

Ibert, Oliver; Schmidt, Suntje

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Article

Once You Are In You Might Need to Get Out: Adaptation and Adaptability in Volatile Labor Markets—the Case of Musical Actors

Oliver Ibert ^{1,2,*} and Suntje Schmidt ¹

¹ Leibniz-Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IRS) Erkner, Flakenstraße 28–31, Erkner 15537, Germany; E-Mail: schmidts@irs-net.de

² Department for Geographical Sciences, Freie Universität Berlin, Malteserstraße 74–100, Berlin 12249, Germany; E-Mail: ibert@zedat.fu-berlin.de

* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed; E-Mail: ibert@irs-net.de; Tel.: +49-336-279-315-2; Fax: +49-336-279-311-1.

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Abstract: The labor market for musical actors is very challenging for several reasons. On the one hand, it is difficult to acquire a position: qualification requirements are high, competition is fierce and reputation is difficult to build up. On the other hand, once in it is often necessary to get out: once being in, market demand for roles with a stage age above 45 drops dramatically and it becomes increasingly hard to stay healthy due to the threefold exposure to bodily strains of acting, dancing and singing. This labor market thus presents potentially interesting situations, in which the meaning of the concept resilience—in the sense of valuing preservation—can change fundamentally. While at the beginning of a career, the main challenge is often to adapt to market requirements, in the second half of a career it becomes increasingly important to become adaptable to a broader spectrum of opportunities, including exit scenarios. The paper generates empirically grounded ideal-typical accounts of the meaning of adaptation and adaptability for musical actors with a focus on the actors' networking strategies, their professional identities, and the corresponding ways of perceiving and creating spaces.

Keywords: vulnerability; resilience; adaptation; adaptability; labor market; musical actors

1. Introduction

The social scientific concepts of vulnerability and resilience provide a unique mindset that combines the operations of valuation and preservation. They denote a distinct mode of how humans interact within an ever changing world by combining two operations of social construction. First, the twin concepts imply the identification of a “valued entity” [1], be it a beautiful object, a beloved person, a peer group, the surrounding neighborhood, a sensitive eco-system or a technical system. Second, vulnerability and resilience include an intensified perception of the manifold possible harms that threaten the internal integrity of this valued entity. While the notion vulnerability focuses more on the identification of potential threats, which can unfold gradually (‘slow burn’) or erupt abruptly (‘shocks’) [2], the notion resilience addresses the ability to protect the threatened entity from possible harms in order to secure its survival. The notion resilience, in other words, describes a capacity to withstand and absorb disruptions and shocks. Resilience can either be achieved through the entity’s robustness to ‘bounce back’ to its former shape or by its flexibility to change its internal structures when confronted with changing requirements from its environment [3,4].

In this paper, we are concerned with situations in which the relationship between valuation and preservation is fundamentally precarious and ambiguous. In a complex and chaotic environment, like the volatile labor markets of musical actors (our empirical case) where phases of stability alternate with phases of volatile change, the concept of resilience poses intricate challenges. In this kind of environment—and we assume that in the long run many, if not all, social practices of resilience are positioned in such an environment—the concept of resilience can abruptly change its meaning. During phases of relative stability, it seems most promising to adapt oneself to foreseeable requirements posed by the environment. In more turbulent phases, however, measures to enhance adaptation are no longer helpful. Adaptation too much to one specific environment might even restrict the ability to explore unknown or disregarded strategies that would open up new avenues of development. Paradoxically the valued entity has to change in order to remain the same [5,6].

We seek to contribute to this reasoning on the dialectic tensions between adaptation and adaptability by focusing on resilience practices that have to alternate between both of these poles: the labor market strategies developed by musical actors. The title of our paper—once you are in you might need to get out—addresses such situations, in which actors have to make choices between further exploiting known strategies or investing in explorative new avenues. The aim of this paper is to generate empirically grounded, ideal-typical accounts of the dynamic meanings of adaptation and adaptability. We are thus particularly interested in changes in the dispositions towards adaptation or adaptability. We assume that at the beginning of a career for musical actors the challenge to *adapt* to market requirements is more pronounced while in a later stage of a career it becomes increasingly important to remain or become *adaptable* to a broader spectrum of opportunities, including exit scenarios.

Moreover, we seek to explore the spatiality of these ambiguous resilience practices. The spatial dimension of resilience has so far mainly been elaborated by focusing on the “*resilience of places*” ([6], p. 63 own emphasis). We, in contrast, focus on *spatial strategies of resilience*. Our study is about labor market actors and the relational spaces they create and enact through their careers. We thereby analyze how space and time are perceived and utilized by musical actors either when pursuing strategies of adaptation or adaptability. As we will show, these labor markets cannot be adequately described as

being locally embedded or territorially restricted. Rather, the predominant impression is one of mobility and fluidity.

In the subsequent sections, we will further outline the contribution of the theoretical concepts of adaptation and adaptability as socially constructed resilience strategies and discuss their relevance for volatile and creative labor markets. After briefly introducing the methodological approach, in the main empirical sections, we seek to demonstrate how musical actors construct relational spaces when navigating between the poles of adaptation and adaptability. In particular, we analyze how our respondents position themselves on markets, manage their professional identities, create, maintain and utilize their social networks, as well as perceive and use space when constructing their labor market resilience. We conclude by pointing towards our conceptual contributions to the resilience discourse as well as our empirical contributions to career research and socio-scientific spatial analysis.

2. Resilience through Adaptation and Adaptability

Resilience in our view is not a factual, quasi-objectively, measurable ability that one can attribute to a given entity. Instead, resilience relies on active and purposeful collective construction work in which—as in actor network theory—incommensurable entities (*i.e.*, of differing nature or quality) are associated with another [7]. The resulting relational web within which vulnerability and resilience practices are situated consists of three main elements: a valued entity, which is usually located center-stage, external entities with either threatening or protective effects on the valued entity, and the associations between valued and external entities of different qualities [1].

