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Triangulation and Dealing with The Realness of Qualitative Research

Abstract

This paper provides a sociologists' reflection of a sociologist on qualitative field research. Reflections will include some methodological and epistemological considerations that are connected with field work, while building the realness of the description and conclusions, i.e. constructing the quality of qualitative research. The intellectual process of doing research will be characterized by analysis of:
1. description of investigated reality (tales of the field),
2. analytical process,
3. usage of commonsense research procedures (so called triangulation procedures), which are used in the field by the researcher and during analysis or writing a research report to adequately "re – present" researched reality.

The three above mentioned stages of representation of reality are interwoven to create one complex intellectual process, which is called "field research". The quality of qualitative research is the intellectual process where some procedures are used to create the accountability of research conclusions.

Keywords
Triangulation; Field research; Qualitative methods; Sociology; Ethnography; Writing of ethnography; Ethnographic description; Definition of reality; Realness; Tribal rules; Generalized other

The considerations in the paper are based on two assumptions. The first one is that social researchers have specific perspectives of social and psychic reality. The social world is divided into parts which can be differentiated according to a criterion and between these abstract categories ("parts of reality") exist *real* connections. Individual thoughts and feelings have also "causes"' or conditions that are included in the above-mentioned "parts of reality" or in the relations between them.

The second assumption is that social researchers try to show a description of social world as real and adequate. They want to prove that the described organization, organizational structure, reconstructed strategy or mission, community relations exist in reality, not only inside but also outside the description. The problem of the quality of qualitative field research is strictly connected with testifying the description of reality, accounts of it and the "reality itself" (by triangulation) and not with the problem of validity i.e. whether the research procedures truly help to answer

the research questions or whether the research measures what it was intended to measure. The quality of qualitative field research is also not connected with a problem of reliability (whether the results are consistent over time and how exact they are in their conclusions) because even revisits to the field could not solve the problem of temporal and historical changes of reality in the investigated field. The fields of ethnographic research are changing and very often are not well defined in advance (fuzzy fields); the researched phenomena could be found in many places to be observed (Nadai, Maeder 2005).

Following the trail of research and constructing reality we will proceed in the wake of hints given by K. Charmaz (2006: 127). Rather than explaining reality, social constructionists see multiple realities and therefore ask: *What* do people assume is real? *How* do they construct and act on their view of reality? Thus, knowledge and theories are situated and located in particular positions, perspectives, and experiences." Thus constructions are made by researched people and researchers themselves. The data are constructed; there is no amorphic description of reality from a constructivist perspective (see Goode 2007: 7, 14-16). Moreover, the construction is inscribed in the relation between investigated people and researchers. Even the detailed transcriptions of data and "focused ethnography" that is intensive in data gathering and analysis (Knoblauch 2005) does not resolve the problem. The question then becomes how is the description of reality constructed in ethnographic reports?

The questions of realness of the researched reality

> *Writing is also a way of "knowing" - a method of discovery and analysis.*
> Laurel Richardson

Realness is a process of achieving compatibility of explanations of taken for granted assumptions concerning the rationality and typicality of human action in everyday life. However, concern for realness is also present in the social sciences. There are special categories and procedures for evaluating the realness of social research, such as validity, reliability, triangulation, revisits etcetera. Usually these procedures are considered to be the tools for ensuring 'realness' independent of the contexts of their usage.

Sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists and other researchers of society who use qualitative methodologies in their studies, especially in field studies, all tend to show a particular predilection to account for realness, in other words, *validity* of research conclusions, formulated hypotheses, verified theories or observed and studied reality or/and authenticity, credibility, plausibility (Belousov 2007: 163 – 164; Silverman 2001: 232- 241; Hamerslay; 1990: 57; Van Maanen 1988: 45 - 72; Stake 1994: 241; Glaser 1978: 4; Glaser, Strauss 1967: 238 - 239; Janesick 1994: 214 - 217; Kvale 1996: 229 – 250; Zakrzewska - Manterys 1996; Konecki 1989; Konecki and Kulpińska 1996; Ożyński, 1998: 9 – 15; Marciniak 2008: 46 – 48; see also Gobo 2008: 264; 267 - 268). It might be the result of their commitment to the research in the role of "research tools", that is, acting as a device to listen, observe and record the perceived "reality". In this role they experience on a daily basis the "dialogical" nature of their research methodology, which interacts permanently with the observed social actors and communities. Moreover, they are aware of their

individual weaknesses, prejudices, personal predilections, which are often present in their everyday life. Why then would these factors not influence the research process, which is nothing more than another form of daily experience and explication of the world, with the only difference of being performed during field studies with the justification coming from the usage of scientific procedures? Very few researchers are not particulary interested in the methodological account of supposition e.g. E. Goffman (Becker 2003: 660; see also very short methodological notes in the book *Asylums* by E. Goffman 1961). This situation might be the result of their conviction concerning the difficulty of developing the relevant procedures for field studies, as well as its consequent use, and, in an unlikely event of successful description, the readers may trace the misstep in the usage of the procedure and thus accuse the researcher of causing the unnecessary disarray. The other reason might be the strong emphasis on freedom of the researcher, meaning the unconventional thinking, also in terms of methodology (Becker 2003: 660).

By qualitative field research we refer to research based mainly on participant observation as the rudimentary research technique and on the unstructured interview as a supporting technique. Such a situation implies a longer stopover for the researcher within the community and his active participation in order to discover the customs and the patterns for interpretation and interaction with the members of a given group as well as the social structure, which binds them together. The researcher builds close relations with the observed individuals. The crucial aspect, from the perspective of such studies, is the access to the life of the group and the acceptance of the researcher within the structure of the group to "share" the reality of the other, and to establish the intersubjectivity with him and to base research on the so called "intimate familiarity" (Silverman 2001: 57; Punch 1994: 84, see also: Van Maanen 1988; Hammersley, Atkinson 1995, chapter 3; Gobo 2008: 120 – 124; Prus 1996: 250-251; Blumer 1969; Kleinknecht 2007: 61 -63).

A field researcher, for example, during his studies, every day asks himself questions regarding realness of the perceived world with reference to its record and its inherent accounts which are interwoven with a "real" description of the world. How is it possible, that something I had observed yesterday is not relevant to what I saw today? Do I need to observe "the same" actions tomorrow then? What will they be like? Will these verified observations eventually lead me to a final and trustworthy version of the description and interpretation of the conduct of the inspected group? What am I suppose to do with the previous versions? Can I state retrospectively that they had been less real than the ones I observed on a last day? Shall I make some more observations, maybe in other context? Perhaps I need to encounter the representatives of other social groups in order to confirm the realness of their behaviour in its diversity? Questions like these demonstrate that a field researcher faces the permanent problem of not only adequate description of reality but also the problem of constructing in a temporal dimension (reality changes according to the passage of time) and interactive dimension (a researcher is influenced by the observed social reality whilst simultaneously influencing it).

