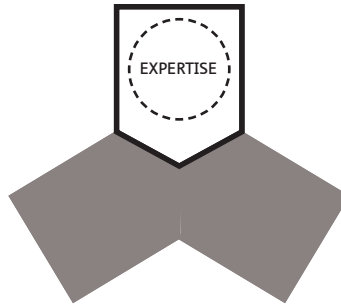# 2 How to claim what is mine: Negotiating professional roles in inter-organizational projects

This is a co-authored paper with equal contributions by myself and Bente Lieftink. Currently, the paper is under review at *Journal of Professions and Organization*. Previous versions of this paper were presented at:

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Abstract

Professional roles within inter-organizational projects have become increasingly diverse and contested, yet little is known about how the members of a profession react to the threats of marginalization these collaborative settings entail. Focusing on the architectural profession, in which historically established role boundaries have become particularly blurred, we analyse how professionals address the concept of these boundaries in order to negotiate their roles in inter-organizational projects. Drawing on empirical data from interviews with project architects, we identify and detail three types of boundary work: reinstating role boundaries, bending role boundaries, and pioneering role boundaries. These categories exemplify how professionals may frame the threat of marginalization differently depending upon their preconceptions of what constitutes professional work. This study provides important insights into how professionals reclaim, change, or temporarily adapt their practice domains in inter-organizational projects; how their boundary work practices help to (re)shape role structures; and how these practices may trigger different paths of professional evolution.

§ 2.1   Introduction

When delivering complex services to clients through inter-organizational projects (IOPs), professionals need to work across boundaries and integrate different domains of expertise (Jones et al., 1998). As research in project-based industries, like film and construction, has shown, such collaboration is typically enabled through the establishing of a number of stable structures, such as 'role structures' (Bechky, 2006). Role structures provide professionals with a shared understanding of each other's 'territory' in a project according to which work is allocated. To date, scholars have largely investigated how stability is achieved in an IOP setting and little is known about how collaborating professionals deal with issues of instability and conflict in these contexts (Van Marrewijk et al., 2016). Such insights are relevant since established role structures have become increasingly unstable.

Contextual developments, such as the decline in public confidence in professions and the widening and the broadening of access to a profession's unique knowledge base, have led to misaligned expectations amongst project actors regarding the processes and outcomes which constitute specific professional work (Vough et al., 2013). Concurrently, the ongoing marketization of professional services (Freidson, 2001), increase in consumer control (Wallenburg et al., 2016), and growing competition over professional work, have blurred formerly established role boundaries in IOPs. Increased contestation over professional roles often results in threats of marginalization for certain professionals (e.g. Ahuja et al., 2017). Hence, professionals collaborating in IOP settings are not only challenged to work across boundaries and integrate different domains of work to address project demands; they also need to defend demarcations of a domain of work to retain professional power, status and remuneration.

In this study, we investigate how professionals negotiate the boundaries of their roles in an IOP setting to respond to threats of marginalization. Existing research provides important insights into how professionals respond to contextual changes and possible alterations of their task domains (e.g. Chreim et al., 2007; Noordegraaf, 2015; Reay et al., 2017). However, how professionals shape their responses in interactions with other actors in the complex, dynamic and temporal setting of IOPs has been largely unexplored (Stjerne and Svejenova, 2016). To address our research aim, we adopt a 'boundary work lens' (Gieryn, 1983; Gieryn, 1999). A boundary work lens allows examination of the micro-practices in which professionals engage to create, shape and disrupt boundaries that distinguish their work from the work of others (Fournier, 2002; Gieryn, 1983; Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010).

We selected construction projects as the empirical setting for our study. Until recently, professionals in the construction industry collaborated in traditional project deliveries, in which professional roles were largely institutionalized and professionals were hired by the client for a clearly defined set of activities and responsibilities. Recent developments in the field, such as the introduction of integrated project delivery methods and Building Information Modelling (BIM), a data-driven engineering and communication technology that has been widely adopted in the field (Whyte, 2011), have disrupted previously established demarcations between professional domains. As a result, professional roles are increasingly in flux and under negotiation. In this paper, we focus particularly on the struggles of the architectural community. Architects, who traditionally operated as one of the key actors in construction projects (Cohen et al., 2005), currently often feel undervalued and marginalized (Ahuja et al., 2017) and struggle to compete for work (Manzoni and Volker, 2017).

Building on 33 in-depth interviews with project architects, we investigate boundary work retrospectively to identify overarching patterns in the boundary work of multiple

architects. Our study reveals that architects engaged in three different types of boundary work to deal with threats of marginalization: 1) reinstating role boundaries, 2) bending role boundaries, and 3) pioneering role boundaries. By unravelling the underlying characteristics and mechanisms of these types of boundary work, we show how various perceptions around professional expertise led architects to pursue different roles and to negotiate these roles in different ways.

Our study contributes to research on professions and more specific on professionals working in inter-organizational settings. Firstly, we show how professionals may also choose flexible responses to threats of marginalization instead of merely trying to maintain (Gray et al., 2011) or change (Reay et al., 2006) their practice domains. Secondly, while focussing on the contextual dynamics of IOPs, we present how the boundary work of professionals (re)shapes role structures. Finally, the three types of boundary work highlight that professionals respond to pressures differently according to their perspective on the profession. This suggests the existence of professional subgroups, which may ultimately lead to divergent paths of evolution within the profession.

The paper is structured as follows: we first review the literature on boundary work, boundary work of professionals and role boundaries in IOPs. In the methods section, we describe our empirical setting, how we selected projects and respondents and how the interviews were conducted and analysed. In the results section, we describe the three types of boundary work we identified. We conclude by discussing the theoretical contributions and practical implications of our findings, boundary conditions and directions for future research.

§ 2.2   **Theoretical background**

§ 2.2.1   **Boundaries and boundary work**

Boundaries are typically described as borders or demarcation lines that establish categories of objects, people or activities and regulate interactions between them (Gieryn, 1999; Lamont and Molnár, 2002; Stjerne and Svejenova, 2016; Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010). Boundaries are constructed in social interactions and as 'unstable, ambiguous, multi-faceted and composite' elements (Stjerne and Svejenova,

2016, p. 1773) continuously redefined and adapted (Hernes, 2004). Boundaries have been a subject of study in many research disciplines and empirical contexts, whether as symbolic, mental or physical boundaries (Hernes, 2004; Lamont and Molnár, 2002). They can vary from being thin (i.e. open to influence) and integrating aspects of different categories, to thick (i.e. closed to influence) and segmenting between different categories (Ashforth et al., 2000). Thus, boundaries can be clear demarcations between dichotomous or mutually exclusive entities or 'permeable membranes' that allow some demarcation between one's situation and that of others (Marshall, 2003; Patru, 2017).

