A political ethnography of rural communities under an authoritarian regime: The case of Belarus

Ronan Hervouet

▶ **To cite this version:**

Ronan Hervouet. A political ethnography of rural communities under an authoritarian regime: The case of Belarus. Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique / Bulletin of Sociological Methodology, 2019, 141 (1), pp.85-112. 10.1177/0759106318812790 . halshs-01981398

HAL Id: halshs-01981398
https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01981398

Submitted on 29 Sep 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

A Political Ethnography of Rural Communities under an Authoritarian Regime. The Case of Belarus.

Ronan Hervouet

University of Bordeaux Faculty of Sociology / Centre Emile Durkheim

3ter place de la Victoire 33076 Bordeaux cedex

ronan.hervouet@u-bordeaux.fr

Ronan Hervouet, « A Political Ethnography of Rural Communities under an Authoritarian Regime. The Case of Belarus », *Bulletin de méthodologie sociologique / Bulletin of Sociological Methodology*, vol. 141, 2019: 85-112.

Résumé :

Une ethnographie politique des mondes ruraux en régime autoritaire. Le cas de la Biélorussie. Cet article explicite d'abord les conditions d'une enquête d'ethnographie politique menée dans les campagnes de Biélorussie entre 2006 et 2013. Une triple difficulté a émergé : enquêter principalement auprès des classes populaires; effectuer cette ethnographie dans un milieu, le monde rural, où l'État, par ses structures économiques et administratives, est omniprésent, et où le contrôle sur les personnes est particulièrement marqué; travailler sur le politique dans un régime autoritaire hérité de l'Union soviétique qui n'admet pas de mise en cause et de débat critique. L'article caractérise ensuite les modalités de mise en œuvre d'une "ethnographie en pointillés", qui s'est avérée fructueuse pour recueillir du matériau, et reposant essentiellement sur trois techniques : la "décérémonialisation" de la situation d'enquête, la familiarisation avec les enquêtés et la symétrisation des relations par l'exposition de soi. A noter que cet article est traduit d'un texte intitulé "Enquêter en Biélorussie. Une ethnographie politique des mondes ruraux en régime autoritaire". La version originale est accessible librement sur le site du BMS, sous la forme d'un document complémentaire à la version publiée de l'article.

Abstract:

This article firstly explains the conditions for a political ethnography survey conducted in rural Belarus between 2006 and 2013. Three difficulties became apparent: conducting a survey primarily among the lower classes; carrying out this ethnographic study in an environment – the rural world – in which the State, *via* its economic and administrative structures, is omnipresent, and in which there is particularly strong control over the people; and studying politics in an authoritarian regime inherited from the Soviet Union, which does not tolerate challenges to its authority or critical debate. The article then characterizes the implementation procedures for a "discrete ethnography", which proved to be a fruitful approach for the collection of material, based primarily on three techniques: the "deceremonialization" of the survey situation, familiarization with the subjects of the survey and the symmetrization of relationships by self-exposition. It is worth noting that this article is the translated version of an article called "Enquêter en Biélorussie. Une ethnographie politique des mondes ruraux en régime autoritaire". The original version is openly available on the BMS website as a complementary document to this article.

Mots-clés :

Biélorussie, ethnographie politique, kolkhozes, postcommunisme, régime autoritaire

Keywords:

Belarus, political ethnography, kolkhozes, post-communism, authoritarian regime

Belarus has emerged from communism in a unique manner in Europe. Today, it is described by many analysts as the "last dictatorship in Europe" (Benett, 2011; Wilson, 2011). Its recent history can be condensed into several key dates. On 25 August 1991, the Supreme Soviet of Belarus voted for independence. This was a major turning point. Indeed, the territory currently occupied by Belarus was incorporated into Russia at the end of the 18th century and the USSR in the 20th century, with part of the country absorbed by Poland under its Second Republic (Snyder, 2003). In fact, until now, Belarus has enjoyed only a very short period of independence. Proclaimed under German occupation on March 25, 1918, the Belarusian National Republic was very short-lived (Wilson, 2011: 94), disappearing on January 1st, 1919. It was replaced by the Socialist Soviet Republic of Byelorussia (SSRB), which was incorporated into the USSR three years later. The dissolution of the USSR was declared on December 8, 1991. After a period in which the political elite sought to make quite a radical break with the Soviet past, Lukashenko embarked on a "conservative revolution" in the country. After becoming the democratically elected President of the country in 1994, he established an authoritarian regime in 1996 (Linz, 2000), proudly asserting the Soviet legacy and reviving certain ideological precepts and some of the interventionist administrative and policing practices of the defunct empire (Lallemand and Symaniec, 2007). "Everything occurs almost as if Sovietism had survived without the Communist party" (Marcou and Pankovski, 2003: 18). Firstly, Lukashenko promoted a "socially oriented market economy" (Lallemand, 2006: 203) which was largely collectivized. Secondly, he established a strong continuity with the Soviet past. In May 1995, for example, he secured approval, by referendum, to abandon the red and white national flag and reintroduce the red and green Soviet banner, but this time without the hammer and sickle. The authorities reintroduced emblems similar to those in force during the Soviet era. The Bolchevik Revolution continued to be commemorated on November 7, and the KGB kept its name. Dzerjinski, founder of the Tcheka, was personally respected and glorified. A bust of the secret police chief is displayed in the city centre. In 2004, a new museum dedicated to his memory was inaugurated on Belarusian soil. Lastly, the elections that have punctuated the country's history since the start of Lukashenko's presidency have been marked by repeated challenges from civil society and international organizations such as the OSCE, but also by systematic repression.

The workings of this regime are traditionally described, by scholars and the media, as being based on a "vertical power structure", whose implementation is based on a strictly controlled administration and a powerful police system that represses opponents. Consequently, the academic literature analyzes the authoritarian functioning of the regime (McMahon, 1997; Eke and Kuzio, 2000; Goujon, 2002; Karbalévitch, 2012), the characteristics of the "State ideology" (Lallemand, 2006; Leshchenko, 2008), as well as the forms of opposition (Shukan, 2008; Goujon, 2009) and dissidence (Symaniec, 2006; Perchoc, 2006; Bigday, 2017; Kryzhaunouski, 2017). The regime is also thought to remain in power thanks to its populist social policy, based on subsidizing often-inefficient economic sectors with the aim of securing the loyalty of a large proportion of the population, and in this way, to a certain extent, buying its submission (Wilson, 2011).

The Perpetuation of the Regime Seen Through the Lens of Daily Life

Without underestimating these essential characteristics of the political machinery in present-day Belarus, my research focuses on practices "seen from below" (Hervouet, 2013a) in order to show, based on the analysis of a singular case, how an authoritarian regime relies on forces other than police violence and redistribution, and permits a form of permeability in its ideology that is capable of absorbing different types of messages in order to perpetuate the political and social order.

This investigation is consistent with certain trends in the historiography of communist regimes in Europe which have developed since the 1970s. On the one hand, the American school, described as "revisionist", advocates a social history "seen from below", which is partially exempt from political and ideological determinism (Werth, 2001), with a particular focus on "everyday Stalinism" (Fitzpatrick, 1999). On the other hand, certain German historians of the GDR operating from the perspective of *Alltagsgeschichte* have set out to "put the people, the 'ordinary' individuals, the 'little guys' (*die kleinen Leute*) back at the heart of history; i.e. to represent or study them as players in their own right and not just consider them as the silent victims of major changes or structures" (Kott, 2002: 226). In this way, both these streams of research examine "everyday life under communism" (Kott, 2001; Zakharova, 2013), "everyday life in dictatorships" (Lüdtke, 2000) and "*totalitarisme au concret*" ("totalitarianism in action") (Rowell, 2006). This historiographical sensitivity which places the emphasis on "minuscule lives" (Lagrave, 2011: 12) and ordinary personal experiences in communist societies, has informed a diverse range of works on the links between daily life and power in the communist societies of Europe (Bertaux et ali, 2005 [2004]; Neculau, 2008; Lagrave, 2011; Koleva, 2012). They sometimes explore specific spheres of activity such as consumption (Ragaru and Capelle-Pogăcean, 2010), cultural practices (Yurchak, 2006) such as rock music (Zaytseva, 2008), education (Droit, 2009), inhabited areas (Crowley and Reid, 2002), the relationship with time (Krakovský, 2014) and recreational activities (Giustino et al., 2013). These approaches to the social and political dynamics of Eastern European societies are echoed in the "anthropology of socialism" (Sampson, 1991) documented in areas situated well behind the Iron Curtain, as in Hungary (Hann, 1980; Lampland, 1991; Burawoy and Lukács, 1992), Poland (Hann, 1985; Wedel, 1986), Romania (Kideckel, 1993; Verdery, 1996), Bulgaria (Creed, 1998) and the USSR (Humphrey, 2001 [1983]; Ries, 1997).

These historical and anthropological studies show that, in the communist societies of Europe, there is an extended array of attitudes that reveal "the complex entanglement of consent and dissatisfaction, adherence and refusal, compromise and passive resistance" (Werth, 1999: 90), "behaviors of inertia, avoidance and nonconformity" (Werth, 2001: 128), the joint existence "of situations of hope and despair, uncertainty and relaxation" (Lütdke, 1998: 8), "multiple types of reactions, [ranging] from deliberate cooperation and unquestioning identification to resistance and opposition, including opportunistic adaptation, apathy and withdrawal into the private sphere" (Kocka, 1995: 84). They insist on the arrangements, the room for maneuver, the permeable aspects of the system, and the ambivalence in the different types of actions, without evading the forms of supervision, control and regression which are characteristic of these regimes.

