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THE TRIANGULATION PROCEDURE IN THE RESEARCH OF CIVIL ACTIVITY AND ACTION RESEARCH

Summary. The authors suggest to realize the specific research objectives in the area of sociology of public life, in the research of particular dimensions of Polish public sphere or in the functioning of various institutions of a civil society with the help of consistent triangulation research procedure. The presented examples of applications of mixed methodology concerned triangulation approach to the methods, sources, researchers, theories, cognitive perspectives and level analysis. In the research concerning the complex social activities, in which after the stage of diagnosing the reality the tools for research of attitudes and the scale of particular behaviors are created, a triangulation experimental plan with the elements of qualitative research (e.g. focus groups) can be used. Such methodological approach also seems to provide interesting cognitive effects as well as application effects in the area of action research.

Keywords: civil activity, action research, triangulation research procedure, cognitive perspectives triangulation, level analysis triangulation, mixed methodology.

PROCEDURA TRIANGULACYJNA W BADANIACH AKTYWNOŚCI OBYWATELSKIEJ ORAZ ACTION RESEARCH

Streszczenie. W prezentowanym artykule autorzy proponują, aby realizować określone cele badawcze w dziedzinie socjologii życia publicznego, w badaniach poszczególnych wymiarów polskiej sfery publicznej czy funkcjonowania różnych instytucji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego za pomocą konsekwentnej triangulacyjnej procedury badań. Takie podejście metodologiczne wydaje się też przynosić ciekawe efekty poznawcze, ale również aplikacyjne w dziedzinie badań w działaniu (action research). Autorzy artykułu podejmą próbę znalezienia odpowiedzi na pytanie, jak badać złożone wielopoziomowe (emergentne) zjawiska i procesy społeczno-ekonomiczne w sferze aktywności obywatelskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: aktywność obywatelska, badania w działaniu, triangulacyjna procedura badawcza, triangulacja perspektyw poznawczych i poziomów analizy, mixed methodology.

The authors of the article will attempt to answer the question - how to research complex multi-level (emergent) phenomena and socio-economic processes in the field of active citizenship, and then make social interventions. Adopting an assumption, mainly of ontological character about the emergent levels of social reality and morphogenetic relationships between the social and cultural structure and agency that also results in the particular methodological consequences - triangulation research procedure, allows providing theoretical grounds for the status of research on the levels of civil activity and functioning of Polish public sphere¹. Under such triangulation studies can take place after the first diagnosis of a certain reality, then constructing the tools for measuring attitudes, in the end can be used elements of triangulation experimental plan, which will not only make it possible to determine the influence of independent variables but also to verify the pragmatically understood authenticity of the research project, its operational adequacy, utility and effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the project (eg, established social change).

The research questions or objectives may be empirically realized and the hypotheses verified in a specific way of organizing the research, specifically understood research procedure². It may consist of a number of directives ordering the particular stages of research, the order of methods and techniques used, the mutual interpretational relations between the levels of the analysis: micro, meso and macro, as well as the way of using various secondary data in order to achieve the effect of cognitive synergy (diagnostic and explanatory) and linking the effects of particular verification actions. As the triangulation research procedure was suggested for the realization of the objectives set, it seems vital to clarify how the author understands the idea and practice of triangulation (i.e. mutually verifying multi-factorial feature in a research procedure) in social sciences. Consistent triangulation approach to the object of the research is stipulated³. In the subject literature there are four basic types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory and methodological triangulation. If the investigator consciously reduces applicability of theory triangulation and at the same time, triangulation procedures base on a certain model or theoretical perspective, then all the remaining types of triangulation find their consolidation. The Fieldings pay attention to the necessity of such approach, the authors of "Analyzing Social Settings" also write with approval about triangulation as a way to supplement data and verify the results already obtained⁴.

¹Archer M.: *Being Human: the Problem of Agency*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000; Archer M.: *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003; Archer M.: *Człowieczeństwo. Problem sprawstwa*, trans. A. Dziuban, Zakład Wydawniczy NOMOS, Kraków 2013.

