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► To cite this version:

Noémie Beltramo. The I(game) of impossible invisibility: Between proximity and distance in the history of the present time. *Loisir et Société / Society and Leisure*, 2022, 45 (2), pp.317-337. 10.1080/07053436.2022.2097388 . hal-04338581

HAL Id: hal-04338581

<https://univ-artois.hal.science/hal-04338581>

Submitted on 12 Dec 2023

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The I(game) of impossible invisibility: between proximity and distance in the history of the present time

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Introduction

Although investigative narrative is more the preserve of anthropologists and sociologists (Bizeul, 1998), historians have been reflecting on their relationship with their research objects and the writing of history since the beginning of the 19th century (Prochasson, 2002). These reflections are all the more important when the research is part of the history of the present, a chronological period during which the moment being studied coincides with that of the study. Witnesses of the events under study are still alive and interactions with them can take place, as is the case in the research presented in this article. The history of the present time is, more than any other form of history, necessarily unfinished. The expression 'present time' thus inscribes it in duration and the present is read 'as a past' (Trebitch, 1991, p. 142), which creates the necessary distance from immediacy. As Jean-Pierre Rioux (1992) thinks, it is ultimately the historian's method that enables him to establish the necessary distance from his object. Disclosing this method, while trying not to 'pay lip service' (Bizeul, 1998, p. 775), constitutes a guarantee of the scientific nature of the research addressed here, which deals with the poloneness of the descendants of Polish migrants, i.e. the attachment of this population to Poland and its culture. The work carried out in Master 1 and Master 2 has indeed traced the monographs of a football club and a Polish folklore group in the Saône-et-Loire mining country in order to identify the specificities of these associations as well as the links that their members maintain with poloneness (Beltramo, 2013a, 2013b). In the doctoral work (Beltramo, 2021), a second space was included to conduct a comparative study and determine the role of the territory on poloneness. It is the mining country of Nord-Pas-de-Calais, located in the region that hosted almost 40% of the Polish population residing in France in 1931 (Ponty, 1988). Five monographs of Polish associations, completed by a census of all the Polish groups that existed or still exist between 1945 and 2015 in the two study areas, were drawn up at different times during the researcher's university career. The researcher's experience and training, as well as his or her view of Polish groups, were not the same when the data was collected in Nord-Pas-de-Calais¹ two years after the Master's degree. This temporal gap probably modified the behaviour and posture adopted with members of Polish associations in this region. Reflecting on one's own practices, making explicit one's

'room for manoeuvre in the way one appears, relates and proceeds' (Bizeul, 1998, p. 759), thus makes it possible to strengthen the scientific validity of the results obtained. In other words, it constitutes a means of 'controlling the construction and reconstruction of one's own categories of analysis' (Portilla, 2016, as cited in Morel, 2018, p. 141).

Here, the investigative narrative focuses more specifically on the only two Polish associations where observation sessions were conducted and a questionnaire distributed, in addition to oral surveys conducted with members of Polish origin, the central source in this research. The approach adopted is mainly inductive, i.e. the results are essentially derived from the interpretation of 'what the respondents experienced and what they said about it' (Hidri Neys, 2018, p. 92). The difficulty for the researcher then lies in producing and disseminating scientific knowledge without being influenced by the overall context, the research conditions and the people involved in the research. Nevertheless, the researcher is necessarily a stakeholder in its scientific realisation, despite his quest for objectivity. Antoine Prost (2010) writes that objectivity is impossible in history, sociology or anthropology, and that it is more accurate to speak of distancing and impartiality. Jean-Jacques Becker (1993) also stresses that 'there is always a share of subjectivity in the search for objectivity, but [that] this subjectivity must be controlled, fought, contained' (p. 120). The effects of the latter can nevertheless be transformed into 'levers of scientific knowledge', i.e. the researcher can 'play with' and not just 'do with' (Morel, 2018, pp. 141, 150). Here, the latter approach has been adopted, although the former appears in some situations.

Firstly, the researcher's desire to be invisible will be presented and analysed, both through writing and during the observations carried out within the two Polish folk dance associations studied. Secondly, a reflexive look will be taken at the oral surveys as the main source of the Master 2 and thesis work (together with the archives), where the researcher is a stakeholder in the production of his source and necessarily visible. Finally, a reflection on the influence of the investigator's family history in his research, linked in part to Italy and to the mining country of Saône-et-Loire, will allow us to write a few lines of ego-history (Nora, 1987). By starting with the end, the finished product, and going back to the origins of the project, this plan finally retraces the path of my posture as a researcher: from an 'I' voluntarily set aside ('withdrawal' of the researcher) to an 'I' voluntarily present and explained.

A sought-after invisibility: a guarantee of scientificity?

My research subject, being part of cultural history, history of the present time and the current of micro-history, the diversity of sources and methods used could lead one to think of a use of the 'I' in the writing of the history produced. However, this is not the case. In my

thesis, the author is absent, no 'I' appears, neither the 'we' nor the 'us', with two exceptions. The few lines of ego-history do not show the historian as a person either. This writing, initiated by my thesis director and not very easy in the beginning, is similar to that of most historians until the 1980s, when the weight of tradition encourages them to erase themselves from their work. From this decade onwards, a reflection on the writing of history and the place of the historian in this narrative develops, in connection with the appearance of the history of the present. More and more historians (although not the majority) are revealing themselves in their writings, exposing what links them to their objects and the influence they may have had on their results, and mobilising the 'I', as some historians have done since the 19th century, such as Jules Michelet (Prochasson, 2002). The distanced, depersonalised writing adopted in my thesis, contrary to this evolution, nevertheless favoured my taking a step back from the witnesses' statements. Through this writing, which is not found in my Master 2 thesis where the 'we' is used, I was in a way external to my research necessarily influenced by my personal characteristics and 'the collective memory of the present time' (Andrieu, 2010, p. 530). I was overhanging it in order to better draw the different threads, i.e. to cross and exploit the sources, in order to tend towards objectivity. However, as Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2000) notes with regard to anthropological and sociological research mobilising the first person singular and the feelings of the researcher, the choice of this or another writing process 'does not in any way prejudge the ethnographic or sociographic quality of the information and interpretations proposed' (p. 421). In this account of the investigation, the use of the 'I' was necessary because I am revealing both my imbrication with my object (Michelet's 'I') and my intimate relationship with the latter (the contemporary 'I'). In other words, I reveal my presence both in and to the history produced (Prochasson, 2002). The use of the first person singular, which in no way excludes the historical approach, thus allows the reader to be alerted to the precautionary measures to be taken concerning the restitution of the past, which is marked by my values and perceptions. This use also favours a 'more sensitive, freer, fairer' writing, echoing Ivan Jablonka's wish (2014, p. 14), even if the language is constantly out of step with reality.

