From the Director: *Tidings* Quarterly Reflection
“The Vagaries of Changing Popular Perspectives for Politics and Vulnerable Groups”

We often say here at the Institute that we disproportionately serve “vulnerable” populations. By this term we mean to convey that VTIPG and affiliated faculty and staff often are involved in seeking to help devise ways to implement, to evaluate or to research public programs aimed at assisting marginalized populations in our society or internationally. In the United States such groups historically have included, among others, those with mental illness, former prisoners, individuals with disabilities, those living in poverty, Native Americans, and/or those of ethnicities or race, religion or sexual preferences that place them in a minority status. Interestingly, these same categories apply internationally too. That is, historically, these populations have often been the objects of hatred, ridicule and discrimination and of successful attempts to enact those inclinations formally into law wherever they reside. In the U.S., for example, Jim Crow laws notoriously legalized Southern state populations’ continued systematic discrimination against African Americans, despite the Civil War and changes in the Constitution and national laws following that conflict aimed at preventing that result. Native Americans were forced to give up their lands and, in especially cruel “schools,” were beaten into relinquishing their “barbaric” customs and languages. Japanese, Latino and Chinese immigrants...
have likewise been the subjects of formalized and systemic discrimination. Many other groups, including Polish and Irish Americans, have been the targets of social hatred at various points in our nation's history. Popular support for the discriminatory beliefs underpinning such actions was displayed dramatically during the Civil Rights era across the South, and has been seen since then in several states via continuing support for laws with discriminatory intent against immigrants, the poor and African Americans. Democracy is not an automatic guarantor of minority rights. Internationally, Hitler vilified Jews and enacted his twisted perspective into law. The Nazi regime assumed a similar stance toward those with disabilities and a number of other groups. The government in Myanmar is currently doing all in its power to discriminate against the Rohingya population in that nation. There are many current additional examples around the globe of such choices and of their attendant consequence of robbing individuals of their basic human rights. In all cases, these decisions are justified to and by the majorities supporting them on the basis of arguments that those targeted are somehow “unworthy” or “less than” and therefore merit contempt. Historically, too, the Bible was filled with examples of discrimination against those with mental or physical disabilities. The New Testament repeatedly highlights the bitter rage that Jesus Christ reportedly unleashed when he dared challenge those prevailing beliefs. In short, systemic discrimination against unpopular minorities is not new. It has gone on for centuries, both here and abroad, and the prevailing justification has ever been rooted in “othering” arguments.

That fact is worth recalling, as is the reality that few now believe that those who are blind or those coping with mental illness do so because they or their parents were being punished by God for some terrible behavior or evil and are in that state as a result. But people once made sense of these elements of the human condition on the basis of such claims. Understanding that fact is crucial. In a democracy, the public philosophy is ultimately driven by what the people at large believe and are willing to enshrine in law and in their behavior. Three recent events and their ensuing policy controversies reveal how quickly public attitudes can change, but also how difficult it can be to secure widespread, long-lived and deep seated shifts in prevailing popular beliefs notwithstanding. The first example is the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in a landmark case this past week that all of the nation’s states must permit same-sex couples to wed. Despite multiple decisions in the lower courts that had come to a similar conclusion, 13 states had not yet granted the right of civil union to same-sex couples and the Court’s decision requires that they do so. But this outcome, justified on the basis of a reading of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, is being sharply criticized by religious groups that believe God ordained matrimony only for men and women, and/or that sexual preference is a choice and that people evincing different sexual orientations need not be so. None of the 2016 GOP presidential candidates, reflecting their reading of the attitudes of the population that votes in their party’s early primaries, endorsed the Court’s decision and many denounced it. They took this stance despite the fact that national majority opinion clearly favored this outcome. The candidates’ public statements doubtless reflected an electoral calculus, but they also suggest the deeper point that while they are now in the minority in calling for actively limiting state sanctioned marriage on the basis of sexuality, they are free to continue to embrace those views
and to proselytize for them among those willing to countenance the continued deprivation of what the majority now views as a basic civil right. And the many churches that hold such views may also continue to teach and press them and need not permit same-sex marriages to occur under their auspices. Meanwhile, at least one judge, in Alabama, has elected not to issue ANY marriage licenses as a protest against the high court’s decision. The broader point is that despite a rapid shift in national public opinion and the legal conferral of this civil right to a new class of people, many Americans (but now a minority of the citizenry) will continue to discriminate against members of this population on the basis of their identity. Same sex-individuals may now wed as a legal and civil right, but many people will see and treat them as “less than” on the basis of the belief that their identity is, as one evangelical minister in Dallas, Texas put it in a sermon recently, “An affront in the Face of Almighty God.”

