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Introduction: Global Economic Crisis and the Politics of Diversity

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The current global economic crisis has led countries in Europe and the United States to adopt various austerity measures, following an initial emergency policy response of monetary and fiscal stimuli and a series of government bailouts of banks and other financial institutions (Boyer 2012; Callinicos 2012; King et al. 2012). However, this is not a general trend in the global economy, as there is great variation among countries in terms of the impact of the crisis and policy responses to it. While economic growth in Canada, for example, has been slow, many countries from the global South continue to experience higher levels of economic growth. These divergent patterns and context-bound particularities require critical reflection in regard to the intensification of a market-oriented path of development and the tensions and uncertainties associated with an increasingly precarious mode of living for many in the world. This book analyses the deep structural issues, fundamental ontological insecurities, and ecological consequences that express uneven processes in the global proliferation of a market model. The authors in this collection concretize these processes across geographically varied contextual conditions, yet do so within the general global conjuncture of the economic crisis.

The book does not debate with various explanations as to the causes, consequences, and impact of the economic crisis, for which there is a now a significant body of literature (e.g. Callinicos 2010; Crotty 2009; Reinhart and Rogoff 2009), nor does it treat ‘diversities’ and/or geo-historical differences observed across cases as national/regional instances of a global project of restructuring capitalism. The study of such a project is undoubtedly worthwhile in its own right. Certainly, growing commercial and financial ties can be expected to create interesting and novel forms of global

I would like to express my gratitude to Fikret Adaman, Yahya Madra, James Cypher, and William K. Carroll for their constructive comments on a previous draft of the chapter.
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This is beyond the scope of the present book. Our book avoids a concept-
tual leap from the empirical observation of a diversity of specific cases to
theoretical conclusions which insinuate an ‘enclosed’ outcome as to the fund-
damental nature of the restructuring of capitalism occurring in response
to economic crisis. Rather, the book observes that a complicated politi-
cal process is currently underway in deepening a market-oriented model
of development that is directed towards buoying economic growth. In
describing and interpreting this process, the book brings together an inter-
disciplinary group of scholars from five countries: Brazil, China, Mexico,
Turkey, and Canada. Our goal is to generate interdisciplinary dialogue across
empirical cases and theoretical perspectives in order to critically explore
the various forms of social polarization, ontological insecurity, and ecolog-
cal consequences that have accompanied the historical and geographical
variation among cases in the global intensification of market-driven solu-
tions. This approach is useful for rethinking the global restructuring of the
capitalist economy – not as a coherent and unified system but as a pheno-
menon which is entirely historical (cf. Block 2000) and deeply messy. The
contributors to this volume investigate the localized meanings, dynamics,
and consequences of market intensification. We do not engage in a macro-
historical comparison of cases. Our cases are different from one another
in regard to their domestic politics, specific trajectories, and geo-historical
complexities, even though we observe that they also reveal reasonable simi-
larities in regard to their placement in the global economy and their policy
choice of a market-oriented economic-growth model. While it seems that
a policy commitment to a market model persists in the name of economic
development, our analysis of various forms of socio-economic insecurity,
exclusionary practices, and ecological consequences helps us expose the
different realities of market models which express multifaceted forms of
global crisis. In short, the book interprets the varied experiences of Brazil,
China, Mexico, Turkey, and Canada with a market model. These countries
are geographical representatives of four distinct regions of the world: North
America, Latin America, East Asia, and the Middle East. All reveal differ-
ent aspects of global processes that have resulted in the consolidation and
reformulation of – as well as critique of – a market form of development.

The market form of development has often been defined in the litera-
ture as characterizing the ‘neoliberal’ phase of the capitalist economy. Since
its emergence in the 1970s and the 1980s, this phase has been expressed
through trade liberalization, the privatization of various forms of public
property, services and policy/norm-making, welfare retrenchment, public
austerity measures, and new contractual and managerial arrangements (e.g.
Atasoy 2009a: 7; Short 2012: 47). Beyond this ‘general’ understanding, how-
ever, there are different meanings attributed to neoliberalism. Harvey (2005:
19), for example, sees it as a ‘political project’ closely associated with the