

From Texture Triangle Discussions to the Power of Freezing a Construction Site

Background

The Soil Science Society of Switzerland SSSS was founded in 1975. While in the beginning the SSSS was mainly supported by academic members, the society always had a practitioner's focus and has been successively transformed into an association for soil professionals not only from research institutions, but also from local and national governments or the private sector (FIGURE 1).

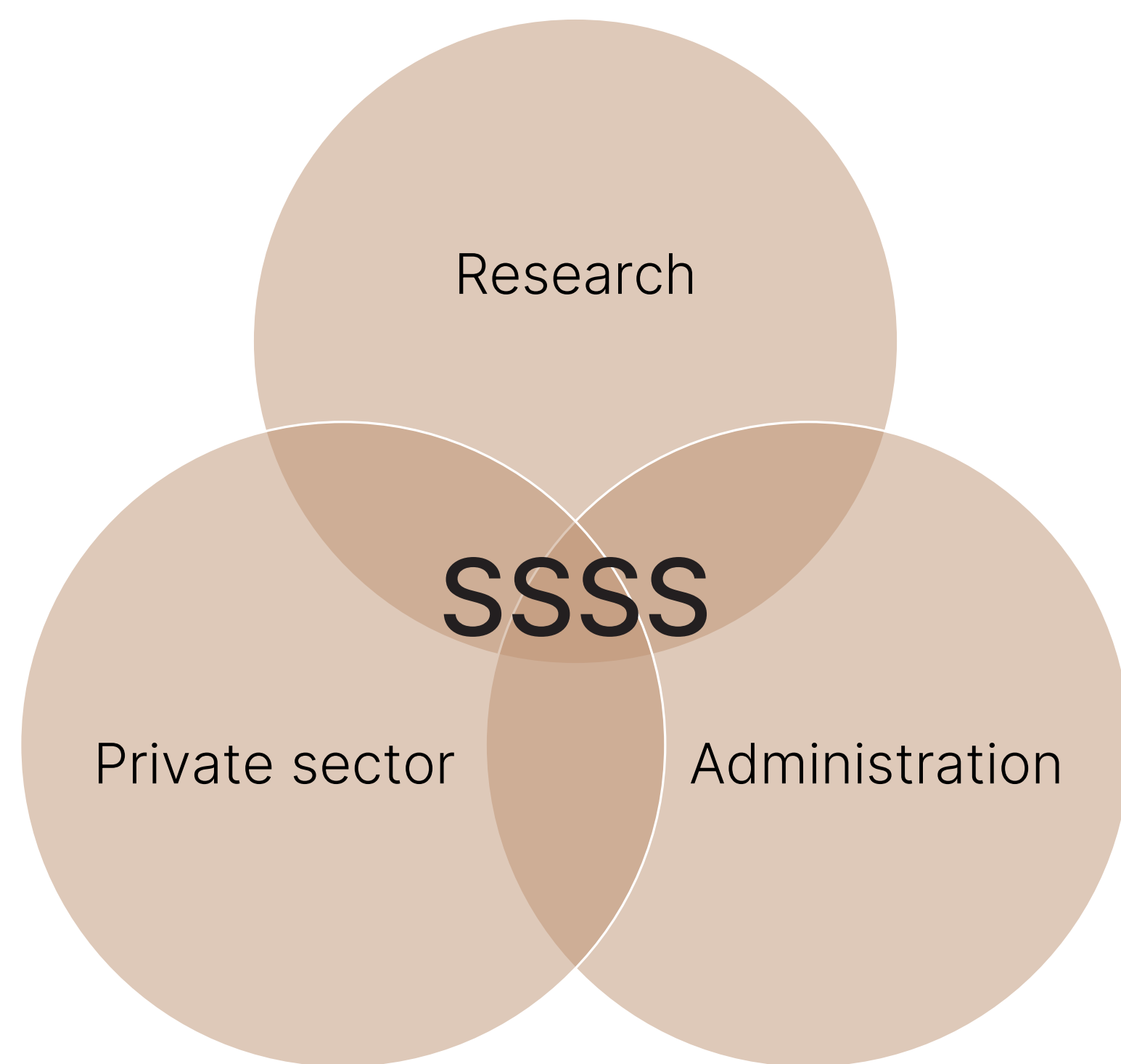


FIGURE 1: SSSS occupies a unique position at the nexus of research, engineering and governmental entities.

Internal organisation and key activities

The SSSS is managed by a board which aims to have representatives of all key areas relevant for Swiss soils. Key activities are performed in working groups, that furthermore include several outreach activities (TABLE 1, FIGURE 2). As of today, 42% of the around 570 members of the SSSS are female. Every year the society meets for its congress and general assembly. In autumn the members can participate at the excursion linked to current soil science topics (FIGURE 3).



FIGURE 2: Members of the working group „Soil of the Year“ producing the image for 2018's Soil of the Year, the alpine soil.



FIGURE 3: Picture taken at the yearly excursion of the SSSS together with the German Soil Science Society (DBG) in 2019.

Soil Protection Advisors on Construction Sites

The supervision of construction projects by specialists is a particular feature of Swiss soil protection governance and a profession by itself. If certain construction sites expect to surpass a specific impact on soil, the cantonal soil protection agencies appoint a Soil Protection Advisor (SPA) for overseeing the protection of soil during the construction procedure (FIGURE 4). This mostly includes measures to avoid soil compaction and also an adequate management of topsoil and subsoil storage and soil recultivation after the project has been completed. On site the SPAs are embedded in the organization chart on the engineer level and are paid by the owner of the construction site. The SSSS is responsible for certification of SPAs, organises continuing educational events and is an appreciated platform for professional exchange and networking amongst the SPAs.



