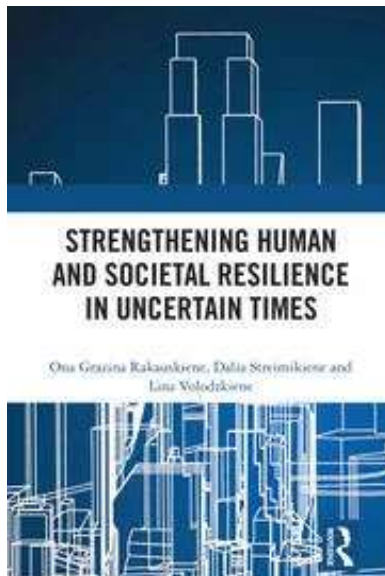


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In the context of today's deeply interconnected and volatile global environment, the monograph *Strengthening Human and Societal Resilience in Uncertain Times* by Ona Grazina Rakauskiene, Dalia Streimikiene, and Lina Volodzkienė stands out as a comprehensive and multidisciplinary response to the increasingly complex challenges of our time. The authors examine the evolving nature of vulnerability and propose a transformative framework to build individual and collective resilience. Their work is particularly relevant as societies face compounded threats: from public health crises and climate change to technological disruptions and growing socio-economic disparities. Through a combination of theoretical insight and empirical research, the monograph delivers a well-substantiated call to reframe traditional policy models and embrace resilience as a guiding principle in human development.

Conceptual Foundations: Redefining Resilience

The first chapter presents a stark summary of the contemporary threat environment. Citing the most recent reports issued by the United Nations Development Programme, the authors document how the simultaneous impact of systemic shocks -pandemics, environmental collapse, growing social inequality, and violent conflict -compounds global vulnerability. Of particular concern is the COVID-19 pandemic, which the report shows has

singularly reversed gains on the Human Development Index across the overwhelming majority of nations, thus producing a widespread and acute slide in human well-being.

Yet the authors argue that these disruptions offer a unique opportunity: to revisit our understanding of security, prosperity, and development. At the center of their analysis is the concept of resilience—viewed not merely as recovery from crisis, but as the capacity to anticipate, adapt, and transform in the face of change. Drawing on psychological theories from Viktor Frankl and Salvatore Maddi, alongside Nassim Taleb's idea of "antifragility," the authors propose that resilience must be understood as a multidimensional construct with psychological, cultural, social, economic, and institutional dimensions.

The chapter further interrogates dominant economic models, arguing that they inadequately acknowledge both the subjective dimensions of human perception and the deeper structural conditions that enable or undermine resilience. The authors persuasively contend that assessments of human development must transcend aggregate income or consumption metrics, focusing instead on autonomy, agency, and the capacity to pursue lives perceived as valuable and meaningful.

This pivot in conceptual framing is deemed indispensable since the existing socio-economic architectures are manifestly ill-equipped to absorb the compounding, nonlinear shocks now prevailing. Institutions once engineered to sustain equilibrium and to anticipate probabilistic variance are faltering in the face of multiplex interdependencies. Consequently, the authors argue, resilience must be reconceptualised not as a psychological attribute or after-the-fact adjustment, but as a constitutive principle woven into the allocative processes, institutional architectures, and normative definitions of advancement on which contemporary societies rest.

Methodological Innovation: A Multi-Level, Multi-Disciplinary Approach

The second section of the monograph addresses methodological concerns. The authors articulate a comprehensive yet innovative model for assessing both vulnerability and resilience at multiple scales. Their approach integrates qualitative and quantitative techniques, draws upon a range of disciplinary traditions, and leverages extensive global datasets, including those of the UNDP, Eurostat, the World Bank, and the IEA.