² Babiński G.: *Metodologia a rzeczywistość społeczna. Dylematy badań etnicznych*. Zakład Wydawniczy „NOMOS”, Kraków 2004, pp. 38-39.

³ Denzin N.: *The Research Act of Sociology*, Butterworth, London 1970; Silverma, D.: *Interpretacja danych jakościowych*, Głowacka-Grajper, M., Ostrowska, J. (interpreter), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2007.

⁴ Lofland J., Snow D., Anderson, L., Lofland, L.: *Analiza układów społecznych, przewodnik metodologiczny po badaniach jakościowych*. Hałas, E. (interpreter), Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2009, pp. 45-46.

Below there are four ways of their interpretation and examples of research uses presented, including the area of action research. Moreover, the authors suggest the introduction of two supplementary types: cognitive perspectives triangulation and analysis levels triangulation.

1. The Classic types of triangulation

First of all, the use of particular types of triangulation in the area of civic participation research will begin with the **data triangulation**, i.e. the use of different types of data. The triangulation of sources in an obvious way broadens the spectrum of data, both secondary and primary, formal and informal. It mutually verifies their credibility, allows to fill the gaps in research materials. Every investigator, also in the area of action research, should refer to all of the available and credible secondary sources: to the analysis of social, economical, administrative and infrastructure resources of the examined local communities. Materials received from local government institutions of all levels, statistical offices, local and regional nongovernmental organizations and media should be used and then compared with the primary data (from opinion polls, interviews). Such various data should be collated, compared and standardized into leading thematic threads in terms of the research problem stated.

In order to conduct the author's research on the models of civic participation in the micro and meso scale, the representatives of municipal structures of local government, local nongovernmental organizations as well as schools and parish churches were invited. The organizers of the research started the cooperation with the people mentioned above in the double role of consultants (objectified source) or as the local leaders (source of subjective knowledge). A very important element verifying the research were the in-depth interviews with chosen managers and entrepreneurs of the local economic market, which allowed the creation of a social and economic context of local and regional public spheres. The investigators who take part in social activity are oriented towards the change of a particular social reality and should precede their participatory actions with the recognition of the main social problems, their diagnosis. To do this, a consistent triangulation approach to the available sources of data would be helpful.

Secondly, the **investigator triangulation** is the introduction of several observers or controllers into the research, who can mutually verify their investigations. This type of triangulation is especially useful in the course of research on the problems biased with subjective valuation. It introduces a correcting intersubjectivity context, a sort of over-individual ethno-methodological sense⁵. Triangulation of investigators or observers makes it possible to create an intersubjective view of the research object, by the use of unique

⁵ Cicourel A.V.: *Etnometodologia*, [in:] Kryzys i schizma. Antyścientystyczne tendencje w socjologii współczesnej, Mokrzycki E. (ed.): vol. 1, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1984, pp. 269-270.

autopsies, intuition or associations of researchers, with the same set of secondary data. In the author's research, the investigator triangulation proved to be especially important in extracting from particular social, political and economic contexts some indicator contents referring to the key factors or thematic keystones of two participatory model as well as determining their weight in the context of those keystones. As an example, in the course of the analysis of a public discourse (political debate) in one of the Upper Silesian province cities, confronting the data achieved from participatory observation of one of the investigator with the observations from the second investigator in the role of a passive observer of the debate, enabled to achieve the effect of intersubjectivity while categorizing the effects of observation and the analysis of verbal contents.

The induction way of collecting and analyzing data (grounded theory) made the continuous verification and testing of research tools possible as well as creating scales for the measurement of e.g. selected grounds. The investigator triangulation can also be used to this end, including a large number of co-participants, volunteers or students. As an example of the use of triangulation of many investigators is one of the actions from the diagnosis phase from the innovative and testing POKL project, titled: 'With matrix to innovative entrepreneurship' conducted by the Department of Applied Social Sciences in the Silesian University of Technology; i.e. the conducting of interviews of qualitative character with the continuous analysis of indicator power of particular questions with selected entrepreneurs as well as conducting fractional analyses of a typological nature (creation of categorization keys). Data collected by particular investigators (students) from the interviews served for each of them to create fractional categorization keys. Then the keys were subjected to verification during the analysis of comprehensive data and the construction of scales for the matrix diagnosing marketing needs of sector of small and medium enterprises in the Silesian province.