The desire to be invisible, 'absent' from the research was also valid in the field, during the observation sessions conducted. Following email exchanges with the presidents of two Polish folklore associations, Wisla and Polonia, as well as a phone call with the president of Wisla, I attended five and three² rehearsals of these groups respectively, in order to get to know the process and the members. As soon as I arrived in Polonia, Catherine Cepak³, the group's president, introduced me as a student working on the differences and similarities

between sport and folklore. I had indeed mentioned to her, during the first email contacts in November 2012, the idea of a comparison between a Polish football club and the association she chaired. However, I had later specified that my research topic would be 'the revival of Polish folk dance associations in the Saône-et-Loire mining basin and in particular [to study] the Polish folk dance association "Polonia"⁴'. My enrolment in a STAPS course (sciences and techniques of physical and sports activities) at the Faculty of Sports Sciences of the University of Burgundy probably contributed to the persistence of this error. I did not dare to contradict this leader⁵ and saw this distorted presentation almost as a chance. I had the impression that the members of the group would not be, or would be less, influenced by what I was really looking for and that I would then reach a certain 'truth'. These beliefs encouraged me to remain evasive about my research object. As Cyril Farnarier (2015) writes, 'it is, generally speaking, always necessary to leave a doubt, an imprecision, a vagueness, about the exact subject of the investigation at the time it is conducted'. This imprecision is justified by the evolution of objectives and hypotheses during the course of the work, and to 'safeguard the integrity of the data collected' (p. 206). When I first came to Wisla, the president of the association, Christian Urbaniak, correctly presented my research topic, which I had indicated to him by e-mail and then by telephone. He also asked the members to give me a warm welcome and to inform me about the information I wanted to obtain, as Catherine Cepak had done. Like Catherine Cepak, during the first phone call on 27 August 2015 and the two interviews conducted with her, he compared Wisla to a sports club, whether it was about the functioning of the group⁶, the quality of the performances⁷, the direction of the rehearsals⁸ or the abilities of the dancers⁹. My institutional affiliation has thus left its mark on the presidents of the groups and influenced, to a certain extent, the survey. As Daniel Bizeul (1998) writes, 'the reasons imagined for the presence of the researcher will partly orient the way of behaving towards him' (p. 760). Another example is the behaviour of the members of these associations. When I arrived at the first rehearsal of Wisla, the members greeted me shyly, while the dancers of Polonia kissed me without asking me why I was there¹⁰. Unlike the latter, the members of Wisla knew I was coming, since Christian Urbaniak had forwarded them my first e-mail to make contact. The proximity of age to the majority of Polonia's dancers¹¹, the arrival of five of them in September 2012¹², and the regular presence of spectators, friends or family members of certain members, led them to believe that I was part of the group.

Despite this 'familiar' attitude in the beginning, the Polonia members were more 'bothered' by my unexpected presence during the rehearsal, once the introductions were made. For example, the notes from my observation sessions indicate that during the first rehearsal

there are more glances in my direction in Polonia than in Wisla¹³. In addition to this unexpected presence, the period of life of the majority of dancers in Polonia, when self-image and appearance become important (Galland, 2006), and the size of the rehearsal room probably played a role in this attitude. I found myself physically closer to the dancers in Polonia than in Wisla. This also put me in an uncomfortable position as some members, especially the group's president, tried to read what I was writing down during rehearsals¹⁴. Nevertheless, some of the initially attentive members of Polonia, from the first rehearsal observed, expressed their dissatisfaction or weariness with doing the same dance steps, chatted amongst themselves, laughed or distracted the group¹⁵. This attitude is the most common in the two associations studied, evoking the traits of a popular culture (Beltramo, 2021). My presence, as Martin de La Soudière (1988) notes, did not disturb the respondents¹⁶ very much in the end, although the conditions of observation and my presentation by the two presidents were somewhat different. Daniel Bizeul (1998) stresses that the researcher's presentation speech 'is only one element among others' and generally has 'little weight compared to the information drawn from the circumstances of the meeting and the clues attached to his person' (p. 760). For Martin de La Soudière (1988), the researcher overestimates the influence he can have on his field. He attributes to himself the role of disrupter since he feels socially useless and therefore feels the discomfort of the field. In my case, this feeling came more from the conviction that remaining as invisible as possible was a guarantee of scientificity, and from my shy and discreet¹⁷ nature. I was trying to avoid the 'strategies of self-presentation, self-control or even conventional discourse which are all ways of meeting the supposed expectations of the observer', to no longer be an 'observed observer' (Lansade, 2017, p. 107). Giving details about my research object, taking part in frequent and prolonged convivial evenings of the associations, or even physically participating in Polish folk dance rehearsals gave me the impression that my research would involve methodological biases. I therefore refused the requests of members of Polonia and Wisla to come and dance. Through these, the members, who were not always at full capacity during the rehearsals, wanted me to do them a favour as they did me, rather than writing down elements in a notebook that sometimes had a purpose that they could not understand. This could constitute a kind of counter-gift (Mauss, 2007). In addition to avoiding showing my weak artistic abilities, refusing these invitations allowed me to maintain my status as a researcher, both in the eyes of the members and in my own eyes. In this way I maintained a certain (bodily) distance from my respondents. In the words of Daniel Bizeul (1998), I wanted to 'remain outside the game, like a stranger who does not feel concerned' (p. 764). I was also afraid of missing out on

something by stepping out of my position as an observer, although this could be beneficial in some cases (Hidri Neys, 2021). Although participant observation allows us to reach the complexity of the object under study (Peneff, 2009), it seemed to me difficult to master in view of the researcher's complete involvement in the activity under study, in this case Polish folk dancing. How could I note and memorize the behaviours, words or even feelings of the situation I was experiencing while practicing an activity that was foreign to me? How can I reconcile my wish for invisibility with this method where the researcher is part of the group studied? Finally, how can I draw the line, define the boundary between personal involvement and the needs of the research? In view of my sensitivity, I feared that my full investment in the folklore groups studied, generating more or less intense emotions and feelings, would cause me to lose my objectivity and my distanced view. However, the fact that I had not experienced Polish folk dance, had not been on stage in front of an audience, had not put on a costume, or used my body as a means of artistic and memorial expression was perhaps a disadvantage for my research. Martin de La Soudière (1988) indeed underlines 'the methodological effectiveness of the physical, material test in dealing with the population under study' (p. 100). Elements of understanding may have been omitted because of this non-sharing of the activity studied, where the body is a central element. Like the work of the garbage collector (Le Lay, 2014), different forms of the body are indeed called upon within Polish folk groups. The affective body is affective through the perception of others on this practice that can be considered outdated (Duflos-Priot, 1995). Adolescents' views of young dancers can be particularly hurtful at a time when, as mentioned earlier, self-image and appearance become important and young people are differentiating themselves from adults and constructing their identity. The erogenous body is also engaged in some of the dances that tell stories of love and carnality, and in the changes of dress during rehearsals and particularly during performances. The words of one of Wisla's choreographers illustrate this intimacy:

We only have five minutes to change, I if I'm dressed, I won't hesitate to go under a girl's skirt to tie her boots [...]. Or one puts on a skirt, the other a bolero, the other a kerchief¹⁸.

