

NZIER's
SUMMER READING LIST
FOR THE PRIME MINISTER 2019

About

This list was prepared as part of the NZIER Public Good programme, which undertakes economic research and thinking aimed at promoting a better understanding of New Zealand's important economic challenges

Purpose

This list recommends books that we hope the Prime Minister, her advisors, and anyone interested in economics and public policy, will find both informative and enjoyable to read.

We support all New Zealanders reading, taking time to think long thoughts, and discussing them. Summer is good for that.

Criteria

Nominations had to meet the following criteria:

- Be relevant to a contemporary issue
- Offer a different way of thinking or perspective
- Be relevant for New Zealand
- Be consistent with NZIER Public Good objectives.

No limitations were set as to the date of publication or to whether articles could be included.

Nominations were invited from NZIER's members, board, staff and selected collaborators.

Selection panel

- Professor Gary Hawke, NZIER & Victoria University of Wellington (Chair),
- Professor Cynthia Kiro, former Children's Commissioner and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Auckland
- Laetitia Leroy, NZIER
- Professor Les Oxley, NZIER Board and University of Waikato.

The books

Inclusion in the list does not imply that the selection panel (or NZIER) endorses all the content of any entry.

Each of these book stimulates critical reading, not in the sense of finding fault but by inviting reasoned responses to the plausibility of asserted facts and to the coherence of the argument. These processes are essential for drawing on economic theory for policy analysis.



Summer reading list for the Prime Minister 2019

Presented in alphabetical order by lead author

- [The Narrow Corridor](#): States, societies, and the fate of liberty, [Daron Acemoglu & James A Robinson, 2019](#)
- [Fatal Necessity](#): British Intervention in New Zealand, 1830-847, [Peter Adams, 1977](#)
- [Good economics for hard times](#): Better answers to our biggest problems, [Abhijit V Banerjee and Esther Duflo, 2019](#)
- [The Sex Factor](#): How women made the West Rich, [Victoria Bateman, 2019](#)
- [Tutira](#): The story of a New Zealand Sheep Station, [Herbert Guthrie-Smith, 1921](#)
- [Confronting Inequality](#): How Societies Can Choose Inclusive Growth, [Jonathan D Ostry, Prakash Loungani & Andrew Berg, 2019](#)
- [Island Time](#): New Zealand's Pacific Future, [Damon Salesa, 2017](#)
- [Economics for the Common Good](#), [Jean Tirole, 2019](#)
- [Deep Medicine](#): How Artificial Intelligence Can Make Healthcare Human Again, [Eric Topol, 2019](#)



The Narrow Corridor

States, societies and the fate of liberty

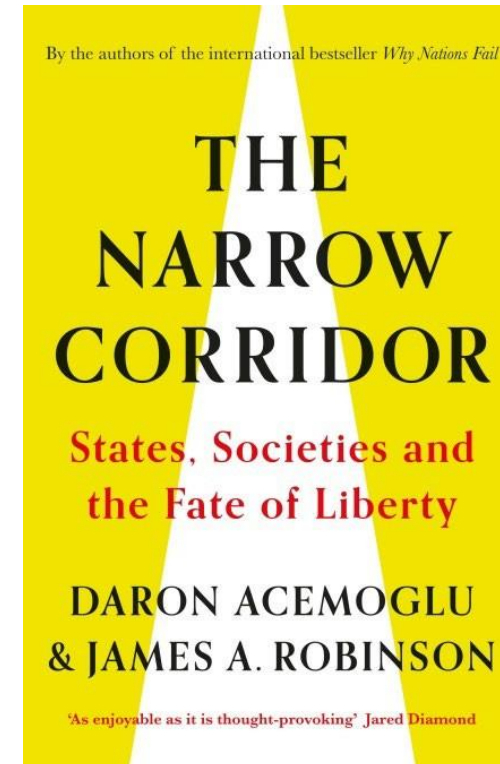
Daron Acemoglu & James A Robinson, 2019

Narrow Corridor addresses the central question of what is required to preserve democracy.

Acemoglu and Robinson are intellectual heavyweights in economic thinking and analyses of geo-economics and geo-politics. Their 2012 book *Why Nations Fail*, quickly became the standard text for long-term thinking about economic and social prospects.