Thirdly, **theory triangulation** takes place, that is basing the research on more than one perspective of theoretical assumption, which rises the most objections by theoretical-methodological purists because of the incoherence between several paradigms (including Silverman). In the context of research on civic participation models the use of theoretical-methodological directive of model notions constitutes theoretical foundations (ontological and epistemological in some way), legitimization for a methodological consolidation in the approach presented⁶. There was the analysis of participation models undertaken, not the types of civic participation. Where does such definition's depiction come from? The choice of the aforementioned definition's convention was determined by the reading of work by Maria Ossowska "Middle-class morality", the ending methodological notes to be precise, about the model notions as the research tools. The author in that work conducted a critical differentiation between a methodological approach of ideal types by M. Weber, which are only the conceptual constructions of the author, and the model notions which are created in

⁶ Ossowski M.: *Moralność mieszczańska*, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1985, pp. 377-378.

the long-term objectified social processes, often during several centuries of experiences and comparisons. They do not possess a defined originator and inspirer ⁷. According to that author, such model notion is middle-class morality – notional convention but also axionormative designation shaped historically and ideologically in a certain development stage of the modern Western civilization.

The understanding of civic participation models may be expressed in a similar way. Both republican and liberal model is historically shaped, regardless of any arbitrary notion depictions. It may be said that it exists objectively in its empiric manifestations. The investigator's objective, with such depiction of model notions, is the extraction both from the works by founding fathers of republican and liberal idea and from the social-political as well as economic contexts in which they were created, their essential assumptions. In such depiction's convention of the examined model notions it is more important to recognize the genesis of vital contemporary meanings in history for the research problem than the presentation of their original definitions. Next, their available designates should be searched operationally (empirically) in the contemporary reality. The theoretical assumption above concerning the ontological status of the research object will be determined by the presented considerations. The epistemological status of the assumption above (if the reality of public sphere defined in such way may be recognizable) was indicated by deductive proceedings. When adapting such notion, one should start from the paradigmatic foundations, superior theoretical assumptions and then turn into assumptions, statements of observations of a medium range in order to finish with operationalizations, empirical indicators for the assumptions previously made, illustrations from a social world.

The approach of Weber's ideal types also found its use, however, not at the level of key notions (models) defining and understanding but in the analysis of concrete reality dimensions. It took place when the participation models constructed on the earlier stage were referred to the contemporary reality of Polish public sphere in a micro, meso and macro scale. The use of ideal types as well as theoretical constructions was very useful. There were the empirical examples analyzed of the types of participation, leadership, attitudes and behavior of regional elites in the context of the examined meganarrations – liberal and republican participation model.

In the context of methodological paradigm – action research – the use of theory triangulation, that is different theoretical, ontological or epistemological assumptions supplementing each other, may constitute too complex instrumentation for the practical investigators. However, theoretical or preconceptionalistic consciousness, or also closer to e.g. grounded theory, always remains useful when defining strategic objectives of research, social intervention or their axiological background.

⁷ Ibidem: pp. 377-378.

Fourthly, **strictly methodological triangulation** occurs, the most popular in social sciences. It consists in research problem verification of the basis of using many research methods and techniques, both of quantitative and qualitative character, also of using desk research on various data (e.g. content or discourse analysis) concerning the area of research⁸. In a methodological aspect, the realization of the presented project also assumed the adoption of research strategy based on triangulation approach to the research object, that is using more than one method of empirical data gathering, both qualitative and quantitative in the process of hypotheses verification.