The social body is finally called upon since the dancers' bodily hexis is questioned by two elements. On the one hand, there is the Polish folk dance, which involves a particular body posture and dress, accentuated by the wearing of costumes. On the other hand, there are the side effects of the practice, such as the various convivial moments and parties organised by the groups, which reveal a popular culture (Beltramo, 2021). Furthermore, during rehearsals, although the choreographers place little emphasis on the 'exhaustive perception of the interiority' of the body, to use the words of Georges Vigarello (2006, p. 200), the dancers

experience sensations of movement, internal sensations shared by the group and evocative of the gestures and attitudes adopted by the forefathers. The absence of participant observation did not allow me to directly access these different forms of the body and the consequences of putting the body into play. Moreover, beyond the primordial place in Polish folk dance, the body, shaped by personal fantasies and culture, represents an important key to understanding individuals, but also society. It is indeed 'the symbol of all existing or possible symbols' (Bernard, 1976, p. 133). To live the same bodily experiences as the respondents would perhaps have allowed me to grasp more finely the key role of this invariant of poloneness that is Polish folklore (Beltramo, 2021).

In addition to the differences outlined above, the observation sessions in Polonia provided a focus for my observations in Wisla. The aim was to compare the functioning of these two associations, created respectively in 1986 and 1991. The field notes I took were more or less the same, but those taken in Wisla were more numerous. The time taken to take notes was not the same between the two associations. The train journeys to and from the rehearsals in Wisla allowed me to refine my note-taking, which I did not do after the rehearsals in Polonia, where I usually went by car. My eyes were also more 'seasoned' for Wisla, but perhaps I left less room for 'surprise', for the innocence of the eyes than in Polonia where I was discovering the folk groups. One of my first reactions when I arrived in the latter group was astonishment. I had not imagined that I would meet so many young dancers, as I associated folklore with the elderly and with an outdated practice, as some of the population does (Duflos-Priot, 1995). This stereotypical, simple, erroneous, second-hand acquired and change-resistant thinking nevertheless allows for an analysis of the individual's relationship to the Other and to the self (Amossy & Herschberg Pierrot, 2007). Here, the experience of the field, although punctual, allowed me to become aware of the possible biases caused by my own categorisations. It alerted me to the permanent, unconscious influence of my person on my research. Putting my feelings and impressions into words during the observation sessions, but also reading epistemological and methodological references, mainly from history, but also from sociology and psychology, helped me to guard against these risks. This first confrontation with the field thus allowed me to reconsider my hypotheses, my stereotypical ideas about Polish folk dance and the desire for memory of individuals of Polish origin, which concerns retired people, (young) workers, students and teenagers alike (Beltramo, 2021). During the first phone call with the president of Wisla, he also introduced me to the association and told me, for example, the age of the members and their number. So I already had an idea about it before I went there. This telephone exchange also informed me of

Christian Urbaniak's desire to present the group as dynamic, open to the outside world and to everyone¹⁹, a desire that was confirmed during the two interviews I conducted with him. In other words, he wanted to combat the prejudices that I myself might have had in my head before I went to Polonia's rehearsals.

This president, like Catherine Cepak, sought to present the association in the best possible light, even if it meant falsifying or embellishing certain facts and situations. He wanted to control what I could know about the group. Although he repeated several times that he did not censor anything and presented it to me without embellishing it, he was for example somewhat reluctant to give me the notebooks containing the various minutes of the association's meetings and general assemblies. He had read them beforehand and completed some of them. He also wanted to delete certain pages concerning the association's first meetings, as he felt that the activities carried out at that time no longer corresponded to those carried out today. In particular, he rejected the link between Wisla and religion, which is still present today, although with some reluctance (Beltramo, 2021). Furthermore, after completing the questionnaire, this leader expressed his surprise at the accuracy of the information requested, revealing a certain concern about my research focus. This change in behaviour is common among managers. They are rather favourable to the study at the beginning, then they become worried about its development, 'feeling that they have been fooled and threatened, doing everything possible to impose their control or prevent the study from continuing' (Bizeul, 1998, p. 758). Similarly, in the course of my research, Catherine Cepak asked me several times to read my thesis to her. I refused, saying that I would pass it on to her once it was finished. I did not want to share my interpretations with her during my research, for fear that doors would close as a result of what she would read or that she would want to change certain things, as she had done with the members when the questionnaire was administered on 7 December 2012. Although she had made it clear, before distributing the questionnaire to the members, that everyone was free to answer as they wished, the president and founder of the group guided, in part, the choice of respondents. To the question 'Do you know of any association(s) of the same type as Polonia in the vicinity or in Saint-Vallier [the town where the group is based]', she asked them to answer in the negative, despite the existence of Mazovia, a Polish folklore group located in that town. One of the group's choristers asked me for her questionnaire after she had returned it to me in order to correct the positive answer she had given for this question. This incentive is due to the competition between these two companies following the departure of some dancers from Polonia to Mazovia and the geographical proximity of these groups (Beltramo, 2021). Having seen this

influence and being a beginner in the world of research, I did not imagine that I would contradict this leader and remain in control of my work if she was critical of it. However, passing on the progress of one's research to the respondents during the course of the research can help to refine the reflection and become a 'research opportunity' (Guffanti, 2011, p. 72). As Cyril Farnarier (2015) writes, when 'considered as a *moment of enquiry*, restitution participates in the epistemology of research as new terrain' (p. 203). Moreover, as Godefroy Lansade (2017) notes, 'including [the actors'] points of view in the investigation process does not mean that they take control of it' (p. 109). The researcher, who is also a citizen, is thus constantly divided between social and political responsibilities towards the group studied and society, and responsibilities towards the academic world that are not always in line with the former (Dionogi, 2001).

