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Acting on Multiple Stages

How Musical Actors Construct Their Labour-Market Vulnerability and Resilience

Oliver Ibert · Suntje Schmidt

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Abstract This paper takes a social-constructionist approach to the terms vulnerability and resilience in order to test their analytical potential within the frame of an empirical spatial-science study. The empirical object was deliberately chosen from a field untypical for vulnerability analyses: the volatile labour markets for musical actors. The paper draws on qualitative interviews to trace the actors' construction of labour-market related uncertainties, mainly caused by labour-market dynamics as well as institutional and territorial mismatches. Barely any resilience strategies exist for these forms of vulnerability. As a result, musical actors construct multiple identities from their bodies and talents, which they use in a targeted way within different spatial and social contexts. Two forms of network governance are additionally established to attenuate some of the competitive mechanisms. From a spatial viewpoint, these practices constitute transient, multi-local activity spaces in the labour market in which action is more effective when combined with a relatively stable home base.

Keywords Vulnerability · Resilience · Creative economy · Musical · Labour market

Prof. Dr. O. Ibert (✉) · Dr. S. Schmidt
Leibniz-Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung,
Flakenstraße 28–31, 15537 Erkner, Germany
e-mail: ibert@irs-net.de

Dr. S. Schmidt
e-mail: schmidts@irs-net.de

Spiel auf vielen Bühnen

Wie Musicaldarsteller Vulnerabilität und Resilienz auf ihren Arbeitsmärkten konstruieren

Zusammenfassung Der Beitrag verfolgt das Ziel, die Begriffe Vulnerabilität und Resilienz sozial-konstruktivistisch zu fassen und sie in ihrem analytischen Potenzial im Rahmen einer raumwissenschaftlichen empirischen Arbeit auszuprobieren. Es wurde bewusst ein für Vulnerabilitätsanalysen ungewohnter empirischer Gegenstand gewählt: die volatilen Arbeitsmärkte von Musicaldarstellern. Der Beitrag zeichnet auf der Basis von qualitativen Interviews die Konstruktionsleistungen von Musicaldarstellern nach, mit denen sie arbeitsmarktbezogene Unsicherheiten herausarbeiten, die sich vor allem aus den Dynamiken des Arbeitsmarktes sowie institutionellen und territorialen „Mismatches" ergeben. Für diese Formen von Verletzbarkeiten gibt es kaum wirkungsvolle institutionalisierte Formen der Resilienzbildung. Daher konstruieren Darsteller aus ihrem Körper und ihren Begabungen multiple Identitäten, die sie gezielt in unterschiedlichen räumlichen und sozialen Kontexten einsetzen und nutzen. Dazu etablieren sie Formen von Netzwerk-*Governance*, mit deren Hilfe sie einige Konkurrenzmechanismen abmildern. In räumlicher Hinsicht konstituieren diese Praktiken auf dem Arbeitsmarkt flüchtige, multi-lokale Handlungsräume, in denen umso wirkungsvoller agiert werden kann, wenn dies von einem relativ festen Ausgangsort („Homebase") aus geschieht.

Schlüsselwörter Vulnerabilität · Resilienz · Kreativwirtschaft · Musical · Arbeitsmarkt

1 On the Constructional Character of Vulnerability and Resilience

In spatial sciences, until now the terms "vulnerability" and "resilience" have mainly been used within the framework of "first order" observations (Japp 1996: 55; Christmann/Ibert/Kilper et al. 2012: 8). These concern processes of social construction in practical circumstances, in which threatening situations are identified, analysed and ways of overcoming them are discovered. However, the notions' extensive instrumental use in many different contexts of practical application has blurred their analytical acuity. Both notions are criticised for being used in a normative, self-evident and essentialist way. The aim of this paper is to learn more about the analytic potential of both terms by examining processes of the construction of vulnerability and resilience from a "second order" observer's perspective, a position from which we are able to analyse how actors socially construct threatening situations and on this basis develop strategies to minimise these threats.

We understand vulnerability as a concept "that synthesises social practises in which any entity (be that a subject, a group, a technical or ecological system, or a territory) may take centre stage in the analysis. The underlying process of construction consists in locating the centrally placed entity in a relational arrangement with other entities. In doing so, the aim is to outline the damaging or compromising effects resulting from the interdependencies that come into view" (Christmann/Ibert/Kilper et al. 2012: 23). By contrast, resilience comprises practices within the relational framework that "aim to transform the relational arrangement in a way that will decrease (or, ideally, eliminate) the vulnerability of the key, or centrally placed, entity" (Christmann/Ibert/Kilper et al. 2012: 24).This understanding emphasises the constructed nature of the two concepts in the radical sense of Actor-Network Theory (Latour 2005). In this interpretation, vulnerability and resilience are formed through associations between heterogeneous elements, i.e. elements of different nature that can nevertheless be linked to and mutually effect one another. The threatening nature of fire, for example, is constructed by positioning a residential building as the central entity. The degree and nature of the threat posed by fire are based on associations of this entity with social groupings (e.g. membership of a volunteer fire brigade), building materials (e.g. a thatched roof increases the hazard of fire), institutional safeguards (fire policies) and physical safety measures (fire doors). This terminological interpretation avoids any antagonism between "social" and "material" entities by positioning all constructional elements on the same analytical level. The challenge consists in precisely identifying the interrelations between these elements.

These types of constructions inevitably include spatial categories, whether explicitly or implicitly. Thus, physical distances (distance to the next fire station), territories (frequency of thunderstorms in the region) and local particularities (building materials) influence the calculation of the respective vulnerability and resilience strategies.

Until now "vulnerability" and "resilience" have mainly been employed in environmental and developmental policies and in relation to situations in which poorer population sectors in poor regions of the world are confronted with extreme natural events such as earthquakes, droughts, floods and landslides. The coincidence of social deprivation with the blind forces of nature results in "natural catastrophes" (cf. for example Felgentreff/Glade 2008). By contrast, the focus of this article lies on highly qualified labour markets that today are regarded as driving economic forces in prosperous societies. In these labour markets the main parameters—the conditions under which creativity can unfold (cf. deFillippi/Grabher/Jones 2007)—are mainly influenced by societal actors, not by natural events. Dealing with uncertainties and thus the permanent calculation of vulnerability and the aspiration to resilience play a constitutive role for the participants in these segments of the labour market. Extending the reach of these concepts to this field is intended as a means of increasing sensitivity to the fundamental operations of the construction of vulnerability and resilience.

