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The Dissemination of Management Innovations through Consultancy in the Postwar Period

Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to fulfill and to refine the role of consultancy and professional bodies in dissemination of management innovations in the Inter- and Postwar Period that was in these days scientific management in Europe. The proposition is set upon the case of French consultancies and organizing bodies (i.e. professional societies and associations) and their activities to popularize the scientific management movement with a special reference to the Henry Bernaténé's output.

The choice of the Bernaténé's personage was dictated by the general notion that not only 'giants', major thinkers shaped the organisation theories but also minor ones. C.S. George (1972, p. 117) clearly stated: "Though these were field workers who laboured in the periphery, nonetheless their part in firmly establishing scientific management was critically important for mass understanding and application". In case of France there was a big division between engineering education and broadly defined management studies. Nevertheless engineers de facto were very important for the executives (as for example H. Fayol). M. Kipping describing the situation in French consultancies in the Interwar period stated that Taylor's followers were competing with the supporters of Henri Fayol, who focused more on the planning, coordinating and controlling than on scientific organization of the work process (Kipping, 1997, p. 70). The analysis of this situation in the post-war period was done by L. Boltanski (1983) and O. Henry (2002).

The proposed paper presents the results of investigation on the role and influence the consultancies and professional bodies in diffusion the scientific management in a consistent

framework. It explain the diffusion of one management innovation from the secondary center (France) to a periphery (Poland).

Background

French economy in the Inter- and Postwar period

After WWI, French politicians thought that despite the debts incurred everything could come back to normality («*Belle époque*» pre war) if Germany was forced to pay for the damages occurred during the war (*L'Allemagne paiera*). The economic policy aimed to return to the previous parity between gold and franc. Keynes was the only voice to explain that this fairytale was very dangerous and impossible to implement (cf. his book *The Economic Consequences of Peace*). Basically these debts and reparations questions were the causes of the 1929 crisis and the impossibility to return to global prosperity.

During the 30's, the French «*front populaire*» tried to cope with unemployment by reducing the legal weekly and yearly work durations and to move away from a market economy to a managed one. It failed and France was unable to fight back against Hitler as the Polish know.

At the same time, some French alumni of the Ecole polytechnique built up a group “X-Crise”¹ in order to find some solutions to the economic difficulties. Somehow, they conflated with the diffusion of scientific management (American style, followers of Taylors). (There are some discussions on the part played by Le Chatelier and Fayol – there are differences between fayolism and taylorism).

Actually history of economic thought shows that there were various strands among French economists. There is a tradition of French economist-engineers who played an important part in the development of microeconomics. They taught in engineering schools and they were not known either in the Faculties of Law (where they were some chairs of economics) nor in the few business schools (Alcouffe, 1989).

Anyway these various concerns explained that the leitmotiv at the end of WWII was «enhancement of productivity». (see Boltanski's paper)

¹ The Groupe X-Crise (or X-Crise) was a French technocratic movement created in 1931 as an aftermath of the 1929 Wall Street stock market crash and the Great Depression. Formed by former students of the École Polytechnique (nicknamed "X"), it advocated planisme, or economic planification, as opposed to the then dominant ideology of classical liberalism which they held to have failed. Their ideas would not be put into practice until the Vichy era, when many technocrats seized the opportunity to reconstruct France. However, many members of the group joined the Resistance and opposed the Vichy regime, ultimately participating in the post-war administration. X-Crise was founded by Gérard Bardet and André Loizillon, and its members included Raymond Abellio, Louis Vallon, Jean Coutrot, Jules Moch and Alfred Sauvy, who as head of the INED demographic institute after World War II coined the term "Third World". (wiki)

In the view of the authors, concerns with productivity were not supported by academics because they were marginal vis-à-vis the division of topics in the French higher education. French economist engineers were more interested by plans (Soviet or Dutch style), for economists in Faculties of law; economics of firms did not appear to be an interesting topics. The business schools stood apart from the academic world and were more concerned by accounting and marketing.

Moreover as they could find their way in academia, people interested by these topics tried to make their living through consultancies (maybe some could have preferred to make their living through consultancies instead of finding their way in the academic jungle) (see Kipping and Nioche). Besides it is quite possible that firms were more confident picking up ideas about management from consultancies than from academics. Worth mentioning is French anti-Americanism which includes many strands but they converge despising American ideas (there cf. Boltanski).

