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AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

An Interpretation of Social Resilience at the Spatial Level across the Hungarian-Romanian Border

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ABSTRACT

Today, resilience can be regarded as an attribute of complex (spatial) systems. However, the extent to which this concept can be applied in practice remains the subject of debate. Can we, for instance, speak in general terms about the social resilience of a region, when the effectiveness of adaptation and the parameters of its functioning are subject to significant fluctuations in space and time, and when the diverse social, economic, and political conditions that prevail in different localities may necessitate the implementation of different adaptation strategies? Can the social resilience of individual groups be equated with the successful adaptation of an entire settlement? To understand change at a regional level, it is apparently not enough to start from present-day social processes; we must also examine the holistic picture on a historical scale, which makes defining the process of resilience in temporal terms a challenging task. In my study, I seek to respond to these questions and specificities by examining the issue of social resilience at a regional level, focusing on settlements close to the Ártánd border crossing point in the historical Bihar region, the center of which is the formerly Hungarian city of Nagyvárad, now Oradea, Romania. I argue that the crisis of the demarcation of the Trianon borders was attenuated by the reassessment of the role of borders following European Union accession. However, in terms of individual settlements, we can also talk about the success, or possibly failure, of specific, constantly changing, alternating, or simultaneous adaptation strategies.

KEYWORDS

social resilience, individual resilience, social equilibrium, Romanian–Hungarian state border, transnational space, cross-border relations

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The concept of resilience emerged almost fifty years ago in the natural sciences, where the term is applied to the resilience of different materials and organisms to unexpected environmental impacts, crises, and situations, and to their subsequent regeneration (Székely 2015). Thinking in terms of resilience has led to new approaches, thus in the last five decades many branches of science have incorporated it into their interpretative horizon, while researchers have applied it to a wide variety of problems and used it in different ways (Chandler 2013). In ecology, resilience refers to the ability to adapt flexibly to shock-like external impacts and is usually understood as the opposite of vulnerability (Holling 1973). In social research, the concept of resilience is used mostly in the context of longer-term processes and is applied to individuals as well as groups (Bonanno 2004; Werner 1989). The global economic crisis of 2008 was a warning about the vulnerability of economic systems (Anger 2000), and resilience has since been used to describe the resilience and renewal capabilities of cities and regions following economic crises (Fejérdy – Z. Karvalics 2015; Lang 2012; Simmie 2014; Tóth 2012 cited in Pirisi 2019). Each discipline has its own set of priorities, theories, methodologies, and terminologies, thus the publications they produce do not usually reach beyond their own context when it comes to the interpretation of resilience. While the concept is used in an increasing number of fields, the content of the concept has diverged from its original meaning, resulting in a multitude of parallel interpretations and thus to conceptual ambiguity. There are now many different definitions of resilience in use, and it has become inevitable that individual authors will conceptualize their own definitions of the term. As a result, the number of definitions is constantly growing, while they are becoming increasingly hard to fathom. One common feature among the various concepts of resilience is that they most often denote an impact or change from which the affected entity is able to recover and regenerate itself, possibly even turning the change to its own advantage (Székely 2015:10). As a result of the multiple readings, a number of types, as well as dual or triple subdivisions, have emerged. By way of example, I refer here to Martin and Sunley's typology, derived from Crafford Stanley Holling, which shows the three forms that are perhaps most often considered as resilience in the literature:

- the ability of a system to return ("rebound") to a stable initial state;
- the ability of a system to "absorb" external impacts that are intended to change it, without changing its state; and
- the ability of a system to adapt to external conditions by changing. (Martin – Sunley 2015)

The impact of resilience is considered by many researchers to have a mostly positive content for a given entity. By contrast, the 2015 study by Iván Székely warns that resilience can be detrimental to both individuals and communities. Critical approaches tend to point out how the preservation or restoration of the status quo is a conservative construct. Consequently, the concept of resilience can be seen as a reconstruction of neoliberal political ideology in a more agreeable form (Swanstrom 2008; Strange 1996; MacKinnon – Derickson 2012). The neoliberal state, which withdraws from social state functions, attempts to exploit the resilience of communities by presenting the various forms of social exclusion as problems at individual level, and as a lack of coping capacity (Joseph 2013; Patakfalvi-Czirják et al. 2018). The idea of resilience is usually raised when those in power seek to shift responsibility to members of society. This happens, for example, when the central authorities are unable to

fulfil their tasks, or when they wish to legitimize certain illegitimate interference in the life of communities (Neocleoust 2013). However, in the context of its application in the social sciences, the question arises as to whether the concept of resilience can be linked to value judgements. According to Neil W. Adger, resilience is not a normative concept, but is rather a concept used for analysis (Adger 2000). As a phenomenon, it is fundamentally and inherently value-neutral, the perspective and interests of the external observer determining its positive or negative perception.

