

## Querdenkerplattform: Wien – Europa

### Policy Crossover Center: Vienna – Europe (PCC)



## Reads for the Summer 2017

The success of the ROY we offered late in 2016 for books to be read during Christmas holidays has encouraged us to suggest readings for the summer season. We report on seven books, four of them centring on crises and change processes in various geopolitical regions and on improving the understanding of Russia and its much-criticized current political stance. We have added a book on the use of big data to understand societies – and maybe also biased elections – and finally two books on alternatives to the current economic mainstream. All seven books are highly relevant to political questions in 2017 and the years to come.

Have fun reading and enjoy the holidays!

The Team of the "Policy Crossover Center: Vienna-Europe"

### 1) Mai'a K. Davis Cross: *The Politics of Crisis in Europe*, Cambridge University Press (2017)

To analyse the reaction of societies to crises, Mai'a K. Davis Cross refers to the multitude of crises Europe was facing over the past seventy years when the lengthy European integration process was successfully accomplished. The analysis goes far beyond the well-known assertion that crises offer opportunities for change. The book demonstrates that crises reveal underlying tensions which would otherwise not surface, using media content analyses, public opinion polls and policy documents. The book confirms the statements of pro-European optimists, that each crisis leads to further integration, even if the number of crises analysed is limited and the differences between them are significant, meaning that the results are not necessarily representative for each and every future challenge.

### 2) Guy Mettan: *CREATING RUSSOPHOBIA: From the Great Religious Schism to Anti-Putin Hysteria*, Clarity Press (2017)

Guy Mettan describes the history and the variety of anti-Russian sentiments in Europe and in the US. The book does not in general defend Russian political activities, but sets them in relation to aggressions triggered and accompanied by the "lies" of the US, France and Germany. The author describes first-hand experiences as a journalist for a liberal Swiss newspaper, the cognitive manipulations and myths about Russia and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Eastern Europe in exchange for a verbal commitment that NATO would not extend its influence into this area. This book is pertinent in a time in which populist parties in Europe are openly or clandestinely cooperating with Putin and in terms of the development of a multipolar world. Europe, as defined by the current EU, has to face rapidly shrinking market shares and consequently withered influence in the world of 2050. In contrast, a Europe including Russia and its neighbours represents a geographical unit which could either become an economic power and force for peace or evolve into small groups of countries engaged in internal political conflict. Russia can either further destabilise Europe or help promote peace in the area, including the Middle East and Northern Africa.

### 3) Richard Youngs: *Europe's Eastern Crisis – The Geopolitics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge University Press (2017)

Richard Youngs analyses conflicts and crises at the eastern borders of Europe, their reasons and how they affect the Eastern European partnership. Theoretical arguments as well as practical problems are analysed and complements nicely those of Cross and Mettan.



#### **4) Julian Gewirtz: Unlikely Partners - Chinese Reformers, Western Economists, and the Making of Global China, Harvard University Press (2017)**

Julian Gewirtz describes the fascinating reform process which China underwent in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Many foreign delegations and individuals were invited to China to teach and discuss the political and economic systems in their home countries and to offer China and its ruling party advice on how to improve the economic situation without radical change from a socialist to a capitalist system. As the [head of the Policy Crossover Center Vienna Europe was himself part](#) of this process, he welcomes this book highlighting how a large country looking for change succeeded in implementing radical economic reforms while preserving those characteristics of its existing political system it thought important to preserve. Karl Aiginger can personally confirm that the Chinese political elite, as well as the students at the management university where he taught in China, were not only highly interested in and well informed about other countries and systems, but also about history, China's past economic power, the inclination for conflict within China's current boundaries and the cultural differences between China and Europe or the US. The learning process China successfully underwent within a relatively brief period is worth understanding if individual nations like France and Italy or the European Union as a whole undergo change which make Europe more successful not only by adhering to its own values but also by learning from others.

#### **5) Set Stephens-Davidowitz: Everybody Lies – Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are, Dey Street Books (2017)**

Set Stephens-Davidowitz reports how the information we offer about ourselves using the internet (for searches, communication and the like) allows us to gain insights into human behaviour which social science and psychology have never had before. Big data enable us to interpret voting patterns, education decisions, sexual behaviour, buying behaviour and the link between crime rates and violent films, etc. We learn about our society and ourselves; this is not only revealing and enjoyable, but is sometimes also frightening.

#### **6) Andrew W. Lo: Adaptive Markets: Financial Evolution at the Speed of Thought, Princeton University Press (2017)**

Andrew W. Lo revisits the question as to whether financial markets are rational, drawing *inter alia* on psychology, evolutionary biology, neuroscience and artificial intelligence. When markets are unstable, investors react instinctively, creating inefficiencies for others to exploit. The book investigates what really happened in the 2008 financial meltdown, and how future crises might be avoided. This is a synthesis of hypotheses which rest on the rational of *homo economicus* and behavioural economics, recognizing emotions as a basis for decision making. It enables policymakers to better understand and manage market risk by allowing for the joint influence of rational as well as irrational behaviour.

#### **7) Kate Raworth: Doughnut Economics – Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist, Random House Business (2017)**

Kate Raworth reveals the fundamental deficiencies of the current state of economics and the emerging call of students, social scientists and the media for a new economic story. Both those having been swayed by traditional economics classes and those having missed out on indoctrination in the mainstream paradigm may discover that there is a great opportunity for unlearning and relearning the fundamentals of economics. The goal should be redefined: from the maximisation of profits and incomes to human rights and needs; economics should be embedded within society and the environment, and linearity should be replaced by circularity are some of the suggestions.

