

# Archives from below in France and Québec

From singular to collective(s),  
from individual to common(s)



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# Archives from below in France and Québec

Archives from the margins in France:  
community claims or a desire to be  
included in the national narrative?



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## Which affiliation processes ?

- Reflecting on the notion of margins - political, social or cultural - and archiving projects developed from these margins
- Studying alternative archiving projects carried out by individuals or groups ("contre-archives" [counter archives])
- Scope: retrospective archiving projects since the late 1980s
- Methods: analysis of archival productions, editorial achievements; testimonies collected using a semi-structured method
- Main projects studied (not exhaustive): Génériques (immigration archives), Mémorial des Nomades (travelers' archives), Archives du féminisme, Mémoires des sexualités (LGBT archives), Collectif LGBT Paris.

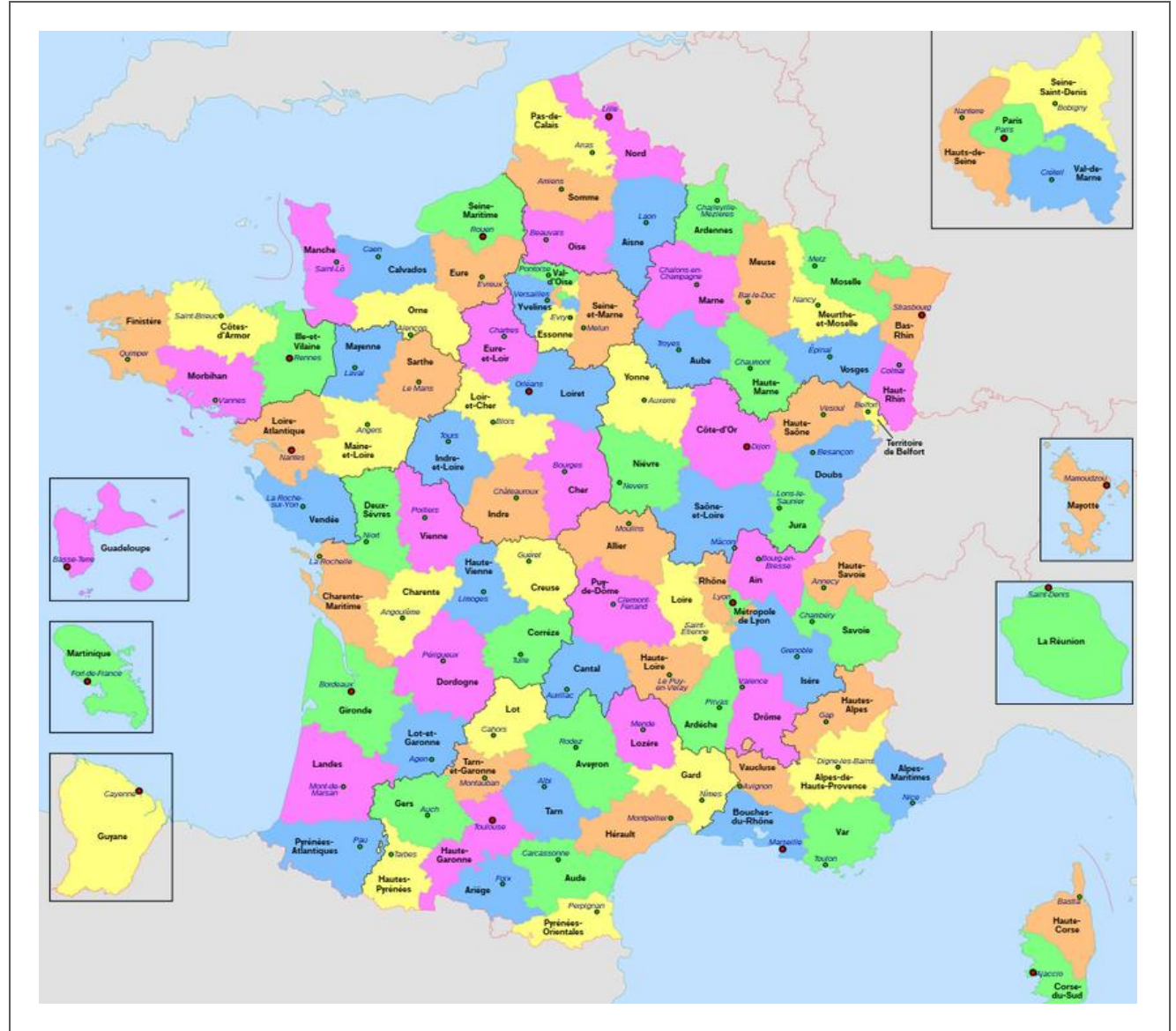
# Context: a high degree of centralisation

France is a Nation-State : a language + an administrative network + a political, identity and cultural ideal symbolized by the French Revolution

Evolving objectives: from cultural democratization to the exercise of "cultural rights"

Cultural rights :

- a right to cultural identity?
- a right to free participation in cultural life?
- a collective or individual right?



