

Jacques Theureau

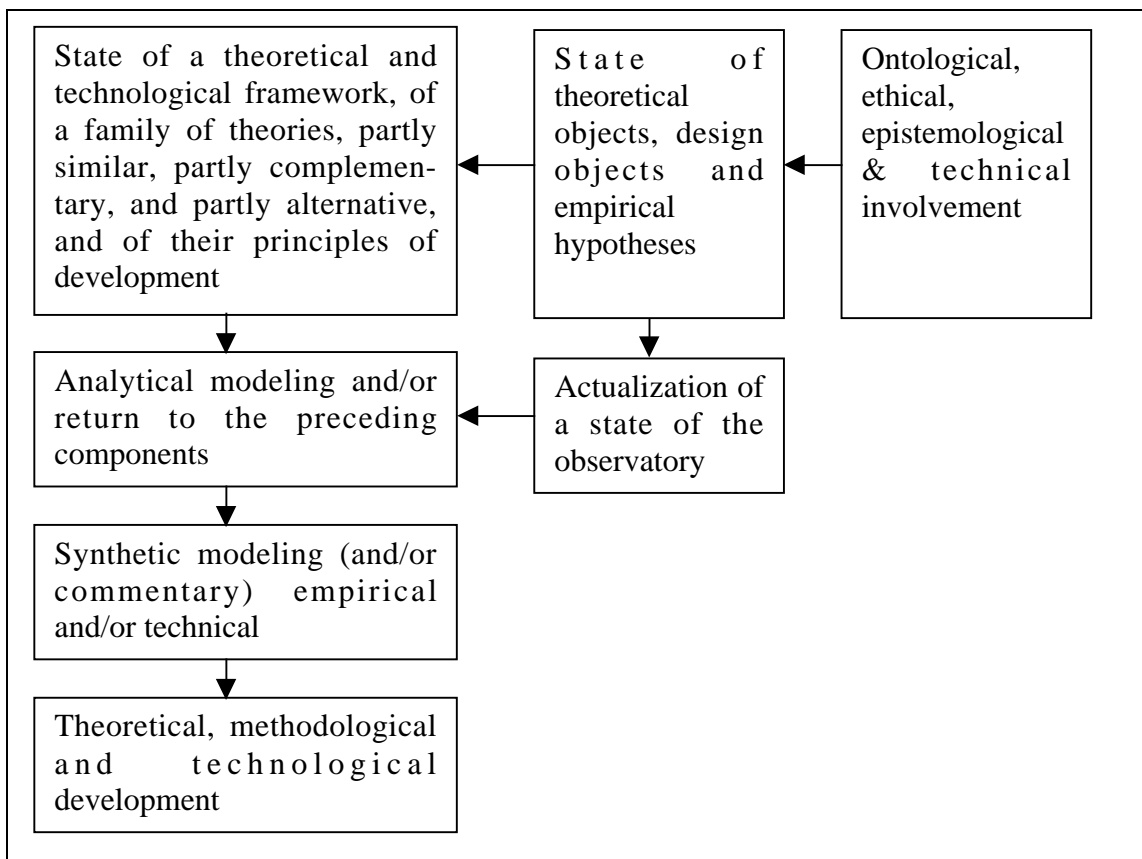
UMR6599 CNRS/UTC, Centre Pierre Guillaumat, 60206 Compi gne

SELF CONFRONTATION INTERVIEW AS A COMPONENT OF AN EMPIRICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Summary : The expression "self confrontation" refers today to numerous kinds of practices. We present here the principles of a self confrontation method developed in relation with a research programme in cognitive anthropology (which we will emphasize) and cognitive ergonomics.

Key words : self confrontation, course of experience, course of action, course of interaction, structural coupling.

Von Cranach introduced the self confrontation method in relation with a theory of a theoretical object for the study of human activity, the goal directed action theory (Von Cranach *et coll.*,1982). Other authors developed self confrontation methods as empirical data collecting methods, but less about human activity than about self image (Nielsen, 1964), which led some of them to use the term "autoscopy" (Linard et Prax, 1984). It is this relation of Von Cranach self confrontation method with a theory of human activity which paved the way to its gradual transformation from 1983 to nowadays in relation with the research programme known under the label "course of action" (Theureau, 1992). In a research study at a given moment, the components of the actualization of this research programme belong to the following structure, that of hexadic sign, which is its main theoretical notion (Theureau, 2000) :



In this diagram, that we cannot detail here, the arrows point to an order of the definitions of the components, i.e. dependency links between components. On the one hand, the state of the self confrontation method at a given moment of the development of the research programme is only an element of a state of the observatory, i.e. the methods of data constructing and their theoretical foundations. On the other hand, this state of the observatory at a given moment depends upon both the state of theoretical and design objects and empirical hypotheses and the researcher's involvement. It has also in view an analytical modeling of the data, a construction of synthetic models (and/or commentaries), empirical and/or technical, concerning the phenomena. Finally, the whole process results, beyond empirical and technical results of the particular study at stake, in a theoretical, methodological and technological development. A failure concerning any component results in a reflection about preceding components. We stress two points : the prominent role played by self confrontation interview in documenting three theoretical objects, the **course of experience** and, through it, the **course of action** and the **course of interaction** ; the links between self confrontation methods and other data collecting methods, and also methods for an efficient participation of the actors in the analysis, and their ethical, contractual and socio-political conditions.

