



# **Toward the construction of a profession's boundaries: Creating a networking agenda**

*Amalya L. Oliver and Kathleen Montgomery*

## **ABSTRACT**

Attention to the boundaries of an organization or profession is an essential precursor to facilitating boundary-spanning activities. We follow a four-stage process model of constructing boundaries to delimit a profession's membership and domain prior to its recognition as an institutionalized entity. A set of networking activities forms the basis of boundary construction, yet identifying and prioritizing *which* activities to pursue is a challenge that can jeopardize the success of an aspiring group. We use a case study of the emerging Jewish legal profession in pre-state Israel to analyze how an agenda for creating membership and domain boundaries implicitly surfaces through interactions among members of the new group. We employ content analysis of a key meeting transcript and network analytical methods to reveal a shared cognitive map of priorities. The study adds to the literature on professional boundaries and demonstrates the utility of an innovative qualitative–quantitative research approach.

## **KEYWORDS**

agenda-setting ■ boundaries ■ centralities ■ network analysis ■ professions

## **Introduction**

Boundary-spanning activities have garnered substantial attention among organizational scholars and practitioners, as they strive to understand and

facilitate the varied structures that cross the boundaries of a social entity today. Such structures include inter-organizational alliances, multi-professional networks, virtual organizations, cross-occupational teams, and professional-organizational integrative models. These structures reflect the reality that organizations and professions are open systems interacting with environmental actors and responding to environmental pressures (e.g. Oliver, 1991; Scott, 1992). The substantial interest in boundary-spanning activities reflects not only their promise, but also the challenges inherent in linking two or more unique social entities. For example, these challenges are often the focus of attention in the research in such varied contexts as structuration of organizational fields (e.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; DiMaggio, 1991; Scott et al., 2000); negotiation of the boundaries between work and home (Shumate & Fulk, 2004); and the integration of academic disciplines (Gabriel & Willman, 2004).

Nevertheless, much of the research on boundary-spanning activities could be strengthened with greater attention to how the boundaries of unique entities are constructed in the first place. That is, knowing more about what is being spanned – the boundaries of a social entity – should enhance understanding about the subsequent activities in which the social entity engages within the relevant field.

A social entity – for example, an organization, a profession, an occupation, a family – can be defined as an independent ‘thing’ with the central properties of endurance, the ability to originate social action, with a coherent internal autonomy (Abbott, 1995). A social entity’s boundaries serve important *identity* roles by ‘sharpening [the group’s] identity in the minds of its members’ (Cross et al., 2000: 845), providing a community for internal actors (e.g. Brown & Duguid, 1991; Newell et al., 2001), and signaling ‘rules of exclusion’ to actors outside the entity’s boundaries (Kogut & Zander, 1996: 515). Boundaries also serve as markers of unique *knowledge domains* or ‘information envelopes’ (Zucker et al., 1996: 91), by distinguishing the scale and scope of internally produced activities (Afuah, 2003) and protecting ‘against the uncontrolled discharge of knowledge’ (Sydow, 2002: 5). Without the shelter afforded by boundaries, ‘bundles of routines and competencies could not coalesce into organized action’ (Aldrich, 1999: 140).

Because boundaries delimit both membership and domain, they serve as the essence of a social entity. Abbott states this clearly: ‘A social entity comes into existence when social actors tie social boundaries together in certain ways. Boundaries come first, then entities’ (Abbott, 1995: 863). Aldrich makes a similar observation about the primordial role of boundaries: ‘Organizations must become bounded entities before they can contribute to population dynamics’ (Aldrich, 1999: 140).

Interest in the emergence of entities, such as professions, is not new, and some of the traditional research on the development of professions could be viewed as studies in boundary construction, even if not labeled as such (see, for example, Larson, 1977; Freidson, 1986; Abbott, 1988). Recently, scholars have called for more research that explicitly examines boundaries as domains of study in themselves, and, in particular, for more empirical research on boundaries (e.g. Paulsen & Hernes, 2003; Heracleous, 2004). To help address this gap, attention has been redirected to the emergence and development of the explicit boundaries themselves that precede recognition as unique entities (Montgomery & Oliver, 2003). In that article, the authors articulate a four-stage model of boundary construction, with a focus on dual-directed networking activities that facilitate the construction of membership and domain boundaries. They illustrate the stages with empirical data from comparative studies of the emerging professions in two different contexts: Jewish lawyers in pre-state Israel and physician executives in the United States.

