

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As *Agora* moves into its 12th year, a team of 20 graduate students carry on the tradition of cultivating a forum for open and cross-disciplinary dialogue about the most pressing urban planning issues and ideas of our time. After receiving an honorable mention from The Center for Architecture's Douglas Haskell Award for Student Journals in 2017, *Agora* has gained recognition as one of the most professional student-run journals of urban planning and design in the country. The opportunity to lead a team of talented individuals to produce a journal that lives up to *Agora's* reputation for excellence has been both humbling and exciting, and I am so proud of our work.

This year, *Agora* has broken new ground! We welcomed a record number of staff members, exceeded our fundraising benchmarks and goals, increased our social media presence, and received our highest levels of attendance at our annual salon. The *Agora 12* staff has worked hard to make *Agora* not only a platform for excellent work, but also a training ground where students can gain new skills and refine their existing abilities in writing, editing, and design.

The title of this year's journal, *Semblance*, speaks to the complexities inherent in planning for communities where everyone can thrive. In choosing this theme, we acknowledge that things are not always as they appear, and actions do not always have their desired effect. Thus, planners have become increasingly aware that they must challenge the assumptions that underlie the initiatives, policies, and systems shaping our society. For example, Christopher Rodriguez asks us to consider whether the market truly illuminates the preferences of our community members, or whether it largely reveals the desires of a powerful few in "Social Cohesion and Economic Justice." In "Practitioner Perspectives, Equity, and Tradeoffs," Prathmesh Gupta examines whether our definition of resilience inadvertently allows inequities to persist. While our efforts as agents of community change grow out of the best of intentions, we may struggle to achieve even a semblance of equity or long-term resilience in our communities. This year's 11 selections ask the tough questions that help planners hold themselves accountable for the outcomes of their work.

I would like to thank the staff of *Agora 12*, who worked tirelessly to produce this outstanding work of art; its authors and photographers for their inspiring perspectives; our benefactors who make this journal possible; and our faculty advisors and peer reviewers for their guidance. It is with your help that *Agora*, for the 12th time, serves as a gathering place for innovative and critical thinking about our roles as planners and future community leaders.

We hope you enjoy it!

Karen Otzen
Editor-in-Chief