

The architect profession in Portugal: From competition to cooperation?¹

Vera Borges and Manuel Villaverde Cabral

Abstract

This paper analyses Portuguese architects' career paths based on the results of a survey and a set of in-depth interviews. Three main dilemmas were identified in the Portuguese case which we believe to represent major challenges for sociology of arts and sociology of professions. First, the centrality of artistic vocation of architects is responsible for the continuing excess supply despite the difficulties many of them face in gaining full access to professional practice. Second, classical competition with other professionals involved in the building industry relies mainly on the artistic dimension brought into it by architects. Third, this high level of inter-professional competition accounts for both the reproduction of architectural *ethos* and the need to cooperate with other architects.

1. Introduction: The centrality of vocation

When Menger asks “are there too many artists?” he is not only alluding to the alleged excess supply of artists (Menger, 1999, 2006). He is also referring to the genuine attraction increasingly felt by young people for those professions due to their lack of routine and also the great social and intrinsic gratification they may bring. The huge expansion of artistic professions is associated with the growing numbers of young, creative, highly qualified people who are keen to join professions like architecture despite the precarious nature of their work. Just as in art professions, the symbolic gratifications that architects enjoy are explained by this ‘calling’ despite the obstacles they face to gain full professionalization (Borges & Cabral, 2015). Moreover, the ‘heroes of the past’ and the symbolic and economic value of contemporary architecture continue to feed the ‘calling’ of the younger generation, using the seduction of art creation. Indeed, very few professions can leave their mark in space and time as architects do, and this explains the demiurgic accounts of architectural authorship (Raynaud, 2001).

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However, sociology seldom registers the recurrent tension between vocation and profession that we have observed with architects. The increasing imbalance in the market of architecture is witness to that tension. The tension between those two meanings of *Beruf* in Weber's politics and science (2005 [1919]) — as vocation and as profession — reappears in Larson's book on architectural change in America when she speaks of "architecture as art and profession" (Larson, 1993: 3–20). Blau too speaks of "commitment" (Blau, 1987: 48–60) as a distinct feature of architecture in a similar way to our use of vocation. While recognizing the dual nature of architecture, they did not attribute any specific sociological meaning to 'art'. Menger also uses the term "vocation" when dealing with artistic professions (Menger, 2006), but neither of these authors draw a sociological consequence from such a feature. In other words, they don't credit actors with the autonomy that allows them to, as it were, defy the market. As Menger himself puts it, "artists may be seen less like rational fools than like Bayesian actors" (Menger, 2006: 766). In fact, much of Weber's argument about "science as vocation and as profession" also applies to art and it is Weber himself the first to make the analogy (Weber, 2002 [1904]: 80–81). Another important idea stands out in the same text. For Weber, the career of the scientist is marked by contingency, inspiration, intuition, imagination, life experience and, ultimately, by uncertainty. This is exactly how Menger describes the conditions necessary for the kind of invention and satisfaction associated with artistic work (Menger, 2005: 7–16).

Freidson (1986, 1994) was the first to recognise that art professions are a challenge for sociology. In his 1986 article, he claims that the lack of a certification system makes entry into the art world more difficult to control. While not directly applicable to architecture, this observation is nonetheless relevant to understand the relationship between academic training in architecture, which is not highly sustained by a recognised scientific base, and architects' unstable 'jurisdictional competence'. Freidson insists that the lack of demand for art — as well as for science — forces artists to make a living by other means, like teaching. Again, it is true that the uncertainty of demand for architecture affects large sections of architects in Portugal and many other countries. Nevertheless, Freidson's conclusions are paradoxical. On one hand, he alluded earlier to art as "vocation work" as opposed to "alienated work" which is only intended for the purposes of "material gain" (Freidson, 1986: 441–442), as if for him "vocation" and "gain" were incompatible; however, on the other hand,

he eventually dismisses altogether the challenge that art professions pose to sociological analysis.