All these central parameters are in no way quasi-natural or pre-existing. Rather, they have to be conceived as the outcomes of collective construction work. For instance, the identification of a valued entity, be it a group, a region, a technical infrastructure or, as in our case, the individual labor market participant, requires the active delimitation of this entity *vis à vis* other entities [7] and the negotiation of its collective value [8]. Likewise, the identification of external entities is contingent upon the perception of the environment. The perception of a threatening or protective effect on the valued entity depends on prior and collectively shared knowledge about causalities and interdependencies. Moreover, within the emergent relational web, relations between entities usually unfold along multiple dimensions, like possible physical impact/exposure, technical precaution, institutional protection, and social support. Again, it is a matter of active collective construction to determine which of these dimensions are acknowledged, taken seriously, or highlighted in comparison to others. Due to their complexity, relations can even have paradoxical effects and can simultaneously be perceived as being threatening and protective. For instance, for musical actors a role offer from abroad first of all provides income. However, the same offer raises new uncertainties, as two national systems of social security and tax laws are now involved (origin of musical performer and place of employment) and it might be unclear which of them applies [9]. These specifications show that calculations of vulnerability and resilience strongly rely on individual and collectively shared *perceptions* of the environment. Both the optimistic and pessimistic perceptions of the event are thus selective and based on a bounded rationality. Furthermore, threatening or protective associations are subject to collective interpretation and thus can always be disputed and are evaluated in the light of interests [1]. The preservation-valuing mode of looking at the world thus inevitably produces blind spots. The gaps and omissions that signify

ignorance within constructed relational webs of vulnerability and resilience are therefore as meaningful as the explicated elements and identified relations.

The more the aspect of perception is taken seriously the more the theorization of mechanisms that increase resilience shifts from quasi-objective features to reflective capabilities. For instance, in organization sciences features such as an organization's "robustness" (*i.e.*, ability of elements and structures to withstand or rebound from stress), "redundancy" (*i.e.*, the availability of elements, sub-units or systems that might substitute for critical functions) or "resourcefulness" (capacity to mobilize resources under conditions of threat and improvise on them) [10] are increasingly complemented with cognitive dispositions that deal with the unavoidable limitations of perceptions in a productive way. An example here would be the ability to question established knowledge claims and to pro-actively seek new information. Furthermore, "respectful interaction" is given high priority as it increases the ability to accept opinion given by others even if they contradict own cognitive predispositions [11,12]. These conceptualizations acknowledge the selective and disputable nature of perceptions and at the same time seek to explore ways in which divergent interpretive schemes interact in a manner that increases an organization's "mindfulness" [12]. The main idea is to preserve several independent sensing elements [5]. Blind spots within relational webs of resilience can be identified and illuminated by contrasting collectively shared perceptions with alternative views generated from different angles.

Constructing resilience is necessarily a dynamic process in which changes in the relational web are induced deliberately in order to preserve the valued entity [13]. However, practices of dynamic preservation can have very different orientations. In this paper, we refer to the analytical distinction between adaptation and adaptability to specify these distinct possible orientations [2,5,6]. Adaptation and adaptability illuminate the complex interdependencies between the internal structures and functions of a resilient entity and an external environment. Adaptation and adaptability thus highlight the tensions between the internal integrity of a valued entity on the one hand and its adaptability to changing external conditions on the other.

For adaptation, a former state of affairs is the major point of reference and the ability to "bounce back" becomes the most important capability. An extreme example of absorbing disturbances without shifting to an alternative regime is the quick restoration of the emergency operations center in New York after 9/11. This center was located in the World Trade Centre. Shortly after the attacks on the twin towers, the center had to be evacuated before its entire physical structure collapsed. "Less than three days after the attacks, emergency management personnel had established a site that in many respects *mirrored the destroyed facility* and that, although lacking in elegance, *preserved and magnified many of the functional attributes* of the original [...] complex" ([10], p. 38; own emphasis). Bouncing back to pre-disaster-state thus either means maintaining a valued entity's internal *structures*, as the definition by Holling ("the persistence of relationships within a system", ([14], p. 17) suggests, or maintaining its core *functions*, as Redman and Kinzig (2003) ("to remain functionally stable in the face of stress"; [15], p. 5) highlight.

With respect to external conditions, the idea of adaptation implies that state variables, driving variables, and parameters [14] in the environment can dynamically change and are likely to cause stress and disturbance for a valued entity. However, the scope of dynamics is limited, as the critical parameters are already specified and impending risks are—at least in principle—understood. Thus, adaptation is a dynamic learning process [13], though one that follows a "pre-conceived path" ([6], p. 62)

and mainly exploits (in the sense of March [16]) supposedly well understood causal mechanisms. Within such a limited environment, practices may be used to reach desired and predefined outcomes. Adaptation thus explicitly addresses learning processes. However, learning is targeted to known goals and takes place only within predefined boundaries. The logic of adaptation is therefore one of maintaining the internal structure and functionality of an entity while dynamically optimizing its fit to the requirements posed by a specific environment [5].

The idea of adaptability arose from a critical reflection on the limitations of adaptive strategies ([5], p. 534). Adaptability “emerges through decisions to leave a path that may have proven successful in the past in favor of a new, related or alternative trajectory” ([6], p. 62). Unlike adaptation, adaptability also connotes internal restructuring. The idea is that in order to preserve a system’s integrity, it might become necessary to reshuffle internal linkages and to re-define functions. More concretely, the identity and separateness of the *elements* that make up a valued entity are still preserved, but the *linkages between these elements* are loose rather than tight and can be re-arranged swiftly. Such a system of loosely coupled elements can adjust to several different local contingencies without affecting the whole system and can “potentially retain a greater number of mutations and novel solutions than would be the case with a tightly coupled system” ([5], p. 538). In this line of reasoning, the former state of affairs is no longer the central point of reference when it comes to resilience.

Adaptability further implies a different quality in the interdependence of a valued entity and its environment. In the short run, environmental changes might remain within a corridor of a known logic. However, in the long run, future changes in the environment are regarded as fundamentally uncertain (in the sense of Knight [17]) and thus can easily exceed expectations, and will most likely be difficult to anticipate. Hence, adaptability includes the paradoxical task of being prepared for unforeseen, rapid and pervasive changes [6]. Furthermore, while adaptation is mainly about *adjusting a system to the environment*, adaptability takes the possibility of creatively *adjusting the environment to the systems needs* [18] much more seriously into account. First, the environment is treated as inherently ambiguous. When viewed through multiple lenses it can become subject to re-interpretation [5], wherein liabilities may turn into opportunities. Second, adaptability encompasses direct intervention in the environment. For instance, Weick [11] theorized “bricolage”—the creative rearrangement of known elements taken from the environment in order to go beyond the current state of affairs—as an integral element of resilience [10].

