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## Resilience in Liminality:

### How resilient moves are being negotiated by asylum seeking families in the liminal context of asylum procedures

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## Resilience in liminality: how resilient moves are being negotiated by asylum-seeking families in the liminal context of asylum procedures

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### Abstract

By elaborating on the concept of ‘resilient moves’, we try to show how resilience in the case of asylum seeking families living in open, collective reception centres exists in a complicated relationship to vulnerability and is very much a matter of local negotiation rather than mere adaptation in the face of adversity. Building upon consecutive waves of resilience research, this approach inspired by practice theory focuses on the agency of acts performed by families

themselves, or facilitated by people and structures in various types of relationships to them. It also allows for a re-politication of resilience, explaining how denouncing vulnerability due to structural precarity might constitute resilience through resistance. An in-depth case example of an Afghan family residing for four years in a collective reception centre will provide illustrations of our findings and approach.

## **Introduction**

This article seeks to illustrate through an in-depth case example the use of the concept of ‘resilient moves’ (Hart et al., 2007) in the liminal context of Belgian open, collective asylum centres. It builds upon seventeen 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.<sup>1</sup> By talking to both parents and children, we gathered testimonies of 27 parents and 35 children between the age of 8 and 12 years old. Half of the families were still in the asylum procedure awaiting the outcome, some of which for several years already.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, living with the entire family in one room in open, collective reception centres, for the most part lacking privacy or family autonomy, contributed to these families’ sense of ‘crumbling down’ after arrival.

The context of the research was the waning, yet still remaining crisis of reception infrastructure in Belgium since the sharp increase of applicants for international protection in 2015. In that year, 39.064 applied for asylum in Belgium, which is less than in 2000 (46.855). Hence, although much depicted as a ‘refugee crisis’, the increase in asylum applications in 2015 was far more a crisis of infrastructure to meet the obligation to provide ‘Bed, Bath, Bread’ to applicants throughout their asylum procedure (Authors’ own 2019: 17-21). During this period, the amount of families with children who fled their home country increased from less than 10% in 2013, to 22% in 2016 (Hedebrand et al., 2016). Although (emergency) reception centres in Belgium (as elsewhere) weren’t equipped to host families with children, a shift nonetheless took place from the option families

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.cgvs.be/nl/actueel/asielstatistieken-overzicht-2017>

<sup>2</sup> The research was conducted at the Centre of Family Studies, Odisee University College Brussels. More on this research, see Authors’ own, 2019.

previously had to apply for individual housing while awaiting the asylum procedure, to the obligation to remain the entire procedural period in collective reception centres (Myria, 2016).

In addition to loss experiences and traumas due to (pre-)flight exposure to violence and precarity, long stays in collective asylum centres where refugee families lack autonomy, privacy, certainty and often even a sense of security, might constitute a proper trauma in itself or pose challenges to one's overall health (Allan, 2015: 1704; De Haene et al., 2012: 392; Papadopoulos, 2011: 415). Due to ensuing procedures, some families remain for over four years in these designed 'non-places' (Augé, 2009), experiencing what Fassin has called 'asylum as a form of life'. This provides families with a 'semblance of protection' by 'attempting to remain within the system and trying to foster its seemingly endless deferral' (Fassin, 2017: 164).

The needful recovery of a feeling of security, attachment and stability after the flight is undermined in this place and time of 'liminality': of living 'betwixt and between', not in an 'illegal' status, but not yet 'legalized' either (Anaut 2012: 76; De Haene et al. 2012: 392; Turner 1967). As recognized by the UNHCR, asylum seekers are living 'in a state of limbo': a post-emergency state, but a period of uncertainty during which the host is ever-ready, but only 'to be master at home ... to be able to receive whomever I like there' (Bal and de Vries, 2000: 53; Patchett, 2016). Caught in this state of limbo, the 'steeling effects' of resilience occurring from exposure to shocks are undermined, as these families face other and enduring shocks after the flight (Allan, 2015: 1704; Yotebieng et al, 2018: 211-12). The idea of resilience as 'bouncing back in the face of adversity' is therefore complicated in the case of long residing families living in liminality and 'out of place' (Yotebieng et al., 2018: 202).