We believe it is important to continue to analyse such a challenge and return to the tension between vocation and profession that can be found in the origins of sociology, when Weber published the essays *Wissenschaft als Beruf* and *Politik als Beruf*. There, depending on context, he alternates the meaning of *Beruf* to mean either profession in the conventional sense or vocation in the usual meaning in the Latin languages, i.e. as 'calling', 'gift' and even 'charisma' in the religious use of the term, according to Weber himself (Weber 2002 [1904]: 84ff). The double meaning of the term *Beruf* is crystal clear in the expression *Berufspolitiker ohne beruf*, i.e. "professional politicians without a vocation", as a French translator identifies (Colliot-Thélène in Weber, 2005: 22–23). We can think about 'vocation' as a type of occupational orientation that may correspond to a previously established profession, such as law or medicine. This happens when the practitioners of such occupations possess a kind of know-how that can feed the supply of creative activities in the marketplace. To cite Larson: "the creation of new needs (or rather, the direction of unrecognized needs towards new forms of fulfilment) is the contribution of all professions to the civilizing process" (Larson, 1977: 56–63).

This brief theoretical background will provide a better understanding of today's art world of architecture in Portugal, as we will see in the next sections. Thus, we believe that by analysing the centrality of vocation in architecture (Section 1), we will be able to better understand how architects mobilize the artistic dimension of architectural work (Section 2), and how this high level of inter-professional competition accounts both for the reproduction of architectural *ethos* and the need to cooperate with other architects (Section 3).

1.1. Methodologies and Becker's mosaic

This article is based on the results of a survey we conducted in Portugal in 2006. The questionnaire was sent out to 12,632 individual members of the Portuguese Order of Architects (excluding trainees), from which we received a total of 3,198 valid replies.² Here we can quickly present some notes on the results. The majority of the Portuguese architects are under 35 years old and

² Statistically, the sample is representative of the universe of architects with a margin of error of 1.73 % for a confidence interval of 95%. Reference is made herein only to statistically significant differences, i.e. where Chi-squared is equal or inferior to 0.05.

have been working in the field for ten years or less; the average age of this sample is 37 years six months; although only just over one third are female, the percentage has been growing every year. In the last five years, the annual number of newly-graduating females has reached parity with that of males. Before constructing the questionnaire, three focus groups were organised in which architects were asked to talk about their perceptions, opinions and attitudes towards architecture and society.

At the same time, we conducted a total of 23 interviews with 17 male and 6 female architects. The respondents constitute a non-probabilistic sample and were selected through the snowball effect. The interviews were made up of semi-structured questions and lasted approximately three hours. They were transcribed and we used five thematic items to study them. These included: the choice of profession; the transition from university to practice; type of work within and outside the practice of the profession; the main obstacles encountered in their careers; and the labour market. Our main goal was to understand not only the way architects are socialised, but also to assess how they verbalize their experience in the profession and how they compare themselves with their peers, as well as they relate with other specialists and with clients; and of course, the effect of time on their careers. In this article we will use only a part of all this material. We also took advantage of *ateliers* and 'construction site' visits in order to observe *in situ* architectural practices, competition and cooperation processes. The image of Becker's "mosaic" in *Sociological Work* (1970) proved to be very operative in order to use the different materials and sources that we had constructed and how we will present them in the next sections of this article:

Each piece added to a mosaic adds a little to our understanding of the total picture. When many pieces have been placed, we can see, more or less clearly, the objects and the people in the picture and their relation to one another (Becker, 1970: 65–66).

2. Architecture between art and technique

Over the last hundred and twenty years the technical and scientific development with its plethora of new construction materials, as well as more rigorous and economical ways of combining them, led to the certification of civil engineering and thus the increasing differentiation between art and technique (Francastel,

1988). Despite continued attempts to resist this (Pevsner, 2005), the differentiation over the 20th century ultimately accentuated the artistic and social and aspects of architecture (Kostof, 2000). At the same time, it posed growing problems for the teaching model associated with the Paris *École des Beaux-Arts*, which emphasised the cultural component of architecture rather than the technical component over which architects had lost control (Egbert 1980: 58–95).