In career studies, the terms have been discussed with regards to well-being and job satisfaction. In this research strand, adaptability includes individual construction processes that establish a distinction between oneself and the labor market. Labor market participants look towards the future in order to “improve the match between themselves and the outer world, and at the same time develop themselves” ([19], p. 84). Adaptability thus implies self-management strategies to act within the labor market while simultaneously modifying and changing it. Similar to our study, labor market resilience is placed between the ability to cope with predictable tasks and requirements on the one hand and the ability to handle unpredictable influences and adjustments to work and working conditions on the other hand ([20], p. 254).

In social scientific debates about the precariousness of creative labor, some of the external threats, which individual creative workers are confronted with, have been taken up for discussion (see e.g., [21]). Musical actors, the group we examine empirically, face most of these risks. For instance, like theater

and TV actors they are confronted with oversupplied labor markets [22], in which labor is increasingly under cost-pressures [23]¹. Also, our data reveals that availability of work drops dramatically after the age of about 40, particularly for women [22,25]. As in many project-based businesses [26–28], temporary contracts or pay-by-work on a freelance basis are widespread. Similar to designers [29], in most professional biographies of musical actors, phases of employment alternate with phases of freelancing, underemployment or even unemployment. Due to the particular segmentation of the labor market, which will be specified in greater detail in Section 4, musical actors can only meet labor market requirements when adopting a multi-local mobility pattern [30]. Spatial mobility and contractual flexibility together undermine the musical performers' fit to institutionalized schemes of social security. As these measures are usually territorially bound [29] and often rest upon the assumption of long-term payments of fees, musical actors often face institutional as well as territorial misfits [9]. Finally, the musical genre combines the performing arts of singing, dancing and acting. According to one of our interviewees, a specialist for health problems of musical actors, the delicate combination of three particular kinds of occupational health risks (for dancing see: [31]) overall increases in the long run the performers' physical vulnerability.

In this article, we wish to explore the rich trading zone between the discourses on vulnerability and resilience, adaptation and adaptability on the one hand, and the briefly sketched, most recent contributions on different dimensions of precariousness within a broad set of creative labor markets on the other hand. We thus deliberately de-contextualize our empirical case—volatile labor markets—and reframe it with terminology derived from the resilience literature—adaptation and adaptability. This reframing is on the one hand well suited to better grasp the role of social construction, perceptions and agency in individual strategies that seek to respond to fundamental uncertainty and institutional ambiguity on volatile labor markets. On the other hand, the reframed empirical case highlights aspects of resilience that are novel in this discourse.

More particularly, our study first seeks to contribute to the discourse on vulnerability and resilience by highlighting the spatial dimension of adaptation and adaptability. In many social sciences, space is not regarded as a central issue. For instance, organization sciences are, of course, concerned with the resilience of organizations but treat space only as a matter of subordinate relevance. Other branches of the social sciences that are primarily concerned with spatial issues due to their (sub-) disciplinary traditions, like human geography, urban sociology or regional economics, contribute to the discourse by addressing the resilience of spatial entities. In particular, cities [32,33] and regions [2–4] have been interpreted as systems with an ability to “anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from a disturbance” ([34], p. 14). However, it is questionable how far this way of integrating space into the resilience discourse is appropriate to stimulate a wider debate about spatiality between different branches of the social sciences. In our analysis, we thus do not focus on the “*resilience of places*” ([6], p. 63 own emphasis) or regions. Rather, our empirical focus is on *spatial strategies of resilience*. The

¹ As valid statistics for musical actors are lacking we can only deduce average income situations from our interviews. For instance, one interviewee describes a situation where a 6 week job leads to an income that lies below the federal unemployment compensation, even for experienced performers. There is, however, evidence from adjacent labor markets about dangerously low wages [21] and income inequalities in general and between female and male performers in particular [24].

research focus lies on musical actors and the spaces they enact when positioning themselves on the labor market and when interacting with threatening or protective entities (like employers, theaters, institutions, competitors, trainers, *etc.*) they perceive in their environment. Our approach suggests that spatial categories, like proximity and distance, territories and borders, spatial reach as well as mobility and fixation, are integral parts of specifying the nature of relations within a relational web of resilience [1].

Second, we seek to explore some understudied dynamics of resilience. So far, in the discourse on regional resilience, theorists have located one spatial system center stage and have reasoned on whether this system interacts with its environment either in an adaptive or adaptable way. This line of reasoning suggests a strong trade-off between adaptation and adaptability [5]. In our study, in contrast, we analyze a system, the labor market for musical actors, which is made up of several inter-dependent sub-systems, labor market participants, each of whom is strategizing about adaptation and adaptability. In other words, we study a highly *dynamic and open system*, in which strategies of adaptation and adaptability *co-exist and compete*. In such a volatile environment, a straightforward trade-off between both approaches seems insufficient to grasp the nature of the observable resilience practices. Rather, as our empirical analysis will reveal, for musical actors it becomes necessary to shift between adaptation and adaptability, depending on the particular situation. In general, it is necessary to strictly follow adaptive strategies to get into the market. However, in the long run, it is equally important to cultivate one's adaptability in order to stay in the business without losing the ability to exit the market.

3. Research Design

Drawing on the work of Alfred Schütz [35] we conceive calculations of vulnerability and resilience as “first order constructions”, that is, socio-technical construction that is situated in practice and with a primary function of enabling purposeful action. For the social-scientific analysis of vulnerability and resilience, however, we undertake “second order constructions” [35]. We thus examine the first order observations of our respondents in order to identify typical patterns within them. During the interviews we asked our respondents, 23 German musical actors, to reflect upon their labor market vulnerability and their strategies of reactively adjusting to this environment and of proactively intervening in it. Moreover, we also encouraged them to reflect upon possible consequences of their own decisions and their short- and long-term labor market prospects. In other words, during the interviews we created a situation, in which our respondents put themselves into the position of a valued entity and interpreted their earlier and actual career decisions in the light of perceived external labor market threats. According to this research design, the perceptions, interpretations and ascriptions of meanings in the performer's first order constructions are at the center of our analysis.

We decided to analyze the labor market of musical actors in Germany for two main reasons. First, the selected field offers some scope for generalization. As was elaborated above, musical actors epitomize extreme as well as widespread features of volatile and precarious labor markets. Our findings on this particular labor market are thus comparable to related creative occupations, but also apply to occupations outside the cultural industries. Of course, the presented findings reflect some of the particularities of the German system of welfare regulations and state support and it is beyond the scope of this article to scrutinize international discrepancies between welfare states. However, our argument is valid far beyond the German context. Musical actors in Germany have to worry about

institutional and territorial misfits within a broad spectrum of smoothly working public and private welfare offers. Hence, Germany epitomizes all those institutional contexts, in which micro practices of labor market resilience face welfare measures that rest on the assumptions that labor relations will be stable in the long run and will not cross the territorial boundaries of the system.