The abovementioned questions evolved, in part, through my own experience in the field. They may become even more complicated if I take into consideration my studies of various cultures, for instance Japanese or American, where the matter of adequate representation of observed and generated reality seems to be even more complex. The researcher into European culture is in the 'studied' foreign culture merely "a stranger" or "newcomer" (Schutz 1944), who experiences all existing cognitive limitations adequate to the given situation.

The problem of "representation" refers to such issues as: reception of a given text (which is an interpretation itself) by a specific audience and the place of the author in the text in reference to "the other". "Representation" then is usually the "presentation of oneself", whether or not we want it to be so. It means that the presence of "the other" usually refers to the presence of the author in the text. The presented "other" is usually an alternative identity of the researcher (Denzin, Lincoln 1994: 503, see also: Van Maanen 1988: 45 - 72). What is more, "the other" is not merely an exterior audience, but also the audience which is the "subject of the study". The issue of representation then refers to the problem of representation in the interactive dimension, with regard to broader social and structural conditioning (see: Strauss 1993: 172 – 186). The researcher (the narrator) while presenting him- or herself in a certain manner, at the same time represents a social group of academics. The intersubjective dimension of the scientific discourse is all the time present in the daily life of the field researcher (Prus 1996; Gobo 2008).

The analysis of rhetorical techniques used by the author displays the problems of representation, which usually refers to particular literary devices (aesthetic) which are present in scientific writings, with the dominating technique of presenting "the other" known as realistic technique (Atkinson, Hammersley 1994: 254-257 and Van Maanen 1988). It might be stated then that the presentation of "the other" is impossible without representation of reality, as well as the identity of the researcher, which is closely related, at least by the mere fact of observation.

When I observe my past research work, I doubt whether I really visited the places I describe and that I produced "real" research results (Konecki 1992a; 1992; 1996). The places were culturally unfamiliar to me, and when I look back at them they seem less real from today's perspective (should I revisit these places?). Therefore, possibly, I wrote the methodological note to confirm my presence in these places, which serves as an observation tool, despite the fact that I stayed there as a private individual. My research reports differ in some details from what I observed in these places, a number of events and definitions did not comply with the scientific research report because some notional categories were not "saturated" enough or they occurred as idiosyncrasies and they did not fit into the theoretical framework, types (see: Glaser, Strauss 1967: 61). As a result I abandoned them. Should I have come to the conclusion that they were less real as the author's objective research reports did not take them into consideration?

As I wrote the term "author's research reports", I consciously used the third person singular to emphasize that 'HE' – the researcher – had an insight into the social reality as opposed to 'I', as a private individual. My observation and interpretations then, as well as producing a research report, were governed by certain conventions, exterior from my perspective. I had in my mind (often unconsciously) the prospective readers of my reports. After all, I carried the observations for somebody else, I interpreted for someone else and I wanted to write books for somebody else, despite the fact I was doing these things mainly for myself. This is the nature of research and scientific work. Observation as well as interpretation, analysis and description, which is indeed a representation of reality, all combine to configure one intellectual process (see: Fig. 1). The meanings and interpretations of the observed events are not established once and for all by the author, but are interwoven into a symbolic reality of a particular social context of reception of the text. From the interactionist perspective it should be stated that the authors of field research reports write for a particular audience and apply in so doing they tend to apply certain assumptions regarding the attitudes, expectations and

views of potential readers. Those readers are then the "generalized other" of the author. Writing of the text together with the application of the role of the other begins at the time of observation and develops into intersubjective interchange of the ideas in the further stages of the research and writing: "While in the field, the ethnographer has an obligation to think and act with respect to the viewpoint of the generalized other. Information is gathered, observations are made, and questions are asked mindful of generalized other. It is incumbent on the ethnographer to adopt the scientific viewpoint, not as a distant party in the situation, but as a conscientious, thorough, curious, information seeking representative of the scholarly community." (Prus 1996: 253).
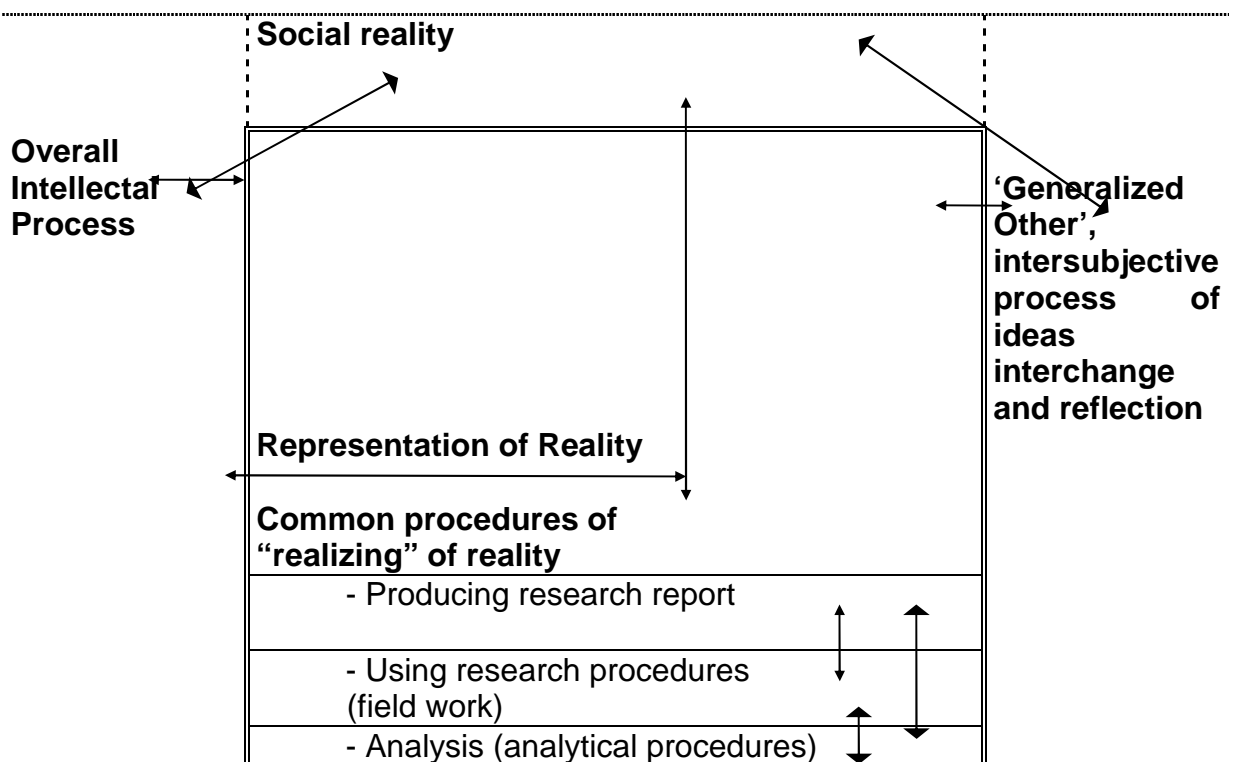

Figure 1. „Overall intellectual process" scheme in the work of a field researcher in building the quality of qualitative research.