The conceptual definition of resilience is made more difficult by the fact that it is a complex phenomenon and there is no scientific consensus on its measurement. Qualitative studies seem to be more effective in operationalizing research on resilience. The case study method, with its predominantly qualitative methodology, appears to be particularly suitable for the study of social resilience (Lendvay 2016).

In the present paper, I first review the dilemmas associated with the social science application of the concept of regional social resilience. I then examine some of the characteristics of cross-border regional social resilience through the regional processes along the traffic corridor[1] connected to the border crossing at Ártánd, which has been my area of research since 2008 (Fig. 1). I conducted fieldwork in the examined region in several phases following Romania's accession to the European Union, first between 2008 and 2011, and then in 2014, 2018, and 2023. My research employed a qualitative method, comprising semi-structured interviews and a snowball sampling technique to identify participants. In Biharkeresztes, a supplementary questionnaire, consisting of open-ended questions, was also used to collect data for an analysis of opinions about settlers in the area. I also used data from interviews with the mayors of Bedő, Berekböszörmény, and Körösszakál, conducted between 2008 and 2011, to assess the situation in the border settlements of the Bihar region. To shed light on the regional position of Biharkeresztes, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the mayors of the town on several occasions between 2008 and 2023.

1. SOCIAL RESILIENCE AT REGIONAL LEVEL

When endeavoring to interpret social resilience at regional level, one of the first questions to arise is whether spatial resilience should be considered in social or geographical terms — that is, whether it is the region's position or the functioning of the local society that is the crucial factor. A further question concerns the method of selecting the examined time period within the life of the region. Researchers will almost certainly not be able to take present-day social processes as their starting point; instead, they must examine a holistic picture on a historical scale in order to understand regional changes. The point at which a resilience process is considered complete is

[1]The settlements on the Hungarian side of the border along the traffic corridor connected to the Ártánd border crossing are Ártánd, Bedő, Nagykereki, Bojt, Mezőpeterd, Biharkeresztes, Told, Berekböszörmény, Körösszegapáti, and Körösszakál. The scope of the present study does not allow for a detailed analysis of the relationships among the various settlements. Instead, I focus on Biharkeresztes, the only town in the region, which I discuss in greater depth.

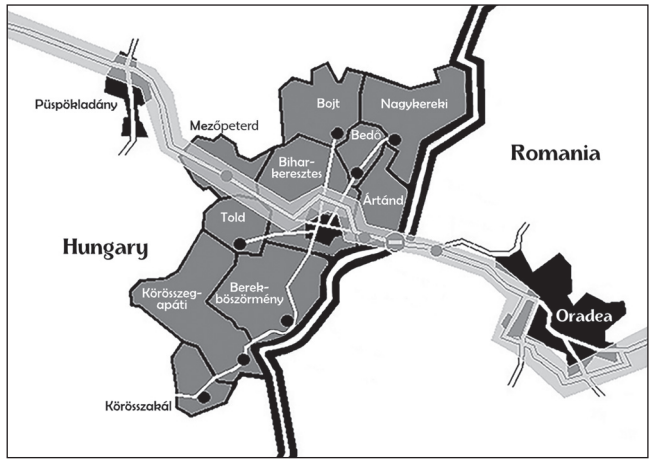

Fig. 1. Settlements situated on the Romanian–Hungarian border along the transport corridor connected to the Ártánd border crossing (*Source*: created by the author)

extremely important: if the examination is based on a later date, it may lead to an entirely different conclusion. Today, resilience can be regarded as an attribute of complex (spatial) systems. But how far can the scope of the examination be extended? Can we really talk about general social resilience that affects several settlements, when adaptation is never a general characteristic of an entire region? Can we speak in general terms about the social resilience of a region when the effectiveness of adaptation, and its functional parameters, are subject to significant fluctuations in space and time, and when the diverse social, economic, and political conditions that prevail in different localities may necessitate the implementation of different adaptation strategies? The question also arises as to whether the successes and failures of a settlement or region are really the result of some kind of community behavior, or whether they are due to specific forms of adaptation at individual level. If we accept that a local society is not able to act in unity to represent its interests, then we might well examine which groups are characterized by resilient action. It is also worth considering how the adaptation strategies of the decision-making political-social elite at community level affect the everyday lives of local inhabitants.

