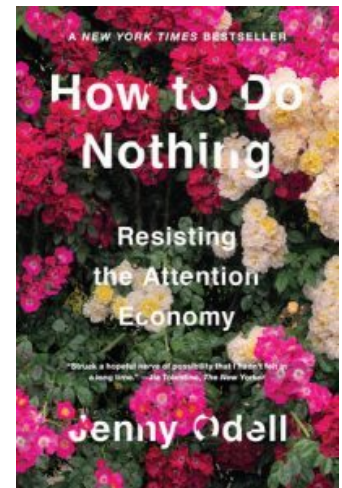


2020 In Review – An Impact Reading List

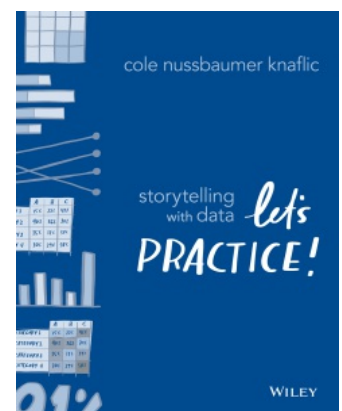
From the art of doing nothing to the competitive accountability of the modern university, with detours via The Economist and the history of the infographic. This reading list brings together the top book reviews featured on the LSE Impact Blog in 2020.

In a frenetic world obsessed with deliverables and results, **Jenny Odell** makes the case for [How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy](#), arguing not for passivity, wilful ignorance or sloth, but rather for the potential we create by refusing productivity and redirecting our attention to active modes of listening and contemplation. By shining a critical light on the ways in which our identities have become entangled with our occupations and advocating modes of reclaiming the power of our own curiosity, this book will be ideal for all those who feel off-kilter in the attention-seeking economy, writes **Christine Sweeney**.

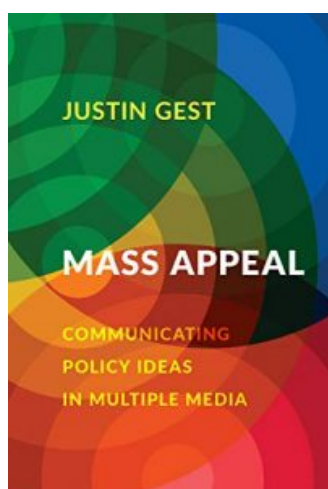


In [The Impact Agenda](#), **Katherine E. Smith, Justyna Bandola-Gill, Nasar Meer, Ellen Stewart** and **Richard Watermeyer** bring together research about the impact agenda and its policies into one critical discussion to highlight why it creates the controversies, consequences and challenges of the book's subtitle. Calling on the UK academic community to seize the opportunity to reshape the impact agenda in more positive and sustainable ways, the book's valuable synthesis and analysis is worthwhile reading for anyone interested in this topic, recommends **Jane Tinkler**.

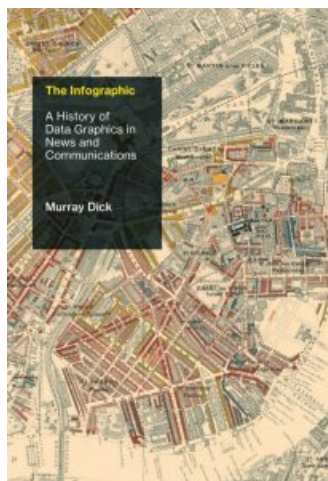
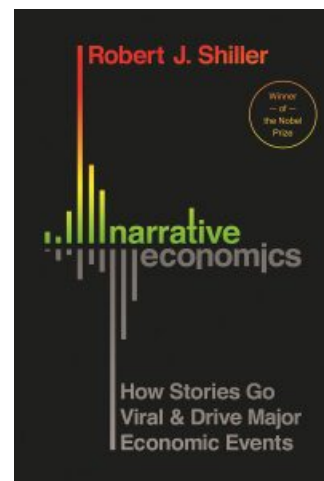
Intended for anyone committed to improving their ability to communicate data and complemented by [a website](#) that enables users to further hone their skills, this book is written in a fun, friendly and accessible manner and will be highly appreciated by visual learners and creative data-minded individuals, writes **Andrea Moise**.



In [Mass Appeal: Communicating Policy Ideas in Multiple Media](#), **Justin Gest** offers a guide for researchers who want to improve their ability to make a policy impact with their research, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of different media for communicating research ideas and their implications. This book is likely to be useful for researchers across the career spectrum, from PhD students to established scholars, writes **Steven Hill**, providing a tool kit to support researchers in countering increasing challenges to the authority of research knowledge and experts.

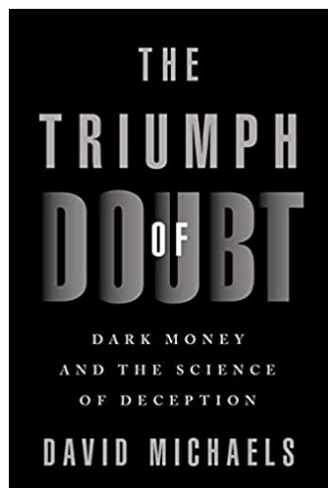
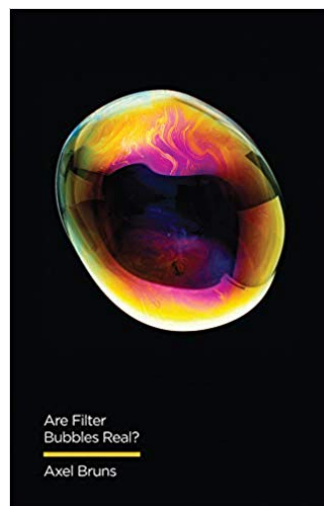


In [Narrative Economics: How Stories Go Viral and Drive Major Economic Events](#), **Robert J. Shiller** argues for the significance of narrative when it comes to understanding the drivers of economic events, arguing that contagious narratives not only play a causal role in their unfolding but also that such events transform our narratives. The book raises important issues, writes **David Tuckett**, yet the notion that individuals 'catch' narratives that go viral risks obscuring the more fundamental sense in which narrative imaginaries and fictional expectations shape how economic agents plan their futures.