Nevertheless, the differentiation which brought about the rise of civil engineers did not do away with the authorship of architects. Nor did it cancel the *Beaux Arts* model of personalised transmission of know-how through a corporate relationship between master and student (Moulin, Champy, 1993: 857). Conversely, both architects and engineers still have to compete with builders for simple construction projects that do not require aesthetically or technically complex solutions. On the other hand, their competitors for very large public projects are urban planners and other specialists as well as politicians (Moulin, 1973; De Montlibert, 1995; Champy, 1998). Though sometimes the giant architectural *atelier* “enabled the invasion of such jurisdiction as urban planning”, this was only possible insofar as the atelier “involved members of several other professions”, such as engineers again (Abbott, 1988: 152). All in all, the trends of expert labour division increasingly pushed architectural design towards its artistic expertise which, in turn, moved architecture away from modern functionalism towards post-modern aestheticism (Larson, 1993).

As a result of the exhaustion of the prevailing international style, architectural conception has recovered its former importance and autonomy over the past three or four decades, as well as its artistic aura. Larson has shown the resurgence of the “heroic architect” in the United States being stimulated from the 1980s onwards by the boom of conspicuous postmodern construction. It was also fostered for political purposes and economic competition between cities where architects were invited to leave their brand on these newly created urban territories (Larson, 1993: 218–242). By the same token, “the lionisation of celebrity architects became part of the client’s marketing strategy and a sign of architecture’s proximity to the culture industry”, while architectural work converged with the culture industries (Larson, 1993: 248). The Pritzker Prize, which is the equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Architecture, has functioned since 1979 as the gatekeeper for new architectural trends on a global scale, including

Portugal, where the architect Álvaro Siza Vieira received the award in 1992 and Eduardo Souto Moura in 2011.

All these professional challenges have led to a renovation of the architect's professional identity (Symes *et al.*, 1995: 24) which resulted from the effects of architecture as an artistic landmark and expertise. Two main examples are the 'Guggenheim effect' in Bilbao (see Ponzini, 2010) and, for Portugal, the rebuilding of Lisbon city after Expo 98, seeking to create a new 'image of the city'. Thus, architecture was since conceived in a context of international competition between cities. Usually, this reputational process is associated with the visibility of an individual name involved in ever-widening networks and working for the most prestigious projects and *ateliers* (Becker, 1982: 351–371). While this is not exclusive to this professional group, it is nonetheless emblematic of the collective way architects became part of the modern professions (Larson, 1983: 49–86). Such process is also emblematic of the wider debate that should take place about the excess-supply of professionals that feed the system.

In the Portuguese case, architects are nowadays associated with very significant international awards and top quality participation in international exhibitions and contests. The award or the invitation to conceive a building represent a 'cumulative advantage' (Merton, 1988) for architects and the progression in the reputational pyramid. Being at the top functions as an income for the lifetime. An extreme alternative to this approach is the dilution of architects' expertise among other 'professions of design' (Brandão, 2006). The coexistence of both illustrates the architects' 'identity schizophrenia' already commented on by Moulin (1973).

3. From competition to cooperation?

Menger's interrogation about artistic vocation and excess supply in art professions (2006, 2012, 2014) brings us to the last decade when architecture has seen a marked rise in the number of architecture students, trainees and young architects. Europe has today more than half a million architects (Mirza & Nacey Research, 2015). And Portugal has one of the highest proportion of architects in the population with 2.4 per 1,000 inhabitants, following Italy, Germany, Spain and United Kingdom. Despite a much smaller building market, Portugal has twice as many architects per inhabitant as France or Great Britain,

and 68% of them are less than 40 years old. As we will see, in Portugal while only a small number of architects exercise their profession as full time 'liberal professionals', many others offer their services in a market which is based on 'piece work' and growing technological specialisation.