The starting point of the resilience process is a loss of equilibrium. However, to ascertain when a given structure was in equilibrium, it is necessary to define what is meant by equilibrium, and how, and in what form, this equilibrium has been disrupted. If we consider the situation in Hungary in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries alone, we can identify several alternative cycles, depending on whether we focus on social, economic, or political aspects. Consider the following examples:

- If the political system between the two world wars, in which feudal relations were preserved, were to be regarded as some sort of idyllic state, we might conclude that today, with the reconstitution of the local hierarchy, steps are being taken to restore the previous "order."

- If we start from the assumption that homestead farming[2] provided a degree of security in the shadow of the large-scale socialist farms, then we can consider the 1970s and 1980s as a kind of equilibrium, which was disrupted by the regime change in 1989 and the redistribution — and capitalization — that followed.
- If we consider the increasingly democratic and independent rural settlements that emerged after the 1989 regime change as organizations striving for equilibrium, then the changes that have taken place in the last decade indicate the latent disintegration of democratic relations, which is slowly leading to the collapse of equilibrium.

These examples illustrate the subjective nature of what we consider to be equilibrium. Different authors interpret the concept of equilibrium, and the loss of equilibrium, in different ways. In the course of the twentieth century, historical and social processes in Hungary forced many regions and settlements to adapt to new situations. After the demarcation of the Trianon borders in 1920, various forms of adaptation took place on both sides of the Romanian–Hungarian border. Then, after World War II, the socialist restructuring of the economy and industrialization led to the rise or decline of several settlements and regions in Hungary. The democratization that followed the regime change in 1989 seemed to create freer, more open, but not necessarily more favorable, opportunities for a time, which, with the lessening of central regulation, made visible at settlement level the location within individual regions of formations that were better adapted to the market economy.

Another important question is whether it is possible to talk about overall social equilibrium in relation to resilience at settlement level. Strictly speaking, there is no historical period that has been favorable for all local social groups, although it should be noted that equilibrium in social terms does not necessarily imply the well-being or favorable position of all members of a given society. It makes far more sense to talk about members of a given society accepting their situation and adapting to it using their own means. If we examine local rural societies in Hungary in the twentieth century (for the purposes of the subsequent analysis, this is a sufficient time period), we do not find a state of equilibrium in the sense of society as a whole. The disintegration of local communities had already begun at least a century earlier, when industrial production began to attract the rural population away from the small settlements, while the "agrarian scissor"[3] under socialism further exacerbated the decline. Even today, there is no state of equilibrium in a significant proportion of rural settlements, as evidenced by continued emigration, aging populations, and the lack of job opportunities.

It is also important to note that some of the basic definitions of resilience are useless in the study of social processes. By introducing the notion of resilience at local level, we can interpret

[2]The *háztáji* was a "mini-farm" operating outside the framework of the agricultural cooperatives. In the socialist agricultural policy of the 1960s, it was intended as a temporary, self-sufficient way for members of the cooperatives to make a supplementary income. Members of collective farms were allocated areas of less than one acre of the cooperative's land for their individual use. Produce from this land belonged to the producers, who were free to sell both crops and animals. The survival of these mini-farms and supplementary farms, which were established to improve the financial situation of low-income village households, was guaranteed by the fact that, by the 1970s and 1980s, they had gradually emerged as an important area of commodity production and played a significant role in the flourishing of socialist agriculture. Besides their productivity, the significance of these economic formations lay in the fact that farmers working for the cooperatives transferred to these mini-farms the vestiges of their traditional peasant way of life and culture (Lovas Kiss 2006:56–60).

[3]An "agrarian scissor" is a period of disparity between (low) agricultural product prices and (high) industrial product prices, resulting in the diverting of some of the value produced by farmers to industry (Lovas Kiss 2006:37).

the disintegration of local communities, the aging of village populations, and the collapse of internal social cohesion in settlements as a lack of resilience. This raises the question of whether a system that, for various reasons, loses its — already questionable — equilibrium, can return to a new state of balance. One of the most well-known definitions of resilience is that a system, once displaced from a state of equilibrium, can regain its earlier stability once the disruption is over ("rebound capacity"). However, the disruption is often a historical impact, after which it is impossible to return to an earlier state. An examination of the phenomena leads to the conclusion that the only constant is change. At the same time, the question arises as to how the concept of resilience is compatible with continuous change. The regime change in 1989, for example, while it declared the restitution of property, did not in fact allow reprivatization but merely a kind of compensation. It was clear that anyone hoping to carry on with what they had been obliged to stop doing in the late 1940s due to the program of forced privatization — small-scale farming, for example — rapidly went bankrupt. For many, it was not just old age that stood in the way of success but also the changed economic circumstances. Such phenomena can of course be described using other concepts of resilience, posited on the fact that a system adapts to external conditions by changing. In this respect, the question arises as to whether one can regard as a process of resilience the fact that the disproportionate land tenure structure that existed in early twentieth-century Hungary — in which a large proportion of land was owned by a very few — seems to be returning in the early twenty-first century — albeit with different levels of mechanization and under new ownership — following the land distributions, collectivizations, and privatizations.