An unanswered question from that comparative study, however, is greater detail about how the early participants decided to proceed. That is, how did these individuals prioritize the activities needed to construct the appropriate boundaries? In this article, we provide a close examination of one stage of the model of boundary construction, using data from a critical juncture in the process of developing the Jewish legal profession in pre-state Israel.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **A model of the boundary-construction networking processes**

Montgomery and Oliver (2003) propose a four-stage process of networking activities involved in the evolution of a social entity, through attention to the construction of boundaries that define both membership and domain. They maintain that greater knowledge about these networking activities can reveal much about the tasks and key networking partners that are deemed central by the aspiring group. This is important because failure to fully appreciate these networking dynamics can lead potential boundary-spanners to underestimate or miscalculate the true identity and specific domain forged by the group. As a result, serious challenges to effective relations at the inter-professional or professional-organizational juncture may arise.

The model emphasizes the activities that operate in a dual-directed fashion to generate robust boundaries defining both membership and domain. Outward-directed activity pushes toward wider domain definition through various negotiations with key actors in the larger organizational or

professional field. Inward-directed activity pulls members toward a more cohesive core. These dual-directed activities will operate in a predictable four-stage sequential pattern, as outlined below:

- Stage one represents the nascent moments of boundary construction, when an informal group of like-minded individuals becomes aware that they share interests and wish to mobilize those interests in some fashion. At this stage, the networking activities are undifferentiated, rather than specifically aimed either inward toward the nascent group or outward toward actors in the environment.
- Stage two is marked by the beginning of coordinated efforts to communicate the core group's initial interests to a wider group of potential members and to a group of key actors who can be energized to aid in construction of both membership and domain boundaries. During this stage, outward-directed networking forces predominate.
- Stage three is marked by the point at which membership and domain boundaries begin to solidify. A critical mass of members has been established, enabling the group to shift from an open membership, outward-directed model, to a more restricted one. At this point, inward-directed networking activities take over to establish more exclusive membership boundaries, raising commitment to the emerging entity and reducing exit interests. Simultaneously, outward-directed networking activities continue toward more sophisticated efforts to formalize and institutionalize the legitimacy of domain claims within the relevant professional or organizational field.
- Stage four represents a point when the group is recognized by influential external bodies as a distinct social entity, often signaled by the acceptance of credentials and licenses. This stage requires efforts to maintain a dynamic equilibrium through ongoing dual-directed networking activities to avoid risks and challenges to both membership and domain boundaries, such as membership complacency or obsolescence and domain intrusion or diffusion.

### Identifying appropriate networking activities

As noted, an important augmentation of the study reported in Montgomery and Oliver (2003) is more detail about how the nascent group of like-minded individuals arrives at a common set of networking activities necessary to move the boundary-construction process forward. That is, although categories of dual-directed networking activities have been identified and

demonstrated in the earlier study, it remains important to understand how certain activities and networking partners are selected, rather than others.

There are several reasons why this is an important gap to be filled. First, networking activities are especially influential during the emergent stages of a new entity, when the boundaries are more fluid and elastic, before the entity has become institutionalized. A wrong step can dissipate the energies and enthusiasm of the nascent group of individuals and threaten the overall success of the emerging entity.

Second, there is the potential for conflict among the nascent group members. Internal debates may arise about how much membership exclusivity is optimal and whether the domain has been realistically specified. That is, members may not all agree about how high to make the entry boundaries and how wide to cast the domain boundaries. Because the boundaries themselves are still unstable and in a process of construction, the opportunities for negotiation among members are of great interest in understanding the ultimate form of boundaries that the emerging entity will reflect.

Often these negotiations are implicit, as the nascent group members interact among themselves in a search for common interests. There is no guidebook about what the domain should look like, nor is there likely to be a clearly identified set of actors who can serve as new members or as outside networking partners.

In the following sections, we introduce a case study of the Jewish legal profession in pre-state Israel to examine the implicit agenda-setting interactions that provide a blueprint for the subsequent networking activities to establish a new entity.

### **Case study in agenda setting: Jewish lawyers in pre-state Israel**

#### **Historical background**

The small 'old communities' (Yeshuv Yashan) of Jewish settlers in Palestine migrated mainly at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century and concentrated in Jerusalem, Zfat, Tiberius and Hebron (Horowitz & Lissak, 1976). Since then, the Jewish population in Palestine continued growing with various waves of migration from Europe that continued into the mid-19th century.<sup>1</sup> The British entered Palestine as an imperial power in 1917 and established the mandatory state (Shamir, 2001).