The creative economy constitutes a broad field of sectors and occupations. We selected the segment of musicals for our empirical investigation, because it is one in which uncertainties regarding labour market expectations are particularly evident. These uncertainties are amplified by an increasingly obvious market saturation. We are interested in musical actors' constructions relating to their identification of vulnerabilities and their development of resilience strategies. In concrete terms, we address the questions of how musical actors see themselves positioned on the labour market, what they perceive as threatening circumstances and safeguards, what changes they consider making to reduce the perceived dangers, and what role space and spatiality play in these construction processes. We thus take a second-order observers' perspective and shift performers' perceptions, interpretations and constructions to the centre of our analyses.

2 Vulnerability and Resilience on Turbulent Labour Markets

What is the current state of research on uncertainties in highly qualified labour markets and what strategies of dealing with uncertainties are prominently discussed in the literature on the subject? To what extent does the approach to the terms vulnerability and resilience differ from that characterising previous research?

2.1 Uncertainties on Labour Markets for Creative Workers

A number of topics are repeatedly discussed in the literature addressing uncertainties on turbulent and highly qualified labour markets, but it is largely devoid of specific statements relating to the group forming the focus of this analysis. Although research has been conducted on, for example, "cultural professions" (z. B. Betzelt/Gottschall 2005; Schnell 2007), our empirical results show that musical actors perceive uncertainties that are not solely generated by their employment conditions but also by their practices of combining different forms of occupations and by job-related spatial mobility.

First, well into the 1970s a successfully completed formal qualification, in particular an academic one, served as a kind of "entry ticket" to the professional world and as a guarantee for lifelong employment (cf. Drucker 1993). Today, however, the same qualifications serve at best as a "participation certificate," allowing actors to compete over resources without any guarantee of success. Many areas of employment, above all in creative fields (e.g. copywriters) are now open to career switchers, which puts the significance of formal qualifications into a different perspective. Cultural professions in particular are characterised by high levels of qualification and continual qualification upgrading (Betzelt/Gottschall 2005: 277 f.). However, there are only a few institutionalised qualification standards governing professions in the creative and cultural area. As a result, members of a professional group are subject to competition not only from within their own specific field but also from other professional groups (Betzelt/Gottschall 2005: 279). In the face of accelerating innovation cycles, specialist knowledge is becoming obsolete ever more quickly with the result that today highly qualified practitioners in particular see themselves as having no alternative but to engage in "lifelong learning".

Second, the responsibility for obtaining qualifications rests primarily on the shoulders of the individual labour-market participants. From their point of view, their own employability (Smith 2010: 280) is something they themselves need to maintain or increase. They are finding themselves more or less permanently on the lookout for work and their approach to their own labour power is becoming increasingly entrepreneurial (cf. Pongratz/Voß 2003; on "culturepreneurs" cf. Lange 2006; Lange 2007). "People spend a greater amount of their time preparing for job market activities whether they are employed, unemployed or underemployed" (Smith 2010: 281). Underpaid positions are accepted in the hope to eventually access secure segments of the labour market (cf. Smith 2010; cf. also Bierett 2000; Eikhof/Haunschild 2006).

Third, the new work regime for creative professionals is characterised by frequent changes between freelance, salaried employee and self-employed categories. In all these models the work relationship is subject to time limits: freelancers and self-employed artists work from project to project, while those in salaried employment are often subject to fixed-term contracts (cf. Haak 2009: 31). Even in the case of tenured contracts, creative workers are subject to competition on internal project-work markets (Grabher/Ibert 2006: 257). The endeavour to achieve full-time employment and thus a level of financial security comparable with that of the average employee relationship has resulted in the widespread phenomenon of creative workers pursuing and managing several occupational strands simultaneously. Haak (2008: 220 ff.), for example, points to widespread "multiple jobbing" as a result of artists attempting to establish a level of security for themselves. However, such combinations are difficult to adapt to the institutional requirements of the German social security systems (Schnell 2007: 117). Moreover, in contrast to other professional groups in the creative economy, it is evident that musical actors do not only engage in different forms of employment consecutively but also simultaneously.

It is widely accepted that creative sectors are dominated by highly polarised labour markets operating on the logic of "the winner takes it all" (Haak/Schmidt 2001: 165). These markets are characterised by an oversupply of qualified and motivated workers and irrational rules (determined by fashions or tastes) governing the distribution of many, poorly paid and a few well-remunerated jobs (Haak/Schmidt 2001: 165; Bührmann/Wild/Heyse et al. 2010: 9).

As yet, the discourse around new, turbulent and highly uncertain labour markets has paid little attention to spatial factors. Rather, this discourse creates the impression that the new "rules of the game" apply equally everywhere, perhaps with some smaller variations due to regional particularities. In this spirit Richard Florida has formulated his thesis of the hypermobile creative class whose members no longer orient themselves to established spatial structures when it comes to selecting their existential base but rather highly selectively seek out "cool places" as the focus of their activities (Florida 2005: 143 ff.). Florida (2005: 49 ff.) sees this freedom as so fundamental that according to him today it is no longer people who follow the jobs but rather jobs that follow the people. However, empirical findings that critically examine these hypotheses suggest that the actual degree of spatial freedom is considerably lower than claimed by Florida (cf. Vinodrai 2009; Martin-Brelot/Grossetti/Eckert et al. 2010).

2.2 Reducing Uncertainty Through Informal Networks

The discussion of how these uncertainties are dealt with is strongly focused on the instrumental use of informal contacts. In brief, informal networks provide important resources for increasing the level of success when looking for a

new job (cf. Granovetter 1974; Lin 1999). Even though the effects of informal networks cannot be quantified in monetary terms, they are certainly qualifiable on a non-monetary basis (cf. Franzen/Hangartner 2006). They can ensure, for instance, that search time is reduced for both jobseekers and employers and at the same time that the likelihood of a good fit between applicants and the jobs on offer is increased.