This background (how schematic it is) is necessary to understand the career of Bernaténé on the one hand and the reception of the BG diagramme on the other hand.

The data sources come from the elaborations covering mentioned period (Bernaténé, 1949; Devinat, 1927; Boltanski, 1983; Kipping, 1997, 1999; Kipping et al., 2008; Girard nd.; Henry, 2002, 2004, 2006; Champsaur and Cailluet, 2010), but also from the investigation of the Bernaténé's professional life identified on the basis of his works and also on bibliography of some of his coauthors of 1946 (especially Charles Voraz).

Consulting in France

It is common assumption that the beginning of the management consultancy in France was driven by engineers (Kipping, 1997; Cailluet and Kipping, 1999). This view is supported by identification of foreign (mostly American) influence. Two strands appeared. One was run by engineers, fading in the French consulting market in the 60s. The second direction was human oriented and thus represent the 'soft' side of management. The diversification took place after the WWII. The consultancy market had started to be difficult and some of the consultants turned into academic institutions or started to join to professional bodies in order to strengthen their positions.

In this development a role was played by professional associations namely referred to Association française des conseils en organisation scientifique or AFCOS (1940s.) and Commission générale d'organisation scientifique or CEGOS (1930s.) (Cailluet and Kipping, 1999, Henry 2002) (tab.1).

Table 1. Main French associations devoted to organisation studies

Abreviation	Full name	Year of establishment
CNOF	Comité National de l'Organisation Française	1926
CGOST	Commission générale de l'organisation scientifique du travail	1926
CEGOS	Commission d'Etudes générale des Organisations,	1936 (renamed CGOST)
AFCOS	Association des conseillers en organisation scientifique	1949
AFCOD	Association française des firmes de conseillers de direction	1950s/1960s. (renamed AFCOS)
AFOPE	Association Française des Organiseurs Permanents d'Entreprise	1958

Source: own elaboration based on: (Kipping, 1997, Henry 2002, Bulat 2008, Boltanski 1983)

The consultancy's services were dedicated mainly for productions. New area of expertise has appeared such as organisation of administrative work. In this paper the special attention is given to this one as an example of creating subfield in the main discourse of scientific management aiming to solve office problems. Presently we would call this information sciences. The administrative and bureaucratisation issues, "rationalisation" of daily management, were despised by prominent consultancies and academics within the analysed period.

The Case of Henri Bernaténé

H. Bernaténé biogram²

H. Bernaténé was born in 6th May in 1906 in Lunéville. His father, Peter was a butler, his mother Caroline Knoetgen a cook. They had left the annexed province of Alsac. After completing the primary school, he had finished the studies in private management and accounting school. He did not served in a military because of hip fracture and bad medical treatment that blocked his growth. He started the work as an administrative employee at Electro-Cables in Paris, that was one of the Thomson's subsidiary. Next he worked for Ferodo Company, the subsidiary of British firm specialised in brake linings (now Valeo Group), in St. Ouen between 1937-1941. It was a turning point in his career. In view of his abilities and skills, his supervisor advised him to move towards a new direction – the organization of work (work studies). He took the courses in l'École d'Organisation Scientifique du Travail de Paris and Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM).

² The authors obtained the data from Henri's son, Michel with whom the CAWI was conducted. The authors would like to thank him for support.

The third job was in organisational consultancy. He was hired by the Department Stores Decré in Nantes and he became deeply involved in this business. The Bernaténé family moved to this city in 1942. After heavy bombardments in September 1943 they decided to come back to Paris. There, Henri was hired by Robert Satet and became his pupil. In the preface to his book “How to design and conduct a literature”, Robert Satet wrote “it is the purpose of the work of our student and friend BERNATENE who, following the advice of Leonardo da Vinci, took care to build practice on a good theory”. The co-workers were H. Grün, Paul Planus, and Leon Gingembre.

