



Refugees in Belgium in Times of Superdiversity and Transmigration. Resilient Moves of Children and Adolescents

Dirk Geldof, Kaat Van Acker and Mieke Groeninck

Abstract

The chapter examines a reconceptualization of resilience into resilient moves among young accompanied refugees in Belgium. First we contextualize the influx of refugees as part of the rising superdiversity and (trans)migration in Belgium. Secondly, we contextualize the growing number of refugee families with children and youngsters, and the rise of unaccompanied minors. Based upon three research projects with refugee families in Belgium, we present in the last part our focus on resilient moves of adolescent refugees.

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D. Geldof (✉) · K. Van Acker · M. Groeninck
Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Brüssel, Belgium
E-Mail: dirk.geldof@odisee.be

K. Van Acker
E-Mail: Kaat.vanacker@odisee.be

M. Groeninck
E-Mail: mieke.groeninck@odisee.be

D. Geldof
University of Antwerp, Antwerpen, Belgium

M. Groeninck
KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

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Refugees arriving in Europe in the last decade add an extra layer of diversity and complexity on the superdiversity in Western-European countries, certainly in arrival cities that are becoming majority-minority cities. Families with children and youngsters, and unaccompanied young minors are an important group of the refugees seeking international protection in Belgium. In this chapter, we analyse the situation in Belgium. First, we briefly sketch the rising context of superdiversity and (trans)migration in Belgium. In the second part, we analyse the growing importance of refugee families with children and youngsters, and the rise of unaccompanied minors. Based upon three research projects with refugee families in Belgium, we present in the last part our focus on resilient moves of adolescent refugees.

1 Belgium in a Transition Towards Superdiversity

Superdiversity is a new approach to understand our societies and today's complexities in the first decades of the twenty-first century (Vertovec 2007). The transition towards superdiversity is a process of diversification of diversity, and a process of normalisation of diversity. These transitions are taking place against the background of a quantitative, demographic transition of increasing ethnic diversity, including the evolution towards majority-minority cities (Geldof 2016, 2018, 2020).

1.1 A Context of Increasing Diversity

The strong acceleration of migration since World War II, and especially since the 1990s, made most West-European cities increasingly diverse. Certainly, larger cities have become arrival cities, the main destinations of international migrants. An increasing number of European cities are becoming “majority-minority-cities”, where people with a migration background gradually make out the majority of the population. These are cities where the majority is made up from a varied range of different minority groups (Crul et al. 2013; Geldof 2016). In cities such as Brussels, Antwerp or Genk in Belgium, or Rotterdam,

Amsterdam or Den Hague in the Netherlands, migrants and people with foreign born parents now make up more than half of the population. Inhabitants of Belgian and Dutch origin now represent less than 50% of the total population in these cities. Other cities in Europe—such as Birmingham, Malmö, Marseille or Frankfurt—are becoming majority-minority-cities as well (Geldof 2016, 2019).

New migration and refugees are speeding up the transition towards superdiverse societies, but today's superdiversity is largely the result of demographic changes building upon the migration processes of the past decades. In Western European cities the majority of children and adolescents increasingly have a migration background (Crul et al. 2013; Geldof 2019). These children and youngsters are tomorrow's parents. Even without new migration, diversity will further increase.

1.2 Superdiversity as Diversification of Diversity

Starting from this demographic transition, superdiversity is a lens to understand an ongoing qualitative transition: the diversification of diversity (Vertovec 2007, p. 1025). Our modern societies are typified by populations with a multiplicity of countries of origin, languages, cultures, religions, immigration statuses and social positions. This process of diversification goes alongside an increasing diversity in migration motives, statuses of migrants and socio-economic positions, It leads to an increasing fragmentation in the background of migrants in ethnic, linguistic, legal, cultural, religious and economic terms, leading to increased complexity (Geldof 2016; Vertovec 2007). The result is a growing diversity within and between groups and communities, as well as among those groups and communities. The interactions between all these different factors form the core of superdiversity. Finally, superdiversity reflects the (contested) processes of normalization of diversity, which gradually becomes the normality rather than the exception for 21st century societies.