Networks allow for the mobilization of above all two resources: information and reputation. Well-networked actors receive more relevant information earlier than less well-connected competitors; they have access to a broader range of attractive opportunities and can react more quickly. Exclusive information is most likely to be available in networks with a high proportion of non-redundant contacts (cf. Burt 1995), i.e. contacts that open up complementary resources. In addition, networks convey the reputation of labour-market participants. Here, a distinction can be made between personal reputation and network reputation (cf. Glückler/Armbrüster 2003). The former is based on personal knowledge of the network partner, the latter on indirect hearsay, i.e. statements about acquaintances by acquaintances. Reputation conveys assessments of the capacity, reliability and creativity of a partner. It has been empirically identified as an important mechanism for the acquisition of engagements by theatre actors (cf. Baumann 2002; Eikhof/Haunschild 2006).

In spatial terms, network strategies of creative professionals are attributed a distinctly local dimension (cf. Vinodrai 2009). Labour-market related contacts quickly lose their efficacy in creative economies if they are not frequently cultivated through shared activities (cf. Wittel 2001). Moreover, their fundamental utility consists in generating informational advantages, for example, by providing information regarding the availability of a job *before* competitors know about it. Both the way in which networks are cultivated and their expected utility require actors to be regularly and often personally present at relevant meeting points. In functional terms, these sociality networks (cf. Wittel 2001; Grabher 2004; Grabher/Ibert 2006) rely on the spatially compact living situations prevalent in urban areas.

2.3 Constructions of Vulnerability and Resilience as a Research Approach

The social-constructivist adaption of the terms vulnerability and resilience and their application to an empirical field previously subject to little research from this perspective aim at extending the range of these concepts on two levels. First, we empirically highlight and substantiate the constructive work that underlies calculations of vulnerability and resilience while avoiding the trap of a reductionist constructivism (cf. Christmann/Ibert/Kilper et al. 2012). Such an approach also opens up new avenues for reflecting on the spatiality of vulnerability and resilience. Second, our aim is to better understand the strategies of creative workers to cope with uncertainties in labour markets. Until now, literature on the subject has focused above all on social networks and institutions while neglecting the aspects of materiality and physicality (Holt 2008: 236 ff.). In the approach employed here the social aspect of labour markets is not seen as a quality attributed to the object of inquiry but rather as the work and effort of actively associating entities with rather incommensurable qualities (Latour 2005: 1 ff.). This perspective can also benefit spatial-science research on creative labour markets, which has until now tended to see labour market uncertainties as spatially independent as opposed to attributing a distinctly local dimension to strategies geared to the containment of uncertainty. By contrast, the approach proposed here is explicitly open to the consideration of proximal and distanced associations as well as static/stable and mobile/transient spatialities.

3 Methodical Approach

The empirical research produced data on the labour market for musical actors that allow us to trace the construction of vulnerabilities and resilience strategies from the perspective of trained performers.

The data forming the empirical basis of this paper comprise ten semi-structured qualitative interviews that where conducted in spring 2011. The sample encompasses experienced male and female musical actors (five interviews respectively) around the age of 35, who had been active on the relevant labour markets for between 10 and 15 years.[1] At the beginning of 2012 we also conducted additional informal background interviews with industry experts. The field research took place in Berlin, where performers in current and completed musical productions were identified via internet research. Our research also drew on webpages of musical productions, the ZAV performing arts placement service[2] and in particular the CVs uploaded on the personal internet pages of musical actors. All interviewees have attained a qualification as a musical actor at a private or public institution and at the time of the interview had been already actively involved in performing over a number of years. The field was accessed via Berlin, where there are a number of established musical theatres, numerous state- and city-funded theatres as well as private theatres that regularly

[1] A second survey involving performers embarking on their careers and experts in the sector is currently underway. The initial results from contextual interviews with experts in the sector have already been integrated into this paper.

[2] ***Z**entrale **A**uslands- und Fach**v**ermittlung der Bundesagentur für Arbeit* (International Placement Services of the German Federal Employment Agency).

host musical productions. On average the interviews lasted 90 min and were fully transcribed. The interviews were conducted in German, and for this paper, the authors have translated quotations from the interviews into English.

Interviewees were asked to reflect on their position in the labour market and to develop individual strategies against the backdrop of their vulnerability analyses. Interviews began with open questions designed to make it possible for interviewees to address the dimensions they perceived as most important before moving on to the more structured part of the survey that illuminated the relevance of what had been anticipated as important research topics. As the group of interviewees exhibits a high degree of homogeneity in terms of key social structural attributes[3], we were able to reach the point of data saturation relatively early and decided to conclude the interview phase after ten interviews.

4 Areas of Vulnerability and Resilience: Market, Institutions, Identities and Networks

In this section we unfold the relational field within which the interviewees position themselves in relation to sources of vulnerability and resilience. We first present the vulnerability dimensions that appear to be least easily influenced by the musical actors. These comprise the competitive situation on the labour market (4.1) and the institutional safeguards against major life risks such as age, unemployment and illness (4.2). We then proceed to those labour market circumstances that have been experienced by the interviewees as more accessible for transformation. These include working on one's own identity (4.3) and establishing and maintaining an informal network (4.4). Whereas structural influences play a more prominent role in constructing vulnerability, resilience strategies of the interviewees are concentrated on the "more accessible" parts of the field: the actors' identities and their social networks.

4.1 Segmented and Mobile Labour Markets

From the perspective of the interviewees, the labour market was restricted to a German-speaking territory, concretely Germany, parts of Switzerland and Austria. Outside this territory, the interviewed actors neither see themselves sufficiently competitive nor do they regard possibly available jobs as appealing. Within this German-speaking territory the demand for musical actors has been shrinking, while the supply of actors has been simultaneously increasing in the past 20 years. Increasing financial pressure on private and public theatres is identified as the primary cause for the decline in demand. The increase in the supply of performers is attributed to newly established private training institutions. Both tendencies are seen by the interviewees as constituting a threat to their livelihoods: "Now, although I unfortunately don't know the figures, I would say that every year 1000 people are being sent out onto the market in the acting and musical fields, while at the same time theatres are closing. So you have this double effect: on the one hand you have a lot more people and on the other there are a lot less jobs" (Interview 6: 4). This shrinking market can be sub-divided into three larger segments: private productions, which offer full-time positions, public theatres, which offer guest roles, and festivals or tours, which offer short-term engagements.