Finally, is there in fact such a thing as settlement-level or regional-level resilience, or is the essence of local social resilience a process that starts at the level of the individual but has a settlement or regional impact? Can the social resilience of individuals or local groups also be defined as the successful adaptation of a whole settlement? Can the adaptation strategies of a local decision-making political, social, or economic elite be projected onto the local society as a whole? When servile compliance with, and enforcement of, ideological networks and the expectations of the central power become the means of prosperity, and when the proficient tapping of EU funds becomes an essential merit in certain political circles, can this be considered successful adaptation at the level of society? Do local benefits, or at least the subsidies for the alleviation of regional disadvantages that have been obtained thanks to the loyalty of local governments to the expectations of the political regime in power over the past decade, amount to social resilience, or are they merely a means of enriching a few profiteering local or regional leaders? Or, conversely, is it rather the case that there is no point looking at what communities or individuals can do to solve problems for which they are not responsible, since the life of local societies is essentially influenced by what are fundamentally macro-level political, social, and economic processes, and their impacts cannot be meaningfully addressed locally, at the micro or meso level (Pirisi 2019)?

2. RESILIENCE PROCESSES ON THE ROMANIAN–HUNGARIAN BORDER, ALONG THE TRANSPORT CORRIDOR CONNECTED TO THE ÁRTÁND BORDER CROSSING

In the following section, I attempt to respond to some of the questions raised above, by placing them in a concrete regional and historical context and by outlining certain macro- and micro-level phenomena from the region of the traffic corridor connected to the Ártánd border crossing.

2.1. Macro-level processes

If, following the ecological approach, we seek to identify in the Bihar (Bihor) region the kind of shock that might have triggered a resilient reaction, the most suitable situation is perhaps the one that arose following the demarcation of the Trianon border, which significantly changed the spatial structure of Hungary — including the new border that split Bihar County into two. The two truncated counties followed different developmental paths in the twentieth century. Bihor County in Romania remained a viable administrative unit, retaining the formerly Hungarian city of Nagyvárad (Oradea) as the region's organizational center, while the part of Bihar that remained in Hungary was left without a single city. It is therefore worth looking at the evolution in the regional situation of the two very different truncated counties on either side of the border.

When Nagyvárad became part of Romania, the city's development, which had begun in the 1890s and which, by 1920, had made it the fourth most developed city in Hungary, came to an abrupt end. With the demarcation of the Trianon border, the city that had been emerging as a regional center in Hungary was relegated to the level of a county capital in Romania. Oradea's disadvantages in terms of regional and settlement structure were further exacerbated between 1945 and 1989, under the Romanian communist administration, when it was classified as a second-tier city (Szücs 2003). In the post-socialist 1990s, following the change of regime in Romania, the city's situation stagnated, while employment declined due to the changed economic and social conditions (Szücs 2003). The city's economic decline was halted by Romania's accession to the European Union. The influx of working capital and the arrival of large international companies investing in the city led to a steady economic recovery after the turn of the millennium. If we interpret this as a process of resilience, it can be regarded not as a return to normal, but rather as an adaptation to a new situation.

The part of Bihar County that remained in Hungary after 1920 became regionally, economically, and socially marginalized, and in the absence of organizational centers, the internal cohesion of the truncated Hungarian Bihar County declined. It was not considered an independent administrative unit, because the government of the time, which believed in territorial revision, opted to preserve the truncated county. It was only after World War II that Nagyvárad's former role as a regional organizational center was substituted. The remaining territory of Bihar was divided between Hajdú and Békés counties, although the fragments of Bihar County occupied a peripheral position in both these counties, as they were situated far from the county capitals (Fig. 2).

This exacerbated the peripheral situation of the Hungarian fragment of Bihar County that had been created by the demarcation of the Trianon border, as it was absorbed into two other regional units, marginalizing it not only in terms of the country, but also in terms of the recipient counties. Thus, the Hungarian fragment of Bihar became the periphery of the periphery (Baranyi 1999). The changed socioeconomic conditions in the post-socialist period had a detrimental impact not only on the economy of Oradea, but also on the settlements on the Hungarian side of the border. Hungary's peripheral border settlements suffered further decline in an already capital-poor and unstable economic environment (Lovas Kiss 2018).