2 Worldfamilies, Transnational Lifestyles and Transmigration

In superdiverse societies, we are confronted with an increasing importance of world families (Beck und Beck-Gernsheim 2011), with transnational lifestyles and networks. Transnational family networks might be a source of support, but can also imply social pressure from abroad, or an obligation to send remittances

to family members in countries of origin (Furman et al. 2016; Negi und Furman 2010).

An additional challenge is the increasing reality of transmigration in Europe (Geldof et al. 2020; Schrooten et al. 2016), with the increase of flexible migration strategies. Many contemporary migrants come and go, not always being sure how long they will stay in sending or receiving countries; when they will stop moving, or where they will settle. The social life of these “mobile migrants” or “transmigrants” is not only oriented towards their new countries, but consists of complex networks and contacts beyond boundaries. They shift between different *modus operandi* and between different visible and invisible, local and global networks. As such, they often have difficulties finding their way to social work.

3 Growing Importance of Children and Youngsters Among Refugees in Belgium

The arrival of increasing numbers of refugees to Belgium since the past decade is part of this transition towards superdiversity, but it is certainly not the main driver. In Belgium less than 20% of all new migrants in the last years were refugees. These refugees however added an extra layer of diversity and complexity upon the increasing superdiversity.

In 2020 one out of four (24,1%) asylum seekers living in collective refugee centers in Belgium were minors: approximately 5000 children and youngsters. The majority is living with family members, a smaller group are unaccompanied youngsters. They stay in the centers during the period of their asylum procedure, which lasts one to three or more years.

Most of the collective refugee or asylum centers in Belgium are hosted in infrastructures that served other purposes in the past. These are seldom child-friendly places. Asylum seeking children or youngsters, and their families, find themselves in a web of multiple “in-betweens” of time, space, homing, childhood, parenthood and identity. Living in a reception center alters child-rearing practices and family dynamics, sometimes leading to parenting on hold. Living in a collective asylum centre, and afterwards embarking on integration pathways, poses multiple challenges for families with children, who often experience situations of precarity, inequality or disadvantage after arrival. Yet with regards to people on the move in general, research equally urges to move beyond classic analysis in terms of victimhood versus agentive capacity. In the next paragraphs, we elaborate on a necessary reconceptualization of resilience in terms of resilient

moves posed by people with their surroundings; not as an antithesis to vulnerability, disadvantage or precarity, but existing next to, despite or even in spite of it.

4 Centre for Family Studies and Research on Refugees

Since 2015, the Centre for Family Studies at the Odisee University for Applied Sciences developed a research-focus on refugee families and children/youngsters. This chapter is based on interviews with refugees in three interlinked research projects.

The first research “Resilience on the move. Strengthening refugee family dynamics” (Groeninck et al. 2020, 2019) builds upon seventeen in-depth interviews conducted in 2018 in Flanders with asylum seeking and refugee families from the top three countries of applicants since 2015: Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. By interviewing both parents and children, we gathered testimonies of 27 parents and 35 children (26 between the age of 8 and 12 years, two younger children and five older children).

The second research focuses on family reunification processes of refugees being recognized in Belgium between 2016 and 2019. 27 interviews were done with refugees who entered or were willing to enter the procedure for family reunification. 9 of the interviews were with young adults who applied for international protection as unaccompanied minors (Debruyne 2020).

The third is the EU-funded AMIF-research project “Improving chances for accompanied children in reception centres”. This ongoing multi-methods research on children in Belgian collective refugee centres, includes 123 in-depth interviews, with 149 people: parents (58), children and youngsters (38) and staff of all levels (38) in 9 refugee centres in Flanders and Wallonia. Furthermore it includes 15 expert-interviews and a the outcomes of an expert network.

In this chapter, we describe our focus on resilient moves in the research, and explore how this focus on these resilient moves gives insight in the agency of adolescents.

5 Resilient Moves as Focus

Despite a variety in conceptualizations, the core to any definition of resilience is “the ability to react and adjust positively when things go wrong” (Aranda et al. 2012, p. 550; Ungar 2008). In our research (Groeninck et al. 2020, 2019),

we question the problematic dichotomy that either approaches refugees exclusively in a pathological way as victims on the one hand, or as inevitably capable of “adapting” and “bouncing back” on the other (Bilotta und Denov 2018, pp. 1577–1578; Munive 2019, p. 4; Papadopoulos 2007; Papadopoulos 2011). We adapt a more nuanced understanding of resilience in relation to vulnerability, that simultaneously recognizes refugees’ attempts of restoring or experiencing aspects of a viable life, while nevertheless remaining in a situation of social suffering due to structural power relations (Allan 2015).