In *Narrow Corridor*, the authors take the reader on a tour around the world and throughout history to demonstrate the possibility that democracy has been, and will always be, an insecure institution in need of careful cultivation.

Be prepared to learn some fascinating history and to have Western ideas about liberty challenged.



Fatal Necessity

British intervention in New Zealand, 1830-1847

Peter Adams, 1977

Fatal Necessity stimulates thought about the history of the Treaty of Waitangi and its place in contemporary public policy.

In this award-winning book, Adams provides a searching historical analysis of the circumstances that led to the Treaty of Waitangi. *Fatal Necessity* shows how the Treaty, with one set of meanings in 1840, became the mechanism for reconciling Māori and Pākehā contributions to New Zealand public life, allowing us to build a better future for Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The discipline of history is essentially a process of eliciting knowledge from incomplete information, and it is always a dialogue among the present, the past and the future. If you want to learn some New Zealand history this is a must-read.

Fatal Necessity

British Intervention in
New Zealand, 1830-1847

Peter Adams

BWB e-Book



The Sex Factor

How women made the West rich

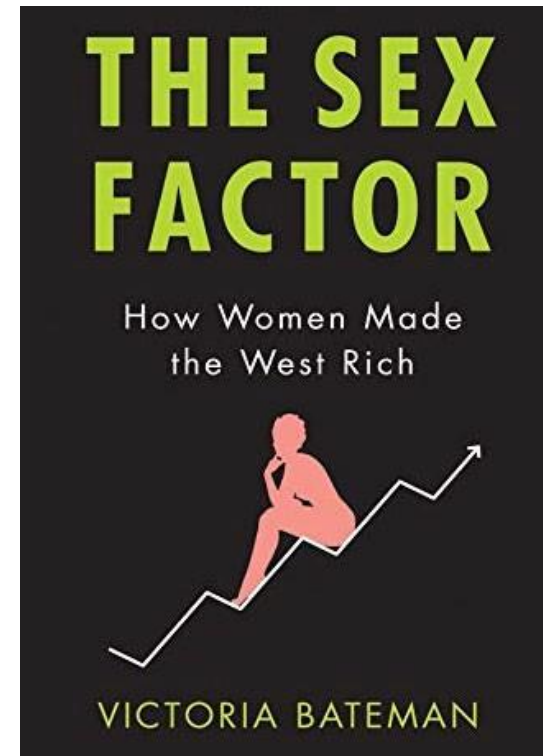
Victoria Bateman, 2019

Sex Factor uses the literature of economics and economic history to show how gender issues should be part of policy analysis.

Gender is important in economic analysis because it is one of the main elements of inequality, which in turn is prominent in the wider sphere of wellbeing. In *Sex Factor*, leading feminist economist Victoria Bateman has found ways to ensure that economists are not blind to gender.

Despite employing the occasional shock-tactic to get her message across, the author has a deep understanding of economics. Her criticisms of traditional economics are based on a real understanding of her subject matter, not on distorted simplifications.

The book is a thought-provoking read for economists and non-economists alike.



Good Economics for Hard Times

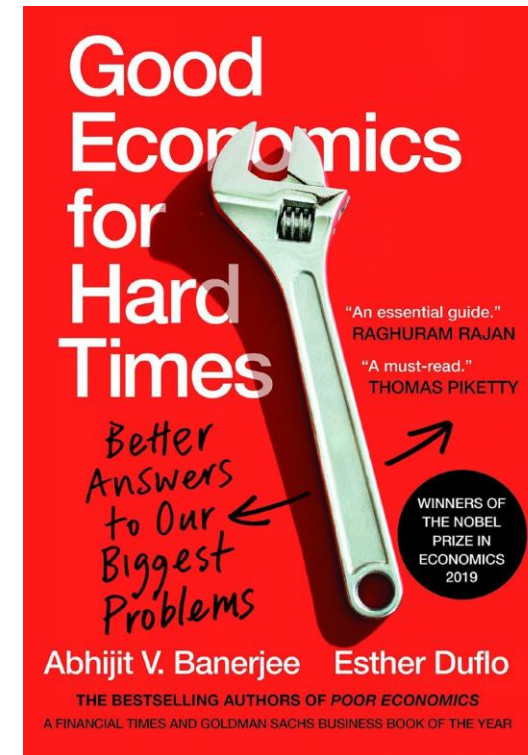
Better answers to our biggest problems

Abhijit V Banerjee and Esther Duflo, 2019

This book demonstrates how economics can help solve the tough issues of our times, and the importance of incorporating theory-informed empirical research into policy formation and implementation.