Self confrontation so conceived is an indirect means to document actor's **experience** or **pre-reflective consciousness** or **immediate understanding of his/her activity** at every instant t . This notion of experience at instant t stems from a critical study, on the one hand, of Sartre's philosophical statement of the psychology and cultural anthropology of his time, on the other hand, of the semiotics of action stories. It has two aspects, **global experience** and **local experience at instant t** , that could be named also, following St Augustine, *distentio* and *intentio* : "*Dicturus sum canticum, quod noui : antequam incipiam, in totum expectatio mea tenditur, cum autem coepero, quantum ex illa in praeteritum decerpsero, tenditur et memoria mea, atque distenditur uita huius actionis meae in memoriam propter quod dixi et in expectationem propter quod dicturus sum : praesens tamen adest attentio mea, per quam traicitur quod erat futurum, ut fiat praeteritum, quod quanto magis agitur et agitur, tanto breuita expectatione prolongatur memoria, donec tota expectatio consumatur, cum tota illa actio finita transierit in memoriam*" (St Augustin, Confessions, XI, 28, 38). The global experience at instant t corresponds exactly to *distentio* (*distenditur*), the embedding of a discrete present in a story with a past and a future in construction, that St Augustine opposes to *intentio* (*tenditur*). But, concerning local experience at instant t , we betray St Augustine and abandon medieval metaphysics. We consider *intentio* as the actor's activity between t and $t + \Delta t$ which results in a transformation of the actor's structure of expectancies (Theureau, 2000). In the theoretical framework for the analysis of the course of experience between t_0 and t_n , the notions of **hexadic sign** and of **significant structure** describe respectively the essential features of the local experience at instant t (*intentio*) and those of the global experience at instant (*distentio*) and link them together. Let us stress upon the fact that the global experience at instant t differs from what is called the **reflective consciousness**, which concerns particular and situated periods of the actor's activity, when he/she considers his/her past activity with a given purpose. Therefore, by hypothesis, self confrontation interview so conceived has little or not at all similarity with self analysis dealing with an "internal life" or with a reflection dealing with an actor's "Self". It is a difered enquiry into the dynamics of the structural coupling between the actor and his/her situation (including other actors) (Varela, 1980). This enquiry has the peculiarity to be helped by technics reproducing an

image of the behavior (video, but also other technical devices) and by the researcher as both an observer and an interlocutor. This self confrontation interview can be completed or even replaced by other verbalisation methods : **simultaneous verbalisation** (when it does not modify radically the activity under study, i.e. in the case of activities both isolated and including a strong symbolic component) ; **interruptive verbalisation** at judicious moments (that needs a pretty developed first knowledge of the structure of the activity) (Theureau, 1992) ; the **elicitation interview** (Vermersch, 1994).

Other methods must be used in order, on the one hand, to prepare the use of these different verbalisation methods, on the other hand, to document the constraints and effects of the part of the actor's activity that is experienced by him/her, i.e. the course of action. These other methods are the methods of cultural anthropology, the other ergonomics methods and various methods for the efficient participation of the actors in the analysis of their activity. Among these last methods, one is the so called **second level self confrontation interview**. It is performed after the self confrontation interview proper. Its procedure is radically different, because its aim is not to collect empirical data about actor's experience at instant t, but to develop a cooperation in the analysis of the activity between the researcher and the actor. We must stress the fact that the assurance of its realisation is necessary to insure the quality of the self confrontation proper. This assurance is a condition for the acceptance by the actor to do not analyse his/her activity and use the video image only as a means to express his/her experience.

In order to insure the quality of both the observations and recordings of the behavioral data and the different verbalisations, different conditions, ethical, contractual and socio-political, have to be joined together. It is at this point that the analyses of sport situations with a perspective of performance improvement and analyses of work situations with a perspective of ergonomics improvement may differ.

References

- Von Cranach (M.). - Goal directed action. London: Academic Press, 1982.
- Linard (M.). - Images vid o, images de soi ou Narcisse au travail. Paris : Dunod, 1984.
- Nielsen (G.). - Studies in self confrontation. Viewing a sound motion picture of self and another person in a stressful dyadic interaction. Copenhagen : Munksgaard, 1964.
- Theureau (J.). - Le cours d'action : analyse s mio-logique : essai d'une anthropologie cognitive situ e. Berne : Peter Lang, 1992.
- Theureau (J.). - Anthropologie cognitive & analyse des comp tences. In : L analyse de la singularit de l action, 2000, Paris : PUF, pp. 171-211.
- Varela (F.). - Principles of biological autonomy. New York : Elsevier, 1980.
- Vermersch (P.). - L entretien d explicitation. Paris : ESF, 1994.