We will briefly discuss the individual and social mechanisms whereby young candidates could deal with the alleged excess supply noted by Menger and by the Architects' Council of Europe. In particular, we use Abbott's analysis of the strategies developed by groups of young workers to deal with such excess supply (Abbott, 2014: 2). On one hand, they use 'reduction strategies' that simply ignore supply and, on the other hand, the 'reactive strategies' which are presented by the author as the hallmark of art worlds, in which architecture should be included. Such 'reactive strategies' are responsible for mapping the hierarchy of individuals whose talent and output differences are after all very slight. Nevertheless, these differences have a strong impact on the public visibility, reputation and income of architects. On a personal level, Abbott considers that individuals "take the best and forget the rest" (Abbott, 2014:18–19); and on a social level, these 'reactive strategies' produce a deep market segmentation and an increasing number of experts, resulting in inevitable conflicts between professional segments around specific specializations within the architecture and other professions.

Though, Abbott uses a series of cases, including architecture (Abbott, 1988: 43–44; 50; 73), to show how professions enter into competition for the recognition of their qualifications and for the reduction of their competitors' scope. The focus on competition among professions is also justified by the fact that their development is not entirely due to the evolution of scientific and technical knowledge. Indeed, competition among professions and cooperation processes, both in the work domain and in the public and legal ones, also determine the content of professional activity and the way each group controls the production and transmission of their know-how. The abstract knowledge of architects as well as the role of conception are the source of the profession and they are the most relevant to Abbott's discussion about the way architects seek to impose their 'jurisdiction' (Abbott, 1988, in particular on pages 43–44; 50). It is on this basis that architects compete for the recognition of their skills and thereby trying to reduce the market scope of their competitors, such as builders, engineers and urban planners. Abbott emphasizes that the way architectural practice evolved has mainly depended on the ongoing jurisdictional conflict between architects and engineers (Abbott, 1988: 73).

Nowadays, professions are undoubtedly going through a transition process which has resulted, in the case of Portuguese architecture, in the multiplication of the number of *ateliers* and the appearance of more multi-professional architects with highly specialized skills. This transition has not reduced the importance of conflicts between architects and engineers as well as among different segments of the professional group of architects. But at the same time, that architects and *ateliers* feel the need to broaden and strengthen their networks of artistic and technical cooperation. For example, the somewhat handicraft nature of architects' work, in terms of the drawings and maquettes, has given way to extraordinary 3D versions — the 'render' to use architectural jargon. The drawings have often given rise to three dimension films in which the house is complete with a simulated exterior and interior, while attempting to keep it close to reality (the client even sees their photographs and objects already in place in the house). From this development have arisen the internal conflicts within the profession which the interviews and *in situ* observation in the *ateliers* and on building sites did not hide. For instance, specialized design architects refer to the others as "architects in precarious situations who develop sophisticated videos to do architecture". In turn, we also observed that the importance of cooperation between *ateliers* has grown due to the association of these different professionals.

Despite the changes and transitions we noted nowadays in Becker's art world (Becker, 1982; Becker, Faulkner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006), their joint reading with Abbott's analyses of conflict and competition is of great interest to the study of architects. It is no coincidence that the research of these two authors — in sociology of art and in sociology of professions — is so interlinked; after all, they are two of the main living heirs of the Chicago School. Cooperation between individuals, which Becker (1982) addressed in relation to the art worlds, doesn't represent an alternative to the conflict and competition (Abbott, 1988) — which has always existed — in every professional world. As we will see, cooperation is above all a central variation of the competition at work in a context of a global capitalism.

3.1. Large generational renewal

More than half of all Portuguese architects are 35 years old or younger, and the number of new professionals is increasing at the rate of over 1,000 a year — more than the total number of architects 30 years ago. This large generational

renewal helps explain the acute marketplace problems currently facing the profession. It also accounts for the different ways of entering working life and reaching the full-time practice of architecture as a liberal profession (26%), as well as many other attitudes towards architecture.