Henri left the Satet Consultancy in 1949 or 1950 to create his own business. His first clients led him to Lyon (knew anyone there previously) in particular in the cardboard industries and this has snowballed. His seriousness was appreciated by Lyon businesses, thanks to an ongoing activity for this city and region and recognition (Rotary, Business School). He finally settled in Lyon and remarried in 1954. He had no access to foreign works, as he spoke any foreign language. In 1976 he settled in Champagne, Villadin (10) where he died December 30, 1995. In addition, he was a great lover of classical music, a good violinist and composer of sonatas for solo violin and string quartet.

The professional life of Bernaténé must be complemented by his writings which let the public get acquainted with his achievements. Bernaténé’s output consists of articles and books. Two papers were published in the journal with international range. One in the “Revue internationale des sciences administrative” which was and remains a "scientific journal", the second – in “Travail et Méthodes”, a review which was very specialized in topics which are now largely dealt with either in computer science or information science. Moreover analysis of affiliations provided in these publications allow to identify his memberships to the professional consultancy bodies.

Bernaténé’s name started to appear in literature at the beginning of the 1950s. (see Appendix 1). His book titled “How to manage the enterprise” from 1949 was quoted in 1952. What is interesting the publisher of this book was CEGOS, which is an important player in the field of organization science. He is also mentioned in the compiled annual bibliography elaborated by L.W. Smith in “The American Archivist” in 1952.

In 1951, Bernaténé published a book about documents. He is described as organisational consultant, professor in l'École d'Organisation Scientifique du Travail in Paris and Bruxelles, but also as a president of C.A.M.O.R.E and *membre-patron* of A.F.G.O.S (sic!). The latter is misspelled abbreviation from Association Française Des Conseillers De Direction (AFCOS) created by the consulting engineers specializing in work organization in 1939

which renamed in 1950s as the Association française des firmes de conseillers de direction (AFFCOD) representing mostly firms (Henry 2002, p. 29). The president of AFCOS was L. Danty-Lafrance, ex-president of CNOF and professor in Conservatoire Nationale des Arts et Métiers (CNAM) (Boulat, 2008, p. 135). It explains why Bernaténé as a director of C.A.M.O.R.E decided to join this group.

In the “Technica” journal, no. 83 from 1964, there is a short info about a new book written by organisational consultant and professors from l'École d'Organisation Scientifique du Travail. But in other book published in the same year dealing with document management Bernaténé is presented as organisational consultant, member of AFCOD and *former* professor in: l'École d'Organisation Scientifique du Travail de Paris, l'École de Formation des Cadres de Lousanne and l'École Supérieure de Commerce de Lyon. Three years later, in the 5th edition, he become the present professor of the first mentioned above university (Bernaténé, 1967).

Looking at his books one conclusions can be make: Bernaténé's main concern was about “documents” (elaboration, circulation, storage).

Bernaténé and his professional bodies

The Centre d'Application des Méthodes d'Organisation Rationnelle CAMORE (or CAMOR) was run by H. Bernaténé in 1959. This organisation was helping the Council of State in Vaud (one of the state of the Swiss confederation with Lausanne as capitol) to improve its administration (Coutaz, 2006, p. 83). Additional data about Bernaténé's activities were obtained thanks to Gilbert Coutaz, the Director of “Archives cantonales vaudoises” who delivered following information to authors.

The first contact with Bernaténé took place in 1959 as the result of undertaking the efforts on rationalisation of the administration. The training course was planned to be conducted by Bernaténé from January 11 to 12 February 1960. Cooperation with Council of State had been continuing till 1963 according to the note from February 18, 1963. Moreover the research in telephone directories allowed to located the presence of CAMOR in Lausanne, between 1959 and 1965/1966. CAMOR's addresses: an avenue of Evian (1959/1960-1961/1962), then 4 Florimont Avenue, but none of them was Bernaténé's address. The address “30 Beaulieu Lausanne” appears on the form from Henry Bernaténé, Director of CAMOR, but it is not confirmed as actual. It seems that the CAMOR had no fixed office, and that Bernaténé was actually from Lyon.

In the 60s. H. Bernaténé described himself as organizational consultant in Association Française des Conseillers en Direction (AFCOD), director of Centre d'Application des Méthodes d'Organisation Rationnelle (CAMOR) and professor in the 'l'École européenne de formation des cadres supérieurs des entreprises' in Losanne.