Strictly methodological triangulation may be successfully used in the area of research on civic participation models or other equivalent forms of social capital. Social capital, understood in the earlier defined way in the operationalized forms, may be examined by a consistent adaptation of research methods' triangulations⁹. Such application has a beneficial influence on the verification of question or research hypotheses stated. The assumption, and a significant advantage of this triangulation at the same time, is the limitation of impact degree of separate specific methods on the results of research. Such way of research proceedings is based on a mutual verification of research results obtained by, firstly, adaptation of quantitative, classic questionnaire forms or opinion polls for the research on large populations, secondly, more quantitative in-depth or narration interviews with the representatives of opinion-forming environments, leaders of certain environments and social-professional categories (including institutions of the third sector) or communities, finally, thirdly, content analysis, including the NGO's internal documents, government institutions, local newspapers, websites representing particular institutional actors of community. Discourse analysis, which may involve public debates open for general use, may constitute an additional information source about the research object and verification of the hypotheses earlier stated. In the area of participatory research the usefulness of this triangulation is beyond discussion – both on the stage of problem identification and diagnosis (where the research problem should necessary correspond to solving a certain social problem), as well as final effects' evaluation. The use of mutually verifying quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques may find their application on the introductory and final stages of Lewin's spiral of steps, that is hermeneutic cycle.

The results obtained on a local and regional level in the aforementioned project, mainly by the adaptation of qualitative methods, could be verified in a macroscale and using a quantitative method. The most important research works from the point of view of quantitative verification, the range of statements' generalization (for general-Polish population) concerned the reflection of structure of quantitative relationships between the

⁸ Konecki K.: *Studia z metodologii badań jakościowych. Teoria ugruntowana*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2000.

⁹ Weryński P.: *Wzory uczestnictwa obywatelskiego Polaków*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe IFiS PAN, Warszawa 2010, p. 89.

chosen indicators of civic participation models. There was an attempt made to construct the model. A consequence of isolating its main factors was building a scale for the measurement of civic participation level among Polish people. For this purpose there was the exploration factor analysis (EFA) used as well as principal components analysis (PCA) allowing a creation of one-dimensional scale on the basis of the dimensions isolated. The analysis was conducted on the grounds of empirical material obtained from the survey by Polski Generalny Sondaż Społeczny – PGSS (eng. Polish General Social Survey)¹⁰. The questions from PGSS survey only in a limited extent correspond with the parameters (variables) mentioned above, characterizing the two examined models of civic participation. It was attempted to relate such indicators to eight dimensions, nevertheless, the fully accessible representative statistical data for the whole population of Poland did not allow an assignment of adequate indicators to all previously characterized participation's dimension of republicanism/liberalism. In this moment it should be emphasized that these were the secondary data, however, a full reflection of the parameters describing the two participation models requires conducting separate research on a nation-wide sample.

Using the indicator resources from the aforementioned survey, it was attempted to design a model of civic participation. On the basis of conceptualization made previously, there were the questions of certain contents included into the analysis. The principal components analysis conducted revealed the existence of six dimensions which, according to the values of factor charges in the particular questions, may be named as: principal component I: trust for the institutions of public life, principal component II: the range of government intervention, principal component III: freedom for participation in the community, principal component IV: freedom from an external pressure, principal component V: axiological dimension, principal component VI: relationships between the participants of community.

The components above were treated as the dimensions creating the model of civic participation. An undeniable advantage of the principal components analysis is the possibility to calculate the components' scales on its basis. Therefore, in the next turn, it was analyzed how the respondents are located in the space created by the aforementioned dimensions in relations with social-demographic features such as: education level, age, social-professional situation, profession and population of the town of residence. The effects of methodological triangulation understood in such way have turned out to be useful in explanatory works on the reasons for a limited participation of Polish people in a public sphere.

An example of a complex triangulation procedure than can be used for the verification of many conceptualizations in the area of research concerning civic activity is a research plan used in order to test the auto-diagnostic tool for examining the innovative attitudes and building relationships with the environment (Matrix of Marketing Needs) of the entrepreneurs

¹⁰ Cichomski B., Jerzyński T., Zieliński, M.: Polskie Generalne Sondáže Społeczne: skumulowany komputerowy zbiór danych 1992-2008. Instytut Studiów Społecznych, Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warszawa 2009.

from the sector of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises as well as MA students and PhD students willing to start their own business after graduation¹¹. The presented triangulation procedure has the characteristics mixed methodology, within its frames the theory triangulation was used together with the strictly methodological triangulation, investigator triangulation as well as the cognitive perspectives triangulation.