Yet the – albeit limited – literature on accompanied refugee children and families also reckons (intra-)familial ways of coping, showing how families/family members are simultaneously vulnerable in certain domains, while acting resilient for and with each other in others (Weine 2008, 2011). Our own research showed that children who performed well in school, parents who followed language courses or other forms of education, families who engaged in leisure activities together, who had a strong social network, who used access to help, or who simply took care as good as possible for another, were manifestations of trying to experience aspects of a viable life while living in limbo

(Authors' own, 2019; Louizidou 2008). Hence, the problematic dichotomy that either approaches these families exclusively in a pathological way as victims on the one hand, or as inevitably capable of 'adapting' and 'bouncing back' on the other, is questioned (Bilotta and Denov, 2018: 1577-78; Munive, 2018: 4; Papadopoulos, 2007, 2011). Instead, a more nuanced understanding of resilience in relation to vulnerability is required, that simultaneously recognizes families' 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; Bilotta and Denov, 2018; Bourdieu, 1999).

Therefore, in line with Hart et al. (2007), we propose to approach resilience through the perspective of resilient moves. Transcending the dichotomy between victim/actor, this allows us first of all to expand the psycho-social perspective prominent in social work, that underlines 'the link between psychological well-being and social conditions such as family and community support' (Allan 2015: 1700-1701). By elaborating on the aspect of relational resilience between multiple levels in and surrounding refugee families, resilient moves are seen as much more the result of *negotiation* in precarious circumstances, instead of mere *adaption* from the part of families (Masten 2001: 227). Secondly, 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).

In the first part of this article, we turn shortly to the intellectual genealogy of resilience research. Secondly, we present our understanding of resilient moves in the context of practice theory. Lastly, we elaborate on our research and on the relation of resilient moves to vulnerability and aspects of negotiation through the use of an in-depth case example.

### **Waves of resilient research**

Despite a variety in conceptualizations, it has been generally agreed upon that core to any definition of resilience is 'the ability to react and adjust positively when things go wrong' (Aranda et al., 2012: 550; Ungar, 2008). It has been further specified as a healthy mental state of being and normal development in a context of adversity that might suspect otherwise (Tol et al., 2013: 445; Vindevogel et al., 2015: 398). Since its contemporary use in the 1960's, the epistemological genealogy of resilience in

psychology has been variously described in consecutive waves that flow into each other in all but absolute categories (Aranda et al., 2012; Hart et al., 2016; O’Dougherty Wright et al., 2013).

The first wave of resilience research in the 1970’s ‘sought to identify correlates of resilience with a focus on the unique qualities’ (Hart et al., 2016: 1) possessed by children ‘who were considered “at risk” for developing later psychopathology’ (O’Dougherty Wright et al., 2013: 15).<sup>3</sup> 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 behavioral, psychological and neurobiological problems or traumatic experiences (Aranda et al., 2012: 550-51; Rutter 1987). Hence, ‘invulnerability’, later more often replaced by ‘resilience’ (O’Dougherty Wright et al., 2013: 15), was considered to be a characteristic of the rational subject, ‘who becomes tasked with compensating for their disadvantaged circumstances’ (Hart et al., 2016: 2). This approach towards resilience has since then been criticized for its strong individualist, positivist and neoliberal character. It was said to enhance an ethics of responsibility to the individual subject, with no attention to the different forms of material and symbolic violence, injustice or inequality surrounding the individual and causing precarity (Aranda and Hart, 2015; Bergström, 2017; Bottrell, 2009; Bracke 2016; O’Dougherty Wright et al., 2013).

The second wave of research was interested in ‘associations between correlates of resilience’ (Hart et al., 2016: 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 and Hart, 2015: 357. Our emphasis). 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 and Liebenberg, 2011: 135).