These organisations accompanying with Bernaténé's name are less known than mentioned earlier CEGOS, or elder CIOS and CNOF (Henry 2006), but they play a significant role in France. Affiliations can be a sign of distinguishing (member of AFCOS), but also can be treated as a manifestation of independent activity (director of CAMOR).

Roger's diffusion model

The paper is based on theoretical background elaborated by E. Rogers (2003) in his diffusion innovation model that is widely accepted by scholars (Lovett, 2002; Treanor, 2002; Cheng et al., 2004; Mikl-Horke, 2004; Murray, 2009; MacVaugh and Schiavone, 2010). The authors decided to investigate elements related to communication channels: diffusion networks and change agency that applied the mass media and interpersonal channels (Rogers, 2003, p. 11). Another approach for explanation the diffusion of management knowledge is the cognitive-cultural perspective expressed in 'travel of ideas' and management consultants as 'carriers' or 'medium' (Faust 2012, p. 142, 145). The carriers can be perceived as communication channels in Roger's theory of diffusion. The Actor-Network Theory supplements the diffusion of innovation by the explanation given to the "translation" process (Berland, Levant, Joannides, 2009). It emphasizes the importance of actor who shape the idea and changeability during the travel (Faust, 2012, p. 141).

According to E.M. Rogers (2003, p. 11) "diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system". Four key terms are: an innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system. In this paper we identify B-G chart³ (G stands for H. Grun⁴ – co-author of this tool) (fig. 3) as innovation, communication channels as professional societies, and social system as professionals dealing with the consulting and research issues. Span of time period in this case study extends from 1950. till present days. Direction of the diffusion: France→Poland⁵. G.

³ In Polish literature the most popular name for this tool is Bernatene-Grün's chart.

⁴ Or Grün (cf. Cubiles 1966, p. 58). The data about this person are incomplete and difficult to track down.

⁵ In Polish literature about scientific consulting mostly presented by Z. Martyniak (1993) the French representatives up to 1940s. are:

- industrial engineering current: Ch. Bedaux (but usually perceived in terms of his success in the U.S.A.), H.L. Le Chatelier, Ch. de Freminville, Michelin brothers;
- universalistic current: H. Fayol,

Mikl-Horke (2004) argues that innovations in the field of management are mostly diffused to the Central and Eastern European Countries by Western companies. This remark refers to the 1990s, but taking into account the results presented in the paper, it should be supplemented by the influence of consultancies.

Diffusion of B.G. graph

Additional reason for choosing H. Bernaténé come from the success of diffusion of one of his work concerning graphic notion in Poland. This so-called B.G. diagram is a graphic tool visualising process using the form and symbols (Bernaténé) (Figure 1). Its construction resembles the common flowcharts and other contemporary business process mapping techniques. The first mention about the B.G. graph was found in 1951. Bernaténé quoted his «diagramme» in his subsequent publications.

The primary reference in Polish literature derives from the three pages long article co-authored by Lisiński and Siedlarz in 1976 (Figure 2). They present the B.G. diagram from the book edited by C. Hauwel⁶ in 1972. The following publications mentioning this tool are based on this (*Organizacja...*, 1986; *Nowoczesne...* 1993; Jedynek, 2011, Potocki 2011, Czekaj 2012). The search of the exact Polish name for it using the Google web engine shows 7 410 hits. Especially significant is the zero hit after excluding the Polish term of the chart. One can say that in other national literature there some variants of its name are used, for example the same as in Bernaténé work. Analysis of the results obtained after the search of alternatives phrases, such as "B.G. diagramme", "B.G. chart" revealed that none of the hit referred to the actual Bernaténé's solution. Therefore conclusion can be formulated about popularity of this tool in Polish literature.

Analysis of the description of the B.G. in the literature revealed that it is treated as an important tool in Value Analysis (*Nowoczesne...* 1993, p. 12) in spite of that it is not included in the SAVE's Body of Knowledge (*Value Standard*, 2007) nor ISO 12973:2000 standard (*Value Management*, 2000). Others references concern information management and documents circulation.

The authors describing it in peer-reviewed publications are mainly affiliated to Cracow universities.