My research is consistent with this movement. Although these different works focus on the communist era, they are also enlightening when investigating a post-communist context presenting significant forms of analogies and continuities with the Soviet past. More broadly, my thinking on the forces behind the perpetuation of the authoritarian regime in Belarus builds on the questions recently raised by the "political anatomy of domination" which is attentive to the "subtleties of the mechanisms of legitimation".

> "The legitimacy granted is never total and must obviously come to terms with dissatisfactions, concerns, partial rejections and recriminations; it is less synonymous with adherence, support and active participation than with compromise; above all, it reflects a relative and intermittent judgment because individuals never ask themselves whether the State or the government are legitimate, and because the rules by which they evaluate

normality may be interpreted on different levels and relate to different, or even contradictory, hierarchies of values" (Hibou, 2011: 25).

What sphere would lend itself to reflection on everyday life under the authoritarian Belarusian regime? My previous research on dachas led me to contemplate the different ways in which ordinary citizens create relatively acceptable or even desirable worlds in an economic, political and cultural environment characterized by very strong constraints (Hervouet, 2009). In it, I showed how ordinary city dwellers, by putting their energies into the tending of vegetable gardens, put their "desire for happiness" (Castel, 1968: 21) into practice, by loosening the shackles of the system without actually breaking them. I then turned my attention toward a more paradigmatic sphere than the vegetable gardens tended by city dwellers. Indeed, the kolhozes and rural communities in general are particularly relevant to an analysis of everyday life under the authoritarian Belarusian regime. Even though they differ from the French situation in many respects, rural Belarusian worlds can also be characterized by the superimposition of professional and domestic scenes, closer mutual-acquaintance relationships than in towns and cities, and domination based on personal relationships (Mischi and Renahy, 2008: 17-18). In Belarus, rural areas have remained collectivized and are governed by systematic policies of control (Hervouet et al., 2017). Viewed from outside, the collectivist system can be defined by political constraint, social discipline and economic control. The Soviet-type collectivist model was abandoned throughout the European post-communist area, except in Belarus. It has not been the subject of detailed political and sociological analyses. There is practically no mention of rural areas in publications devoted to Belarus, especially in economic analyses. In this academic context, I considered Belarus to be a living laboratory for the analysis of everyday life under dictatorship in the collectivized rural world.

Kolkhozians and countryfolk in general are subject to a hierarchy in the economic and social world which is also a political and cultural hierarchy. At first sight, they appear to have absolutely no room for maneuver or influence over their own destiny. From a "*misérabiliste*" perspective (Grignon and Passeron, 1989), kolkhozians could be seen as the quintessential product of domination. Scorned by the city dwellers and controlled by the authorities, they are characterized by their humble social standing, their meager economic resources and their silent and passive acceptance of their situation. In addition to being economically exploited, they could also be considered culturally alienated due to their defense of their own oppressor. Indeed, the countryfolk are often perceived as the propagators of a conservative culture (Goujon, 2009: 178) and the President's natural supporters. Independent surveys have found that in 2001, the president benefited from 41.6% of support in Minsk and 72.4% in rural areas (Ioffe, 2014: 221); in 2010, these figures had dropped to 32.1% and 50%, respectively (Wilson, 2011: 257). From this perspective, countryfolk would only be characterized in a negative manner, due to their lack of economic resources, pride, self-sufficiency, practical know-how and dignity. Their attachment to the regime and the figure of Lukashenko can be interpreted as a direct result of the effectiveness of the apparatus deployed by the authorities. This vertical view from the top of the system assumes more than demonstrates the performative dimension of the official discourse. Performing an ethnographic analysis of the dictatorship corresponds to focusing on practices at the lowest levels of society and endeavoring to understand the links between these practices and the aims of the regime. This entails investigating the forces behind the legitimacy of such a regime, without automatically assuming the messages and policies handed down from the upper echelons of the State to be effective. In this way, my ideas run counter to this top-down approach, while avoiding the pitfalls of "*populisme*" (Grignon and Passeron, 1989). I am seeking to understand the forms of life that occur in rural areas, from the inside, without assuming my contacts to be motivated solely by the power of a hegemonic domination. I therefore focused on practices aiming toward "self-ownership" (Castel and Haroche, 2001) employed by people who, because they are never encountered, and their worlds remain unobserved, are denied any power to define their own projects or appropriate their own existences. These means of self-reappropriation are always

fragile, however, and should not remain silent about the social structure that shapes them. Indeed, they form part of social configurations which are objectively marked by forms of material, statutory, cultural, political and symbolic domination.

This approach requires an examination of the authoritarian regime at the "grass-roots" level (Revel, 1989), and the development of a "political anatomy of detail" (Hibou, 2011: 24). It justifies the adoption of an ethnographic approach. It is firstly a question of an economic ethnography. Considering that "concrete economic practices play a key role in power struggles and power relations", there was a need to understand "how the most ordinary economic mechanisms and economic operations simultaneously contribute to the mechanisms of domination" (Hibou, 2011: 16, 15). To this end, the survey needed to be painstakingly based on material aspects (budgets, domestic chores, job requirements, timetables, family schedules, etc.) and then related to other spheres of activity (family and neighborhood relationships, organizational hierarchies, relationships with the government), while placing them, via a biographical approach, in a broader temporal context. When examining the rural condition in terms of "interconnected worlds" (Dufy and Weber, 2007: 19), my approach is therefore situated at the confluence of an economic sociology, the sociology of work, a rural sociology, the sociology of the family and kinship, the sociology of the lower classes and even the sociology of the collective memory. But the aim is also to understand, from this microscopic perspective, the ordinary attitudes to politics and the potential forms of attachment to the authoritarian regime. This ethnography is therefore also a political ethnography (Katz, 2009). The thoughts and representations of my contacts are rooted in the daily practices that are an integral part of domestic, professional and village life. As in the analysis of northern French workers' attitudes to politics by Olivier Schwarz, my approach aims to obtain "a very indirect 'knowledge', revealed by traces, which focuses less on positions and attitudes than on underlying forms of *rapport* with politics, as can be inferred from materials which are all-too often abstruse and incomplete" (Schwartz, 1991: 79). I perceived the influence of politics in behaviors and discourses which, in isolation, bear no relation to it, but which, when combined and interconnected, may reveal coherent conceptions of what is fair and unfair, and of the power struggles within society. I collected concrete accounts of life situations, life stories, complaints, criticisms and judgments on social organization. I needed to find ways to bring out indigenous and uncensored comments about life in the kolkhoz, and to consider them as "symptoms" (Schwartz, 1991: 79), and then to infer – from fragments and contextualized, sometimes very down-to-earth descriptions – representations of the world which are seldom verbalized and rarely systematized in reflexive discourses. To address political issues, I reflected on the nature and meaning of practices at grass-roots level, considering that the political horizon of these practices could be glimpsed through everyday utterances and acts which, at first sight, are far-removed from politics: the cultivation of vegetable gardens, shady dealings at work, discussions within the family, neighborhood tensions, working conditions, etc. I raised the subject of politics (almost) without talking about politics.

The conclusions I reached at the end of my survey can be summarized in the following manner. The ethnographic analysis enables a description of the different resources that are actually available, whether they are formal, informal or illegal (such as the cultivation of a personal plot of land, transactions with city-dwellers, cross-border activities, humanitarian aid, transnational marriages, different types of theft, dubious accounting practices, the distillation of home-made vodka, and poaching). These resources are scattered throughout these areas and are mobilized within systems of horizontal and vertical interdependencies implying relatively stable configurations of reciprocities and obligations. These configurations produce acceptable or indeed desirable forms of life, based on the satisfaction of material needs, membership of supportive groups and the defense of dignified ways of living. These forms of life generate a special everyday relationship with politics, a moral economy and specific expectations of the authorities, which must protect – if necessary by violent means – these fragile rural communities from certain threats embodied by profiteers, idlers and moralists. In this way, the local aspiration for order converges

with the governing power's desire to perpetuate the system. This research therefore shows that the acceptance of domination does not simply stem from the effectiveness of the authorities' discourse and the mechanical efficiency of the State ideology but from the interaction between a political policy and life plans which are *indirectly* and, more often than not, unintentionally produced by the regime itself (Hervouet, 2018).

An Ethnography Subject to Three Constraints

In the framework of my research on the dachas and vegetable gardens of city dwellers, carried out between 1999 and 2003, I had no particular difficulties in meeting contacts or entering into discussions with them in the form of recorded interviews. This was for two reasons. On the one hand, in people's imaginations and local representations, the question of dachas seems remote from any kind of political issues and relates more to non-problematical agricultural and cultural practices. I was perceived as a strange French folklorist who was only interested in an ordinary and, when all is said and done, not very serious activity. My work had also attracted the attention of journalists with varied links to the government who treated me as an exotic curiosity (Tkačenko, 2002; Šanski, 2003). On the other hand, the political regime has become more repressive over the years and its authoritarian dimension has become more burdensome in daily life. The methodological difficulties therefore appeared at a later stage, when I began my new research.

While the questions are an extension of my previous work on dachas, the sphere covered presents a major difference. Indeed, the collectivist mode of government in rural areas takes on a crucial political importance for the regime:

> "as Lukashenko acknowledged in a meeting in Grodno, in 1998: 'Why must we keep the collective farms, which are in reality State farms? It's because the kolkhoz and the sovkhoz are not just ways of organizing agricultural production… If they cease to exist, the State will be unable to implement its policies in rural areas efficiently. The kolkhoz and the sovkhoz, with their administrative apparatus, their specialists and their leaders, are the cornerstone of the State's power in rural areas. This concerns half of our population, which ensures the stability of our society." (Karbalévitch, 2012: 275-276).