A second recent example of how difficult changing the prevailing imaginaries regarding vulnerable populations can be has arisen from the recent tragic murder of nine African Americans during a Bible study group at Emanuel AME church in Charleston, South Carolina. The alleged killer Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old white racist extremist, was depicted in photos wrapped in a Confederate battle flag accompanied by hate-filled rhetoric. That discovery soon occasioned a firestorm of criticism of the fact that South Carolina still flies that flag on its capital grounds. Moreover, it has been flown and venerated elsewhere by many in the South, including, officially, in Alabama, on the basis of a belief in the “heritage” it represents. Once again, no active GOP presidential candidate called for South Carolina to remove its flag in the aftermath of Roof’s suspected hate crime, until that state’s Republican governor did so. Now, many GOP officials are calling for the standard’s removal across the South and such may occur. While that is so, it is not clear that the many citizens willing to honor a flag that historically represents treason and the preservation of slavery as somehow the symbol of a romanticized vision of honor will suddenly change their perspectives, despite formal regime action. In short, while official government law or policy may soon no longer endorse this symbol of enmity and violent conflict in many Southern states, that is not to say that many residents of the region will soon change their beliefs. If such a broad shift does occur, it is likely to take time despite the pain inflicted on those African Americans meanwhile, who overwhelmingly view the flag as a sign of willful and continuing social degradation.

A final example of a recent event with policy implications for vulnerable populations, in this case the poor, once again involved a U.S. Supreme Court decision. The high court recently declared once more that the nation’s Access to Healthcare Act was constitutional in a second defeat for those who have sought to roll back the law, which has secured health care insurance for millions who had previously not enjoyed it. Opponents have argued that the statute represents national government overreach and deprives individuals of their freedom of choice. In this view, public provision of a benefit to the poor represents not a needed support, but a limitation of their freedom to choose, even though that “choice” would likely mean no or less comprehensive health coverage. The Court has now twice endorsed the law as constitutional, and in so doing earned the ire of GOP leaders and presidential candidates who have endorsed a deeply individualistic and neoliberal public philosophy. As I write this, it is unclear how strongly Republican leaders will continue to fight the law on the basis of these ideological arguments, but it seems likely that the battle over defining the role for government support, of the vulnerable especially, is not yet over.
What unites these cases is how complex and layered the public imaginary may be in political terms and how “sticky” the current views of specific population groups may be. These three cases are also joined by the fact that policies aimed squarely at assisting disadvantaged populations have created furor with at least some groups, long accustomed to claiming the privilege of defining the “place” of those individuals even when those views resulted in the formal sanctioning of social discrimination against those populations. Majoritarianism does not insure justice, particularly when one realizes that what constitutes justice is itself constructed on the basis of social values and assumptions. Each of these incidents and their aftermaths highlight that signal reality. Finally, in its efforts to ensure that minorities of all sorts in its midst are guaranteed their rights to believe what they wish, the nation will continue to witness ongoing conflict concerning how the vulnerable are to be treated, even when majority opinion shifts and supports a new view of those populations. Ironically, such social change often finds the national government seeking to protect the rights of the previously dominant group, who had often perpetrated what is now viewed as injustice in the past. Whatever the vagaries of this fraught social process, the Institute will remain in the fray, seeking both to help illuminate the portent of the choices in play and to realize fully such policies as presently exist to dignify and support the nation’s and globe’s vulnerable people.

Max Stephenson Jr.  
Professor of Public and International Affairs  
Director, Virginia Tech Institute for Policy & Governance

Notes

http://www.ipg.vt.edu/
Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance (VTIPG) builds strategic relationships between the university and community by linking academic research and outreach efforts to address significant public policy issues. VTIPG, a university level institute, was created to blend theory with practice by a variety of policy-related services.
Acknowledgements & Accomplishments

Congratulations to Marc Thomas (ASPECT), who successfully defended his dissertation on May 5. The title of his dissertation was Assessing the Boundaries of Participatory Democracy within an Emancipatory Political Framework: The Case of Parish Development Committees in Jamaica. Committee members included Craig L. Brians (Political Science), Chair (Deceased), Max Stephenson Jr. (SPIA), Co-Chair, Karen Hult (CPAP and Political Science), Joyce Rothschild (GIA), and Laura Zanotti (Political Science).