My fears about the dissemination of my results to the President of Polonia were confirmed once I had sent my brief electronically. After reading it, she wanted it to be changed as it did not reflect her feelings. The functioning of the association, the group's link with religion and the role she played in it did not, according to her, correspond to my descriptions and analyses. This excerpt from her first return email, four days after I sent her my brief, illustrates the latter point:

I have read your memoir and I would like to give you some thoughts: page 80: "she [Catherine Cepak] is in charge of the organisation of the shows and decides to accept or refuse certain performances": NO, I do not decide, I propose projects for shows and it is all together, all the members consulted, in particular the dancers and musicians, who decide whether to do the show or not according to the number of people present on a given date. I only act as a relay between Polonia and the show organisers²⁰.

Here, Catherine Cepak distorts my words that nuanced her role, as shown by this extract from my Master 2 thesis: 'She is also in charge of organising the shows and decides, after having nevertheless collected the members' opinion, to accept or refuse certain performances' (Beltramo, 2013b, p. 80). This distortion illustrates the difficult recognition of her influence on the members and the functioning of the association, and confirms the importance she gives to the group. The speed with which she returned to my dissertation of about 100 pages of text and more than 150 pages of appendices, which she also went through²¹, further testifies to her interest in the work. A few hours after this first e-mail, which ended with the sentence: 'Here are some thoughts, it's a pity you didn't send me a draft before, that would have avoided these few little mistakes²²', the president of Polonia contacted me again. This time, small errors became elements to be deleted: 'I have continued to read it and I cannot authorise the

publication of certain passages that do not accurately reflect our feelings. We need to see each other soon²³. After having replied to her by e-mail, a fortnight later, that my work could not be modified, that the extracts quoted were incomplete and that the distribution of my memoir was limited to an academic context and to a few members of Polonia²⁴, she encouraged me not to distribute my work, as her words show: 'I only hope that this memoir will not be distributed to people other than those quoted because I think that it is not to the advantage of Polonia, it is more a matter of history than of a folklore/sport relationship²⁵'. Through the truncated image she had of the objective of my research, she was probably hoping for a valorization of folklore, and thus of Polonia, at the expense of sport. As Cyril Farnarier (2015) points out, 'it is often at the moment of the final restitution of one's work that the object of the research is exposed in detail and that the actors in the field become fully aware of it' (p. 206). Catherine Cepak thus did not find support in my dissertation to expose 'her truth', unlike many actors in relation to ethnological knowledge and research results, a recovery 'which creates the risk of uncontrollable interpretations' (Dionigi, 2001, p. 11). A certain 'frustration' may indeed appear among the respondents at the time of the restitution of the results since they 'do not recognise themselves in what the researcher is showing' and their expectations with regard to the research are not necessarily met (Farnarier, 2015, p. 207). As Godefroy Lansade (2017) writes, 'responding to one's research is not a neutral action. One cannot underestimate the consequences on the daily life of one's interlocutors beyond the relationships the researcher has with them' (p. 109). Despite my proposal of dates for a meeting with Catherine Cepak, with the aim of addressing the points mentioned by email, I subsequently declined, using the excuse of an early departure on holiday. In reality, I was afraid to do this interview. Nevertheless, this confrontation would have been interesting to refine my results, in the way Muriel Darmon (2005) analyses her field refusals. As Lucas Guffanti (2011) notes, 'the conflict allows for a better understanding of the positions that are asserted, but also for a deeper analysis' (p. 81). This episode finally made me aware that despite the establishment of a relationship of trust and sympathy during the survey, it can only be ephemeral and superficial, and completely disappear when the results are transmitted, thus revealing the intensity of the expectations of certain members towards the researcher. As Laurent Douzou (2011) notes, 'the phase when the study finally sees the light of day is not the most gratifying. Indeed, no matter how much care one takes, no matter how careful one is, the return will never be synonymous with full satisfaction' (p. 63). This misadventure encouraged me, during my thesis, to distance myself from my research object and the people I interviewed, so as not to be disappointed as I was by Catherine Cepak's refusal. Having not read, at that time, any

articles dealing with the return to the interviewees, I felt this refusal as a non-recognition of my work that I was not expecting. As Christophe Prochasson (2008) writes, 'the historian must know how to cultivate the passion of indifference and not always respect the dead [or the living here]' (p. 220). Moreover, 'the object of the study is not the researcher himself' (Guffanti, 2011, p. 86). I did not, however, disseminate my thesis to the members of Wisla, partly out of fear that this would happen again, and partly because they did not express a willingness to receive a copy. Christian Urbaniak's attitude of wanting to control the information I could obtain made me fear a similar reaction to that of Catherine Cepak. I wanted to remain invisible and 'see [my] theories circulate in a vacuum' (Hamel, 2011, p. 99).

Thus, my wish for invisibility was in vain since 'in the heat of the action', the researcher, even if he has the impression 'to hold an exemplary investigation protocol', is not 'master of the relations he engages in' (Bizeul, 1998, p. 753). A reciprocal influence is exerted between the interviewer and the respondents, a relationship 'always - more or less - marked by affectivity, by the sensitivity of the interviewer, by his personal reaction to the socio-geographical environment of the respondents, by the spontaneous relationship he has with them and which imposes itself on him' (de La Soudière, 1981, p. 108). The researcher's influence on the respondents, if it is conscious, is not however a bias and can provide 'some additional means of objectifying our practice while giving the reader a glimpse of the blind or repressed angles' (Morel, 2018, p. 150).

When the researcher is a stakeholder in the production of his/her source

Despite this desire for invisibility, one of the main sources of my Master 2 and thesis work is, along with the written archives concerning the Polish associative world, the oral survey. Among the abundance and diversity of sources made possible by the study of the present time, the choice of the research subject directed me towards this technique in order to retrace, as precisely as possible, the framework of life of the descendants of Polish migrants since 1945, but also their motivations and their ways of getting involved in the Polish associative field and of continuing certain Polish traditions. Furthermore, oral surveys, corresponding to my curiosity since childhood to know the way of life of individuals, allowed me to give a certain recognition to the interviewees, to listen to them, to give them back what I could 'take' from them for my research (de La Soudière, 1988). Long decried in history (Descamps, 2006), oral surveys are now recognised, to a certain extent, by the historical community. They have the particularity of involving the researcher in the production of his or her source, which is immediately available. In other words, the researcher is at the origin of the materials used to construct his scientific reflection. As Laurent Douzou (2011) writes, the

