The Role of Community Resilience Dimensions of Agency and Resources in Community Resilience to Crises and Uncertainty in Polish Border Communities

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to analyze the role of community resilience in Polish border communities in response to crises and uncertainty caused by Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February in 2022. Therefore, the main tasks of the research are to firstly gather knowledge of the core dimensions of community resilience, namely agency and resources, to see if they have developed and enhanced community resilience to this crisis and uncertainty and secondly to study how individuals internalize risk and how this perception affects their response to crises and uncertainty. For this purpose, two cases of responses made by two Polish border communities, in Suwałki, known as Suwałki Gap, and in Biecz were analyzed. Interviews in three interview groups of volunteers, community members and the municipality were conducted with respondents who were privately or professionally involved in helping Ukrainian refugees arriving in Poland. Results of the qualitative analysis reveal that despite the atmosphere of growing uncertainty about how the developments of the Russia-Ukraine conflict may impact Poland, in response to refugee crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, both Polish border communities did manage to activate their agency which was exercised mainly as a natural reaction to help leading to an instant decision to act in order to help. Critical resource in this response was information which was shared, updated and distributed among the groups of helpers. Also, a range of emotions experienced during this unprecedented crisis, did not prevent those communities from finding ways to secure other necessary resources which were not available or accessible until the crisis, in order to help people in need. The case of the responses to the refugee and humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022 made by communities in Poland and other receiving EU countries, may serve as a vast territory for academic research on the role of community resilience and its core dimensions.

KEYWORDS: response to crises and uncertainty, refugee crisis, humanitarian crisis, community resilience, risk perception.

Introduction

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February in 2022 which caused next unprecedented humanitarian and refugee crisis, the 'Summer of Migration' in 2015, known as a year of 'refugee crisis' (De Genova et al., 2018 as cited in Schwiertz & Schwenken, 2020) has constituted an unprecedented phenomenon the EU member state had to face (Fechter & Schwittay, 2019). During this time thousands of refugees were arriving in Southern Europe and far off (Haaland & Wallevik, 2019) and were travelling from Greece through the commonly named 'Balkan Route' to Northern and Western European countries (Schwiertz & Schwenken, 2020), in an attempt to flee war and violent conflict in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. Haaland & Wallevik (2019)

maintain that the year 2015 was historic in Europe in respect of the arrival of refugees to the continent, which in particular impacted parts of Central and Eastern Europe as the number of people who were displaced war and were fleeing to Western and Central Europe because of the conflict was the highest since crisis of the 1990s caused by the Balkan wars (Haaland & Wallevik, 2019).

In 2015 images of the refugees' arriving to Europe shown in traditional media as well as in social media led to a growing number of ordinary citizens' responses to the refugee crisis in Greece, particularly in Lesvos, one of the Greek islands which became the destination for thousands of refugees (Haaland & Wallevik, 2019) as well as the focal point of what has been known as the 'European refugee crisis' and a symbol of a massive spontaneous support and solidarity with the refugees mobilized and provided by various agents such as humanitarian organizations, local grassroots groups, local community members, volunteers who worked and collaborated together by creating unplanned partnerships and alliances in the form of among others provision of first aid, goods and services, medical help, information, water and food. This humanitarian landscape in Greece (Rozakou, 2017) implies the recognition of agency commonly understood as the capacity of individuals to remain independent in making their own free choices (Brown & Westaway, 2011) and which is needed to respond to crises and which continues to be catalyzed and strengthened through crisis (Benessaiah & Eakin, 2021). When Russia invaded Ukraine on 24th February in 2022, a growing sense of risk and uncertainty was felt specifically in the regions directly affected by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and, what was most crucial, EU countries had to again face an unprecedented refugee and humanitarian crisis. Among those EU member states was also Poland which has received the majority of Ukrainian refugees, where, according to the border guards' official statistics, in the first quarter of 2022 itself over 3 million refugees fleeing Ukraine crossed the border with Poland. Polish local communities were confronted with a new and unknown reality in which they had to respond to this unexpected emergency. In the light of the developments in Europe since Russia's invasion on 24th February 2022, this new response to a new type of refugee and humanitarian crisis in another country set in a different context needs to be analyzed.