The first segment offers full-time employment, either with a theatre company or, increasingly, in mobile productions, with fixed term contracts for a complete season (usually for 12–18 months, including 6–8 weeks rehearsal time). As a rule, such engagements involve eight performances a week, two on Saturdays and Sundays and a further four throughout the week. The second classic employment segment involves guest roles at publically funded theatres. Here the musical actors are either self-employed or work as freelancers and are paid per performance plus for an agreed rehearsal period. State theatres do not present musicals every evening but as part of an overall program that includes around four to eight performances per month. If engaged for a single guest role, musical actors are neither able to earn a sufficient wage nor is their available working time fully used. Hence, it is necessary to take on further guest roles or pursue other forms of employment ranging from teaching and directing their own plays to part-time positions outside the musical business, for example, in bars. Festivals, tours and musical events form a third and rather new segment in this labour market. These comprise, for instance, "en suite" engagements (Interview 8), short intense engagements that may involve, for example, 20 performances over 4 weeks. Such engagements may involve salaried employments or freelance arrangements. In any case, the work is restricted to a certain time period that varies between a few days and several weeks.

The two first segments of the labour market are mutually exclusive in the sense that actors accepting a full-time employment are unavailable for guest roles and not allowed to accept self-employed engagements. To a limited extent festivals and tours are compatible with the other market segments. Festivals mostly utilize the summer breaks in normal theatre schedules; events or tours are of such a short duration that they can often be accommodated in the gaps of the scheduled seasons presented by state theatres or in the gap between two productions.

[3] Homogenous in relation to the age structure, experience and training of musical actors. The ten interviews allow for a clear delineation of specific characteristics of this employment sector but are not suited to a comparative analysis the situations of male and female musical actors. For this reason gender differentiation was not an object of the systematic evaluation of the empirical material.

All these variants generate a high degree of uncertainty for musical actors, since castings are done through competitive, multi-stage auditions. The prospects of gaining a role are limited (one interviewee estimated a quota of one offer per ten auditions). Even actors with well-developed careers still have to compete for every role: "People who have done a lot, including a lot of star roles, may have a small advantage from time to time. But it is more often the case that it makes no difference what you've done before. You stand there and sing and start back at zero again" (Interview 1: 8; also Bierett 2000: 31). Participating in auditions is laborious, demands intensive preparation (of a suitable repertoire), usually travel time and private travel costs for trips to as many as three qualifying rounds, which are often held at different locations.

Competition in these market segments is further intensified by many young performers entering the labour market. These "people are around 20 and will work for any wage" (Interview 8: 6) and thereby undercut the wages for established performers. This competition is much more dramatic for female performers, as many more female than male actors enter the labour market every year. This point is discussed by both male and female interviewees: "As a man I'm lucky that there are far fewer men than women in this sector. It's a lot tougher for women" (Interview 7: 8).

The increasing low-wage competition coming from young performers is due above all to the increasing number of private training institutions. The chances of success for actors trained at public institutions are seen as far better than for those trained in private schools, because of the better quality of training: Public schools offer almost twice as many courses and significantly more individual tuition and in addition are more geared to an educational objective (e.g. the formation of an artistic personality) than is the case in private schools. Women already face a higher level of competition on the market for training and education. Since the public universities of arts apply equal quotas for male and female applicants, each available place for men has around six applicants while each one for women has about 44 (Interview 12) with the overall effect that a disproportionate high number of female applicants are pushed into the more costly and less promising private training sector.

Additional competitive pressure comes from international performers, who have comparatively good opportunities when it comes to productions requiring little spoken German. For the interviewees the origins of international competition are difficult to survey and are increasingly subject to surprising changes due to the dynamic development of this branch. Whereas around 1990 many performers came to Germany from English-speaking countries and Scandinavia (Interview 10: 20), currently many East European performers are arriving (Interview 1: 4) who are prepared to work for lower wages.

The competitive situation seems hardly amenable to influence by resilience strategies. Several interviewees report that they have rejected unacceptably low offers in the past. In addition, one interviewee rejected an opportunity to work as a teacher at a private school because he did not want to profit from a development that he saw as damaging the market. However, it is also clear that the interviewees have few illusions about their market power. Such individual market decisions tend to be seen more as unprofitable idealism than as effective market correctives. Some interviewees employ agents to observe the market and preselect offers, but most of them do not understand this as increasing their resilience. Since agents earn the most with their most successful clients, they tend to increase the imbalance in the distribution of access opportunities rather than even it out.

Even though all interviewees have completed training as musical actors, none of them works exclusively in musicals and their work is characterised by the establishment of several fields of employment. Although these strategies of multiple jobholding (Haak 2008: 220 ff.) take on different concrete forms, they are all designed to counter uncertainty regarding income by spreading risk. They include entrepreneurial activities pursued by musical actors parallel to the search for employment or during breaks in performance schedules, such as developing their own solo programs, writing their own plays, and pursuing own band or theatre projects. These activities are designed to enable them to create their own employment opportunities and the conditions for creative work themselves. However, in most cases it is clear that these are stopgap measures, which immediately become secondary priorities when an engagement becomes available. Finally, many interviewees formulate "exit scenarios" for the time after their musical careers and develop such scenarios during periods when they do not have engagements. They build up profiles for themselves in employment areas related to musicals such as teaching in the fields of acting, singing and dance. Some of them reactivate professional qualifications completed before they became musical actors, while others retrain for established professions relatively late in their careers.

Two important spatial themes present themselves in the construction of vulnerability and resilience. First, the market constitutes itself on the basis of concrete situations, i.e. at a particular time and a given location. None of the interviewees analysed the competitive situation confronting them by way of statistics or scholarly studies.[4] It is rather the

[4] There are hardly any statistics available relating specifically to musical actors. Although data gathered by the German Federal Employment Agency includes the professional classification "acting, dance and movement art", it covers not only musical dancers but also other performing artists, with the result that deriving branch-specific statements from the data is not possible. A further problem is the fact that many musical actors working on a self-employed basis are not included in labour-market statistics. For example the *Bundesministerium*

case that auditions form the central context in which competition is concretised: "Yeah, you always see the same faces at singing auditions or sometimes new people who have just finished their training" (Interview 9: 10). "You stand there next to five blondes who are younger than you and cost less. And then the choice is clear for the producers" (Interview 3: 11). The evaluations of the interviewees are to be interpreted here as constructions in which concrete, personally experienced competitive situations are generalised to an abstract idea of the labour market as a whole.