researcher 'takes away the word [from the witnesses] by the very act of giving it to them', since he 'will make whatever use of their testimony he wishes according to the overall architecture of the research he is conducting' (p. 63). During the 13 and 12 oral surveys conducted with members of Polonia and Wisla respectively, I guided the respondents on the themes I wished to address. In the Master's programme, I put the interview guide in front of me, containing the fully written questions I was going to formulate. In the thesis, on the other hand, I kept it in my memory and it contained only the themes to be addressed during the interview. The visibility of this guide may have modified the investigative relationship and increased compliant responses in order to 'do it right' (Beaud, 1996). But this attitude, which Florence Descamps (2005) calls the 'good student complex', also appears in the absence of an interview guide. Witnesses who agree to be interviewed generally want to satisfy the researcher and expect his approval. An example of this is the sentence of a chorister from Wisla: 'At last, we have more or less answered what you wanted or do you need something else²⁶?' Because of this absence, but also because of my previous experiences and the more detailed knowledge of my research object, my questions to the members of this association are less 'direct' and more in the mode of conversation than in the mode of 'recitation'. Contrary to the oral surveys conducted in Master 2, I did not necessarily try to formulate all the questions envisaged in advance. The silences are also longer, which allows the respondents, most of the time, to develop their remarks further. In addition, the beginning of my interviews, concerning the initial arrival of members to the association, is different. In my thesis, I echo the members' answers in the questionnaire, as shown in this interview extract: 'You told me in the questionnaire that you came through your parents to Wisla²⁷?' For the Polonia members, however, I do not refer to this and some of them have the impression that I have not read it or that the interview is going to be a repetition of the questionnaire, like this exchange:

'How did you get to Polonia?

- Well, I had it..., it was all written down normally [smiles²⁸].

My interventions during the oral surveys also differ. Although I alternate between 'the tactic of the "idiot"' (Bizeul, 1998, p. 773), in order to compare the discourse of the interlocutors with each other and with the written archives, and that of the 'insider', so that the witnesses can develop their comments without fear of my misunderstanding, I favour the former posture during the oral surveys conducted in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais mining region. The fact that I was not originally from this territory and that I lived there occasionally²⁹ encouraged me to adopt this status and legitimised it, in my eyes. I had also seen the benefits of this 'tactic'

during the interviews conducted in the Master 2 course and wanted to repeat it more. These two interview extracts show the difference:

'- Respondent: It's former KSMP dancers at the time it was um KSMP it's the initials of pol, of words in Polish.

- Interviewer: Yeah. The Catholic Youth...

- The Calo Youth, Polish Catholics³⁰.

- Interviewee: Before the creation of the Wisla group as such, there were what were called KSMPs.

- Interviewer: Yeah

- I couldn't tell you what the exact letters mean, but they were groups of young people who got together to sing and dance. There were shows, based on the same principle. Except that I think the K in KSMP is more Catholic, so it was really close to the religion itself³¹.

In this last extract, my 'absence' of intervention allows us to perceive the ignorance of this Wisla choreographer about the meaning of the abbreviation in Polish of the Polish Catholic youth associations to which her parents belonged and from which the Wisla association originated. Conversely, my desire to show Catherine Cepak my knowledge of the Polish associative world does not encourage her to characterise these groups. All these differences in the conduct of the interviews have an impact on their duration. The oral surveys carried out during the thesis lasted longer than those carried out during the Master 2 (two hours and ten minutes on average, compared to one hour and thirty minutes). My greater ease in conducting interviews during the thesis and my desire to know in even greater detail than in the Master 2 the lifestyle and environment of the individuals interviewed, their representations, their family history as well as their practices in relation to Poland, also extended the duration of the oral surveys. The fact that the interviewed members of Wisla have been in the association longer than those of Polonia³² may be another factor, but the length of the interviews is not proportional to the seniority of the members. On the other hand, the higher concentration of Polish migrants and their descendants, and thus of Polish associations, churches or even businesses, in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais mining country probably played a role in this difference. The descendants of Polish migrants in this territory remain attached to Poland and its culture for a longer period of time or renew their ties with it earlier than individuals of Polish origin living in the Saône-et-Loire mining country (Beltramo, 2021). They therefore have more to tell about their Polish past.

Apart from these differences, the interviews conducted in the Master 2 programme were almost all conducted at the interviewees' homes, which is not the case for my thesis³³. Although the absence of a vehicle during the interview allowed me to create a link or to continue the exchanges when the witnesses came to pick me up or took me to the train station, it encouraged some of them to choose an interview place outside their home, but close to a train station in order to facilitate my arrival. I regretted this choice, as going to the respondents' homes allows me to observe their living environment, both the home itself and the environment outside it. For example, some of the individuals interviewed lived in or near a former 'Little Poland' (Ponty, 1988), which for some symbolised a strong attachment to the area, and encouraged discussions about their childhood and youth. Nevertheless, as Delphine Bruggeman (2011) writes, 'we enter [then] on *our* ground, in *their* dwelling', 'we therefore take the place we are offered, in such and such a room, on such and such a seat, at such and such a distance from our interlocutor(s)' (p. 59). Although these conditions were imposed by the respondents, they allowed me to identify any Polish objects, documents or foodstuffs, markers of poloneness, present or not in their homes. For example, a member of Polonia wanted the interview to take place in a basement room entirely dedicated to Poland and Polish folklore (posters, photographs, objects, costumes, etc.). Some members of Wisla and Polonia also showed me photographs of their stays in Poland or of their children in Polish folk costumes. A chorister from Polonia proudly showed me the various Polish objects she had mentioned during the oral survey. On the other hand, I could not 'verify' the statement of a Wisla chorister that 'the library at home, half of the books, is only Polish food³⁴', since the interview took place in the group's rehearsal room. Other witnesses interviewed at home offered me Polish drinks, as did a Polonia musician who offered me Polish beer after the interview. A choir member from Wisla baked a Polish cake to introduce me to this culinary speciality, which I certainly did not know and which was relevant to the topic of the interview. She also told me that she had added orange blossom to the original recipe³⁵. This informed me of my perceived status in relation to Polish traditions (ignorant) and the transformation of these traditions by some descendants of Polish migrants (Beltramo, 2021). In addition to the 'material' conditions of the oral survey, the time of the oral survey is also defined by the interviewees. While three of them had forgotten about the appointment but received me anyway, like Delphine Bruggeman (2011), some of them shortened the interview because of a planned activity or interrupted it momentarily because of the arrival or presence of a third person. For example, in the oral interview with a young dancer from Wisla, the presence of her mother in the next room influenced what she said. The look, words and tone

used by her mother when this great-granddaughter of Polish migrants talks about her reluctance to learn the Polish language during her childhood show her disapproval, and lead her to justify herself and express regret. This interview extract illustrates this:

- Interviewer: Did you ever ask them too, I don't know when you were younger to speak with her [her Polish speaking grandmother]?
- Interviewee: [laughs] It's true that when we were younger, we were quite [looks at her mother, they smile at each other], we were quite reticent.
- Oh, right [laughs].
- Mother of respondent: There you go. That's it [in a reproachful tone].
- That's it [repeats her mother's intonation]. Because, no, but it's true, because when we're little, when we first learnt to speak French, etc., it's true that all of a sudden they start speaking Polish to us, we'll say, but... We're a bit lost, but I don't understand. So, well, that's it afterwards. Well, it's true that when we're little, we don't understand and then we're confused, we don't feel like it any more. And we regret it³⁶.