The notion of 'boundary work' refers to the strategic efforts of actors to create, maintain or change boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000; Gieryn, 1983; Lamont and Molnár, 2002). Gieryn (1983, 1999) was among the first to coin the term boundary work when he studied how the scientific community sought to protect their professional autonomy in seeking to secure resources and public support to conduct their research activities. In Gieryn's study, scientists rhetorically distinguished 'real' from non-science by using different forms of boundary work, including monopolization, expansion, exclusion and protection of autonomy. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) investigated the literature on boundary crossing, which involves 'enter[ing] onto territory in which we are unfamiliar and to some extent therefore unqualified' (Suchman, 1993, p. 25) and found that boundary crossing should not be seen as a process that results in homogeneity but that it can establish continuity in situations of sociocultural difference. Although boundary work occurs in many domains (Paulsen and Hernes, 2003) professions represent an area in which boundary work is particularly salient (Abbott, 1988; Anteby et al., 2016). In the context of professions, boundary work has been closely linked to struggles over jurisdiction, in which professionals claim authority over the tasks within their domains (Abbott, 1988; Bechky, 2011).

§ 2.2.2   **Boundary work of professionals**

Contemporary research has shown that the historically established distinction between professions and other occupations can be questioned (Evetts, 2003) and that new boundaries are constantly constructed and (re)negotiated (Montgomery and Oliver, 2007). Within this domain of research, studies have focused on the creation, maintenance and altering of professional boundaries at field level (Abbott, 1988; Bucher et al., 2016; Lawrence, 2004; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005) and at the level of everyday work practices (Allen, 2000; Barley, 1996; Chreim et al., 2013; Wikström, 2008). Field level studies paid attention to macro-level effects of boundary work by

professionals. For example, the study of Bucher et al. (2016) showed how professional associations responded to a potential change in jurisdictional boundaries. In reaction to a government proposal to strengthen inter-professional collaboration, associations engaged in issue framing, justifying, self-casting and altercasting as forms of discursive boundary work to (re)shape professional boundaries.

At the level of everyday work practices, some studies have focused on micro-level strategies of professionals in order to protect their role boundaries (e.g. Gray et al., 2011). Most of these studies have been conducted in health care, were initiatives such as patient-centred and holistic care gave rise to boundary disputes. In this inter-professional context, different groups deliberately positioned others as unfavourable to maintain existing boundaries. For example, higher status professionals attempted to preserve boundaries in the face of threat from newer occupational groups by referring to 'others' as technicians and positioning their own profession as more holistic (Allen, 2000). Other studies showed how professionals were seeking to expand their role boundaries in other domains (e.g. Reay et al., 2006). These studies focused less on discursive aspects, but looked at practices, such as the performing of each other's tasks, through which role boundaries were continually negotiated (Apesoa-Varano, 2013). This boundary crossing or mitigating was elaborated by Van Bochove et al. (2016) with what they referred to as 'welcoming work'. In their study, volunteers were 'invited' by professionals to enter their domain as the professionals noticed in their daily work that these volunteers possessed skills that they themselves did not have. In this case, roles of actors were actually being transformed. Although these micro-level studies showed different strategies employed by professionals when dealing with blurring boundaries, none of these studies looked at the highly dynamic and temporary context of IOPs, which we turn to now.

§ 2.2.3   Role boundaries in inter-organizational projects

In project-based industries, such as advertising, film and construction, different occupations and professions work together for a limited period of time on the delivery of unique products and services to solve complex customer problems (Jones et al., 1998). This requires groups of actors to work across their professional boundaries in order to integrate the different types of expertise that are needed to serve the client. In these temporary, inter-organizational settings, roles or role structures are used as mechanisms to coordinate the interaction of diverse collaborating professionals (Bechky, 2006; DeFillippi and Sydow, 2016; Whitley, 2006). A role structure can be defined as a shared understanding of actors' roles and their respective expertise

and responsibilities (Bechky, 2006). In her studies of film crews, Bechky revealed how role negotiations, which involved mundane acts such as role-oriented joking, enthusiastic thanking and polite admonishing, enabled and constrained work activity. The repeated enactment of the role structure in successive projects stabilized the organizational structure across the film industry. As such, project participants with little or no shared history of working together, easily agreed on their position within the role structure and were instantly able to work effectively together in temporary settings (Jones et al., 1998).

The interactions between actors in IOPs are thus carried out in line with a specific pre-existing structural context that is assumed to be relatively stable across projects. However, as the work that is performed in inter-organizational projects has become more complex and has involved more actors over time, the competition over task jurisdictions has intensified (Jones et al., 1998). Established demarcations between domains of work have also become more fluid and contested because of ongoing societal developments, such as the marketization of professional services (Freidson, 2001) and increase in consumer control (Wallenburg et al., 2016). As a result, professional roles in IOPs are increasingly under pressure and professionals often fear being marginalized (Ahuja et al., 2017). Hence, the negotiation of professional work within IOPs has become particularly important. Professionals do not only need to work across boundaries to integrate different domains of expertise, they also need to realize their own aims and secure revenues. Because boundary work studies have not specifically focused on IOPs (Stjerne and Svejenova, 2016), our study delves more deeply into how professionals, in particular architects, negotiate their role boundaries in IOPs to respond to threats of marginalization.

§ 2.3   Methods

As the objective of this study can be best described as theory elaboration (Vaughan, 1992) with regard to boundary work of professionals in IOPs, qualitative research procedures are most adequate (Edmondson and Mcmanus, 2007). We aim to analyse how members of the architectural profession dealt with the pressure of being marginalized within construction projects, in which architectural work is mainly conducted.

Architects are part of a professional group that performs creative and aesthetic work on the basis of a shared set of professional norms, standards, values and beliefs (Cohen et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2012; Styhre and Gluch, 2009). In their daily work, architects make use of their aesthetic knowledge (Blau and Power, 1984; Cuff, 1992; Winch and Schneider, 1993) and technical expertise to deliver design, engineering and/ or supporting services for complex spatial challenges in project-based collaborations involving various actors, such as engineers, developers, clients, contractors, government officials, users and other consultants.