Therefore, in line with Hart et al. (2007), we approach resilience through the perspective of *resilient moves*. Transcending the dichotomy between victim/actor allows us first of all to expand the psycho-social perspective, that underlines “the link between psychological well-being and social conditions such as family and community support” (Allan 2015, pp. 1700–1701). By elaborating on the aspect of relational resilience between multiple levels in and surrounding refugees, resilient moves are seen as much more the result of negotiation in precarious circumstances, instead of mere adaptation from the part of refugees (Masten 2001, p. 227). Rather than considering this as observable moves “back and forth” between resilience and vulnerability, we perceive the process of resilience in limbo as always unfinished (Aranda et al. 2012).

This approach combines elements of the second and third wave of resilience research (Groeninck et al., 2020). The first wave in the 1970s “sought to identify correlates of resilience with a focus on the unique qualities” (Hart et al. 2016, p. 1) possessed by children and youngsters “who were considered ‘at risk’ for developing later psychopathology” (Wright et al. 2013, p. 15). Resilience was thus found to reside in the agentive individual, who showed inner fortitude on the level of the mind and in the face of behavioural, psychological and neurobiological problems or traumatic experiences (Aranda et al. 2012, pp. 550–551; Rutter 1987).

The second wave of research was interested in “associations between correlates of resilience” (Hart et al. 2016, p. 2). Instead of focusing on individual characteristics, the focus shifted towards risk factors and protective processes leading to resilience, which was hence considered to be both “a process and the outcome of efforts to navigate access to or negotiate use of relevant resources” (Aranda und Hart 2015, p. 357). Inspired by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological approach, attention was paid to systemic interactions between the micro (individual), meso (intrapersonal), macro (community) and exosystemic (cultural) level (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Ungar und Liebenberg 2011, p. 135).

During the third wave of resilience research, attention shifted to the level of intervention to foster resilience (Wright et al. 2013, p. 27). Research highlighted the contextual and dynamic nature of it (Hart et al. 2016, p. 2). Inspired by Michael Ungar's work (2004, 2008, 2012), a constructionist approach started to consider how resilience is "made" rather than "found" through a "predictable relationship between risk and protective factors, circular causality and transactional processes that foster resilience" (Ungar 2004, p. 342). Instead, both what can be defined as a risk or protective factor, and how these relate to each other in a specific historical, socio-economic and cultural context that equally influences what is considered a positive or negative outcome, are found to be "chaotic, complex, relative, and contextual" (Ungar 2004, p. 342).

Such a constructionist approach considers resilience as a social practice: something that is done in a particular social context. This allows us to include defiance or oppositional stances to normative approaches into the study of resilience. Subverting or resisting the hegemonic norms—which is regularly done by adolescents—may in certain cases be an agentic act producing a way of wellbeing "on their own terms", considering such a form of resistance as resilience (Bottrell 2009, p. 323). Where resilience is a form of resistance, "individualized notions of risk are not manifestations of individual vulnerability or moral failing, but of social disadvantage and inequalities" (Aranda et al. 2012, p. 552).

In such cases, resilience can be defined as "overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially changing, or even dramatically transforming, (aspects of) that adversity" (Hart et al. 2016). Intervention here necessitates a re-politicization of resilience research, not merely focusing attention on the "adaptive individual", its internal strengths and coping mechanisms (always in relation to a surrounding), but also keeping attention to vulnerability creating practices, various forms of structural violence affecting the individual, and its ensuing experiences of loss, injustice and resistance resulting by it (Aranda und Hart 2015; Betancourt et al. 2015; Bottrell 2009).

Current resilience research that focuses on refugees after displacement therefore tries to understand and depict the sensed stressors, challenges and structural violence people face, as well as the selected coping behaviours that may create moments of a viable life. Such a constructionist, emic approach offers a different way of conceptualizing resilience in limbo; neither as a linear pathway nor an achieved state of being, but rather as perpetually unfinished and existing out of negotiated relational practices or "resilient moves" (Aranda und Hart 2015; Groeninck et al. 2020, 2019; Hart et al. 2007).