Second, the selected field seems particularly promising for providing lessons on social practices of resilience that are strongly shaped by the tensions and contradictions between adaptation and adaptability. On the one hand, it seems to be necessary in these labor markets to adapt to the business' standards, norms and conventions, otherwise it would be virtually impossible to gain access. For instance, qualification requirements are very demanding as musical actors have to learn singing, dancing and acting up to a professional level. Moreover, the prospects of being part of a musical show attract so many actors that the labor market is largely over-supplied, while demand is stagnant or even shrinking (compare also e.g., [36]). On the other hand, however, it is often necessary to get out, even after a foothold in the business has been gained. In the absence of a star-system², it is extremely difficult to build up a public reputation. Moreover, market demand for roles with a stage age older than 45 decreases dramatically, particularly for women. Further, it becomes increasingly difficult to fully recover and stay healthy due to a threefold exposure to the bodily strains of acting, dancing, and singing [9] as well as the constant necessity to acquire future job contracts. In other words, throughout the career of a musical actor the meaning of resilience can change fundamentally.

To focus on this tension, we contrast data from matched pair samples of qualitative interviews. We juxtapose data obtained in 13 interviews with musical actors at the beginning of their careers (six male and seven female performers) with data from 10 additional interviews conducted with advanced actors (half of all interviews with women). In comparison to the neophytes, most of the senior actors had gathered a broad spectrum of on- and off-stage experiences within and outside of the musical sector. This includes experiences in how to manage institutional mismatches in terms of unemployment compensations, social security as well as health care (for a more detailed debate see [9]). Only two of the 10 interviewees (male and female) belonging to the latter group have parental duties and one of them (female) was about to start a family. Both sample groups consist of highly competitive and more ordinary actors, measured in terms of number of main roles in their track records and graduations from reputable musical schools that execute multiple-step selection procedures.

With the help of this matched paired sample, we were able to compare strategies emblematic for the early phases of a career, in which adaptation to labor market requirements is the main challenge, with those of the later stages in a career, in which adaptability to a much more broadly conceived labor-related environment increasingly becomes dominant. Furthermore, the contrast of neophytes' views with experienced workers' assessments also enables us to access the diachronic dimension within professional careers, the changing perspectives during a career and the individual learning processes taking place in labor markets.

In addition, we conducted three interviews with industry experts who had a professional overview of the labor market. They provided deep insights into the training and education of musical actors. One of these interviewees is professionally concerned with the mental as well as physical strains of musical

² This might be a particularity of the German musical business that emerged and grew by licensing out successful Broadway productions, such as *Cats* in 1984 and *Starlight Express* in 1988.

actors. Finally, one of the authors undertook a participant observation for a whole day in a typical labor market situation for young musical actors, the “Intendantenvorsprechen” in Berlin, a yearly audition in which graduates from public musical study programs perform for directors, producers and choreographers, with many of them leaving the event with a job offer. All interviews were conducted in German and were fully transcribed for further analysis. For the purposes of this paper, quotations from this material were translated into English by the authors.

4. Labor Markets: Competition and Positional Identities

Musicals are produced in different organizational settings, which influence the institutionalized employment forms as well as temporal aspects of employment.

(1) *Long runs* are privately financed shows staged in privately owned theatres in one of the centers of the musical business. Increasingly, long runs are also presented in mobile, circus-like theaters that move from place to place. Long runs offer full time positions for up to two years either in a role or in the ensemble. Employment is usually subject to public social security, involving health, pension and unemployment insurances.

(2) *Musical tours* are mobile shows that move from one permanent stage to the other. Typically these shows last from a couple of weeks to half a year. They are staged in regional theatres and only play one or two shows at each place before moving on. Given the shorter employment times, full time positions, as found in long runs, are more seldom, though not untypical. However, for mobile shows it is also common to hire actors on a freelance basis. Musical actors spoke of the high degree of mobility found in this form of employment:

“So I was on tour last year [...] in 14 different cities in Germany, Switzerland and Italy, and had no fixed home, so it was really like being a gypsy” (Interview #24).

(3) *Festivals* are cyclical events, often open air, that usually take place during the summer break between the public theaters’ seasons. For actors, these festivals are valued as opportunities for bridging the summer time, in which the labor market usually stagnates. Actors are employed in festivals almost exclusively on a freelance basis. Some of these festivals are prestigious, e.g., in Tecklenburg or Bad Hersfeld, and thus offer additional opportunities to build up a reputation.

Finally, today most (4) *public theaters* include one or two musicals in their seasonal programs. Musical performers are usually not in the standing cast of a public theater and therefore are employed on a freelance or temporal employee basis as guest actors. Due to the program structure of theatres, musicals are shown only on one or two evenings per week. This implies that one engagement alone underutilizes the actors’ capacities and is also not sufficient to earn a living. Thus, actors in this segment of the labor market seek additional engagements at different places. They are therefore forced to individually coordinate rather fixed playing schedules at two or even more different venues.

Typically, musical actors have experiences in all four segments of the labor market. This implies that throughout their careers they have to manage an enormous diversity of institutional (employment vs. self-employment) and territorial settings (pay taxes in different countries), different time frames (short-term vs. mid-term, constant vs. occasional employment) and also connect the different locations through mobility. Besides these four major settings that already offer a wide portfolio of roles and

positions, additional job opportunities can be identified for actors, e.g., in the entertainment sector on ship cruises or as singers and dancers in bands and shows. Furthermore, since musical performers are trained in acting, singing and dancing, they might have access to adjacent, specialized labor markets (e.g., for theater or movie actors) too. The following empirical results will juxtapose how young actors and more experienced actors navigate their way through this landscape of labor market opportunities and how they deal with the associated challenges.

4.1. From Reacting to Demand to Creating Demand

Though the above described labor market framework is similar for both young and advanced performers, labor market perceptions, interpretations and labor market related strategies differ clearly between these groups.