The second important spatial theme concerns the individual mobility of performers. If performers are primarily employed in guest appearances and event-related engagements along with sideline jobs, the acceptance of engagements requires a high degree of individual mobility: "Okay, today I'm in Mannheim and tomorrow in Antalya and the day after that in Hamburg and today in Berlin. We try to make ourselves as flexible as possible so that we really are able to deal with competition" (Interview 2: 21). Full-time engagements are usually not based where actors live. This raises the question of whether a good one-year engagement justifies moving one's entire household. A common solution is to establish a second temporary residence at one's own cost. "Well that's how it is in the big musical market. You go where the work is" (Interview 3: 10). Moreover, it is increasingly the case that full-time work is offered for tours during which the location changes every few weeks. Given that such tours entail eight performances a week this means performers spend months living in hotels.

4.2 Institutional and Territorial Mismatches

Strategies to counter vulnerabilities could be offered by formal institutions such as contracts and forms of insurance. Previously presented studies already show examples of vulnerabilities that can arise from the different forms of and time limits on employment, and improvements in the relevant institutional framework conditions have also been identified (cf., for example, Schnell 2007). However, what has not been explicitly considered so far are those forms of vulnerability arising from the spatial mobility of performers and the parallelism of employment conditions and forms that are particularly clearly manifested in the case of musical actors. We expected to encounter institutional arrangements that protect the integrity of the body, such as health and accident insurance or occupational disability insurance. Moreover, we saw public social security as possibly providing safeguards against unemployment and the professional risks of aging. However, the interviews show that such institutional safeguards are barely relevant to musical actors because they rest on assumptions about a normality that for this group is at best achievable in phases. The interviews support the impression of a systematic "institutional mismatch".

In Germany artists can, for example, join the *Künstlersozialkasse* and take out accident insurance with the *Berufsgenossenschaft Bundesverband Bildender Künstler* (BBK). However, only a comparatively small number of musical actors can take advantage of these services because access is tied to formal criteria. The accident insurance offered by the BBK, which offers minimum protection in the case of a workplace accident, is obligatory for all artists in salaried employment, whereas all other risks are covered by ordinary social security.[5] However, this excludes self-employed musical actors. By contrast, membership in the *Künstlersozialkasse* provides pension, health and long-term care insurance as well as an accident insurance for artists and journalists that are primarily self-employed and work on a commercial basis or as freelancers.[6] Important here is the fact that a minimum of income is required to come "mainly" from self-employment, which excludes some actors (e.g. practicing multiple-jobholding).

These divergent formal criteria become critical factors in the context of multiple jobholding (Haak 2008: 220 ff.) and the simultaneous pursuit of different types and forms of work. For instance, people with multiple jobs often have difficulties earning the minimum income needed to be included in the *Künstlersozialkasse* (Interview 9: 15) on an on-going basis. If actors are unable to qualify for the *Künstlersozialkasse* (Interview 9: 15), they are compelled to take out private insurance, which may require almost half of their disposable income. Because of these high costs, several of our interviewees have simply accepted the fact that they are insufficiently insured. However, for those who have gained membership, the *Künstlersozialkasse* offers insurance protection that is regarded as positive and reassuring: "Thank God I'm now insured through the [Künstlersozialkasse], finally, for 2 years now. I didn't do it for a long time and paid a huge amount for health insurance with the result that after a while I just couldn't manage the cost anymore" (Interview 9: 15).

The main reasons for these very starkly felt vulnerabilities are the time limits on engagements to play roles and the frequent changes between salaried employment subject to social security and self-employment, and in some case parallel forms of employment. Employment conditions characteristic of larger productions resemble those of

für Wirtschaft und Technologie—German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology—(2009: 49) concludes that in 2008 52 % of performing artists were self-employed.

[5] See http://www.bbk-bundesverband.de/index.php?id=213 (last accessed April 4, 2012).

[6] See http://www.bbk-bundesverband.de/index.php?id=209 (last accessed April 4, 2012).

a time-limited full-time position, including the associated safeguards. However, when the actors work in smaller productions, they have to find additional income sources in order to ensure they have enough to live on. In some cases actors work three or four jobs in parallel, with the result that they are simultaneously subject to different contracts: "The situation for us changes constantly. Sometimes I'm on a salary, sometimes I'm self-employed, often both at the same time" (Interview 2: 13). This situation entails constantly dealing with the question of which insurance applies for which period of time.

Apart from safeguarding one's health and body, a prominent theme is financial security during periods of unemployment. The income conditions experienced by actors are subject to pronounced fluctuations. At the same time they have fixed costs for social security while wages are fluctuating. They often find themselves in underpaid work, from which they earn too little to live on but too much to be able to apply for unemployment benefit. In cases of actual unemployment, previous periods of work are often not long enough to attract the full unemployment benefit. When performers take on short-term work, they must formally suspend their unemployed status, and the situation becomes even more complex when they switch between different forms of employment.

For musical actors in Germany, access to both first-stage unemployment benefit (ALG I) and second-stage unemployment benefit (ALG II) is associated with vulnerabilities arising from institutional mismatches. Since due to multiple jobholding they are rarely able to prove consistent employment even if their workload is high, they are often immediately put on ALG II when they become unemployed. Since the so-called Hartz reforms, ALG II has been offset by personal savings, which makes it difficult for musical actors to build up a private pension fund.[7]

Institutional arrangements not only establish the legal framework but also delimit territories within which institutions have validity. Due to the spatial mobility of the actors within German-speaking countries they repeatedly cross the boundaries between these territories. As a result, the institutional mismatch identified at the outset is overlaid by territorial mismatches. One actor provides a particularly clear illustration of the fatal effect this can have. On Monday and Thursday he had a performance in Basel. On Tuesday and Wednesday he had no engagement and would therefore have been entitled to draw unemployment benefits for these 2 days. However, he would have had to be in Germany in his job centre district (Berlin) to access the unemployment benefits. Returning from Switzerland, however, would have cost more than he would have been paid in unemployment benefit. As a consequence he forwent (and not only in this case) the payments he was entitled to (Interview 9: 18, similarly Interview 2: 14).

