Countering Homonationalism:
A Case Study with ACT UP, Paris

By

Laelia DARD-DASCOT

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

Supervisors: Elissa Helms & Iris van der Tuin

Budapest, Hungary
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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the recent phenomenon called homonationalism, through the angle of activism. By doing fieldwork with the association ACT UP, Paris, I intended to understand how activists have perceived homonationalism. I chose ACT UP because they participated in the construction of the LGBT community but also created coalitions with other marginalized groups so as to better struggle against AIDS. I analyzed whether the post-colonial approach of the association can help to avoid falling into the pitfall of homonationalism. First, I argue that the LGBT community, product of the history of the LGBT movement, has been embedded since its inception in a national framework that they cannot escape. Moreover, the LGBT community is informed by its own nationalism, which forms the basis from which they organize their struggle. As a result, homonationalism was not perceived as new but as something that always existed within the LGBT movement. Moreover, considering the recent development of French state politics, by taking into account the processes of exclusion against certain minorities, most notably Muslim people, but also the issue of imperialism, I argue that the issue of homonationalism is deeply linked to the relation that the LGBT community has with state politics. My analysis of the potential of ACT UP to displace the LGBT community is part of a larger ambition to counter homonationalism in its various and complex forms.

Ce mémoire est une exploration du phénomène récent que l'on appelle homonationalisme, sous l'angle de l'activisme. En poussant la porte de l'association ACT UP Paris, j'ai essayé de comprendre comment l'homonationalisme est perçu par les militants. J'ai choisi ACT UP car elle a participé à la construction d'une communauté LGBT et parce qu'elle a créé des coalitions avec d'autres groupes marginalisés afin de lutter plus efficacement contre le SIDA. J'analyse comment l'approche postcoloniale de l'association peut permettre de ne pas tomber dans le piège de l'homonationalisme. La communauté LGBT, produit de l'histoire des mouvements LGBT, est imbriquée depuis ses débuts dans un cadre national auquel elle ne peut échapper. C'est la raison pour laquelle l'homonationalisme n'est pas perçu comme un phénomène récent mais comme existant depuis les débuts du mouvement LGBT. De plus, en prenant en compte les récents développements de la politique française, et prenant en considération les processus d'exclusion envers certaines minorités, en particulier envers les Musulmans, ainsi que le problème de l'impérialisme, j'affirme que le problème de l'homonationalisme est intrinsèquement lié à la relation que la communauté homosexuelle entretient avec la politique. Mon analyse sur le potentiel d'ACT UP à redéfinir la communauté homosexuelle fait partie d'une ambition plus large de contrer l'homonationalisme dans ses formes complexes et variées.

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Introduction

"I must distance myself from this complicity
with racism, including anti-Muslim racism"
(Judith Butler, June 19, 2010)

The news spread across all gender studies department in Europe faster than the speed of light: Judith Butler had refused the Civil Courage Prize at the 2010 Christopher Street Day in Berlin. She denounced what she called the pervasive racism within the LGBT community and the instrumental use of gay rights to exclude minority groups living in Germany. For many people at the event as well as for people reading the news in LGBT magazines the next day, Butler's speech is considered as a milestone in the denunciation of homonationalism. Whereas the word homonationalism was barely uttered by some activists and scholars before, it became a new concept that one could not ignore anymore. The discontent one could feel in the LGBT world of theory and activism now had a name: homonationalism.

So I knew about the concept and was prepared when I attended, seven months later, the conference in Amsterdam entitled "Sexual nationalisms: Gender, Sexuality and the Politics of belonging in the New Europe". The conference had been co-organized by the *Amsterdam Research Center for Gender and Sexuality* and the Paris-based *Institut de recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les Enjeux Sociaux*. The conference attracted a crowd and brought to the fore the tensions already present within the LGBT world. Judith Butler herself came and explained further her critical view, arguing that human and gay rights are used as tools to legitimate military interventions in foreign countries (Costache, 2011:106). What Butler denounced here is the fact that the advocacy of gay rights by Western countries thus travels in places where the West is embodied mostly by the army. Butler's interventions showed two aspects of homonationalism, one national and the other transnational.

Homonationalism is a new concept, which has been extensively studied in recent years. Jasbir K. Puar coined the word in her seminal work published in 2007 and entitled *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Puar defines homonationalism as the embedding of homonormative ideologies in the ideal of the U.S. nation, i.e. the incorporation of homosexuality as a constituent element of the United States of America's sexual exceptionalism (Puar, 2007). Whereas the author focuses mostly on the United States, the concept of homonationalism echoed the construction of sexuality in several Western European countries. There is now a considerable scholarship on this topic applied in different countries, including France. As Eric Fassin explained during the conference in Amsterdam, LGBT rights discourse participated in the exclusion of French Muslims, the latter being supposedly intolerant towards homosexuality. Homonationalism is a concept that resonated in countries, in which there is a considerable LGBT movement, and which have recently given LGBT rights legal recognition.

As we see, homonationalism as a concept has had a significant success and the issue is now widely debated. But it also had an explosive effect as it questioned the legitimacy of LGBT politics. And this explosion happens in a historical moment in which LGBT rights campaigns have never been so successful. Anti-discrimination laws are now condemning homophobia in a significant number of countries. It is also a crucial moment in history because gay marriage has recently become a unifying goal in the LGBT rights movement. But this struggle for LGBT rights, i.e. for a politics of inclusion, was shadowed by a concurrent politics of exclusion of other groups. Feeling part of an LGBT community is not reason enough to actually be welcomed in it. Moreover, the struggle for equality was shadowed by the disclosure of politics that only strengthened other inequalities. The construction of a sexually more tolerant West comes with an imperialist agenda and is used to legitimate intervention abroad.

The question of whether strategies chosen by LGBT activists are exclusionary *per se*, or whether it is the reclaiming by state politics that render them dubious can be raised. It is necessary to understand whether exclusionary politics are constitutive of LGBT politics or whether it is the State institutions that use LGBT rights to legitimate their nationalistic agenda and imperialistic politics. LGBT activists have to navigate through a political system, which they criticize but from which they cannot escape. They have to "infiltrate" the system so as to be able to change it. If homonationalism is a concept now well established in academia, less research has been done on how the concept is perceived and interpreted by activists. This is the angle I choose to grasp homonationalism in activists' practices.

In my thesis, I would like to unravel the discourses about homonationalism but I would like to see how it is possible to counter this new phenomenon. In order to do so, I chose to focus on how LGBT activists themselves are building strategies and how, if so, they struggle against homonationalism. This choice reflects my willingness to bridge activism and theory. The bridge is not broken by the denunciation of homonationalism but it certainly needs some renovations. I believe that theory is already activism and most of the activists I met were very aware of theoretical texts. ACT UP is often cited in academic texts as the embodiment of queer theory in practice. This is one of the reasons why I chose the association as an entry point into the world of activism.

In order to get out of this conundrum, I chose to do fieldwork with a specific association, i.e. ACT UP Paris. Several paths led me to knock at the door of ACT UP Paris. First, ACT UP has a very visible visual activism and their strategies are often successful in reaching the media. Their activist strategies have been well studied in academia but most articles focus on ACT UP branches in the United States of America. Second, ACT UP Paris is publicly fighting against the rise of nationalism and racism in France and participates in many events organized by anti-racist associations.

To answer my questions, I would like to confront sociological literature linking nationalism and sexuality with queer theory on homonationalism. The rise of nationalism is often conflated with the rise of racism, as the idea of nation entails processes of exclusion (Mosse, 1985; Fassin, 2006). At the same time the nation, first defined as a heteronormative structure, has now taken the LGBT rights as an accepted norm thus making homonormativity a new norm (Duggan, 1994). This trend at this moment in history has to be acknowledged and challenged so as not to legitimate exclusionary politics. Homonationalism appears when exclusionary practices are legitimated by the recognition of LGBT rights, i.e. when tolerance towards sexual minorities becomes the new threshold to gaining citizenship (Fassin, 2006; Haritaworn et al., 2008). It should be specified that homonormativity usually focuses on the rights of gay and lesbians and seldom refers to bisexuals and transsexuals. Nevertheless, I will use the acronym LGBT because it is the one used by the associations struggling for gay and lesbian rights.