Strasman (1984) documents that in 1917 only five lawyers were formally listed in Palestine, and the British governor of Palestine nominated the first Jewish judge in Jerusalem in 1919. In 1921 the law profession in

Palestine consisted of 39 Jewish lawyers, 112 Arab-Palestinian lawyers, and one British lawyer. The legal profession was dominated by non-Jewish lawyers, and the judicial system in Palestine was run according to British and Ottoman laws. The higher legal education system was built on the principles of British law, with studies conducted in English (Shamir, 2001).

As migration gradually increased the number of Jewish residents, there was a nascent interest among Jewish lawyers to establish a legal system based on Hebrew law, to distinguish itself from the British tradition.<sup>2</sup> During the 1920s several informal meetings took place, including a small meeting of 54 individuals who expressed an interest in forming a Jewish lawyers group. However, the existence of multiple legal systems remained, and coordinated and explicit networking activities by this aspiring group to construct new membership and domain boundaries were not yet well coordinated.

### December 1944 meeting

In December 1944, a conference of 87 interested individuals (voluntary members of the self-formed Jewish lawyers association and elected regional representatives) was held in Jerusalem to discuss the status of the aspiring entity (*Hapraklit*,<sup>3</sup> January 1945). This was the 11th meeting of the group over a period of nearly 20 years, but it was pivotal because it was called at a time when the aspiring group was struggling to gain a foothold as a distinct institutional entity, which coincided with the early days of nation-building. As noted by M. Alish, who opened the meeting:

We gathered here for professional matters only, but we should always remember the issue of problems of the era regarding the nation and the Yeshuv.<sup>4</sup> . . . The organization of the courts, the appointment of Jewish judges, and the use of the Hebrew language in courts are central building blocks for this [effort], and our discussions here have an important value beyond the narrow professional issues . . .

Thus, this particular meeting crystallized the concerns of the aspiring group at a moment of broader change when decisions about the emerging group's future were tied to the future of the emerging nation.

An editorial in *Hapraklit* describes the purpose of the meeting as a discussion related to the 'arrangement of the economic issues' of Jewish lawyers, which had been triggered by several major concerns. The challenges facing this emerging professional entity were compounded by uncertainties regarding appropriate networking partners, the pool of potential new members, the nature of domain competition, and the structure of new state

institutions. For example, there were inconsistencies in the legal training and experience of immigrant Jewish lawyers; there were language differences among judges, lawyers, and clients; there were questions about appropriate professional ethics and fee structures; and there was competition from adjacent occupational groups. Each of these topics can be recast as issues of construction of membership and domain boundaries. There was a lack of clarity, however, about the relative importance of these issues among the individuals present.

In the following discussion, we will demonstrate how network analysis methods allow us to examine the way agenda prioritization can emerge, even when members of a group may not be aware of their collective cognitions. We employ network analysis for mapping the collective cognitions of the members of the group, as a way to reveal similarities in conceptual fields across a variety of actors (Oliver & Ebers, 1998).

### Data source and analytical methods

The data come from the full transcript of the meeting held on 24 December 1944, which was transcribed and reprinted in *Hapraklit* in January 1945. Following some introductory discussion about the structure of the Jewish lawyers association and elections to association committees, the floor was opened to discussion from any interested participant. Each individual was given five minutes to speak on any topic related to the aspiring profession. A total of 29 individuals spoke; some discussed a single topic, while others raised a number of topics within the allotted five minutes. The content of these 29 five-minute speeches provides the data for our analysis, on the assumption that the topics of greatest salience for the aspiring profession will emerge from these speeches.

Using content analytic procedures, the full transcript was reviewed first to establish a list of topics raised by each of the speakers. Two coders – the first author and a research assistant fluent in Hebrew with a strong background in sociological theories of professions – read and independently coded the transcript for separate topics raised; this resulted in an initial set of 23 separate categories. The two coders' category lists were compared and, through an iterative process of negotiations between the two coders, were reduced into one unified list of 13 separate issues.

These topics are listed on Table 1 and identified as whether or not these topics are thought to be related to domain boundary construction or membership boundary construction. Some of the topics clearly call for networking activities that would enhance both membership boundaries and domain boundaries and are so labeled.

**Table 1** Topics raised at the meeting and related boundary type

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Boundary type</i>
1. Representation of Jewish lawyers in various extra-professional committees (1)	Domain
2. Achieving public legitimacy for the Jewish legal system (2)	Domain
3. Establishing a formal system of Hebrew law (10)	Domain
4. Establishing a uniform fee structure for services by Jewish lawyers (5)	Membership
5. Whether or not to place limits on the number of lawyers who can enter the group (13)	Membership
6. Internal organization and committee structure for the aspiring entity (4)	Membership
7. Expanding and empowering the voice of the aspiring entity at the regional and national level (2)	Domain
8. Using the Hebrew language in courts and among lawyers (14)	Domain/membership
9. The role of the group in dealing with and responding to national issues and the international war crisis (1)	Domain
10. Educational and training requirements for members (2)	Membership
11. The need for more Jewish judges in courts (4)	Domain/membership
12. Contacts with national institutions, especially regarding establishing a state-sanctioned Bar examination (5)	Domain/membership
13. Determining how to evaluate, and whether to accept, the legal training of immigrant lawyers (3)	Membership

( ) = number of speakers who raised this topic.