The novelty

The novelty of this study is that it analyzes the new case studies of communities responding to a new nature of refugee and humanitarian crisis set in a different context, namely the developments of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in Europe caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The focus of the analysis are Polish border communities as this may provide better insights into the organizational aspects of first response during the crisis. A natural consequence of refugees fleeing Ukraine and crossing border with Poland was that Polish border communities were the first to respond to the arrival of those refugees and were becoming the first reception points providing refugees with different types of support. Very often their strategic location was also of central importance as it was in the case of refugees arriving in Suwałki, which is the only road and rail connection between Central Europe and Poland with the Baltic states.

Since the summer of 2015, when across Europe, enormous number of citizens responded to refugee crisis and provided impromptu help to arriving refugees, new chapters have been written in the history of humanitarian aid (Vandevoordt, 2019), and citizen aid, namely private individual initiatives to support those in need, with the focus on 'citizens' to highlight the agency of ordinary people exercising ethical choices about helping others, has been the most notable and prolific territory both for their emergence and analysis (Fechter & Schwittay, 2019). Since crises often arise as windows of opportunity or as a possibility for providing such an opportunity for change, it still remains unrevealed as to how crises and agency are related in terms of creating new op-

portunities for such a change (Benessaiah & Eakin, 2021). Next unprecedented phenomenon for an EU country (Rozakou, 2017), namely refugee and humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 may be seen as a window of opportunity and prolific territory to firstly analyze the manifestations of humanitarianism and solidarity in the form of collective actions taken by various social agents, specifically ordinary citizens, in response to this crisis, as it has been previously done in the case of the refugee crisis in 2015 in Greece, and secondly to, by building on this existing research, direct academic attention to the study of core elements which develop and enhance community resilience in response to crises. The results of the study of those core elements supporting community resilience and the way this crisis fostered community resilience in response may provide insights highly sought by stakeholders in charge of such a response, among others contingency planners and experts, government officials, scholars as well as researchers (Patel et al., 2017), fill the gaps in academic research on the resilience of social systems to support the development of strategies for community resilience (Koliou et al., 2018) as well as help identify key themes that support and limit community resilience (Robertson et al. 2021).

Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyze the role of community resilience in Polish border communities in response to crises and uncertainty caused by Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February in 2022. The main tasks of the research are to firstly gather knowledge of two still understudied core dimensions of community resilience, namely agency and resources, to see if they have developed and enhanced community resilience to crises and uncertainty and secondly to study how individuals internalize risk and how this perception affects their response to crises and uncertainty.

The capacity to operationalize the concept of 'community resilience' in response to crises and disasters is highly sought by stakeholders in charge of such a response, involved in applying resilience practically (Carpenter et al., 2012), among others contingency planners and experts, government officials, scholars as well as researchers (Patel et al., 2017) and the concept of resilience has been turning into the prevailing discourse in research and policy on among others social change (Green et al., 2022).

Among others contingency planners and experts, government officials, scholars as well as researchers (Patel et al., 2017) and the concept of resilience has been turning into the prevailing discourse in research and policy on among others social change (Green et al., 2022. Interestingly, even though there is an extensive research on community resilience resulting in considerable number of various definitions of this concept (Roberston et al., 2021), community resilience has been understood differently in different areas of research and there is a lack of consensus on the definition of community resilience per se (Wilding, 2019 as cited in Robertson et al., 2021) and no clear understanding have been developed of what community resilience represents and how communities can build such resilience in real life. A frequently employed definition of resilience is the capacity possessed by individuals or systems such as communities, families and groups to endure serious contingency, extreme event and risk and resist change (Roberston et al., 2021, McCrea et al., 2015).

In turn community resilience interpreted by Twigger-Ross et al. (2011) encompasses communities which cooperate with localized resources such as for instance information and local experts such as local crisis managers, volunteers or local responders to help make themselves and other community members prepared to respond to, to endure and to recover from contingencies, in a way allowing the community to operate on an acceptable level. What researches also observe is that community resilience to an emergency, just does not emerge impromptu, after the

Theoretical background

emergency, in response to an adversity, but rather this response builds on the base of pre-existing community networks and abilities which are further developed according to the recognized need (Dynes, 2005, as cited in Twigger-Ross et al.2011). Again Roberston et al. (2021) defines community resilience as the ability of communities to employ their available resources to prepare for, respond to, sustain, and recover from extreme adversities such as for instance natural disasters, economic crisis and disease outbreaks. Researchers recognize the fundamental role of community resilience in preparing individuals and communities for those expected and unexpected events and challenges, especially in times of uncertainty or crises such as humanitarian or refugee crisis.