Therefore, Aranda und Hart (2015, p. 361) define resilient moves as "relationally embodied practices (i.e. things said, thought or done) by people" within a

framework of “local negotiations of possibilities”. Agency and the capacity for change is no longer placed in the bounded subject’s mind, beliefs or motivations, but in the performance and reconfiguration of “local practices situated in time and place” and based on everyday social knowledge (Aranda und Hart 2015, p. 360; Hart et al. 2007; Reckwitz 2002).

6 Adolescents Resilient Moves

A focus on resilient moves can allow us to recognize and value ways of coping with, challenging and negotiating aspects of precarity and vulnerability in a relational context; in a context that therefore situates the articulation of resilient moves in a relation, rather than in a contained individual subject. In the rest of this chapter, we analyze this based on three examples: resilience in resistance to meso- and macrostructures; resilient moves through networks; and resilient moves between (more than) two worlds. Elsewhere we have described the breadth of resilient moves more extensively (Groeninck et al. 2019, 2020; Van Acker et al. 2022).

6.1 Resistance as Resilience

In several interviews, children and adolescents manifested defiance or oppositional stances to experienced injustice. Asylum-seeking children and adolescents often accused the procedural uncertainty and the defective living conditions in large-scale reception centres. Children and adolescents who had obtained refugee status more readily talked about discrimination at school or about intolerance in society at large.

Interviewer: Do the kids at school tease you sometimes because you come from Afghanistan?

Brother 1: Yes, like “you are asylum seekers and you don’t have a house and so on.”

Brother 2: But then I tell my friends “You go and live there yourself ... Then you’ll see ... Go and try it out yourself.”

Brother 1: My father also told the people at the Commissioner (Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons/CGRS in Belgium): “How can we live in this center when we have only one small room, two beds, a cupboard, and a small table and that’s all.” And he told them “I invite you to come and live one day with your

family one day in such a small room, one night, and you'll see how difficult it is.”
(Afghan sons of 9 and 10 years old, 4 years in procedure)

Like the two Afghan boys, several young refugees we spoke to actively resisted their living situation as well as the normatively or socially ascribed identities that come with it such as being an asylum-seeker. For these youngsters, “others” delimiting ascriptions constitute adversity; rejection of them towards the researchers indicates a resilient move; a relationally embodied practice based on local negotiation of possibilities – here the embodied encounter with research (Bottrell 2009).

I heard it once in class last year, and we were talking about economy and one of the students, he was like “yeah, how will we succeed as a country if we give all our taxes to the refugees?” And I was like “let me tell you, it's only a limited amount of time...” We are building ourselves, we need money from nobody. I want to have my own money. I want to do my own money, I want to pay- I'm not happy with my situation. I'm not happy that my country is completely destroyed. I needed to flee and start all over again, learning a new language. I'm not happy with it. Let me see you go to other country and start all over again. All your life, studying, working, everything, it's hard for us, it's not about taking money, it's about literally something like, we are living. (Syrian daughter, 19 years old, with status).

In fact, I have only one problem at school. I was praying at school and then the teacher told me that that was not allowed, but that is difficult. And then the problem of the headscarf. At my school it is allowed, but at the other schools it isn't. [...] And the boss of my school told us: “You are not allowed to pray.” And then we talk and so, and I tell him that that is difficult and he responds: “It is not your country here, this is Belgium.” I respond: “That is not my problem, that is the problem that you see. You are against praying at school.” (Afghan daughter, 18, with status)

Both the Syrian as well as the Afghan girl are performing acts of resistance; by explicating their vulnerability in relation to meso- or macro-structures, they thereby politicize the structural construction of disadvantage or inequality. Hence, subverting or resisting the hegemonic norms may in certain cases be an agentive act of producing a way of wellbeing “on their own terms”, considering such a form of resistance as resilience (Bottrell 2009, p. 323). Where resilience is a form of resistance, “individualized notions of risk are not manifestations of individual vulnerability or moral failing, but of social disadvantage and inequalities” (Aranda et al. 2012, p. 552). In such cases, resilience can arguably be defined as “overcoming adversity, whilst also potentially changing, or even dramatically transforming, (aspects of) that adversity” (Hart et al. 2016).