Table 1: Age * Sex (%)

Age (age groups)	Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
Up to 30 years	42.8	23.2	30.2
31 to 35 years	27.6	23.4	24.0
36 to 40 years	12.3	15.5	14.4
41 to 45 years	6.9	11.9	10.1
46 to 50 years	4.7	9.7	7.9
51 to 60 years	5.4	11.1	9.1
61 years and over	.4	5.2	3.5
Total (n=3198)	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Cabral and Borges (2006).

The youngest we interviewed work at home and describe how they are resilient and committed to the profession. They report 'experiences that were a failure', their internships abroad, and what they understand by the term 'serving the client.' The second profile is composed of architects with more than 10 years in the profession. They describe the need to internationalise their *ateliers* and consider themselves as 'scouters' who are able to analyse the market, showing that 'no games are played' and everything is possible when their *ateliers* focus on a specific type of activity or project. These architects believe their ateliers will gain certain slices of the labour market if they specialise and increase in size. The third profile is made up of the architects who represent the glamour of the profession. They see themselves as occupying 'positions of power' and doing 'top projects' to use their own words. Their work includes the conservation of national monuments as well as the renewal of public spaces and they are taking steps towards gaining a national and international reputation.

Every architect worked with draughtsmen (...). It was a love-hate relationship (...). I felt that way until almost the 1980s. (...) [The draughtsmen] were too proud to willingly change to the computer (...). I think it really ended up happening when computers came on the scene; this was when manual skills

were no longer required and it was necessary to be technically competent with the computer to be effective; and that is when young trainees, the young architects appeared in my atelier. (...). So as they start to be trained in this kind of parallel school, where a love of graphics is developed (...). (Luís, aged 67, in charge of a large atelier)

As far as training experience is concerned, the interviews show that they increase architects' skills; and as the quantity and variety of those experiences increase, the architect's networks of collaboration also expand. It is equally true that the growing number of graduates led to more time spent in training and to delaying the start of working life; not only are mandatory internships required by the Order of Architects, but studies are often prolonged for Master's degrees and doctorates, and there is a proliferation of post-graduate and occupational training courses. However, our interviewees did not feel that these courses actually prepared architects for working life. Most of them compensated for this by working in architecture-related fields so as to get the practical skills not readily provided by academic teaching. This helped them to become professionals and to develop their careers.

Male architects are typically young and their female counterparts are even younger: 70% are less than 35 years old. In fact, the second most striking feature of the profession's sociological composition is its rapid feminisation. About 35% of working professionals are women, far more than just ten years ago; currently they account for more than half of the annual intake of new architects, so gender parity will be reached within a few years. In terms of professional status, male architects are more often self-employed whereas female architects take paid employment or positions as 'piece-workers', including working on a freelance basis for other architects or for other employers. Differences are also found in the distinct architectural areas in which architects' work. For instance, men are more involved in top projects than women. Equally, women participate less than men in architectural public tenders and they receive half as many prizes from academic institutions as their male colleagues. Female architects are also less involved in activities outside their main job than men. Women are more dissatisfied than men with the conditions in which they practice architecture. They emphasise their precarious labour situation and competition from other professionals, whereas men are more concerned about the constraints caused by Portuguese legislation and bureaucratic procedures.

3.2. The reproduction of the professional ethos

Despite the recent generational renewal, there is still a very high level of internal reproduction, as measured by the percentage of architects who are offspring and/or close relatives of architects: 25% of architects have at least one close relative within the profession. This high level of reproduction accounts both for the persistence of professional *ethos* and the apparent lack of internal conflict within Portuguese architecture. This happens despite the difficulties many professionals, trainees included, face in getting full access to professional practice, as Stevens (1998) show with examples from North America, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia.