In the process of conceptualizing the concept of community resilience, academic research has shifted focus from elaborating on and providing a universal definition of community resilience, to rather identifying the core elements that make a community resilient (Sarah Jo Bundy Kirkpatrick, 2019, as cited in Robertson et al., 2021). In the view of the fact that when disasters strike, governments and aid organizations are not always able to help communities straight away (Patel et al., 2017), and are aware of the need to increase local preparedness (Imperiale & Vanclay, 2019), and that community resilience is a rather a work in progress, a continuous process of adjustment as well as the enhancement of the core elements (Roberston et al., 2021), directing academic attention to the understanding of these core dimensions enhancing community resilience to crises and disasters rather than trying to define and study community resilience as a concept per se to establish what is the best way to help communities to help themselves (Patel et al., 2017) would contribute to greater resilience in times of an adversity. For this purpose, it is necessary to firstly search for both the core dimensions that enhance community resilience and also those elements that hinder the development of community resilience, and secondly to transmit these findings to stakeholders such as communities, policy-makers, practitioners and researchers (Roberston et al., 2021). Therefore, analysis in this article will specifically focus on the dimensions of community resilience, namely agency and resources to study what was their role in the Polish border communities' response to crises and uncertainty.

Resources as community dimension

One of the identified core dimensions of community resilience are resources as the importance of resources being broadly accessible, identified and distributed in the community is emphasized (Patel et.al, 2017, Masik, 2022). This dimension of community resilience encompasses natural, material, knowledge, human, social, and financial resources. Resilient communities pool, invest in, distribute, and employ resources competently and efficiently to provide for the community and its members. A community's resource base should comprise of adequate, various and redundant resources to allow necessary and vital community operations to run even in the face of major contingencies and disruptions. Community structure and roles within community as well as responsibilities can build the potential and capability for preparedness and conclusive, prompt response to crises. In extremely uncertain environments exposed to various threats and risks, structural elements which enable flexibility are critical for the community to respond to unexpected instability and threats (Pfefferbaum et al., 2013).

Human agency as community dimension

Yet it is insufficient to have available resources alone for the community to become resilient as fundamental to respond, endure and thrive in times of change is agency (Green et al., 2022), the second identified core dimension of community resilience, which is defined as the ability to take actions and make decisions that bring desired results or as the capacity to act, notably required in times of emerging crises which mobilize people to deal with change (Brown & Westaway 2011,

as cited in Benessaiah & Eakin, 2021).This mobilization is related to people's agency, namely their abilities to understand the changing contexts and to activate their capacities, the resources and support within their reach.

As from the agency-supported viewpoint humans possess intentions, motivations, emotions, values that shape their perception of risks and opportunities and how they make decisions. Hence the capacity to grasp the opportunity of critical window in times of crises is strongly related to agency (Benessaiah & Eakin, 2021) which activates and enhances other communities' strengths (Berkes & Ross, 2012). Research on agency provides insight into how people may or may not be resilient to change (Green et al., 2022) yet this dimension still remains understudied in the academic research on resilience (Brown& Westaway, 2011) and it is still not well known how crises foster agency and how it may relate to different types of change (Benessaiah & Eakin, 2021). Community response to crises may also depend on the way individuals perceive risk and uncertainty as it is claimed that risk perception may influence how people, community members are prepared for, respond to and recover from an adversity (Ridzuan et.al, 2018).

Methodology

In order to address this study's research question -"*What is the role of community resilience in response to crisis?* and to achieve the aim of this research which is the analysis of the role of community resilience in Polish border communities' response to crises and uncertainty caused by Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February in 2022, the main tasks are to firstly gather knowledge on two still understudied in academic research on community resilience, core dimensions of community resilience, namely agency and resources and secondly to study how individuals internalize risk and how this perception affects their response to crises and uncertainty. Therefore, two cases of responses made by two Polish border communities, from two corners of Poland, one in the northeast, in Suwałki, in the borderland area known as Suwałki Gap, and the second, circa 700 km from Suwałki, in the southeast, in Biecz, referred to as "Little Cracow" are analyzed.