Marc has recently accepted a new government position in Jamaica. Best wishes to Marc as he embarks on this new appointment!

Damion Blake was interviewed on NPR about Obama’s recent visit to Jamaica (Damion finished in ASPECT in December 2012. His dissertation committee was co-chaired by Max Stephenson and Karen Hult)

Rachael Kennedy (Doctoral Candidate, Department of Agricultural, Leadership, & Community Education) was selected for a 2015-16 Fulbright U.S. Student Award to Turkey. She will represent the country as a cultural ambassador while you are overseas, helping to enhance mutual understanding between Americans and the people in Turkey. Her research will examine causal factors of social movements in Turkey and the potential for community resiliency. With this award, Rachel joins over 100,000 Fulbright U.S. Student Program alumni who have undertaken grants since the program began in 1948. Rachael and Fulbright grant recipients were featured in VT News on June 11.

Rachael was also featured in VT news on April 3, with topics including her Peace Corps service in Uzbekistan, current academic endeavors, and recent honors and awards.

Sarah Lyon-Hill (PGG) was featured in a WVTF piece on April 24 about the recently released study on the economic impact of Virginia Tech football on the region.

Welcome new VTIPG Fellow, Martha Mead
(...continued) Acknowledgements & Accomplishments

A few 2015 SPIA Awards 2015 to note - congratulations, all!

*Emily Barry-Murphy* (PGG) received the GIA Founding Faculty Award for Outstanding Graduating PhD Student.

*D’Elia Chandler* (MPIA) received the GIA Founding Faculty Award for Graduate Student demonstrating ideals of community engagement, public service, and social justice.

*Max Stephenson* was recognized for 25 years of service!

*Christian Matheis* (ASPECT) has received and accepted a Visiting Assistant Professor position in Government and International Affairs in the School of Public and International Affairs at Virginia Tech. Christian’s main duties in GIA will be to teach a couple of graduate seminars each semester.

*Sarah Hanks* (PGG) is currently underway with a Programs and Practice Research Internship with *Independent Sector* (leadership network for nonprofits, foundations, and corporations committed to advancing the common good). Their Programs and Practice department focuses on advancing sector leadership, strengthening effectiveness, and supporting greater impact and highest standards of governance and accountability in the nonprofit and philanthropic community.

*Sarah Halvorson-Fried* (MURP) received the C. David Loeks Award for Outstanding Second-year Graduate Students in Urban and Regional Planning.

*Jordan Laney* (ASPECT) and *Sarah Halvorson-Fried* (MURP) were among select scholars to receive the 2015 Diversity Scholars Award *(VT News, April 29)*. They presented their Diversity Scholars Projects on May 7:

- Jordan documented qualitative evaluations of the campus climate for Appalachian-identifying graduate students and plans to use the data to create awareness and inclusive initiatives for those students.

- Sarah assessed the impacts of the community-planned Islamic Worlds Festival on a wide range of undergraduate students, including those involved in the year-long pre-festival preparation.
(continued) Acknowledgements & Accomplishments

Virginia Tech Spotlight on INNOVATION: How Change Grows

**Junior Beauvais** (Agricultural Technology) was featured on Virginia Tech’s home page Spotlight on INNOVATION! Full article: How Change Grows. Beauvais’ efforts are making a positive impact already on the agricultural and economic challenges that resulted from the distribution of genetically modified seeds in the 1980’s.

In 2013, **Max Stephenson** along with colleagues **Nancy McGehee** (Department Head and Professor of Hospitality and Tourism Management) and **Laura Zanotti** (Associate Professor, Political Science, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences) assisted Beauvais in securing a scholarship to the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute (LCI) so he could come to the U.S. to study. His time spent at LCI enabled him to begin his current endeavors in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences’ Agricultural Technology Program.
Anna Erwin (PGG) presented on “Cross Linking Literatures: Farmworker Food Security in North Carolina” at the Association of American Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting, held April 21-25, 2015 in Chicago, IL. Her presentation was a part of a panel session titled Food Sovereignty and Food Security III: The Caribbean and the Nuevo South.

Anna also presented at the Agriculture Food and Human Values Annual Meeting and Conference held June 24-28, 2015 in Pittsburg, PA. Her presentation was titled “Farmworker Food Insecurity and Sustainable Agriculture: Connections in the Nuevo South,” and was part of the panel session called Give Us Bread and Pickles: Equity, Food.

Maya Berinzon (VTIPG Research Associate) presented on “Raising the Bar: The Role of Bar Associations and Societies in Promoting Development” at the 2015 Law and Development Conference held April 17 at Tulane University.