Following the shock of the 1920 partition, the two truncated parts of Bihar County followed a similar yet distinct path. Depending on which temporal dimension and which definition of resilience we take as our starting point, there are several possible interpretations. If we

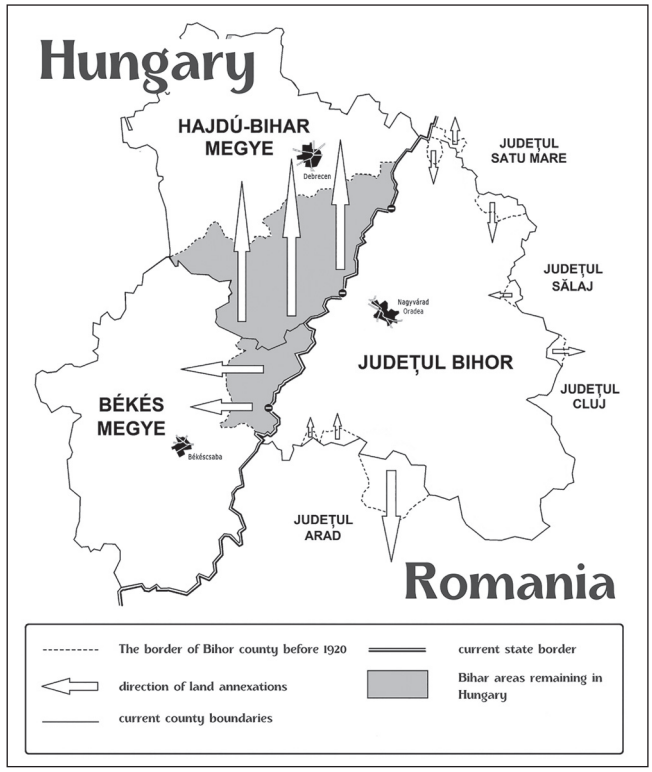

Fig. 2. The distribution of the truncated Bihar County between Hajdú and Békés counties (*Source*: created by the author)

understand the restoration of the original to be the elimination of the border, then we cannot speak of resilience. However, if we content ourselves with a change in the significance of the border, then we can consider the process of change as resilience. Following Hungary's accession to the European Union in 2004, and Romania's accession in 2007, a new system of interstate relations was established between the two countries, one of the most visible elements of which was the re-evaluation of the role of the state border. As an existing geopolitical spatial unit, the border that had separated Romania and Hungary for almost a century was redefined. The earlier form of separation, characterized by strict border controls and the regulation of passage, was replaced by a more open system. As Romania did not join the Schengen area at the time of its accession to the European Union, the border between the two countries was not abolished but rather simplified to a one-stop border control system. This process can be seen as resilience if we consider the period from the demarcation of the Trianon borders to the accession of the two countries to the European Union as a single period. Although the 1920 border did not disappear, the change in border permeability triggered significant regional changes (as we shall see below). At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that free movement between EU member states has not yet been achieved at the Ártánd border crossing, thus the transformation cannot yet be

considered a process of resilience, and in this sense, we have not yet reached the end of the period of resilience that began with the demarcation of the border.

The introduction of the one-stop border crossing system following Romania's accession to the EU has facilitated border crossings and is significantly transforming the region's internal structure, regional relations, and system of relationships. Nagyvárad had been the regional center before the Trianon border was drawn, and following the accession of both countries to the EU the relaxation of the restrictive border made possible the re-establishment of links between Oradea and Hungarian areas outside the city's sphere of influence. It should be emphasized that this trend can be considered as restoration only in the context of the previous unity of the region and in relation to the restrictive border, since what we are actually witnessing is the emergence of a new phenomenon, where a regional center exerts influence from another country.

If we consider adaptation to external circumstances by means of change to be resilient behavior, it is also manifested in the emergence of border surveillance areas on both sides of the border. The new borders established by the Treaty of Trianon gave a new role to what had previously been an internal Hungarian region. Guards came to play an important role on both sides of the border, and this had a significant impact on the border settlements, and especially on the town of Biharkeresztes, the closest town to the Ártánd border crossing on the Hungarian side. While the eastward mobility of the local population was restricted, the changed conditions also created new opportunities. Border surveillance involved the temporary or permanent settlement of border guards in Biharkeresztes, changing the composition of the population of Biharkeresztes and Ártánd and creating new employment opportunities for the local population. After Trianon, border patrols once again created a new, stable regional position on both sides of the border, which lasted throughout the twentieth century.