On the other hand, the interview conducted with the choreographer of Wisla in a university library did not allow me to meet her mother, who 'reproached' her for not having invited me so that I could exchange with her. In the same vein, during an oral survey with a dancer from Polonia, she told me, half-heartedly and then more explicitly, about her husband's reluctance to maintain Polish traditions, as shown in this extract:

- Respondent: But then I met Yves [her husband], well, after that it was more, well, after that.
[...]
- So it's true that there's also this side where, um, maybe I would have been married to someone of Polish origin, um, well maybe it would have been different.
- Interviewer: Oh yes. Yes, it would have been different.
- Well, maybe it's...
- Yes, there may also be a bit of a...
- A sort of reluctance³⁷.

Following her husband's increasingly pressing requests that we come to dinner, the interview is cut short. During the meal, to which I was unexpectedly invited, I received confirmation of this reticence through her husband's mockery of this preservation of traditions. Conducting the interviews in the homes of the interviewees therefore allowed me to access information that was complementary to that obtained from the witnesses' discourse and placed them in a known, 'reassuring' setting that probably favoured the development of a climate of trust and intimacy conducive to the release of speech. In addition to the theme of the interviews, the

researcher's position as both 'a stranger to the group and a member of the group' (Bizeul, 1998, p. 767), accentuates this phenomenon.

In spite of everything, a certain amount of unspoken information persists during the oral surveys. The hesitations, facial expressions, changes of tone, looks and silences of the individuals interviewed are all clues to detect these unspoken words, but also the importance attached to the events recounted. The comments made by the researcher on the interview situation help to identify these unspoken words. During my thesis, I noted my feelings about this situation after each of the oral investigations. The lack of formulation of these perceptions in the Master's programme may have biased, in some cases, the use of the interviews and hindered their understanding a few years later. In the transcript of the second oral survey conducted with Catherine Cepak, I mention, for example, the tone of her voice for one of her comments: 'Oh well, you've done the trick [seems almost surprised when she says this³⁸]?' This question comes at the end of the interview, which suggests that the group chair imagines further questions from me, given her idea of my research object. Nevertheless, listening to this passage again, I get the impression that it is an affirmative sentence formulated without surprise. Comments on this oral survey would have helped to situate this passage. The notes from the two interviews with the President of Wisla indicate that he is 'very diligent in the interview³⁹' and 'is not very natural⁴⁰'. The content of his speech is in fact worked out, the problems experienced by the association are sometimes admitted half-heartedly and he is careful with the terms used, although he gives himself away more during the second oral survey. He also alternates between being polite and polite, although he is polite to me from the first face-to-face meeting, outside the interviews. His job, which he does in an interregional directorate of the judicial police, has made him familiar with the interview situation, which he mentions during the first oral interview with him. He therefore has experience in this field, which allows him to weigh up most of what he says. As Geneviève Pruvost (2008) writes, 'in terms of socialisation to narrative, the police corporation is a textbook case' (p. 78). In general, the respondents associate the interview situation with 'other social relations according to [their own] categories of perception of the world and action in the world' (Fournier, 2006, p. 8). The discourse of a dancer from Wisla, born in 1998, was also processed. Here it was not her past experiences that fostered this attitude, but her young age and pride in being interviewed. When the interview is over and the recorder is turned off, the conversation continues and she confesses to me, when her mother has left the house, that the friends mentioned during the interview are in fact her best friend and her boyfriend. Smiling, I answer her:

'You didn't dare to say it in front of your mother?

- No, that's not a problem, I just thought it was a bit of a mouthful in an interview, that it wasn't appropriate⁴¹.'

The speech of this great-granddaughter of Polish migrants thus became freer once the recorder was turned off and she left the formal framework of the oral survey that she had set herself. Just as the 'first moments of the meeting', which induce 'a climate, an "atmosphere" in which the interview will then take place' (Beaud, 1996, p. 238), the words exchanged after the interview can be decisive for the research conducted. Although I observed a particular attention to the terms used and the formulation of sentences during the oral survey, as well as a certain nervousness⁴², I did not imagine that his speech was so well constructed. As Geneviève Pruvost (2008) notes, 'it is important to objectify the narrative skills of the study population' (p. 73). The absence of a request for the former socio-professional category of retirees in the questionnaire distributed to Polonia members, however, prevented me from accessing this information influencing narrative skills for some individuals.

Finally, the presence of an interview guide, the attitude of the researcher, his interventions or the setting of the oral survey, to mention only these elements, influence the behaviour and the words of the interviewees. However, the researcher's investment in the production of his or her source does not diminish the quality and reliability of the source. Only the critical method of the historian can transform any document, whether oral or visual, into a scientific source. As Vincent Duclert (2002) notes, oral enquiry is indeed 'an archival, research and writing experience in its own right' (p. 86).

Investigating the descendants of Polish migrants by being of Italian origin

'But you, are you Polish?

- No, not of Italian origin.

- Of Italian origin. And you are doing a thesis on Poland then, no, how⁴³?'

This exchange with a chorister from Polonia, which is repeated in another interview conducted during the Master's degree, reveals a kind of incomprehension, a surprise that I am investigating the descendants of Polish migrants by being of Italian origin, even though more than 40% of the members of the Polish folklore group to which this woman belongs are of non-Polish origin. Some of the historians working on immigration are indeed descendants of migrants who favour the study of their country of origin or the country of their ancestors (Noiriel, 2006). In my case, I (in)consciously rejected the idea of working on Italian migrants, the second most numerous population after the Poles in the two major towns of the Saône-et-Loire mining region during the inter-war period (Meunier-Vonné, 1985), since I do not know

