

The Institute for Sociology, Centre for Social Sciences, HAS  
cordially invites you to its thirty-third *Jour fixe* event:

Maria DiCenzo:

Challenging Theories of Abeyance:  
Feminist Activism in the Interwar Years in Britain

Academic symposium

**Presenter:** Maria DiCenzo, Professor, (Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada)

**Discussants:** Balázs Sipos (ELTE University, Budapest)

Judit Acsády (Institute for Sociology, Centre for Social Sciences, HAS)



**Abstract**

The proposed paper grows out of a larger study involving a critical examination of feminist media used by key figures and organizations to frame, debate, and publicize a range of social, political, economic, and cultural issues affecting women in the interwar decades in Britain. The research draws on a range of conceptual frameworks rooted in current debates about interwar historiography, social movements, and media history, to identify the functions and contributions of the feminist press and related print media in the period. By working at the intersection of these critical perspectives, I am proposing ways of reframing and highlighting the significance and implications of early movements and their media which have either been obscured altogether or given a limited focus in the context of these various fields of scholarship. The presentation will draw on distinctions between phases of mobilization made by social movement theorists to argue that accounts of the interwar period as one of 'decline,' 'retreat to domesticity' or, at best, a movement in 'abeyance,' have ignored what was in fact a shift from an earlier period of 'action mobilization' (the insurgency of the pre-war suffrage campaign) to one of renewed 'consensus mobilization' working to build awareness and support around a much wider range of issues, about which there was considerable disagreement—a process for which print media became crucial. I will challenge theories of retrenchment or dormancy by arguing instead that the interwar years witnessed the pluralization and diversification of feminist discourses. Rather than deactivating feminism, the war generated new problems and complicated old ones. At the national level, demobilization intensified competition between women and men in the work force, leading to major public policy debates around labour-related and family welfare issues. At the same time, post-war political diplomacy fuelled the involvement of feminist pacifists in international campaigns (such as the recently formed Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) to debate and intervene in world conflicts and to promote peace. These causes drew support from existing and new constituencies of participants (many of them former suffragists), in a landscape of radically changing social and economic conditions and political opportunities.

Venue: Institute for Sociology, Centre for Social Sciences, HAS,  
Hegedüs room, Budapest I. Úri u. 49.

Date: 16 April, 2015 (Thursday), 1p.m.