The phenomena outlined thus far, from the demarcation of the new borders in 1920 to the change of regime in 1989 and accession to the European Union, were changes resulting from macro-level processes, transnational agreements, and national regulations, in which local people had no meaningful influence at the individual or local community level. As a result, they cannot in themselves be considered as regional resilience processes. At the same time, however, macro-level processes have generated individual or group responses at the micro level, which have also had a significant impact on regional events. Thus, local regional and social changes are in fact the result of international or national decisions, although adaptation takes place at local level, through individual coping strategies and solutions.

2.2. The impacts of micro- or individual-level resilience

Gábor Pirisi defines resilience as a social construct created by spatially connected communities (Pirisi 2019). The skills and knowledge contained within these connections make possible adaptation to the ever-changing external conditions, helping to maintain the community's functionality and to reduce its vulnerability. The ability of a region to renew itself can be promoted or hindered by individual resilience aspirations.

Despite its advantages, the 1989 change of regime was disadvantageous for many in the Hungarian part of Bihar, as the changed political landscape led to the liquidation of a significant proportion of local industrial and agricultural enterprises. The loss of local opportunities meant fewer possibilities to make a living and increased insecurity among the region's inhabitants.

Locals looked for individual ways to remedy the disrupted equilibrium by means of various alternatives. On the Hungarian side of the traffic corridor towards the Ártánd crossing, one of the preferred individual resilience solutions to the reduced employment opportunities was to move to another part of the country where jobs were more readily available. In itself, this individual protective strategy did not make a difference to the economic and social decline of the Bihar region, although since it was the more proactive and solution-oriented locals who made efforts to move, it nevertheless exacerbated the region's difficulties. If individual solutions to hardships prove effective, a significant number of individuals may opt to pursue them, potentially influencing outcomes on a larger scale, and even at a regional level. Internal migration was hindered mainly by the fact that those wishing to move away were unable to sell their properties due to a lack of solvent demand, or were able to find buyers only at very low prices, which meant they were unable to purchase property in other, more developed parts of the country. At the same time, another individual resilience effort that involved moving emerged on the Romanian side of the border. In 2007, with Romania's accession to the European Union, a new system of interstate relations was established between Hungary and Romania. The border that had separated the two countries for almost a century took on a new meaning as an existing geopolitical spatial element. The earlier form of separation, characterized by strict border controls and the regulation of passage, was replaced by a significantly more open system. As discussed above, Romania did not become part of the Schengen area when it joined the EU. The border was not abolished; instead, it was merely simplified to a one-stop border control system. However, relationships among EU member states are moving towards the complete abolition of border crossing controls in the long term, which has had a positive impact on the nature of cross-border relations. On the Romanian side, several private individuals were quick to exploit the economic advantages of the changing situation. On hearing that the border would become easier to cross, they took steps to purchase properties near the Hungarian border, which, although situated in a disadvantaged area, were cheap and located in an area with excellent infrastructure, thereby avoiding the high cost of housing in Oradea and the poor standard of the surrounding agglomeration. The first buyers did particularly well, as they were able to purchase very cheaply. However, the market rapidly adjusted to the demand, resulting in higher property prices. While enabling individuals who wished to leave the area to move, the process also alleviated the housing shortage in Oradea to some extent. In Biharkeresztes and the other settlements along the traffic corridor connected to the Ártánd border crossing, innovative and adaptive families from Romania settled in the place of those inhabitants who moved out following the regime change, and this contributed to the resilience activities of the region's population (for more on this, see Lovas Kiss 2018). The new settlers continued to be employed in Romanian workplaces, thus for them, the high unemployment rate on the Hungarian side did not represent a problem. Many of those who moved to Hungary found work in the industrial zone between the border and Oradea. It is more convenient for them to live on the Hungarian side of the border, since unless the border is congested for any reason, they can reach their workplaces more comfortably and quickly than if they were to commute from Oradea (Fig. 3).

Their resettlement can in itself be considered as a form of resilience, since it is a response to macro processes and involves the symbolic and physical crossing of borders that had previously restricted them.