In this context, the project to conduct an ethnographic survey of rural areas in Belarus runs into three difficulties: conducting a survey primarily among the lower classes for which the primary problems facing the ethnographer have been highlighted in the literature (Mauger, 1991); carrying out this ethnographic study in an environment – rural areas – in which the State, via its economic and administrative structures, is omnipresent, and in which there is particularly strong control over the people; studying politics in a regime inherited from the Soviet Union, which does not tolerate any challenges to its authority or critical debate. Consequently, the authoritarian nature of the regime had a decisive impact on the way I was able to conduct my survey. How could a city-dwelling Frenchman, an academic, establish a trusting relationship and initiate a dialog with members of the lower classes in rural communities in Belarus? How could I elicit spontaneous indigenous conversation about an authoritarian regime characterized by its desire to exert total control over its population? How could I examine the political aspects and the dictatorship without any reference to politics and despotism? This article is presented in the form of a reflexive look back at a field experiment conducted between 2006 and 2013, entailing trial and experimentation that gradually, over the years, generated sufficiently robust material to propose a reflection on the everyday life of the dictatorship.

I will start by analyzing the existing constraints on access to research fields in present-day Belarus, while pondering the continuities and differences in relation to the work carried out by Western anthropologists during the Iron Curtain era. I will then examine the special conditions concerning field surveys, necessitating certain compromises with the precepts of sociological ethnography and requiring the practice of a "discrete" form of ethnography. Lastly, I will clearly

explain the ruses and maneuvers employed to successfully build up, despite these constraints, a sufficiently robust body of material to construct an analysis.

The Complications of Field Work in Communist Europe and Post-Soviet Belarus

Despite the great difficulties associated with conducting field surveys during the communist era, several Western researchers have carried out research of an ethnographic nature in Eastern European countries (Hann, 1994). In these closely monitored societies, they have had to overcome different types of obstacles. Without claiming to present an exhaustive list, I will now mention some of these works, paying particular attention to those focusing on rural communities. To access the sites for their research, these anthropologists had to obtain special authorizations. On this subject, Katherine Verdery recounts the institutional context of her first visit to Romania in 1973. She obtained a grant in the framework of a partnership between IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board) and the Romanian Academy of Social Science. "Without one of these exchange grants, it was very hard for an American citizen to work in Romania" (Verdery, 2013: 40). In 1966-1967, Caroline Humphrey was a beneficiary of exchange agreements between the British Council and the Chair of Ethnography at the State University of Moscow (Humphrey, 2001). These arrival contexts influenced the definition of their research subjects. The Romanian sociologist Mihail Cerna, who had encouraged Katherine Verdery to study Romania, had explained to her before her departure that she "clearly must not submit a project that directly or indirectly concerns the functioning of the socialist system, but rather that [she should] choose a topic that interests the authorities, such as folklore" (Verdery and Faure, 2011: 202). Indeed,

> "scientists in Central and Eastern Europe […] were in a quest to find the 'people', in their desire to build a nation and reveal its original nature. To this end, they did not require comparisons or theories but instead, they needed to accurately describe the local traditions" (Verdery and Faure, 2011: 207).

In 1967, Caroline Humphrey was supposed to be working on kinship in Buryatia, by outwardly adopting an approach that conformed to the Soviet principles of *etnografiâ*, which is similar to folklore studies (Gessat-Anstett, 2001: 66), but which was far removed from the perspectives of Western social anthropology. These activities could not therefore openly appear to be focused on the socialist system in force.[1] Researchers from other disciplines could collaborate with local teams to analyze the operation of collectivized agriculture, but field visits were short and very closely supervised (Maurel 1980: 19-20). In this regard, the French geographers Joseph Casas and François Labouesse wrote, in 1983: "Until then, none of the 150 missions conducted in the USSR since 1970 in the framework of the official agreement between INRA[2] and VASKHNIL (including ours) had included visits lasting more than a few hours!" (Casas and Labouesse, 1983: 1).

For researchers who had access to the field, the practice of ethnographic work was closely supervised. Katherine Verdery lived in a village but could not study how the collective farm operated (Verdery, 2013: 37). She therefore wrote a social history of a Romanian village spanning three centuries with barely a mention of the situation in communist Romania (Verdery, 1983). After consulting *Securitate* reports to which she gained access in 2008, she finally understood the

[1] This does not mean that it had been impossible to carry out any research that expressly aimed to study the functioning of socialism beyond the Iron Curtain. But it does mean that it was conducted under very specific circumstances. For example, Michael Burawoy was authorized to work in a Hungarian factory in 1984, but this was only because his Hungarian colleague János Lukács had contacted an acquaintance and member of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Communist Party, who pleaded in their favor with a senior civil servant in the Ministry of the Interior (Burawoy and Lukács 1992: 7).

[2] INRA : Institut national de la recherche agronomique (France)

extent to which she had been under surveillance. This explains her difficulties in finding face-to-face contacts in the villages and compelled her to focus her research on subjects relying on access to available sources in libraries or on interviews conducted with city-dwelling intellectuals. Caroline Humphrey managed to reside in Buryatia by focusing her work on kinship systems and beliefs – Shamanism. It was only tangentially that she managed to collect a substantial body of new material on the functioning of collective farms. Although surveillance and mistrust were apparent – she was considered by some to be a spy (Humphrey, 2001: XIX) – there appears to have been a lower level of control than in the context described by Katherine Verdery. Lastly, Verdery describes a final constraint. Could the dissemination of scientific texts that were considered harmful to the image of the regime pose a threat to the subjects of the survey (Verdery, 2013: 41)? This uncertainty caused certain researchers to wait until after the fall of the Berlin Wall before publishing their analyses of life under socialism (Kideckel, 1993; Verdery, 1996).

In the post-Soviet context, it was not strictly necessary for me to adhere to institutional procedures to obtain a visa, travel to Belarus and move around the country. This is a key difference in relation to the Communist period. In addition, I could choose whether to collaborate with Belarusian colleagues or work alone. It seems to me that the constraints of scientific cooperation are likely to resemble those encountered by anthropologists in the 1970s and 1980s. I have doubts about the expediency of turning toward ethnologists. For example, the research conducted in villages of Western Belarus by a Polish anthropologist (Engelking, 2002), in collaboration with Belarusian researchers, very closely resembles the practice of descriptive and folklore-oriented Eastern European ethnography (Alymov, 2011). The rare works by Belarusian sociologists on the collectivized rural world are based on descriptions and opinion surveys (Smirnova*,* 2009). Despite their interest, they share the common characteristic, as in the Soviet era (Bikbov, 2009: 124, 130), of not proposing a critical analysis of political dimensions and refraining from any reflection on modes of domination and power. To this risk of misunderstanding, related to the divergent histories of our disciplines in both countries, is added my wariness toward the academic world which is likely to be subjected to a specific type of control by the regime.

At this point, I should mention my previous experiences in Belarus and recount certain events that reflect the hold of the surveillance system over citizens in Belarus. From 1999 to 2001, I was the national service advisor (*coopérant service national* – CSN) at the French Embassy in Belarus, where my main function was teaching economic and social science at the Franco-Belarusian Faculty of Political Science and European Studies, a department of the European Humanities University, which was independent of the authorities. When I began my research on dachas in Belarus, I immediately discussed it with my students, who were important allies in my fieldwork. Pressure from the authorities forced this university to close in 2004, and it was relocated from Minsk to Vilnius (Rennes, 2006). I could therefore no longer rely on this institution to help me find partners. I started by conducting three initial field missions in rural areas of Belarus, in 2006, 2007 and 2008, outside any institutional framework. I then spent three full years in Belarus, from 2009 to 2012, where I held the post of co-director of the Franco-Belarusian Center of Political Science and European Studies, while also remaining on the French Embassy's staff. On an exceptional basis, my family and I held diplomatic passports, given the tensions prevailing in the country and the pressures exerted on certain members of other embassies (*Naviny.by,* 2006; Taras, 2011). During these three years, I put my surveys on hold, in compliance with the duty of confidentiality required by my superiors at the French Embassy, but different events which occurred between 2006 and 2012 prompted me to proceed with caution once I resumed my field studies in 2012 and 2013.[3] Here is one example.

[3] Between 2012 and 2016, I received funding from the *Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine* (Aquitaine Regional Council) for a collective survey that I was coordinating. The research was entitled: "The production and expression of moral sentiments in a context of radical social change. An analysis of rural experiments in three post-communist countries (Russia, Belorussia and Romania)".

In principle, there was an opportunity to establish links and collaborations with colleagues at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Science at the State University of Belarus. As co-director of the CFB, I organized a conference to be presented by a French anthropologist at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Science. On the day in question, a Belarusian colleague, the speaker at the conference and I were summoned to the office of the Dean, along with several lecturers from the Faculty. Another person, who was not a member of the teaching staff was also present and was introduced to us by the Dean as someone who "dealt with international relations". The discussion revolved around the subject of the conference ("Transformations in marriage in Europe"), and the riots that had occurred in France in 2005. During the discussion, the "international relations representative" asked specific questions to determine the statuses of the different people and insisted on seeing our visitor cards while attempting to find out whether there were any reasons for our presence other than academic ones. He did not seem to belong to our host community and was treated with particular respect by the Dean. While searching on the Internet a few days later, a colleague could find no trace of this person in the University's organizational structure. He was only mentioned in an article stating that he had accompanied a Belarusian delegation to China. My colleague considered that this information pointed toward him being an informant, or even a member, of the KGB. This suspicion of the academic world being subject to surveillance slowed my progress. In the end, I decided not to embark on any academic collaboration, considering it to be fraught with danger. I was concerned about running into indifference, mistrust or incomprehension. I therefore addressed the issue of "everyday life under dictatorship" without institutional support for accessing the field.