The work that architects perform in construction projects is embedded in established role structures (Jones and Lichtenstein, 2008) which are based on and communicated through various industry protocols. Due to the increased complexity of projects and the emergence of new professional disciplines in the value chain, the roles of architects have become more specialized over time. This has subsequently reduced levels of professional autonomy and caused shifts in the activities and responsibilities that architects fulfil in construction projects (Ahuja et al., 2017; Duffy and Rabeneck, 2013). Architects often feel that their work in projects is undervalued and marginalized (Ahuja et al., 2017).

On the one hand, architects have deliberately distanced themselves from certain aspects of their work. For example, many architects increasingly focused on design activities as they preferred the creative, innovative dimension of their work over the technical and/or managerial components (Cohen et al., 2005). On the other hand, architects were also forced to take on fewer responsibilities in projects. Clients increasingly commissioned firms that were able to provide an all-inclusive service since they lack both capacity and skills to integrate all the different parties that are involved in the construction process (Burr and Jones, 2010). This has led to an increasingly important position of other actors in the role structure. Contractors now often take the lead in integrated project deliveries (Lahdenperä, 2012), such as Design and Build or Design, Build, Finance, Maintain, Operate (DBFMO) projects.

In these situations, an architect is hired by the contractor (or a consortium of contractors, developers and/or investors), who integrates and controls multiple project phases and is often primarily interested in streamlining the construction process and/ or optimizing maintenance and operation to realize cost reductions. Many architects fear that, within such role structures, they are unable to guard the quality of the design throughout all project phases, as their involvement is often limited to the front-end of the project and they are hired by a profit-oriented party instead of the actual user of the

project. Previously established role structures in the construction industry have also been disrupted by technological developments, such as the introduction of Building Information Modelling (BIM). BIM comprises a 3D modelling and communication technology that has significantly altered processes of design, building and communication in the global construction sector over the past few decades (e.g. Azhar, 2011; Bryde et al., 2013). Building professionals collaborate in a 3D model that is often aimed to generate the exact information that is needed for construction, maintenance or operation of a project. This caused changes in activities and responsibilities between involved actors. Detailed engineering work, for instance, is often performed or at least coordinated by the general contractor, leading to a decrease in the role of the architect. BIM has also introduced 'grey areas' of new activities and responsibilities that, as of yet, have not been allocated to a certain actor. As a consequence, different actors all try to claim (parts of) these grey areas.

§ 2.3.2   **Data collection**

Our primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews with project architects in the Netherlands. Interviews focused on a recent project in which they had been involved. To ensure that we would capture a comprehensive scope of architectural services, our sampling was based on a broad selection of building types, including residential buildings, hospitals and care facilities, offices, educational buildings, a sport facility and a railway station. These projects all moved through typical phases of briefing, conceptual design, schematic design, design development/engineering, constructing documentation and actual construction (Burr and Jones, 2010; Cohen et al., 2005). Rather than attempting to follow a few projects from beginning to end, we chose to concentrate on a broader set of projects that had been finished no longer than a year prior to the interview. The decision to cover role negotiations in various projects neatly fitted with our research aim to explore how members of a professional community dealt with the pressure of being marginalized. Moreover, we believe that as the interactions during the projects were still vivid, respondents were better able to reflect on the "doings" and outcomes of their negotiation strategies.

In total we conducted 33 interviews with architects in the period between 2014 and 2016. All interviews were conducted at the offices of interviewees, lasted between 45 and 120 minutes and were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. All interviewees had been trained as professional architects and worked on the selected architectural projects from start to end. Prior to the interview, we often received a short tour of their workplace and in some cases we informally spoke to other architects that worked on

the selected project. During the interviews, we asked architects to talk about how the project was organized and how they perceived their profession in comparison to the others in the team. Then, we asked about their actions, perceptions and thoughts relevant to their role in the project. This led to conversations about conflicts they experienced in the project with regard to their activities and responsibilities, how they handled these conflicts and how particular responses played out over time.

In addition to interviews with project architects, we conducted several interviews with clients from the selected projects. The purpose of these interviews was to gather additional insights regarding the role and performance of the architect in the project. We specifically asked clients why they selected the architect (or architectural firm), how they experienced the collaboration with the architect and how satisfied they were with the outcome of the project, since the perception of clients might differ from the perception of architects on these matters (Volker, 2012). We also collected archival materials: industry reports and protocols, to gain a more detailed understanding of architects' activities and responsibilities in Dutch construction projects (e.g. BNA and NLingenieurs, 2013, 2014; BNA and ONRI, 2008; Schoorl, 2011); and project documentation, to develop greater contextual understanding of architects' roles in the projects under investigation. The client interviews and archival materials were used for triangulation purposes (Jick, 1979).

§ 2.3.3   Data analysis

We chose a three-step iterative process in which we continually switched between analyses of individual interviews and cross-case comparisons, to identify overarching patterns in the projects of multiple architects without losing the insights that individual interviews had to offer. We used the interview transcripts with project architects as primary data for the analysis. The interviews with clients and project documentation were used to support and refine emerging themes.

The first step of our analysis involved open coding of individual interviews. This process began with each author reading and reviewing all the interview transcripts and independently developing potential codes in the margins. We used MAXQDA as a supporting tool to capture and systematically code all interview data. We compared and discussed the codes to develop a shared understanding of the key codes per interview. The codes were often related to the professional identity of architects, the changing nature of architectural work, developments in the field and competing values in projects.

In the second step, we jointly compared and discussed recurring codes of multiple interviews and grouped them into overarching themes. The themes that emerged during this process included architects' perceptions regarding: 1) their value and professional task, 2) their roles in projects, and 3) their abilities to influence this role. These themes revealed that architects negotiated their roles within projects differently based on different underlying beliefs, different perceptions of roles and different negotiation practices.