Population movements following the two countries' EU accession differed from earlier migration processes, as a significant proportion of those who moved did not simply change

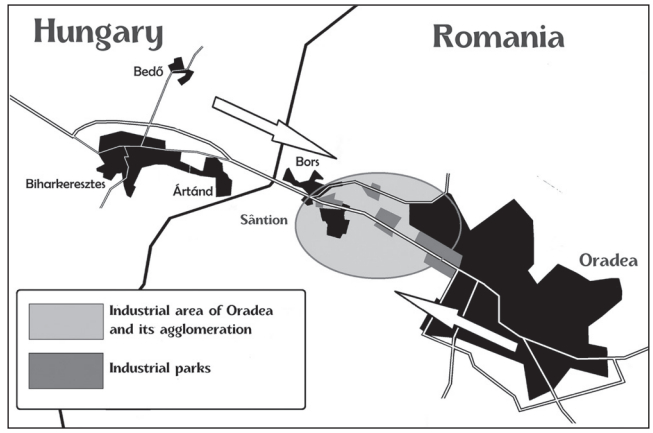

Fig. 3. The accessibility of Oradea's industrial ring from the Hungarian side of the border (*Source*: created by the author)

their place of residence but are in constant, intensive motion between the two sides of the border. This has given rise to a new, flexible lifestyle that relies less on the individual's cultural background and social identity than on the way in which they manage their life. Thus, the permeability of the border has given rise to a model of border-crossing behavior, an important feature of which is integration across state borders, which occurs at the level of the individual. The social networks linking the two countries are operated by "transmigrants," who maintain their social, economic, and cultural connections with their country of origin while establishing new systems of relations in their place of residence, thus building cross-border social networks (Schiller 1992).

Transmigrants reside in the recipient country, establish contacts with locals at neighborhood level, and may be involved in local civic organizations, although they work, educate their children, and maintain family ties and friendships in the sending country (Gielis 2009; Strüver 2005). In principle, the resulting "transnational space" provides equal opportunities for encounters among different ethnic groups, cultures, and lifestyles, and thus fosters the emergence of a kind of "transnational lifestyle" (Jagodič 2012; Niedermüller 2005). The plurilocal relationships of those who commute daily between the two countries are characterized by simultaneous and permanent ties and contacts on both sides — albeit of different intensity. In our case, however, in the Ártánd area on the Hungarian–Romanian border, we cannot talk about equal opportunities. Indeed, over the last decade, one group has been able to gain an advantageous position in several areas, even managing to increase its dominance in recent years. The newly emerging opportunities have been best utilized by members of the Hungarian minority in Romania who commute between the two countries, since they were open to the new possibilities, spoke a language that could be used on both sides of the border, and were able to navigate among the cultural differences of the two sides. Their micro-level individual resilience was supported by macro-level processes, once they were able to obtain Hungarian citizenship through the naturalization process that was simplified in 2011, making them full citizens of both countries.

The first definitive response to the changes that followed EU accession was made by residents of Oradea. For a considerable time, there was no evidence on the Hungarian side of the border of anyone capitalizing on the new situation created by European integration, as if the Hungarian population had a mental blind spot when it came to turning eastwards. In the 2010s, it was clear that the local decision makers in Biharkeresztes had not yet found a solution. They did not consider neighboring Romania as a potential source of companies to fill the empty industrial park, for example, instead attempting to attract companies from within Hungary. Nor did Biharkeresztes see border permeability as an opportunity, thus regular public transport across the border was not organized from Hungary, but only from Romania. There were exceptions, however. Some people tried to sell vegetables grown in the border village of Bedő at the Oradea market. At the level of private individuals, relocation or labor migration to Romania along the traffic corridor connected to the Ártánd border crossing was not common in the first two decades of the 2000s, despite the significant demand for skilled workers in Western firms on the Romanian side of the border. In a study I conducted in 2008, many of my interviewees attributed the reluctance among Hungarian workers to seek employment in Romania to lower wages and a lack of language skills. In their opinion, it was often not so much their inability to speak Romanian but their lack of international languages, especially English, that excluded Hungarian workers from job opportunities on the Romanian side of the border (Lovas Kiss 2011).[4] However, the situation seems to have changed in recent years. Between 2010 and 2020, there was a relative stagnation in cross-border labor mobility. Although the emergence of the Oradea industrial ring created a growing demand for labor, it was only after 2020 that Hungary's economy had weakened to the extent that Hungarian workers found it worthwhile taking up jobs on the other side of the border. Among the mostly low-skilled Hungarian workers, the daily commute to Romania is worthwhile, since those working in Romanian firms earn more than they could make doing public service jobs in a small Hungarian settlement, while they are not dependent on local decision makers for such job opportunities. Working conditions and the nature of the work are also superior to day labor. For some people, who are in debt to the bank, working in Romania is an advantage, since income earned abroad cannot be claimed by a debt collection agency. As labor shortage is also a major problem in Romania, the Italian and German companies operating in the Oradea industrial park are taking advantage of their location near the border to recruit workers from Hungary by offering free travel, good working conditions, and permanent employment. This is essentially a new process, as there are no earlier examples of relatively large-scale and legitimate labor migration to Romania. At the same time, if we examine this process at the regional level, we find that the relationship between the periphery and the center has been restored, in as much as the workforce is once again flowing towards the centrally located Oradea, while the settlements around the regional center are becoming dormitory villages, as an agglomeration zone. This change is also reflected in terms of consumption on the Hungarian side of the Ártánd traffic corridor. During the socialist period, shopping tourism attracted people from Romania to the better-supplied shops in Hungary. However, this trend, which continued long after the emergence of the market