"Generalized other", according to G. H. Mead, is a particular vision of social order and a vision of oneself shaped on the basis of "taking the role of the other", as well as recognition of the rules of mutual adjustment of roles within a wider social context. The socialization allows an individual to see oneself from a "generalized" perspective of a group and also creates an opportunity for the development of one's own social identity. What one gains is a complete set of attitudes, with which others may approach us (Mead 1932, chapter 20; see also the study of G. H. Mead's concept in: Ziolkowski 1981: 58 - 60; Krzeminski 1986: 53 ; Halas 1987). The above attitudes are represented by a group of readers of field researcher's reports. The expectations concerning the research reports, as we see them, influence the choice of what we write about and in what manner. "Generalized other", with internalized system of conventions, has then a colossal symbolic power over the representatives of social studies.

The question becomes one of who field researchers address their work to? According to Van Maanen (1988: 27-33) there exist three main types of reader of ethnographic studies. These are:

1. Collegial readers, who possess the best recognition of ethnographic norms in particular research areas. They also know the standards of correct textual presentation. The important role here is given to the jargon used by the researchers. Assisted by the jargon they identify themselves with a certain club of researchers. The terminology such as "grounded theory", "impression management", "informants", "interaction order", "indexical rules", "social construction" or "interpretative procedures" place the researcher in a particular tradition, and show his/her belonging within a certain group, which excludes the uninitiated.

2. Social science readers, they are the scholars who do not carry the field research but examine the research reports for information essential for their personal research interests. They evaluate the reports on the basis of the extent to which they provide the necessary information. Field researchers put low value on this group of readers, who might be extremely critical because reports fail to provide the required information.

3. General readers who read ethnographic papers for entertainment, or for informative reasons before, for example, a visit to a foreign culture. In this context, the researchers become the narrators, storytellers, and their reports take the role of allegories. Writing for non-professional readers diminishes the significance of the criteria applied by the academic readers. The reports tend to show the culture rather than analyze it. Such reports are interesting from the literary perspective and free from academic jargon (see: Marriot 1999). Reliability of the description might be evaluated only by experts in a particular discipline[1].

The expectations regarding the perspective and chosen main readers of the reports determine the interpretation of observed behaviour and manner of presentation of data. Van Maanen (1988) distinguishes three main types of field research reports, based on the analysis of rudimentary standards of presentation of ethnography used by authors. He names these reports as "tales of the field" because they have certain narrative features such as: manner of presentation of narrator, metaphors, decorative expressions, text organization and style. The category "tales" implies the "representative" qualities of ethnographic texts, because, according to Van Maanen, there is no direct correspondence between the experienced reality and that presented in the text. Even if there is such a correspondence, it is no more real than the one between the observer and the observed. The first type of tale is the realist tale (compare also Gobo 2008: 290-292), which is the most frequent in the tradition of field studies, written for "collegial readers". The narration in the monographs and articles is presented in a detached manner, in the third person singular. The author is particularly concerned with an impression of authenticism in the presentation of a certain reality. It results in author's apparent absence in the text.

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[1] A similar division was introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 238-239). They distinguish the three groups of readers of qualitative monographs: 1. professional colleagues, 2. readers from various research disciplines, including practicing researchers, 3. non-professionals. Whereas Denzin (1994: 506) defines two types of readers, or "interpreters": 1. readers who possessed a certain experience in the area, and 2. "well informed experts", who are mainly field researchers. The first group searches for contextual and meaningful accounts (emic), the other concentrates on the abstract, non-contextual accounts (etic), which often refer to a particular theory. Giampietro Gobo mentioned in his book (2008: 289) about, so called, "Model Reader", that is not the actual reader but the reader type, imaginary audience, that is taken into account while choosing the stylistic options.

S/he only equips himself with references by presenting their academic affiliations and also presents a professional training and impersonal interest in the subject, which legitimates their access to a particular culture and its examination. The author then builds his/her authority by showing their own experience (experiential authority). The author shows: "X did this", rather than: "I saw X doing this". The realist tale annihilates the researcher and, according to the standard, the text concentrates exceptionally on what has been said, done or potentially thought by the people, who are the subject of the study. The role of the researcher is limited only to perform the description of place, duration and the strategy of research. Realist tales avoid abstract definitions and concentrate on particular descriptions of real, everyday life. Field researcher imposes a certain structure to the gathered data, which creates particular types of phenomena and characters, e.g. a typical married couple, a typical divorce, a typical member of a given culture, typical actions, typical interpretations, a typical new employee, etcetera (typical forms). The presentation of field observations need to have accounts by the members of a given culture made on the basis of the events that occurred in their lives, particularly concerning routine procedures. The researcher then presents the perspectives and interpretive practice of the members of a given community (the native's point of view). The last convention of the realist tales implies that field researcher has the right to give the last word in interpretation of the given culture. It may use common theoretical frameworks, prepared by the mighty predecessors, which provide certain rules of explanation. The other means could be the contrary strategy, according to which the researcher bases his accounts and interpretations on the interpretations provided by the members of a given community (Strauss 1987; Geertz 1973). The narrator is somehow the exponent of the perspective of the group that he passively observed (interpretive omnipotence). The ethnographer makes an assumption about the genuine perception of a reality by the field researcher. In order to achieve that goal, the researcher might use the ideologically neutral terminology, even technical or originating from the colloquial language (see: Becker, 2003: 664, who analyzed the language of presentation by E. Goffman, see also: similar strategy in choosing the language in Smith, 2003; Prus, 1977; Prus and Irini,1980).

For example, Richardson (1994: 518 – 519) claims that the standards associated with the manners of writing have their historical conditioning also in academic papers. At the end of nineteenth century, realism as a mode of writing dominated both science and literature. Both writers and researchers of social studies used to search and describe "the causes of phenomena", "social consequences", "basic rules" which were the foundation of the social order. There were attempts to introduce the precise terminology, the contents of which would have an objective, unambiguous, non-contextual and non-metaphorical character, where the omniscient narrator-researcher adequately illustrates reality in the text.