this part of my family history. This enabled me to avoid feeling a certain embarrassment, a shame at my inability to answer potential questions on this subject from interlocutors interested in their Italian origin⁴⁴. The mere fact of introducing myself by giving my surname could have led to this type of questioning, which accentuates the feeling of being different from others, of possessing a 'cultural singularity' (Simon & Tiberj, 2012, p. 26). The surname is in fact one of the only visible elements of the cultural origin of the descendants of migrants and bears witness to their otherness. This is also evoked from time to time at extended family gatherings, through stories about the arrival of my ancestors, the reconstruction of a family tree or the preparation of Italian dishes such as polenta. Similarly, the years spent in French Algeria by my maternal grandparents and their children are sometimes recalled in extended family gatherings containing some Algerian culinary specialities. The nostalgia caused by uprooting is often expressed by these ancestors who returned to metropolitan France a few months before Algeria's independence. This regret marks the childhood of my mother, who feels 'almost more Mediterranean than Burgundian⁴⁵' in her own words. However, these references remain punctual and appear essentially in a wider family context. My parents did not pass on much of their family history to me. This absence, coupled with the fact that my childhood and youth did not (probably) include people of Italian or pied-noir origin, favoured my detachment from my family migration history. Despite this, the migrant population, which my parents, especially my mother, have been helping since the late 2000s, has long been a source of questions for me. How can an individual decide to leave his or her country, his or her family, to go and live in an often unknown state? How do migrants manage to live torn between two worlds and what do they pass on to their descendants? Finally, why do the latter claim to be different, having often provoked contempt and suffering on the part of the natives, when they were born and have always lived in France? In other words, where does this need come from that I do not feel in relation to my cultural origins? In the context of my research, this detachment may have been beneficial, but also disadvantageous, since it may have led to the omission of certain elements that were too distant, in a way 'incomprehensible' to me. It limited my empathy for the interviewees, although Antoine Prost (2010) writes that 'to understand, in history, is always, in a way, to put oneself in the place of those whose history one is making' (p. 161). Here, it was not my political ideals that prevented me from developing this empathy (Avanza, 2008), but my position in relation to my family history. The absence of an affective link between certain researchers and their objects, 'sometimes even to the point of identification', makes it possible to avoid the 'compassionate drifts' that are particularly visible in the history of the present (Prochasson, 2008, pp. 16, 69). On the

other hand, empathy, understood as 'affective communion', offers the possibility of reaching the intensity of the affects felt by the natives and not the images associated with it (Favret-Saada, 2009, pp. 156-157). Moreover, my lack of empathy did not prevent the imaginative part leading to the search for causes and the construction of historical facts (Prost, 2010).

Despite this difference with the interviewees, my family history is at the same time a point of connection with them, especially with the members of Polonia. Until my first two years of life, my parents lived (mainly) in the major town of the Saône-et-Loire mining country, Montceau-les-Mines, which is about thirty minutes away from their current home. Their childhood and youth took place in a neighbourhood close to a 'Little Poland', and my paternal grandfather was a miner. Correspondences, which the researcher must accept, identify and analyse, were then established between the respondents and myself (de La Soudière, 1981). The latter were 'reassured' that we shared a common history and, for example, mentioned the names of the different districts of the four towns in the Saône-et-Loire mining country, considering that I knew them. I was thus able to 'benefit from a position of closeness', 'conducive to confidences' (Kessler-Bilthauer, 2017, pp. 60, 63), although my knowledge of my family history was actually limited, as in this extract from an interview with a dancer from Polonia:

- And you are not of Polish origin?

- No, Italian, but my grandparents live in, I never know, it's the Beaver City, but I don't know which neighbourhood it is. It's towards La Saule. I don't know, a district in Montceau, I can never find the name, but they used to live with Polish people, my parents lived with Polish people when they went to school.

- That's it.

- So there is a connection. My father played football with Poles. My mother had a Polish girl in her class whom she knew as well as she did, well, they knew each other a bit.

- Oh, right.

- As my parents come from Montceau and all that, they knew⁴⁶...

This part of my family history allowed me to justify the choice of the Polish population by being of Italian origin. On the other hand, during my thesis, the interviewees did not ask me about my cultural origin and I put forward my non-affiliation with the region to justify my thesis subject. Originally from Saône-et-Loire where I had studied a Polish folk group, I was making a comparison with a group from the mining country of Nord-Pas-de-Calais. In addition to using it to justify my dissertation topic, I valued my family link to the location of Polonia during interviews with members, as illustrated by this extract:

- Interviewee: So drowned in the French. I had French girlfriends everywhere, even if it was difficult to pronounce, the name was difficult, sometimes I was a bit embarrassed to say my name because... It's true that I would have lived in La Saule, er, in Les Gauthierets.

- Interviewer: Yes, well yes, in Les Gauthierets, it's not the same⁴⁷.

Here, I show my closeness to the respondent by sharing with her, in the words of Déborah Kessler-Bilthauer (2017), 'the details of the collective history and current events of "[my] corner" in relation to [my] field and the group [I] study' (p. 63). However, this does not encourage this daughter of Polish migrants to talk more about the living environment of this neighbourhood, which could be considered as a 'Little Poland' until the 1960s (Beltramo, 2020). Similarly, in the short introductory text at the beginning of the questionnaire distributed to the members of Polonia, I indicated that I was 'originally from the Montcellian region [of Montceau-les-Mines]'. My proximity to the location of this association was further accentuated by the fact that my parents took me to some of the group's rehearsals and events. My research was, in a way, a way of learning more about their history. Although the subject is not taboo, I felt, and still feel, a certain embarrassment in asking questions about my parents' childhood and youth, in a family where modesty about personal life is a must. In a way, my research legitimised this type of question. They dealt with a subject that did not directly evoke my family history but from which I could access it.

Thus, the historian benefits from being both close to and distant from his object. It is sometimes beneficial for him to become physically and emotionally involved, to get closer to the individuals interviewed, while at the same time maintaining a certain distance, a critical mind, as much on the words of the witnesses as on his own behaviour and words; even if he tends to pay more attention to the interviewees than to himself (Morel, 2018). Although this positioning may be favourable to him, it has the disadvantage of making him more easily a target, of being accused of 'being an agitator who has been sent by external enemies' (Dionigi, 2001, p. 8). The president of Wisla adopted this view to some extent, although he presented it in a joking manner. He smilingly assumed that I was a spy for Kalina⁴⁸, a Polish folk ensemble with whom exchanges are restricted and complicated because of the competition between the two groups. As Godefroy Lansade (2017), who was ironically called a spy by the nurse of the high school where he investigated and taught, writes, 'lifting the veil on one's identity is not always enough to defuse the suspicions that hover over the reasons for the researcher's presence' (p. 104). Finally, in the words of Martin de La Soudière (1988), 'there is no "right" distance; one always does too much or too little. It is therefore in and through the interplay of differences and similarities that the investigation is constructed' (p. 101).