Max Stephenson participated in the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) Applied Ethics Initiative Panel Discussion on “Ethics, Values, and Justice: A Spectrum of Research and Educational Activity at Virginia Tech” on April 20. An open discussion of current work in ethics across the university, the program featured faculty from the ASPECT Program, the School of Public and International Affairs, the Department of Philosophy, and the Department of Science and Technology in Society.

Max also had his article titled “Exploring the Connections among Adaptive Leadership, Facets of Imagination and Social Imaginaries” reprinted by SAGE Publications in their Change Leadership collection of academic works, in Volume III: The Emerging Edge of Change Leadership.
Max Stephenson and Laura Zanotti’s paper proposal entitled “Exploring the Nexus of Aesthetics, Agency and Peacebuilding” was accepted for presentation at the 10th International Conference of the Arts in Society, to be held July 22-24, 2015 in London, England.

In a recent guest post for Routledge Planning Blog, Max Stephenson and Scott Tate discuss the themes of their new book (Arts and Community Change: Exploring Cultural Development Policies, Practices and Dilemmas) in light of recent civil unrest throughout the US.

Sarah Hanks’ (Agricultural and Extension Education) proposal entitled The Dialogue on Race: Exploring the Implication of Frame Alignment When Leading Across Boundaries, has been accepted to the International Leadership Association’s 17th Annual Global Conference to be held October 14 - 17, 2015 in Barcelona, Spain.

Lyusyena Kirakosyan’s (VTIPG Senior Project Associate) article titled “An Examination of Violence Practiced against Disabled Brazilians in Relation to Sustainable Development” was published in Disability Studies Quarterly, Vol 34, No 4 (2014).

Lyusyena also had her proposal entitled “Cultivating moral imagination in the special education teachers in Brazil: the role of continuing teacher education” accepted for presentation at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Association for Moral Education to be held November 5-7, 2015 in Santos/Brazil.


Community Voices Spring 2015 Season Recap
Links to SoundCloud Recordings

Liz Lerman
▶ talk on “At the Crossroads: Art, Science, Research”
▶ radio interview

Lisa Jo Epstein
▶ roundtable discussion
▶ radio interview

Tracy Kunkler
▶ talk on “Governing Complex Systems- Stories from the Front Lines”
▶ radio interview
Recent Events on Campus Related to Governance

April 2 Dr. Elaine Salo (Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, University of Delaware), presented the last Women and Gender in International Development discussion for the semester. Salo’s talk focused on the governing processes used to ensure women’s and girl’s gendered access to safe water sources as a means to reducing poverty and to strengthen gender equality.

April 9 Laura Zanotti (Virginia Tech Department of Political Science) presented on “Re-conceptualizing Political Agency beyond Universal Normativity: Critical Realism Meets Bohr’s Physics” (spring 2015 ASPECT Working Paper Series)

April 9 Screening of Girl Rising

April 17 WGS student conference on “Embodying Resistance: Contemporary Feminist Activism and Scholarship,” including readings of creative writing and poetry.

April 18 Screening of Place at the Table, as a part of Global Youth Service Day

Virginia Tech Ethics Week

These three major events were scheduled to convey the significance of ethics to research, education, professional activity, and daily life.

April 20 Tom Clarke (CEO of Kissito Healthcare) spoke on “Beyond Corporate Social Responsibility: The Ethical Responsibility of Business in Social Change”

April 22 Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) Applied Ethics Initiative Panel Discussion held on “Ethics, Values, and Justice: A Spectrum of Research and Educational Activity at Virginia Tech.” An open discussion of current work in ethics across the university, this panel discussion featured faculty from the ASPECT Program, the School of Public and International Affairs, the Department of Philosophy, and the Department of Science and Technology in Society.

April 23 Bertram Malle (Cognitive, Linguistic, and Psychological Sciences at Brown University) presented a Department of Philosophy Seminar titled “Ethics of Social Robots and Ethical Social Robots: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach.”

April 25 Virginia Tech College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences hosted its 4th Annual Combating Racial Injustice Workshop

April 29 Screening of Drop City

April 30 Graduate student consulting forum held: A Conversation about Methods with LGBTQ+ Families, with Dr. Oswald. Discussion included methodological challenges in conducting LGBTQ+ research.