The second type of tale is confessional according to Van Maanen (1988). The characteristic feature is the personal style of narration. Such style aims at showing that despite numerous drawbacks of both the tool and the researcher, the latter is disciplined as a scholar, susceptible to epistemological matters characteristic for social sciences. The author builds his/her authority through presenting him/herself as a humane person ("I saw what X was doing"). The "confessing" researcher adds to the realist tales, the deepened descriptions of applied methods in form of separate articles, chapters or appendices to the realist tales. They also mention their personal prejudices, drawbacks, bad habits in order to build the ironic self portrait, with which the readers may identify ("See how malicious I am, full of human flaws"). The

emotional reactions of the researcher, their surprise, unexpected events they participated in, all shed light on the way the researcher tried to comprehend the observed reality (personalized authority). Moreover, the researcher expresses a fieldworker's point of view. S/he also standardizes their access to the observed group, presents themself as a person treated as "one of us", always participating in the life of community; therefore almost invisible for the 'subjects' of the study (Van Maanen 1988: 73 – 100).

The third type is the impressionistic tale. These usually describe rare or unusual situations. They openly show the researcher's personal feelings as well as their work. Impressionistic tales simultaneously present the subject and the matter of the study, and aim to find the bond between the observer and the observed. Authors of this 'type' attempt to show their own experience from the beginning to the end, and seek to involve the reader in the observation. This researcher does not imply what the reader should think and how they should analyze their experience. Rather, the text is intended to provide an inspiration for interpretation (textual identity). Impressionistic tales develop from a series of unfolding events, often in an irregular manner, which are difficult to predict. The events are presented in a loose manner, thereby providing surprises for the reader (fragmented knowledge). The characters in the tales have their own names, faces, motives, actions (characterization). The author also works to build tension or climactic highs, often followed and countered by lows. These tales require from the author the possession of certain artistic rather than scientific writing skills. The language is rich, full of implications, and cognitive and emotional elements (dramatic control; as above 101-124).

Triangulation procedures and generalized other

> *Two descriptions are better than one.*
> Gregory Bateson

The abovementioned conventions that regulate the approach to field study report writing, in my opinion, are much more far reaching than the writing context alone. The researcher is well aware of them while carrying the research. The conventions are an essential part of creating "realness" of observed and described events and interactions during the research. The expectations of the prospective reader influence the research procedures followed by the researcher, as well as created *ad hoc* procedures, which are used to build a full and credible representation of the observed reality (see many research procedures used by Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, Zeisel 1933). The procedures are intersubjectively interwoven into the daily practice of the researcher.

In order to "re-present" the reality in an adequate and "proper" manner, the researcher, still in the field, must use a number of procedures. One part of which has already been studied by the other researchers, and the other part created *in situ* or *ad hoc*, to assure the researcher in the field that the reality described in his/her record book corresponds with the reality that exists around them; adequately situating him- or herself in opposition to "the other". During the research the researcher conventionally employs triangulation methods in order to show him- or herself as an exterior observer of the observed events, even when s/he participates in them. Originally, triangulation was a heuristic tool. The basic meaning of the term refers to the method of indicating the position of points in the field by means of the

configuration of triangles: the triangulistic web. All of the angles in the triangle are measured together with one or more of the sides, and by astrological methods one indicates the coordinates for some of the points and the azimuths of particular sides. Although the term is mainly used by geodesists in order to describe the method of measuring the position of the point on the basis of two other points in space, it should not be read literally as the use of only two or three various research methods or perspectives (Janesick 1994: 215). It implies the employment of various methods, both quantitative and qualitative (see also: Huberman and Miles 1994: 438; Richardson 1994: 522; Bryman and Burgess 1994: 104 - 105, 222 – 223; Silverman 2001: 233 – 235, Hammersley, Arkinson 1995: chapter 8). Thus, the term triangulation assumes a different meaning when compared with its original use.

Denzin (1978) distinguishes four types of triangulations:

1. triangulation of data, which involves the employment of data from various sources;
2. triangulation of researchers, which implies the introduction to the research numerous evaluators and auditors;
3. theoretical triangulation meaning the employment of various theoretical perspectives to interpret a single set of data;
4. methodological triangulation, which means the employment of numerous methods to study a single problem.

According to Hamersley and Atkinson (1995, chapter 8) triangulation is used to evaluate the accuracy of a conclusion drawn from data on the basis of other kinds of data (triangulation of data). Methodological triangulation helps to verify competing interpretations and the correctness of the juxtaposition of a given term with an indicator. Triangulation then can serve as a tool to verify the validity of connections between the indicator and the term by means of other indicators. This subsequently serves a final verification of the validity of the analysis and the validity of the conclusion on the basis of collected data. In the model of triangulation increased confidence in the outcomes of the research is its intended purpose; it could be called "increased validity" model of triangulation (Moran et. al. 2006: 47). There are other meanings of the triangulation procedure used in qualitative research. Some researchers want to show complexity of social reality and multidimensional analysis of it by using triangulation. Methods can be triangulated to show "many dimensions" of the phenomenon and to help in understanding complexity of the social world under study (ibidem 2006: 48). Other meanings of triangulation are connected with the aim of "generating more knowledge about a phenomenon". Both qualitative and quantitative methods can enrich our knowledge of the researched field. The fourth meaning of triangulation indicates that social phenomena exist on two different levels, "those of structure and agent". Different methods help in sociological explanation of two levels of the phenomena, one macro/meso level and one micro level (ibidem 2006: 48-49). Other theoretical perspectives such as postmodernism also "provide a rationale for the use of multiple methods to capture complexity and multiple contexts of a phenomenon" (ibidem 2006: 49).

Triangulation might is not then only a tool used in positivist enquiry but will be used in field research in an effort to obtain the credibility of data and valid and objectively verifiable conclusion. To use Van Maanen's terminology, triangulation is usually employed as a persuasive tool in realistic tales, which aims to emphasise the realness, objectivity and authenticity of presented descriptions and research conclusions.