Performers at the beginning of their careers monitor job offers and audition announcements for musical roles very closely through established channels, such as ZAV³, online portals or musical magazines. That means they mainly react to positions offered by musical companies and theaters. This reactive search behavior is connected with the fear of missing announcements, especially those by public theaters:

“But, not all roles can be found there: especially those of all city theaters and so on. They never issue calls on such portals. It works only through agencies.” (Interview #14)

Because of that, private agencies are believed to provide valuable assistance when screening the labor market:

“But of course, if one has the luxury of being in an agency, they would be searching for fitting role descriptions, and then one has much more options.” (Interview #16)

To gain a job contract, actors and actresses have to pass several auditions. An audition for a role consists of several (about three) competitive sessions and—as our respondents estimate—on average only one out of 10 applications is successful. Therefore, besides the fear of missing an announcement, young performers problematize the high transaction costs for participating in competition. Against this background, young actors adapt to labor market requirements as much as possible by streamlining their travelling habits towards more efficiency. For instance, travel costs are reduced by booking return trips whenever possible (instead of staying overnight) or by saving accommodation costs when spending the night with a fellow colleague. Adaptation hence consists of measures that enable performers to fulfill market requirements as much as possible.

In contrast, advanced musical actors have a broader understanding of the labor market itself. Instead of just being fixated on finding the suitable role offer, they search more broadly for interesting projects they would like to get involved in, including performances adjacent to the musical sector, such as acting, singing or vaudeville. Additionally, they also work on further income sources, for instance following entrepreneurial aspirations like creating their own show. It seems to be more important for

³ ZAV=Zentrale Auslands-und Fachvermittlung Künstlervermittlung, Central Agency for Foreign Artists and Specialists. This agency is part of the public employment agency.

them to find self-fulfillment and to experience the creative process than simply to “just” perform as an actor in a role defined by someone else:

“In these long runs it is predetermined what you play, when you are on stage, how a joke has to run, the choreography of the ensemble is given. [...] The creative process is not very complex [...] but when you go somewhere with a director and colleagues you have not seen before and you work on a piece that is not there yet. Costumes have to be made, stage setting has to be made just for this show, [...] This is more fun. It's harder work, but it's much more fun because you can self-actualize.” (Interview #6)

In contrast to their younger counterparts, advanced performers distrust the official information channels. For instance,

“with the agencies it is often the case that they represent more people than they can actually handle, because they need the money [...] and then they invest work only to a limited extent” (Interview #2).

Moreover, private agencies are believed to earn most money with their “star” customers. Hence, there are only a few private agencies that specialize in musical actors (because the business does not promote “stars”). Other agencies, which serve a mixed spectrum of customers, are suspected to privilege movie actors over the less profitable musical actors. Experienced actors know about the limitations of the services provided by private agencies. Thus, not all of them use these services. If they consult agencies they do so only selectively (e.g., to get a job in advertising spots) and with an awareness that they cannot rely on them in all situations.

Competition in the labor market manifests itself most prominently in auditions. In these situations, the abstract idea of a market instantaneously becomes concrete, as supply and demand come together in one place at the same time:

“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).

The audition context itself, however, is interpreted and utilized differently by the two groups of respondents.

Younger musical actors perceive competition primarily in relation to other young performers with comparable bodily attributes (as in the quote above). This reflects the wide-spread practice within the business of selecting performers usually due to specific bodily attributes [22] that are required by the role (e.g., the masculine type of the young and blond hero). In these instances, auditions are seen as stressful competitive situations, in which intensive “emotional labor” [37] has to be done to sustain countenance in the face of the competitive situation [38]:

“What’s just really bad at auditions is this competition. It’s very, very often so that you just sit quietly in the corner, because you do not dare to talk to the others, because of biting commentaries or the like.” (Interview #15)

At the same time, this also offers the opportunity to learn who the competitors are and to receive reference points in terms of improving one’s own attributes:

“When I apply for a role, I always see the same three or four other people. During the study—at the end of university and the beginning of my professional career—I attended six auditions, and really I saw the same

three, four people in these six auditions and this also surprised me a little because I thought that the market is actually larger.” (Interview #24)

Advanced actors have a more differentiated and far reaching perception of labor market competition. One major topic for them is, for example, the huge oversupply of freshly trained actors, who are willing to work for little money. Also, they are aware of competition from international markets, particularly for roles with small shares of (German) text or for specialized roles (e.g., ballet dancers from Eastern European countries). Advanced actors articulate a much fiercer competition, not just in general, but especially for women. This is even described by male actors:

“There is competition, of course. I am lucky as a male because there are much less male [performers] in this sector than female ones. It is much more difficult for women.” (Interview #7)

Finally, more advanced actors also assess the present competitive situation in comparison to earlier situations. From this point of view, they see a long-term tendency of a huge oversupply of actors, on the one hand, and a stagnating or even shrinking market on the other. Privately run musical schools are accused of producing an over-supply of labor force that might be advantageous for the theaters but is definitely disadvantageous for the individual actors. From their point of view, the size of the market is decreasing due to financial pressures on public theatres and due to a saturation of the market for private theaters (closure of theatres, no new foundations of theatres). In contrast to young performers, more advanced actors also confront bodily and stage age as competitive factors.

4.2. From ‘Telescopic Identity’ to ‘Prismatic Identities’

Musical actors not only compete in terms of offering their labor. Rather, comparable to models in the fashion industries or actors in public theatres [39], they offer “their entire embodied self” ([25], p. 774). Hence, developing further the own identity as part of their employability [40] is a permanent task for them. One important aspect of this ongoing identity management is to create a personalized profile that distinguishes one actor from another, allowing him or her to “stand out in the crowd” ([41], p. 1144). Strategies for creating such positional identities clearly differ between the two compared groups and can again be systemized in terms of adaptation and adaptability.

As pointed out earlier, actors at the beginning of their career have a much clearer understanding of their labor market in terms of roles, forms of engagements and institutional settings. The interviews show that young actors know about the necessity to build up a role profile and to collect many different experiences in musical productions. In their perception, professional resilience is ensured by collecting as many valuable experiences as possible as a musical performer. Therefore, they invest time and effort in creating an ideal musical performer’s CV, associating themselves with reputable employers, big theatres, prominent locations and, of course, many star roles. Once this has been achieved, future auditions will be passed more easily, more successfully or might even be skipped completely (interview #19). We call this adaptive orientation in building up a positional identity *telescopic*, as it is clearly focused on a particular image. At the same time it is oriented towards a distant future, as none of the neophytes believes that she or he is already in good shape. To remain on track, young musical actors almost completely internalize the labor market requirements and make them their second nature:

“I believe that this is often the best possible impression to leave: That you do *not pretend something, that you really are like yourself*. [...] Show that you are progressing in professional terms, that you do not sit down and relax but rather always show that you are willing to give 100%, also that you are concentrated, that you are thankful for having the job and leave your sorrows at the front door. When you enter the theatre you have to be 100% alert, astute, well-rested, fit. And you have to be serious” (interview #19, own emphasis).