The stage of testing the Matrix constituted an integral part of the research, occurring after the diagnosis stage. A significant value of the diagnostic tool should be contained within the way of responding to the users' expectations. If the diagnostic tool meets their expectations its inter-subjective value increases. Therefore, during testing of the Matrix a certain theoretical-methodological strategy was adopted. On the theoretical level in the research the meta-theoretical inspiration with pragmatism and its concept of authenticity, which accepts as true what may be verified by its consequences, mainly the practical ones, was referred to¹². The understanding of authenticity presented above is close to indentifying it with effectiveness, efficiency and indirectly with adequacy of satisfying human needs in a particular situational context. The pragmatists look for the criterion of authenticity in experience, daily life and consequences of taken actions. Authenticity is not an unchanging category, it becomes it and verifies itself in social activities (cognitive utilitarianism). The method of qualitative analysis, stemming from the grounded theory¹³ and the elements of action research¹⁴ were also referred to¹⁴.

The objective of the research plan was to collect data regarding perception of quality and utility of the final tool among the potential users and recipients of the Matrix. A configuration of quantitative and qualitative methods was used together with an experimental plan in order to learn about the influence of the independent variable (workshops passing knowledge, skills and competencies in the area of the Matrix) on the examined entrepreneurs and the university circles and therefore, to check the functioning of the Matrix in regards to the criterion of adequacy, utility and effectiveness in relation to the objectives of the project.

Appropriate testing tools were constructed, that is scenario and observation questionnaire for the focus groups, pre-test and post-test for the participants of focused groups and workshops as well as curriculum for the workshops with experimental groups. Afterwards, the

¹¹ Weryński P.: Marketing self-diagnostic tool for smes – assumptions of the project, *Journal of Positive Management*. Vol. 4, No. 1, 2013, pp. 92-109; Weryński P. (ed.): *Matryca Potrzeb Marketingowych. Testowanie i upowszechnianie narzędzia*, Difin, Warszawa 2013.

¹² James W.: *Pojęcia filozoficzne a praktyczne wyniki*, [in:] *James myśli i ludzie*, Buczyńska-Garewicz H., Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 2001.

¹³ Konecki K.: *Studia z metodologii badań jakościowych. Teoria ugruntowana*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2000; Glaser B., Strauss A. L.: *Odkrywanie teorii ugruntowanej. Strategie badania jakościowego*, M. Gorzko (interpreter), Nomos Kraków 2009. (original: Glaser, B., Strauss A.L.: *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Aldine, Chicago 1967); Hensel P., Glinka B.: *Teoria ugruntowana* [in:] *Badania jakościowe. Podejścia i teoria*, tom1, Jemiłniak, D. (ed.): Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012.

¹⁴ McTaggart R. (ed.): *Participatory Action Research: International Contexts and Consequences*, State University of New York Press, NY 1997; Cervinkova H., Gołębniak B. D. (eds.): *Badania w działaniu. Pedagogika i antropologia zaangażowana*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe DSW, Wrocław 2010.

series of focus groups in various configurations of the groups of recipients and users were conducted.

A comparison of the state of knowledge by compiling the results of the pre-tests with the post-tests, the results from the people from control groups with knowledge of the examined people from experimental groups, that is those subjected to the influence of the independent variable (workshops using materials constituting the substantial basis for creation of the Matrix questionnaire) enabled indicating the differences in the level of knowledge and attitudes of those examined, and at the same time effectiveness of the experimental activities.

The research problems – concerning recognition of the attitudes connected with a final output of the project – constituted the issues for which the most specific and most demanded was qualitative verification in terms of substantial value. It required acknowledgement of the respondents' motivation who could be reached thanks to the use, for instance, of proper projection techniques and finding intersubjective meanings in the research material. The focus research was aimed at, above all, description, understanding and interpretation of opinions and attitudes of the respondents, in a lower degree at explaining and discovering tendencies and at forecasting the behavior of those examined. The choice of the technique of focus group interview was justified by the fact that when using the rule of mutual stimulation of discussion participants, it was possible to get to such opinions and motivations of the respondents that could be not entirely conscious views and impressions about the issue examined by the researchers. Such attitude also facilitated the use of categories of answers in data analysis that were generated either more or less consciously by the participants, e.g. for typology construction. It led to assigning a new, intersubjective rank to the single opinions.