Case one

During my studies on the socialization of new employees in the industrial company I used triangulation of data, methodological triangulation and, in part, theoretical triangulation (Konecki 1992a). I coined the term trajectory of a new employee during the participant observation when I was employed as a worker. I observed myself in this context and other employees[2]. Moreover, I based my observation on my own experience of working at university environment during the 80's. I was uncertain during my participant observation whether my experience and observations were simply the product of my interaction with workmates and my notes merely auto-biographical reflections of my interaction. Many facts I gathered during my participant observation implied that I was treated by my workmates in a special manner (as a newcomer). My education, language I used might have caused certain repugnance and the practice of degradation that I was subjected to. I was unclear of the order of the stages of trajectory that I was experiencing. I decided then to employ yet another research method (other than participant observation), that of the semi-structured interview. I felt this would allow me to examine the stages of the trajectory of a new employee discuss examples of rituals of ridicule and the so-called "worker flirting ritual". Therefore, I employed methodological triangulation. The interviews confirmed the "realness" of the previous observation and produced an in-depth insight into them. The "realness" was confirmed because the stages of the trajectory gained a typical character, the typical were also the "guardians" of the socialization, the particular interactions occurring during the trajectory also became typical. Typologisation, which I conducted on the basis of the interviews 'typologised" also the trajectory itself giving it the status of the objective representation of the reality of socialization. Methodological triangulation situated me outside the researched situation. In order to strengthen the "realness" of the description I later hired a company employee (the sociologist) to conduct a covert participant observation for me, among the office employees. I did not know whether my idea of trajectory was valid and experienced by other types of employee. It was later that I learnt from the literature that what I had done was follow the procedure of methodological triangulation, which from my perspective only confirmed my intelligence as an experienced field researcher.

In the research report, which turned out to be a realistic type of tale, I (Konecki 1992a) wrote:

> The picture of the trajectory was drawn on the basis of data gathered during two participating observations and, in this section of the paper, mainly on the basis of empirical data gathered during 123 semi-structured interviews with the new employees (61 interviews), supervisors (22 interviews), and senior staff (40 interviews). Quantitative study of the data gathered during the interviews is not the most important purpose of the analysis in that part of the paper. It rather aims at keeping the order in a qualitative study of

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[2] Trajectory involves the process of entering of the new employee into an industrial institution, when the individual adjusts to the requirements of the job and the organizational culture and he is the subject of the introductory (initiating) procedures into the work and the social relations at work and when the new employee also influences the ones who introduce him to work (Konecki 1992a: 13-17). Term 'trajectory' is used here as a metaphor showing the temporal and processual character of workers' socialization. The metaphor shows that the process of socialization has a particular purpose and its ups and downs, and also that the shape of the process may vary, also unexpectedly for the participants (the problem of scientific metaphors is further discussed by Lakoff and Johnson 1988: 70, 98-102 and other; and Richardson 1994: 519, 524-525). One may certainly use yet another metaphor instead of trajectory, for instance the organistic metaphor known as "adaptation", but then we would concentrate on other aspects of socialization of new employees.

> empirical data, thus it has an ordering function, sometimes supporting the
> qualitative analysis while forming categories and hypotheses. (p. 17)

One may observe that the objectivity and realism of my analyses is supported by the use of various types of data (triangulation of data), the use of various methods (methodological triangulation), where the numbers are particularly persuasive. Although I stated earlier that the quantitative study was not the main purpose of the analysis, I underline that it corroborates the empirical data as well as the categories. Therefore, the numerical sequentiality, which is mainly the following of the "majority rule", constructs the sequentiality of the presentation of the categories and subcategories. Being a qualitative researcher I thought at that time that I could not admit openly that I regarded quantitative data as important. They were thought necessary in order to confirm the objectivity and realness of qualitative data, from part of which I resigned as they had no quantitative significance (only one or two to be found), therefore they were less real from the perspective of the researcher. It was difficult to transform them into analytically useful typology of categories. "The majority rule", coming from the scientific "generalized other" indications, was useful while deciding on the "realness" of particular categories. Moreover, the manner of presentation of the report was appropriate to the manner of what I had done in the field, which means the report shows the realist and positivistic inclinations of the researcher.

The passive voice and third person narrator are often used in such presentation. The number of interviews and methods can have a certain persuasive power. In my writing I attempted to convince the collegial readers to accept the realness and validity of my data and conclusions. The triangulation of data increased the internal validity of data presented in the report and their explanations. In this case, I also treated the validity as a social construction that is created in communication. I took into consideration who would receive the research report and who would interpret it. The techniques of research and presentation construct the validity in communication with the readers. The social construction of validity "is decided through the argumentation of the participants in a discourse" (Kvale 1996: 245).

Similar significance is given to the methodological note regarding the research into the ritual of "worker flirting" (Konecki 1990). I coined the term "worker flirting" during the participant observation. I was not certain at that point whether my experience and personal inclinations did not provoke the phenomenon. The realness of the results and their representation seemed to me to be particularly in danger. Therefore, I decided to examine the problem by means of interview (carried by the pollsters) among the same group of employees I had observed previously. Again, I wanted to place myself outside the researched situation and far from the problem as possible. Obviously, I do not mention these doubts in my report, showing instead considerable methodological consciousness, which works to reassure the reader of the realness of the phenomenon described. The confessional tale was not my favourite type of narration.

Here is what I (Konecki 1992a) wrote in a "realistic" methodological note referring to that part of my study:

> The data gathered during the interviews broaden our knowledge on worker
> flirting. They provide new data for comparative analysis allowing us to verify
> the hypotheses or form new ones during the research. The data from the
> interviews have been separated here, as the way they were collected
> differs considerably (the situation of the interview) from the way of collecting
> data during covert participant observation. During the interviews the

respondents reveal the common data, which they witness and which cannot harm them at work. Whereas in the participant observation the researcher gains data, the revelation of which the respondents would be afraid of, or some of the data which might be interesting for the researcher but which the direct participants of social life regard as obvious and might not be aware of. The comparison of those two types of data, and often the two dimensions of social life (public and informal), allows a better understanding of the conditions in which the particular categories and hypotheses exist. The data from the interviews show the knowledge, which is public property. The contrary data were obviously collected during the participating observation, where the information have also the public character, but limited to the functioning of the informal level, which was not revealed to the "strangers" (the pollsters) to the company. Nevertheless in the interviews it is allusively highlighted, either in a concealed or open manner, to the particular phenomena, which were noted during the participant observation. (pp. 122-123)

