

### 1.3 *The First Globalization: The Rise of Terrestrial and Celestial Globes in Early Modern Europe*

MICHAEL J. SAUTER

**CIDE México / Center for History of Science and Technology (GNT), Uni Hamburg**

michaeljsauter@gmail.com

The concept “globalization” is more than ubiquitous in our contemporary culture, having become a dominant metaphor for many public debates, with terms such as “one world”, “shared planet” and “global responsibility” becoming pervasive. A striking aspect of globalization’s role in contemporary discourse, however, is how little scrutiny its intellectual foundations have received.

In this talk I will argue that there would be no globalization today, at least not in its current form, without the invention in the late fifteenth century (and subsequent diffusion) of terrestrial globes. This scientific instrument first appeared in Italy in 1477, before diffusing rapidly through every part of the early modern world. Through its use Europeans from many social scales learned how to place themselves above (and float comfortably around, a planet that none of them had ever seen. That is, they put themselves and their planet in a space that, for all practical purposes, did not exist.

The first globalization was, thus, marked by the diffusion of material objects and their accompanying mental underpinnings, rather than the free movement of people, goods, and capital. When we speak in “global” terms, we expect to be understood, because most everyone has had access to globes and has absorbed the concepts on which they are based. A basic component of today’s globalization rhetoric is, thus, a spatial imagination that was invented by and diffused throughout the early modern world.