Hence, rather than considering resilience, or vulnerability for that matter, as an individual trait, the focus shifted to relational and systemic aspects, expanding beyond the family to integrate wider person-context interactions (Brown and Westaway, 2011: 329, cited in Panter-Brick, 2014: 441). Research looked at the development of attachment relationships (Anaut, 2012: 76; Walsh 2016: 616),

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. Garmezy 1971, 1973.

the role of the broader cultural context and extended family networks, religious organizations or other social systems that might influence a positive developmental outcome by a complex process of interaction and transaction (O'Dougherty Wright et al., 2013: 23). Due to this multilevel, systemic and developmental approach, researchers started to consider the showing of resilience no longer as a totalized, achieved status, but rather considered how persons or children followed *pathways* of development which made them adaptive in certain aspects of their lives but not others (*Ibid.*: 24; Papadopoulos, 2007: 309-310). However, not quite as different as during the first wave, this approach maintained a positivist outlook, in which resilience was perceived as a normative feature present in certain actors or relations (Aranda et al., 2012: 551).

When, during the third wave of resilience research, attention was put to the level of intervention to foster resilience (O'Dougerty Wright et al., 2013: 27), research highlighted the contextual and dynamic nature of it (Hart et al., 2016: 2). Much inspired by Michael Ungar's work (2004, 2008), 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: 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' (*Ibid.*).

Such a constructionist approach that considers resilience as a social practice – something that is *done* in a particular social context – allows us to consider on the one hand particular aspects relevant for situated protective processes, without denying some universal key processes to access resources that people transnationally seem to need in order to sustain wellbeing (Ionescu 2012; Pickren 2014; Ungar, 2012; Ungar and Liebenberg, 2011). On the other hand, it also provides for ways to include defiance or oppositional stances to normative approaches into the study of resilience (Aranda et al., 2012: 552; Bottrell, 2009). Subverting or resisting the hegemonic norms may in certain cases be an agentive act producing a way of wellbeing 'on their own terms', considering such a form of resistance as resilience (Bottrell, 2009: 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: 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). Intervention here necessitates a re-politication 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 and Hart, 2015; Betancourt et al., 2014; Bottrell, 2009).

Current resilience research that focuses on asylum seekers and refugees after displacement therefore tries to understand and depict the sensed stressors, challenges and structural violence people face, as well as the selected coping behaviors that may create moments of a viable life. Such a constructivist, 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 and Hart, 2015; Hart et al., 2007).

### **Resilient moves as negotiations in liminality**

Aranda and Hart define resilient moves as 'relationally embodied practices (i.e. things said, thought or done) by people' within a framework of 'local negotiations of possibilities' (2015: 361). Inspired by Shove et al.'s 'slim-line interpretation of practice theory', 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 and Hart, 2015: 360; Hart et al., 2007; Reckwitz, 2002). For Shove et al., practices consist of varying combinations of elements, including material elements, meanings and competencies (Aranda and Hart, 2015: 359).

*For practices [such as resilient moves] to develop and then survive, these three sets of elements must connect and 'capture' practitioners [be they refugee families themselves or surrounding social workers], who then commit and are willing and able to integrate these elements and keep the practices alive. (Ibid.)*



This shifts the focus from the disadvantaged individual towards resilient moves as practices (things said, thought or done (*Ibid.*)) performed within relations, and how these may recruit practitioners from – but also in various types of relationships *to* – asylum seeking and refugee families. Hence, resilience is ‘made’ (Ungar, 2004: 342); it’s a relational practice, integrating the systemic and multilevel approach as indicated by the second and third wave of resilience research.

Inherent to this contextual and dynamic process of performing resilient moves is the aspect of *negotiation* of possibilities. The Lebanese-Australian anthropologist, Ghassan Hage, considers the aspect of ‘negotiation’ in two ways, which he defines as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the law (2018). Negotiation inside the law are those situations ‘where people have to formulate interests’ and thus where it is seen as an instrumental strategy, a means to achieve an end (Hage 2018: 105). Negotiation outside the law is explained by Hage as ‘a mode of being where one is constantly attuned, attentive, interactive, and responsive to the presence of the other without the existence of a ‘law’ regulating the interaction’ (2018: 105). Shove et al.’s approach of practices, however, adds to Hage’s understanding of negotiation the aspect of the material world.