I will first explain the concept of homonationalism in France. Then I will go back to the construction of the LGBT community in France, from its inception in the 1970s until the presidential campaign of 2012. I will show that the notion of LGBT community is problematic because its construction is embedded in a national narrative. The legitimation of the existence of a gay community happens on a national level, by demanding equal rights by national law. Second, I will show how some actors in the French LGBT community, in their construction of a collective identity, use processes of exclusion and how LGBT politics are sometimes framed in nationalistic words. Third, I will open the door of ACT UP and follow them during the last month of the presidential campaign. Through participant observation of meetings and actions organized by the association during the presidential campaign, I will argue that ACT UP struggles against the possibility of homonationalism but that the association is limited by a state privileging other constituents of the LGBT movement.

Chapter 1
Theoretical framework and research design

Scholarship about homonationalism is recent but has been growing fast in the last few years. Most of the events that will be related in this thesis as well as the publications happened in the last two years. Not everything has been said about homonationalism of course but we see that the concept, originally formulated by Jasbir K. Puar in 2005, hit a nerve in academia. Moreover, many articles are published regularly online, relating how homonationalism can be observed in several countries, particularly in Western Europe. Many scholars guided me throughout my research and I hope that I can review as accurately as possible those who inspired me the most. In my research, I draw on three important bodies of work. Taking as a starting point the scholarship about homonationalism, I also looked closely at the scholarship about the relation between sexuality and nationalism. At last, I review scholarship about the LGBT movement as well as about AIDS, so as to understand the position of ACT UP, Paris in the movement. I travel from Anglophone to French scholarship because both are relevant for my case study.

As for the methodology, I have been more hesitant in choosing one that could help me the most in my research. With a background in history, I tend to interpret everything historically while at the same time reminding myself that, as a professor of history at the Sorbonne kept saying (referring to Hegel), we do not learn from history. Nevertheless, I find the historical perspective illuminating for my topic. But I also took an inter-disciplinary approach, drawing on methodologies taken from anthropology. Within this approach, feminist methodology will be the backbone of my research. As Sandra Harding showed, it is not the methods that make a research feminist but the ideas behind the methods, i.e. the theory of knowledge that shapes our practices of inquiry and justification (Harding, 1987).

1.1 From nationalism to homonationalism

My research question on how to counter homonationalism was first and foremost inspired by the recent academic debate on homonationalism. As I soon realized, understanding homonationalism implies going back and seeing how the LGBT movement developed over time. To criticize the LGBT movement implies knowledge about how the LGBT movement came to being. I was eager to understand the history of the movement before I could express some criticisms. Understanding does not mean forgiving or decreasing the responsibility of the main actors in the movement, but it is necessary so as to move beyond and create new strategies.

The literature about nationalism and sexuality has revealed to be most helpful to understand how social actors are entangled by larger forces that they cannot escape. However I am aware of the danger to accuse the bigger force that is nationalism, which would play down the responsibility of the actors. In the initial call for papers made for the conference in Amsterdam, the organizers had only mentioned George Mosse and Joan W. Scott. This unfortunate mistake, which left behind the many scholars of color who contributed to the field, was also a choice to focus more on nationalism rather than on racism among the LGBT community (Jaunait, 2011:13).

Racism is hardly new in the history of the LGBT movement. This is due to the fact that the movement was created around the category of homosexuality, leaving behind other aspects that constitute identity. This will be explained more in details in my analysis of the history of the LGBT movement in France. Here, I wish to recall the importance of AIDS in shaping activist strategies. Finally for lack of a better word, I will use the word LGBT, as I understand it as the continuity of the lesbian and gay movement of the 1970s. But today, it is still often only gays and lesbians that are under consideration when the word LGBT is used.

1.1.1 Tracking homonationalism

Coining the word

As hinted in the introduction, the concept of homonationalism has become notorious in the last few years. I myself became acquainted with the concept in the conference organized in Amsterdam, which brought more than two hundred fifty hundred participants. (Costache, 2011:104). Jasbir P. Puar coined the word in her book published in 2007. Two years before, Puar argued that, in the United States of America,

> Queerness is proffered as a sexually exceptional form of American national sexuality through a rhetoric of sexual modernization that is simultaneously able to castigate the other as homophobic *and* perverse, and construct the imperialist center as "tolerant" but sexually, racially, and gendered normal
>
> (Puar, 2005:122)

This sentence can be understood as the definition of homonationalism in the American context. It is not clear who is proffering queerness for this purpose. In concrete ways, homonationalism appears on many levels, from the individual assuming the "other" is homophobic, to the state, which uses this fear against minority groups.

In her book *Terrorist assemblages*, Puar's work can be understood in the light of post-9/11 politics. Her work focuses on the United States. She takes a Deleuzian perspective, hinted at by the word "assemblage", to explain a new phenomenon that, she suspects, puts into question LGBT politics. The writer is keen to unravel the link between the normalization of queer identities and the development of American imperialism. She explains the rise of a gay nationalism, which she calls homonationalism or homonormative nationalism. She describes the emergence of the construction of the queer body as a new norm: from a body threatened by death because of AIDS, the queer body becomes the symbol of life, a life that deserves equal rights regarding marriage and reproduction. On the other side stands the terrorist body that deserves to be tortured and killed because of its supposed intolerance. To

develop this last point, Puar describes the effect the torture in Abu Ghraib had on the American society and the way it was talked about in the media, the latter stressing the fact that the homosexual acts used as torture were particularly humiliating in Muslim culture.

The concept of homonormativity comes back often in Puar's work as the new trope in which nationalism takes its strength. It is all the more significant to understand it as the LGBT movement does struggle to gain equal rights regarding marriage and reproduction. Homonormativity can be defined as the willingness to enter the main stage of society by accepting and reproducing the rules of the dominant. In other words, gay people are keen to demand gay marriage and the rights to adoption so as to live "a normal life". This normalization of gay identities implies the existence of a "fixed minority political constituency" eager to assimilate (Duggan, 1994:4). It is problematic because it privileges one identity over others. As Duggan showed,

> The production of a politics from a fixed identity position privileges those for whom that position is the primary or only marked identity. The result for lesbian and gay politics is a tendency to center prosperous white men as the representative homosexuals.
>
> (Duggan, 1994:4)

As Duggan hints, LGBT politics are actually dominated by white gay men. The desire for assimilation, easier for the white gay men, makes it easier to understand the appeal to nationalism. Moreover, homonormativity "creates a depoliticizing effect on queer communities as it rhetorically remaps and recodes freedom and liberation in terms of privacy, domesticity and consumption" (Martin, 1997:142). Rather than depoliticizing, I would argue that a homonormative agenda moves the focus of LGBT politics away from its radical potential, privileging a dominant discourse compatible with nationalistic discourses. The concept of homonationalism can thus be understood as homonormative nationalism.

Homonationalism in Western Europe

While homonationalism can be observed in the United States, Western Europe often appears to be the focus of analysis. The organizers of the conference in Amsterdam had chosen to focus on the "new Europe" but most papers focused on national case studies of Western European countries. I would argue that similarities can be found in many Western European countries because similar discourses on homosexuality creates a certain homogeneity among these countries, a homogeneity useful in a time of redefinition of the borders and space with the development of the New Europe. The definition of the New Europe is constantly being negotiated and the politics of opening the borders following the Schengen Agreement actually reinforces controls at the border of the Schengen area (Balibar, 2009). As Kulick argued, "sexuality is one site where boundaries and roles in the new Europe are being imagined and negotiated" (Kulick, 2003). Homosexuality is used in discourse to legitimate politics of exclusion in several Western European countries. Sexual politics help to define the New Europe. Tolerance towards homosexuality is put forth as a major argument to differentiate Western Europe from other countries whether from Eastern Europe or elsewhere (Haritaworn, Tauqir, Erdem, 2010). Consequently, the shifting of sexual politics and discourses about homosexuality have been largely influenced by the construction of Europe and European-ness.