The third step of the analysis aimed to investigate how the role negotiations of architects differed exactly. Following our research question, we chose to focus our analysis on further detailing the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of architects' role negotiations. We used the details that were provided in the individual interviews to develop comprehensive overviews of what exactly happened for the various instances in which an architect negotiated his/her role in the project. We found that the 'why' was largely concerned with architects' perceptions of professional expertise, how architects saw their actions in the project as influenced by other actors (we labelled this relational orientation), how architects saw their actions in the project influenced by the past, present or future (labelled as time orientation) and whether architects were oriented towards the profession or the market (labelled as point of reference).

Our analyses revealed that the 'what' included both the activities and responsibilities that architects tried to negotiate (i.e. content of role) and how architects saw these demarcated from the activities and responsibilities of other actors (i.e. boundary of role). For the 'how' we identified a number of specific boundary work practices that architects engaged in to negotiate their roles. We then carefully compared the individual role negotiation situations in projects with one another to single out the similarities and differences between them. Eventually, this led us to categorize them into three types of boundary work: 1) reinstating role boundaries, 2) bending role boundaries, and 3) pioneering role boundaries, which we will present and discuss in the next section.

§ 2.4 **Findings**

In this section, we describe the three types of boundary work (see Table 2.1). The three types are further detailed with the underlying beliefs that triggered architects to negotiate their roles in projects (why do they negotiate?), what they tried to accomplish with their negotiation (what do they negotiate?), and in which practices architects engaged during role negotiations (how do they negotiate?). In the following sections,

we provide an account of our findings and use extracts from our interviews to illustrate each type of boundary work in detail. The respondents are referred to as A1 to A33.

	TYPE 1: Reinstating role boundaries	TYPE 2: Bending role boundaries	TYPE 3: Pioneering role boundaries
Why do they negotiate?			
Perception of professional expertise	Undervaluation: expertise is not being valued	In flux: expertise is constantly changing	Generalizable: expertise is broadly applicable
Relational orientation	Proactive: professional is capable of influencing own role	Reactive: role of professional determined by other actors	Proactive: professional is able to recreate own role
Time orientation	Past-oriented: role negotiation guided by views of the past	Present-oriented: role negotiation based on evaluation of current situation	Future-oriented: role negotiation guided by future prospects
Point of reference	Profession	Market	Profession
What do they negotiate?			
Content of role	Return to established situation: activities and responsibilities in line with traditional role	Flexible: activities and responsibilities tailored to project demands	Break with established situation: activities and responsibilities redefined beyond traditional role
Boundary of role	Thick and segmenting: actors have clearly defined and demarcated roles	Thin and permeable: actors collaboratively define role boundaries	Thick and segmenting: actors (re)define clearly demarcated roles
How do they negotiate?			
Boundary work practices	– Demonstrating professional expertise – Pressuring the client to secure professional value – Challenging the collaboration structure	– Reframing activities – Investing in specific expertise	– Offering new activities – Building alternative collaborative structures

TABLE 2.1 Overview of types of boundary work

Why do they negotiate?

In the first type of boundary work, which we labelled 'reinstating role boundaries', architects tried to regain other project actors' appreciation for the architecture profession as it used to be. They aimed to convince clients that they were valuable for every construction project and for society at large. Role reinstating architects believed that their expertise was not being valued and aimed to counteract ongoing misperceptions of architectural work. One architect said:

It isn't a fast profession. It is a slow job, for which you need to take time and for which you just have to be properly paid (...). That's what is wrong today: people don't know anymore that it takes time and may be time-consuming. And it is my mission to make that clear again. (A12)

Respondents argued that they had to 'fight back' and 'rebel against' marginalized positions in projects to be granted the activities and responsibilities they felt that belonged to them and to retain autonomy over the design process. These phrases show how role reinstating architects were determined to prove their value to the outside world and to reclaim the traditional role that they aspired to. This group believed that architectural work involved much more than developing creative ideas and designs:

We are so much more than the designer. [Our work] is much more than just a pretty picture and some nice colours. We are fully engaged in the entire process, we have engineering knowledge and expertise in laws and regulations. We are very much price and planning conscious. (A5)

Respondents argued that they encountered difficulties proving that they still had the knowledge and skills to perform 'full services'. One architect argued that although they had clear added value beyond the design phase, it was often difficult to obtain a role in the engineering or construction phase of a project:

[...] that is something that you have to explain over and over again [the added value of architectural involvement beyond design] because you constantly encounter people that say 'well, that is not true! (A21)

When reinstating their role boundaries, architects were predominantly oriented towards the past. Role reinstating architects indicated that they had difficulties in

giving up the traditional aspects of their role. A powerful belief in the traditional knowledge domain and skills, that has always distinguished architects from other project actors, guided the architects in their quests to re-establish the definition of their profession and to reinstate the associated role.

What do they negotiate?

Architects who reinstated role boundaries believed that an architect's added value was particularly prominent when they were able to provide 'full services', including design work, engineering work and coordination of the design process. This group of architects did not want be involved in projects in which they would have a marginalized role, as they feared that this would prevent them from performing their job properly. One respondent explicated this by saying:

We don't want to be whores! [Laughing] We only do what we consider the right thing to do. (A12)

Role reinstating architects thus aimed to reclaim the comprehensive design and engineering activities that they were used to performing and considered it important that they could coordinate the entire design process. Respondents typically argued that the traditional role allowed them to serve the client in the best way possible. They explained that they needed to have control over the entire design process to make sure that the quality of the project would match the client's ambitions and their own professional standards. Architects who were reinstating role boundaries seemed strongly oriented towards creating clear demarcations between the architectural profession and other professions, based on an implicit hierarchy of project actors. For instance, the architect referred to a clear division of work between the architect and general contractor. He stated:

They [the client] tell you: 'it is like having a butcher inspecting the quality of his own meat [Dutch expression].' Well, that is just not the case at all. Because if meat is the product and the butcher is the one who makes it or the one who processes it, I'm neither one of them. I am the one who describes what quality standards the meat has to meet. And I check whether it complies. What the butchers make is actually the subject that I review, but I am not part of it. (A3)

They typically differentiated themselves from other actors in the project constellation by emphasizing their expert knowledge and skills as unique. Respondents felt that actors should all do what they are good at and believed that architects are the only ones

who are able to manage the design process and integrate all the different disciplines that are involved. One architect expressed this by saying:

[…] and every time I tell my clients: 'Allow people to do what that are good at, put them in the right role'. So if you are a centre forward, why should you play centre-back? That does not work at all. You will shoot the ball in the wrong direction. That's what's happening now in our field. (A5)

How do they negotiate?