Resilient moves are in other words relational practices based on negotiation between practitioners from, and in various relationships to, refugee families, and the material world. As previously explained, resilient moves therefore include material elements, next to elements of meaning and competence. In the words of Aranda and Hart, resilient moves imply ‘particular knowledge, skills, expertise of experience (...) [and] these meanings and competencies always combine with but are never in opposition to the material world’ (2015: 361). In what follows, we will provide examples of resilient moves performed by an in-depth case example of an Afghan family as forms of negotiation inside and outside the law in a specific material context, while not evading the precarious situation in which they find themselves.

### *Case study*

*When we had problems in our country, we left it to come to Europe. We thought our problems would be over, that we would start a new life. But when we arrived... I think the difficult life starts here.*

This is an excerpt from an interview with an Afghan father of a family of four. It's been four years since they first applied for international protection in Belgium, after which ensuing procedures have followed one another. During that time, they have lived in two different open, collective reception centres. They've received a negative decision for the third time and are now in their final appeal. In the meantime, they've also started the 9bis procedure for humanitarian regularization.

Both parents are highly educated and have learned quite some Dutch. The children are doing well in school and are losing notions of their mother tongue.<sup>4</sup> The interviews with the parents and with the two sons of 9 and 10 years old, illustrate that the wait is getting harder and harder. Especially the mother struggles with feelings of depression and burn-out. She gave up on her Dutch courses due to concentration problems. The father explains how he remains strong and ever-smiling on the outside, yet suffers from his loss of status and is filled with feelings of despair, frustration, loneliness, and boredom. He regrets not being able to work much, while he also has difficulties concentrating during Dutch courses. At the same time, however, this family is known by the social workers in the reception centre for being 'strong', 'exemplary', 'well integrated', 'well educated', 'positive', 'open minded', and 'friendly to all'. Although the children are very much aware of the extraordinary situation and weight of the wait for their parents, it's clear that somehow this family manages to construct aspects of a viable life for at least some of its members.

#### *Negotiating resilient moves inside and outside the law*

*Four years is a long time (...) [but] in our country we have nothing. We have nothing and a lot of problems (...). And we have no law, because in Afghanistan the powerful people never think about the law. So that's why we left our country and came here. Here was also strange for us. When we became 'refugee', they also think about us as 'refugees'. (...) But now my wife has problems here. She always asks "What happened? Why? Why do they do that with us? What is wrong?" I never did anything wrong here in the four years I've been here. You can ask about my background to people. I didn't say "I'm a perfect man", but I know the law that respects the people, how to live in the asylum center, how to have contact with people. Yet they still think about us as "Yes, those are 'the refugees' in the center". They should give us a chance also. That's what I ask you.*

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<sup>4</sup> After having started the asylum application procedure and having been directed to an open, collective asylum centre, children of asylum seeking families in Belgium have to be subscribed in school after a maximum of sixty days.

This is another extract from the interview with the Afghan father. It has several references to resilient moves in it. An example of a resilient move that is a negotiation *inside the law* is when the father mentions how he ‘knows how to live in the asylum centre’. Rather than mere adaptation from the part of the inhabitants, a closer look at the internal dynamics of asylum centres shows how this is much more an aspect of negotiation as a two-way traffic.