The process of normalization of queer identities is crucial in understanding homonationalism. The Netherlands has been studied extensively on this issue. Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens take a critical perspective on the normalization of the LGBT movement as they analyze the case of the Netherlands (Mepschen et al., 2010). Indeed, they analyze how "articulations of lesbian and gay identity no longer threaten but replicate and underscore heteronormative assumptions and structures" (Mepschen et al., 2010:971). The Dutch extreme right wing, represented by the figure of Geert Wilders, is even claiming that

tolerance towards homosexuality is a "core value" of the Netherlands in an effort to stigmatize immigrants (Mepschen et al., 2010). As accurate as their analysis is, the situation in the Netherlands is different than in France because gay marriage and reproductive rights are legal. In France, these rights have not been granted. Thus normalization is less advanced because it does not offer the same rights. Moreover, the radicalization of AIDS activism in France, which was not the case in the Netherlands, opened a space for queer activism within the LGBT movement (Mepschen et al., 2010: 971). Therefore, the normative framework in French sexual rights discourses is not so central or, at least, opens space for different approaches.

Besides, the process of "othering" is at the heart of homonationalism. The term homonationalism refers to the construction of Western gay men supposedly threatened by intolerant "Others", particularly by people from Muslim culture (Puar, 2007). Thus homonationalism cannot be separated from the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Western Europe. Anti-Muslim racism can be witnessed in many countries and there are case studies about many of them. Today, Germany and the Netherlands have laws stipulating that immigrants be tested to see whether they have homophobic tendencies or not (Haritaworn, Tauqir, Erdem, 2010). In the United Kingdom, the mainstream LGBT movement also stigmatizes immigrants by portraying other countries, especially those in the Middle East, as particularly homophobic (Haritaworn et al., 2010). Germany has also been under the spotlight after Judith Butler's refusal of the Civil Courage Award in 2010. Butler accused the organizers of the Berlin gay pride of excluding queer groups of color and said in her refusal speech that she must distance herself "from this complicity with racism" (Butler, 2010). In France, it is often pointed out that sexual rights discourse is used to construct an intolerant religious "Other" which does not deserve to claim a French identity (Dorlin, 2006; Fassin, 2006).

What about France?

Scholars point out that the situation is different in each country depending on how the nation is imagined (Anderson, 1993). The term homonationalism is here significant as it reveals a link between homosexuality and nationalism. As a consequence, each country has a specific form of nationalist discourse. In France, it is important to take into account the history of colonialism and how the colonies were perceived and represented as "Others" (Dorlin, 2006). The history of immigration, as well as the construction of the "Other", is largely influenced by the colonial past (Dorlin, 2006). It is also important to take into account the history of homosexuality in France. Homosexuality, unlike in other countries, was decriminalized as early as 1791 and was more or less tolerated as long as it was a private matter (Mosse, 1985). I would argue that the development of the LGBT movement in France is very much linked to the debates about immigration. At the same time that the politics of borders are shifting, so does the LGBT movement.

There is little information about the situation in France in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, probably due to the language barrier. In France, there is the assumption that gender studies do not exist and that academia is impervious to queer theory (See Bourcier, 2011). Marie-Hélène Bourcier is an interesting case because a member of ACT UP presented her to me as the only French scholar writing on homonationalism. In fact, her book *Queer Zones* hardly mentions homonationalism. In less than three pages, she explains the rise of homonormative identities, symbolized by the white gay man going about the gay district in Paris and demanding equal rights (Bourcier, 2011). She calls this stereotype *homosexus normaticus* (Bourcier, 2011:281). However, Bourcier is also famous as she participated to a Facebook group called "No to homonationalism" when the poster for the gay pride 2011 was revealed. The group was filled with articles explaining the concept. Bourcier is thus also interesting for her activism in the LGBT movement.

Other scholars are less anchored in a queer paradigm but are enlightening to understand the concept at stake, notably Eric Fassin, Elsa Dorlin and Louis-Georges Tin. Eric Fassin was the co-organizer of the conference in Amsterdam. His research focuses on the intersection between race and sexuality (Fassin and Fassin, 2006). He explains that discourses about race and sex in France are circumscribed to a Republican ideology founded on the refusal to admit distinct identities (Fassin and Fassin, 2006). As a consequence, minority rights movements are constrained to frame their struggle using a universalistic framework. Furthermore, he showed that negative references to the United States are made by French intellectuals to criticize multicultural societies and to promote universalism (Fassin, 1999). I will take up Fassin's framework insofar as he always takes a comparative approach between France and the United States. In doing so, I will be able to see how homonationalism appears in France in different ways than in the United States.

Professor at Paris-VIII, Elsa Dorlin takes a postcolonial approach in her study of the construction of racialized sexualities. In her doctoral thesis, Dorlin developed an epistemology of domination, one in which a medicalized perspective on sexuality is used to legitimate the superiority of the white colonizers (Dorlin, 2006:12). More recently, she denounced the racialization of the feminist discourse leading to imperialist and nationalistic politics in the name of women (Dorlin, 2007). In a manifesto called "Not in our names", Dorlin analyzed the instrumentalization during the headscarf ban debate of a so-called unified feminist movement (Dorlin, 2007). Because some feminists defended the universal and secular values of France to support the ban, some politicians instrumentalized a simplified feminist movement for their own purpose, i.e. to argue the superiority and the modernity of the French state. I will also use her approach to analyze the instrumentalization by the state of the LGBT movement.

1.1.2 Homosexuality and nationalism

Sexuality and citizenship

It is crucial to differentiate the notions of nationality and citizenship. In France, the concepts are often used interchangeably. The concept of citizenship defines the relation between the individual and the state. As T.H. Marshall wrote, "citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (Marshall, 1950 in Lister, 2003:14). The community here refers to those subject to the state sovereignty. Nationality works more on an ideological level, by defining the relation between the individual to its national group. In France, the idea of French identity is more related to citizenship rather than nationality (Villalba, 2003). This state of affairs is related to the politics of assimilation of the French state, which considers all French citizens are French by nationality (Villalba, 2003). It is the reason why it is forbidden to create statistics revealing ethnic origins (Fourest, 2011). The process of acquiring French citizenship is for that matter called naturalization. Consequently, we should not conclude that the French ideal citizen is only the white man. Nevertheless, we must recognize that some citizens are discriminated against because of their race and/or ethnicity.

Sexuality is closely linked to the idea of nation and citizenship. As Mosse showed, homosexuality has long been excluded from the construction of the nation (Mosse, 1985). The construction of the nation-state implies necessarily ideas and ideals about what a good citizen is and Mosse explained how the boundaries of nation-states were constructed in the XIXth century and how it came to exclude some groups, in particular Jews and homosexuals. The XIXth century witnessed the development of nation-states in Europe but as well the development of sexology and a certain scientific interest in sexuality (Mosse, 1985:10).

According to Mosse, the image of the homosexual was rendered abnormal because the homosexual was not productive for the nation. Because of the alliance between the nation and bourgeois morality, the exclusion of homosexuals was correlated with the development of respectability as a core value of the citizen in the nation-state (Mosse, 1985). Homosexuality became a sexual identity and a way of life that could not be endorsed by the nation-state. However, homosexuality was decriminalized in France in 1791, during the French revolution. Homosexuality was still excluded from the construction of the nation but the experience of discrimination was different than in Germany or the United States because not punished by law. This fact will be important to consider for my research.

The close relation between nationalism and heterosexism explains the exclusion of homosexuality from the construction of the nation. Peterson defines heterosexism as "the institutionalization and *normalization* of heterosexuality and the corollary exclusion of non-heterosexual identities and practices" (Peterson, 1999:39, original emphasis). Homosexuals are excluded because of their non-reproductive sex. Moreover, they are excluded from "enjoying the membership privileges available to heterosexual couples" with marriage (Peterson, 1999:46). In France, heterosexism is still very central as gay marriage and the rights to adoption for same-sex partners are illegal. Since 1999, a civil union called PACS (Civil Solidarity Pact) has been possible for same-sex partners. Nevertheless, it does not open the same privileges as with marriage and explicitly exclude the possibility for couples to both be recognized as parents of the children they might raise together. It is the reason why the LGBT movement demands the right to get married. The homonormative agenda of the LGBT community reflects the willingness to be part of the nation as full citizens, by reproducing the heteronormative patterns. It can be interpreted as a claim to normality.