In addition to claiming recognition for experienced injustice, dialogically remembering one's personal social status before the flight can be an effective means to restore fractions of one's social identity in a new context. Walsh refers to this as "seeking reconnection and repairing grievances" (Walsh 2016, p. 620). While often reduced to "refugees", young people feel the need to reconnect to who they were before the flight in order to imagine and rebuild their identity.

6.2 Resilient Moves through Networks

Refugees face difficulties and disadvantage in several domains. They may encounter difficulties finding housing, learning a new language, working through traumatic experiences and managing social contacts in a new context. Resilient moves can be found in the relational process of negotiating different ways and channels of support. It can also be found in the process of negotiating the support that is offered. In today's bureaucratic landscape of healthcare and social work organizations managing to find help that is well-adjusted to one's needs may be considered great craftsmanship.

One of the most important challenges refugees are confronted with upon obtaining their status is to find adequate housing. Limited time offered to leave asylum centers, limited housing availability for low incomes, and discrimination on the housing market make it particularly difficult for refugees. Therefore, many refugees attend to friends and acquaintances as mediators on the housing market.

When we had just arrived, we all lived in one room with our father. Later on we found this house through my father. Here lived another family first, an Arabic family. But the owner is Turkish and my father's friend knows him, upon which he told us that if we want, we can live here. And then we moved. (Afghan son, 16)

In this family with three teenagers, the father moved to Belgium first. His wife and children joined later through family reunification. In such situations, it is often particularly hard for the family member who arrived first to find proper housing for the entire family. Many refugees make use of informal linking networks to find housing, which can be considered a resilient move, but at the same time it puts them in a vulnerable position since it is a common practice among those mediators to ask money for their services.

Even within the formal network of social work and health care organizations refugee families narrate very different experiences with social workers. Several adolescents that we spoke to showed a very clear sense of what they expect from

social workers in terms of practical help as well as in terms of basic attitude and involvement.

Yeah, the “inburgering” (integration course teacher) and yeah, she’s amazing woman, she also- she’s this person, whenever I have a problem, she actually calls me and she says “come to me, I have an appointment, I want to hear what is the problem so I can help you solve it.” So when I was looking for a job, when I was looking for sections to find what I want to study... It’s [name teacher], like I always call her like “[name], please, I need help with this”. So she sit with me, we open the universities... this is perfect, this you need to do, this. She actually leaded me on the way. So I preferred my OCMW (Public Centre for Social Welfare) assistant which was my real assistant to do this with me, but actually my “inburgering” assistant did that. (Syrian daughter, 19 years old, with status)

Daughter 1: We had three assistants so far. The first one was amazing, like, she really became one of our best friends so now when we go and we see her, we are like “hallo” and we have a conversation and stuff. It went more than just an assistant and a refugee, it’s become more of a friendship. She could understand cause she was dealing with us as people, as humans more than us being refugees. From the first appointment I met her, she’s like-

Daughter 1: She like does not have the rules next to her and if she needed to say a word, it was not from the rules. This is not part of the rules. So, she was like just herself.

Daughter 1: Yeah, cause she knows that she was dealing with adults. She was not dealing with people [just like that] we are educated. We talk English, we talk Dutch, so we were like...

Daughter 2: Our appointments were all in Dutch. She actually never spoke in English.

Daughter 1: Yeah, we were completely, like, good. and she was completely, like, good to us. (Syrian daughter 1, 19 years old and daughter 2, 20 years old, with status)

These Syrian young women first point to the importance of being available and providing practical help. The teacher in the first quote becomes a *navigational assistant* (Green et al. 2014), guiding this young women in finding their way through the school system and labor market. Second, the daughters also point to the importance of a human approach, in which social workers dare to deviate from procedures and hierarchical relationships to meet their refugee clients as human beings with their own history. It thus becomes clear that these young people are not passive recipients of help, rather they manifest agency in finding and negotiating the support that is offered to them. The resilient move arises out of this encounter, manifesting itself within the relation and affecting all actors concerned in a perlocutionary way.

