



The feminization of topography in France

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November 25th 2021

Introduction:

My name is Audrey ALAJOUANINE, I am a licensed surveyor, manager since 2011 of a company located in Toulouse with 20 employees. Our activities mainly revolve around topography and photogrammetry. I was elected to the Toulouse Regional Council of Licensed surveyors (OGE) in 2017 and since 2015 I have also been a member of the OGE's commission for Surveying measurement techniques.

I am going to present to you the situation as we know it today in France concerning the feminization of the surveying professions then we will have the testimony of Tania LANDES and Hélène MACHER, professors at engineering school INSA Strasbourg.

Feminization of vocational training in France:

To explain the situation in France, let's first analyze the training courses that are offered.

There are 4 schools in France: ESTP School of Public Works since 1910, INSA National Institute of Applied Sciences of Strasbourg since 1922, ENSG National School of Geographic Sciences since 1941 and ESGT National School of Surveyors since 1947.

The arrival of the first women in these engineering programs was, as you will see, very late: in 1971 for the ENSG, 1973 for the ESGT, 1973 for the INSA, as for the ESTP four women were precursors in 1946, 1955, 1964, 1966 then recruitment became more regular from 1970.

It should be noted here that the ENSG and ESGT recruitment competitions were only opened to women in 1971.

A study published in 2019 shows that the proportion of women to men is on average 22% if we look at the numbers since the first women entered this program and 25% if we take the figures since 2000. And today the latest statistics on the 2021-2022 school year show that in all schools the percentage of women on each year remains stable around 26%.

Some explanations for this statement:

Currently, female applications to topographic engineering schools are in the minority, because the recruitment channels are not equal: around 30% of women for preparatory classes, 40% for scientific channels in universities, around 20% for the BTS Professions of the land surveyor and digital modeling. Overall, women remain in the minority in scientific training in France, and certain courses, although long and difficult, are more in favor, such as medicine, where women are now in the majority.

It will be difficult for our training programs to increase the number of female students, as long as scientific training programs are not more popular with young women.

Actions carried out by OGE:

Strongly related and associated with the construction trades, the profession of surveyor and the professions linked to the expertise are in fact historically and culturally predominantly exercised by men.

Today, the activity remains very masculine and in France nearly 70% of the employees of our companies are men. Men represent more than 80% of the workforce in the technical professions of companies, whether they are employees, engineers or surveyors.

Historically, it was in 1956 that the first woman was registered as a surveyor, and she practiced until 1980. However, it is only very recently that the number of women surveyors has become significant.

Indeed, if we look at the totality of the registered members of the order since its creation, we are only 293 women out of 6 232 registered members, that is to say 5 % and currently we are 249 out of 1 859 licensed surveyors in activity, that is to say 13 %.

There is certainly still an effort to be made to make known our professions. OGE launched in 2019 a communication campaign in order to meet the growing need that our profession knows. The objective is therefore to attract as many women as men in the years to come.

If the feminization of the profession is not an objective in itself, OGE is committed to moving towards parity and removing the obstacles that students in engineering schools might fear. Whether salaried or self-employed, working in an office or in the field, there are many opportunities for those tempted by a profession of the future.

Since 2015, OGE has imposed parity in the representative bodies of the profession. One could be unfavorable to the extent that the participation of women in the bodies would come from a quota and not from skills. But it can still help some of us to take the step. Currently, parity ensures that at least 2 women sit on the Executive Board, i.e. 10% of the body's workforce, which is therefore representative of the feminization rate of the profession.

My experience:

Throughout my career I have evolved in a very masculine environment, which has often been an advantage, sometimes a disadvantage, and I have greatly appreciated when it was neither, being treated equally regardless of who I was talking to or who was present.

I never had the impression that the status of women could be a disadvantage in achieving a professional career in a relatively masculine environment that is nevertheless becoming more and more feminized.

At the age of 33, I became a licensed surveyor and young entrepreneur in a world traditionally dominated by men, and it was an extremely motivating moment. I turned what could have been a weakness into a curiosity and then a strength. Being a young female engineer leading male-dominated technical teams that had only known male leaders was a real challenge, but it was an experience that definitely shaped my career path.

Today, I don't feel that being a woman plays a particular role in this career path, because it is not uncommon to have other female interlocutors, whether in the large groups we work with or with local authorities.

And when I speak in schools, I do not hesitate to encourage young female students who are still wondering about their legitimacy to become a surveyor and I remind them that there are no limits to practicing the profession that we are passionate about and in which we flourish.

I thank you for your attention and we shall now hear the testimony of two professors from the National Institute of Applied Sciences in Strasbourg.