Since mobility is inherent to the profession, actors are compelled constantly to manage institutional arrangements (residency registration and deregistration, tax declarations in several countries, changes between health insurance schemes) parallel to their actual artistic employment. Such management is experienced as extremely laborious because it involves diverse personal appointments with tax advisors, job centres and insurance providers. Interviewees also find themselves having to deal with diffuse feelings of being somehow cheated (e.g. due to dual taxation) and, at the same time, of slipping into a gray zone of illegality (unperceived tax evasion).

4.3 Physicality and Identity Prisms

Whereas the sources of vulnerability and resilience discussed so far appear comparatively difficult to influence, vulnerabilities that originate from within the actors themselves—their bodies and identities—are experienced as far more accessible.

When interviewees are questioned about possible sources of uncertainty, the danger of physical impairments that mean not being able to go on stage is almost without exception the first example named. This category includes short-term absences due to illness or injury. These are seen as dramatic by actors not only because they imply a personal loss of income ("No show, no pay"; Interview 7: 8), but also because an entire production is dependent on one's own ability to participate. "We are talking about a machine that cares about the show not the actors. The fact that you are not feeling well is of no interest … No one comes and says, 'Hey, you did a super job'. What you hear is: 'Why are you ill? Why aren't you in position?'" (Interview 8: 5).

Even more decisive for the interviewees is the fear of irreparable physical deterioration. The strains associated with eight weekly performances in a big production are equated with a "competitive sport" (Interview 3: 11), a sphere in which the reduction of physical capacity can mean the end of a career. Typical weak points are the voice ("I sung above my range every day. And at some point you only reach the note by forcing it"; Interview 1: 7) and the sinews and bones. Due to these threats, the interviewees invest a great deal of, primarily private, resources, meaning their free time and own money, in avoiding illness and injury, for example, by investing in a healthy diet, caring for their bodies (yoga, gymnastics, fitness) and training (voice and dance).

Musical actors, like actors in general, "bring not only artistic talent to the market but their whole personality" (Eikhof/Haunschild 2006: 240). This situation intensifies

[7] See http://www.musicalzentrale.de/index.php?service=8&subservice=1&details=1586 (last accessed April 4, 2012).

the focus on one's own physical features. These are experienced as fixed, as difficult or impossible to elude, and as pre-structuring the possibilities of one's marketability. They include the pitch of the voice (soprano, tenor or bass), physical dimensions and stature. In terms of gender, not only biological gender is relevant but also socially and culturally formed notions of sexuality. Gender becomes a variable open to limited changes that interviewees specifically stage in the form of changes in gender roles, gender images and androgyny. "There are so many roles that are supposed to come across as incredibly manly. But 90 % of the actors are very obviously gay. It doesn't matter at all if they are gay. The problem is that on stage they come across as gay" (Interview 1: 4).

With regard to their age, interviewees distinguish between their biological age (by the year of their birth) and their "stage age" (how they come across on stage). These two ages do not have to correspond but of course are related to one another. Age represents a challenge because most productions offer roles requiring a stage age of less than 30. As a result the market shrinks with increasing age. Age is seen as a critical factor above all for women by both male and female interviewees: "Women especially have to be young, have to have super voices, and have to be able to dance and act super well" (Interview 6: 2). The gradual increase in age also takes actors across larger qualitative thresholds in the sense that roles change more fundamentally and more comprehensive repositioning on the market becomes necessary: "I'm not right for this role [a young girl] anymore. But I'm not yet right for the mother role. For this reason it's difficult to get roles from 35 onwards" (Interview 9: 10).

The influence of physical attributes on the availability of roles is seen both as a source of vulnerability and as a route to an increase of resilience. On the one hand, actors find themselves excluded from certain segments of their labour market ("If you're skinny and gangly you don't often get the chance to play the hero in shining armour"; Interview 1: 2). On the other hand, such physical attributes immunise actors against competition. In addition, they still have the possibility of emancipating themselves from these traits by extending their repertoires (e.g. in terms of dance styles). It is about "of course trying to be as diverse and as good as you can within the limits of your possibilities" (Interview 4: 15) or specialising in protected segments, e.g. tap-dancing. The body is a type of basic physical configuration that can be adapted through targeted moulding.

Apart from moulding their bodies, the actors create multiple identities for themselves (Wiesenthal 1990) with which they make themselves compatible with different fields of employment (cf. Schmincke 2009). Proceeding from their basic training in the musical area, their individual talent and their physical possibilities, they look for access to diverse labour markets: musicals, dramatic acting, singing, dancing etc. and in the process have to directly compete with specialists in these individual disciplines. Since roles are awarded based on competition between individual performances at auditions and not on the basis of previous experience, it is strategically advantageous to create multiple identities, each specific for another discipline: "Musical actors have around three different CVs. One of them identifies them as an actor, another as a dancer and another as a singer. It's not even worth applying for work in a film as a musical actor. You have to apply as a dramatic actor" (Interview 1: 7 f.).

The multiplication of identities begins with the CVs actors are required to supply with job applications. These are variously geared to the labour-market segments of dancing, singing, dramatic and musical acting. Depending on what they are applying for, actors deliberately leave out certain aspects of their careers to make themselves seem predestined for the segment in question. Since it is often the case that actors take several engagements simultaneously, it is possible for them to generate seemingly balanced CVs despite their leaving out certain aspects of their career histories. The interviewees also report the manipulation of CVs acquainted actors as a means of improving profiles. When candidates are invited to attend the final selection process, what counts are neither former qualifications nor experiences but the personal impression an actor is able to make on the jury. It is therefore important for actors to prepare a wide repertoire of presentable songs, dances and monologues from which they can develop many different performances of a competitive quality. All interviewees work on improving and expanding this personal repertoire in their "spare" time.

The prism-like multiplication of one's identity into clear facets increases resilience because it increases one's suitability for different labour market niches. Even if each niche is in itself too small to provide a livelihood, the concentration of multiple identities in one person allows for the possibility of combinations drawing on different niches that, taken together, increase resilience.