I built the authority by showing a wide empirical basis for the proposed hypotheses. The representation of reality is then shown to have an inductive and grounded basis. Thus implying that it is rather impossible for the researcher to make-up the phenomenon of "worker flirting". The data from the interviews point "allusively in a concealed manner" to the behaviours observed during the participating observation. The author authoritatively underlines that the data gathered during the interviews allow for the better understanding of the conditions of functioning of particular hypotheses. It creates the opportunity to use the comparative analysis, which is yet another method of assuring the validity of the conclusion. The realness of the description is then confirmed by the usage of triangulation of data and methodological triangulation simultaneously. "The generalised other", whose part is the reader with his standards of evaluation of the research report, reveals its presence during the field research (through methods and procedures), in order to find the final confirmation in the research report. The author can use the passive voice to annihilate somehow his/her presence in the research and to show that the research was carried by the collective author. This tendency is emphasized by the usage of personal pronoun in plural, which allows one to identify "the generalized other" with an individual researcher. The collegial readers in this case are "the generalized other" (together with the researcher), who know the definitions of the terms such as: hypothesis, pollster, respondent, public and informal dimension of social life, covert participant observation, etcetera. The researcher solved the discrepancies between the analysis of the participant observation and semi-structured interview data through their use of the procedure of triangulation of data and methods. It is somehow the explanation *aposterori*. The author claims that there exist various meanings ascribed to flirting in the workplace (ibidem 1992a: 130). Flirting might be treated by the participants as the ritual of dependence indicating the centre of discretional force in a given workplace (such interpretation was reconstructed on the basis of data from participant observation) or as a form of play which breaks the monotonous routine of work (such interpretation was reconstructed on the basis of data gathered during the interviews). During the research I was disturbed by the altered and contrary data, but still in the report which "objectifies the observed reality" the anxiety was not expressed. At the end of the report I state authoritatively: *"The researchers allowed to extend the issue of flirting and find yet another meaning (and function) of flirting, meaning of breaking the monotony of work and keeping the social contact"* (ibidem 1992a: 130; see also Konecki 1990).

In order to underline the realness of my observation, I disclosed myself as a subject of observation in the quotations from my observational notes. There exists a certain trace of a confessional tale, but it was not employed consequently. The quotations of the studied "subjects" are supposed to invoke the persuasive force of the report, to underline the "credible" representation of reality, because we can see for the moment the "tool of observation", which uses the similar language as the observed people. It increases the realness and credibility of the description: *"I talked to a new worker (aged 21, 1.5 months of work in the transport department) about an incident on the second shift when he had been beaten up by a woman-worker (an assembler in another bay) 'What have you messed about with that woman?' I asked. He said 'Well, it went all right at the beginning, but then she went nuts ...' 'Were you pressing her too much?' I asked. 'Well, you see, I could have hit her, even killed her, but what for? ... Anyway, she was stoned too"*. (Konecki 1992a: 120; Konecki 1990). The researcher confirms that he was very close to the described events as a subject and the observation tool, that he gained good understanding of the researched field and the people achieved "intimate familiarity" (the concept by H. Blumer 1969).

Case two

Let us present here the field research conducted in a different cultural context, in Japan, where I researched the organizational culture of Japanese companies. Here is what I wrote in the introduction to the book, which is the form of the research report (Konecki 1992):

> To be in the center of events. To learn about the fact on one's own. To observe while participating. The experience is for the author of this book the source of knowledge. The author spent most of the time in Japan. He got familiar with the organizational structure, work conditions and the customs in the Japanese factory, by taking the role of a regular employee. He was a worker and an academic at the same time. Becoming "one of them" he gained a vast source of information, he could obtain the first hand knowledge. It then, along with the other research methods and tools, became the basis of this book. Perhaps it makes the book different from the hitherto writings on the subject… (ibidem: 7). The author spent a month in the Maekawa factory, all the time being among the workers. He carried the observation and the interviews as well as hundreds of conversations; he also participated in numerous meetings (kaigi) during working time.
> The other company where the participant observation (covert) was carried out was a small company Shi…
> The author also carried out research in the sub-contracted, but formally independent transport company Iyo…
> The author worked in Shi and Iyo companies as an unqualified blue-collar worker… (pp. 17-18).

The above statements serve as an introduction to the realistic tale. The narrator uses the third person and, what is more, he employs the persuasive strategy in order to show, that the author was in the centre of events and work processes within the companies, and that the research was meant to be in-depth research (in a good range of companies). There also appear certain elements of a confessional tale. The author was "one of them", therefore despite different skin colour, education, upbringing, he experienced the world simultaneously and in the same space, in the same manner as the observed (he possessed the 'intimate familiarity'). Moreover, he

employs the practice of raising his academic prestige by displaying the uniqueness and innovation of his work, which he modestly calls "different from the hitherto writings on the subject". The author generally adjusts himself to the standards of a realistic tale. Does it mean that the research was not problematic and the reality represented in the report was also certain? In fact, there were problems with the description and construction, and that these problems were rudimentary, associated with the interpretation of the definition of the situation of the researched people, for instance on the understanding of work. It transpired that the statements concerning work and the company, quite often negative, did not correspond with the activities of the Japanese workers. By negating the sense of their work, talking about lack of bond with the company, criticizing low salaries, after-hours (data from the informal interviews done during observation) the workers in the actual activities showed a certain loyalty to the company and involvement in work, a will for cooperation, fast and accurate work, and very often they worked voluntary after-hours and did not leave the companies. From the perspective of European culture, one may use the colloquial expressions such as hypocrisy in reference to the lack of compatibility that they presented. (The sociological distinction between the formal and informal organization in a Japanese company was useless in that case because of the intermingling or "overgrowth" of those two dimensions in every possible communicative situation). Nevertheless, the researcher who objectifies the researched reality cannot accept such common interpretative expressions. Therefore, the researcher objectifying his knowledge about reality (in the text the "realist" narrator) approaches the problem in more conceptual manner (Konecki 1992):

> one should refer to four notions present in Japanese culture: omote and ura as well as tatemae and honne. Similar to the comparison of Latin words recto and verso, the terms omote and ura are the contradictory concepts. Speaking about omote and ura of a particular object we mean the two sides of it. Omote-dori is the main alley whereas ura - dori is a side street. Omote-muki refers to something public, ura-muki suggests something private, closed or personal. Omote is visible, unlike ura. The meaning of behaviour varies according to whether we present it in ura or omote dimension. Such participation in these two dimensions determines the meaning of activities and statements not just the statements or activities separately.
>
> There are two important definitions for Japanese culture associated with omote and ura: tatemae and honne. Tatemae in Japanese architecture means "erecting the gable", so it refers to the external. The dictionary definitions explain tatemae as a certain type of rules and regulations regarded as natural and obvious. Tatemae then refers to the concepts created by men on the basis of consensus. The term tatemae implies the existence of the group of people in the background, who agree to the earlier stated concept.
>
> The notion of honne, in opposition to tatemae, refers to the fact, that individuals, who belong to a given group, even if they accept tatemae, they have their own motivations and opinions, which sometimes differ from tatemae. These individuals often keep the particular motivations and opinions for themselves. Tatemae (notions) appear in the omote dimension (official), whereas honne (private) is presented in the informal interaction dimension, which is ura (Doi 1986: 23-47).
>
> The contradiction, which occurs between the statements concerning work and the actual activities is not the matter of logical contradiction, but the question of various dimensions of presentation of oneself through the

individuals. The omote and tatemae dimension, in other words, official and conventional dimension refers to work which is observable for the others and undergoing the social surveillance, thus the observable workers' activities. On the other hand ura and honne dimensions, which represent unofficial and personal motivation would be reserved for the disclosure by the individual the personal opinions only to the closest acquaintances, or complete strangers (such as pollsters), when the official social control is abolished and replaced by values such as empathy and openness…