The second step of the analysis involved returning to the transcript and coding for each speaker whether or not any of the 13 topics was mentioned during the speaker's five-minute talk. A code of 1 was given if the topic was mentioned, and a code of 0 was given if the topic was not mentioned. The coding system generated a rectangular matrix of 29 (speakers)  $\times$  13 (topic categories), which, after multiplying it with its transpose, generated a 13  $\times$  13 (categories  $\times$  categories, producing 78 dyads) square matrix of topics by topics.

Next, we generated a set of centrality measures to help elicit the shared 'cognitive map' developed implicitly by the participants, using Borgatti et al. (2002). The square matrix of 13  $\times$  13 was used to calculate three different centrality measures for each topic:

- *Degree centrality* refers to the number of direct ties that connect a topic to other topics raised in the meeting. In other words, if three people



spoke and each one raised one joint topic and one exclusive topic, the degree centrality for the first topic will be 3, since that topic is connected to three other topics. In mathematical notations, degree centrality is the number of vertices adjacent to a given vertex in a symmetric graph (Borgatti et al., 2002).

- *Betweenness centrality* measures how often a topic lies along the shortest path between any two topics; in other words, the number of times a topic is the connecting topic between two other topics that otherwise never appear together. In mathematic notations, let  $b_{jk}$  be the proportion of all geodesics linking vertex  $j$  and vertex  $k$  which pass through vertex  $i$ . The betweenness of vertex  $i$  is the sum of all  $b_{jk}$  where  $i, j$  and  $k$  are distinct. Betweenness is therefore a measure of the number of times a vertex occurs on a geodesic. The normalized betweenness centrality is the betweenness divided by the maximum possible betweenness, expressed as a percentage (Borgatti et al., 2002).
- *Closeness centrality* is the average of the distances to all other topics. This centrality measure refers to the degree of closeness each topic is connected to other topics mentioned in the meeting. For example, if there are only three topics and if one person referred to topic 1 and 2, and the second person referred to topics 2 and 3, then the closeness centrality for topic 2 will be 1 and for topic 1 and 3, it will be 1.5. In mathematical notations, the farness of a vertex is the sum of the lengths of the geodesics to every other vertex. The reciprocal of farness is closeness centrality. The normalized closeness centrality of a vertex is the reciprocal of farness divided by the minimum possible farness expressed as a percentage (Borgatti et al., 2002).

## Results

Table 2 shows the three centrality measures calculated for each of the 13 topics discussed at the meeting. For each measure, the higher the scores, the more central the topic. The results show a remarkable similarity in rank-order across the three measures of centrality.

Figure 1 shows the centralities in a hyper-graph. On the diagram, each arrow represents one or more connections and is not sensitive to the number of times each topic was considered relative to any other topic. Nevertheless, the diagram also corresponds well to the results reported in Table 2 in terms of the topics of greatest salience to the speakers.

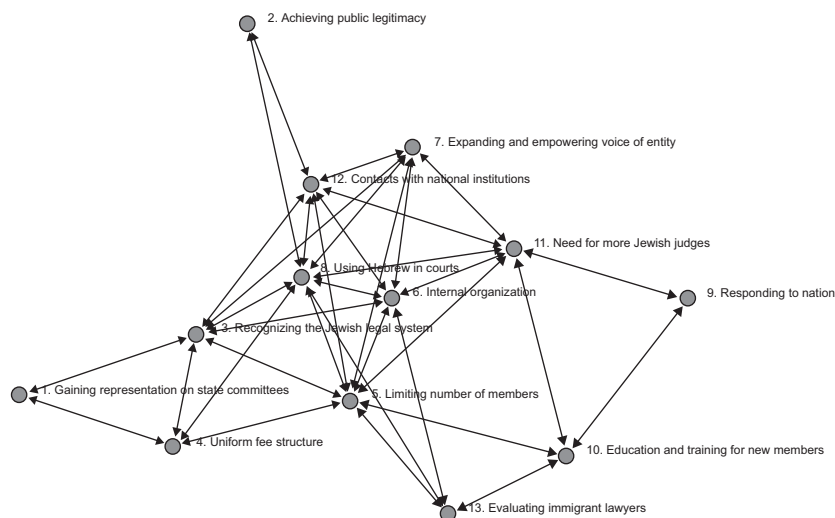
The most central topic, on the hyper-graph as well as on the centrality scores, refers to the use of Hebrew in courts. This is clearly the topic of greatest salience to the speakers. Through one perspective, this topic could

