

Dear CITY members,

As you know Roger Keil stood down on July 1st as Director of the CITY Institute. I have agreed to stand in as Acting Director for a one year period while another search takes place for a permanent Director. Roger is an incredibly hard act to follow but I hope that in my year I can add to City's well-deserved reputation as a dynamic research centre with a global reputation.

I am assuming that you know about the failed search to find a replacement for Roger and that a few months ago I did not know I was going to be in this position. I was supposed to be on sabbatical this year but felt very strongly that sending out a message that York could not find someone to replace Roger was not only wrong but damaging to the reputation of the Institute that he had worked so hard to establish. Roger and I were both giving papers earlier this year at the American Association of Geographers annual conference in the session on 'Global Urbanisms'. We met, we chatted about CITY, and here I am. I do not want you to think however that I will be merely filling a space for the year. I have plans for the Institute that I have already discussed with the Executive and that I want to share with you.

So who am I? I am a geographer by training and I have been a member of the Urban Studies program in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies at York for over twenty years. For most of this time I was cross appointed to the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies so it should come as no surprise that my research has had a focus on feminist issues. My latest publication in this field is a co-edited book with Prof. Martina Rieker (Director, Centre for Women and Gender Studies at the American University in Cairo) *Rethinking Feminist Interventions into the Urban* (2013, Routledge). You can find out more about it at <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415518802/> And you can find out more about me at www.yorku.ca/lpeake

We have a busy year coming up at CITY with ongoing activities, most notably those of the MCRI funded project, headed by Roger, on 'Global Suburbanisms' that will be showcased with a major international conference in September. For the CITY seminar series I have already put plans afoot to have a roundtable on social justice and the city with urban activists in Toronto, a one day session highlighting postgraduate urban research, an evening with Matt Gallagher from the CBC (to be confirmed) and faculty presentations, including from myself. We have a number of visiting scholars from Europe and beyond and a range of activities that will engage the CITY community at York in outreach activities. I will for example be working with Prof. Zulfikar Hirji (Anthropology, York) on a symposium being mounted by the Ismaili community in Toronto on faith and the city. I am also going to be working with Vice Provost Academic Alice Pitt on how to increase York's community engagement; such an activity is obvious for CITY to be involved in.

My attention will mostly be focused however on a range of new activities that I would like CITY to undertake, both in-house and beyond, that will serve to raise its

profile. With such a well established global reputation and the large number of postgraduates engaged in urban research at York the time is ripe for CITY to initiate its own postgraduate diploma. Other student based initiatives include seeking funding for undergraduate and graduate essay prizes on an urban topic (equivalent to the CERLAC Baptista essay prize) as well as for a PhD on a topic such as 'diversity and the city' or 'women and the city'. Funding will also be needed to establish an annual 'activist in residence' program that will provide a semester's stipend and office space to allow the intellectual head space that enables such individuals the time and space to recuperate, regenerate and develop their creative agendas. Another activity will be to put together a proposal, along with an academic department, for a Canada Research Chair in Canadian urbanism (the final focus of which will be determined through consultation). Should all these initiatives come to fruition there is also the possibility, further along the line, of an annual postgraduate conference and a summer school on methods training (ranging through theatre to big data) for urban scholars.

A revitalization of the web site will serve to highlight these new developments. Work on the web site will take place alongside some other housekeeping activities that we need to undertake. The Institute needs to establish its own governance document, especially with the changing landscape facing research centres at York. And we also need to make decisions about the space CITY is occupying. The Institute is a busy place with a number of postgraduates and visiting scholars and if we are successful in achieving the above 'things to do' list we will be even busier. Do we want to expand and offer space for faculty residents, have our own meeting room and drop-in space? We need discussion and resolution on such matters.

The first and foremost task however is the Chartering exercise that CITY must undertake this year as this will establish the research focus for the Institute for the next five years. We have a tight schedule in that the charter document should be submitted to the VPRI by early November. This is an exercise that will involve much consultation but I feel confident that we can complete this on time with a positive result.

The success of these ventures will largely depend on how well the CITY community can work together. I hope to facilitate this process by a leadership mode that will emphasise dialogue and collegiality. I depart shortly for a trip to East Asia but will be in touch soon to arrange to meet with you – starting in August - to discuss the charter and start the process of working together. I look forward to hearing from you about any ideas you have about CITY and meeting with you.

With best wishes,

Linda Peake