At the supranational scale, the authors interrogate how emergent global threats alter the Human Development Index, the inequality-adjusted Human Development Index, and the planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index across nations and macro-regions. Particular attention is directed toward the phenomenon whereby nations that score highly on the HDI often reveal elevated vulnerability to planetary pressures, traceable to production and consumption patterns that lack sustainability. The authors foreground a critical inversion: advanced economies do not automatically graduate toward greater resilience. While structural robustness appears on the surface, the hidden fragility resides in their extensive ecological footprints and dependence on precarious transnational supply chains. These vulnerabilities do not register in standard economic indicators, yet their latent effects persist across scales.

At the micro level, the authors furnish a detailed longitudinal study of Lithuania spanning 2016 to 2024, deploying a complementary battery of seven sociological and psychological inquiries to interrogate intra- and inter-group resilience formation. Building upon Maddi's 3C framework—commitment, control, challenge—alongside standardised instruments for resilience quantification, they ascertain psychological hardiness and its variance across cohorts. Data triangulation is achieved through multivariate statistical procedures, comparative cohort analysis, and survey instruments focused on energy poverty, inter-generational equity, and resilience to mid-life crises.

A salient methodological advance is the extraction of psychological and emotional resilience from their usual isolation and embedding it within broader macroeconomic analysis. Emotional responses to involuntary

unemployment, energy deprivation, and disinformation are treated as endogenous to the design of effective welfare contingencies, thereby reframing resilience as both an evaluative indicator and a prospective policy target.

This analysis is further tempered by a granular sensitivity to social topology. Eschewing universal prescriptions, the authors stratify their results according to age, sex, urban/rural distinction, and socio-economic stratification, yielding differentiated profiles. For example, the resilience of Lithuania's rural elderly is seen to hinge upon the cumulative effects of historical trauma, the strength of inter-personal networks, and the reliability of basic service delivery, thereby complicating the design of universal policy interventions.

Findings: Mapping Resilience Across Scales

The third section delivers empirical insights. One key contribution is the identification of resilience disparities between countries, socio-economic groups, and demographic segments. The authors cluster EU countries into three groups based on HDI performance and resilience capacity. Findings suggest that while highly developed countries recover more quickly from crises, they also experience sharper drops in well-being during systemic shocks, due in part to their greater exposure to planetary pressures.

Among the most compelling findings:

- **Pandemic resilience:** While all countries experienced HDI decline during COVID-19, countries with higher resilience capacities (stronger institutions, healthcare systems, and public trust) recovered faster. However, the pandemic also exposed deep inequality in vaccine distribution, even within the EU. This led to uneven public health outcomes and widened trust gaps between governments and citizens.
- **Energy inequality:** The study highlights energy poverty as a major barrier to resilience. Energy access and affordability are shown to correlate strongly with well-being and adaptive capacity, especially in rural areas and among low-income households. Energy inequality is presented as both a cause and consequence of broader social vulnerability. Addressing it requires not only infrastructure investment but also behavioral, cultural, and regulatory change.
- **Psychological resilience:** The Lithuanian case study reveals that middle-aged and elderly populations possess lower levels of resilience than youth, challenging prevailing narratives. Gender-based differences in coping mechanisms are also explored, offering insight into the role of cultural and social expectations in shaping resilience. The finding that resilience is strongly linked to education and perceived autonomy suggests new directions for public education and community initiatives.
- **Planetary pressures:** Countries with the highest HDI scores exhibit the largest environmental footprints. The authors use the PHDI to demonstrate how environmental degradation and inequality interact in a vicious cycle that undermines both human development and ecological sustainability. The tension between development and sustainability is not merely a moral debate—it is now a measurable risk factor.

These findings highlight how resilience is not simply about returning to "normal" after disruption. Instead, true resilience means learning, adapting, and transforming to build new systems that are more inclusive, sustainable, and robust.