6.3 Resilient Moves Between (More than Two) Worlds

When refugee families arrive, they carry with them a world of meanings. In daily contacts with care workers, neighbors and other surrounding actors, they are confronted with different language games and grammars, and the forms of life they constitute (Wittgenstein 1958 [1953]). Unsurprisingly, for many people on the move religious traditions constitute an important anchor point. Also for the young accompanied minors we interviewed:

Brother 1: On Fridays we go to the mosque, and also in the evenings, every day [...]

Brother 2: We go to the mosque to learn something, on Sundays and on Saturday from 11am until 2 pm.

Interviewer: Some kind of additional school on the weekends?

Brother 2: Yes but it's fun. He talks and he narrates, it is kind of fun to listen to.

Interviewer: And do you also meet new people there?

Brother 1: Yes [...] We are 60 or 70 students in the class. [...] Mostly Afghan, but other people can also come.

Brother 2: Yes, but they only speak Afghan language there. Dari and Pasjtoe, both of them [...]. We also learn Arabic. Book of Arabic.

Interviewer: And you like those classes?

Brother 2: Yes, we do. They are all our friends. There are also boys our age, 19 years old, 18 years old and some older, in their twenties.

One of the ways to rebuild a sense of belonging is to find reconnection to the familiar, yet in a new spatiality. This bonding via sameness-in-strangeness constitutes an expanding network. As we previously saw, this might invoke various resilient moves, which in this extract is articulated for instance in terms of friendship building and learning capacities.

Several parents that we talked to also expressed the explicit wish for their children to learn about their own traditions. These parents believe that anchoring or rooting in the own culture can help to build bridges; rather than to lead to segmentation or separation it is believed to foster integration.

Interviewer: In particular your (18-year-old) daughter had limited schooling experience before she arrived in Belgium (through a process of family reunification). How is it for her now?

Father: When she arrived here, she immediately said: “Amai, we are really behind compared to Belgium and compared to other compatriots living here, in all regards.” She learnt to write Pasjtoe in one year. She can also read the Quran now, our holy book, that she finished reading in one year, even though she didn’t go to school in the past and she didn’t know the alphabet. But in one year she caught up with all of that. And also Dutch: she goes to school and she really feels well here because she learns a lot. Her speaking (in Dutch) is not so good yet, but the writing is improving. And she feels well.

Both constitute socially valued knowledge that affects her sense of belonging in multiple lifeworlds. Acquiring both and using the opportunity structures to do so, is a relational resilient move between her and various meso- and macro-structural (f)actors impacting her integration pathways.

Daughter 2: Some people think being a Muslim is like you having a hijab but this thing mom and dad didn’t tell us, they told us it is way more inside than the outside. You can do whatever you want on the outside, of course there are also limits, do not be like slutty or something, but you know your limits as a human being but being a good Muslim doesn’t mean like- because Islam is not just about practicing the religion, it’s also about dealing with people, about humanity, about the high morals, it’s not only about how I look. A lot of Muslims in here, they think it’s only about the Islamic practice they do at home: praying, doing Ramadan and stuff while it’s way more deeper than that. And gossiping is forbidden.

Daughter 1: And it’s not about- we pray, we do Ramadan, we do everything, but that does not... when I’m dealing with people, I’m not dealing with my religion. I’m dealing as a human. My religion is for me and for God. (Syrian daughter 1, 19 years old and daughter 2, 20 years old, with status)

This quote illustrates how young people negotiate the meaning of their religion in a new context. They distinguish between a personal experience of religion and behavior in the outside world that is inspired by religious values. At the same time, several young people and their parents seem aware of the potential prejudices Belgian people hold about culture maintenance (Van Acker and Vanbeselaere 2012). They are conscious that visible manifestations of religion (such as wearing a headscarf) make girls and young women more vulnerable to judgements both of the Belgian community and of their own community.

My daughter wears a headscarf. I always tell her than when she covers herself, she has to behave accordingly. Then you have to conform even more than others to the rules, to the way of organizing here. When you just wear a jeans, people don’t know

whether you are Portuguese, Spanish of something else. But with a scarf you immediately become part of the Arabic Muslims, thus you have to conform and adapt to the upbringing that comes with it. In Iraq that was more evident. (Iraqi father)

This father attests that when wearing a scarf his daughter bears the burden of responsibility to behave irreproachably to invalidate any potential prejudices. Her agency when wearing a scarf is confined by contextual power structures.