The second type of approach to gaining access to the field in rural areas consists in directly contacting the directors of kolhozes through the official channels. Two interrelated obstacles then become apparent. In principle, as there is no tradition of social anthropology, but definitely a tradition of close surveillance of economic and social activities, the directors prefer to avoid this type of contact. They consider any interest in their kolkhoz to be suspicious, as they believe that there is nothing exceptional about their work. Why talk about banalities? The response of the deputy director of a kolkhoz, contacted by telephone in April 2006, is very revealing:

> "I'm very busy at the moment. I don't have time to meet you. Our kolkhoz is very ordinary. It is devoid of any interest. You'd be better off visiting Snov. Have you been to Snov? It would be better if you went there rather than visiting us".

Furthermore, as a rule, you must also complete the necessary formalities and obtain an administrative authorization before being able to meet with these directors. I have avoided this approach. Indeed, I prefer to remain discreet in my dealings with the administration to prevent any misinterpretation of my work as a researcher. I practice sociology, but I do not hand out any questionnaires or produce any statistics. It could be considered that I practice an unauthorized form of journalism, for example. Any mistrust could be reinforced by the fact that I spent five years working for the French Embassy (1999-2001 and 2009-2012). Moreover, I assume that if I went through an authorized channel, the director would only give me stock statements. Besides, a colleague who was allowed to accompany a delegation of French farmers during an official visit to kolkhozes and agri-food production sites in Belarus told me how only the successes and efficient aspects of the system were shown, while any complications were kept out of sight. Lastly, there is little likelihood that I would receive such an authorization quickly. In this regard, the following comment by *Le Monde* reporter Piotr Smolar is very revealing:

> "We wanted to closely examine one of Alexander Lukashenko's flagship projects: the *agro gorodki* - agricultural villages. […] To visit Jouravliny, in the western part of Brest, […] you must obtain permission from the district's Department for Ideological Work. Which never arrives" (Smolar, 2012).

All in all, it seemed inadvisable for me to use the official institutional channels to gain access to the field in rural areas of Belarus.

The Protection of Survey Respondents in a Police State

The dramatic changes in modes of travel between the East and West enable me to circumvent the first difficulty encountered by anthropologists seeking to work behind the Iron Curtain: entering the country. As I do not need to obtain researcher status to cross the border and travel around Belarus, I ultimately decided to work alone. Nevertheless, I was still faced with another difficulty which is similar to that encountered by anthropologists during the communist era: coping with the surveillance system. My approach poses two types of risks. The first is to myself. As I carry out my research work without links to a Belarusian institution, I could be subject to different forms of harassment. In Belarus, I am often told in informal discussions that anything that is not clearly permitted is prohibited, and there is no law stipulating that questioning kolkhozians about their everyday lives is permitted. A risk, however minor, would therefore appear to exist. This could lead to the subsequent rejection of a visa application and the inability to continue my survey. This circumspection is not unjustified in light of the fact that the Russian authorities have recently made life difficult for Western researchers and have not hesitated to expel some of them (Schreck, 2015).

The second risk is to my contacts. As in the Soviet era, the authorities are careful to avoid tarnishing the image of the regime. In 2005, a law was adopted on untruthful and defamatory information given to foreigners, for which criminal sanctions apply (Nečapajka, 2005). I do not want my contacts to be associated with me and be accused of criticizing the regime. I am also conscious of the fact that while I personally have little to fear, these people could think that they are taking a risk by agreeing to cooperate with me. Indeed, the presence of what my contacts call the "services" (meaning the security services) is a recurrent topic in everyday conversations, like the "eccentric" neighbor who listens to the dissident radio station *Svaboda* and thinks he is being monitored by KGB agents, and the employee of a private company who tells me that to be awarded a particular public contract, you have to "grease the palm" of a KGB officer, etc.

The functioning of the regime is intrinsically linked to the power of the security services and police (Hervouet, 2013b). This is reflected in a latent suspicion that permeates everyday relationships and prompts me to adopt a cautious approach to my work with the people I interview. The manifestation of control by the authorities is based on suppositions, conjectures and speculations, giving free rein to the most paranoid interpretations. In his review of a novel by a young Belarusian intellectual – a story of love and crime set in Minsk and aptly entitled *Paranoia* (Martinovitch, 2010) – the American historian Timothy Snyder wrote:

> "Whenever you enter or leave Belarus, you get to meet the KGB. In the European airport where you board your plane for Minsk, a civil servant – often a harmless-looking woman – will be prowling around the departure lounge. At a given moment, she will ask to see each passenger's passport, without anyone having much idea of her authority to do so. At Minsk Airport, just as you are leaving the country, a civil servant – clearly a member of the KGB – will check your papers one last time. And then he will board the aircraft with you. The officer is probably accompanying a Belarusian manager on a trip abroad: nationals of any importance cannot travel without a chaperon. But maybe he is keeping an eye on you too. If this thought crosses your mind, it means you have entered the paranoid world at the heart of Martinovitch's novel" (Snyder, 2010: 58).

It is in the interest of such a regime to make people believe that everything is under surveillance. Indeed, different events do suggest that, potentially, everything may be monitored. Incidentally, I can only recount certain anecdotes about this subject because the people who are associated with them to a greater or lesser extent, and who were asked for permission to include their accounts in a publication, preferred that I refrain from doing so. They were worried about KGB members reading my article and reaching them in this way.

Here are a few meager illustrations of this unusual context. At the Embassy, we were warned that we were probably under electronic surveillance. A colleague told me how, when he was driving around town earlier than usual one morning, he drove around a roundabout twice and became certain that he was being followed. I also recall how, a few days before my departure from Belarus in 2001, I noticed that the front door of my apartment appeared to be locked, but that a magnetic device had been inserted into the lock which made it possible to enter without the key… and nothing had been taken from the apartment. A Belarusian friend with whom I discuss my research asks me to write to him via a specific email account which he only consults during his trips abroad.

These local situations need to be interpreted in a context of omnipresent State-sponsored violence. Here are several events that occurred during my stay in Minsk, between 2009 and 2012. On September 3, 2010, Oleg Bebenine, founder of the information website *Charter97.org* and an ally of the dissident Andrei Sannikov, was found hanged in his dacha (Harris, 2010). The presidential election took place on December 19, 2010. Thousands of people flooded into the center of Minsk to protest at the results. They met with fierce repression. Hundreds of people were roughed up and arrested. Convictions followed. Several opposition candidates were imprisoned. Following the protests, the television channels broadcast recorded conversations of people at the scene of the events or nearby, suggesting that the entire city-center population was under electronic surveillance (Avril, 2010). Several weeks later, I found out that one of my 18-year-old students had been arrested for challenging the legitimacy of Andrei Sannikov's detention (Plaschinsky, 2012) and that she had spent the night in a Belarusian jail. At around 6 p.m. on April 11, 2011, a bomb exploded at Oktyabrskaâ – the only station at which Minsk's two underground rail lines intersect. Over 300 people were injured and 15 people were killed in the explosion. It was rush hour, and above all the time when students at the Franco-Belarusian Center of Political Science and European Studies were heading toward the building in which we were working, close to this station. An anguished wait then followed, before we learned that none of our students were among the casualties. In the following days, the two alleged perpetrators were arrested. They were tried, condemned to death and executed by a bullet to the back of the head on March 18, 2012 (Bohdan, 2011). In the summer of 2011, several peaceful demonstrations were organized through social networks, attracting several thousand young participants. They took place just a few hundred meters from where I was living and working. There were no slogans, and nothing was planned. People simply gathered from time to time and applauded in unison. Then silence returned before, once again, the crowd started clapping. The repression was severe (Leshchenko, 2011). Online, I saw students being manhandled by clearly recognizable law enforcement officers but also by a number of people in civilian clothing and obviously determined to use force to quell the unrest. On December 20, 2011, three Ukrainian activists belonging to FEMEN protested in front of the KGB headquarters in Minsk to mark the first anniversary of Lukashenko's reelection in their own particular way. That same evening, they were taken away "by KGB police officers and agents" – according to Inna Chevtchenko's statement on the FEMEN website. After threats to kill them, they were stripped naked and abandoned in a forest 320 km to the south of Minsk (Barthet, 2012). On April 14, 2012, Andrei Sannikov, a dissident and candidate for the presidential election of December 2010, was released. He had been beaten and arrested on December 19, 2010, when thousands of people had challenged the authorities in the center of Minsk. Sentenced to five years of imprisonment on May 14, 2011, he explained that he had asked for a presidential pardon after being tortured (AFP, 2012).

Although I am aware that it is possible and even probable that my attitude is excessively cautious, this context prompts me to adopt a specific approach to conducting my surveys in the field.

When making contact with people, I adopt two attitudes. The first, of lesser importance, is to assume the role of a French teacher, an erudite tourist interested in the traditions and customs of Belarus. I introduce myself in a not untruthful but abbreviated manner. The aim is to

communicate with public figures or officials without formalizing the encounter and without publicizing my status as a researcher. In this way, I met with the priest of a small Belarusian parish, the founder of a temperance museum who had adopted a paternalistic approach to his work throughout the area, which the authorities considered to be exemplary. A few weeks after our meeting, however, he was accused by the Lithuanian authorities of having participated in the execution of several Lithuanian anti-Soviet partisans after the Great Patriotic War. This made it difficult to pursue my work and incidentally, the priest died a few months later (Hervouet 2014). I also introduced myself in this way to the director of a kolkhoz. Although I managed to collect some interesting information, the director made it clear to me that he was not fooled, and that he was therefore closely controlling everything I was told.