Role reinstating architects tried to ensure that their value could not be overlooked by other project actors. They engaged in different boundary work practices that emphasised the value of their work and/or contrasted this value to the work of others. One architect said:

You have to find out where you can press the buttons. How can you become master of the construction process? […] You have to show that you are worth it. You just have to show it once, work hard, you must ensure that there is nothing open to critique. And then they [the client] are just very happy that you want to do it for them. (A12)

We found evidence of three boundary work practices in our data: 1) demonstrating professional expertise, 2) pressuring the client to secure professional value, and 3) challenging the collaboration structure.

Role reinstating architects sought to demonstrate professional expertise in the traditionally architectural tasks. They showed results of previously realized projects or performed tasks without official approval by the client and without any form of payment. One respondent, for instance, contrasted the results of projects in which his firm was responsible for the engineering with the results of projects in which this was not the case. By showing images of the two types of projects, the architect emphasised the value of his firm and actively pursued the engineering work:

We show [the client] that the projects in which we did it [engineering work] ourselves are of better quality than projects where it is outsourced. (A24)

Another architect hoped that performing tasks for free would gain the trust of her client and ultimately lead to the acquisition of more activities and responsibilities. Although she was only commissioned to design furniture for a building that was going to be renovated, she also helped the client to sort out technical problems during the process

by giving advice, making additional drawings and involving suitable partners. In doing so, she aimed to acquire a role in the engineering phase:

You first have to show them [other project actors] that they need you and that they can't back out [...] So I always let them know 'we did do this, but it is not included in our assignment. (A12)

In the end, the architect's efforts convinced the client to ask the architectural firm for the engineering work instead of another organization. The respondent said that the client and contractor were both wildly enthusiastic about the work of her firm:

They thought we were 'the last of the Mohicans' [Laughing], they didn't know that we still existed.

This suggests that other project actors are often unaware that some architects are still able to provide the traditional spectrum of services and underlines the necessity for architects to demonstrate that they are equipped to do this.

In other projects, architects were pressuring the client to secure their professional value. Although role reinstating architects sometimes agreed to less preferential roles in a project, they tried to reclaim their traditional role when they noticed that the project developed in a way that did not match their professional standards. The stories of our respondents revealed multiple situations in which architects put pressure on the client to secure their professional value. This may seem a desperate attempt to reclaim responsibilities, yet it was explained by respondents as a step that had to be taken to maintain their professional integrity. For example, one architect threatened to withdraw from a project as he considered this the only option left when his firm's ideas were constantly overruled and expertise was repeatedly called into question by another actor in the project:

[our expertise] was constantly called into question, while we know for sure that what we are doing was good and with the right intentions. And then we just said: 'Okay, it's very simple: either that project management agency is out, or we are out. (A19)

In a similar vein, role reinstating architects pressured their clients to commission them for 'full services' by raising their fee for the delivery of fewer services. For example, one architect said to his client:

If we can only make the preliminary design and final design, it will cost thirty percent more compared to when we can make everything. (A18)

We also found that architects were challenging the collaboration structure of the project by discussing the benefits of their involvement in a traditional role and the dangers of involving other actors for this role with their clients. For example, respondents specifically put forward their strengths:

So we do a lot of design, we will coordinate that, please let us do that, that is what we are familiar with and what we are most experienced in. (A11)

Respondents also pointed out to their clients that when a part of 'their' role would be performed by another actor, it would ultimately damage the project's end result or complicate the process leading up to it. One respondent made clear to his client that an elimination of the architect's engineering activities and early procurement of a contractor would lead to all kinds of process disruptions such as discussions, additional work, unexpected costs and delays:

I particularly pointed that [the risk] out to my client. [...] And also mentioned 'this is what it means if we arrange the contract documents. Perhaps it takes a couple of weeks extra, but it also means [fewer risks] for the further course of the project. (A27).

This shows how architects challenged the collaboration structure of the project because they felt that actors were not playing the right part in the project. They tried to convince the client to alter the roles of actors to prevent that a non-optimal division of roles would ultimately lead to a decrease in quality.

The three boundary work practices show how architects tried to reinstate traditional role boundaries. Based on perceptions of how architectural work was conducted in the past, this group of architects used these practices in an attempt to reclaim what they thought of as their professional jurisdiction.

§ 2.4.2   **Type 2: Bending role boundaries**

Why do they negotiate?

In the second type of boundary work, which we labelled 'bending role boundaries', architects responded to ongoing market developments by anticipating or accepting changes in their professional roles. Role bending architects were convinced of their value as a professional group, but saw their added value as different for each project

and as continuously changing. They believed that their expertise had to change to keep up with the evolving society and construction industry in order to serve clients, users and society in the best way possible. One architect said:

We look at this development [the diminished role of architects] with great sorrow. But on the other hand, we also go along with it because you have to evolve. You can't remain an old-fashioned architect, that's impossible. (A17)

Architects in this group were convinced that further development of 'non-traditional' knowledge or skills would lead to increased benefits for clients or other stakeholders in projects. They believed that 'new' expertise was not only crucial to qualify for projects, it would also significantly enrich the added value that the architect would have in those projects. Respondents argued that the architectural profession has become 'too meaningless'. They recognized that other project actors are increasingly interested in non-design related aspects of the building process. In their projects, they tried to understand both the reasoning and goals of other involved actors and respond to these in the best way possible. Respondents argued that this requires 'constantly delivering other added value besides the design' and 'constantly stretching yourself'. They wanted to add to the traditional architect role to make sure that their professional work is still valued in the market:

If you don't attach a couple of hooks to it [the traditional architect work] that are embedded in a much more complex society, it won't be your turn that easily. (A6)

This quote illustrates how role bending architects wanted to expand their professional expertise to make sure that they would still be commissioned for projects and that they would remain of value as an individual professional, professional firm or entire profession. This group of architects feared that if others no longer saw the value of their work, they would one day be 'played out in the market'. Respondents seemed to accept that they were not in a position to define their own role boundaries within a specific project and largely went along with their clients' requirements. They used phrases such as 'the market eventually dictates' to express how they saw their work in each individual project as shaped by the wishes and demands of the client and other involved actors. We saw that the actions of role bending architects were mainly influenced by a strong orientation towards the present, in which the market served as their main point of reference.