**Table 2** Normalized centrality scores for 13 topics

Topic	Type <sup>a</sup>	Degree centrality score	Rank	Betweenness centrality score	Rank	Closeness centrality score <sup>b</sup>	Rank
8 – Using Hebrew in courts	D/M	24.0	1	16.85	1	80.0	1
5 – Limiting number of members	M	19.0	2	16.13	2	80.0	1
3 – Recognizing a system of Hebrew law	D	13.0	3	12.34	4	66.7	5
11 – New for more Jewish judges	D/M	10.0	4	14.91	3	66.7	5
12 – Contacts with national institutions	D/M	10.0	4	6.59	5	70.6	3
6 – Internal organization	M	10.0	4	3.14	8	70.6	3
4 – Uniform fee structure	M	9.0	7	4.32	6	57.1	8
7 – Expanding and empowering voice	D	6.0	8	0.94	10	66.7	5
13 – Evaluating immigrant lawyers	M	5.0	9	1.31	9	57.1	8
10 – Education and training for new members	M	4.0	10	3.75	7	54.5	10
2 – Achieving public legitimacy	D	2.0	11	0.00	11	48.0	11
9 – Responding to national crisis and war	D	2.0	11	0.00	11	44.4	12
1 – Gaining representation on state committees	D	2.0	11	0.00	11	42.9	13

<sup>a</sup> Boundary type: D = domain, M = membership, D/M = both domain and membership.

<sup>b</sup> For this measure, data matrix was dichotomized such that  $X_{ij} > 0$  was recoded to 1.



**Figure 1** Hyper-graph depicting relationships among topics

be interpreted as part of the nation-building enterprise, because it would assist in reducing the non-Jewish influence in the new nation. Through another perspective, this topic can be interpreted as the core of the boundary-construction agenda for the aspiring entity of Jewish lawyers, because it would serve as a way to establish the group's boundaries in both membership and domain. First, it would create a membership boundary that included only those who spoke Hebrew [#8] and thus create a demand for more Jewish judges [#11]. Second, it would create a domain boundary by establishing arenas for these professionals to operate in that were dedicated to Jewish issues and Jewish clients under the auspices of a Hebrew legal system [#3]. The importance of this set of topics to boundary construction is reflected in their being instrumental both to defining the domain of the aspiring entity, as well as to raising the membership exclusivity, and this is borne out by the high ranks for the centrality scores on Table 2 for each.

From the transcripts, it is clear that this set of issues is seen as critical to legitimizing the Jewish legal profession as a collective social entity. For example,

The problem of the use of the Hebrew language [#8] is only a part of the general problem of discussing such matters in hearings of Jewish people in front of Jewish judges [#3]. There is a need to increase the number of Jewish judges [#11].

In the past, the issue of the Hebrew language was problematic . . . but now, the situation has changed and we need to insist to use only Hebrew [#8]. The appointment of new Jewish judges [#11] in Haifa was gained due to the stubborn use of Hebrew by Jewish lawyers.

The problem of the Hebrew language in courts [#8] will be canceling the option to appear before a British judge when the two sides are Jewish, and to insist that the law will be changed in this direction [#3] . . . that will result in an increased number of Jewish judges [#11].

The use of the Hebrew language [#8] will be resolved by Jewish courts and then the Jewish law will be established [#3].

The second most central topic, according to the ranking of scores for the three centrality measures reported on Table 2, is related to the construction of membership boundaries. That is, whether or how much to limit the number of members [#5] is a driving consideration in setting membership boundaries and how exclusive to make them. Figure 1 also depicts the importance of this topic. Details from the transcript reveal that members believed a numerical approach to membership restriction was not ethically justified. Clearly, the group was struggling with how best to establish exclusive membership boundaries around the aspiring entity that would deal with the issue of reducing competitive forces (from large numbers of immigrant lawyers [#13] and from those who charged very low services fees [#4]), but how to do so on the basis of professionally justified criteria. Speakers also recognized that membership boundaries needed to be built on substantive criteria (e.g. education, training, and language facility [#10]), rather than simply on a numerical basis, in order to enhance the legitimacy of the aspiring group. For example,

I reject that the cure for the problematic economic status of the profession is to restrict the number of entering professionals [#5], but to intensify the requirements of the specialization process [#10].