In the presented experimental plan four researchers participated as FGI moderators. Therefore, we may speak in this case about the investigator triangulation, that is introduction of several observers or controllers into the research procedure who may mutually verify their research. It is especially important when their observations may be burdened with a subjective evaluation.

An external project evaluation or investor triangulation specifically understood as well, confirmed appropriateness of the procedures and measures used for tool testing (experimental plan). Its results were a direct proof for pragmatically understood authenticity of MMN, adopted conceptual and methodological assumptions in relation with the identified users' and recipients' needs on the stage of diagnosis.

The triangulation procedure presented above in an experimental plan may be useful for testing the various psychometric tools for measurement of the attitudes, the scale of social activity (including civic one), preferred behavior patterns in many areas of social-economic life. It constitutes a theoretical-methodological frame for the verification of pragmatically understood authenticity, usability and effectiveness of conceptualizations adopted.

2. The Authoring types of triangulation

Most of the triangulation types presented above possesses visible advantages, however, they do not exhaust the possibilities of triangulation verification. On the basis of the author's several-years' experience in the area of research on the functioning of local and regional public spheres, he suggests the introduction of two supplementing triangulation types. The first of them is the **cognitive perspectives triangulation** of the particular examined actors of social life, both personal and institutional (in this case connected with the local government institutions – communal and regional, and with the independent subjects such as non-governmental organizations performing locally). In an operational sense, it would come to the confrontation of situation definitions, systems of norms and values, interests of the examined social actors as long as their perspectives are axiological, functionally or mentally convergent. It should also be realized through the differences confrontation in the language (arguments), experiences, interests. The discrepancy among the perspectives would indicate the areas of dysfunction analysis or structural intensity analysis such as: conflict of interests, areas of taboo in local social life, possible links to the phenomena of, among others, corruption, nepotism or local institutions becoming oligarchic. In the analyses of the third sector institutions and public sphere functioning such approach seems essential.

In the research conducted in Rybnik in 2007, in frames of one of the EQUAL project¹⁵, on the cooperation forms between the government organizations and non-governmental organizations in the area of preventing and counteracting social marginalization, it was attempted, among others, to confront the attitudes of representatives' of government institutions on the one hand and on the other hand, attitudes of social subjects. There was an attempt made to identify the structural intensity between the institutional-governmental perspective and the social one, however, formalized. Similarly, in the conducted public discourse analysis between the two antagonistic groups of interest and ideologies in a local council environment there may be the aforementioned triangulation type adopted. In this way it is possible to confront the two cognitive or ideological perspectives, e.g. liberal and republican or of particular actors or interest groups in the examined communities.

Another example of the use of the cognitive perspectives triangulation was the aforementioned research describing the attitudes and behaviors of the groups of users and recipients of the autodiagnostic tool of the Matrix of Marketing Needs in the project "With matrix to innovative entrepreneurship". It came to a confrontation of the elements of attitudes of the environment of SMEs sector entrepreneurs with the university circles – academics, PhD

¹⁵ Koziół J., Lech A., Mikołajec J., Weryński P.: Współpraca instytucji samorządowych z organizacjami pozarządowymi w zakresie przeciwdziałania i zapobiegania marginalizacji społecznej, [in:] Partnerstwo instytucji przeciw wykluczeniu społecznemu- analiza badawcza, Gogolok P. (ed.): Europejski Fundusz Społeczny EQUAL i Miasto Rybnik, Rybnik 2008.

students and MA students. They consisted in confrontation of the definitions of situations (opportunities and possibilities coming from creating mutual relationships), perception of mutual interests of the examined social actors, to what degree their perspectives are axiologically, functionally or mentally convergent/divergent. The divergence of the perspectives would determine the areas for analyzing the structural tensions (a community or maybe rather a conflict of interests), attitude towards changes and innovations.