What do they negotiate?

Role bending architects saw their own role as part of a larger puzzle that needed to be solved. They noticed that the former comprehensive role of the architect in a project was often not desired or possible anymore, because projects were undertaken on the basis of different forms of collaboration. Respondents in this group argued that in newer collaborative forms, such as public-private partnerships, some activities will be simply less often commissioned from architectural firms. They mentioned that their professional work would still include the preliminary design, final design and 'a bit of supervision', but that services like full engineering and project management are no longer obvious. Role bending architects were willing to perform altered roles when these would better fit the project. Respondents argued that being of value to clients 'starts with the willingness to be flexible'. They considered a flexible attitude towards the performance of roles key to stay in business:

So one time you do A and the next time you do B in a different assignment. (A4)

Hence, these architects pursued more fluid role demarcations as they wished or agreed to perform different roles in each project. They also saw the overall division of tasks as less segmented. They allowed other actors to perform parts of their roles or were willing to perform part of other actors' roles when this was specifically requested in the project, or when it was collaboratively defined as the best way to accomplish the project's aims. Role bending architects thus pursued less prestigious hierarchical positions in a collaboration and saw themselves as 'much more an interplay between different specialist advisors than one all-knowing genius that can do everything' (A6).

How do they negotiate?

Role bending architects were willing to go along with the requirements of the projects that they worked in, but always kept a critical attitude towards the work that they would perform. Their role needed to be in line with their professional values and beliefs. One respondent said:

[M]aybe it's flexibility connected to integrity. [...] it has to do with who you are as a professional and how you want to work together with people. (A4)

We found two boundary work practices that architects used to bend their role boundaries: 1) reframing activities, and 2) investing in specific expertise.

By reframing their activities in the project, role bending architects aimed to serve the client and the project in the best way possible. When clients asked them to perform certain activities in projects, they took these questions very seriously and tried to find out if their activities would actually lead to the desired end result. Respondents explained how they tried to reveal the 'question behind the question' to find out which activities the client should have asked them to perform. They bended their role boundaries by offering these activities, but only for this specific project. Respondents particularly highlighted situations in which they offered the client additional activities. For example, one architect offered a rowing association counselling throughout the entire building process instead of merely the requested design, because she surmised that the association did not have the expertise to coordinate this process themselves:

I made an offer that included an entire process, [...] I take the initiative to bend their request into my own terms of 'what do you in fact need? (A10)

We also found examples in which respondents deliberately decided to give up parts of their own role to achieve a satisfactory solution for the project. One example was given by a respondent who closely collaborated with a contractor in his project. The respondent explained how he proposed to make a concise technical specification together with the contractor instead of having sole responsibility over the delivery of a more detailed technical document. He took the reduction of his own firm's role in the project, resulting from this decision, as a necessary concession:

We rather collaborate with a contractor to write a really good technical specification together of which we all know: okay this is what we get. (A14)

This shows how the architect considered a document that was created in collaboration much more valuable than a document that was created by the architects themselves. It also highlights that role bending architects sometimes willingly gave up part of their remuneration or influence in a project when they believed that this would contribute to the quality of the process and/or the end result.

We found that architects were also bending their professional role boundaries by investing in specific expertise, because clients asked them to perform certain additional tasks or because they expected these requests to emerge soon. Such additional tasks, for instance, involved consultancy work to assist clients in the initial phases of project definition or workshops with users. Architectural firms invested in the knowledge of their own people or attracted people with specific knowledge and skills to perform these tasks in a project. For example, many architectural firms invested heavily in their Building Information Modelling (BIM) expertise. Whereas some firms only invested in BIM to stay in business, as many clients require BIM, other firms used

the technology to deliver different kinds of value to their clients. One respondent, for instance, argued that it is important to draw in 3D, but even more important to use the data to demonstrate and account for what they draw, especially in projects that are coordinated by contractors. The respondent wanted to be 'the best and most reliable Design and Build partner' and argued that he needed extensive BIM expertise to assist contractors in their calculations. He explained how he gained this role, by:

[…] knowing really well what building is, professionally. We've done that for more than 28 years now. […] But also, just collaborate with contractors a lot, somehow we then are the natural partner for that because of that craftsmanship, but also because we invested and developed a lot around that BIM story. (A6)

This architect was convinced that new data management skills would enrich his existing professional expertise and help him to be a good and reliable professional partner in contemporary projects.

The two boundary work practices that architects used to bend their roles in projects show how architects responded to conflicts around untouched areas of work, the so called 'grey zones', and negotiated their role 'on the spot'.

§ 2.4.3   **Type 3: Pioneering role boundaries**

Why do they negotiate?

In the third type of boundary work, which we labelled 'pioneering role boundaries', architects engaged in practices that moved away from the status quo and thus opened up the traditional role boundaries. This group saw the profession as having been 'asleep' for a while and saw opportunities for architects to step off the beaten track. Respondents argued that they could regain control and have more impact by moving beyond established professional work and adopting a different mindset. As one respondent put it:

Our peers are, I guess, sort of scared to be more entrepreneurial or it is a missing quality in general. I'm not sure. They often say that architects should mainly focus on design activities, but with that kind of attitude we are, in my opinion, going to lose our market position completely. (A26)

Role pioneering architects believed that their qualities and skills are more broadly applicable than in the established roles of architects. One respondent stated:

We never felt good in the straightjacket into which the architect was forced. (A30)

The constraining template of traditional roles led this group of architects to explore and exploit new activities within projects. For these architects, engaging in entrepreneurial activities was accompanied by a strong desire to contribute to the overall good of the built environment. One architect, for instance, stated:

Personally, I believe that we should always ask ourselves in every assignment: 'Am I making a more pleasant environment, a liveable city or better building? Or am I only working on this project because it is an assignment? (A7)

By constantly questioning their own influence in each project they tried to look beyond the temporary needs of clients. They constructed a sense of themselves as valuable design professionals and actively engaged in other areas of service delivery in which they could make greater use of their competencies. Overall, role pioneering architects were purposefully stretching or breaking away from traditional role boundaries and were focused on redefining the profession. By reflecting on and stepping back from their project work, they visualized alternative practice domains and other roles for themselves and other actors. These architects were successful in colonizing such new positions in projects, which, over time and project by project, led to an expansion of their scope of work and new definitions of the architect's role.

