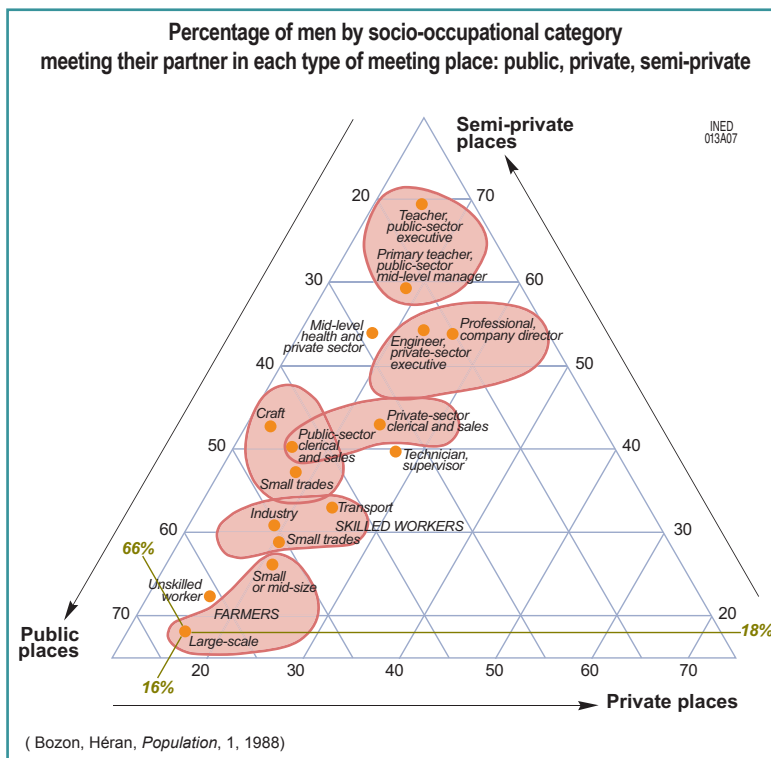


THE TRIANGLE OF MEETING PLACES



Reading the graph

Where do people first meet their spouse? The meeting places are divided into three categories, forming the three corners of the triangle: public places on the left, private places on the right and semi-private places at the top.

Each side of the triangle has a scale: from left to right along the bottom for the proportion of partners met in a private place; from bottom-right to top for a semi-private place, and from top to bottom-left for a public place.

For each social category, the position of the dot indicates the frequency of the three types of meeting place. They can be read on the scales along the three sides of the triangle and their sum is equal to 100.

Interpretation: 16% of large-scale farmers met their partners in a private place, 18% in a semi-private place and 66% in a public place.

Each social group has its preferences

What does this graph tell us? The choice of partner is not random, and neither is the place where the first meeting takes place. Men in lower social categories often meet their partner in a public place, open to everyone.

Semi-private places, where people meet with others “of their kind”, are frequented mainly by groups ranked among the higher social categories, the intellectual professions in particular. They are places with restricted access where strict rules of behaviour apply. Last, private-sector executives, company directors and professionals appear to be more at home in purely private places, with friends or family.

Source

The data are taken from the INED couple formation survey of 1984. Respondents were asked where they first met their spouse. Meeting places were then classified into three categories: public places (festival, public dance party, café, street, shopping mall etc.), semi-private places (club, place of work or study, concert hall, etc.), and private places (gathering of family or friends). The occupation given is that of the man.

This graph and its commentary are taken from the article by Michel Bozon and François Héran “Finding a Spouse: A Survey of how French Couples Meet”, *Population*, An English Selection, 1989, pp. 91-121, republished in the book cited below.

To find out more

Michel Bozon and François Héran - *La formation du couple*, Paris, La Découverte, Coll. Classiques. Grands repères, 2006, 235 p.