Managing identities also includes the modification of reference levels with regard to vulnerabilities. For instance, the competitive character of auditions changes the more it is emphasised that they also provide an opportunity to chat with acquaintances. The logic of this resilience strategy consists in emphasising the advantages of one's own lifestyle (cf. Friebe/Lobo 2006) and playing them off against narrow minded security considerations. Vulnerabilities appear more acceptable in circumstances where people feel they have extensive possibilities of determining and shaping their own lives (cf. Thiel 2005). In this sense, "musical actor" is presented less as a profession than as a lifestyle (cf. Eikhof/Haunschild 2006).

Safeguarding physical resources, cultivating physical capacities and identity management are based on spatial

conditions that oppose ceaseless mobility with the concept of a long-term, stable home base. "I want to have a place *from* where I can work" (Interview 3: 10; authors' emphasis). This home base is important because phases of regeneration are tied to deceleration and the abrogation of mobility. Preventative training, healthy eating and medical treatment require facilities that can be visited regularly. It is helpful to identity management when the structures of opportunity in the immediate surroundings promote the differentiation of more than one identity. These functional requirements of identity management are easier to fulfil if the home base is situated in an urban location.

4.4 Socially and Spatially Distanced Contact Networks

Musical actors' networks are constructed according to a logic that has been described as bi-partite (Uzzi/Spiro 2005: 452 ff.). Bi-partite refers to a network structure with two levels, one on which the network actors are personally and directly connected with one another—for example, because they are part of the same team—and another comprising further connections to other contexts.

The first level of the networks in which the interviewed musical actors are involved in consists of colleagues currently acting in the same production or who were in the same production in the past. Reproducing this logic, one interviewee went through current and old cast lists in order to reconstruct the dimensions and internal structures of his network. Participants in a production can make direct contact with one another at any time, even if the time they originally spent together was years ago. All participants are aware that these contacts are at most only superficially cultivated. "It's okay if we talk once every 4 months. We still like each other" (Interview 4: 10). These networks expand organically, as actors in the course of their careers move from theatre to theatre and production to production: "On average I'm involved in three productions every season and each of these productions employs at least 30 people" (Interview 7: 10).

These networks function to reduce vulnerability in so far as actors' colleagues occasionally give them information concerning as yet uncast roles or possible engagements as "back-ups".[8] Performers who learn of an opportunity that they themselves cannot utilize reflect on their former colleagues and decide who might be suitable for the role (Interview 2: 9). When musical actors are looking for a new engagement, these network contacts are reanimated. This is achieved by making oneself "visible" by announcing changes of location or the end of tours via telephone or email, and most typically via social media networks: "We know many people who say: 'If I have something available, I'll think of you'. That's why it's good to go on Facebook from time to time and say. 'Hello! Do you want to have a coffee? By the way, have you been looking at my homepage now and again?' Just to maintain a presence" (Interview 8: 12; also Interview 2: 9).

However, these networks also have negative sides. First, they largely reflect the social composition of productions, i.e. they comprise a lot of other performers but include far fewer people with real responsibilities for offering jobs, such as producers, artistic and musical directors and choreographers. As Burt (1995: 20 f.) puts it, redundant connections dominate, i.e. contacts that add hardly anything complementary to one's own resources and competences. Due to the sheer size of the networks, maintaining contacts, however superficially, still requires a considerable investment of time, despite their superficiality. All in all, contacts within these networks are relatively enduring and can be reactivated easily even after long breaks. Second, interviewees speak of social opportunity costs, which are generated when attention and time is directed away from one's immediate circle of friends to a disparate group of acquaintances. One interviewee describes this experience as one of "loneliness" (Interview 8: 18) within this lively and talkative sector. Third, the repeated transformation of quasi-familial relationships to colleagues into superficial, strategic contexts is described as "schizophrenic" (Interview 3: 11). The strong sense of social closeness generated between actors during a production almost abruptly turns into socially thin, loose and mainly strategically important contacts following the end of the production, the guest performance or the tour. The ensemble dissipates in all directions and the few intensive social relationships to colleagues immediately cool down and are absorbed into the numerous other superficial contacts deriving from other productions.

The second level in the bi-partite networks (Uzzi/Spiro 2005: 452 ff.) connect performers to decision makers in the sector with whom they have not (yet) worked with. In this case, interest is directed mainly at non-redundant contacts, i.e. at those who are in a position to make decisions about casting or who are known for putting interesting productions on stage. Other important figures include those who are known to be frequently asked for their opinion by others. From the outset, the initiation of contacts takes place with professional interests in mind, which is why these contacts occur far less organically and have to be initiated actively and purposefully. Furthermore, networks at this level are mainly associated with the function of improving one's own reputation and thus of increasing the likelihood of being invited to auditions and ultimately considered for engagements. The interviewees show little interest in creating a personal relationship with these decision makers. Rather,

[8] Back-ups or understudies are trained actors who are not offered a main role but prepare themselves to take over short-term for a leading player who is unavailable due to illness.

they seem to be satisfied when they succeeded in making the latter aware of their presence and in presenting themselves to them in one form or another.

The interviews also illustrate the functional limitations of these more strategic networks. The mingling of the economic interest in a "person's status" with the social interest "in the person's personality" (Interview 2) can produce new uncertainties (cf. DeFilippis 2001; Grabher/Ibert 2006), since the network participants might enter into relationships based on reciprocity, which they then have to serve without being able or wanting to. For instance, it is not uncommon in wage negotiations for representatives of the theatre to attempt "to put everything on a personal level so that you allow yourself to soften your stance and accept a slightly smaller wage out of loyalty to the theatre" (Interview 2: 4). Interviewees also refer to the Janus-faced character of network reputation (cf. Glückler/Armbrüster 2003): news of poor performances on stage spread at least as quickly and uncontrollably as news of success.

This two-dimensional network structure and the interplay between both levels have interesting spatial implications. Put briefly, these networks grow through a process in which people from many different places meet at many (other) different places for a certain time. The organically grown part of the network expands with every production, tour or guest role. By contrast, the strategic-professional network providing links to decision-makers requires appropriate opportunities that mostly arise in the context of informal meetings. Taking the initiative outside the context of an appropriate occasion is regarded as unlikely to prove successful. For this reason this strategic networking is focused on events at which informal opportunities to interact with strategically valuable individuals are generated "coincidentally", for example at premiere parties. In the interplay of the two levels, the network grows and expands almost exclusively on occasions of "temporary proximity" (Torre 2008), while the individual network actors constitute very specific multi-local action spaces using a high degree of mobility.

