



The 2nd SCAS Wittrock Lecture

## HELGA NOWOTNY

Professor emerita of Science and Technology Studies, ETH Zurich.  
Chair, ERA Council Forum Austria.  
Former President, European Research Council

### *Life in the Digital Time Machine*

Tuesday, 25 February 2020, 10:15 a.m.

Humanistiska teatern, Campus Engelska Parken  
Thunbergsvägen 3c, Uppsala

Please contact [rsvp@swedishcollegium.se](mailto:rsvp@swedishcollegium.se) no later than 1 February 2020 to register for the event.  
The number of seats is limited and seats will be distributed on a first come, first served basis.

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## ABOUT HELGA NOWOTNY

Helga Nowotny is Professor emerita of Science and Technology Studies, ETH Zurich, and a founding member of the European Research Council (ERC). In 2007 she was elected ERC Vice President and from March 2010 until December 2013 she was ERC President. In January 2014 Nowotny was appointed Chair of the ERA Council Forum Austria. She is a member of the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development and Visiting Professor at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Helga Nowotny is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Falling Walls Foundation, Berlin; Vice-President of the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings; Chair of the Science Advisory Board of the Complexity Science Hub, Vienna; and active in other advisory boards in Europe. She is a Foreign Member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences as well as member of academies of science in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, and a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She has been honoured with the rarely awarded Gold Medal of the Academia Europaea, the Leibniz-Medaille of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and the British Academy President's Medal. She has received honorary doctorates from universities and academic institutions in Belgium, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore and the United Kingdom. Her latest books are *The Cunning of Uncertainty* (Polity, 2015) and *An Orderly Mess* (CEU Press, 2017).

## ABSTRACT

It is a truism, albeit an urgent one, that humanity faces unprecedented global challenges. At last, we have discovered the spatial finiteness and vulnerability of the planet, our only habitat so far. Our temporal bearings are also shifting. We cannot escape the present which increases in density, acceleration and openness towards past and future, filled with ever more information from the past and expectations from a future that is already here, but unequally distributed. With access to a huge amount of data, unprecedented computational power and clever algorithms we are constructing a digital niche. The predictive power of algorithms enables us to see further ahead, opening new opportunities for prevention and shaping the future. Does it also risk a return to a more deterministic worldview once we start to align with the predictive power of the digital time machine?