Policy Implications: From Adaptation to Transformation

The fourth and final section focuses on translating research into actionable policy. The authors make a persuasive case for embedding resilience in all levels of governance, planning, and education. They align their

recommendations with the UNDP's two-tiered model of resilience (2024), emphasizing two strategic dimensions:

1. Investment, Insurance, and Innovation: Strengthening human capital through investment in education, health, digital infrastructure, and social protection. Innovation is viewed not just as technological advancement but as the development of social and psychological capacities. Investments should be targeted to reduce vulnerability hotspots identified in the data, ensuring that no demographic group is left behind.
2. Culture, Solidarity, and Meaning: Promoting cultural narratives that value autonomy, responsibility, and collective action. The authors stress that resilience is not only material but also emotional and ethical. Strengthening social bonds and community cohesion, through cultural activities and inclusive policies, is just as important as economic stimulus.

The monograph proposes practical measures including:

- Expanding early warning systems and crisis preparedness programs.
- Redesigning social policy to focus on empowerment and autonomy rather than passive protection.
- Reducing energy poverty through targeted subsidies, infrastructure development, and public education.
- Cultivating psychological resilience through education and lifelong learning programs.
- Fostering global cooperation to address transboundary risks through multilateral frameworks and knowledge-sharing platforms.

Furthermore, the authors propose the concept of a “resilience dividend”: policies that not only mitigate risk but actively create co-benefits such as community trust, environmental sustainability, and economic innovation. For example, retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency not only reduces emissions but lowers household costs and increases comfort—thereby reducing both economic and psychological stress.

The monograph warns against short-termism and reactive governance. It calls for anticipatory policy design, intersectoral coordination, and the integration of resilience metrics into national accounting systems. Just as GDP fails to capture environmental degradation or well-being, resilience indicators can better reflect the true health of a society.

A Transformative Contribution to Human Development Studies

Strengthening Human and Societal Resilience in Uncertain Times is an ambitious, timely, and intellectually rich work. Its principal strength lies in its capacity to knit together disparate theoretical and empirical strands into a coherent, actionable framework. Few studies have matched its capacity to interrelate psychological resilience, economic vulnerability, energy justice, and sustainability within a single analytical vision.

The volume furthers resilience scholarship through a methodological innovation. By combining macro-level Human Development Index analysis with in-depth sociological fieldwork, the authors furnish a multi-scalar lens that is uncommon in the literature. This dual optic enhances the empirical robustness of their conclusions and renders the resultant policy prescriptions simultaneously context-sensitive and widely transferable.

The Lithuanian case study is a model for other national contexts striving to gauge resilience processes within their populations. Empirical data collected between 2016 and 2024 illuminate how disparate social groups perceive, experience, and react to perturbations. The study deserves particular commendation for its attention

to rural and marginalised communities alongside urban centres, yielding a comprehensive diagnostic of resilience across the entire national territory.

A notable strength of the book resides in its forward-looking perspective. The authors refuse to confine resilience to the role of a protective buffer against disruption; instead, they advocate for its cultivation as a wellspring of renewal and inventive capability. This conceptual shift, which reframes resilience from mere preservation to a catalyst of systemic transformation, resonates powerfully with contemporary strands of systems theory, developmental economics, and sustainability science.

The monograph thus stands to benefit a diverse audience: scholars, policy architects, multilateral agencies, NGOs, and practitioners across development studies, public health, environmental governance, disaster risk reduction, and psychosocial support. It is equally pertinent for educators and civil-society leaders who aspire to deepen the preparedness and adaptive capacity of the communities they serve.

Conclusion

In summary, *Strengthening Human and Societal Resilience in Uncertain Times* exceeds the conventional boundaries of monographic scholarship; it is a manifesto that charts the contours of a post-control human development paradigm oriented toward adaptability, inclusivity, and long-lasting stewardship. Confronted with a widening horizon of instability, the work diagnoses present fragilities and then transposes that diagnosis into a generative, forward-facing, and practicable vision.

The authors invite a reconception of resilience, no longer lodged within the metaphor of stoic survival but reframed as a situated, imaginative, and ethically charged negotiation of complexity. By situating human agency and the quest for meaningful existence at the fulcrum of development, they advance a dual contribution to the academic canon and the operational realm.