Apart from religion, young people express multiple cultural differences with Belgian people. They are actively looking for ways to approach these differences in order not to get permanently confused or conflicted.

Daughter: Belgian people can be really straightforward to the point, and to be honest, it's sometimes positive but it also can be negative. I told you we care about relationships more than the work itself. So for me, she's my best friend so I don't want to break her heart by telling her "your work is bad", while they don't really care. I have a friend, [name], he's really one of my best friends, he's Belgian, but when it comes to work, we are not best friends. "Your work is bad" he tells me and when he does something bad I say "come on, you can do better, just do some revision on your work", I never go straightforward for him [...]. I had a whole course called intercultural communication, which... which means we need to embrace and observe each other's culture. So I can't change. Well, I understand the backgrounds behind it and it's just more than an individual person, it's a whole nation like this. It's a cultural thing and I can't change it and he can't change me. So it's us, understanding the cultural diversity and that not all cultures are the same, norms are not the same and, yeah, I mean. (Syrian daughter 20 years old, with status)

This young woman talks about cultural differences with a mixture of sadness and acceptance. While differences in ways of behaving don't prevent her from engaging in and continuing friendships, they nevertheless hurt. For her, acculturation is about mutual understanding and mutual acceptance, rather than change. At the same time, several young people did talk about adopting certain customs and ways of behaving such as going out and being more autonomous from their parents.

The interviews thus reveal that bridging old and new worlds is a complicated process that can occur in many different ways with varying degrees of culture maintenance and adoption. The various ways in which young newcomers are seen to acculturate in their own way towards a sense of well-being and belonging in a new context, while negotiating language games and grammars, whether or not conflicting, and navigating their own way through all this, can be considered expressions of resilient moves. They are relationally embodied practices (things

said, thought, or done) by people within a framework of local negotiations of possibilities, knowledges, limits, facilities or opportunities.

7 Concluding

In contexts of rising superdiversity and transmigration, the “reception crisis” of 2015, as well as the actual arrival of refugees adds another layer of complexity on today’s society. However, the impact of refugees on the transition towards superdiversity is overestimated.

Within the group of refugees applying for international protection in Belgium, the share of families and the share of minors increases. This urges the asylum network in Belgium to pay more attention to families with children and youngsters in the asylum centers.

Not only in terms of victimization, but also while recognizing the various ways in which young people in precarious circumstances might simultaneously perform resilient moves in relation to their surroundings: whether it be by explicitly challenging their situation of precarity or disadvantage to others; by negotiating support for themselves and/in their family; or by navigating their way between various lifeworlds towards a regained sense of belonging. These examples underline the need to reconceptualize resilience, departing from its neoliberal interpretation that focuses on individual traits and responsibilities, but considered as a relational opportunity; not a matter of individual adaptation but of local negotiation and resistance.

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Dirk Geldof, Professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Design Sciences at the University of Antwerp. He is lecturer 'Sociology & Society' and senior Researcher at the Centre for Family Studies (Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Brussels). He is also Lecturer at the Crossing Border International Program the Karel de Grote University of Applied Sciences

(Antwerp). His current research is on superdiversity and on refugees. He is promotor of the research project 'Improving chances for accompanied children in reception centres for refugees in Belgium' and co-promotor of the REFUFAM-research 'From policy gaps to policy innovations. Strengthening the well-being and integration pathways of refugee families'.

Kaat Van Acker, lecturer in social work at Odisee University of Applied Sciences. She has been a fellow of the Flemish Research Foundation between 2008 and 2012 and obtained her PhD at KU Leuven (Belgium) in 2012 for a study on acculturation attitudes of Flemish majority members. Between 2013 and 2015, she worked as a social worker with asylum-seeking families in individual housing facilities. Since 2015, she joined Odisee University of Applied Sciences (Belgium) as a lecturer and researcher while she maintains a position at the KU Leuven as a research fellow and lecturer in social psychology. Her current research primarily concerns refugee families, focusing on family dynamics, resilience and reception infrastructures. She teaches counseling and research skills in the social work department.

Mieke Groeninck, postdoctoral researcher at Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Brussels, on well-being and inclusion pathways of refugee families in Belgium. Previously she also worked on vulnerability and resilience with refugee families in Belgium, and on (in)formal Islamic religious education in mosques and Islamic institutes.