A emergent perception of central or metropolitan, regional and local public spheres implies a certain methodological approach. Therefore, the next triangulation type for the aforementioned research is **analysis levels triangulation**, that is the inclusion of mutual interaction of the emergent levels of reality, correlating data sources from micro, meso and macro level in the analytical work of the investigator. A huge role in this approach will be played by the factors' impact of exogenous character on each of the distinguished level of analysis. There should be the relevance considered of the relations between the communities and external systems (regional or national authorities, above-regional non-governmental institutions, European Union structure, influence of the global economic situation and geopolitical conditions). There will also be the mutual relations and feedback important between the central public sphere as well as discourses characterizing it and its regional as well as local equivalents, as the existence of the examined meganarrations manifests on each of the level of social reality.

In case of the research problem raised, analysis level triangulation would be expressed in searching for the symptoms of existence in the consciousness of the examined, accordingly from local, regional and nation-wide public spheres, components of two meganarrations as well as group sources and generalized resentments determining the extent and scale of civic participation among Polish people. When analyzing the Polish public sphere the author adopted the structural approach and synchronous comparative method¹⁶. He also referred to the analytical frames or structural tendencies mentioned by Eisenstadt¹⁷. He indicates the effects of historical, geopolitical, cultural and structural processes, which over the centuries have led to the creation of Western phenomenon of public sphere and civic society. There was a confrontation made of the assumptions above and structural frames in which the Western-European public spheres work with Polish historical, geopolitical, cultural-religious and finally, structural conditions. The analysis was based on various secondary sources (among others: Polish reports and by Western research institutions, non-governmental organizations established for monitoring of the development state of civic society, articles from the nation-wide and regional Polish newspapers, yearbooks by Central Statistical Office, analysis by

¹⁶ Babiński G.: *Metodologia a rzeczywistość społeczna. Dylematy badań etnicznych*. Zakład Wydawniczy „NOMOS”: Kraków 2004, pp. 40-51.

¹⁷ Eisenstadt S.N.: *Dynamics of Civilizations and Development: The Case of European Society, Essays on economic development and cultural change: in honor of Bert F. Hoselitz.- III*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1977, pp. 133-144; Eisenstadt S.N.: *Spółeczeństwo obywatelskie i sfery publiczne w perspektywie porównawczej*. *Studia Socjologiczne*, no. 3, 2006, pp. 25-31.

Transparency International or Freedom House). The comparative analysis showed dysfunctions or imperfections limiting the development of Polish public sphere and in consequence, underdevelopment of civic society and deficit of relationship-creating bridging social capital. Referring the structural state of development of the Polish public sphere to the conditions of ideal communication situation by Habermas enabled an identification of communication barriers, specificity of Polish public discourse. Moreover, public discourses on the three levels of analysis (micro, meso and macro), included in the two examined meganarrations and the presented thematic keystones, were researched on the basis of assumption of superior directives and methodological postulates composing into a critical discourse analysis by van Dijk. According to them, it becomes necessary to include the historical-cultural or ideological-political contexts in the analysis undertaken as discourses take place in them, also include the categories of participants (their auto-identifications, created categorizations concerning the social world surrounding them, possibilities of working out an agreement between them) and social actions of these participants, rules (texts and opinions as manifestations or realizations of communication or interaction rules shared socially) and strategies (for example defensive and offensive) of achieving goals by the participants of discourse¹⁸.

Abstract

The diagnosis of the state of functioning in a certain public sphere or chosen dimension of active citizenship which should precede further more applicable stages of action research, may be conducted through a conscious, parallel, supplementing use of different types of triangulation procedure. It may be expressed in the following ways: 1) after indicating the main thematic threads, as research results correlation on the micro, meso, and macro levels of reality, 2) in a depiction of mutually verifying qualitative and quantitative methods, 3) by a comparison of data and interpretations obtained by different investigators or even groups of investigators concerning the same research object, 4) with the use of primary and secondary data, formal and informal, 5) as the inclusion of various cognitive-personal and institutional perspectives, 6) using a set of supplementing and non-contradictory theoretical assumptions which triangularly verify each other (e.g. model notions and ideal types differed on the level of ontology or epistemology), 7) in the research concerning complex social activities, in which after the stage of diagnosing the reality the tools for examining the attitudes and the scale of particular behaviors are created, a triangulation experimental plan with the elements