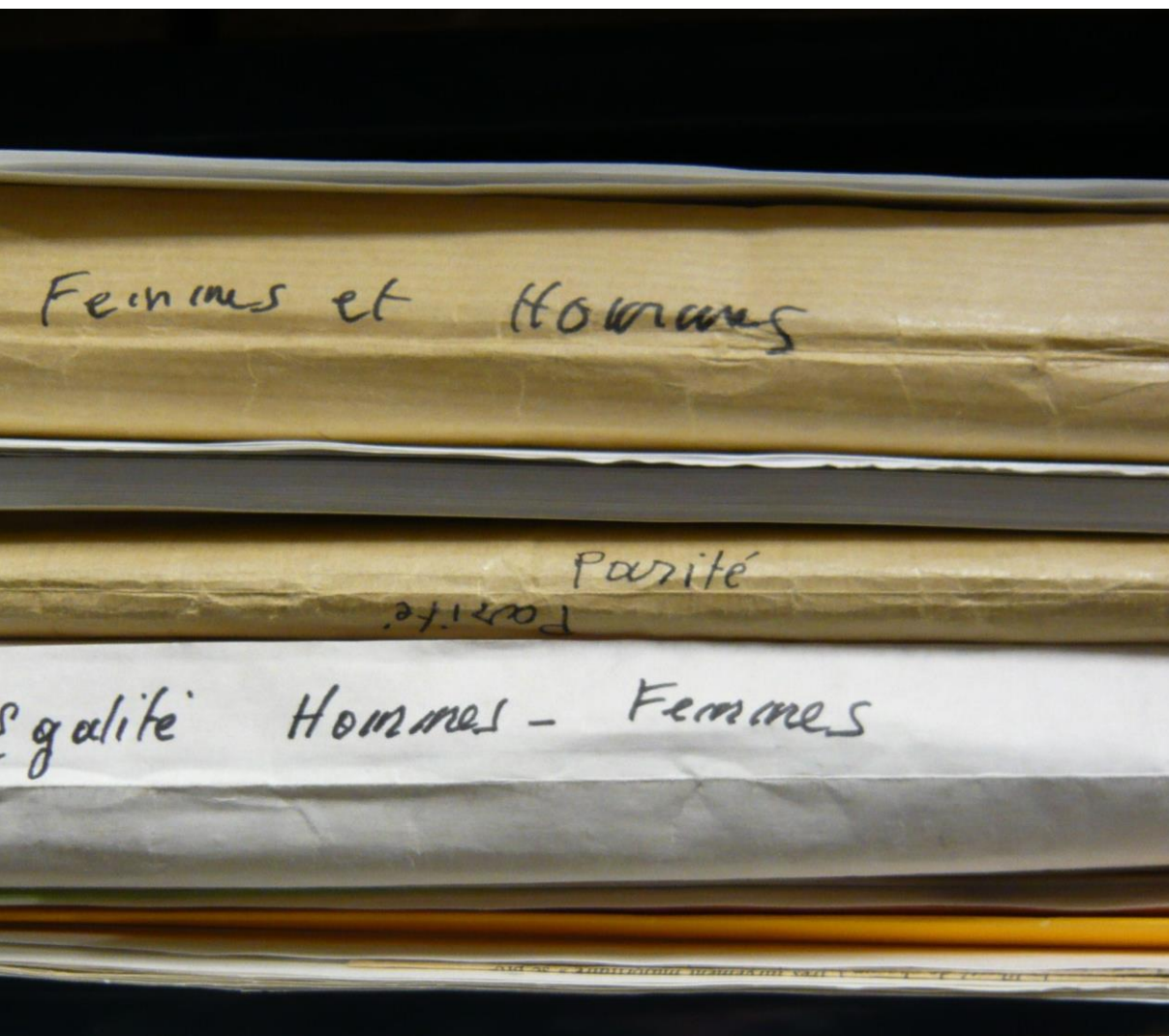


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en proposant vos archives personnelles ou  
associatives...