What do they negotiate?

Role pioneering architects provided a wide range of activities and associated responsibilities in projects, all expanding on the traditional role. Respondents gave examples ranging from consultancy roles in city developments to coordinating the entire construction process, by taking over the work and responsibilities of the general contractor. These architects wanted to take ownership of processes that, in their opinion, were not functioning well: 'I really want to go far. I would prefer to do it all myself' (A15). Our respondents often mentioned that they were increasingly performing activities that 'have nothing to do with the architectural profession' but which can contribute to becoming a more valuable professional. This shows how pioneering architects saw the performance of new services or tasks as intrinsically linked to their architectural work. One architect was convinced that a product development approach and an active role in the project initiation phase enabled him to

design and deliver apartment buildings that addressed the needs of future owners. This required additional activities:

We do not only deliver a design, instead we provide a complete business plan including how to get people involved in the project and how to sell the project, how to make it customer-driven and how to connect various stakeholders. (A15)

This example shows how architects entered new domains of work by deploying 'odd' professional skills, such as sales skills. However, this often led to dilemmas around what constitutes appropriate professional conduct, illustrated in the following quote:

She [fellow architect] actually implied, by the tone of her voice, that I was good at selling my product. Probably at the cost of my design abilities. As if these things are two separate things! (A15)

Role pioneering architects experienced that the scope of their desired roles was not only contested within the professional community, it also required adaptation of other project actors. Therefore, the act of 'pioneering' role boundaries was often described by our respondents as a collective act that also involves other project actors. Architects explained that it was essential to redefine the roles of all actors to come to an optimal division of work. As one respondent said:

That established order, [the roles of] those construction companies, really obstruct movement in developments. I would like to discuss that. (A7)

This quote illustrates how role pioneering architects questioned and tried to redefine the demarcations between the roles of different project actors.

How do they negotiate?

Pioneering professional role boundaries was manifested in two boundary work practices: 1) offering new activities and 2) building alternative collaborative structures.

Architects pioneered role boundaries by offering new activities that they tried to further develop into projects or integrate in their projects. These 'new' activities were performed regardless of any remuneration or the opinion of other actors, because architects strongly believed that these activities represented the future of their work and a way to remain of value in the field. Respondents gave examples of launching BIM related services, developing innovative service contracts for clients or looking for locations and investors to develop projects, so they could claim a bigger role in the

actual development of these projects. What characterized these activities is that they were either new to the profession or new to the field of construction. For instance, one respondent initiated all kinds of activities to get engaged in discussions with the municipality and other influential actors, such as developers and financers, because she strongly believed that current forms of collaboration did not enable cities to function well and she wished to address these issues:

We then made a magazine that sort of gave birth to the unsolicited advice for the city. [...] We made plans and distributed those plans. (...) what we've done with that [referring to the project] is a form of activism. (A7)

This architect explained how she turned unsolicited advice into an unbidden project. Through interfering with the development of an area, namely a building, they were able to obtain an architectural project and consequently improve the built environment. This example is illustrative for role pioneering architects, who expanded their boundaries by offering new activities.

We also found that pioneering architects were building alternative collaborative structures to break away from traditional role boundaries. They proactively reorganized the roles of actors in the projects that they were involved in to make sure not only that the collaboration would be beneficial for all actors involved, but would also be more in line with contemporary society, and ultimately contribute to that society. One architect explained how he set up an entirely new BIM collaboration for projects:

Actually, we set it up. We organized weekly meetings. Made sure that we communicated with each other. Made appointments for that. Yes, we took matters into our own hands. (A1)

Another architect went against the traditional price-based approach for commissioning a general contractor as he considered this approach an obstruction to innovation in projects. He argued that contractors offer their services for the lowest price possible to acquire a project, but then have to 'squeeze out' subcontractors, which obstructs innovation and decreases the quality of the project. Therefore, he offered the client an alternative way of organizing the project by replacing the general contractor in the process. This did not only create a new role for the architectural firm, it also changed the role of the subcontractors, who were given more responsibilities and were in direct contact with the architect.

In a traditional project delivery, a main contractor is shielding the interaction between architects and clients and subcontractors. So what we've said is: 'No, we want to be at the same table with clients and subcontractors and share expertise with each other. (A2)

Another architect built an entirely new collaboration structure for large-scale renovations of social housing:

We noticed that [the budget] was so limited that we radically had to turn that around. So we chose a completely different form of collaboration and also took away the initiative from the housing corporation. (A22)

Although other respondents were not as extreme, they also gave examples in which they used their long-term relationship with the client to recreate the role structure together. In a few of these examples, building alternative collaborative structures allowed role pioneering architects to allocate themselves a more influential role in projects.

In sum, role pioneering architects used boundary work practices that had, over time, more macro-level effects, as they deliberately tried to reconstruct or break away from their traditional architectural roles.

§ 2.5 Discussion

In order to examine how professionals deal with threats of marginalization, we studied how actors negotiate their professional work in inter-organizational projects (IOPs). The dynamics and temporality involved in IOPs render the negotiation of work particularly complex, especially since formerly established role structures in these projects have become increasingly unstable. Our analysis revealed three types of boundary work that professionals engaged in to negotiate their roles in IOPs in an attempt to reconcile project demands with professional values and beliefs: reinstating role boundaries, bending role boundaries and pioneering role boundaries. These types show how professionals may frame the threat of marginalization differently depending on their assumptions of what constitutes professional work. By unpacking how these various views act as resources for the role negotiations of professionals, we underline that the content of professional work is inconclusive and provides room for interpretation even among members of a profession (e.g. Vough et al., 2013).