Sexuality and Race

In the debate about homonationalism, we observe how sexuality is used to construct the boundaries of the nation. Through sexuality, the boundaries are racialized (Nagel, 2000). Sexuality is used to characterize what the nation is but also to emphasize who does not belong to the nation. Recently, we have been witnessing a shift in which homosexuality is no longer a factor of exclusion and is no longer condemned to stay in the margins. This redefinition of what a good sexuality means reminds us of how sexuality was used in the colonies. Ann Stoler for example wrote a very interesting article about how sexuality was defined and controlled in the colonies. By analyzing the intersection between race and sexuality, Stoler showed that "sexual control figured in the construction of racial boundaries" (Stoler, 1989:636). Today, sexual control happens when tolerance towards homosexuality becomes a threshold to gaining citizenship (Mepschen et al., 2010:970). Immigrants are excluded, especially because they are often described by the media and in politics as intolerant towards homosexuality. In that sense, sexuality remains the "most salient marker of Otherness" (Gilman, 18985 in Stoler, 1989:636).

Joane Nagel, in her brilliant article on ethnicity and sexuality, combines sociological literature and queer theory (Nagel, 2000). She defines ethnicity as something that is performed and performative (Nagel, 2000:111). As suggested by the author, there is no possibility to get out of the process of ethnic differentiation. Nagel accurately points out that sexuality serves "racial, ethnic and nationalistic agendas" (Nagel, 2000:118). She shows in parallel that the Western model of heteronormativity is constructed as a universal model (Nagel, 2000:114). Homonormative agendas become nationalistic when they support the discourses of the dominant group. Because the sexuality of the dominant is constructed as superior (Nagel, 2000:114), tolerance towards homosexuality becomes a new trope to prove the superiority of the dominant. Intolerance, on the other hand, is given as a characteristic of

ethnic minorities. As a result, homosexuality in ethnic communities is rendered invisible (Nagel, 2000:114). In Nagel's article, we see that race comes before sexuality. Similarly, Adrienne Rich had pointedly argued that she was born white before she was born white before she was born a woman (Rich, 1987). In conclusion, Nagel does show that race and ethnicity are performative nevertheless it seems impossible not to naturalize it. This point is important to consider because its puts race as a more important marker than sexuality.

1.1.3 The LGBT movement: an ongoing story

Identity Politics and Queerness

The gay and lesbian movement, called later the LGBT movement, is based on identity politics (Duggan, 1994). This identity politics is often criticized within the LGBT community itself. It is now common to refer to a mainstream gay and lesbian community, now under the spotlight with homonationalism, and a queer community, whose aim is to loosen any fixed category. The mainstream LGBT community is accused of advocating a public collective identity that does not reflect the tensions within the group i.e. that denies other forces of oppression (Gamson, 1995:400). As Gamson demonstrated, "fixed identity categories are both the basis for oppression and the basis for political power" (Gamson, 1995:391). Following the critics, Gamson provocatively asked in 1995 whether identity movements should self-destruct. His analysis of a debate about queerness, published in lesbian and gay periodicals, shows that the tensions are often understood as generational differences (Gamson, 1995:395). But the author also reminds us that the critique of identity politics has always existed within the LGBT community, a phenomenon he calls a "queer dilemma" (Gamson, 1995:4). It is thus no wonder that new questions arise when collective action is achieved.

Lisa Duggan, in queering the state, proposes an interesting strategy to go beyond this dilemma (Duggan, 1994). First, she explains, “though queer politics is presently claiming public and cultural space in imaginative new ways (kiss-ins, for example), the politics of the state are generally being left to lesbian and gay civil rights strategies” (Duggan, 1994:6). Duggan argues that, even though queer politics highlights the margins within the LGBT movement, the state does not allow any space of expression. As a solution, the author calls for a queering of the state, i.e. a strategy that highlights how the state promotes a naturalized notion of heterosexuality (Duggan, 1994:9). In other words, she proposes the deconstruction of heterosexuality, which is at the core of the state, so as to destabilize heteronormativity (Duggan, 1994:11). Duggan thus sees how the relation between the state and activism influences activist strategies. It is the reason why she calls for a reconceptualization of this relation (Duggan, 1994:11). Patton had a similar interpretation when she argued, “what is at stake is not the content of identities but the modes for staging politics through identity” (Patton, 1993:145). It is interesting because it reveals the extent to which identities, even based on sexual orientation, are formed through the relation with the state. Moreover, we can see that the role of the state as legitimate institution to control sexuality is not fundamentally questioned.

The influence of AIDS activism

Because I chose ACT UP to conduct my fieldwork, scholarship about the AIDS crisis has been more than useful. Though it is impossible to review all the literature on the topic, it is necessary to emphasize how much AIDS has changed the LGBT movement. AIDS had a huge impact on the LGBT movement because it led to a growing homophobia in public space (Takemoto, 2003:84). The 1970s had witnessed a “slow institutionalization of the new

lesbian/gay consciousness" (Altman, 1994:510), soon jeopardized by the unknown disease. In the first years, little information was known about the pandemic and it was even believed at first that it was a disease affecting only homosexuals (Altman, 994:510). In 1983, the Denver principles stated that HIV-positive people had the right to be "included in all AIDS forums with equal credibility as other participants, to share their own experiences and knowledge" (Bosia, 2009:77). The declaration asserted that the problem was not only medical but also social and political. This was crucial as it legitimated the role of activists in the AIDS crisis.

But the rapid spread of AIDS was faster than governmental reactions and led to a growing discontent. During a time of neoliberal reforms in the United States and Western Europe, "the spread of the epidemic has often been directly related to larger questions of political economy" (Altman, 1994:507). Governments have been accused of not responding effectively to the AIDS crisis, as in France where an infected blood scandal raised the question of the responsibility of the state (Bosia, 2005). In other words, AIDS was a major public health emergency, not recognized early enough by states (Takemoto, 2003:83). As Crimp wrote, "scientific research, health care and education are the *responsibility and purpose* of government and not a so-called 'private initiative'" (Crimp, 1987:6; original emphasis). We will see with the case of ACT UP, Paris how important the state responsibility still is today and how much members of the association are dubious towards privately financed pharmaceutical industries.

Consequently, the AIDS crisis led to the birth of a new kind of activism, called queer activism. Queer is often equated with radical activism (Seidman, 1994:172). ACT UP, in the United States and in other countries where local groups of ACT UP emerged, is often considered as the source behind this renewal of activist strategies. As Douglas Crimp wrote, ACT UP is "a non partisan group of diverse individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis" (Crimp, 1987:7). When Crimp wrote these words, he had

just joined the association ACT UP, i.e. the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, in New York City. Direct actions include “zaps”, an action made to disrupt and interpellate the persons present at an event. For example, during political events, activists interrupt the person making a speech and display short messages to express their anger (Gamson, 1989:334). Die-ins are also common, a “technique of the body” (Foster, 2003:408) in which activists lie down on the floor as if dead, to show their resistance towards authorities. Die-ins are very effective because they compel authorities to use force on sick people. As Judith Halberstam explained,

> Facing death, activists disrupted normal social life, forcing the disease onto the public stage and demanding accountability. In sharp contrast to the silences around the disease, activists positioned themselves and their bodies as a very physical manifestation of the growing epidemic.
>
> (Halberstam, 1993:190)

At Last, the importance of AIDS activism as a queer practice was best illustrated with the group Queer Nation, founded in New York City in 1990 by ACT UP members (Berlant and Freeman, 1992:155). It is very interesting for my research to see how a queer association reclaimed discourses on nation and nationalism. The group was created in response to the growing violence towards gay and lesbian people (Seidman, 1994). Queer Nation wanted to create a new nationality based on queerness, so as to confront “the nation’s relation to gender, to sexuality and to death” (Berlant and Freeman, 1992:151). Playing with national symbols, Queer Nation was very linked to the national imaginary of the USA. It is not so much the concept of nation that was questioned, but rather it was an attempt to “reoccupy the space of national legitimation, to make the national world safe for just systems of resource distribution and communication, to make it safe for full expression of difference and rage and sexuality” (Berlant and Freeman, 1992:178). It would be accurate to call it an American queer nation because as the groups that sought to create a new political language, it remained within the language of American nationalism. Paradoxically, counter politics are thus tied to a national framework, even if activists contest the latter.