• humanistic current: H. Dubreuil, E.F. Rimalho.

⁶ In M. Lisiński and R. Siedlarz's work is a misspelled name of the editor: C. Hauuel.

Data discussion

The gathered data allow to apply the underlying diffusion theory. In terms of Rogers' diffusion theory early adopters are researchers who also act as consultants. But one remark needs to be formulated. The diffusion of B.G. chart is mostly in literature. This tool was mainly employed during scientific researches on information processes carried out by scholars or is a proposition while discussing possible mapping tools.

The most significant communication channels were publications that can be counted as one of the type of mass media. Access to the foreign journals was limited on these days in Poland and the most convenient form was to be familiar with the monograph reviewing contemporary solutions employed and considered as the best in the given time. It supports Roger's generalisation no. 5-13 stated that "mass media channels are relatively more important at the knowledge stage" (Rogers 2003, p. 205) and generalisation no. 5-14 "Cosmopolite channels are relatively more important at the knowledge stage" (ibidem, p. 207). Knowledge stage is the first one of the innovation-decision process. It consists of 3 steps: recall of information, comprehension of messages and knowledge/skill for effective adoption of the innovation (ibidem, p. 199). Therefore Bernaténé works can be treated both in terms of mass media and cosmopolite. Transferring innovation such as BG chart occurs via channel from a source to a receiver. This is: from Bernaténé to Polish scientists and research and through their publications to the larger audience. Using Internet caused further diffusion of this tool.

Discussion

The authors explain this phenomenon by the fact that pioneers of scientific management movement in Europe could not compete with Americans at the world level, but they could infuse their ideas in some countries where people were more reluctant to the sophisticated models elaborated abroad in culturally different environment. Translations of Bernaténé works to Spanish (Cubiles 1966, p. 58; Giopp 2005, 218) are also a proof of such process. In the French case the scientific management (operation research, production management, budget control, etc.) was never easily inserted in the business school mainstream and engineers trusted more consultancies which spoke the same language as them. After the 1970s, this line of research produced some hybridization as the French diploma called MIAGE (*méthodes informatiques appliquées à la gestion des entreprises*) (they played an important part for inventory management, planning, etc).

The limitations of the study refers to the scope of analysis. Bernaténé books were appreciated by Spanish and Portuguese readerships and he received some proposals to establish in Mexico but these projects were not realized.

Conclusions

The authors have chosen the historical institutionalism approach in order to describe the different effects in a systematic way and provide the basis (framework) for further researches. The institutionalism view was applied in order to investigate the role of the French professional bodies such as: Centre d'Application des Méthodes d'Organisation Rationnelle (CAMOR), Association Française des Conseillers du Direction, Ecole d'Organisation Scientifique du Travail, and CEGOS. It is supplemented by communication channels taken from the Rogers' diffusion model mentioned above. This perspective allows to approach more systematically to analysis of particular contributor who stepped into organizations for support of his/her efforts.

The authors argue that in spite of a common assumption about significant role of consultancies in the dissemination of management innovations (cf. Kipping, 1999), there still exists the research gap in the form of lack of in-depth analysis of their particular impacts and actual positions in this process. Therefore there is no well established classification of the roles that consultancies have played, especially referring to 'minor' contributors. In Bernaténé case the authors deduce from different quotations (Coutaz, 2006) that he was not succeed and probably moved from Lyon to Lausanne in the 1950s. This observation is supported by Henry's notion about hard time for French consultants in the Interwar period (Henry, 2002, p. 26).

In authors' opinion the French engineers were fascinated by scientific management and tried their best to introduce rationalization in order to enhance productivity and cope with the Americans. If they could not succeed in running companies at least they have tried to monopolize consultancies. In this rationalisation fever some devoted themselves to – one may call – peripheral topics (*vis à vis* production) as documentation, administration or accountancies. This is especially the case of H. Bernaténé whose works counted in tens and were quite often re-edited.

The main findings show and explain changing roles of consultancies and supplementing influence of professional associations which strengthen their position. The forms of diffusion are still valid in spite of current impact of ICT, e.g. professional societies are now expressed in Internet social networks. The authors believe that proposed

methodology could be applied for examination of other theories. This conclusion is in line with the similar notion about the economists who can be perceived as innovators (Faulhaber and Baumol, 1988).