Consequently, this method proved to be very risky and only moderately productive as it did not enable me to obtain spontaneous comments, which are the only way for me to investigate "everyday life under the dictatorship". How should I proceed? I had no plan, no program, no timetable, and few specific ideas about how I would approach working in the field. I refused to develop an excessively narrow form of questioning that could lead me, without proper consideration, to dismiss comments that might be legitimate, interesting and worthy of inclusion, along with any other findings. I decided to embark on this ethnographic adventure by allowing myself to follow any byroads that appeared to be relevant to my work, in the hope of managing, slowly but surely, to collect interpretable material. Incidentally, with regard to his fieldwork carried out among employees of the RATP [Paris public transport operator], starting in 1992, Olivier Schwartz had written:

> "Convinced that the conditions for the success of an ethnographic survey are much less dependent on the interest of the 'subjects' than on the quality of the 'fields', and that whoever is fortunate enough to have access to a 'field' will, sooner or later, find a subject, I had embarked on this adventure without a precise idea, at the outset, of what I might find there, or of what I should even look for" (Schwartz, 1998: 6).

To access the field, I made up my mind to meet people whom I could trust and who could trust me. I mobilized my network of close and not-so-close contacts that I had been developing in Minsk since 1999. Because bonds had been established between us, these people made an effort to act as intermediaries and sometimes to make contact with old acquaintances. The political conditions specific to this regime therefore led me to meet people known primarily via chains of mutual acquaintances. I stayed clear of official messages and institutional channels, preferring to gather – directly or indirectly – the comments and actions of kolkhozians and countryfolk.

A Fragmented and Silent Field

Two new difficulties faced me. Firstly, it was hard to limit my field to a clearly defined geographical area. This was partly due to the surveillance system in force. If I wanted to remain discreet and travel freely without official researcher status, I would have to avoid lengthy stays in one place in order to maintain a low profile. One long stay in a village without authorization could appear suspicious, whereas frequent travel should appear normal for a foreigner visiting the country. In addition, the environment I was investigating was partially fragmented. Consequently, if I tried to situate my contacts in local configurations, I was not always able to correlate information by gathering other people's points of view. Therefore, the understanding of mutual acquaintance environments often remained patchy. If mutual acquaintance, reflexivity and long timeframes are the three key ingredients required for ethnographic surveys (Beaud and Weber, 2010: 278), then my approach needed to find ways of accommodating these methodological requirements without following them to the letter, but also without automatically invalidating the substance of the material collected.

The second difficulty pertained to the fact that many of the people I met were unwilling to enter into discussion. In fact, I encountered varied situations. I addressed the issue of everyday life in rural areas by collecting life stories. I introduced myself as a French teacher who had published a book on dachas in Belarus and who was preparing for a new work on everyday life in the country. While my aim was to produce a political ethnography of an authoritarian regime, it was impossible to present it to my contacts in this way without running the risk of being denied access to them. Some of them trusted me immediately and were forthcoming, but in most cases, the people I met were reticent about responding, or even totally uncommunicative. This reserve in the discussions can be explained by two intertwined characteristics of the survey situation: the survey was being conducted both under an authoritarian regime and in a lower-class environment.

My contacts clearly appeared to be afraid. As the people I met had been contacted through acquaintances, they usually trusted me. But sometimes they were afraid to talk to me. They were probably worried about the consequences of their comments if the administration found out about them. In March 2008, a Belarusian friend and I were received by a family I had previously met in a village during the previous year. He was a driver for the kolkhoz, while she was employed by a small private company. Their neighbors then joined us. The woman was a senior official at the kolkhoz. The man was the deputy director of the kolkhoz and head of the local executive committee in charge of agricultural issues before becoming the director of the office of the president of the district's executive committee. We drank, he talked to me about the riots in France, made violent comments about immigrants living in France, and then we drank some more. Despite the drunken ambiance, there was a certain restraint. He mentioned that "he couldn't talk about everything, for obvious reasons" and that he therefore preferred "not to talk about anything". He nonetheless managed to slip into the conversation that he did not agree with the centralized system in agriculture, and that he would have preferred greater autonomy, as in France. At that very moment, his wife interrupted, stating that she did not want to talk about politics and stressed on several occasions during the meal that people live well on the kolkhoz, repeating herself with so much insistence that she seemed to be making a show of her loyalty toward the regime – perhaps she suspected me, my Belarusian friend whom she did not know, or maybe her neighbors. On another occasion, in November 2012, I had a conversation with an elderly woman in an isolated village. I had met her through a friend, who had found this contact for me through a close relation, who had contacted someone living in the country who knew this woman. She was living very modestly and received me with kindness but also with reserve. As she spoke, she rubbed her hands together feverishly and could not hide the anxiety she was feeling, as she told me about conflicts on the kolkhoz in a very distant manner and was clearly apprehensive about the consequences of her comments.

I was confronted with a "cold hard fact" (Lahire, 2015: 36-38): nobody talks about what everyone knows and what everyone has learned to keep quiet about. People have learned to be very discreet. Family stories are sometimes repeated as a reminder of foolish, loose-tongued people who would not have been deported if they had kept quiet, like the uncle who spent five years in a prison camp for joking about Stalin just after the Great Patriotic War (Applebaum, 2005). This automatic suspicion of people from outside one's own world is not unique to Belarus and is observed in other regions of the former USSR. Jessica Pisano bears witness to it in relation to her own surveys in rural Ukraine, for example (Allina-Pisano, 2008: XXI).

However, my contacts' reticence cannot be solely explained by their fear of the police. Another obstacle is posed by the sense of social inferiority felt by the people I met. This difficulty is not specific to the authoritarian nature of the regime (Bourdieu, 2002: 53). This feeling of being ashamed of themselves originates from the condescending and scornful attitude that city dwellers adopt toward people who live in the country. In the cities, one frequently hears remarks tinged with scorn about rural communities which reflect a form of class-based racism. Kolkhozians find themselves associated with negative qualities: they are narrow-minded, easily pleased,

uneducated, drink too much, and support a political regime that prevents the country from entering the modern era, which should be their legitimate aspiration

> "There can be no neglecting the real scorn displayed by the *intelligentsia* toward the 'peasants' – a name given to the inhabitants of villages, provincial towns and people who have recently moved to the capital. A. Lukashenko's success is said to be due to the ignorance of these peasants because 'what else can you expect from such people!'" (Lapatniova, 2001: 60).

I was also refused contact on several occasions, sometimes even by close relations of people I had known for several years, and who trusted me completely. They did not dare to meet me, through embarrassment, fear or timidity. This is what my allies told me about their contacts: "they're worried about saying something stupid", "they don't have time to tidy up their home", "a Frenchman deserves a better welcome than I can give him", "they think they've got nothing worth talking to you about", etc.

My contacts' reticence cannot be explained solely by a form of self-censorship related to fear or internalized social shame. It also a product of specific forms of sociability, which could mean that volubility is frowned upon. In local settings, one cannot overtly say what one thinks. This would amount to claiming a sort of special status – a lofty attitude which could be perceived as the manifestation of a haughty nature. Untoward comments about other people, if passed on, could be harmful to the person who made them and result, for example, in their exclusion from mutual assistance systems operating within mutual acquaintance networks.

The final obstacle is linked to both the functioning of the authoritarian system and the codes of conduct governing lower class environments, in equal measure. The people I met seemed to be afraid of tarnishing their image. Bearing witness to problems with the functioning of the system to which one belongs means giving cause for criticism of the world to which one is functionally and emotionally attached, and in a certain manner, giving rise to a judgment about one's own self. Moreover, informal practices based on wily resourcefulness and "getting around" the system are considered morally acceptable and altruistic when they are personally used to benefit one's close relations, but they are frowned upon when used by other people (Ledeneva, 1998). When dealing with a foreigner, who is not supposed to comprehend the ethical nuances of these underground forms of life, people will probably prefer not to mention them at all. To save face, certain contacts decide to remain silent.

Also, and most frequently, critical views of the world are revealed by fleeting gestures or words that are retracted, by occurrences of stereotyped comments and formulations that must be painstakingly compiled. Moral sentiments are often condensed into sparse formulas lacking clear explanation. The sociologist's work therefore consists in bringing to light, from varied and heterogeneous discursive environments (when people are talking about their neighbors, children, colleagues, holidays, potatoes, etc.), interiorized forms of subjectivity which are resistant to semantic elucidation.

Stratagems Behind Discrete Ethnography

Consequently, when I managed to gain access to villages, and to meet people who were not opposed to the idea of speaking to me, I needed to use a range of ploys to create situations that would encourage them to make precise and personal comments. As an outsider on two levels – as a Frenchman and an academic – I had to take steps to reduce the social distance that separated me from my interviewees. With hindsight, I consider that my behavior in the field was guided by three principles: the "deceremonialisation" of the survey situation, familiarization with the subjects of the survey and the symmetrization of relationships by self-exposition.