May 1 Virginia Tech President Timothy Sands spoke on The Public University in the 21st Century. Additional speakers included Marc Edwards (Engineering) on public scholarship, Wat Hopkins (Communication) on academic freedom, and Carol Mullen (Education) on pedagogy.
Dr. Ramona Oswald (nationally renowned family science scholar on lesbian and gay family processes and policy) presented on Better than It Used to Be!: How Non-metropolitan Communities have Changed for LGBT People. Her presentation examined non-metropolitan LGBT life in one Midwestern region: downstate Illinois. Using two waves of Rainbow Illinois data, Dr. Oswald discussed how communities have changed since 2000, what makes communities “supportive” rather than tolerant or hostile, and what aspects of community climate are linked to health and well-being of LGBT people. She concluded her presentation with policy and practice implications.

May 1

Virginia Tech-Southwest University Teleconference

June 3-5 Professor Carol A. Mullen (Educational Leadership) on Interventions of Learning for Shaping Education Policy and the Civic Society

June 5 Dr. Diana (Yanzhu) Wu (Assistant Director, Office of Instructional Technology and Affiliated Faculty) on Emerging Technologies for Supporting Teaching & Learning

June 5 David Brod (PhD student in Higher Education) on State Funding for Higher Education and Performance Based Funding

June 12 Professor David Alexander (Educational Leadership) on Educational Leadership and Law in the USA

June 12 Professor Guru Ghosh (Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs) on Outreach and International Affairs in Higher Education

June 23 University Distinguished Professor Karen A. Roberto (Director, Center for Gerontology and Institute for Society, Culture, and Environment) on Developing Interdisciplinary Teams for Advancing Research and Practice

June 23 Professor Rolf Müller (Mechanical Engineering) on The Shandong University – Virginia Tech International Laboratory

May 13 Dr. Walter J. Kickert (professor of public management at Erasmus University Rotterdam and scientific director of the Netherlands Institute of Government) spoke on “Europe managing the crisis: The politics of fiscal consolidation in fourteen European countries”
Upcoming Policy and Governance Related Events

**Wednesday, July 8, 2015**, 5:30pm-8:30pm, Fralin Auditorium - “Virginia Way” Forward Roundtable Event, facilitated by Chris Saxman (Executive Directory of Virginia FREE), with participants Ron Rordam (Mayor of Blacksburg), William Fralin (President, MFA and former member of the Virginia House of Delegates), Dr. Charles Steger (Virginia Tech’s Global Forum on Urban and Regional Resilience and the 15th President of Virginia Tech), and Professor Karen Hult (Chair of the Center for Public Administration and Policy in SPIA, and Professor of Political Science).

**Fall 2015**: The next season of Community Voices - stay tuned!

**Fall 2015**: Women and Gender in International Development (WGD) Discussion Series

_The WGD discussion series aims to educate and promote awareness of gender issues, increase visibility of gender research carried out by members of the Virginia Tech community, and provide opportunities for graduate students to present their work and experiences._

**Wednesday, September 9th, 2015**

“I miss school because there are no latrines” – Exploring the real costs of poor sanitation facilities for school girls in Africa

Nneoma Nwankwo,
undergraduate student, Political Science, Virginia Tech

Newman Library
First Floor Multipurpose Room (Room 101)
12:30 to 1:30 pm

**Wednesday, October 14th, 2015**

Women, gender norms, and natural disasters: examples from South Asia

Dr. Luke Juran, Assistant Professor, Geography Department, Virginia Tech

Newman Library
First Floor Multipurpose Room (Room 101)
12:30 to 1:30 pm

**Wednesday, November 18th, 2015**

No Relief: Poor women’s everyday experiences of sanitation in urban India

Dr. Kathleen O’Reilly,
Associate Professor, Geography Department, Texas A&M University

Newman Library
First Floor Multipurpose Room (Room 101)
12:30 to 1:30 pm

The Women and Gender in International Development Program is situated in the Office of International Research, Education and Development (OIRE). OIRE is part of Virginia Tech’s Outreach and International Affairs (OIA).

Other Happenings

**Calls for Papers**

The 5th International EcoSummit Congress, EcoSummit 2016, invites proposals for sessions and side events. Proposals should be submitted by **July 31, 2015**.
Student Spotlight: Jordan Laney

My name is Jordan Laney, and I will be entering my third year as a doctoral student in the Alliance for Social Political Ethical and Cultural Thought (ASPECT) program at Virginia Tech in the fall. I grew up in McDowell County, North Carolina, a place that continually shapes my interests and passions. In 2010 I earned a B.F.A in creative writing from Goddard College and in 2013 graduated from Appalachian State University with an M.A. in Appalachian Studies.

