

## CONTESTING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS IN IRELAND

Why do states opt to constitutionally entrench economic and social rights? Why do societies demand them? These are the central puzzles of *Contesting Economic and Social Rights in Ireland*. While most studies of socio-economic rights focus on legal or normative argumentation, Thomas Murray proposes that questions of rights and redistribution necessitate the analysis of power and freedom in society. He illustrates the politics of socio-economic rights through an in-depth case study of the evolution of socio-economic rights conflicts, discourses, and constitutionalism in Ireland. Murray draws on new archival, case-law, and statistical research to reconstruct socio-economic rights discourses from across Irish society, to demonstrate the tension between state and civil society discourses, and to trace an untold history of their contested development over time. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, Ireland's conservative and nationalist constitutional projects have tended to dominate or incorporate social democratic and radical ones, albeit in a process continually contested at critical junctures. The rich and diverse history of people's struggles for justice 'from below' – from organic courts in days of popular militancy to unemployed marches, from housing action protestors to striking workers – provides an alternative, oppositional perspective on constitutionalism from which to recuperate and assess the possibilities and limits of advocating economic and social rights today.

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Constitution, State, and Society, 1848–2016

*Thomas Murray*  
*University College Dublin*



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*For my grandmothers,  
Kathleen Holohan and Theresa Murray*

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