In the first place, it is desirable to minimize the academic connotations of the survey situation. Like other researchers in the post-Soviet regions (Gessat-Anstett, 2007: 13; Allina-Pisano, 2008: XXII), I soon abandoned using a dictaphone, as had been my practice for recording my interviews on dachas between 2000 and 2003. Firstly, people are wary of leaving traces that could be transformed into incriminating evidence. When Svetlana, a pensioner, mentioned the carrots she had purloined during a *subbotnik* – a "voluntary" day of labor (Hervouet and Kurilo, 2010) – organized on the neighboring kolkhoz, her son jokingly reminded her that her comments were punishable under the law on untruthful and defamatory information given to foreigners. Svetlana, initially quite hesitant, ended up saying: "in any case, it isn't recorded". Secondly, the dictaphone reinforces the ceremonial and academic nature of the meeting. I sometimes take notes during the discussions; however, slowly but surely, due to the misunderstanding of the nature of my work and the mistrust it arouses, I have acquired the habit of not transcribing the conversations until I return home. In addition, when I started, I used to use a very general and adaptable interview guide to orient my first biographical interviews. This formalization of the discussion was sometimes perceived as artificial and abnormal. Since then, I have very often improvised according to the contexts of my encounters – over a cup of tea, during a meal, or in the vegetable garden – with a view to asking questions that relate to the discussion in progress. The information gathered is scattered and fragmented. I must then record it in a field survey log. The benefit of this is the fact that the discussion then takes the form of friendly and innocuous dialogs resembling the exchanges one might have with a newcomer to one's neighborhood or within an extended circle of friends. It formally excludes the creation of a survey situation. This manner of flitting freely around the social world I am studying requires me to be satisfied with blending into the background in scenes of everyday life without, outwardly, exerting any influence on how they unfold. Undeniably, this facilitates the gathering of everyday comments, which might have been made in my absence, but it sometimes makes it difficult to go deeper into certain questions. In these interviews, I need to bring out my contacts' experience and wait for them to take the initiative to talk about what they are unhappy with. A Belarusian friend, who knows these communities because he grew up in them and continues to live in them, helps me with these ideas.

> Log of 4 March 2008. To prepare for the interview with Andrei Petrovitch [a former director of a kolkhoz and currently a teacher in an agricultural high school], I discuss my ideas with my friend. For example, I am thinking about asking why young people would settle in rural areas if they are poorly paid. My friend's reaction is immediate. You must not talk about negative things. My contact must mention them spontaneously, otherwise he will clam up.

I therefore need to adopt a patient approach and wait for situations to arise which are sometimes impossible to trigger. I sometimes return from long days almost empty-handed. But that is the price I must pay to have a hope of being told some privileged information next year.

Indeed, the second general principle I have adopted has been to revisit the same people every few years, whenever possible. Familiarity and trust develop throughout the duration of the relationship. The primary benefit of this approach is the respect one inspires by returning to the same places on a regular basis. At first sight, it could seem surprising – or even suspicious – to some of my contacts that I would like to see them again. I also try to find excuses to contact them again and maintain links over the years. For example, I pass on presents to and from a family in a Belarusian village whose daughter lives in France. Another technique consists in bringing a gift with me on my next year's visit which makes reference to the discussions we had together the year before. These tiny services, resembling a kind of donation and passing on debts from one side to the other, facilitate the maintenance of fragile links. The other tactic used to this end consists in sending people a few photos of the moments we spent together, accompanied by a short message, a few months after the event. People sometimes mention this to me on subsequent meetings. These tactics help to create a form of ordinary routine and provide evidence of our relationship.

These techniques for "deceremonializing" the survey relationship and creating familiarity have sometimes been supported by practices designed to eradicate social distance, with a view to generating contexts that are propitious to the production of non-controlled comments. It is an established fact that "a part of the investigator's expertise relates to the art of camouflage" (Mauger, 1991: 127). However, this strategy of blending into the background does not lead to the adoption of a casual attitude or a bird's-eye view that implicitly requires contacts to behave as if the investigator were not there. On the contrary, it relies on making an active contribution to the interactions, in which I have developed an understanding of certain rules during the course of my experience, which bring into play certain facets of my personality as an academic, a Frenchman and an urbanite, who is also a man – presumably with manly qualities, as well as a husband and a father. I use certain ploys to conceal the first three characteristics, which generate intimidation and reticence, while emphasizing the last three, which I often share with my contacts. Conforming to the desired and expected norms for masculine behavior firstly implies adhering to the standards for the consumption of alcohol. On many occasions, I have been welcomed to a table laden with food. The meal and the discussion are punctuated by relatively codified toasts ("To our meeting", "To friendship", "To love and women", "To family", "For the road", etc.) which are intended to lead to a controlled form of drunkenness among men (Pesmen, 1995). This collective drunkenness is a way to slip out of one's social roles and show one's true nature, without disguise. Synonymous with virility and honesty, it takes place in front of the women, who encourage it as long as it remains governed by ceremonial rules of shared hospitality and commensality. In this way, a trusting relationship sometimes develops, based on the sharing of vodka or its home-made equivalent, *samogon*. This vodka strips me of the social power with which I am associated, because I become weak. I accept the risk of being unable to control myself, physically and verbally – the alcohol thickens my tongue and sometimes makes my pronunciation imprecise. My long stays in Minsk have taught me to drink sodas and eat fatty foods during these meals to absorb the vodka and keep face. In this horizontal world that vodka creates, the discussion flows more easily. It becomes possible to talk about the neighbor – the director of a kolkhoz – whose lover committed suicide, or book-keeping ruses used to misappropriate goods, the price of the new car belonging to the head of the local executive committee, etc. I must focus my efforts on avoiding passing out before my hosts and on taming the vodka's fire. The difficulty lies not only in following the gist of the conversation and asking the questions I need to pose at the right time, but also in remembering the answers that are given to them. Perhaps the reason why people speak to me so openly is because they assume that, due to the drunkenness, I will forget everything that is said. In these situations, the presence of an accompanying Belarusian friend is a precious aid. He is the one who drives the car and, in this capacity, does not drink a drop of alcohol. As he remains sober, he can remain attentive to all details given during the discussion. Also, during these meals, while I am trying to cope with my weakened mind and body, my ally remains clear-headed, which facilitates the subsequent transcription of the conversations.

I have also used a second method to quickly develop a trusting relationship. The *bania* – or Russian sauna – is the other masculine world in which confidences can be shared. In November 2012, I visited a small village where I met Maksim, a carpenter with whom I got along well. In the evening, he invited two friends, one of whom was a young mechanic working on the neighboring kolkhoz, to meet at the *bania*. The meeting took place, but this time without consuming vodka, as Maksim is a recovering alcoholic. For several hours, I took part in the everyday conversations, without managing to talk to the mechanic about his work. It was only later – in the *bania* – that he told me about the director of the kolkhoz with whom he did not get along, his pitiful wage and his desire to leave. We were all naked in the *bania*, sweating, whacking ourselves with birch branches, and stripped of the vestimentary indications of our social attributes. That was when he confided in me. Once out of the sauna, the discussion turned toward other subjects than the kolkhoz and its injustices. Lastly, I sometimes put my own family to service in the field, bringing my family status to the fore in an attempt to divert attention away from my other social characteristics. The presence

of my French partner, who learned Russian at school, sometimes accompanied by my young sons, contributes to the symmetrization of relationships. My personal implication brings my own private life out into the open and encourages my hosts to share details of their own.

Conclusion

My survey was conducted between 2006 and 2013. I met current and retired kolkhozians, male and female, who occupy, or used to occupy, a range of different posts: directors, milkers, drivers of tractors and other vehicles, mechanics, veterinarians, etc. I also interviewed self-employed craftsmen living and working in villages (a carpenter and a glassblower), teachers at agricultural high schools collaborating with collective farms, and academics whose families live in rural areas. I conducted around forty interviews in total and took part in many everyday events (Easter and birthday celebrations, family meals, working on personal plots of land, etc.), while carrying out a form of multi-integrative ethnography, defined as "this series of partial totalizations which attempts to describe the groups to which people belong, social scenes and personal histories" (Beaud and Weber, 2010 [1997]: 294). Over the years, chance and uncertain encounters with people, some relatively forthcoming, others almost totally uncommunicative, have been a source of heterogeneous material that has gradually acquired a certain robustness. In this article, I have explained the difficulties and obstacles that I have endeavored to overcome in my efforts to build up a sufficiently substantial body of material on which to base my analysis. To examine the rural lower classes in an authoritarian context, I adopted, sometimes with certain adaptations, the techniques and tactics used in the traditional French approach to sociological ethnography – as in the work by Olivier Schwartz (1990), Florence Weber (2009) and Nicolas Renahy (2005) – which set out to build relationships based on trust and familiarity in mutual-acquaintance contexts in order to comprehend the varied dimensions of the spheres investigated (domestic, family, professional, neighborhood, and in relationships with the government and bureaucracy). Despite the "literary narcissism", the "self-promoting dimension" and the "exaltation of subjectivity" (Olivier de Sardan, 2000) that such an explication of my work could have implied, I nevertheless wrote this text and did so for different reasons.

Due to the division of the scientific work on "area studies", numerous specialists in Eastern European countries are neither sociologists nor anthropologists and some of them are unaware of, or do not necessarily recognize, the soundness and legitimacy of ethnographic knowledge based on a long tradition of research (Céfaï, 2003). Consequently, a colleague who specializes in dissidence in the USSR saw my work on dachas as nothing more than a series of relatively naive accounts and the evocation of a limited impressionistic experience, suggesting that my arguments boiled down to a few quite amusing anecdotes.

> "After setting off to teach in Belarus in 1999, Ronan Hervouet discovered a society which he examined with a sociologist's eye, but also from the perspective of Candide. […] From time to time, the reader may be troubled or charmed by the repeated use of 'I', which sometimes transforms this work into a series of reminiscences about his travels. The same characters – members of the circle of friends – are often encountered" (Vaissié, 2010).

Here, I have shown that the nature of the material collected cannot be reduced to that found in a personal diary or travel journal. My reflexive methodological approach is consistent with "informed empiricism" (Schwartz, 1993: 305). It cannot be assimilated to a subjective posture recounting an intimate adventure. Instead, armed with the knowledge of tools developed throughout the history of the discipline, it is designed to produce a sufficiently robust corpus of material to envisage the proposal of general statements of an objective nature.