Experienced actors follow a different strategy. Most of our respondents from this group can refer to an impressive track record of prominent roles and a wide range of engagements throughout the world. Yet, competition for them is still perceived as omnipresent, even as increasingly fierce. From their point of view, the assumption that work experience and the accumulation of reputation would decrease the pressures of competition eventually turned out to be false. Hence, adaptation to labor market requirements appears less promising as a resilience strategy:

“Actually, musical actors are no-names. This is Danny from ‘Grease’ and this is the main role from so and so. The name is not of interest to anybody. There are cast lists. But no-one takes a look—maybe apart from a few hardcore fans. There are some of them, but they are somehow scary. It does not help to build up a profile. [...] Whatever you have done before, you always have to stand there [at auditions, the authors] again and sing or dance and you always start from zero. [...] A moment ago you were the star, and in the next piece you get a role you are ashamed of” (interview #1).

Under these pressures, advanced actors orient their efforts onto a broader range of market segments adjacent to the musical sector. Many of them try to take advantage of their broad training as dancers, actors and singers and try to compete on more specialized segments, like for instance, drama or film acting. However, the institutionalized boundaries between these genres are experienced as highly rigid. In these specialized markets, the classical CV resulting from a career as a musical actor is seen suspiciously:

“It’s not even worth applying for work in a film as a musical actor. You have to apply as a dramatic actor. There are many clichés around about musical actors, that we cannot act properly. [...] Musical actors have around three different CVs. One identifies them as an actor, another as a dancer and another as a singer” (Interview #1).

We call these strategies of multiplying positional identities *prismatic*. A prism is not clearly focused. Analogously, the positioning on the labor market now takes place without clear and pre-existing reference points. In such a situation, it is no longer promising to fully internalize the requirements of one particular labor market. Rather, the plasticity of one’s own personality, its flexible suitability for different sectors now becomes decisive:

“Since my activity field is very wide-ranging, it is of course very difficult to say what fields might possibly... So first and foremost I hope that I can do what I enjoy and what makes me satisfied. This is most important.” (Interview #2)

Furthermore, a prism consists of many sharp facets each of which produces a clear, though slightly different image. Analogously, musical actors multiply their positional identities not by blurring boundaries, but by streamlining their multiple CVs according to the different market segments’ requirements. They reflect the internal logics of each of these segments by selectively leaving out

apparently undesired episodes in their CVs while emphasizing (or even inventing) supposedly relevant experiences. Prismatic identities often encompass professional self-images beyond the sphere of performing arts. For instance, one interviewee has built up a career in coaching business managers in presentation and communication techniques, others have built up careers as trainers or teachers.

The prism-like multiplication of “possible selves” [19] increases suitability for different labor-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 [9]. Moreover, prismatic identities provide access to several possible development paths and thus might also be utilized when completely leaving the musical sector.

5. Networks: About Outsiders Who Want to Get In and Insiders Who Consider Getting Out

Musical actors work on a project-basis in which fixed-term employment contracts are the general rule. In such a context, social networks prepare and informally initiate subsequent employments once work contracts have expired [26]. The way musical actors perceive and utilize their networks, however, differs significantly between neophytes and more experienced actors. These differences resonate strongly with the distinction between adaptation and adaptability and can be detected with respect to network structure, qualities of ties, conceptions of reputation, and, finally, ambivalences of networks.

5.1. Networks are Helpful—for Others

Younger actors’ networks mainly consist of cohesive and strong ties to former fellow students. These contacts are complemented with some selected, more strategic contacts to former trainers, teachers and mentors. Most of the ties are local ties, even though some network partners already moved to other locations in order to play their first roles shortly after graduation. These networks emerged quasi-organically during study at universities of arts or at private musical schools and thus mainly encompass redundant [42] resources. Most persons known from the sector are in the same situation and face the same difficulties. Only the more strategic contacts to former teachers and mentors provide good access to labor market opportunities. However, only in some exceptional cases, teachers have superior contacts to decision makers within the business and thus can act as door openers and intermediaries.

Against the background of this predominant structure and quality of their personal networks, young actors express the belief that networks are important, if not necessary, for getting engagements and attractive roles:

“Many roles are staffed from within the network, that’s clear, also leading parts [...] Each role will be advertized. However, most of them are already staffed internally with some favorites. That’s how it is” (Interview #14).

On the basis of such an assessment, most of the young musical actors try to continually expand their networks in the near and mid-term future:

“You really have to leave a good impression. [...] Because people know other people and will say: Hey, why don’t you go there and introduce yourself?” [...] And, as already mentioned, they all know each other. My

professor knows the director with whom I work today. [...] Yes, and ideally this continues: That you are introduced to another director or that there is someone in the audience, to whom I appeal” (Interview #19).

In this imagined ideal case, the expansion of networks goes hand in hand with an enhanced personal, networked and public reputation [43]:

“The most difficult thing is to get into the loop. I am a fan, or am advocating the principle of getting in through achievement. This means not to run after people and try to achieve something. Rather, try [...] to remain true to your own goals and people will come. Not after the first or second time, not after ten or even twenty times. But, if it works out, after the twenty first time and you ultimately catch people’s attention, than you are in the loop—and you remained true to yourself” (Interview #24).

Even though the neophytes in our sample advocate the positive effects of networks and networked reputation, most of them also stress important limitations to their networking practices. First, many of our interviewees had the perspective of an outsider looking in on informal networks. In their accounts, social capital is no help to them personally, at least not for the moment. Rather, it is regarded as being helpful for others, mainly for more established actors with whom they thus cannot compete on a level playing field. Thus, in the long run, becoming an insider is regarded as the most promising strategy to adapt to the business’ requirements. Second, “leaving a good impression” (interview #21) is reiterated as a necessary condition to build up reputation in the business. However, this is not only achieved by performing well in professional terms, it is also a matter of being a likeable, sociable person. This delicate combination of dedicated professionalism and personal sympathy imposes a huge pressure towards conformity upon the neophyte actors thereby highlighting an additional, network-related aspect of “emotional labor” [37,38]:

“You really have to take care how you treat people. Even if you really dislike someone, you have to take care, because they all know each other. In principle, it is a really small world and everybody talks to everybody else. When a role is open you will ask others, how people are. And some of the relations are really unforeseeable. [...] I heard about someone who was not casted because someone else, from a completely different background, did not like her. And then they will say: ‘No, she is not good, we won’t take her. She is simply dislikeable’. [...] You can be super-good. [...] If it is difficult to work with you, people will talk about that. And then you will never get a role” (Interview #14).