¹⁸ Dijk van, T.A.: *Badania nad dyskursem*. G. Grochowski (interpreter). [in:] Jasińska- Kania A., Nijakowski, L.M., Szacki J., Ziółkowski M. (selection and elaboration), *Współczesne teorie socjologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2006, pp. 1042-1045.

of qualitative research (e.g. focus groups) can be used, which will not only make it possible to determine the influence of independent variables but also to verify the pragmatically understood authenticity of the project, its operational adequacy, utility and effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the project.

The adaptation of all the aforementioned triangulation types at the same time in a particular research area, characteristic for action research, may be difficult due to a different degree of investigators' competences, due to research object, extent or research objectives set. However, the use of one or more triangulations may significantly increase the reliability of research concerning e.g. data source selection, degree of intersubjectivity of observation or conclusions concerning e.g. conflicts in a local society, verification of more difficult hypotheses when using and confronting the cognitive perspective of representatives e.g. of government institutions with a perspective on non-institutional social actors. However, the classic triangulation of methods and techniques is highly useful on the stage of identification and diagnosis as well as evaluation of final results of action research.

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Omówienie

Diagnoza stanu funkcjonowania określonej sfery publicznej czy wybranego wymiaru aktywności obywatelskiej, która poprzedzać powinna dalsze bardziej aplikacyjne etapy badań w działaniu, dokonana być może przez świadome, równoczesne, uzupełniające się zastosowanie różnych typów procedury triangulacyjnej. Wyrażać się ona może: 1) po wyznaczeniu głównych wątków tematycznych, korelowaniem rezultatów badań na poziomach mikro-, mezo- i makrorzeczywistości, 2) w ujęciu weryfikujących się wzajemnie metod jakościowych oraz ilościowych, 3) poprzez zestawienie danych i interpretacji dotyczących tego samego przedmiotu badań, uzyskanych przez różnych badaczy czy nawet grup badaczy, 4) z wykorzystaniem źródeł zastanych i wywołanych, formalnych i nieformalnych, 5) uwzględnieniem różnych perspektyw poznawczych - personalnych i instytucjonalnych, 6) z zastosowaniem zespołu uzupełniających się i niesprzecznych założeń teoretycznych triangulacyjnie weryfikujących się (np. pojęcia wzorcowe a typy idealne zróżnicowane na poziomie ontologii czy epistemologii), 7) w badaniach złożonych zjawisk i procesów społecznych, w których, po etapie diagnozy rzeczywistości, konstruowane jest narzędzie do badania postaw, skali określonych zachowań, zastosować można triangulacyjny plan eksperymentalny z elementami badań jakościowych (np. fokusy), który nie tylko pozwoli określić wpływ zmiennych niezależnych, ale również zweryfikować pragmatycznie pojętą prawdziwość projektu, jego operacyjną adekwatność, użyteczność oraz skuteczność w realizacji celów projektu.

Stosowanie wszystkich wspomnianych typów triangulacji jednocześnie w określonym obszarze badawczym, charakterystycznych dla badań w działaniu, może być trudne ze względu na różny stopień kompetencji badaczy, przedmiot badań, zakres czy postawione cele badawcze. Jednak zastosowanie jednej czy kilku triangulacji może znacząco podnosić rzetelność badań, np. z zakresu doboru danych źródłowych, stopnia intersubiektywności obserwacji czy wniosków dotyczących, np. konfliktów w społeczności lokalnej, weryfikacji trudniejszych hipotez poprzez wykorzystanie i konfrontowanie perspektywy poznawczej przedstawicieli, np. instytucji samorządowych z perspektywą niezinstytucjonalizowanych aktorów społecznych. Natomiast klasyczna triangulacja metod i technik jest bardzo użyteczna na etapie identyfikacji i diagnozy oraz ewaluacji efektów końcowych badań w działaniu.