1.2 Research design

This study falls under different research styles and is informed by a plurality of methods. It is a qualitative study, in which a phenomenon is observed in-depth for its relevance, in any case not to make general claims on the topic. Following my intuition, I entered the field with an open mind, with a willingness not to look narrowly for homonationalism, but to look how activists were choosing strategies and try to understand the reasons why they did so. More specifically, I chose to focus on the link between the LGBT community and issues such as racism and feelings of national belonging. To do so, I read many articles from various publications and met a dozen activists from ACT UP.

1.2.1 Debate in the media and internal publications

The research design is strongly influenced by the 2012 presidential campaign. I will thus focus on LGBT issues raised in the light of the elections, notably debates in the media about gay marriage and LGBT rights in general. Debates about LGBT rights should not be overestimated, as the French media seemed more interested by the Strauss-Kahn affair during the period under scrutiny. The two main newspapers never mentioned the word homonationalism during the campaign but many articles dealt with the rise of xenophobia in France. Moreover, there were no specific debates about sexuality or gender equality.[1] Nevertheless, an article specifically on homonationalism published in *Le Monde*, on June 30, 2012, shows that the debate is no longer limited to LGBT publications.

[1] There was one exception, as the Constitutional Council declared on May 4, 2012, that the law about sexual harassment was unconstitutional. The Council demanded a new wording of the law, which led to a legislative gap between May 4, 2012 and July 12, 2004, when a new law was adopted. Nevertheless, the candidates for the presidential elections did not talk about the issue, which appeared late in the campaign.
See: http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2012/07/12/le-senat-a-adopte-le-nouveau-projet-de-loi-sur-le-harcelement-sexuel_1733265_823448.html last accessed: August 10, 2012.

Moreover, by internal publications I mean publications made by LGBT associations. There are many associations so the list cannot be exhaustive. Nevertheless the umbrella organizations *Centre LGBT* as well as the *Inter LGBT* will be considered as they gather together many LGBT associations. Both regularly publish press releases on their official websites. It is interesting to notice that none of them published an article on homonationalism in the official website. Members of those associations did participate in the debate but mostly on other social platforms, such as blogs and Facebook. The two umbrella organizations are often considered as the mainstream LGBT movement and have been accused by queer theorists of being homonationalistic, particularly during the last months. The two groups are sometimes called "lobbies" but this word shall be used carefully as it has a negative connotation in French. Other associations, such as Gay Muslims, shed light on how the LGBT community is organized in Paris.

I shall also mention different Internet blogs denouncing homonationalism. Little information about the topic has reached mainstream newspapers. But the proliferation of blogs is a sign that that Internet has become a crucial medium, a bridge between academia and society. At first, I looked for the video of Butler's refusal of the prize at the Berlin gay pride's parade. This led me to find many blogs talking about homonationalism. Indeed the Internet is the place when one can find many interventions in the debate. It is unclear who the authors of those blogs are but it is not surprising as Internet allows space for anonymity. I will use those blogs not so much for their theoretical contents but because they are valuable sources of information about events that occur. The speed is such that most events are almost immediately related on the Internet. Moreover, I will focus on the blogs written by scholars such as Eric Fassin, Elsa Dorlin, Marie-Hélène Bourcier and Louis-George Tin. Those scholars were also prolific on social networks and blogs. This link between activism and academia may have an impact that shall not be underestimated.

1.2.2 The website of ACT UP Paris as well other social platforms

I looked closely at all publications from ACT UP since the beginning of their own presidential campaign, on December 1, 2011. First, ACT UP has a very complete website with all the articles that have been written since July 1996. This was very useful for tracing the history of the association throughout the years. Today, the association publishes articles almost everyday as well as pictures taken during their actions. Most of their actions are filmed and clips can be found on the YouTube platform. What's more, members of the association are very active on social platforms, most notably Facebook. For example, a Facebook group created to denounce homonationalism was made at the initiative of a member of ACT UP. It is thus with the support of all these publications that I built my argument.

1.2.3 Participant observation

When I started my fieldwork in Paris, I was interested in knowing how activists are framing strategies so as to counter homonationalism. I had been acquainted with ACT UP, Paris through their impressive actions they organize in Paris every week. I had known the association for several years and participated to several public meetings in the last three years. My presence during those meetings was more because of curiosity. I did not participate in any of the actions then. In April 2012, I had the opportunity to spend three weeks in Paris, in April, so as to attend public meetings but also to meet activists more individually. My fieldwork coincided with the last three weeks of the presidential campaign. The first ballot was on April 26 and the second ballot in May 5. I arrived in Paris on April 10 that is two weeks before the first ballot. No need to say that the elections were the main focus in ACT UP'S discussions. What's more, homonationalism was mentioned on several occasions.

I attended two public meetings of the association. Every week, on Thursday evening, the association gathers at the *Beaux-Arts*, a symbolic location, as it is in the same amphitheater, that was used by the Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action in the 1970s (Sibalis, 2010:271). The atmosphere was really nice and many jokes were expressed. At the same time, one could feel the anger expressed by the activists against the political situation. It was interesting to see that, despite the fact that ACT UP enjoys a huge visibility, activists felt they were in the margins. Their experience in society was the basis of their anger. Between fifteen and twenty persons attended the meetings - men, women, and transsexuals. Some of them were sex workers, all of them members of ACT UP. I was thus the only outsider. The age of the participants varied from the early twenties up to the fifties. This information was given to me by an activist in her fifties who considered herself the oldest in the group.

Activists did not have much time to dedicate me. ACT UP members were very welcoming even though they barely had time to sleep. Indeed they were very busy focusing on their actions during the presidential campaign. So I had to change my plan to make structured interviews. This change of plan has been retrospectively very beneficial. Indeed, it prevented me from focusing too much on homonationalism. Rather it gave me the opportunity to give the first role to activism itself. Through participant observation, I observed which topics were given priority during the time period and how activists were approaching those topics. Moreover, I had the chance to have discussions with a dozen activists, during the breaks or during their actions. The constant rain throughout the whole month did not discourage them from going out to demonstrate nor from making smoking breaks. Because the discussions usually involved several persons at the same time, many things were said simultaneously. Besides, the activists were often speaking in the name of ACT UP. For these reasons, I decided not to reveal the names of the activists but to consider them in relation to the association.

The enthusiasm of the activists to talk with me is a sign that they are happy to share their experience with outsiders. One member told me that the more the association is talked about, the better it is for the activists and for the struggle at stake. I also interpret this as their willingness to give me a certain mediated image of the association. The presidential elections were the main topic that was discussed in their meetings and the main reason behind their actions. It is striking to see how their activism was organized depending on the elections, i.e. embedded in a national framework. It is no coincidence that ACT UP chose a national symbol, Joan of Arc, in their demonstration against racism. The demonstration gathered more than one hundred people (France Info, April, 30, 2012). ACT UP was really organized, bringing many posters and shouting slogans through a megaphone. The location, on the *Rue de Rivoli*, was favorable as many cars, people and tourists passed by with smiles on their face. Moreover, homonationalism was mentioned on several occasions, when I brought up the topic. The extensive knowledge Act Up members had about homonationalism struck me. I was therefore in an auspicious environment to explore counterstrategies to homonationalism.

My position as a researcher was very important during the process. I was always considered first as a student doing research, a fact, which brought some suspicions. However, activists were very willing to talk to me, surely because they were enthusiastic to see how the association was perceived. Doing informal research allowed me to learn about activism but also to share my experience in academia. This sharing of knowledge gave me more confidence to discuss the topic under scrutiny. Last, but not least, I always had Donna Haraway's "situated knowledges" in mind (Haraway, 1988). Choosing Act Up was a very conscious choice because of my position as a white middle class French lesbian woman. I knew the association also had members with similar characteristics. Moreover, I do not feel excluded from LGBT politics but I recognize that the possibility of excluding others is very present. With ACT UP, I felt that my position could be shared with other members.