The personal opinions cannot be officially revealed (for example to the supervisors at workplace) or be translated to the language of actions, because in that situation they undergo the sanctions relating to the common notions and officially rationalizations of the actions involved in typical cultural formulas (tatemae dimension). Therefore behind the verbal declarations regarding the attitude towards work there does not have to be a permanent behaviour regulators. Perhaps the regulators lie in the organizational culture of the Japanese companies, where there exist strong socio-cultural control elements of the workers' actions (pp. 59-62)

The researcher solves the problem according to the accuracy, objectivity therefore the realness of his observations through the employment in the analysis of the "theoretical triangulation". The problem of reality is solved through the use of the procedure. The researcher borrows from cultural anthropology (which studies Japanese culture) the terminology, which helps him to find a certain standard and regularity in the observed reality. It is unthinkable for the academic reader from the circle of Western culture (the "generalized other") to leave any ambiguities and incoherencies in representation of a certain reality (the rule of coherence at the description level). There have to appear certain meta-regulators of the behaviours that allow egress out of the description of the particular context for the behaviours which for "generalized other" might seem inconsistent. Each culture is coherent to a certain extent, it cannot be chaotic, accidental – this is the field researcher's assumption or his idea of the assumptions of the prospective readers of his book. He needs to find certain typicality of behaviours and of its conditioning. If during the research he cannot find the triangulation procedure that will allow him to liberate himself from the fear of the incoherence in the observed reality, he employs the necessary analytical procedure, which still remains the *ad hoc* procedure used during analysis, which is the period of intensified lack of understanding of the described reality. "Triangulation of data" (data from interviews and polls and from the participant observation) merely confirmed incoherence of verbal declarations when compared with observed actions. It is contradictory to the general sociological assumption, which implies that the subject of an action frequently attempts to be consistent and acts according to declared and accepted motives (the rule of coherence at action level). The sociological analysis though does not allow to present the researched reality as coherent, the researcher-sociologist then uses the anthropological theoretical perspective in order to give the reality a character of coherency. Therefore, the reality refers not only to its representation. The analysis then (which is the period of intensivefear regarding the realness of the described reality, the coherence of actions and statements) is the elongation of the construction of reality, which still takes place during the research, and which is expressed by the triangulation of data (or even earlier before the field study, in the intersubjective process of shaping the "generalized other"). The use of the emic terms *tatemae* and *omote*, which the researcher turns into the general and explaining definitions (etic terms), then eradicates the fear and anxiety of the researcher (or cognitive

dissonance), which appear in association with the discovery of the incoherent reality, even lasting for a short period of time. The procedure of theoretical triangulation, no matter whether the researcher realizes it or not, is beneficial for his/her identity, as it rejects the common interpretation of the statement as full of hypocrisy and again puts the researcher outside the described and interpreted reality as a member of an academic community. Paradoxically, for his explanations the researcher uses the other common definitions, such as *honne* and *tatemae*, but with the theoretical sanction of cultural anthropology. The view of the incoherent reality from another perspective gives coherence to the reality, which may satisfy the academic reader, or to a certain extent, the social science reader. The non-professional reader would be least satisfied because of over-theorising of the explanations (and/or lack of the description of the extraordinary situations), but he is not in the centre of realistic attention of a bit lost narrator who follows the "coherency" rule of his generalized other from academia world.

Discussion on triangulation – scientific and common sense method

The triangulation process obviously has a deep epistemological meaning and one may analyse this by means of exploring aspects of the philosophy of science. Our analysis uses only certain motifs appearing in symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, which were particularly helpful for the analysis of reader's, researcher's and academic community interactions. The process of "realizing" (making real) the observed social world does not involve only, as Van Maanen (1988) believes, the manners of presenting the world in research reports. It starts at the very beginning of field research and continues during the analytic process, when the researcher "situates" him-herself in position to the observed "other", interacts in the field and tries to achieve intersubjectivity of his results *in situ* and in the academic world. The language of reports is an outcome of action, thus it does not exist separately from the interacting actors and audiences of the author and his actions in the field. These three intellectual processes intermingle with each other and form the complexity, though they may be analytically discerned (see figure 1). The usage of the procedure of "realizing" the researched social world, which is triangulation, seems to be a common practice in field research and it is to build the quality of qualitative research (see: Denzin 1978; Janesick 1994: 214 -215; Morse 1994: 224 - 225; Huberman and Miles 1994: 438; Hammersley, Atkinson 1995: chapter 8).[3] The procedure in sociology has it's beginning in the Chicago School where since the start of sociological ethnography researchers used multiple methods (Deegan 2007: 19-20), as for example life history, documents, conversations and observations. Paul

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[3] Occasionally ethnographers attempt to receive verification of the realness of the description and conclude on the basis of ethnographic revisits in the field. It might resemble the rule of replication of research, derived from experimental sciences, at the same time the assumption, that what is repetitive is more real than something sporadic and idiosyncratic. The repetitiveness of research is supposed to give the opportunity of gaining intersubjectivity in field research, as other researchers are able to observe the same conclusions on the basis of the observation of "the same or similar" actions. It may be said, with a certain amount of arbitrariness, that "revisits" are a particular form of triangulation of researchers, who enter the field at various moments, and the theoretical triangulation, because they attempt to reconstruct the theory by using new or other theoretical inspirations in new moments of the field observation. "*An ethnographic revisits* occurs when an ethnographer undertakes participant observation, that is, studying others in their place and time, with a view to comparing his or her site with the same one studied at an earlier point in time, whether by him or herself or by someone else. This is to be distinguished from ethnographic reanalysis, which involves the interrogation of already existing ethnography without any further field work." (Burawoy 2003: 647). Revisits though are not accurate replications of research carried by the same researcher or other researchers in the past. The purpose of research revisits, according to M. Burawoy, is either the rejection of theoretical conclusion based on the research or their reconstruction.

Cressey used in his research on "taxi – dance halls" records from observations and records of social agencies (triangulation of data), he used also "reports from different observers upon their contacts with the same individual made possible a check upon the consistency of document obtained" (Cressey 1932/2008: XX). We can say that it was triangulation of researchers. Similarly Nels Anderson (1923/1965: XXVIII and others) collected the life histories and conducted observations by himself in his research on hobos in Chicago. He used many kinds of data from many sources and researchers: life histories, data from observation, statistics. So there were used triangulation of data, methods and researchers too.