Family networks which help obtain professional opportunities and provide strong exposure to architectural habits also lead to the concentration of material and symbolic resources that favour professional success. In turn, these factors are obstacles to professional change. In short, not only is there limited access to a university degree of this kind due to high entry grades (17 and 18 on a scale of 0–20, second only to medicine) and many years of study, but job opportunities in architecture are few and infrequent. The ever growing number of graduates must inevitably be limited to applicants who have a genuine vocation and high levels of cultural and social capital as well as strong family ties to the profession, as Rodrigo shows:

I'm from a family of architects. My grandfather was a very important architect and we have several generations of architects in my family and my aunts are married to architects (...). Was it a choice driven family? Yes, at first. (Rodrigo, aged 67, in charge of a large atelier)

Indeed, most of our respondents stated that they are mainly engaged in studies and projects as conception work, but many of these are never put into practice. This happens all the time with thousands of un-built projects that architects regularly present to tenders and competitions but which remain, nonetheless, just projects. This relationship between 'paper' and 'built' architecture, as well as between 'image' and 'reality' in architecture, with which Larson dealt extensively (Larson, 1993: 229–234), is indeed another variation on the recurrent tension between architecture as 'vocation' and as 'profession'. Instead, only a small minority of professional architects work in activities like management, direction and site management as their main field. Respondents involved in teaching and research (20%) continue to express expectations about work in areas directly linked to architecture as a practical occupational activity.

This is due perhaps to the current lack of design and building work in Portugal since the economic crisis. This however illustrates the idea of teaching as a “refuge job (...) combined with creative vocation work” (Menger, 2005: 16). On one hand, a very large group of Portuguese architects need to accumulate jobs so as to complement their below-average earnings from their main occupational activity; on the other, a very small group of architects who already earn above-average incomes and who are equally well paid for work ‘for pleasure’, such as furniture, decoration, graphic arts, etc. In fact, there is a strong positive correlation between both incomes, which deepens the income inequalities between the two groups of architects, because those who are better paid in their main activity are also better paid in the other areas work. In fact, architects who work exclusively in a single form of professional practice, such as a permanent position in one *atelier*, continue to be a minority.

Table 2: Patterns of practicing architecture as the main activity (%)

Self-employed / Independent professional	26.0
Manager / Partner of a professional <i>atelier</i>	12.5
Civil servant or contracted by local or regional administration (Azores and Madeira)	11.4
Civil servant or contracted by central administration	8.3
Service provider to other architects and/or architect <i>ateliers</i>	8.6
Service providers in other kinds of company	3.5
Employed by another architect or architect	6.7
Employed by other professionals or companies	6.5
Main activity not declared	16.3
Total (n=3198)	100.0

Source: Cabral and Borges (2006).

The ideal-type of architecture practiced full-time as a liberal profession is therefore far from corresponding to reality. Strictly speaking, less than 40% of architects in Portugal are self-employed professionals as their main activity, a core characteristic of the traditional ‘liberal professions’, like medicine doctors. Moreover, a significant number of these practitioners engage in one or more kinds of other activities. One third of all Portuguese architects are salaried employees of central and local public administrations, or work for other individual architects or *ateliers*. This does not stop, however, most of these salaried practitioners from engaging in independent work. An even-larger group

is that of 'freelancers' who work for other architects or for other kinds of professionals. This status is often also combined with activities as liberal professionals, i.e., designing occasional projects.

The enormous complexity of architectural practice today in Portugal is presented in 2,145 situations of job accumulation (e.g. architects employed by architects' *ateliers* but also accepting freelance work) that involve 53% of the respondents. These are either older (perhaps retired from a former occupation) or very young architects who work predominantly as freelancers and take any opportunity to engage in other activities however remotely related to architecture. The second group most involved in job accumulation is composed of architects employed by the state. They represent 18% of job accumulation with activities as liberal professionals. Other architects in salaried employment are responsible for nearly 10% of independent work.