5.2. *Networks are Helpful—but Overestimated*

The networking strategies within the logic of adaptability, which are utilized by more experienced actors, differ significantly from those of the neophytes. These networks encompass many more actors, are differentiated in several layers [26,27] and are more extensive in spatial terms.

Experienced musical actors usually keep in touch with many actors from the business. This layer within their networks has grown organically as with each successive engagement the array of former colleagues and collaborators expands. One interviewee presented this logic, going through current and old cast lists in order to reconstruct the dimensions and internal structure of his network (interview #7). However, despite their size and spatial extension, these networks still primarily offer access to redundant [42] resources. Most network partners are in similar situations and face more or less the same kinds of problems.

As long as a production is still running, the ties among the collaborating actors are experienced as being very close and intense. As soon as the production ends, however, people move on to new engagements, the group disperses and the intensity of relationships almost immediately cools down. This radical switching from close and intense relationships to socially thin contacts has been described as evoking a “schizophrenic” (interview #3) feeling. One respondent reported to often feeling lonely while being amidst his talkative peers to capture these particular qualities. However, these superficial contacts seem functional with respect to sustaining contacts in a rapidly proliferating network of colleagues. Keeping in touch is mainly done via social media—the list of friends on Facebook is mentioned by almost all respondents as the most important means to manage contacts to former colleagues. These ties usually last for long periods without requiring much social effort (“It’s okay if we talk once every four months. We still like each other”; interview #4). However, when necessary, they can be reactivated anytime and on short notice.

This organically evolving layer within the networks of musical actors is complemented by a second layer of more selected and purposefully initiated ties to decision makers in the business, like directors, choreographers or producers (‘sociality’; [26,27,44]). These contacts represent non-redundant resources, or more to the point, they have been built up because of their supposed strategic value. The respective partners have privileged access to information about future job opportunities or are even responsible for staffing productions. In terms of the quality of relations, these ties are again experienced as ambiguous, as these contacts are usually warmed up at informal occasions, for instance during first night celebrations. Despite the quasi-private setting, the professional calculus predominates [26,27,44]. Therefore, most actors feel uncomfortable about being interested both in a “person’s position” and a “person’s personality” (interview #2).

Moreover, for experienced musical actors contacts that are explicitly not related to the theater world become increasingly important in professional terms (‘communality’; [26,27]). One of our interviewees (interview #3) reported that the opportunity to work as a freelancing communications coach in the health sector arose from her private networks. This layer of contacts appears to be “purely private” and thus professionally irrelevant only for those who adapt to the requirements of the musical business. However, in the light of adaptability, these contacts might offer non-redundant resources, as they bear the potential to generate opportunities to diversify beyond the musical business.

The more complex, multilayered professional networks of the more experienced musical actors are not at all as beneficial as they are believed to be from the outsider’s perspective of the neophytes. First, almost all experienced actors we interviewed stressed the limited effectiveness of these contacts. In their estimation, the ultimate decision about who gets the job is always made in a competitive situation during the audition. Networks are helpful only in the sense that they provide advanced access to information about auditions. Sometimes they might even generate invitations to auditions, so the first rounds of the competition can be skipped. However, invitations do not allow these competitive situations to be completely circumvented. Also, during career progression, musical actors increasingly realize that the possibilities to build up reputation are rather restricted. In the long run, it is possible to gain personal and networked reputation (word of mouth assessments circulating within the community) while public reputation is almost impossible to gain in a business without a star system (interview #1).

Moreover, the experienced actors are also very aware of the limited efficiency of their networking activities. The initiation and maintenance of strategic ties à la sociality, for instance, requires their presence at business events, such as first night celebrations or festivals. They have to stay for hours, in order to find an appropriate occasion to approach the person they wish to contact. Strategic networking is one reason why creative work is experienced as “never ending” ([25], p. 790). Also, the ephemeral ties to former colleagues require some effort to be maintained, despite the affordances of social media and despite the shared convention that keeping in touch does not necessarily require much social effort. In short, with increasing experience, musical actors realize that they initially overestimated the enabling effects of networks while at the same time they underestimated the effort to build up and maintain their network.

6. Spatial Strategies of Resilience: From Hyper-Mobility to Home-Base

The musical business is a highly dynamic creative labor market, in which people follow jobs rather than jobs following people [45]. The resulting mobility patterns are highly complex as they combine multiple forms of labor-related mobility, regular as well as irregular commuting, and short-term mobility as well long-term migration. However, the way these mobility requirements are perceived by musical actors and the way in which mobility requirements are handled differ significantly, depending on whether labor market resilience is understood in terms of adaptation or adaptability.

As long as one is still a beginner, the business’ hyper-mobility requirements come to the fore and are regarded as normal and acceptable. Many interviewees who belong to the younger cohort of musical actors call their professional mobility “traveling”, thereby highlighting the tourist-type aspects of it. Mobility is thus associated with “trying this and that on stage” and with having “fun” (interview #22). In adaptation strategies, professional individual mobility is reported to resonate with a personal predisposition and with one’s own desire to travel:

“I like traveling, because I realize that I am always at home [...] I think, I don’t have to be unhappy as an artist [...]: I can do my art but am still at home—inside myself. And then I can drive around and travel” (interview #18)

“At the beginning you are in good mood when you are flexible, when you still enjoy travelling around, see new cities or new theatres.”(interview #23)

For experienced musical actors, the requirements of professional mobility are equally demanding. The respondents report that they sooner or later realized that they will never be established enough to be able to rely on one local labor market alone, even if it is a major center of the business, like Berlin or Hamburg for the German-speaking market (interview #1). As one important element of labor market adaptability, most experienced musical actors organize their professional mobility from a fixed locality—a home base. A home base is not a place to work at, but rather a place *from which* to work (interview #3). The home base is not primarily valued as a local labor market but as a place for informal networking, for business related events, for recreation, training, and health care. Moreover, a stable home base is seen as a precondition for nurturing private relationships that extend beyond the network of professional contacts. Finally, a home base offers the amenities necessary to arrange family duties [9]. All these locally accessible opportunities are not primarily helpful to make the next career

step as a musical actor, but to remain employable, sustain recreation and at the same time increase flexibility in developing alternative career paths.

Professional mobility is not only necessary when agreeing to a new assignment, it is also necessary just to participate in the market. The audition procedure requires several rounds of competition, often with subsequent rounds taking place in different cities.

