

## Acknowledgments

For more than twenty years I have found inspiration and motivation in the work of Douglass North, who is always years ahead of me in his ideas. Doug is an intrepid thinker and a true friend. It is to him that I dedicate this book.

I see *Imperfect Institutions* as an extension of my previous book, *Economic Behavior and Institutions*, which aimed at synthesizing emerging contributions to the new institutionalism in economics. The new book explores the implications for policy of new institutional economics, while reflecting on recent developments in the field as well as in my own thinking.

Colleagues at home and abroad have given me invaluable help in writing this book. They all have my thanks, but their number is large and only a few are mentioned below. Recently I have spent much time away from my roots at the University of Iceland. Initially, my friends at Washington University in St. Louis put me on the institutional path. Two years with Lin and Vincent Ostrom and their team at Indiana University's Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis were invaluable, both intellectually and emotionally. Similarly two years at Stanford University's Hoover Institution were important and delightful. Of the outstanding people at Stanford University, I owe special intellectual debts to Barry Weingast and Avner Greif. One semester with Steven N. S. Cheung at the University of Hong Kong's School of Economics and Finance opened my window to the Far East. Two semesters at the Max Planck Institute for Research into Economic Systems in Jena opened a door to German institutionalism and modern Germany. Unfortunately, my association with the Jena Institute was cut short by the untimely and tragic illness of its director and esteemed colleague, Manfred E. Streit.

In recent years, I have spent the fall in Iceland and the spring term in New York, initially as Olin Fellow at Columbia University's School of Law. The opportunity to learn more about legal aspects of institutions and enjoy the superb intellectual company of the professors and

## vi Acknowledgments

students at the law school was a wonderful experience. The same is true of my contact with the political science department. For all this I thank Victor Goldberg, Richard Nelson, and many other friends at Columbia. My current home away from home is New York University's Politics Department, where I am part-time professor, enjoying a great intellectual environment and generous, supportive colleagues. I am particularly indebted to the department chair, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita.

The University of Iceland has treated its wayward son with patience and generosity. I mention particularly former university president Sveinbjörn Björnsson, and former dean Ágúst Einarsson. Several of my colleagues in Iceland have read individual chapters of the manuscript: Ásgeir Jónsson, Thorvaldur Gylfason, and Tryggvi Thór Herbertsson. Gylfi Zoega read the entire manuscript. I thank them for valuable suggestions. I also thank innumerable professors, graduate students, and conference participants in various countries who have assisted me with this book.

The editor of the series, Timur Kuran, has critically examined virtually every paragraph of my text, as well as its overall structure and logic. The book has benefited enormously from his suggestions. I am also thankful for thoughtful comments by two anonymous readers. The staff at the University of Michigan Press has been exceptionally efficient, helpful, and encouraging. I thank my initial in-house editor, Ellen M. McCarthy, and her successor, Raphael Allen. Marcia LaBrenz was in charge of copyediting and did a fine job. I also thank Kelly O'Connor, editorial assistant, for her help.

Finally, warm thanks go to personal friends and family members who have supported me in various ways.