From March till April 2023 interviews in three interview groups of volunteers, community members and the municipality (employees of the municipality and subordinate units) were conducted with respondents who were privately or professionally involved in helping Ukrainian refugees arriving in Poland. Collected empirical data have been interpreted using qualitative analysis method in order to coded sub-categories and identify main emerging themes. Results and insights presented in this article have been obtained from the transcription and coding of answers of in total 6 informants, namely 1 from each interview group of volunteers, community members, and the municipality from 2 case areas - Biecz and Suwałki. The informants were coded as B_INF1 for volunteer from Biecz and S_INF1, volunteer from Suwałki, and correspondingly community members were coded as B_INF2 and S_INF2 and B_INF3 and S_INF3 for informants from the Municipality.

The questions asked in the questionnaire were directly related to the core dimensions of community resilience, namely resources and agency. In the case of agency, the question was "Did you take any action on your own to support Ukrainian refugees arriving to Poland?", in the case of resources it was "What kind of (human, material, non-material) resources did the group provide to support Ukrainian refugees?" for volunteers interview group and "What kind of (human, material, non-material) resources did you provide to support Ukrainian refugees?" for community members interview group. The question related to risk and uncertainty was "Do you think you feel threatened by the World War III or any other risk?". The background question asked during the interview was "Think of a time when you learned about Russia invading Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees arriving to Poland and describe your first

reactions in as much detail as possible". This study as well as the interview guide has received from the Research Ethics Commission of Kaunas University of Technology an approval for the conduction of the research confirming that the project does not contradict the general principles of research ethics - protocol No. M4-2023-03.

A limitation of this article is that it presents the results and insights of a qualitative analysis of two core dimensions of community resilience, namely agency and resources, which is a part of a bigger research project aimed to explore other core dimensions of community resilience.

Results

The findings indicate that the resources pooled, distributed and employed in the response to the refugee crisis by both communities in Biecz and Suwałki may most probably fall into similar categories as discussed and proposed Pfefferbaum et al. (2013) which were classified as natural, material, information, human, social, and financial resources (Pfefferbaum et al., 2013).

Table 1

Community resilience dimension - resources

Sub-category	Quote	Interview Group
Provision and searching for material aid and necessities	*Home, food, yes what was needed for first aid, so as I was already pre-pared well, I bought them food in the refrigerator, I bought toothbrush-es, necessary hygiene products, because I already knew more or less so who is coming so well such things needed for life for women first of all (S_INF2).* *Therefore, this action took various forms, we are looking for bicycles. And what do bicycles have to do with anything, well, to "not let them go crazy", just out of inactivity, we are looking for books, and this is also the role of the library, collecting from Ternopil those books that are in the Ukrainian version to read (S_INF3).*	1. Community member 2. Municipality
Organizing donations and fundraising	*Even my birthday in January turned out to be a good excuse, I had a birthday and I wrote - if you want to have a beer with me-let's make an arrangement so that you donate those 20 and contribute to this money raising, and it worked (B_INF1).*	Volunteer
Transport and redistribution of material aid and donations (in Poland and Ukraine)	*Here, here in the museum itself, I think 80%, 80% of this aid we col-lected was distributed locally, while this 20%, 20% went, I would spread it out like this though; because it went with me like this, if I didn't go, it would either probably go to Transcarpathia, because here also a boy substituted, substituted - a resident of Biecz substituted a car and I know it went to Transcarpathia; while here, as if, it's also nice that here people very quickly understood that since there are people on the bor-der and there is a crowd on the border, a crowd of people to help, very often unfortunately trampling on each other's feet, that it is necessary to help those who do get here, so well, it's important that somehow this energy and this help did not go in vain, but rather here, yes, also I think the ratio was about 80 to 20 (B_INF1).*	Volunteer
Transport of refugees	*Organizing a bit on behalf of and for the city of transportation to Lithua-nia of those war refugees from Ukraine who wanted to go further. This was a very big deal, these buses left from our train station every day, and they did not generate any extraordinary costs for the city. It was a great help, because there were organizational possibilities on the part of this entity, this is a very important element (S_INF3).* *(...) I actually had such a function that it was mainly to go to the border, and also such a second colleague of mine, then those people who came here, they needed help, they needed to be taken to some insti-tution, to arrange something, we mainly traveled with him and helped them arrange it (B_INF3).*	Municipality

