Foreword

Certain terms periodically capture the imagination of the social sciences. *Our Common Future*, the final report of the Brundtland Commission, launched *sustainability* as a central metaphor. From sustainable growth to sustainable environments, social scientists have sought to understand the implications for individuals, organizations and economies. Working toward sustainability implied then, and still does today, the sense that a suitable equilibrium could be found that balanced good outcomes for the environment, the economy and social equity.

Starting around 2000, however, resilience emerged as another prominent catchword in academic and policy agendas, owing mainly to shocks and stresses that have disrupted social systems throughout the world. Urban development has placed increasing numbers of people in harm's way, especially with escalating threats from climate change. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks reinforced a climate of fear in the US, with subsequent attacks in Madrid (2004), London (2005), Mumbai (2008), Paris (2015) and other global cities reinforcing the climate of uncertainty. And the 2007–8 economic crisis manifested structural weaknesses in the global financial system. That crisis—occurring less than a decade after the dot-com crash of 1999–2001—reinforced the understanding that capitalism is prone to speculative bubbles.

If disequilibrium is the norm, rather than the exception, then sustainability needs resilience as a counterpart metaphor to fully encompass our understandings of the economy. Perpetual disequilibrium requires strategies for surviving today and being prepared for future shocks and stresses. Resilience isn't just a useful metaphor for understanding non-equilibrium systems, however. Indeed, many researchers use it as a way to describe whether and how fast a system returns to its previous (equilibrium) state once exposed to a shock. Others look for understanding of how a shock can cause a system to move to a new equilibrium. While some critics of the construct reject it precisely because of this fuzziness, others embrace it for exactly the same reason: it can help illuminate how systems respond to surprises and stresses, regardless of whether these are normal or unusual.

In any case, social scientists deploy the resilience metaphor in part because it has normative appeal, just as sustainability does. Who doesn't want to recover from a shock? Who doesn't want to grow after experiencing adversity? When they embrace the metaphor enough, however, they can sometimes create a need for yet another round of metaphor deployment. Resilience, as originally posited by ecologists and psychologists, really does mean "returning to normal." But if it also means "getting better because of a strain or shock," then maybe it would be useful to call the process something different: transformation, perhaps. Maybe that's a metaphor for another decade.

It has been a privilege to provide a short foreword to this volume, which brings together key research on this important topic, demonstrating the breadth and potential of economic resilience as an approach. The book highlights the application of resilience to be wide-ranging, from individual level, businesses, sectors, as well as national and subnational economies. As the editors state, resilience offers an opportunity to reframe economic development policy and practice. Given the emergent nature of resilience research, the book sets the foundations to advance these debates. In doing this, *Creating Resilient Economies* provides a probing and thoughtful collection that analyses how external shocks can positively shape the economic future of individuals, organizations and places.

Rolf Pendall
Director, Metropolitan Housing & Communities Policy Center
Urban Institute
Washington, DC