However proposed work has the second purpose namely to create a common framework for assessing other examples of diffusion of management innovations. It shows that historical approach allows to refine the complicated issues despite of its simplifications caused by fading contrasts existing in a given period and petrified in documents.

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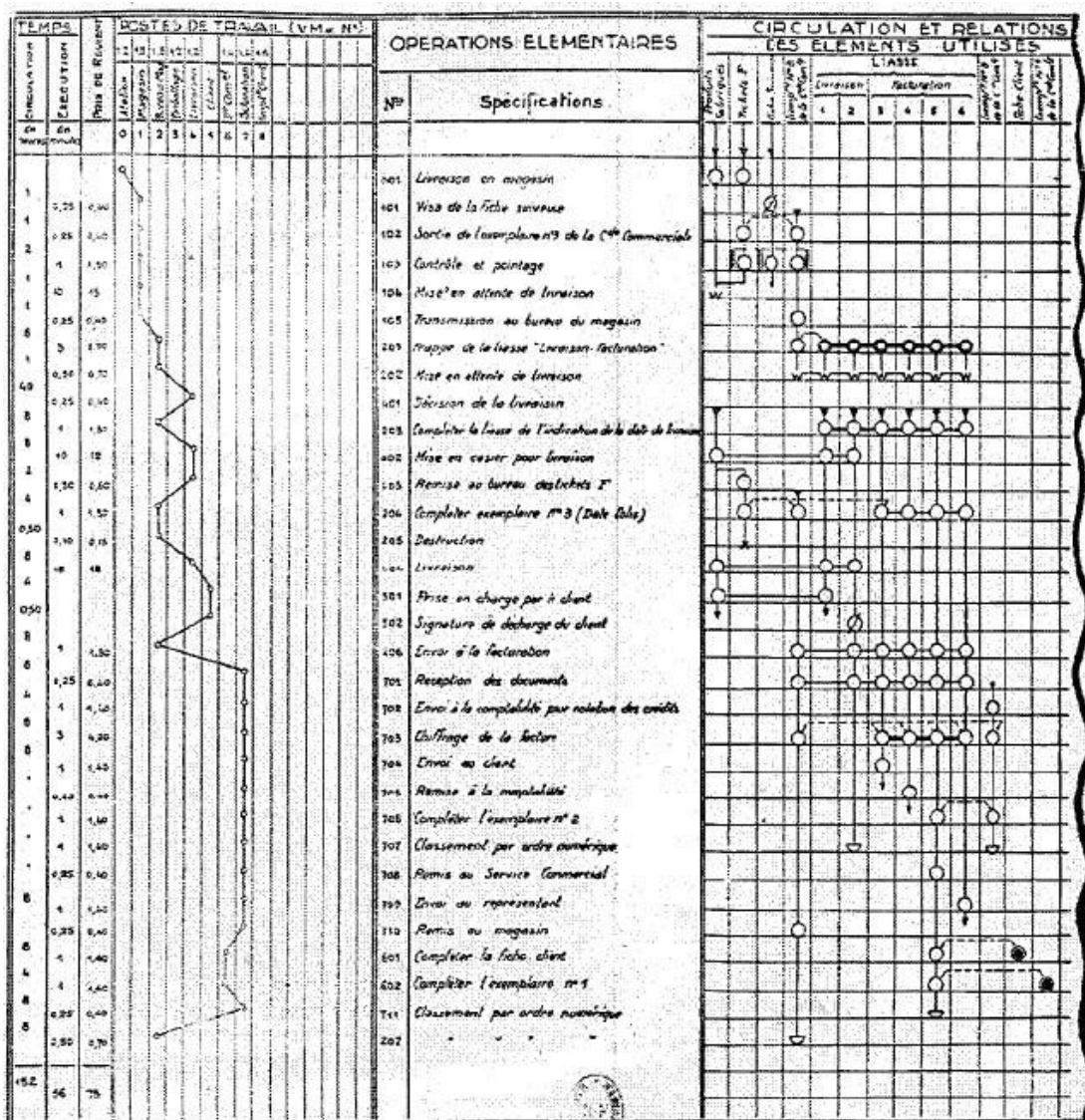
Appendix 1