In this book Duflo and Banerjee build on their extensive and Nobel-prize award-winning research and use of randomised controlled trials to look at the challenges we face today. As well as their work on poverty alleviation, for which they are most famous, they tackle a wide range of challenges including inequality, climate change, immigration and new technologies... to name just a few.

Don't be put off by the thickness of the book or the rich academic content – this book is accessible, even witty at times, and will challenge many of the ideologies that too often blind us.



Tutira

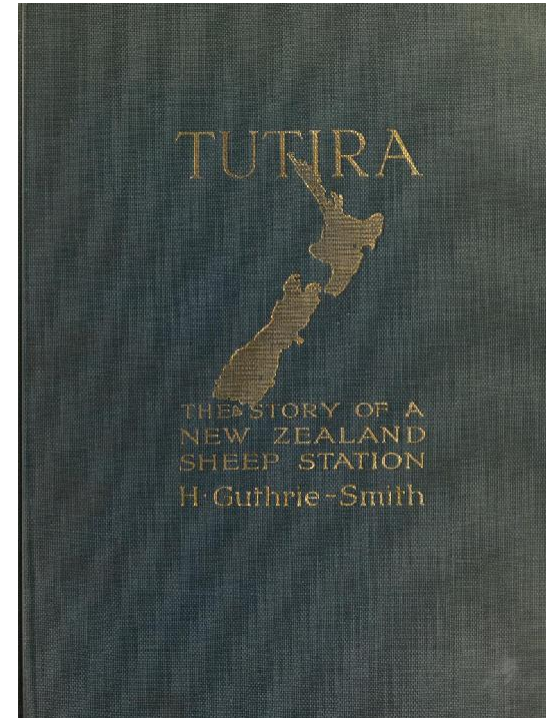
The story of a New Zealand sheep station

Herbert Guthrie-Smith, 1921

Tutira is a New Zealand classic that explores an enduring and pressing contemporary issue – the appropriate balance between development and conservation.

Guthrie-Smith's recording of establishing a sheep farm in Northern Hawke's Bay in the late 1800s helps us view aspects of the modern New Zealand economy through the lens of the past. Today we have better economic tools than Guthrie-Smith could draw on to analyse choices such as development versus conservation and reconciling Pākehā and Māori notions of property rights, but many of New Zealand's contemporary problems retain the essential issues which Guthrie-Smith faced and recorded so ably.

Tutira is sadly out of print but is available [electronically from the Victoria University of Wellington website](#). If you spot a second-hand copy, snap it up. It's a charming piece of New Zealand's past.



Confronting Inequality

How societies can choose inclusive growth

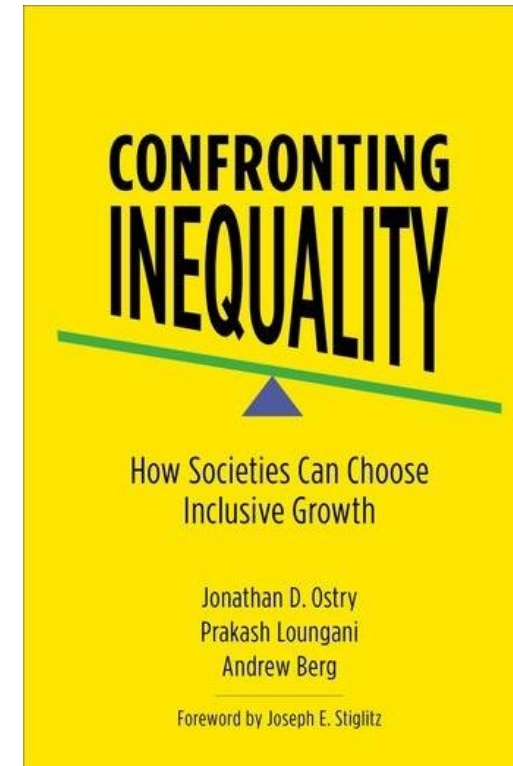
Jonathan D Ostry, Prakash Loungani & Andrew Berg, 2019

Confronting inequality is a study of the international experience of inequality. It provides a basis for how New Zealand should address the causes and effects of inequality.

