future publication on the topic. We will cover travel and two nights of accommodation for presenters. Questions and submissions should be directed to: nina@kth.se

Nina Wormbs

Associate professor, History of Science and Technology, KTH
Royal Institute of Technology,

Staffan Bergwik
Björn Billing

Associate professor, History of Ideas, Stockholm University
Senior lecturer, History of Ideas, Gothenburg University