These topics were salient because of an 'overflow' of lawyers in Palestine, which was creating excessive competition for clients and fees. Thus, this cluster of topics also was impacted by the nation-building enterprise. However, we see that the concerns raised in these topics are clearly closely tied to boundary construction, especially with regard to decisions about barriers to entry, that have been seen in previous studies of emerging entities in other contexts (e.g. Abbott, 1988).

Initially, we characterized #4, establishing a uniform fee structure, as an issue related only to membership boundaries (see Table 1). This connection is seen on Figure 1 by the arrow between #4 and #5, limiting the number of members. However, on seeing in Figure 1 that this topic is more clearly connected to several domain-related boundaries, we returned to the transcript for illustrative quotes related to this item. For example,

The major problem is the service fees [#4]. The only way to sort out this problem is to have a formal service fee and to treat any abuse as a breach of the professional ethics.

In reassessing our initial categorization, we recognize that it can indeed be seen as primarily relating to domain boundaries. This is because a uniform fee structure serves as a signal to outsiders about the domain for which the fees apply, as well as the ethical practices that pertain to those who perform activities in the domain. Thus, the fee structure argument was framed as a signaling one: that the emerging entity as a whole would lose credibility if some of its members charged rates that were too low. As such, this item helps to distinguish the domain of this group from the activities of competing occupational groups<sup>5</sup> – an issue of great concern to the aspiring members during this time. In this perspective, the connection to other domain-related topics (#1, #3, and #8) is understandable.

Interestingly, while grave concern was expressed at the outset of the meeting over the international war crisis and the Holocaust, [#9] this was not a topic of centrality among the speakers. Instead, the focus of the speakers was more targeted to topics that would set the agenda necessary to construct membership and domain boundaries around the emerging entity. This is a revealing example of how prioritizing of network activities for domain and membership took place, with the goal of constructing a new entity. The goal of addressing the international war crisis, while apparently deeply felt by those present, was at the same time a distraction from the agenda of boundary construction.

## **Discussion**

Our goal in this article was to use a case study of the new profession of Jewish lawyers in pre-state Israel to add greater understanding to the boundary-construction process of an emerging profession. We began by reviewing the theoretical framework proposed by Montgomery and Oliver (2003), which introduces a four-stage model of the networking processes

involved in constructing membership and domain boundaries that constitute an institutionalized profession. The framework also introduces the concepts of dual-directed forces to characterize the simultaneous inward and outward direction of the various networking processes associated with domain and membership boundary construction.

An important aspect of the model that has required further exploration is how specific boundary-related activities are identified in the first place by those who wish to create a new profession. We have proposed that a fruitful avenue is to study how the agenda emerges among early members of the group. In other words, we need to understand *which* networking activities are selected and prioritized by the aspiring group and the processes by which the sorting of activities takes place. This is important because a nascent group could waste much energy and motivation if it engaged in networking activities that were not shared by others in the group, or if it pursued activities that would not move the group forward toward becoming an institutionalized profession.

We recognize, however, that agenda-setting often is not an explicit exercise among participants, especially among members of a non-hierarchical, newly forming group. Rather, the agenda may emerge in more implicit ways that can be revealed indirectly. Thus, we have proposed an innovative research methodology that enables us to discern the topics and their centrality among the options available to the nascent group. This methodology combines qualitative content analysis with quantitative centrality measures, to produce a map of shared cognitions about emergent topics and their relationships. In this study, we interpret the cognitive map as an agenda for the group. In other settings, this approach could serve to reveal other types of shared cognitive maps, such as implicit elements of a strategic plan or priorities for groups and organizations that are already well established. Moreover, it helps to sift out those clusters of topics and activities that, while important, may be less central and hence could serve as a distraction from the collective goal of the group.

In this study, we have focused on one important meeting held by members of the aspiring profession of Jewish lawyers in late 1944, during which many members were given an opportunity to speak about issues of salience to the development of the professional group. The full transcript of that meeting was published the following month in *Hapraklit*, and the text was coded to reflect the range of topics addressed by various speakers at the meeting. Using network analytic methods, we calculated centrality measures for the various topics and mapped the connections between them. Although the discussions weren't framed as 'agenda-setting,' we have argued that they served as an implicit exercise in arriving at a collective cognitive identity for the aspiring group that emerges through our multi-dimensional scaling analysis.