The three authors, all economists at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), provide a thorough study of inequality. The book draws on the extensive and high-quality work of the IMF in collaboration with national sources.

Economic growth and reducing inequality do not have to be trade-offs. Redistribution of wealth can be a win-win for society and the economy. This principles and concepts have direct application to the New Zealand experience.

Even if you're not usually a fan of the IMF we recommend you give this a go. You may be surprised by the sensitivity and inclusivity demonstrated in this book.



Island Time

New Zealand's Pacific futures

Damon Salesa, 2017

Island Time gives an extensive analysis of the Pacific character of New Zealand society.

Building the economic and social future of New Zealand depends on us realising where in the world we are – the Pacific. Salesa argues, in this accessible book, that we must shake off our Eurocentric glasses or pay the price.

The tension between analysing the economic impact of immigration beside issues of family reunification and maintenance of historic links to ancestral islands are canvassed by Salesa. He clearly demonstrates the tension between Pākehā balances of the individual and more collectivist traditions among Polynesians.

Salesa's book is a short read but it will challenge you to think about New Zealand's – and perhaps your own – place in the Pacific.



Economics for the Common Good

Jean Tirole, 2019

Economics for the Common Good is a penetrating study of economics in the French tradition rather than the more familiar Anglo-American one.

Written after he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, Tirole uses a multitude of examples to describe how economics works. He provides a wide-ranging yet personal and analytical look at the role of economics (and economists) in the modern world.

The book is structured in self-contained chapters which can be read in isolation. This is a neat way for readers to dip their toe into some economic reading over the summer.



Deep Medicine

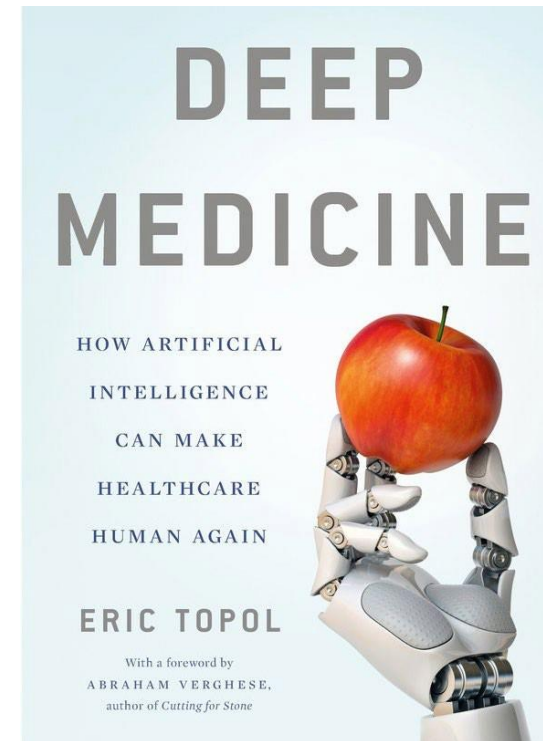
How artificial intelligence can make healthcare human again

Eric Topol, 2019

Deep Medicine combines two key challenges for economic policy – how to manage technological change, and what influences could determine the nature of our health services now and in the future.

In scanning the horizon for policy challenges, the impact of new technologies is prominent. Eric Topol, one of America's top doctors, explores the potential of artificial intelligence to allow health professionals to focus on the high end of their scopes of practice, in particular their judgement and empathetic skills.

If you've ever felt the healthcare system seems uncaring at times and prone to error, you'll enjoy the ray of hope provided in this book for the future of medicine.



Thanks

Thank you to:

- Our selection panel for their time and efforts
- Professor Gary Hawke for chairing the panel
- NZIER's members, collaborators, board and staff for nominating books
- The Grattan Institute of Australia, who supported us in creating a New Zealand version of their list
- New Zealand authors Peter Adams and Damon Salesa, and David Allan, chair of the Guthrie-Smith Trust for attending the launch of the list on 3 December 2019.