I have then shown that the conditions for research under an authoritarian regime invalidate the precepts of ethnographic methodology. Consequently, it is risky to settle in a single area for too long without running the risk of attracting the attention of the authorities and therefore

potentially bringing the investigator and the survey subjects to the attention of the police state. Although it is inadvisable to remain in the same place for a lengthy period, the ethnographer has the ability, by different means, to maintain links with the survey subjects and to return to the same places every few years. Although it might not be possible to perform an in-depth analysis of specific cases in singular areas, in exact compliance with impeccable survey techniques, one can multiply the number of geographical points of access to the field and correlate information about these widely scattered "minor cases". Although it is difficult to talk about politics directly, it is possible to make deductions based on behaviors, comments and situations in direct relation to the everyday activities of the survey subjects. This discrete and "impure" ethnography (Schwartz, 1993: 266) is neither patchy nor botched. It cannot be reduced to a flat description of singularities, and aspires, by patiently building up material, to become increasingly generalized. Although it makes compromises with the traditional requirements for field surveys, it still seeks to propose a robust approach in compliance with the epistemological requirements of the discipline. Such an ethnography may be undertaken if the survey is designed to be conducted over a long period, on the one hand, and if there is a refusal to conform to overly prescriptive and restricting research protocols, on the other. Despite being uncomfortable, this approach has proven to be heuristic.

This reflexive exercise urges a reappraisal of the question of social distance and trust in survey relationships. Admittedly, social distance is not an obstacle and trust is not a necessity in every type of ethnographic survey (Bonnet, 2008). However, in the lower-class environment, trust may be considered desirable for gaining access to comments and enabling discussion (Mauger, 1991: 126-127). In lower-class environments that are also under an authoritarian regime, it seems to be a necessity. Several stratagems, designed to gain the subjects' trust, have been proposed. These ruses, aiming to facilitate deceremonialization, familiarization and the symmetrization of relationships through the investigator's self-exposition, neutralize – at least partially and temporarily – this social distance and enable the creation of conditions of possibility that are sufficient for the utterance of spontaneous comments in the investigator's presence. Only the establishment of trust and forms of intimacy can prevent the encounter from becoming a series of excessively banal, insignificant and repetitive exchanges.

Lastly, the description of the concrete aspects of such work could contribute to the debate on the transformations of the modus operandi for research, a consequence of which is to direct researchers toward protocols which are "not excessively time-consuming" (Lahire, 2012: 344) and to encourage "inter-team collaborations" and "consortia of teams or laboratories" (Lahire, 2015: 559). However, I have shown how my customized small-scale approach to sociology, which is characteristic of other surveys in "difficult settings" (Boumaza and Campana, 2007: 9), would have been difficult to duplicate within overly prescriptive collective research protocols. This open-ended approach to scientific work is ill-suited to certain requirements of funding bodies, in terms of the programming of activities and of the quantitative objectives to be attained (number of interviews, observations, future publications, etc.). I have experimented with the adoption of a highly specific approach to research time, in which I focused on the long term without a clear idea of where the paths I was following would lead me.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Sophie Duchesne, Viviane Le Hay and the anonymous reviewers of the *BMS* for their comments and advices, which helped me to improve this article's first draft. I remain responsible for the content of this article.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The Author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

This work was partly carried out in the framework of a collective research project intitled "La production et l'expression des sentiments moraux dans un contexte de changement social radical. Une analyse des expériences rurales dans trois pays postcommunistes (Russie, Biélorussie, Roumanie)" funded by the Conseil régional d'Aquitaine (2012-2016; scientific coordinator: Ronan Hervouet).

References

AFP (2012) Belarus : un opposant torturé en prison ? *lefigaro.fr*. Available at http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2012/01/25/97001-20120125FILWWW00513-belarus-un-opposant-torture-en-prison.php

Allina-Pisano J (2008) *The Post-Soviet Potemkin Village. Politics and Property Rights in the Black Earth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alymov S (2011) On the Soviet Ethnography of the Soviet Life: The Case of the 'Village of Viriatino. *Histories of Anthropology Annual* 7: 23-48.

Applebaum A (2005 [2003]) *Goulag. Une histoire*. Paris Grasset.

Avril P (2010) L'Occident dénonce l'élection et la répression biélorusse. *lefigaro.fr*. Avalaible at http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2010/12/19/01003-20101219ARTFIG00198-bielorussie-Lukashenko-etrille-l-opposition.php.

Barthet E (2012) Femen, les activistes aux seins nus. *lemonde.fr*. Available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2012/02/22/femen-les-activistes-aux-seins-nus_1644775_3214.html.

Beaud Sand Weber F (2010 [1997]) *Guide de l'enquête de terrain*. Paris La Découverte.

Benett B (2011) *The Last Dictatorship in Europe. Belarus under Lukashenko*. London: Hurst & Company.

Bertaux D, Thompson P and Rotkirch A (eds) (2005 [2004]) *Living Through the Soviet System*. New Brunswick (New Jersey): Transaction Publishers.

Bigday M (2017) *L'engagement intellectuel sous régime autoritaire. Les « think tankers » biélorusses entre expertise et dissidence*. Paris: Dalloz.

Bikbov A (2009) Is Sociology the Same Discipline in Russia and France? A Brief Political Micro-history. *Laboratorium* (1): 124-139.

Bohdan S (2011) Belarusian 'Terrorists' On Trial: Any Hope For Justice ? *Belarus Digest*. Available at: http://belarusdigest.com/story/belarusian-terrorists-trial-any-hope-justice-6592.

Bonnet F (2008) La distance sociale dans le travail de terrain : compétence stratégique et compétence culturelle dans l'interaction d'enquête. *Genèses* (73): 57-78).

Boumaza M and Campana A (2007) Enquêter en milieu 'difficile'. *Revue française de science politique* 5(1): 5-25.

Bourdieu P (2002) *Le bal des célibataires*. Paris Seuil.

Burawoy M and Lukács J (1992) *The Radiant Past. Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Casas J and Labouesse F (1983) *Monographie de deux kolkhozes soviétiques*. Montpellier: INRA Notes et documents.

Castel R (1968) Présentation. In: Goffman E *Asiles. Études sur la condition sociale des malades mentaux*. Paris : Éditions de Minuit, 7-35.

Castel R and Haroche C (2001) *Propriété privée, propriété sociale, propriété de soi. Entretiens sur la construction de l'individu moderne*. Paris : Fayard.

Céfaï D (2003) *L'enquête de terrain*. Paris: La Découverte.

Creed G W (1998) *Domesticationg Revolution. From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Crowley D and Reid S E. (eds.) (2002) *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in Eastern Bloc*, Oxford: Berg.

Droit E (2009) *Vers un homme nouveau ? L'éducation socialiste en RDA (1949-1989)*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Dufy C and Weber F (2007) *L'ethnographie économique*. Paris: La Découverte.

Eke S M and Kuzio T (2000) Sultanism in Eastern, Europe: The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarian Populism in Belarus. *Europe-Asia Studies* 52(3): 523-547.

Engelking A (2002) The Mentality of Kolkhoz Inhabitants. Research Notes from the Grodno Region of Belarus. *International Journal of Sociology* 31(4) :64-78.

Fitzpatrick S (2002 [1999]) *Le stalinisme au quotidien. La Russie soviétique dans les années 1930*. Paris Flammarion.

Gessat-Anstett E (2001) Les mots / maux de l'*etnografiâ*. A propos d'une discipline et de ses attendus, l'ethnologie russe post-soviétique. *Journal des anthropologues* (87): 65-78.

Gessat-Anstett, E (2007) *Une Atlantide russe. Anthropologie de la mémoire en Russie post-soviétique*. Paris: La Découverte.

Giustino C, Plum C J and Vari A (eds.) (2013) *Socialist Escapes. Breaking Away from Ideology and Everyday Routine in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Goujon A (2002) Le 'loukachisme' ou le populisme autoritaire en Biélorussie. *Politique et Sociétés* 21(2): 29-50.

Goujon A (2009) *Révolutions politiques et identitaires en Ukraine et en Biélorussie (1988-2008)*. Paris : Belin.

Grignon C and Passeron J-C (1989) *Le savant et le populaire. Misérabilisme et populisme en sociologie et en littérature*. Paris : Hautes Études / Gallimard / Seuil.

Hann C (1980) *Tázlár: a village in Hungary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hann C 1985) *A Village Without Solidarity: Polish Peasants in Years of Crisis*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hann C (1994) After Communism: Reflections on East European anthropology and the 'transition'. *Social Anthropology* 2(3): 229-249).

Harris M (2010) A Death in Minsk Should Sound The Alarm Bells. *Belarus Digest*. Available at: http://belarusdigest.com/2010/09/09/a-death-in-minsk-should-sound-the-alarm-bells.

Hervouet R (2009 [2007]) *Datcha blues. Existences ordinaires et dictature en Biélorussie*. Paris Belin.

Hervouet R (2013a) Authoritarianism from Below. Lessons from Ethnographic Studies in Belarus. *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 31(2): 19-29.

Hervouet R (2013b) Le 'socialisme de marché' dans la Biélorussie de Lukashenko : égalitarisme, néopatrimonialisme et dépendance extérieure. *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée* 20(3): 97-113.

Hervouet R (2014) Usages du passé et ordre social en Biélorussie. L'histoire d'un prêtre charismatique aux prises avec son passé criminel. *Ethnologie française* 44 (3): 409-420.

Hervouet R (2018) *Le quotidien d'un régime autoritaire. Économie, morale et politique dans les campagnes de Biélorussie*. ENS Paris: *Habilitation à diriger des recherches* (Accreditation to Supervise Research)

Hervouet R and Kurilo A (2010) Travailler 'bénévolement' pour la collectivité. Les *subbotniki* en Biélorussie postsoviétique. *Genèses* (78): 87-104.

