Forestry – a men‘s world?

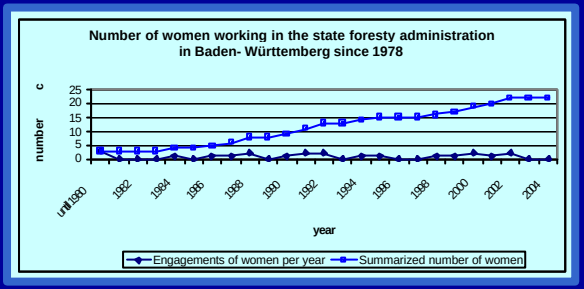
Case study Baden- Württemberg:

Forestal apprenticeship as prerequisite for the access of women to leading positions in the state forestry administration

Introduction

Just 7,5% of the employees working in leading positions in the state forestry administration of Baden-Württemberg are women.

The small share of women can be explained by the history of the access of women to forestal apprenticeship as prerequisite for professional work in the forestry sector.



Method

The apprenticeship regulations were analyzed under the aspect whether there existed equal opportunities for all applicants to receive professional training.

The results had to be contextualized with general contemporary history and especially the women’s history to find out if the developments in the forestry sector complied with the general societal trends.

Results

Up to the 1970s women were excluded from professional qualification.

While it was possible for women to study forestry sciences at the universities since 1939, they had no access to the obligatory traineeship at the state forestry administration until the middle of the 1970s. The reason for that were the apprenticeship rules which did not change significantly from 1940 till 1977.

During National Socialism the prescribed military service was the main barrier for women. After 1945 (demilitarization!) an other mechanism became the main barrier: the temporal intermixture of the forestal traineeship and the employee selection. During the traineeship the future forest officers were chosen. This sourcing of staff was a multistage process that continued the entire time of the traineeship.

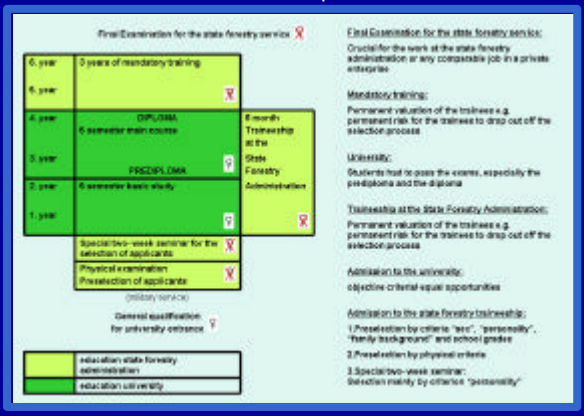


Illustration of the multistage forestry training and employee selection process in Baden- Württemberg

Consequently only the aspirants that fulfilled the employment criteria of the state forestry administration were allowed to participate and complete the traineeship.

The criteria which were used to select the applicants showed the following characteristics:

1.The criteria were formulated imprecisely. Consequently they could be interpreted in any direction.

2.The specialist knowledge was not the most important criterion. In spite of that, the three criteria “sex”, “personality” and “family background” were the determining criteria.

3.Especially the criterion “personality” was defined by the values of the organisation culture of the state forestry administration. (Male/ Conservative/ Military shaped values!)

In consequence only applicants that conformed were allowed to participate the obligatory traineeship at the state forestry administration in Baden – Württemberg.

Right after the school leaving examination and prior to the start of term, special two – week seminars were held to select adequate candidates for the obligatory traineeship. On this seminars the applicants were multiple tested. They had to do sports, forest operations, write exams for hours and were tested by a psychologist. All tests were designed for men.

Sources:
Prussian foresters 1922. Borkenhagen (1977): Deutsche Försterchronik S. 230
Female lumberjacks (dateless). Archive community Grabenstetten

White collar jobs…

Mens‘s and Woman‘s traditional roles in the forestry sector

… versus back- breaking work

As women traditionally did not “occur” in the selection and training methods, they were not admitted to the obligatory traineeship and therefore could not get professional qualification for the forestal professions.

Only strong socio-political pressure during the 1970s made it possible to change the apprenticeship regulations so that women were allowed to participate in the traineeship. Therefore, the first woman was hired as late as 1978 in the state forestry administration of Baden-Württemberg.

This picture is taken 1935 and demonstrates impressively the connection between military and forestry. It is called “Betriebsappell” = germane military language “to muster”.
The foresters had to line-up such as soldiers in front of their chiefs.

Source: Rubner(1985).Deutsche Forstgeschichte 1933 – 1945 S. 65

Timeline

•1939/ 1940:
New nationwide legal training rules for the occupation in the state forestry administration. Prescribed military service. Multistage forestry training and employee selection process.

•1970:
New legal training rules in Baden-Württemberg.
BUT no “real” change/ revision

•1977:
Because of a court decision and socio-political pressure, the employee selection process had to be transfigured to an objective and comprehensible process.

•1978:
The first woman is employed in the state forestry administration in Baden-Württemberg.

Contact person:

Astrid Kühnel
Institute of Forest Utilization and Work Science

Phone: 0761/ 203 3764

astrid.kuehnel@fobawi.uni-freiburg.de

wagen
WALD GENDER
BILDUNG ORGANISATION
NATUR BERUF

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Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung

PTJ Projektträger Jülich

Findings of the interdisciplinary research project wa’gen (Wald und Gender)
Poster for the 11th International Conference for Woman in forestry May 2010