“In the case of an audition for one of these long-runs [...] we talk about 2000 applicants. Then you get your slot. [...] Get up early in the morning at 5:00, take the train at 6:00 and bye, bye to Stuttgart, Berlin, Hamburg, wherever this takes place. And you get a rough time, but this never works out. So we are talking about three to four hours time of waiting. [...] Usually, the first round is singing. Step in, sing and then it's either ‘please wait for the dancing’ or ‘thank you very much. You will hear from us’. [...] And then you receive an e-mail within the next 24 and 48 hours, if you have to show up for a recall or not. Today it is never less than two or three rounds” (interview #8).

Both, neophytes and more experienced actors have to travel a lot, just to participate in the competition. However, both groups have quite different ideas about the costs of travelling. Neophytes primarily problematize the monetary aspect. One of them, for instance, abstained from participating in an audition in European cities outside Germany because the travel costs were regarded as too expensive (interview #15). By contrast, more experienced actors additionally calculate opportunity costs. While traveling, one is forced to refrain from other activities, like, for instance, qualifying for an alternative professional field or aspiring to entrepreneurial projects.

Finally, adaptation and adaptability also differ with respect to the perceptions of places, space, and time. In interviews with neophytes the places of the business are described in a rather unambiguous way. An audition, for instance, is a place of competition, and little more. The more experienced respondents, by contrast, additionally highlight, that the breaks during auditions are useful to refresh contacts or to catch up on gossip from within the community. Similarly, among neophytes the perception of time is either regarded as unambiguously valuable or as useless for progressing in a professional career. For instance, “waiting” is a very prominent topic among the newcomers, highlighting that the time between two auditions or engagements is regarded as more or less useless time. The more experienced actors, in contrast, value time in a more nuanced and ambiguous way. Unemployment, for instance, is not only regarded as the unused time between two employments. Additionally, it is treated as leisure time, time for recreation and health care, time for expanding one's repertoire, time for training or for pushing forward entrepreneurial projects.

7. Conclusions

The empirical study presented in this paper uses the example of labor market strategies of musical actors to highlight different activities and time-spatial patterns associated with practices of resilience. We contrasted two sample groups of respondents with different orientations in their individual strategies of resilience. The group of recently graduated musical actors represents a strategy geared towards adaptation. At the beginning of a career, the main emphasis is on getting into the market. A second sample group, consisting of musical actors with 10–15 years of professional experience exemplifies labor market strategies towards *adaptability*. This becomes necessary in a volatile and

over-saturated labor market, in which public reputation turns out to be unattainable and the demand for older stage ages drops dramatically.

The empirical analysis showed how these different strategies lead to rather distinct activities and related time-spatial practices. For instance, while young respondents emphasize their willingness to conform to (perceived) market requirements in order to be able to *react to labor market demands*, the more experienced actors concentrate more on their own talent in order to *create market demand*. Moreover, while freshly graduated performers develop a *telescopic identity* of themselves being a successful musical actor in the future, the more experienced actors create *prismatic identities*, which offer the possibility of being simultaneously present in several, related labor markets (e.g., as actor, singer, trainer, coach, *etc.*). Both groups of respondents perceive networks as ambiguous, though necessary, means to successfully develop their careers. However, they problematize rather different aspects of ambiguity. Younger actors perceive networks as *valuable though exclusive*. They unequivocally acknowledge the value of networks for promoting their career, but perceive themselves as being (still) excluded from these networks. More advanced performers, in contrast, highlight the limitations of networks for circumventing competition. At the same time, they are more sensitive to the efforts of maintaining a network. For them, networks are thus *time-consuming* and of *limited value*.

In contrast to previous research, we did not conceive the spatiality of resilience in terms of the “resilience of places” ([6], p. 63; also [2,3]). Rather, we were more interested in how spatial categories are inscribed into calculations of vulnerability and resilience. Our analysis demonstrated that neophytes achieve the adaptation to labor market requirements by being hyper mobile and by perceiving places and times in an unequivocal manner. Experienced actors, in contrast, organize their adaptability from a fixed home base. Such a permanent and stable base from which to work enables them to remain employable in the business and at the same time to create alternative opportunities outside of the business. Moreover, from their perspective time and space are highly ambiguous categories that might change their meaning as they can have different functions in different frameworks.

The contrast of the two groups of respondents also offers the possibility to undertake a diachronic analysis. Even though we, of course, cannot directly compare vulnerability and resilience calculations within the same group of professionals at two different points in time, the research design still affords a comparison of the logics inherent to early and advanced career stages. Our results suggest that the perceptions of vulnerability and related strategies for improving resilience shift in the course of a career. With increasing experience most musical actors seem to develop more sophisticated ideas about their labor market vulnerability. At the same time, they shift their resilience strategies from adaptation to adaptability.

Previous studies on adaptation and adaptability concentrated on the *operations of single systems*, such as regions [6] or even (Post-Socialist) societies [5]. These studies discuss adaptation and adaptability mainly as mutually exclusive strategies, in which the one almost necessarily disappears at the expense of the other [5]. In our study of labor market resilience, in contrast, we focused on the individual strategies of sub-systems (single actors) *operating within a system* (labor market). Although our study focused on micro practices of resilience, it also offers some insights into the scalar architecture of resilience [46]. The musical business seems to represent a societal sphere, in which the resilience of higher-ranked systems, like the labor market, is increased by delegating the responsibility for resilience to subordinate elements of the system, the individual actors. At least for labor market

studies, adaptation and adaptability are not adequately conceived as mutually exclusive strategic dispositions. As shown above, the resilience of the musical business rests upon a system in which some individuals apply strategies of adaptation while others prefer strategies of adaptability. The co-existence of and competition between both strategies on the micro scale increases the stability of the whole system on a higher scale.

Moreover, adaptation and adaptability do not only co-exist within the same system. It is also common that individual actors shift from adaptation to adaptability and possibly also the other way round. This sheds additional light into the dynamics of resilience. The survival of the overall system capitalizes upon the learning capabilities of its elements. On the one hand, the business offers enough incentives to warrant telescopic identities. On the other hand, it is permeable enough to tolerate prismatic identities. Our study suggests that adaptation and adaptability should not be treated as mutually exclusive, alternative learning trajectories. Rather, they are more appropriately seen as marking contradictory end positions of a learning continuum. Individual actors have to deal with the resulting tensions, but can find different ways of balancing these contradictory requirements.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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