Over the past ten years, Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design has evolved in form and scope. It has progressed in both its physical appearance, now a highly designed publication with a full layout staff, and in type of article featured. The journal has addressed themes such as “Change,” “Endurance and Adaptation,” “Connection,” and “Alternatives.” In its tenth edition, Agora has expanded beyond the print publication; Agora now hosts annual events and has established a wide online presence through a blog, videos, social media, and online distribution. This year’s theme, “Progression,” captures not only the changing nature of the journal, but the over-arching commonalities between the articles that show how cities progress in order to create viable places that serve the ever-changing needs of their residents.

Agora 9 articles presented the theme “Divisions” as a descriptor of the pieces that showed the stark barriers that the built environment and the people within them face. Agora 10 presents ideas for how we can move past these divisions and re-create places in meaningful ways. In this year’s edition, authors discuss topics such as the implications of adaptive reuse of churches, neighborhood change through urban design, gas-tax policy reform, rethinking informal migrant villages in China, and the reimagining of historic urban gardens in Iran. While varied in perspective and topic, all pieces encompass the need to address critical planning issues and to propose change.

Symposium 002, the journal’s second annual Symposium, poses the question “What makes a place refugee-ready?” By examining this question through different media and perspectives, we seek to provide ways to address the barriers associated with moving
forward in this humanitarian crisis. In addition to providing a selection of answers to this question, we also encourage others to consider what it means for a place to be refugee-ready. We not only seek to provide a snapshot in time of a current event, but to address an issue with broad and long-reaching impacts.

Agora has always been a venue for discussion, and the need for a space to gather innovative ideas continues. While the planning process, and progress in any form, is often slow, effectively inciting change requires innovative problem-solving and careful implementation. Progression implies taking the past into consideration and improving upon what has already been accomplished, a concept which presents a critical lesson for our cities, policies, and Agora.

I would like to thank all of our authors, editors, creative staff, and faculty advisors for their dedication throughout the publication process. Agora would not be possible without these contributors, and generous departmental support. Though all of these efforts, Agora continues as a gathering place for ideas, discussions, and challenging questions that seeks to advance the field of urban and regional planning.

Enjoy!

MIKAH ZASLOW