Hervouet R, Kurilo A and Shukan I (2017) Socialisme de marché et gouvernement des campagnes en Biélorussie. *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 48(1-2): 83-118.

Hibou B (2011) *Anatomie politique de la domination*. Paris: La Découverte.

Humphrey C (2001) *Marx Went Away – But Karl Stayed Behind* (Updated Edition of *Karl Marx Collective: Economy, Society and Religion in a Siberian Collective Farm*, 1983). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Ioffe G (2014) *Understanding Belarus and How Western Foreign Policy Misses the Mark*. New York and London: Rowman and Littlefield.

Karbalévitch Valeri (2012) *Le satrape de Biélorussie. Alexandre Lukashenko, dernier tyran d'Europe*. Paris: François Bourin Éditeur.

Katz E (ed.) (2009) *Political Ethnography. What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Kideckel D (1993) *The Solitude of Collectivism. Romanian Villagers to the Revolution and Beyond*. Chicago and London: Yale University Press.

Kocka J (1995) L'histoire sociale de la RDA. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 106-107: 80-84.

Koleva D (ed.) (2012) *Negociating Normality. Everyday Lives in Socialist Institutions*. New Brunswick (New Jersey): Transaction Publishers.

Kott S (2001) *Le communisme au quotidien. Les entreprises d'État dans la société est-allemande*. Paris : Belin.

Kott S (2002) Compte rendu de : Lüdtke Alf, *Des ouvriers dans l'Allemagne du XXe siècle. Le quotidien des dictatures* (2000). *Revue d'histoire contemporaine et moderne* 49(2): 226-229.

Krakovský R (2014) *Réinventer le monde. L'espace et le temps en Tchéchoslovaquie communiste*. Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne.

Kryzhanouski Y (2017) Gouverner la dissidence. Sociologie de la censure sous régime autoritaire ; le cas du rock contestataire biélorusse. *Critique internationale* (76): 123-145.

Lagrave R-M (ed.) (2011) *Fragments du communisme en Europe centrale*. Paris : Éditions de l'EHESS.

Lahire B (2012) *Monde pluriel. Penser l'unité des sciences sociales*. Paris Seuil.

Lahire B (2015) *Ceci n'est pas qu'un tableau. Essai sur l'art, la domination, la magie et le sacré*. Paris La Découverte.

Lallemand J-C (2006) Biélorussie : un régime autoritaire en quête d'une idéologie d'Etat. *Esprit* (2): 200-209.

Lallemand J-C and Symaniec V (2007) *Biélorussie. Mécanique d'une dictature*. Paris: Les petits matins.

Lampland M (1991) Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives. *American Ethnologist* 18(3): 459-479).

Lapatniova A (2001) *Biélorussie : les mises en scène du pouvoir*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Ledeneva A (1998) *Russia's Economy of Favours.* Blat*, Networking and Informal Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leshchenko N (2008) The National Ideology and the Basis of the Lukashenka Regime in Belarus. *Europe-Asia Studies* 60(8): 1419-1433.

Leshchenko N (2011) The Sound of Clapping. *Belarus Digest*. Available at: http://belarusdigest.com/2011/06/24/sound-clapping.

Linz J J (2006 [2000]) *Régimes totalitaires et autoritaires*. Paris : Armand Colin.

Lüdtke A (1998) La République Démocratique Allemande comme histoire. Réflexions historiographiques. *Annales Histoire. Sciences Sociales* 53(1): 3-39.

Lüdtke A (2000) *Des ouvriers dans l'Allemagne du XXe siècle. Le quotidien des dictatures*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Marcou J and Pankovski S (2003) Le phénomène biélorusse. In: Dépelteau F and Lacassagne A (eds.) *Le Bélarus. L'Etat de l'exception*. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 13-32.

Martinovitch V (2010) *Paranoia.* Saint-Petersburg: Astrel SPB.

Mauger G (1991) Enquêter en milieu populaire. *Genèses* (6): 125-143.

Maurel M-C (1980) *La campagne collectivisée. Société et espace rural en Russie*. Paris: Editions Anthropos.

McMahon M A. (1997) Aleksandr Lukashenka, president, Republic of Belarus. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 13(2) : 129-137.

Mischi J and Renahy N (2008) Pour une sociologie politique des mondes ruraux. *Politix* 21(83): 9-21.

Naviny.by (2006) Prokuratura Belarusi prokommentirovala delo latvijskogo diplomata. Available at: http://naviny.by/rubrics/society/2006/08/01/ic_news_116_256958/.

Neculau A (2008) *La vie quotidienne en Roumanie sous le communisme*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Nečapajka T (2005) Diskreditaciâ gosudarstva' stanet v Belorussii prestupleniem. *BBCRUSSIAN.com*. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/news/newsid_4492000/4492182.stm.

Olivier de Sardan J-P (2000) Le 'je' méthodologique. Implication et explicitation dans l'enquête de terrain. *Revue française de sociologie* 41(3): 417-445.

Perchoc P (2006) L'enseignement supérieur biélorusse en exil. *Le courrier des pays de l'Est* (1057): 79-83.

Pesmen D (1995) Standing Bottles, Washing Deals, and Drinking 'for the Soul' in a Siberian City. *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 13 (2): 65-74.

Plaschinsky G (2012) Political Prisoners As Part Of Belarus Electoral Process. *Belarus Digest***.** Available at: http://belarusdigest.com/story/political-prisoners-part-belarus-electoral-process-7852.

Ragaru N and Capelle-Pogăcean A (eds.) (2010) *Vie quotidienne et pouvoir sous le communisme. Consommer à l'Est*. Paris: Karthala.

Renahy N (2005) *Les gars du coin. Enquête sur une jeunesse rurale*. Paris: La Découverte.

Rennes J (2006) Une université biélorusse en son exil lituanien. *EspacesTemps.net*. Available at: http://www.espacestemps.net/articles/une-universite-bielorusse-en-son-exil-lituanien.

Revel J (1989) L'histoire au ras du sol (préface). In: Levi G, *Le pouvoir au village. Histoire d'un exorciste dans le Piémont du XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Gallimard.

Ries N (1997) *Russian Talk. Culture and Conversation during Perestroika*. Ithaca (New York): Yale University Press.

Rowell J (2006) *Le totalitarisme au concret. Le logement en RDA 1945-1989*. Paris: Économica.

Sampson S (1991) Is There an Anthropology of Socialism? *Anthropology Today* 7(5): 16-19.

Schreck C (2015) Western Scholars Alarmed by Russian Deportations, Fines. *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*. Available at: http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-western-scholars-alarmed-deportations/26929921.html.

Schwartz O (1990) *Le monde privé des ouvriers. Hommes et femmes du Nord*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Schwartz O (1991) Sur le rapport des ouvriers du Nord à la politique. Matériaux lacunaires. *Politix* (13): 79-86.

Schwartz O (1993) L'empirisme irréductible (postface). In: Anderson N *Le Hobo*. Paris: Nathan, 265-305.

Schwartz O (1998) *La notion de classes populaires*. Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin en Yvelines : *Habilitation à diriger des recherches* (Accreditation to Supervise Research)

Shukan T (2008) Le flash-mob : forme d'action privilégiée des jeunes contestataires en Biélorussie. *Raisons politiques* (28): 9-21).

Smirnova R. (ed.) (2009) *Čelovečeskij potencial belorusskoj derevni*. Minsk: Belorusskaâ Nauka.

Smolar P. (2012) Inventaire avant liquidation. *Le Monde*, February 19-20.

Snyder T (2010) In Darkest Belarus. *The New York Review of Books* October 28.

Snyder T (2017 [2003]) *La reconstruction des nations. Pologne, Ukraine, Lituanie, Bélarus. 1569-1999*. Paris: Gallimard.

Symaniec V (2006) Le théâtre en Biélorussie. L'officiel et le dissident. *Le courrier des pays de l'Est* (1057): 79-83.

Šanski A. (2003) Navuka pra dačnikav, Minsk: *Nasha Niva* May 16.

Taras A (2011) Vengriâ ne poterpit 'travli svoih diplomatov'. Available at: http://naviny.by/rubrics/politic/2011/06/27/ic_articles_112_174162/.

Tkačenko E. (2002) 'Postavil' na daču, Minsk: *Belorusskaâ Delovaâ Gazeta* May 16.

Vaissié C (2010) Recension de *Datcha blues*. *Vingtième siècle* (106): 287-288.

Verdery K (1983) *Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Verdery K (1996) *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Verdery K (2013) An Anthropologist in Communist Romania, 1973-1989. *Problems of Post-Communism* 60(4): 35-42.

Verdery K and Faure J (2011) Les échanges universitaires, la logique de bloc et l'esprit de guerre froide. *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire* (109): 201-212.

Weber F (2009 [1989]) *Le travail à-côté. Une ethnographie des perceptions*. Paris: Éditions de l'EHES.

Wedel J (1986) *The Private Poland: an Anthropologist's Look at Everyday Life*. New York and Oxford: Facts on File.

Werth N (1999) L'historiographie de l'U.R.S.S. dans la période post-communiste. *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 30(1): 81-104.

Werth N (2001) Le stalinisme au pouvoir. Mise en perspective historiographique. *Vingtième siècle* (69): 125-135.

Wilson A (2011) *Belarus. The Last European Dictatorship*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Yurchak A (2006) *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Zakharova L (2013) Le quotidien du communisme : pratiques et objets. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* (68): 305-314.

Zaytseva A (2008) La légitimité du rock en URSS dans les années 1970-1980. Acteurs, logiques, institutions. *Cahiers du Monde russe* 49(4): 651-680.