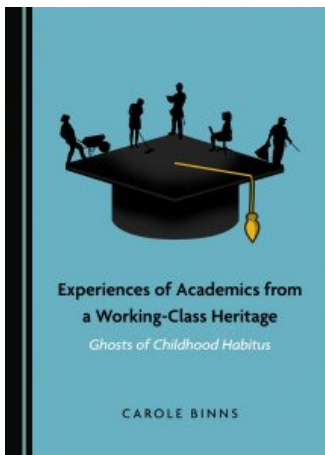
In [The Infographic: A History of Data Graphics in News and Communications](#), **Murray Dick** offers a new cultural history of the infographic, tracing its emergence and development in Britain from the eighteenth century. The book succeeds in offering an account of an evolving media form, showing the infographic to be a contradictory tool, one developed to persuade select upper-class audiences that slowly became a form of mass communication, writes **Sam di Bella**.

As references to echo chambers and filter bubbles become ubiquitous in contemporary discourse, **Axel Bruns** offers a riposte in [Are Filter Bubbles Real?](#), which questions the existence of these phenomena. While not convinced by all of the author's arguments, **Ignas Kalpokas** welcomes the book as a must-read for those looking to critically reflect on some of the assumptions surrounding social media today.



Christie Aschwanden reviews David Michaels' [The Triumph of Doubt: Dark Money and the Science of Deception](#), finding the book to provide a combative and unflinching account of the way in which corporate interests have infiltrated regulatory science.

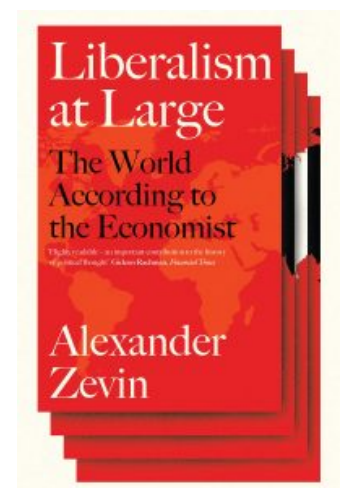
In [What is Digital Sociology?](#), **Neil Selwyn** offers a new overview of digital sociology, advocating for its mainstream acceptance as a valuable expansion of sociological inquiry, while dispelling the misconception that it is an entirely new or radically different form of sociology. This is an excellent introduction to digital sociology, recommends **Huw Davies**, that will be particularly helpful for students and any sociologist curious about the field's scope and purpose.



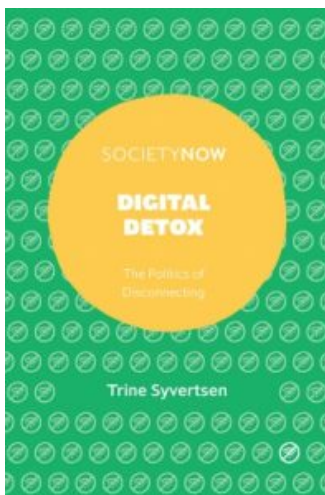
In [Experiences of Academics from a Working-Class Heritage](#), **Carole Binns** draws on interviews with fourteen tenured academics from a working-class background to reveal the complexities faced by individuals who have experienced social mobility in academia. Suggesting that a diversification of the academic workforce could be a valuable addition to the widening participation agenda, this book contributes to understanding lived experiences of social mobility and the social class inequalities that shape entry into 'elite' occupations, writes **Ross Goldstone**.

not only as a lens for understanding reinterpretations of liberalism across different eras, but also as an active participant in influencing policy and public debate. This is a rigorous and meticulously researched study of the Economist's history and the contingencies that shaped liberalism over the long term, writes **Jenny McArthur**.

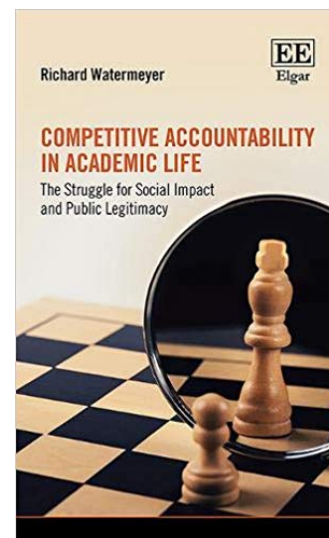
In [Liberalism at Large: The World According to the Economist](#), **Alexander Zevin** traces the 177-year history of the Economist newspaper, positioning the Economist



In [Digital Detox: The Politics of Disconnecting](#), **Trine Syvertsen** studies the politics of disconnection as a practice of resistance to the intrusion of digital technologies into everyday life, locating it within the context of neoliberal self-regulation. The book offers a highly accessible overview of the digital detox phenomenon and the politics of the attention economy, recommends **Kim Harding**.



In **[Competitive Accountability in Academic Life: The Struggle for Social Impact and Public Legitimacy](#)**, **Richard Watermeyer** critically explores the increasing quantification of academic life and the rise of the marketised competitive university. This book particularly succeeds in not only exploring the futility and counterproductiveness of quantified academic performance metrics, but also revealing how complicity among some academics allows these practices to become even more entrenched, writes **Ignas Kalpokas**.



Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the LSE Impact Blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [comments policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.

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