

Director's Message 2018-2019

Dear CITY members,

As we start to become engaged in the new semester, I wanted to send a brief update about the City Institute and the activities we have set up for 2018. Coming back to campus after the strike has been an unsettling activity for many, but it does not have to be an isolating experience. The need for political engagement continues as we enter the era of Doug Ford politics in Toronto and Ontario, as is evident by our first City seminar of the academic year with Progress Toronto and a number of York faculty as discussants: "A Conversation About Toronto and its Upcoming Municipal Elections in the Doug Ford Era". On the 5th of October we will be hosting an event on "Queer Toronto" with Jane Farrow and on the 26th of October we have another of our feminist urban reading groups led by Dr. Elsa Koleth. Our annual professional training session for early career folks (that we hold jointly with the Program in Planning at Waterloo University) will continue and we have a two day session planned for November 15th and 16th . This meeting will be held during the second visit of Professor Kevin Ward (Manchester University) to the City Institute. Kevin will be attending classes and holding meetings with graduate students as well as organising a one day workshop on "Urban Infrastructures" on November 8th .

Although somewhat delayed by the strike, our SSHRC Partnership grant project (Urbanization, gender and the global south: a feminist knowledge network) is well underway with our Research Project Manager in place, Leeann Bennett (welcome Leeann!). The project is holding its second AGM and a workshop on feminist urban methodology in Mumbai from the 28th to 30th of September with keynotes by Richa Nagar (University of Minnesota) and Cindi Katz (CUNY), as well as a panel discussion on feminist activism in Mumbai with members from a range of NGOs and civil society groups. Further information on the workshop and the project will be available soon when the project website is launched. In March 2019 we will also be holding a globally co-ordinated online conference on "Decolonising the urban; whose voices, whose agendas" organized by Dr. Elsa Koleth.

Earlier this year, the City Institute was also successful in securing a major SSHRC Partnership grant (more information about this will follow, once it has been officially announced by the Federal Government) and we now have a Research Project Manager in place, Prabha Khosla (welcome Prabha!). Meanwhile, we are entering into the last phase of Professor Roger Kiel's MCRI grant on Global Suburbanisms with a series of [Towards Suburbia](#) seminar presentations taking place throughout the year as well

as a major international conference ([After Suburbia](#)) that will be taking place from the 19th – 21st October (or register [here](#) for the conference). The conference organisers are still looking for volunteers to help with the meeting and you can contact them at suburban@yorku.ca. Another York held conference—the 33rd Biennial Conference of the [Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies](#)—being held from the 26th – 28th October, with a strong urban content, is being led by the Director of the Centre for Asian Studies, Professor Abidin Kusno.

Meanwhile, we are entering into the final phase of Professor Roger Kiel’s MCRI grant on Global Suburbanisms and hosting various SSHRC funded grants including: my own SSHRC IDG grant “Gendered Subjectivities and Gendered Urban Forms: Urban Feminist Geographies of the Anglo-Caribbean,” Professor Alison Bain’s SSHRC Insight Grant “Queering Canadian suburbs: LGBTQ2S place-making outside of central cities,” and Professor Bain’s SSHRC Connections Grant “The power, potentialities, and paradoxes of controversy in feminist geography pedagogical praxis.”

In addition, undergraduate members of the City Institute have set up an undergraduate journal TUJ: Toronto Urban Journal. Led by Brandon Hillier, a fourth year undergraduate student in Urban Studies, and also a DARE recipient, and a number of other enterprising students in the Urban Studies program, the journal is attracting a large number of submissions from undergraduates across North America and further beyond. For those interested in knowing more about the journal please contact Brandon on brandonhilliers@gmail.com.

This semester has also seen a large influx of visiting scholars (a total of 15 scholars over the 2017-2018 year), including: Sabrien Amrov, Mojgan Chapariha, Dr. Thomas Chiramba, Lorenzo De Vidovich, Dr. Eiman Ahmed Elwidaa, Dr. Nehal El-Hadi, Dr. Shekofeh Farahmand, Jairan Gahan, Dr. Tania Hernandez-Cervantes, Dr. Andre Ortega, Dr. Jessica Parish, Dr. Mahmud Rezaei, Dr. Majiid Sameti, Marie Tabary, and Dr. Kevin Ward. Dr. Elsa Koleth is approaching the second year of her Post-Doctoral Visitor position working on feminist approaches to comparative urbanism. Anyone wishing to meet with any of our visitors can email city@yorku.ca to set up a meeting.

This has also been an active year for publications for City Institute members. The publication of the theme issue of the journal *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (36 (3)) on critical engagements with planetary urbanization has garnered much attention globally and sparked off various debates about the nature of urban knowledge production. This work includes an introduction to the special issues that is written by two York Ph.D. students, Darren Patrick (FES) and Gokboru Tanyildiz

(Sociology), a previous City Post-Doctoral Visitor, Dr. Roza Tchoukaleyska, as well as colleagues from the University of Toronto and myself. Those interested can follow up here.

In terms of reaching out to other members of the York community, we have begun discussions with faculty members in the urban humanities and with our urban focused colleagues at Glendon. In January we will be hosting a joint City Institute talk on smart and sustainable cities during the Glendon Global Debate in conjunction with Annie Demirjian (director) and Meaghan Kay of The Glendon School of Public and International Affairs. Other events will follow and we will advertise them on our listserv as they approach.

In house, we are currently upgrading the City Institute website, engaging in discussions on the possible merger between the Department of Geography and the Faculty of Environmental Studies, preparing our charter document for 2019-2024, and working on a diploma for graduate students.

Finally, if you want to find out more about us and what we do, please join us at the City Institute's Meet and Greet that will be held on a date to be announced the very near future.

With best wishes and looking forward to seeing you at one or more of these many events!

Linda Peake

Director, the City Institute