Chapter 2
Defining the LGBT community: Welcome to a new nation-state

The expression "welcome to a new nation-state" is not a slogan of the American movement "Queer Nation" It is a feeling one gets when entering the gay district called "*Le Marais*" in Paris. While walking in the historical center dominated by the cathedral Notre-Dame-de-Paris and the old city hall, one only needs to cross the *rue de Rivoli* to have a feeling of entering another world. The borders are invisible but very present in the mind of the Parisian modern would-be *flâneur*. In the Marais, one will notice the abundance of gay flags in front of shop windows and bars. The district could almost be claimed as an autonomous territory with its own community.

The LGBT community, described above, has not always existed. It actually has a very recent history and the district was renovated not earlier than thirty years ago. This chapter will focus on the history of the LGBT community as it has developed in Paris since the early seventies. History is an ongoing process and the LGBT rights movement did not emerge out of nothing. Nevertheless, the first LGBT associations that were founded in the early seventies are of crucial importance for the topic under scrutiny, as many actors from ACT UP Paris participated in these first attempts of organizing and/or are influenced by them today. I choose to focus on Paris because ACT UP is also based in Paris and because it is the largest community and the closest to the heart of State power. First, I will focus on the revolutionary aspects of the first organizations and their influence in later developments of the movement. Second, I will analyze how the development of the LGBT rights movement led to the creation of a LGBT community. Third, as the success of the LGBT community relies on strategies inspired by ethnic-based political claims, I wish to argue that the LGBT community can be defined as a nation within a nation.

2.1 The inception of the LGBT movement: revolutionary attempts

The history of the LGBT rights movement in France shares many similarities with the LGBT movement in the U.S., as both developed in the 1970s after a decade of social unrest (d'Eaubonne, 1996). In the U.S., the African-American civil rights movement and the opposition to the war in Vietnam had shaken the whole country. In France, the war in Algeria and later the student movement of May 1968 also changed the political climate and eventually led to the resignation of General de Gaulle. In both countries, the feminist movement was also growing. Whereas the LGBT movement in the U.S. has been studied extensively, the French case is not so well known in Anglo-Saxon scholarship. In order to understand how the LGBT community has come to exist in France, it is useful to go back to the inception of the movement. A focus on the French case will also bring up specificities that do not appear in the U.S. movement.

There hasn't always been a LGBT community but we can reasonably say that the LGBT community grew out of movements developed in the beginning of the 1970s (Sibalis, 2010). Three factors facilitated the emergence of a LGBT movement. First, there was a homophile movement in France in the 1950s with only men. Second, the Stonewall riots of New York in 1969 provoked a radical rupture in LGBT activism and the news had an impact in France. Third, the student movement of May '68 and the feminist movement deeply influenced the creation of LGBT associations in France. In fact, LGBT associations share with those contemporary movements similar characteristics and a similar will to change society. It is thus in a very dynamic period of social change that the LGBT rights movement rose. The first LGBT organizations are very interesting because of the revolutionary approach of its members. Here, I will rely on Sibalis' analysis of the history of the gay movement in France, as I find it most accurate.

2.1.1 The Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action

The *Front homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire* or FHAR, considered to be the first LGBT association, was founded in 1971. It is not coincidental that it was created shortly after the Stonewall riots and the first gay pride parade in the U.S. The riots and the aftermath had reached the media in France and were known by young activists. For example, Guy Chevalier, who had been involved in the May 68 movement and created the short-lived Committee for Revolutionary Pederastic Action in the Sorbonne, travelled to New York in June 1969 and witnessed the Stonewall riots (Sibalis, 2010:270). He came back in October 1970 and participated in the creation of the FHAR (Sibalis, 2010:270). Chevalier later declared, "and so, at the time, I contributed all the American experience" (Sibalis, 2010:270). The gay rights movement that was blossoming in the U.S. certainly helped in the development of the French gay movement, creating a sense of solidarity beyond borders.

But the FHAR is situated in a very specific context and is not only an emanation of the American experience. Contrary to the U.S., homosexuality was not a crime in France and Paris was seen as a sexually liberated place (Sibalis, 2010:267). The birth of the FHAR was first and foremost an anger expressed because homosexuals were only portrayed as people in suffering. The creation of the FHAR was announced during a radio broadcast entitled "Homosexuals: this painful problem" (Sibalis, 2010:265). By the end of the program, a dozen people came to the stage and took possession of the microphones shouting "Stop talking of your suffering" and "Liberty! Liberty!" (Sibalis, 2010:266). The troublemakers had actually been invited by one of the participants, a journalist who had written about homosexuality (Sibalis, 2010:266). Most of the participants of this action were lesbian women influenced by feminism. Here we see a parallel with the feminist movement with the choice of a radical action to make their voices heard.

Shortly after, the participants of the live broadcast registered their association at the *Préfecture de Police* as the *Front Humanitaire Anti-Raciste* (Humanitarian Anti-racist Front) (Girard, 1981:82; Eribon, 2003). This decision was a cautious one because of the risk of harassment by the police. Indeed, the police could "always use the laws against indecent acts performed in public to harass and entrap those homosexuals who looked for sexual partners in parks and around street urinals" (Sibalis, 2010:267). Another reason was the possibility of playing with the acronym as it also created a link between homosexuality and anti-racism. The association shared with the anti-racist movement the willingness to use radical actions as implied by the use of the word revolutionary. Moreover, it also creates the idea that prejudice against homosexuals is racism. The idea of community is not there yet but we can perceive that homosexuals are compared with race, i.e. that homosexuals can be considered as a particular race. Even though it framed itself as revolutionary, largely influenced by Marxism, the movement had some characteristics that could potentially later develop into an identity politics movement.

And so the FHAR was born out of a revolutionary will to transform society. The group refused to have any organizational structure. They met every Thursday in the amphitheater of the *École des Beaux-Arts* rue Bonaparte, in the Latin district, where they held general assemblies (Sibalis, 2010:271). ACT UP Paris chose the same place to hold their weekly meetings so I had the chance to visit the place while doing my fieldwork. The amphitheater can welcome up to four hundred people and was said to be full during FHAR's general assemblies (Sibalis, 2012:272). A famous statement from the FHAR was "the homosexual struggle sought neither to justify homosexuals nor to integrate them into existing society, but rather to challenge and transform that society". The origin of the statement is unclear. Some scholars say it was pronounced by Guy Hocquenghem, others claim it is from Françoise d'Eaubonne. This uncertainty makes sense if one remembers that no minutes were taken of

the meetings. No concrete actions were organized and the lack of political organization eventually led to the end of the FHAR. The police put an end to the last meetings at the request of the art school's administration in February 1974, but the assemblies had already been deserted for months (Sibalis, 2010:272).

2.1.2 The Red Dykes: a lesbian revolutionary organization

The FHAR was created by feminists from the Women liberation's movement (MLF) and with male members from *Arcadie*, the homophile association (Bonnet, 1997). But during the general assemblies of the FHAR, lesbian women felt overpowered by the presence of homosexual men. As said earlier, most of the participants of the radio broadcast's interruption had been lesbian women. The FHAR was created as an organization opened to both sexes. Many of the women were also involved in the Women liberation's movement (Sibalis, 2010:270). The feminist movement had a significant influence on the FHAR. Indeed, women from the MLF had been meeting in the *Beaux-Arts* already for two years when the FHAR was established (Bonnet, 1997). Marie-Jo Bonnet, a member of the MLF, attended the meetings of the FHAR before joining in the creation of an association called *Les Gouines Rouges* or Red Dykes.