# Modalities of emergence of collective actions

From the end of the 1980s onwards, new structures were created with new ambitions: to collect archives from the outside world and distribute them to a wider or narrower circle.



# Construction of archival categories

- Archival categories: feminist archives, LGBT archives, immigration archives, nomad archives etc.
- An alliance between activism, academia and research; enlargement with institutions; at the crossroads of the scientific and associative fields
- Amnesia is not spontaneous and is part of present-day marginalization
- It is therefore necessary to find and preserve the archives of past struggles and the trace of the lives of the people concerned
- A co-legitimization approach: academics justify the archival project, and the scientific project is backed up by the identification of documentary and archival resource sites
- "The association's objective was more broadly, for the de facto recognition of the history of immigration in official institutions" said a witness (association Génériques)



## Mémoire des sexualités



L'association Mémoire des Sexualités met à disposition un fonds documentaire, organise débats publics et salons, et participe à la construction du mouvement militant LGBT.

# Writing history is at the heart of our approach

- Central to setting the project in motion
- Central to attracting donations and deposits
- More or less conceptualized
- Two approaches:
  - combat organized invisibilization and oblivion, and open up archives to research (examples: Archives du féminisme created in 1999, Génériques created in 1987)
  - build a narrative for the main use of the collective behind the project (example: Mémoires des sexualités Marseille created in 1989)

# The question of files

- Margins are often documented by police or judicial files
- Archives of violence?
- A witness : "when you handle individual records of people, face and profile, all the time, it can be nauseating at times"
- A witness : "Give a different image of the history of immigration than that of the police, and bring out other sources"
- Importance of research guides



recherche

## Accueil

Le guide des sources est un outil de localisation des fonds d'archives LGBTQI+ en France. Le Guide des sources est porté par Collectif Archives LGBTQI Paris.



# Three other observations

Importance of "ego-archives" according to the concept proposed by Patrice Marcilloux, i.e. documents that offer the subject a means of understanding and situating himself, and a space for the construction of individualities.

Emphasis on the forbidden and their exhibition, e.g. erotic and pornographic homosexual archives.

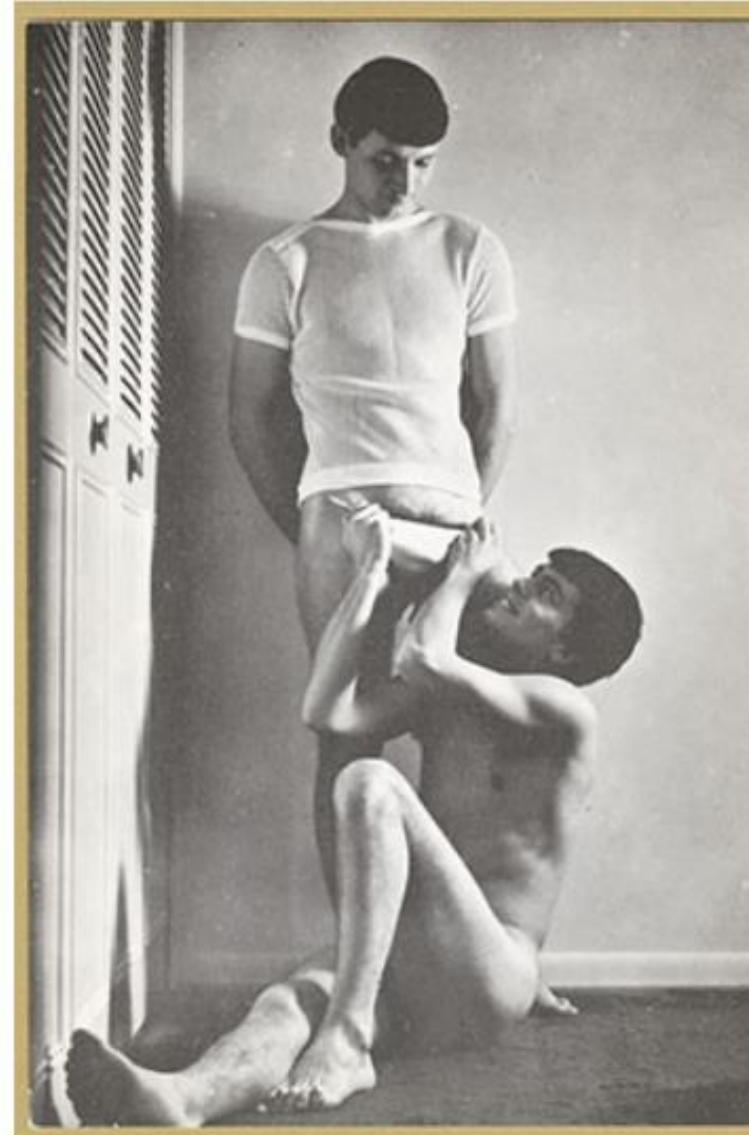
Search for archives that add value: for example, songs and music in the case of immigration archives.