Whether or not the members were aware of the development of a collective cognitive identity around which to pursue membership and domain boundary-construction networking activities, we believe that this is what occurred. As history has shown (Strasman, 1984), the boundary-construction activities that followed this meeting ultimately focused on the issues that this analysis has revealed to be central at the 1944 meeting. In particular, Hebrew did become the formal language of the courts, the number of Jewish judges was increased, requirements were implemented regarding the legal training of immigrant lawyers, formal fee structures were established, and in 1962 a formal bar exam was established as a statutory law council. This last act can be considered the moment at which the social entity of the Jewish legal profession was institutionalized (stage four of the process model).

What is also reinforced in this study is how successful boundary construction efforts target *both* membership and domain boundaries. While multiple activities can occur simultaneously, the focus of the aspiring members of a successful entity will coalesce around a subset of the networking activities and key networking partners. For example, as suggested in this case, the meeting occurred at a point when perceived competition from practitioners outside the group was intensifying, triggering pressure to raise membership boundaries. Domain issues were more closely related to the nation-building that was simultaneously occurring; yet, domain boundaries for this entity were not entirely co-terminus with nationalistic efforts, and other aspiring groups also were heavily involved in the nation-building enterprise.

### Limitations

The study is unique in that it occurred during a time of nation-building, thus making it difficult to unambiguously distinguish between topics that were salient because of their contribution to the nation-building project from topics that were salient because they were important to the boundary-construction project. We would argue that making a clear distinction is not altogether necessary, because topics can serve more than one purpose – that is, nation-building and boundary construction – and that interesting analyses can occur through different lenses. An intriguing question is whether the agenda-setting aspect of boundary construction is substantially different when it occurs in well-structured environments than when it occurs in an emerging one, as during the establishment of a new nation. The broad comparative study reported in Montgomery and Oliver (2003) suggests that there are systematic similarities in the stages of boundary construction, regardless of the environment; however, that study does not delve into the agenda-setting activities investigated here. Additional rich contextual studies such as the one reported here would be a useful augmentation of the current analysis.

The archival data also may contain some limitations, in that some meaning may be difficult to retain through reporting and translation. We have tried to minimize these problems by using expert translators; however, we cannot be certain that we have fully captured the intended meaning of each speaker or that the reports in *Hapraklit* are as precise as we would like.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, one of the most difficult challenges in the creation of new entities is deciding how to proceed; that is, what means to use to reach the desired ends. A similar problem is faced when trying to determine why a particular set of actions that were implemented turned out to be less than successful. In either situation, being able to understand how a particular set of actions (whether they are networking activities and partners for an aspiring entity as in the present study, or elements of a strategic operating plan for a large corporation) was selected in the first place can be extremely useful to inform future actions. In particular, what may appear to be free-flowing discussion or debate may actually carry greater systematic meaning than is recognized. We would argue that the mapping of analytical techniques and centrality measures, combined with content analysis of a meeting transcript or other communication vehicle, can serve as an innovative and fruitful approach to revealing the underlying structure of themes and courses of action.

## Notes

- 1 As reported in Yaar and Shavit (2001), the first migration wave (1892–1903) arrived mainly from Russia, Poland and Romania. The second migration wave (1903–14) included middle-class intellectuals, mainly from Russia and Poland, who settled in the cities and established economic and cultural entrepreneurial projects including the revival of the Hebrew language. The third wave (1919–23) were mainly radical socialists who settled in Kibbutzim, but also in the cities such as Tel-Aviv. The fourth wave (1924–29) included middle-class urban emigrants from Poland. The fifth wave (1929–39) brought intellectuals from Poland and Germany.
- 2 As documented by Shamir (2000), in the 1920s there were internal struggles between Jewish lawyers who played an active role in legitimizing British colonial law and Jewish lawyers who advocated for Hebrew law. Hebrew law was attacked by those in power for being a non-law and for lacking national value.
- 3 ‘The Attorney’ in Hebrew – a monthly professional newspaper.
- 4 The new ‘Yeshuv’ is the general term for the Jewish people living in Palestine starting in the first immigration wave in 1882, who established the first settlements and urban neighborhoods. This is in contrast to the old ‘Yeshuv’ which referred to the ultra-orthodox Jewish population that lived in Jerusalem, Zfat, Tiberius and Hebron (Horowitz & Lissak, 1976).



- 5 For example, 'request writers' were a competing group at the time, composed of people who prepared legal briefs and other quasi-legal documents. They were charging fees that were significantly lower.