Sub-category	Quote	Interview Group
Financial support	*Yes, at the first moment, most of it was the financial one, that is, there the transfer of money to a person who was very close to the border, then when there were some collections here it was also for cans or something, it was also, mostly just that, mostly just financial, that money was transferred* (B_INF2).	Community member
Administrative support and social assistance	*Yes, yes. Assistance benefits. To receive a PESEL was a basis. It was a certain certificate, it was an identity, it was a name, surname, even an address, and it was the basis for receiving this one-off cash benefit for the start but also for travelling further* (S_INF3).	Municipality
Emotional and mental support	*(...) well, yes, we support her, maybe not so much financially, but some material things are given to her, and maybe we support her mentally, so that, because sometimes the girl has such breakdowns* (B_INF3). *On the other hand, later, when they decided that they would like to live, well, I wrote an announcement myself that I was looking for an apartment, and since I know a lot of people and they trust me so I wrote such an announcement on Facebook that I was just looking for an apartment for a nice family from Ukraine, whom I helped myself, I described that she is a wonderful person, etc., etc.* (S_INF2).	1. Municipality 2. Community member
Information	*A very important element was a simple information. People got off from the station, where they were taken care of in terms of food products, sanitary items and so on, but also information on where to go from this city and how to get there. I want to say that there were a lot of these cases, because we also met with people who got off with this transport, people sometimes did not know where they were going, but not because someone misled them, they just knew that there was a transport* (S_INF3).	Municipality

Source: Authors

The first resources mobilized and used by both communities in order to help and support Ukrainian refugees, specifically in the first days and weeks of this crisis, was the material aid and necessities in the form of among others warm clothes, food, blankets and hygiene products. Within time the needs of the refugees or displaced persons were identified and those targeted resources were either redistributed in Suwałki or Biecz or were transported to the border with Ukraine or to the Ukraine itself. The results also show that material resources were not only distributed or redistributed but also searched for, like for example in the case of the Municipality in Suwałki which was searching for bikes or books in Ukrainian language so, to *"not let them go crazy", just out of inactivity* (S_INF3). Simultaneously all three groups of community members, volunteers and the municipality were organizing donations and fundraising which were also either transported to Ukraine or redistributed in Poland. Sometimes money was raised in a creative and indeed efficient way as it was the case in Biecz, when one of the volunteers offered that instead of drinking a birthday beer with him, donate the equivalent of a beer to aid the refugees. Financial support was also offered by community members, or in the case of municipality, these were all sorts of social and cash benefits which Ukrainian refugees were eligible to receive, similarly to Polish citizens in need, once they obtain PESEL, personal identification number. It means that administrative support was also fundamental in the response. Critical in the response was transport, which was arranged in two main ways - transporting transiting refugees to another receiving country, as in the case of refugees arriving to Suwałki, the end station in Poland, to help them to get to Lithuania so they can travel further for instance to the Baltic states. Second way was to drive them in

the city to mass accommodation points or to help them and also assist them in running all types of errands in the town or in other town in Poland, like in the case of Biecz, where the employees of the Municipality drove a refugee woman from Ukraine to Kalisz and then to Łódź to get there a lifesaving insulin pump for her child. The analysis of the results also indicates that information, specifically the exchange of information for instance about the number of arriving to the town refugees or their immediate needs exchanged between the helpers from different groups, allowed for a much smoother and efficient logistics of other resources mobilized on a daily base in the response. Information was of utmost importance for refugees themselves as it helped them navigate in the new reality they were experiencing, for instance in the case of the Suwałki community and arrival of refugees at the last train station in Poland, there were *people who got off with this transport, people sometimes did not know where they were going, but not because someone misled them, they just knew that there was a transport* (S_INF3). Hence volunteers at the train station in Suwałki offered those very often disorientated refugees not only warm tea or a place to rest but also information about how they can get to specific destinations in Poland and abroad. Very often volunteers also helped them purchasing tickets or raised funds for those could not afford one. The final resource identified was emotional and mental support provided in all three interview groups which manifested in all kinds of activities such as simple conversations or spending time together. In the case of the Municipality in Biecz, its workers who by a rule are to offer administrative support, they have been supporting also mentally a young refugee woman *because sometimes the girl has such breakdowns* (B_INF3).