Theoretical contributions

Our study has three important contributions. First, we contribute to the literature on boundary work by professionals. By identifying the three boundary work types 'reinstating role boundaries', 'bending role boundaries' and 'pioneering role boundaries', and unravelling the underlying characteristics and mechanisms of these types of boundary work, our study presents a more nuanced view on boundary work by professionals. Bending responses show that professionals do not only engage in boundary work to maintain (e.g. Gray et al., 2011) or change (e.g. Reay et al., 2006) their practice domains, but may also strategically reside between these two opposing sides. In some projects, professionals may compromise for more traditional roles while in other situations they might accept alterations in their work. These flexible responses to threats of marginalization have, so far, been underexposed in literature on boundary work of professionals and show that studying boundary work in IOP settings can provide insights that are likely to be overlooked in more stable work settings. Whereas role reinstating and role pioneering professionals particularly aim for clear demarcations between professional work and try to (re)gain professional autonomy in a particular domain, role bending professionals tend to see less hierarchical divisions between disciplines and consider more flexible role boundaries essential to meet project/client demands. This suggests that professionals have different views on the level of professional autonomy that is appropriate (Vough et al., 2013). Our study also adds to the work of Reay et al. (2017), who investigated role change in highly established settings and found that a collective process of reinterpreting guiding logics was particularly important for role change to occur. We show that role reinstating and role pioneering professionals both attempt to have more influence in the way their role evolves and seek to 'guide' the collective reinterpretation process, by actively confronting other project actors with their own ideas of how change should precisely occur. While role reinstating professionals explained, and in some cases demonstrated, their work and value to others to respond to threats of marginalization, role pioneering professionals went beyond these temporary responses and actively tried to reconstruct their professional role. This shows that although role change can be orchestrated by others (Reay et al., 2017) and is enabled or constrained by the institutional environment (Chreim et al., 2007; Goodrick and Reay, 2010; Greenwood et al., 2002), professionals may follow their own routes regardless of the contextual conditions in which their work is embedded.

Second, we contribute to the literature on professional collaboration in IOPs (Jones and Lichtenstein, 2008). Research in this area has mainly cast light on how stability is created and maintained by means of established and stable structures such as role systems to counterbalance the idiosyncratic nature of individual IOPs (Bechky, 2006;

Van Marrewijk et al., 2016). Role negotiations then take place in a specific pre-existing structural context, which is assumed to have become stabilized. Our study shows that these structural contexts are more dynamic and are significantly influenced by boundary work of professions. In negotiations, when roles are claimed or contested, professionals also oppose positions of other actors in the IOP. Their boundary work practices, invoked by past, present or future orientations, may, over time, transform the overall role structure.

Finally, our study contributes to the literature on professions by engaging in the ongoing debate on changing professionalism (e.g. Goodrick and Reay, 2010; Noordegraaf, 2015; Reay et al., 2017). In addition to literature that has particularly focused on organizational implications of changing contexts such as increased managerialism and hybridity (Noordegraaf, 2011, 2015), we particularly focus on the implications for professional work in inter-organizational collaborations. Besides showing how contextual changes impact established roles and role negotiations of professionals in IOPs, we also show how they trigger various forms of boundary work and thereby contribute to the evolution of professions. We provide insights into how professionals, when negotiating professional work in complex, inter-organizational settings, simultaneously maintain their profession roles through reinstating professional boundaries, enable incremental role change by bending role boundaries, and fuel radical role change by pioneering role boundaries. This suggests the existence of different 'subgroups' in a profession (Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011; Fitzgerald and Teal, 2004). Threats of marginalization seem to heighten already existing distinctions between professionals, including aspirations for different directions of professional evolution. Although it has already been addressed that especially neo-professions have rather fluid boundaries that open up entrepreneurial space (Reihlen and Werr, 2012), we show that diversification is also topical for more established professions. Based on the findings of our study one could argue that more homogenous professions, such as the architectural profession, may also become more diverse and fragmented (Saks, 2015).

§ 2.5.2   **Practical implications**

Our study has a number of practical implications. First, by showing the bigger picture of negotiating professional work in inter-organizational settings, our study helps practitioners to deal with external dynamics that challenge professional roles. The strong distinction between the three types of boundary work suggests that to (re)claim desired roles in IOPs, professionals need to be aware of what they aim for and how

they wish to pursue their aims. In particular, our findings provide a variety of tactics that professionals could engage in to take charge of their own future. In doing so, they also need to be sensitive to the enabling and constraining factors of the project and its surroundings in order to respond in an appropriate manner. To successfully create and capture value in the collaboration with other actors, professionals need to identify whether their professional values and beliefs sufficiently match the conditions of the context in which this work will be performed.

Secondly, our study also provides guidance to professional service firms (PSFs) operating in IOPs. The findings indicate that reinstating professionals wish to perform similar, traditional roles in different projects and that they need these roles to remain relatively stable over time. Reinstating professionals thus need to ensure that they are able to get across the value of their 'traditional' professional role when this value is not recognized or not agreed upon by other actors. To prove their professional expertise and autonomy, PSFs could potentially benefit from having a solid base of 'grey hair' professionals (Coxe et al., 2005), who are able to provide professional work with a consistent quality, and complementing these with people that are able to 'sell' the services in contexts where they are contested. For bending professionals, tailoring the activities and responsibilities to the specific demands of each individual project, requires organizational flexibility. PSFs need people with diverse skills to be able to respond to different kinds of requests and need to be able to attract these people on a temporary basis. This raises issues of firm sizes and networked forms of collaboration between multiple firms. Finally, pioneering professionals focus on conquering new grounds. To succeed in doing this it is important that people in the firm should share similar views on the contents of their work and the way this can be performed. This implies that PSFs need to construct organizational identities that go beyond the 'traditional' professional identity in ways that include and convince both organizational members and other actors in the field.

§ 2.5.3   **Boundary conditions and directions for future research**

Our study has several boundary conditions and limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, although we believe that our findings indicate that even within the same profession people may engage in different types of boundary work in IOPs, we cannot make direct claims about other professions or occupations. We therefore strongly encourage research that explores the negotiation of professional roles in other professional fields.

Secondly, respondents in our study sometimes hinted towards the tensions they encountered as a member of the organization, project and profession. Additional research could further explore how these tensions might influence architects or other professionals needing to balance conflicting targets, when they enact their professional roles.

Thirdly, although we believe that collecting data on the broad scope of architectural work via interviews was essential to obtain a broad perspective on the responses of one professional community, it might also be interesting to collect longitudinal observations of interactions between architects and other actors as they negotiate their project roles. Since our methodological strategy did not allow for in-depth examination of the projects, we cannot judge the relative success of each negotiation strategy. Future studies that add processual data will expand our findings by shedding light on how professionals engage in boundary work in an IOP on a day-to-day basis. In adopting a process approach (Langley, 1999), research could further examine how these boundary strategies play out over time (Covaleski et al., 2003), but also 'zoom out' and show if these multiformity of responses leads to a redefinition of the profession in the long run.