## References

- Abbott, A. *The system of professions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Abbott, A. Things of boundaries: Defining the boundaries of social inquiry. *Social Research*, 1995, 62, 857–82.
- Afuah, A. Redefining firm boundaries in the face of the internet: Are firms really shrinking? *Academy of Management Review*, 2003, 28, 34–53.
- Aldrich, H. *Organizations evolving*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999.
- Borgatti, S., Everett, S. & Freeman, L. *UCINET 6 for Windows – Software for social network analysis*. Analytic Technologies, 2002.
- Brown, J. & Duguid, P. Organizational learning and communities of practice: Towards a unified view of working, learning, and innovation. *Organization Science*, 1991, 2, 40–57.
- Cross, R., Yan, A. & Louis, M. Boundary activities in 'boundaryless' organizations: A case study of a transformation to a team-based structure. *Human Relations*, 2000, 53, 841–68.
- DiMaggio, P. Constructing an organizational field as a professional project: U.S. art museums, 1920–1940. In W. Powell & P. DiMaggio (Eds), *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 267–92.
- DiMaggio, P. & Powell, W. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 1983, 48, 147–60.
- Freidson, E. *Professional powers*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Gabriel, Y. & Willman, P. The journal strap line: Boundaries or integration? *Human Relations*, 2004, 57, 7–8.
- Hapraklit*. The Lawyers' Association, Tel-Aviv, Israel, January 1945.
- Heracleous, L. Boundaries in the study of organizations. *Human Relations*, 2004, 57, 95–103.
- Horowitz, D. & Lissak, M. *The origin of the Israeli polity: The political system of the Jewish community in Palestine under the mandate*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1976. (In Hebrew.)
- Kogut, B. & Zander, U. What firms do? Coordination, identity, and learning. *Organization Science*, 1996, 7, 502–18.
- Larson, M. *The rise of professionalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.
- Montgomery, K. & Oliver, A. The role of dual-directed networking dynamics in constructing entity boundaries. Under journal review. (Extended version of: Creating entities through network dynamics of boundary construction. *Best Papers Proceedings*, Academy of Management, 2003.)
- Newell, S., Pan, S., Galliers, R. & Huang, J. The myth of the boundaryless organization: Technology does not make cultural and business boundaries disappear simply because it exists. *Communications of the ACM*, 2001, 44, 74–7.
- Oliver, A. & Ebers, M. Networking network studies: An analysis of conceptual configurations in the study of inter-organizational relationships. *Organization Studies*, 1998, 19, 549–83.
- Oliver, C. Strategic responses to institutional processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 1991, 16, 145–79.
- Paulsen, N. & Hernes, T. (Eds) *Managing boundaries in organizations: Multiple perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

- Scott, W.R. *Organizations: Rational, natural, and open systems*, 3rd edn. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992.
- Scott, W., Reuff, M., Mendel, P. & Caronna, C. *Institutional change and healthcare organizations*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Shamir, R. *The colonies of law – Colonialism, Zionism and law in early mandate Palestine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Shamir, R. Nation-building and colonialism: The case of Jewish lawyers in Palestine. *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, 2001, 8, 108–23.
- Shumate, M. & Fulk, J. Boundaries and role conflict when work and family are collocated. *Human Relations*, 2004, 57, 55–74.
- Strasman, G. *Wearing the robes: A history of the legal profession until 1962*. Tel Aviv: The Lawyers' Association, 1984.
- Sydow, J. Structuration theory in action: Managing organizational boundaries in interorganizational networks. Paper presented at the 18th EGOS Colloquium, Barcelona, 2002.
- Yaar, E. & Shavit, Z. (Eds) *Trends in Israeli society*. Israel: The Open University, 2001. (In Hebrew.)
- Zucker, L., Darby, M., Brewer, M. & Peng, Y. Collaboration structure and information dilemmas in biotechnology. In R. Kramer & T. Tyler (Eds), *Trust in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996, pp. 90–113.

**Amalya L. Oliver** is currently the Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Hebrew University. Her main interest is in studying social and organizational networks in the biotechnology industry, inter-organizational learning and new organizational forms, scientific entrepreneurship, and professional projects in the context of globalization and transformation. Recent work has been published in *Organization Studies*, *Organization Science*, *Research Policy*, *Human Relations* and others.

[E-mail: amalyao@shum.cc.huji.ac.il]

**Kathleen Montgomery** is Professor and Chair of the Department of Management and Marketing in the Anderson Graduate School of Management at the University of California, Riverside. Her recent research considered trust-related challenges to members of hybrid professions; she also studies ethical dilemmas that arise from conflicting stakeholder demands. She has served as Chair of the Health Care Management Division of the Academy of Management. Her work has appeared in *Health Services Research*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Organization Studies*, *Advances in Health Care Management*, *Human Relations*, and elsewhere.

[E-mail: kmont@ucr.edu]