Bonnet remembers the inception of the group. Because the MLF was not attentive enough to lesbians, she and other lesbian women organized a meeting with the homophile association Arcadie (Bonnet, 1998:5). This meeting was very fruitful, as we saw, as it was at that moment that the action on the radio set was organized. Men and women thus created the FHAR together. But because men monopolized the meetings of the FHAR, lesbian women decided in April 1971, to meet on Tuesdays as well and later on they decided not to come to the Thursday meetings anymore (Bonnet, 1998:5). The Tuesday meetings were organized as

informal discussion groups with women only where lesbianism was discussed (Bonnet, 1998). One of the most famous members of the Red Dykes was Monique Wittig who later wrote about lesbian radicalism. As Bonnet recalls, the importance of a lesbian radicalism and separatism was explained by the need to take into account the intersection between the movements that will liberate women and homosexuals (Bonnet, 1998:5). The movement gained some visibility by distributing leaflets at the entrances of women's clubs in Pigalle and the club *Chez Moune*, two famous lesbian bars of the capital (Bonnet, 1998). The Red Dykes was similar to the FHAR insofar as no political claims were put forward. In the same manner, the meetings of the Red Dykes attracted fewer and fewer people until the group fell into oblivion (Bonnet, 1997:6).

2.1.3 A radical perspective

It is wise to say that the first gay and lesbian associations were revolutionary and slightly anarchist. One of the main characteristics of the FHAR and the Red Dykes is that they were anti-identitarian. The participants demanded a right to exist and live as they pleased but there were no political demands as a group. In fact, they even rejected of the political system as a whole. The society was described as full of *hétéroflics*, literally heterocops (Travelet, 1972:21). The political enemy was oppression and normalization and the means to gain visibility was protest (Roussel, 1995:87). Here the protest was aimed against all discourses of medicalization, which claimed that some people were born homosexuals. This medical assertion implied that homosexuality was an identity. One striking fact is that in the radio broadcast organized around the theme of homosexuality, most of the guests were doctors putting to the front the medical aspect (Sibalis, 2010:268). This medicalization was the

primary target and one statement of the FHAR was actually "Doc, heal yourself" (Roussel, 1995:89).

If homosexuality was not an identity, then the idea of a homosexual community was purposeless. There were even hostile reactions, from members of the FHAR, when a community with a specific gay lifestyle developed in Paris with the increase of gay bars and of a commercial gay network (Roussel, 1995:87). The opposition to such a community is that it was standardizing the idea of homosexuality. Also, it went against the political idea to oppose the system as a whole. Opening bars and shops specifically for a homosexual crowd came with a capitalist logic that many members opposed. It should not be forgotten that most members were children of May '68 and consequently had Marxist political views. Both groups criticized *Arcadie* for being "middle-class, conformist and politically and socially conservative" (Sibalis, 2010:267). Moreover, the feminist movement was also deeply influenced by Marxist ideas. The gay and lesbian movement therefore did not aim to integrate homosexuals into the public space, but rather it opposed this system of normalization.

The playfulness in the actions of the FHAR and of the Red Dykes is worth looking into because of its later influence on ACT UP. Shocking statements were very common. In fact, it can be said that the strategy of both associations was to destabilize common ideas about homosexuality, to extract suffering from its representations. In other words, it was a struggle against the medicalization of homosexuality, seen as a disease. From the meetings at the Red Dykes was born the idea of political lesbians. As they claimed, "we are fundamentally subversive, we are homosexuals by choice of *jouissance*. We are creatures of *jouissance* outside of any norm"[2] (Travelet, 1972:21). Here is introduced the idea of choice, i.e. the idea that lesbianism can be a political choice taken in opposition to the dominant gender system. The ideas shared during those meetings inspired Monique Wittig when she

[2] "Nous sommes fondamentalement subversives, Nous sommes créatures de jouissance en dehors de toute norme." All translations in the thesis are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

wrote the article *La pensée Straight* or *The straight mind* in 1980. A book with the same title was then published in English in 1992 then translated in French only in 2001. A member of ACT UP told me that the book is not printed in French anymore and can only be found in English. I checked this information by asking a feminist librarian and she confirmed that only old copies could be found. Intriguingly, it seems that Wittig's ideas, translated ten years after the first publication, do not reflect the LGBT politics anymore. This political gap that grew during that period will have beyond all doubt significance in explaining the rise of homonationalism.

The FHAR also specialized in playful radical statements. The project of the FHAR was subversive as the goal was not only to put the topic of homosexuality into public view, but also to question and destroy the capitalist system as a whole (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 2006, 189). The manifesto they published in the journal *Gulliver*, in November 1972, was humbly entitled "Proletarians of all countries, caress!" [3] an obvious reference to Marx (Gulliver n°1, 1972). A member of the FHAR declared in 1972, "the homosexual will not have a country as long as the family unit and the patriarchal society is not abolished" (Chauvin, 2006:7). The homosexual is thus a political exile in a country in which he does not recognize the system. The ideas expressed here reflect the feminist struggle against the oppression of the patriarchal system. It also shows the affinity between the extreme left and the FHAR. The vocabulary used often referred to socialism such as this famous statement from the *Gazolines* (a sub-group of the FHAR) "Let us nationalize the glitter factories!" [4] (Eribon, 2003). The absurd demands of the groups were characteristic of a readiness to flout norms and rules of society. The FHAR thus played with gay stereotypes to show the absurdity of the capitalist system.

[3] "Prolétaires de tous les pays, caresses-vous!"
[4] "Nationalisons les usines à paillettes!"

It is doubtful that the FHAR and the Red Dykes really aimed at destroying capitalism. Rather, it is more likely that they wanted to create a space of expression about homosexuality that would combine socialist ideas and a will to change society and, above all, radically change the discourses about homosexuality. It is the reason why participants were delightfully provocative in their actions and tactics. It has been said that these strategies caused their political ineffectiveness (Sibalis, 2010:273). By political effectiveness, Michel Sibalis refers to the future development of the gay rights movement. The author thus considers that the change really happened when the State changed its legislation on homosexuality and when state institutions integrated gay and lesbian persons. In this logic, change happens then when gay and lesbian women are willing to be integrated into mainstream society. Therefore it implies the very existence of the category "gays and lesbians". As we will see, this category took shape little by little in the 1970s.

2.2 The birth of a community

The FHAR and the Red Dykes have gained a mythological status over the years. My informants during my fieldwork frequently mentioned them and scholarship about the history of the LGBT movement in France often starts with the creation of the FHAR following the radio broadcast. The importance of the FHAR in France can be compared to the Stonewall riots in the U.S. These revolutionary groups had a very short life but they gave way to other LGBT associations. The LGBT movement was born with revolutionary groups and then began to be more structurally organized. It is necessary to emphasize that there is no clear-cut line between the FHAR and subsequent LGBT associations. The FHAR was the condition of existence of subsequent groups and many people involved in the FHAR joined the newly formed associations. It can be said that the enthusiasm born during the revolutionary attempts

brought a will to continue the struggle. This struggle took new forms and is characterized by a different approach to politics.

2.2.1 The creation of LGBT associations

As stated earlier, the FHAR and the Red Dykes had a short existence but they were not devoid of political messages. According to Marie-Jo Bonnet, the Red Dykes did not survive because its members were too young, not experienced enough, and lacked models of personal history, culture and identity (Bonnet, 1998:6). Bonnet recognizes that the lack of identity-based structures was detrimental to the group. However, the Red Dykes did not survive as a political group because it was not meant to be a political group. Instead, it was more an informal group centered on issues about lesbianism. This structure was already a political statement in a society where lesbians were invisible. The FHAR had a more abrupt ending as the police force expelled the group from the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*. The School requested their expulsion because the meetings had turned into sexual orgies within the premises (Sibalis, 2010:272). The expulsion was not followed by a strong protest thus showing that the FHAR did not fight to keep their political character. Nevertheless, some members were still participating in the International workers' day parade in an effort to prove that homosexuality could be a subversive force that could change society (Sibalis, 2001).

Despite the lack of structures within these groups, a political question had been framed and was central to the formation of other associations. The homosexual militants that took over were describing themselves as "children of the FHAR" (Sibalis, 2010:275). Former members of the FHAR created an association called *Groupe de Libération Homosexuelle* (GLH) or Homosexuals' Liberation Group in 1974. This association was divided into two groups, the *Groupe de base* (core group) and *the Groupe Politique et Quotidien* (Political and

Daily life group) (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:190). The ideas of the core group were close to those of the FHAR as they asserted the right to difference. The second group differed insofar as their goal was to build a network of local groups (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:190). The first massive gay demonstration was organized on June 25, 1978, by the group *Politique et Quotidien* and turned into a huge success (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:190). This demonstration was a turning point because the gay movement was no longer joining the 1st May Parade (Sibalis, 2001). Therefore, the gay movement turned away from a communist rhetoric in favor of "reformism, the formulation of specific demands for equal rights and sustained political lobbying" (Sibalis, 2010:275). The normalization process had started.