My current research focuses on bluegrass festivals as sites of identity and spatial construction. Working closely with the new Carlton and Charles Haney Collection at Appalachian State University, this project also provides insight into the legacy of Carlton Haney, the pioneer of multi-day bluegrass festivals, the first being held in nearby Fincastle Virginia in 1965. I have recently been awarded the Berea Sound Archives Fellowship (2015-2016) to further this research. Inspired by a roundtable I had the pleasure of organizing and chairing at the Appalachian Studies Association in 2015, I am also currently working to co-author an article on identity, place and sound with regards to rap and hip hop in the region commonly referred to as “Rappalachia” looking closely at the intersections between race, sound, and regionalism. I enjoy serving as the co-editor of Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Theory Archives (SPECTRA) a student-led online scholarly journal established as part of the ASPECT program, as well as helping plan the annual ASPECT Graduate Conferences (2015, 2016).

While at Tech, I have realized a passion for teaching. Serving as the instructor for “Introduction to Appalachian Studies” and a special topics course, “Bluegrass Music: Appalachian Roots and Influences” have been wonderful opportunities.
Taking classes to mountain top removal sites, traveling to bluegrass festivals and fiddler's conventions, preparing students to present at undergraduate and national conferences, and helping as they begin to interview members of their own communities are a few of the experiences that have impacted not only my teaching, but my research as well. As an associate member in the GTA Academy of Excellence (inducted in 2015), I look forward to growing as a teacher and learner and working to create a more inclusive, transformative pedagogical approach.

The Appalachian region and its people and music are more than research interests. I deeply care about the lack of employment opportunities and massive out-migrations which I see in my home county. I believe it is very difficult to study Appalachia and not serve as an activist on some level. Right now, I am honored to serve as a liaison between activists and academics through my position as a Student-At-Large Steering Committee Member within the Appalachian Studies Association (ASA) and Young Appalachian Leaders and Learners (Y’ALL) committee co-chair, a newly formed group within the ASA, working to facilitate connections and relationships between young people in the region. Working with groups like Community Voices allow me to be involved with similar efforts in my community here at Virginia Tech. I was also honored to serve as a Diversity Scholar (2015) to survey and address the needs of first generation, Appalachian identifying graduate students, a population often misunderstood and a group with which I identify. It is my hope to continue serving Appalachia as well as learning and teaching about place after graduation.
Blogs & Commentaries

RE: Reflections & Explorations - a graduate student commentary
May 7, 2015: Pondering the Nexus of Poverty, Human Dignity and Development
- Danny White (PGG)
April 30, 2015: Academic Freedom for Whom: Institutions or Individuals?
- Jerald H. Walz (PhD candidate in Higher Education)
- Rachael Kennedy (Doctoral Candidate, Department of Agricultural, Leadership, & Community Education)
April 9, 2015: Beyond (internal) Colonization, Blame, and Binaries: Working Towards a Relational Economy
- Jordan Laney (ASPECT)
April 2, 2015: Between Conditional and Unconditional Hospitality: The Contradictions of European Union and United States Immigration Policy
- Johannes Grow (ASPECT)

Soundings - a weekly commentary from VTIPG Director Max Stephenson
June 22, 2015: The Once and Future Perils of Popular Rule
June 8, 2015: Liberal Learning meets the Politics of Fear and Neo-liberalism
May 26, 2015: Of False Analogies, Fabled Claims and Caution Flags
May 1, 2015: Another Turn of the Wheel
April 27, 2015: The Politics of “Dispossession”
April 13, 2015: Institutionalizing ‘Doublethink’ and the Challenge of Democratic Deliberation
March 30, 2015: Fantasy, Phantasm and Pursuit of Power

Tidings - a quarterly reflection from VTIPG Director Max Stephenson, now featured as the Director’s Letter in our Quarterly Newsletters beginning October 2014.
Read Tidings from last quarterly newsletter, April 1, 2015 – Illustrating The Critical Importance of Framing Assumptions for Policy Analysis

Thriving Places Project - http://thrivingplacesproject.com/
This project shares ideas for change, and provides resources for people interested in making positive changes in their community.

Beth Olberding (MURP-MIP) in Costa Rica - https://betholberding.wordpress.com/
IPG affiliated master’s student Beth Olberding (MURP-MIP) is in Costa Rica now in pre-service training for the Peace Corps. Beth will spend the next 2 years volunteering in the community economic development sector. Check out her blog from time to time, as she will update it when she is able!