The List of Henri Bernaténé's works

1. BERNATENE H., (1949), *Le Diagramme "B.G.". Remarquable instrument de travail pour l'organisateur.*
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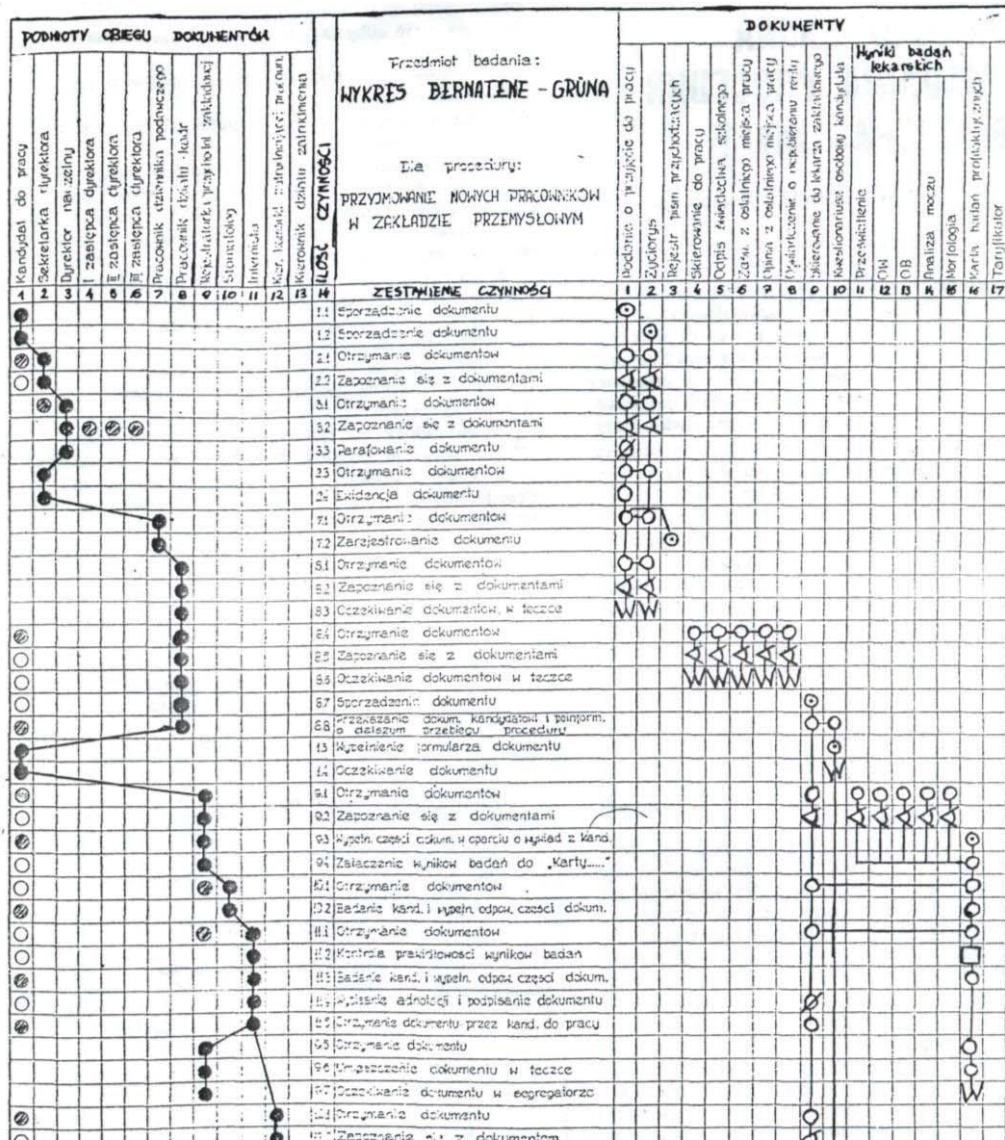
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Fig. 3. Example of BG chart



Source: (Bernatene 1949, p. 15).

Fig. 4. The first example of B.G. chart in Polish literature



Source: (Lisiński and Siedlarz, 1976, p. 521)