[4]Until the 2010s, labor flows were characterized by the movement of workers from Romania to Hungary. In fact, a higher number of Romanians sought employment in the EU or Canada than in Hungary. However, most of the foreigners seeking work in Hungary came from Romania. Labor migration typically did not take place at subregional levels but was rather directed towards larger cities and Budapest (Gödri – Tóth 2010).

economy, has changed in recent years. The situation has been reversed: it is now more common for shoppers from the Hungarian side of the border to visit the cheaper and better-stocked shops in Oradea. The situation is characterized by the fact that, according to the locals' experience, the quality of goods and the market supply in Oradea is better than it is in Debrecen, the biggest regional city on the Hungarian side (Lovas Kiss 2019). The difference in market prices and regulations encourages people living on both sides of the border to exploit the opportunities available in everyday life. Of course, this phenomenon is not exclusive to the Bihor region where I carried out my research; the exploitation of differences and disparities between member states is a characteristic of cross-border migration and economic flows throughout the EU (Terlouw 2008). Taking advantage of the opportunities and benefits offered by one's place of residence can also be perceived as individual resilience.

3. SUMMARY

This paper examines processes of resilience in settlements along the traffic corridor connected to the Ártánd border crossing, through a focus on two areas: firstly, it explores resilience solutions to the situation created by the demarcation of the Trianon borders in 1920; and secondly, it examines transmigration as adaptation to the new situation in the context of European integration.

My investigation of regional social resilience focuses on the individual and the group, rather than the system. I interpret resilience, following Gábor Pirisi, as a social construct created at the individual level by a spatially organized population linked by institutionalized and informal relations (Pirisi 2019).

From a Hungarian perspective, the loss of Bihar's regional center following the demarcation of the Trianon border was essentially a loss of territory that has never been resolved either geographically or politically. However, ease of passage for inhabitants of Oradea to Hungary following European integration has resulted in a social and cultural resolution to the division of the Bihar/Bihor region on both sides of the state border. In the new sphere of movement created by macro-level changes, the resilient behavior of individuals and local communities is contributing to the identification of practical solutions. It is often difficult to predict changes in advance, thus rapid adaptation was required on the part of those living in the local space of Bihar. The demarcation of the Trianon borders, the collapse of socialism, and EU accession were all unexpected events that could not have been foreseen years in advance. Not all groups and individuals are able to adapt to the new situation, although those who are more resilient may gain a positional advantage. In this favorable situation, these people have an opportunity, through their actions, to promote — even unconsciously — regionally based resilience processes. In the Bihar region that I have used in my example, it was settlers from Oradea who first recognized the local potential of the European integration of Romania and Hungary and who took advantage of the fact that on the Hungarian side of the border — in settlements with numerous disadvantages and lacks — resilient behavior manifested itself in the form of emigration. Cross-border residential mobility from Oradea, which originated as an individual-level resilience effort, has had a positive impact on systems of relationships in the divided Bihar region. These steps are not intended to restore the relations that existed before the Trianon border was drawn; the aim

is merely to utilize the natural character of the city as a regional center, which was not possible while the border was closed.

Those who commute between the Hungarian and Romanian sides have adapted to the new conditions by modifying their lifestyle, while the situation of Hungarian speakers has also been helped by such macro-level decisions as the simplified naturalization process introduced in 2011, which allowed them to obtain Hungarian citizenship and thus become full citizens of both countries. The simultaneous presence of macro- and micro-level resilience processes raises the possibility that in complex social systems, various adaptive, compensatory, and protective strategies may be operating simultaneously on multiple levels, with different trajectories in space and time. The speed at which the components of a system change can vary by several orders of magnitude, while these components interact in complex ways, thus, in the social sense, we should in fact talk not about *resilience* but rather about *resiliences* in the context of regional studies.

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