The analysis of the results reveals that despite the fact the community both in Biecz and in Suwałki experienced many types of emotions such as among others no surprise, disbelief, astonishment, fear, uncertainty, insecurity, concerns and dread in the face of crisis which followed after

Table 2

Community resilience dimension: Agency

Sub-category	Quote	Interview Group
Instant decision to act	*Anyway, my first thought came to help people like this, I just didn't know where to get them from* (S_INF2). *It's not that one person somewhere there, but something from my own so to speak, but here all the people, people, citizens of Suwalki, people, I'm talking about a friend also about well one of the Angels, after all, she went home from work to Cymes at our place, she went up the hill, talked with the girls, after all, after all, that's why we had fresh rolls every day, fresh bread for sandwiches, because I'm saying we did not have to buy it, because normally we had it all for free, just for people, to somehow help them in this hard time at least as much* (S_INF1).	1.Community member 2. Volunteer
Natural reaction to help	*(...) that is otherwise, yyyyy, it happened that exactly on February 24 my grandmother died, and on the same day the war began, yyyy, my reaction was, let me put it another way, as what reaction you might expect, my father called me and said "do what you have to do, we'll take care of the funeral, and no one will be angry as at this funeral you will", and so it happened. When, when my grandmother's funeral was, I was going with the first transport to the East* (B_INF1).	Volunteer
Top-down action	*The mayor there simply recommended top-down the managers, as if who is to do what, I actually had such a function that it was mainly to go to the border, and also such my other colleague, later those people who came here, they needed help, they needed to be taken to some institution, to arrange something, we mainly rode with him and helped them arrange it* (B_INF3).	Municipality

Source: Authors

Russia invaded Ukraine, people did activate agency which was exercised on three main levels. People acted instantly in order to bring the first aid for the refugees arriving from Ukraine in either Suwałki or Biecz, often prioritized helping refugees over their own matters, which for some was not about a natural reaction to help but rather about a human duty and responsibility. Apart from bottom-initiatives there were also top-down actions taken by institutions such as the municipality. Following Benessaiah & Eakin (2021) the findings indicate that all three groups in both communities understood the changing context and as a response to the refugee crisis caused the Russian invasion of Ukraine, they activated the resources and support within reach, and most importantly their agency, namely the capacity to act independently.

As Ridzuan et al. (2018) contends that community response to crises may also depend on the way individuals perceive risk and uncertainty as it is claimed that risk perception may influence how people, community members are prepared for, respond to and recover from an adversity, communities in Biecz and Suwałki, despite the growing sense of uncertainty about how the developments of the Russia-Ukraine conflict may impact Poland in the future, did succeed to activate their agency and mobilize resources in response to this unexpected emergency.

Table 3

Risk and uncertainty

Sub-category	Quote	Interview Group
Range of emotions	*At our place there was great dismay, especially my parents, on the fourth of March my brother's son was born, so my mother panicked that God how these poor children will be living if there is a war here. Well, of course, they were reassured that no for sure nothing bad will happen in our place, well I say there was such a following of the media (...) (B_INF2).* *I mean, my first thought was such disbelief whether there would be this war or not, but somewhere deep down I was sure that there would be one, contrary to what everyone thought there would not be this war, but I thought there would be one. And I remember waking up in the morning and such a surprise, because after all, this attack happened (B_INF3).*	1.Community member 2.Municiplaity
No surprise and astonishment after an earlier Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014	*I mean, there was no surprise, after 2014, after 2014, after the way the world behaved after the annexation of Crimea, when, when, well, for me it was perfectly normal, that this is an examination of how much we can afford, examines Russia, and when Europe, however, tried to civilize, civilize Putin's policy, saying that it's possible to do business with him and so on, I didn't believe, since 2014, I didn't believe that it would end well, and I didn't believe that it would end only with the annexation of Crimea, Donbass and Lugansk (B_INF1).*	Volunteer
Insecurity and uncertainty about the impact of an ongoing war in Ukraine on Poland and the world	*I think everyone is feeling threatened by World War III because it is increasingly dangerous (S_INF2).* *(...) it's actually Ukraine, at this point is such a border between us and Russia, and if more missiles fall further away, and it won't be I don't know two random, as claimed, people who died, but it will already be into some specific object? (B_INF2).*	Community member
Responsibility by not showing fear	*No, no, no, no, no, no, I won't say it that way, I try to be a responsible parent and partner, and anxiety of any kind, showing it, and in the relationship just now we were talking about a person with a disability, with my daughter is noticeable, and it translates, just as contagious as a smile, or joy, or cheerfulness, or a cheerful disposition is, this fear is written on the forehead, and in a moment other people may take it with them, this baggage, this baggage of fear (S_INF3).*	Municipality