In qualitative methodology the use of this procedure is often justified by the scientific requirements of gaining "reliability" (it is an opportunity to repeat the observed behaviours together with the explanations, which means the accuracy of the "measurement" or classification), validity (the answers to the question whether the explanations are suitable to presented quantitative descriptions of people or situations), credibility (the degree of probability of occurring of the observed phenomena), or the opportunity of generalizability (Janesick 1994: 216 - 217; Dey 1993: 253 – 261; see also: Silverman 2005: 220 - 223; Kvale 1996, chapter 13; Gobo 2008: 27 - 28). Researcher searches for information, in order to determine empirical constants (see: Garfinkel 1967: 265). Rational requirements lying at the basis of the ways of creating "reality" and "realistic" representation of social reality in research reports are not specific merely for science. Let us look closer at the concept of "triangulation". It is a method of rational objectifying of the observed reality by the emotionally and intellectually imperfect, very often lone, researcher. Researcher attempts to adjust himself to the rules of scientific rationality in order to present the observed reality objectively and intersubjectively. He tries to employ the means and aims to make them appropriate to the rules of formal logic. Moreover, he attempts to achieve semantic clarity and precision, and to adjust (agree) the definition of the situation to the existing scientific knowledge (see: Garfinkel 1967: 267-268). But while participating in the everyday life of the observed, field researchers cannot employ only these rules. One may say, that the objectification of presentations of reality occurs through the application of yet other rules, so-called "procedural rules" (as above 1967). The procedure will be rational (and the presentation objective) when the researcher evaluates the rightness of his judgments, observations and conclusions referring them to the procedural rules. Following Garfinkel (1967: 265-266) we may distinguish, according to importance for our purposes, two classes of rules regarding the correctness of common conclusions: *"cartesian rules"* and *"tribal" rules*. Cartesian rules state that the decision concerning conclusion is correct when the person acts in accordance to the rule ignoring other people's views. Tribal rules imply that the accuracy of the decision depends on whether while making a decision one takes into consideration certain social obligations. A person regards his or her decisions as right or wrong depending on the evaluation of the people with whom for various reason he or she wants to live in unity (ibidem 1967: 265). Field researchers act according to both types of rules. Tribal rules, in his case, refer not only to the people and social groups observed in the field and relations between them and the researcher, but also to "generalized other" often personalized in the academic companions.

Lostness of the field researcher usually results from his state of being "a stranger" (or a newcomer) in a certain culture (see: Schutz 1944; Ziolkowski 1981: 170 - 216). Before he gains the necessary knowledge, typifications, language adequate to the culture, he feels uncertain of the "realness" of his observations (the

possibility to repeat the previous observations and accuracy of explanations to the observed actions). Moreover, with him he brings different values and a "system of relevancy" to a new culture, which may have a negative influence on his interactions and the manner in which he perceives and interprets the observed reality. The gathered data are actually co-constructed together with the observed subjects *in situ.*

What does each "stranger" studying a new environment on the everyday basis do? Basically, he examines the "realness" of the perceived (often only by him) reality by means of various methods. He performs a triangulation in everyday life, which means he employs the procedure. By reducing his anxiety and doubts he searches for the confirmation for his observations in the observations of other people, he searches for written materials (also quantitative), which refer to other phenomena that he experiences. Therefore, he performs triangulation of methods and data in order to gain a complex image of reality. He searches for "accounts" other than his own, made by experts, credible informants, social control agents etcetera. He also performs a "theoretical triangulation" on the level of common knowledge, searching for various generalized points of view on the observed and experienced reality. It enables him, through making comparisons, to achieve a more general perspective (it is usually a kind of "enlightment", which we usually dread to call a "discovery") and typification of reality in its diversity. Apparent, or in the initial stage contradictory interpretations find their meta-pattern of interpretation. Every stranger does it regardless of which new subculture or culture he enters, whether it is Polish, Japanese or American culture. A common procedure of triangulation allows for an active reconstruction of reality, often unclear and threatening for her/his cognitive system. The triangulation procedure allows for double or multiple comparisons (see: Bateson 1996: 95 - 121). It often happens that combining the information from other sources not only verifies, but also gains a wider pattern of interpretation, which eventually appears to be a confirmation or negation of the "realness" of the observed facts and phenomena; that is verification, but in a logical sense (coherence rule).

Triangulation is also a necessary procedure in a number of professions and types of work, such as so-called "headhunters" (recruitment consultants). Though the procedure is not referred to as triangulation, it is widely employed. "Headhunters" while recruiting employees from other companies work on, for instance, references, education, qualifications and/or competence checking of the candidate, they examine his communication skills etcetera. They employ a variety of methods and data. They contact numerous people that the candidate encountered in the past, either at work or in private life, and also use the existing data banks in order to check and receive a "real" description of the candidate's identity. They employ qualitative methods to evaluate a candidate (opinions of various people) as well as quantitative (they check, which type of opinions prevails, that is they use the "majority rule"). They often hire other consultants (psychologists), in order to confirm their information (researcher triangulation), or they hire experts to explain, with the help of their perspective, behaviours or career path of the candidates, that is they employ theoretical triangulation (see: Konecki 1998).

The examples of use of triangulation in everyday situations and the professions that use it are numerous (e.g. jobs of police officers, attorneys, intelligence, industry intelligence, strategic or stock market investor, professional matchmaker, journalist, etc.)[4]. But this procedure is also used in our everyday life, if we want to examine the

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[4]   It would be interesting at this point to perform empirical field research into the common employment of triangulation procedure. It would generally aim at studying the technical aspects, range, necessary and intervening conditions of effective employment , moral evaluation concerning it, sequence of particular types

"realness" of the perceived common world.[5] A field researcher participates in the world and his/her situation in the field is not exceptional. Using the procedure of "realising" the world, s/he acts according to the rule of evaluation of the actuality of the observations, according to the assumptions of his "generalized other" that gives him/her the identity of being rational. The researcher might be wrong as to the adequacy of representation of reality employing even accurately triangulation in the scientific sense, as well as other participant of the social world, such as police officer, attorney, matchmaker, recruiter or while checking the future business partner, can be wrong in his/her/our "research". There is though one issue that the researcher might be sure of, that s/he used a "realising" procedure for the observed world, which potentially convinces the reader of his/her "representational" tale, as to the realness of the described world. Nevertheless s/he cannot state that the "real" social world is exactly as s/he observed, described and explained it. What is the most realistic is the procedure that he previously used, that is triangulation.

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of triangulation, sequence of actions in the framework of a certain triangulation procedure etc. in the various types of work in the abovementioned jobs and professions.

[5] Triangulation procedure is commonly used in everyday life unintentionally. It is common for example for matchmakers. They check thoroughly who the candidate for marriage is. The basic question is the question of their "real" identity. Without triangulation of methods, data, and often triangulation of "researcher", or theoretical triangulation, we would not be able to complete the task.

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