**One night stand d'Émilie Jouvét :  
et le porno se fait queer », *La dixième muse*, n°23, novembre-  
décembre 2006**

Bm Lyon, Chomarat P 2246

Fonds Chomarat,  
Bibliothèque municipale de  
Lyon



**Carte postale, Paris, Artistes de  
Paris, 1970.**

Bm Lyon, Chomarat Est 23215 (07),  
fonds Illico

# Archives as tools or archives as project ?

Either the archives are placed at the center of the approach and the other actions radiate from them (examples : Archives du féminisme, Génériques ou Académie gay et lesbienne)

Either archives are a means of maintaining group cohesion, polarization and mobilization (example: Mémoires des sexualités or LGBT collective Paris since the law authorizing gay marriage in 2013)

Archives become a playful occupation, to help the group last and inscribed in a protest and divisive mode.



Watch archive documents over a drink

# An institutionalization in progress?

A witness (Génériques) : "The association's idea was never to become a conservatory of these sources, to be a conservation institution, but rather to identify in particular private archives relating to the history of immigration and to transfer them, through donations and deposits, to public archives, whether in departments, communes or the National Archives."



Illustration 3. Jean Favier, André Jeanson et Saïd Bouziri  
au Comité de suivi de l'inventaire national, 1993.  
© Collection Génériques, fonds Béatrice Lagarde

Partnership between Archives de France (Ministry of Culture) represented by its director Jean Favier and Génériques represented by its president Saïd Bouziri

# Choosing your affiliation (1)

Collectif LGBT Paris, Mémoires des sexualités: influence of the North American matrix; internationalism; reinventing a symbolic activity to stage the group's identity; cultural rights conceived as a right to cultural identity and a collective right, and in the process of metropolization of public policies



## Notre philosophie de l'archive

### Pourquoi des archives LGBTQI ?

À la suite des travaux pionniers de Magnus Hirschfeld à Berlin dans les années 1920, les initiatives des minorités sexuelles et de genre pour conserver leurs archives et leurs mémoires se sont démultipliées et amplifiées à partir des années 1970-1980 dans de nombreux pays.

Ainsi en France, on assiste à la création en 1984 à Paris des Archives Recherches Cultures Lesbiennes, en 1989 à Marseille de l'association Mémoires des sexualités, en 2001 à Vitry-sur-Seine de l'Académie Gay et Lesbienne ou encore en 2005 à Paris de l'association audiovisuelle trans Médusa.

Cependant il n'existe pas encore à Paris ou en région de lieu disposant de l'espace, des moyens et de la visibilité suffisants pour permettre aux LGBTQI de sauvegarder et partager largement leur histoire et leurs mémoires, comme c'est le cas à San Francisco, Berlin, Amsterdam, Bologne, Prague, Londres.

Le traitement des archives des minorités par les services institutionnels les expose à la dépossession, la dispersion, l'invisibilisation. Il induit également une déformation des représentations et opère un tri inadapté aux critères des personnes concernées. C'est pourquoi le Collectif Archives LGBTQI prône une gestion communautaire de ses archives,

# Choosing your affiliation (2)

- Other collectives: integrating the national narrative
- A witness (Génériques): "to act as an intermediary between activists who didn't necessarily trust the State [...] so they found it difficult to give their archives to the French National Archives [...] it was more our way of entering through the personalities of our founders and the institutions". The association's first action was an exhibition to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution.
- Archives du féminisme : making women and feminism part of national history
- President (Mémorial des nomades): "because considering us as a separate ethnic group from the French nation doesn't suit us"



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**Bouziri, Saïd**

[Date](#) : 1967-2006

[Description physique](#) : 161 cartons.

[Organisme responsable](#)

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Université Paris Nanterre  
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# Conclusion

a form of compromise between claiming to belong to the grand national narrative and displaying their militant commitment