Source: Authors

The results demonstrate that that this new and uncertain reality caused by the developments of Russia-Ukraine conflict since the very beginning of the invasion in 2022, was perceived similarly in both communities in Biecz and Suwałki which felt and had almost analogous emotions and reactions varying among others from panic, astonishment, fear, consternation to concerns of the closed ones and the ones not living in Poland. For example, in one case a community member and her family from Biecz were offered by her friends from outside Poland help in arranging for plane tickets to leave Poland in case it is attacked like Ukraine. There were also some unusual reactions like the sense of responsibility of the informant to as a parent not to show his fear in front of his child with disabilities. Interestingly, despite those first thoughts and various emotions, among others insecurity and uncertainty about the impact of an ongoing war in Ukraine on Poland and the world, like *it's not far from us anyway, I said let's hope it doesn't spread to Poland,* did not prevent people from responding to this unexpected emergency as they also had those other thoughts about the need to help like *thought that maybe, maybe it will be needed, although, well, we haven't heard yet that somebody just arrived or something, but such thoughts, somewhere something was circulating, that maybe it will be necessary to help someone so* (S_INF1).

Discussion

Next unprecedented phenomenon of refugee and humanitarian crisis which was faced by not only Poland but also other the EU countries may serve as a window of opportunity to study closely the mechanism of communities' response to this unexpected emergency, both in the context of emergence of different types of manifestations of humanitarianism and solidarity towards refugees from Ukraine and a case study of how different dimensions of community resilience are activated and fostered and how community becomes resilient in times of crises and uncertainty. It is also a good opportunity for communities to learn about themselves, especially how they can help themselves before they receive help from stakeholders in charge of such a response.

The case of Polish border communities' response to the refugee and humanitarian crisis in 2022, illustrates that like in the case of Greece in 2015, particularly on a Greek island of Lesvos, regular citizens, either volunteers or community members did show a lot of solidarity and support for Ukrainian refugees arriving in Poland. Even though those citizens were not prepared to respond to such an emergency they did manage to identify the needs of the refugees and provide necessary resources which they either already had within their reach or they did manage to find and get access to the necessary ones. The response was a dynamic process of constant learning and adjusting to this new and unknown reality and confrontation with different challenges both the helpers and the refugees had to cope with every day. This humanitarian landscape consisted of bottom-up, spontaneous collective or/and individual initiatives made by all kinds of social actors and of top-down actions taken by the institutions, in the case of Biecz and Suwałki, the municipality. In both analyzed Polish border communities, critical resource in this response was information which was shared, updated and distributed among the groups of helpers. To conclude it was natural for people that they want to help refugees but often they did not know how to do this and they were looking for possibilities where they could offer such help. The response was possible due to a natural reaction leading to an instant decision to act in order to help refugees from Ukraine, namely agency, which consequently led to the mobilization of available resources.

Presented in this article results of a qualitative analysis of two core dimensions of community resilience, namely agency and resources, highlight the need for the continuation of academic research on other core dimensions of community resilience.

» Despite the differences in the number of inhabitants and geographical location, Polish border communities in Biecz, in southeastern Poland and Suwałki, in northeastern Poland, circa 700 km away from each other, did activate their agency which was exercised in a similar way in both communities, mainly as a natural reaction to help leading to an instant decision to act in order to help refugees from Ukraine arriving in Poland which consequently activated the mobilization of available existing resources.

» Critical and valuable resource in this response was information which was sought, gathered, shared, updated, exchanged and distributed among the groups of helpers.

» Despite a growing sense of uncertainty about the impact of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict on Poland and range of emotions experienced during the refugee crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, did not prevent those communities from activating their agency, mobilizing existing available resources and as well as finding ways to secure other necessary resources which were not accessible or available until the invasion, in order to help other people in need.

» Other study findings and results may provide insights into how crisis can foster community resilience and what core dimensions of community resilience may develop and enhance communities' resilience to be able to respond to an unexpected emergency and help themselves before the help is offered by stakeholders in charge of response. Refugee and humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February in 2022 and the responses to this unprecedent situation made by various communities in Poland and in other receiving EU countries, may serve as a vast territory for academic research on the role of community resilience and its core dimensions.

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