FIGURE 4: Large construction sites require a soil protection advisor to assure for appropriate soil handling on site. The SSSS is critically involved in the certification and quality assurance of the SPAs.

Diverse topics but continued efforts over time

The SSSS bulletin serves as a mirror of the key topics that were addressed in the last decades within the organisation (FIGURE 5). Early onwards, questions on the physical properties and hydrology dominated, followed by biological and chemical soil quality assessments. Questions on the interaction of society with soil in e.g. laws and outreach were addressed in a similar number of articles as soil classification and soil genesis, while topics on soil mapping and modelling increased particularly in the last two decades. This demonstrates the diverse backgrounds of SSSS members and their continued efforts to increase the understanding of various soil properties.

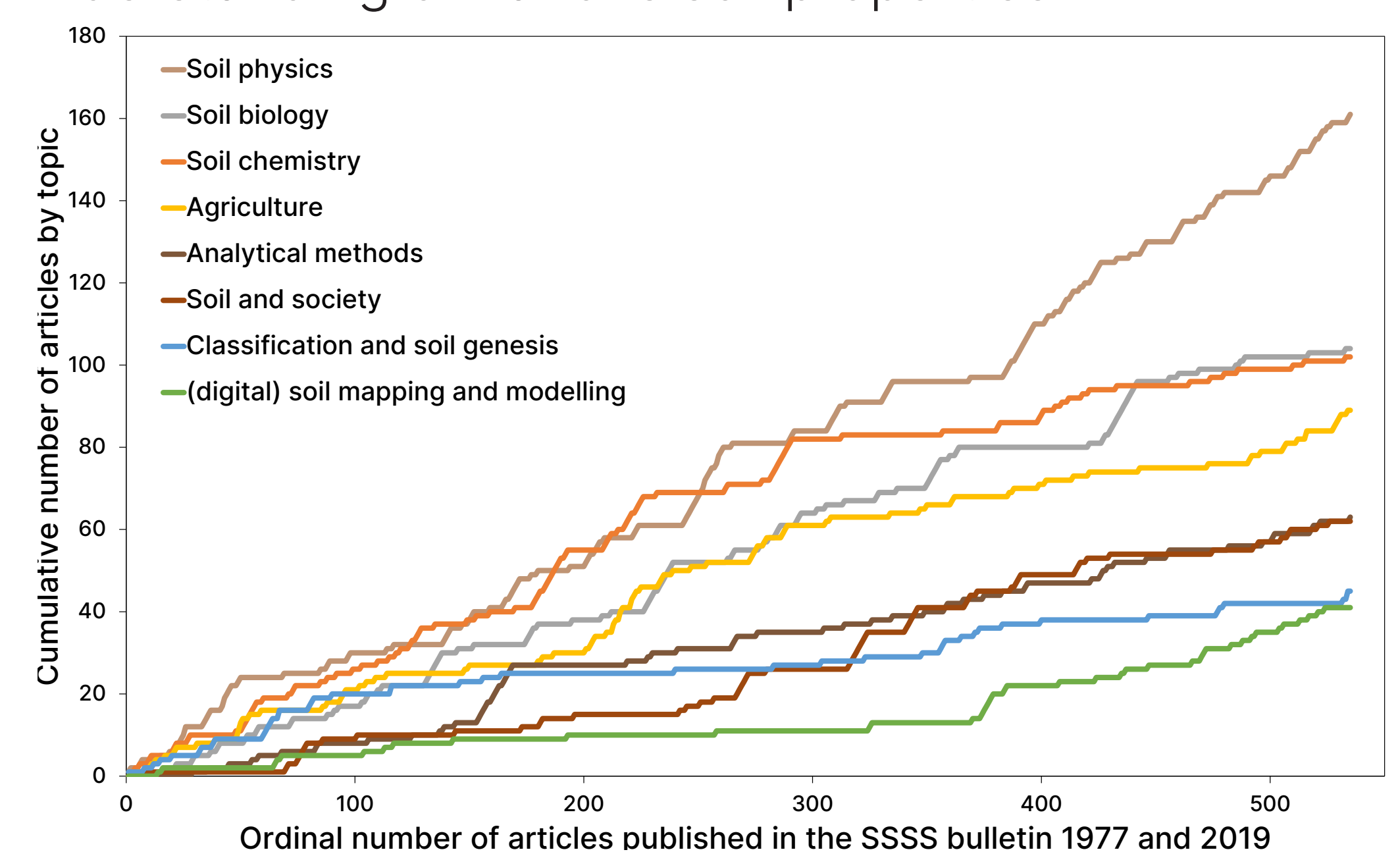


FIGURE 5: Evaluation of the topics addressed in the bulletin published by the BGS/SSP in the years between 1977 and 2019.

TABLE 1: Organisation and activities of the SSSS

SSSS Body	Activity
Working groups	Soil Mapping
	Soil Classification and Nomenclature
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	Soil of the Year
	Platform Physical Soil Protection
	Soil 4.0 - Exploring New Methods
	Environmental Education on Soil
Outreach activities	Swiss Soil of the Year boden-des-jahres.ch
	SSSS Online Blog soil.ch/de/blog
	Annual congress and excursion
	Lobbying in regional parliaments and participation in the legislation consultation process
	Support of innovative outreach activities