3.3. Between competition and cooperation

The best architects — like the best doctors, writers, etc. — convey confidence to the client, the investor, and the public as a whole. As Karpik (2007) noted, certain signals guide the consumer when assessing the quality of goods in the market. In the case of architecture, the recognition of past work and feedback from colleagues, juries or critics increase the likelihood of being nominated for awards or being invited to design a building. As Rodrigo, senior architect, gives us to understand when he mentions that major projects are concentrated in well-known practices and outlines the 'coming and going' of individual and organisational reputations (Frombrun & Shanley, 1990; Lang & Lang, 1988):

They [the youngest] start out on their own, but lack the financial resources to make major bids, or else they bid for very small projects, and they do not have access to the top projects. Large institutional organizations will rarely award a project to an atelier which is not known, because what really counts these days is the prestige of the architect. There are people who want to have a house designed by us and use it commercially. The primary standard for publicity has been the architect's name, not the location. If they are not known, they don't make it. (Rodrigo, aged 67, in charge of a large atelier)

Relational resources favour individuals' careers and they are transferable to the *ateliers*, and vice-versa (Ollivier, 2011). Marco, a senior architect, highlights the fact that he was able to join up with the *atelier* of another equally well-known architect. We believe that collaboration, association, connection between

architects and *ateliers* makes them 'stronger', more skilled, more renewed when bidding for projects in Portugal and abroad. Each *atelier* has its own teams, but they work together on the design and construction of 'top projects' (Borges, 2014).

The two ateliers together have almost 50 architects; so they have greater capacity, and we have a partnership, a cooperation to compete for a series of major projects in Lisbon and abroad. It has been going really well (...) (Marco, aged 65, in charge of a large atelier)

This allows us to see the numerous mechanisms that connect architects with their colleagues, clients, investors and users of the buildings and public spaces they have designed, as well as curators, critics, and journalists. In this market, the impact of a prize, the publication of photographs of a building or articles in well-known architecture journals and their discussion by experts and prospective clients who comment on, publicise, promote and celebrate 'the best' (Collins & Hand, 2006). Like Moulin in France, we found that "creation, in this field as in others, is the privilege of a small number" (Moulin, 1973: 280).

4. Conclusion

We identified and analysed three main professional dilemmas and how they transformed Portuguese architects' career paths in a theoretical and empirical challenge for the sociology of arts and professions. The first one, the centrality of artistic vocation in the case of Portuguese architects explains why so many young people come to the profession in this country, in spite of the growing tension between demand and supply in the national market for architecture. More importantly, architects persist in it, unlike French architects who never become members of the professional association (Champy, 2001). Just as in other professions of artistic nature, we believe it is their 'calling' component that accounts for the symbolic gratifications architects obtain from it, despite the obstacles to full professionalization. Secondly, the technical and technological development of the last thirty years has changed architectural activity as well as the artistic aura of architects and their work. Today, for instance we see international competition between cities that invite the most renowned architects. Thirdly, the high level of competition among architects themselves and with other professionals account both for the reproduction of architecture ethos and the new meaning of cooperation process.

The different ways of practising the profession are extremely complex, and there are a number of possible work combinations. A minority of architects is practicing their profession designing houses and following their construction as the author of the project. Most others do several types of work at the same time. The fact that young Portuguese architects earn less and work more often as paid employees distances them from the ideal-type of the 'liberal profession'. The dense networks of family and social relations are both factors that favour access to the profession. However, they also contribute to the reproduction of the prevailing professional *ethos*, thus preventing more innovative changes that would meet the need to adapt to the current imbalance between the supply and demand of architects in the market. The profession is characterised by the predominance of mixed working situations and is mainly exercised in accumulation with other activities, either out of interest and pleasure, or out of necessity.

At the same time, the architects' profession is indeed constructed around many classical conflicts with internal segments of the profession, such as the 'young' and the 'old', the 'architects-artists' and the 'architects-render specialists' of nowadays; and also with other professionals such as engineers and urban planners, not to mention builders. However, there is the cooperation between architect's, teams, and *ateliers* that really intrigues us. As Becker (1982) put it, cooperation is the result of the constraints facing these professionals and the low costs underpinning their contractual relations. Therefore, we believe that cooperation can only be, simultaneously, a theoretical concept, a practical need and also a moral condition — whatever the social context — in the present era.

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