

# INVITED SPEAKERS AND THEIR KEYNOTE ADDRESSES



FIRST KEYNOTE SPEAKER

## JUDIT TIMÁR

Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

Day:

Thursday, 26th September

Location and time:

VG, 9:30 - 10:30

Discussants:

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### STRUGGLES OF FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY AGAINST CHANGING HEGEMONIES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

*The relatively short history of feminist geography in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been the history of a continuous struggle against hegemony. This presentation strives to present how spaces of feminist geography are shaped in the ever-changing context of power relations both inside and outside the academia in this region. I rely on various conceptions of space in order that the process of the above-mentioned struggle can be understood. Of the relational conceptions of space, it is Massey's conception (1994), born out of feminist critique and, especially, Rose's „paradoxical space“ (1993) that can be instrumental in my analysis. Recommended by Rose as a means of fighting masculinist exclusionary discourses, the conception of space assuming the positive nature of otherness describes a space where feminist geographers work both „within and against“ the discipline. However, I argue that this paradox identified on the basis of Anglo-American experience cannot describe the social context of feminist geography evolving in former socialist countries fully. Nor can it describe the ever-changing context of „within and against“, not to mention trends and developments in external and internal hegemony.*

*Contrary to the comparison of „socialist“ against „post-socialist“, I stress continuous change. I believe that, with the impacts of hegemony taken into account, as regards Hungary, at least three conspicuous periods can be highlighted. The CEE region is far from being homogeneous. Therefore, identifying stages in Hungary is just an example and serves as a case study. The impact of the political regime change on the evolvement of feminist geography was palpable there after a relatively short period. Nation state politics negated even the existence of the gender issue (inequalities) during the era of state socialism. Gender research did not stand a chance. Democratisation and the evolvement of feminist movements in the early 1990s offered a different context for the fight for recognition. However, mainstream geography remained conservative and strove to exclude gender research saying that „It is not geography“. Recentralisation and current increasingly authoritarian politics in Hungary all but ban not only feminist research arguing that „It is not science“, but also any other approach of social sciences that may pose a threat to the current political regime. This reflects such concentration of power that makes gender studies (and, hence, feminist geography) go back to square one, i.e. the current situation can easily be characterised by means of the concept of „curved space“ that modern physics addressing the idea of „spacetime“ proposes.*

*This „trajectory of development“ varies from one CEE country to the next. However, the fight against hegemony and for acknowledgement is something that the CEE region as a whole has in common. Furthermore, the state socialist practice of knowledge production and some of its consequences are also shared experience. Therefore, sharing old and new experience is an important condition of solidarity, which is an indispensable tool of fight against hegemony, and which is also the subject-matter of a more detailed train of thoughts in this presentation.*

Keywords: feminist geography, hegemony, power relations, Central and Eastern Europe