Consider for instance the fact that people only recently gained the opportunity to cook for themselves in the centre where this family resides; a decision that was taken by the board in response to inhabitants’ demands and in order to ‘enhance people’s sense of self-worth, daily routine, connection to who they were before, or family cohesion’ (extract from an interview with a social worker in the centre). In the words of one of the social workers from the reception centre where this family resides:

*We realize that people here live in a pampering situation. They have to eat on specified hours; the restaurant is only open on a specific time schedule. Everything is arranged for them, but that makes people dependent. (...) Some inhabitants miss the small things from back home, for instance, women with regards to their mother role. They miss taking care for their family. (...) [That is why] We now have one kitchen that families may use, but we plan on providing more cooking units, so people can cook for themselves.*

However, the use of the kitchens is regularized by strict opening/closing and safety rules, setting the terms on which these resilient moves may be performed by the inhabitants. This shows how these families’ agency ‘is constituted in and among the constraining effects of practices, organizations and structures’ (Aranda and Hart, 2015: 360).

In other words, through this measure which consists of the adaptation of the material element of practices (namely, providing cooking units), the board (meso-level) facilitated the performance of resilient moves by the families (micro-level) in the asylum centre, while establishing at the same time the structures and criteria on which to do so. Hence, in line with Ungar’s Foucauldian approach, embodying the capacity to cook for themselves implies not only the use of former practical knowledge on ‘how to cook’, but also new elements of competence that include knowledge of ‘how to live in the asylum center’, i.e. while respecting the opening/closing and safety rules demanded in the kitchen. Cooking for themselves, therefore, can be seen as a resilient move implying a negotiated being. It sets

the terms on which ‘resilient behavior’ is valued, yet in this case it has done so after a process of negotiation between the inhabitants and the board.

The father’s negotiation outside the law is exemplified in his declaration that he ‘knows how to have contact with people’. Although this is not specific to a context in limbo, reception centres nevertheless provide unique spaces for observing this social capacity. One has to look no further than to see how people greet each other depending on who is in front of them. Inhabitants of the centre very quickly learn the way (the language as well as other bodily behavior) in which aid workers can be greeted, whereas contact with other inhabitants from the same home country necessitates a greeting performance based on longer acquired practical knowledge. It’s this family’s capacity to demonstrate those kinds of skills in these and other domains, or to embody these newly acquired elements of competence, which provided them with the reputation among the social workers of being ‘strong’, ‘exemplary’, ‘well integrated’, ‘well educated’, ‘open minded’, and ‘friendly to all’. However, whereas this family displays resilient moves in liminality, they simultaneously embody aspects of vulnerability in other domains.

#### *Resilience and/in vulnerability*

*I followed four modules on Dutch courses and I really showed progress. (...) But now I’m no longer able to [concentrate during the courses]. I try to stimulate my children to do well at school and my husband to follow an education. But because of my health, I’m no longer able to concentrate.*

This quote from the interview with the Afghan mother illustrates one aspect of what she experiences as ‘crumbling down’ due to the long period in the asylum centre. She mentions how she was very motivated to learn Dutch upon arrival, yet has lost her energy due to the accumulation of negative responses to their procedure and the difficult life in the collective asylum centre. Yet in the private sphere of their family chamber, she nevertheless performs relational resilient moves by encouraging her other family members to do well at school or to engage in job training. In other words, her vulnerability in certain domains of life occurs simultaneously with the performance of resilience in others. This performance is embodied through relational behavior that is situated in a specific material context, based on newly acquired social knowledge – or elements of meaning and competence – that includes insights into the role of school and job training on the plane of local integration.

Yet not only does vulnerability due to macrostructures occur next to resilient moves in other domains; the denouncement of these macrostructures itself, and thus the fact of underscoring one's vulnerability due to it, simultaneously has an aspect of resilient behavior integral to it. One of the ways in which this was articulated, was when the Afghan father of this family interrogated the interviewer directly:

*Do you make a difference between Afghan people and other countries here in the asylum centre? Do you see a difference between those people? Or are they all equal to you? (...) Because now there's a new law that says that only Syrian people get social housing, because they have a high chance of recognition. Does that mean that Afghan people will never be recognized? How do we have to explain that to our children? They don't see any differences between their friends here in the centre.*