On the other hand, it is precisely in the context of these highly mobile practices that the need for a home base becomes even more understandable. Such a base makes it possible to maintain a few solid social relationships (outside the musical sector) alongside numerous superficial ones. The home base accrues additional value when it forms a node within multi-local practices: when other musical actors live there, the costs of maintaining superficial contacts are reduced because it is easier to make oneself "visible". When a lot of branch-specific, local, and above all supra-local opportunities (cf. Glückler 2007) become readily available and when an above-average number of premieres take place there at which the important people can be met, then the costs of strategic-professional network management are also reduced.

5 Summary

This paper has aimed to use an empirical analysis of social-constructional processes as a means of assessing with musical actors their vulnerability and resilience on the labour market and of obtaining a deeper understanding of the spatial analysis of volatile labour markets within the creative economy.

With regard to the concept of vulnerability, we have tested a social-constructional approach that, inspired by ideas drawn from Actor-Network Theory, understands social construction as a process through which heterogeneous elements are associated. This idea negates old dichotomies between nature and culture and between materiality and immateriality in that the body and materiality are regarded as having a significance equal to that of institutions and networks.

The empirical analysis has shown how musical actors construct relational frameworks involving four different dimensions—market, institutions, identities and networks—in which associations between heterogeneous elements are produced, arduously maintained or deliberately dissolved or loosened. Competition, for example, is constructed in and through concrete situations in which supply and demand coalesce, which are, as it were, mentally scaled up to form an abstract notion of the market. In the resilience formation of actors via the management of their own identity individuals develop "prismatic identities" with different facets in the hope that these facets, which on their own are considered insufficient for successfully engaging in competition, will supplement one another. Each of these facets is refined by creating a connection between physical attributes, a series of career stages and a repertoire comprising dancing, singing or acting. This understanding of vulnerability and resilience seems to be a promising field of enquiry for the spatial sciences, because spatial categories such as places (e.g. premiere parties, auditions, stages), distances (e.g. international competition), borders (see territorial mismatches) and mobility (journeys to workplaces, tours) are integral elements of these constructional processes.

The described mechanisms of the identification of vulnerability (delimitation of threatened entities, the identification of elements offering security or posing threats in regard to these entities) and the mechanisms for increasing resilience (the repositioning of the centrally located, threatened entity, the change in relationships to individual elements, the addition of new elements offering security or the elimination or alteration of threatening elements) have been empirically described using a small and in many respects specific segment of the labour market. However, the mechanisms are of such a generic character that it seems possible to detect them in other fields as well.

The proposed view on vulnerability and resilience inspired by Actor-Network Theory has also yielded new insights

into the spatiality of creative economies and volatile labour markets in the knowledge economy. The specific characteristics of the labour market for musical actors, such as the relatively low significance of formal qualifications, the time limitations on work relationships, and the restrictions on the capacity to carry out this profession to a certain age-range (up until around 40) suggest that this case is an exception that can be generalised to a limited extent only. However, some findings can be transferred to other labour markets that also exhibit some of these features. For example, many professions in the creative industries are also characterised by only marginally formalised paths to qualification (e.g. copywriting). Temporary work relationships are widespread beyond the narrow field of the creative industries (even extending to construction engineering). Mobility requirements can also be observed in sectors that have little in common with the creative industries (e.g. the recently discussed imposition of mobility requirements on German military personnel). To this extent the musical sector brings together many features of labour markets that could accrue increasing significance in modern knowledge societies.

The spatial analysis of volatile labour markets has hitherto been analysed from the perspective of local production complexes (cf., for example, Moßig 2004; Vinodrai 2009). A strongly local dimension has been attributed particularly to labour markets, for instance due to the limited spatial local reach of informal, job-related networks or due to certainties provided by territorial institutions. The constructional processes that have been placed at the centre of this analysis also reflect a sectoral structure characterised by spatial concentration in only few centres. However, our findings also suggest that these spatial structures have been moulded by mobile and multi-local practices in which jobs do not follow the people, but people still have to follow the jobs. In this process networks emerge not primarily through permanent co-location at one place but rather through temporary co-presence at many different locations. Contrary to the bulk of the literature, territorial institutions are barely experienced in terms of reducing individual uncertainty. Rather, on the labour markets for musical performers overlapping institutional regimes induce institutional and territorial mismatches that might even increase the individual market participants' vulnerability and uncertainty.

However, there are good reasons why these expansive and unstable action spaces of musical actors are best organised from a fixed local base—the home base. This is important if a degree of more intensive private contact is to be cultivated despite ceaseless mobility. The evasion and subsistence strategies of performers rely on enduring contacts. Identity management also requires regularity and duration in terms of the relationship to trainers, teachers and educators. Moreover, home bases are accorded greater value when local opportunities exist for entrepreneurial activities (such as theatre workshops and band projects), which allow the enforced creative pauses between engagements to be filled with meaning and perspective. With respect to market chances, preferable locations are those in which opportunities arise that go beyond local requirements (cf. Glückler 2007). The home base gains additional attractiveness when many of the events for strategically meeting important people take place there. In the ideal case it should be a theatre location where many premiere parties are held, productions are often hosted and at least some auditions are organised. The local stable dimension of mobile and multi-local resilience practices of musical actors is thus less favoured by agglomeration effects than by urbanity effects.

In future research it will be interesting to inquire more precisely into how the concept of resilience is understood. It makes a significant difference whether resilience is understood in the sense of adaption to the requirements of the labour market or in the far more extensive terms of the general adaptability of individuals in their efforts to protect themselves from vulnerabilities (cf. Pike/Dawley/Tomaney 2010). In particular, the fact that, due to its physical requirements, the profession of the musical actor can only be pursued until around the age of forty makes it necessary, for example, for people in this professional group not only to repeatedly reinvent themselves but even more fundamentally to reflect on their second career after their musical one has finished. These dynamics characterising the construction of resilience within the tension between adaptation and adaptability (cf. Grabher/Stark 1997) could further inspire both spatially relevant labour market research and the discourse around resilience and vulnerability.

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