The urgency of this contribution is, if anything, understated. With climatic perturbations accelerating, technological disruptions proliferating, and fractures of inequity deepening the social tissue, the capacity to bend without breaking is fast converting from asset to imperious condition. This volume furnishes the analytical lexicon and the policy cartography necessary for navigating the years ahead with discernment, empathy, and resolute steadiness.

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SANTRAUKA

Monografija *Strengthening Human and Societal Resilience in Uncertain Times* (Ona Gražina Rakauskienė, Dalia Štreimikienė, Lina Volodzkienė; Routledge, 2026) yra plataus užmojo darbas, nagrinėjantis žmogaus ir visuomenės atsparumo stiprinimo būtinybę šiuolaikinių globalių iššūkių kontekste. Autorės išsamiai aptaria, kaip pandemijos, klimato kaita, energetinis nesaugumas, technologiniai sukrėtimai ir didėjanti socialinė nelygybė silpnina tradicines vystymosi sistemas, ir siūlo naują atsparumo sampratą bei matavimo metodiką.

Konceptualieji pagrindai. Knygoje atsparumas suvokiamas ne tik kaip gebėjimas atsigauti po krizės, bet ir kaip galimybė prisitaikyti bei transformuotis. Atsparumas analizuojamas daugiamatėje perspektyvoje – psichologinėje, kultūrinėje, socialinėje, ekonominėje ir institucinėje. Taip pat kritikuojami tradiciniai ekonominiai modeliai, kurie pernelyg apsiriboja BVP ar pajamų rodikliais.

Metodologija. Autorės pateikia daugialypį tyrimų modelį, apimančį tiek pasaulinius rodiklius (HDI, IHDI, PHDI), tiek mikrolygmens empirinius tyrimus. Pavyzdys – Lietuvos atvejis, gyventojų psichologinio ir socialinio atsparumo nagrinėjimas 2016–2024 m. laikotarpiu, remiantis apklausomis, sociologiniais ir psichologiniais testais bei energinio skurdo analize.

Pagrindiniai rezultatai:

- COVID-19 pandemija parodė, kad valstybės su stipresnėmis institucijomis ir didesniu visuomenės pasitikėjimu greičiau atsitiesia, tačiau net ir jose išryškėjo nelygybė.
- Energinis skurdas tapo esmine kliūtimi atsparumui, ypač kaimo vietovėse ir tarp žemesnes pajamas gaunančių grupių.
- Psichologinis atsparumas yra nevienodas pagal amžių, lytį ir socialinę padėtį – vyresnio amžiaus ir moterų grupės dažnai pasižymi mažesniu atsparumu.
- Didžiausią paradoksą atskleidžia PHDI: aukštą HDI turinčios šalys dažniausiai labiausiai veikia aplinką, taip kurdamos naujas grėsmes ateičiai.

Politikos rekomendacijos. Autorės siūlo perorientuoti viešąją politiką nuo krizių gesinimo prie sisteminės transformacijos: investuoti į švietimą, sveikatą, socialinę apsaugą ir skaitmeninę infrastruktūrą, stiprinti kultūrinę solidarumo dimensiją, mažinti energinį skurdą, plėtoti prevencijos sistemas bei į nacionalinę apskaitą įtraukti atsparumo rodiklius. Pabrėžiama, kad atsparumas turi būti suvokiamas kaip ilgalaikis dividendus generuojantis procesas, stiprinantis tiek individo, tiek visuomenės galimybes prisitaikyti ir atsinaujinti.

Išvada. Knyga yra reikšmingas indėlis į žmogaus raidos studijas ir politikos formavimą. Ji sujungia psichologinį, ekonominį ir socialinį matmenį į bendrą tyrimų ir veiksmų sistemą. Ši monografija ne tik diagnozuoja pažeidžiamumą, bet ir siūlo realų kelią, grindžiamą atsparumo, įtraukties ir tvarumo principais. Tai darbas, turintis ilgalaikę vertę akademinėi bendruomenei, politikos formuotojams ir visuomenei plačiąja prasme.

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