The father denounces the shift that was taking place during the reception crisis in 2015 to keep families within collective asylum centres their entire procedure, whereas they previously could apply for individual housing after six months in a collective centre (Myria, 2016: 112). The only exceptions to this informal rule were Syrian families with a high chance of recognition, which was depicted by the father as unfair. The fact that the daily cost of collective reception centres exceeds that from individual housing, underlines the former's role in a technology of power (Foucault, 1977; Malkki, 1995: 236; Myria, 2016: 112): it helps to constitute the not-(yet)-classifiable 'asylum seeker' as an object of knowledge and control (Douglas, 1966). Following Mary Douglas (1966), asylum seekers are considered in this regard as 'polluting' due to their category as unclassified/ unclassifiable, because they 'blur national (read: natural) boundaries, and challenge "time-honoured distinctions between nationals and foreigners"' (Arendt 1973: 286, cited in Malkki 1995: 8).

Frequently denouncing and underlining during the interview the injustice felt by this family in the light of macrostructures, can therefore be considered a resilient move based on a negotiated being, that is 'attuned, attentive, interactive, and responsive to the presence of the other' (Hage, 2018: 105). By providing enough space of recognition for these inhabitants' experiences of loss, injustice and needs which feature the precarious situation in the liminal non-space of an asylum centre, the listener (whether it is the interviewer or the social worker) then becomes a witness in all of this. Crucial to 'witnessing' is both the idea of having gained a specific type of knowledge of an event, as well as having acquired the capacity to communicate about it to others (Agamben, 1999: 17). This is the

aspect of negotiation that is going on at the moment of this father's interpellation towards the listener, which therefore can also be considered a resilient move; not as opposed to vulnerability, but by articulating it.

In line with the American philosopher Judith Butler's insights on precarity (2004a; 2004b), such recognition from the part of the 'other', in this case the listener, is crucial in order to be constituted as socially viable beings. Recognition through the witness therefore becomes a site of power, a space of empowerment (Allan, 2015: 1706; Aranda et al., 2012: 556; Butler 2004b). Yet, at the same time, 'recognition is also based on a shared corporeal vulnerability' (Aranda et al., 2012: 558; Butler, 2004a). For Butler, everybody is vulnerable and dependent on others for resources and aid. Yet that vulnerability comes to bear a different meaning in situations of precarity and liminality, when those resources aren't met. In such cases, she argues that exposing that vulnerability through acts, not only induces agency, but also constitutes a form of embodied resistance. Hence, vulnerability and liminality aren't understood here as opposed to agency, but provide the possibility of the embodiment of resistance. The way in which this is done is very much dependent on the existing structures in which bodies move, and the elements of materiality, meaning and competence that are used. This brings us back to the aspect of negotiation and the contextuality of relations (meso-level) which provides opportunities for resilient moves, as in the case of this father's encounter with a listener.

## **Conclusion**

Faced with the paradoxical reality of families residing for a long time in the precarious situation of collective asylum centres, while nevertheless being able to (re-)live aspects of a viable life, we asked how we should understand this manifestation of resilience in such contexts. In line with Hart (2007), we chose to reconceptualize resilience in terms of resilient moves. This enabled us to see resilience as relational behavior between different levels surrounding these family members, simultaneously pointing to the responsibility of the structures around them in facilitating resilient moves. Therefore, we no longer considered resilience as merely a matter of adaptation. A closer look at the reality in asylum centers unravelled how the capacity for resilient moves by these families is a matter of

‘negotiation in and outside the law’. Resilience therefore isn’t an individual trait as it has long been considered; in these cases it showed to be the result of a negotiated being, underlining the responsibility of different agentive actors simultaneously. At the same time, this also highlighted the necessity of interpreting resilience not as opposed to vulnerability, but as existing next or through it. Indicating or verbalising one’s vulnerability in the face of macro-structures implies a form of resistance; resilience in resistance, resilience in vulnerability. For asylum seeking families or social workers surrounding them, this approach allows for resilience and vulnerability to exist next to, with or throughout each other; to enhance, support, facilitate or strengthen the former, while, or even *by*, recognizing the latter.

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