Conclusion

Tracing the course of the investigations carried out during the Master 2 and the thesis has thus brought to light the influence that my personal characteristics, my words, my behaviour and their evolution had on the results obtained. The temporal distance between these researches was more an asset than a constraint. Although they are not similar in all respects, the first one fed the second one by varying the cursor between proximity and distance of the researcher in relation to his object. My concern for invisibility, which was reinforced during the transmission of my work and in the writing of my thesis, helped me to take a step back from my research object. Despite the utopian nature of this quest, it was beneficial to me here and promoted the scientificity of my results. The choice of oral surveys, where experience in the field plays a role in their conduct, allowed me to get closer to the interviewees, even more so when they took place in their homes. This interview framework can be beneficial for the researcher as it allows to learn more about the witnesses' lifestyle, the family influences that may be exerted on them, but also the content of their more or less elaborate discourse. Finally, my family history, divided between Italy, French Algeria and the commune of Montceau-les-Mines, helped to position me both close to and far from the witnesses. It is therefore both the individual himself, his personal history, and the researcher's way of doing things that allow him to alternate between proximity and distance with his research object. As Christophe Prochasson (2008) points out, 'history is nothing other than the intellectual effort required to free the relationship to the past from its sentimental envelope and to free us from the emotional hold that memory always imposes on those who refer to it exclusively' (p. 163). In other words, in the words of Antoine Prost (2010), 'it is history that creates hindsight' (p. 96). Sharing my experience as an apprentice historian, putting it into words, helps to consolidate this intellectual effort and to build a common toolbox in 'an activity that is both methodical and random' (Bizeul, 1998, p. 778). This reflexive return finally contributed to the achievement of an additional stage in my training in the 'historian's craft' (Bloch, 1998). Nevertheless, as Florence Weber (as cited in Noiriel, 1990) remarks, 'when we look at ourselves working, do we still work in the same way?' (p. 147).

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Notes

¹ Formerly a French region, now part of the Hauts-de-France.

² I was also present at the Polonia show on 16 December 2012 and at the association's Christmas dinner on 21 December 2012.

³ The first and last names of the two presidents of the Polish folklore groups studied have been replaced by pseudonyms.

⁴ Email sent on 11 November 2012 at 10.47 am.

⁵ I mention in my field note of 30 November 2012 that 'Mrs Cepak introduces me, takes charge without really letting me speak', suggesting the president's desire for control mentioned in the following pages.

⁶ During this telephone call, Christian Urbaniak presented me with the way in which the association works to compose the repertoire of dances. He told me that the office proposes dances to the artistic cell and that regular exchanges between them take place to choose them, 'like in a sports club' (field note of 27 August 2015).

⁷ This interview extract shows this: 'From time to time, I compare us to a sports team, there are times when we have good days, we are very good [...] a successful show requires a lot of time, it requires a lot of rigour like in a sports club' (interview conducted on 7 October 2015).

⁸ This passage illustrates this: 'They [the choreographers] have been taking classes for five years so they adapt like any coach in a sports team' (interview conducted on 7 October 2015).

⁹ This exchange shows: 'Because it's like in any sport, there are people who have innate qualities, others who manage to progress through work and others who are always unfortunately limited' (interview conducted on 21 October 2015).

¹⁰ In the field note of 30 November 2012, when I first came to Polonia, I indicate that members 'kiss me, probably thinking I am new to the club'. The mention of the term 'club' is reminiscent of the comparison made by the presidents of the folk groups with the sporting world. It reveals the influence of my membership of a table tennis club on my research, the implicit comparison I make between the two associations.

¹¹ The average age of the Polonia dancers is 25, compared to 30 for the Wisla dancers.

¹² The five new dancers make up a quarter of the membership.

¹³ Field notes of 30 November 2012 and 9 September 2015.

¹⁴ Field notes of 7 December 2012.

¹⁵ Field note of 30 November 2012.

¹⁶ The term respondent is used here in the same way as witness, although these terms do not have the same definition. The respondent, in the generic sense, is seen more as a person who can be 'replaced' by another if he or she is lacking or not suitable for what is expected, 'without prejudice to the research being conducted'. On the other hand, the witness, a term more frequently used in the history of the present, is considered as 'an actor in the history that we intend to retrace', 'he or she is the repository of specific knowledge that the researcher who solicits it believes is likely to enlighten, in one way or another, his or her lantern' (Douzou, 2011, p. 61).

¹⁷ As Martin de La Soudière (1988) notes, 'one is in fact constantly oscillating between two statuses, professional (the one in whose name one is there), and personal (the one from which one cannot withdraw)' (p. 96).

¹⁸ Interview conducted on 29 October 2015.

¹⁹ Field note of 27 August 2015.

²⁰ Email received on 30 June 2013 at 9.19 am.

²¹ One of his comments refers to the full transcript of one of the interviews conducted with him in the appendices (email received 30 June 2013 at 9.19 am).

²² Email received on 30 June 2013 at 9.19 am.

²³ Email received on 30 June 2013 at 3.41 pm.

²⁴ Email sent on 17 July 2013 at 4.52 pm.

²⁵ E-mail received on 18 July 2013 at 10.09 am.

²⁶ Interview conducted on 2 October 2015.

²⁷ Interview conducted on 18 November 2015.

²⁸ Interview conducted on 1 March 2013.

²⁹ I used to make weekly return trips between Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Burgundy to join my companion who remained in this former region.

³⁰ Interview conducted on 22 April 2013.

³¹ Interview conducted on 6 October 2015.

³² The interviewed Polonia members have been in the association for an average of 8.5 years, compared to 15.25 years for the interviewed Wisla members.

³³ Six interviews with Wisla members took place outside the respondents' homes, compared to only one for Polonia members.

³⁴ Interview conducted on 29 October 2015.

³⁵ Comments on the interview conducted on 28 October 2015.

³⁶ Interview conducted on 20 October 2015.

³⁷ Interview conducted on 12 March 2013.

³⁸ Interview conducted on 22 April 2013.

³⁹ Comments on the interview conducted on 7 October 2015.

⁴⁰ Comments on the interview conducted on 21 October 2015.

⁴¹ Interview conducted on 20 October 2015.

⁴² Comments on the interview conducted on 20 October 2015.

⁴³ Interview conducted on 1 March 2013.

⁴⁴ This discomfort is also experienced by a dancer from Polonia, grandson of Polish migrants, when he is asked about his surname and declares that he does not know the Polish language and traditions, as shown by his words: 'for me personally, it was something frustrating because when I was little, even in the years that followed, even today, sometimes when I am asked my name or when I spell it: "ah it is a Polish name. Do you speak Polish?'. So for a very long time I would answer: "no"' (interview conducted on 19 February 2013).

⁴⁵ Email received on 2 March 2017 at 9.06 am.

⁴⁶ Interview conducted on 22 April 2013.

⁴⁷ Interview conducted on 28 February 2013.

⁴⁸ Field note dated 9 September 2015.