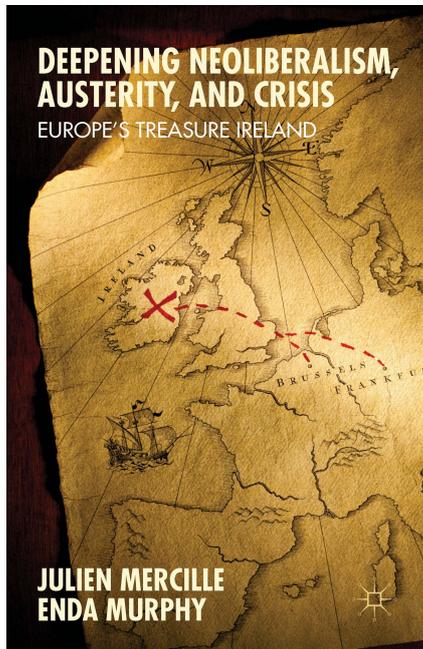


Review: Julien Mercille & Enda Murphy, *Deepening Neoliberalism, Austerity and Crisis: Europe's Treasure Ireland*

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Julien Mercille & Enda Murphy, *Deepening Neoliberalism, Austerity and Crisis: Europe's Treasure Ireland* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2015. £58.00

Julien Mercille and Enda Murphy, two geographers lecturing at University College Dublin respectively in Geography and Planning, have here produced an excellent text which should be essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the broader forces which have been responsible for re-shaping Irish economic and social policy over the past thirty years. It is clearly written, well researched, highly informative, being packed with valuable up-to-date information, and deserves to reach a wide audience. It is also available as an electronic copy.

At the very outset, the authors nail their colours firmly to the mast. Fundamentally, this is a book about power and the ways in which power has shifted increasingly in favour of corporate interests and those individuals who already possess considerable economic power. Contextualised within processes of neoliberalisation internationally, the authors provide a forcefully argued exposition and analysis of Ireland's experience of neoliberalism and its deepening

impacts under a post-crash regime of austerity and expropriation of ordinary citizens in favour of capital.

The structure of the book is logical and provides an excellent review of the class project that neoliberalism comprises. It does this first at a theoretical level, but their exposition is never abstract or unintelligible. Instead, they provide a sound basis for understanding the driving force for the transformational processes that are detailed in subsequent chapters.

They explain the ways in which the neoliberalisation of Irish society have originated in both domestic socio-economic structures and from the roles played by international rules regimes guided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. They further demonstrate how the European Union (EU), acting in the interests of transnational financial and industrial capital, has aggressively sought to deepen the domination of neoliberalism.

A key component in the authors' understanding of what has transpired under austerity programmes is the Marxist concept of 'accumulation by dispossession', the impacts of which are examined in some depth in the case of the Irish health-care system.

They then review in some depth the impacts of neoliberal policies on the Irish labour market where they note that labour power has been forced to comply with seemingly incontestable market imperatives resulting in significant erosion of pay and working conditions. Additionally, such changes have been complemented by aggressively hostile 'workfare' labour 'activation' policies for those unable to find employment.

In contrast, market imperatives do not seem to apply to the interests of capital, which has simultaneously been bailed out and pampered, as has become increasingly evident in the reconfiguration of the Irish tax regime to favour capital over those who

work and who face an increasingly onerous tax burden to pay for the bailout.

In summary, this important book should become essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the nefarious grip of neoliberalism. Moreover, it provides a powerful wake-up call to all who would seek to oppose the class-war policies which neoliber-

eral ideologues have unleashed upon us.

It also provides an excellent contextualizing book for its sibling in the Palgrave Macmillan publishing house (*Neoliberal Urban Policy and the Transformation of the City: Reshaping Dublin*) which was published in 2014.