The creation of the umbrella organization *Comité d'Urgence Anti-Répression Homosexuelle* or CUARH (Emergency Committee Against Homosexual Repression) definitely turned a page in gay and lesbian politics. Indeed, LGBT associations were from then on affiliated with political parties. The CUARH considered that political lobbying was "the most effective way to change the conditions of life that are imposed on us" (Sibalis, 2010:275). Following this political strategy, they supported François Mitterrand, the Socialist candidate for the presidential elections in 1981 (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:191). Similarly, associations like *Homosexualité et Socialisme* (Homosexuality and Socialism) and *Gays pour la Liberté* (Gays for Liberty) were also affiliated with the Socialist Party. Most of the associations defined themselves as politically left wing but there also existed an association called *Mouvement des Gays Libéraux* (Gay Liberal Movement) associated with the right wing of the political landscape. These new associations, which constituted the significant gay and lesbian movement of the 1970s, were henceforth negotiating with political parties, i.e. dealing with politics.

These federally structured organizations were the forerunners if not the very first representatives of an identity politics. The struggle was focused on discrimination faced by gays and lesbians in society, and the tactic chosen was to gather gays and lesbians together so as to demand a public and legal recognition of that discrimination. This assemblage of all homosexuals regardless of their political opinions, race, and class, meant the construction of a political force fighting against what could be considered a peculiar form of racism (Roussel, 1995:91). In other words, homosexuality was made a part of one's own identity and the principal discrimination taken into consideration within these associations. The FAHR had rejected this view upon homosexuality, as we saw, refusing to see it as a minority based on identity (Sibalis, 2010:275). The homophile association *Arcadie* was against the same idea and "refused categorically to confine homosexuals within the limits of a particular sexual identity" (Sibalis, 2010:275). *Arcadie* disappeared in 1982 because their political discourse on homosexuality, based on the idea that homosexuality should be lived in discretion, was outdated after the FHAR's outburst. (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999: 193). Radical associations created the possibility to speak about homosexuality in public space but without demanding specific rights and rejecting to formulate precise definitions on homosexuality. The choice of asserting a sexual identity was made certainly in an attempt to fit the political standards of the time in their demands for equal rights. And indeed the state also responded positively to these demands.

2.2.2 The LGBT movement and the state

By the mid-1970s, the new LGBT associations were less radical but more assertive in demanding equal rights. As mentioned, they lobbied political parties so as to defend their

cause. The gay and lesbian movement was successful in gaining a higher visibility in society, notably with the gay pride organized annually starting from 1979. Moreover, the movement was a fantastic opportunity for the Socialist Party to propose another social project based on the recognition of a minority, i.e. based on the tolerance towards a minority group. I will briefly explain how the law changed when the Socialist Party was elected.

Before 1981 and the election of Mitterrand, homosexuality was not a crime in France. Indeed, the decriminalization of homosexuality was voted on in 1791 during the French Revolution and the law has never been changed since (Sibalis, 2008). This fact represents a significant difference from the U.S. and consequently from the gay and lesbian movement there which had to fight against sodomy laws. Nevertheless, a repressive state of affairs was also present in France. The police could create homosexual files, which were usually put with files on prostitution and transvestites (Sibalis, 2008). This filing was used to control and repress homosexuals. Moreover Pétain passed two repressive laws under the Vichy regime (1940-1944). Fillieule and Duyvendak accurately described those laws:

> Article 331, paragraph 3, of the *Code Pénal*, punished by fine and imprisonment any "indecent or unnatural act with an individual of one's own sex under the age of twenty-one years" (eighteen years after the age of adulthood was lowered), even though heterosexual relations were allowed from the age of fifteen years; Article 330 of the same code imposed higher penalties for an act of indecency when it concerned persons of the same sex
>
> (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:192)

Homosexuality was not criminalized as such but it was strictly controlled by state legislation. What's more, the police forces were given tools so as to repress homosexual behaviors in public. On June 28, 1978, the two clauses were abrogated by the Senate but not by the National Assembly (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:192). Interestingly, the project of abrogation was proposed before the election of François Mitterrand, head of the Socialist Party. The final abrogation in December 20, 1981 by the National Assembly was the logical outcome of a project that had dragged on for more than two three years. But it was first and

foremost a political message given by the newly elected Socialist government.

This turning point in the gay and lesbian movement shows the success of the LGBT movements to get the attention of the Socialist Party. This explains why the LGBT movement is still today closely related to the left wing political landscape. In the 1970s, we observe that the gay and lesbian movement was gaining more and more visibility but it is in their collaboration with the Socialist Party that they achieved political effectiveness. The CUARH, for example, was successful in creating a substantial network of LGBT associations. Furthermore in April 4, 1981, they had organized a demonstration in Paris, which was a success as it gathered more than ten thousand people (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:192). But the CUARH went beyond by calling to vote for Mitterrand so as to get equal rights, i.e. political recognition. By supporting Mitterrand, the CUARH suggested that the Socialist Party better represented gays and lesbians as a group. Gay and lesbians became a political group as associations were building their project on the idea that they represented all gay and lesbians in France. The politicization of LGBT associations thus contributed to the idea of the existence of a LGBT community. Another factor should not be forgotten in this particular moment in history, i.e. the commercialization of a gay and lesbian subculture.

2.2.3 The commercialization of a LGBT subculture: the *Marais*

The development of the *Marais* district in the 1980s as a gay meeting point is extremely important insofar as it contributed to the making of the gay and lesbian community. There were gay and lesbian venues in Paris long before the *Marais* developed, notably in *Saint-Germain-des-Prés* and *Montmartre* (Martel, 1999:77). But the concentration and configuration a new gay district gave immense visibility to the gay and lesbian subculture. Michel Sibalis made a case study about the *Marais* that is worth summarizing here. Sibalis

describes nicely how the *Marais* became a must for gay men and how it contributed to the constitution of a gay community (Sibalis 2004). But the author unfortunately renders lesbians almost invisible because his analysis implies that they are almost invisible in the gay and lesbian community building process, as they are extremely underrepresented in the district. I will here briefly summarize the history of the district, following the analysis of Michel Sibalis.

The *Marais* is today one of the wealthiest *arrondissements* of Paris and gay businesses represents the principal employer of the fourth arrondissement (Sibalis, 2004:1747). Located in the center of Paris, the district was entirely renovated in the 1960s and beyond. Before it was overcrowded and many buildings were falling apart. As a consequence of this process of gentrification, the *Marais* lost many of its inhabitants who could afford no longer to live there. The real-estate market was thus flourishing and became an opportunity for gay entrepreneurs to buy and create enterprises. Gay entrepreneurs "consciously set out to create a new gay quarter as much because of their personal convictions as from their desire to benefit financially from an evident commercial opportunity." (Sibalis 2004:1745). A new gay district was born through this entrepreneurial economic activity. In 1990, the *Syndicat national des Entreprises Gaies* or SNEG (National Syndicate of gay enterprises) was created as a lobby group for the gay business community (Sibalis, 2004:1746). The need for a gay business to attract a gay clientele implies the existence of a gay community. Gay businesses were thus logically keen on affirming that a gay community existed and that it had a claim to existence. In doing so, they could attract a considerable clientele to their venues. As a consequence, the *Marais* is primarily a commercial place.

Moreover the development of gay meeting places, concentrated in the same location, contributed to the feeling of belonging to a community. The opportunity to gather was part of a political agenda to strengthen the idea of community and thus to gain recognition of the

existence of the community. The first gay bar opened in 1978 and was entitled *The Village*, as a tribute to the Greenwich Village in New York. Opening bars and shops that were directly visible from the street in the center of the city was a novelty and evidently a political message (Sibalis, 2004:1746). It was a claim that gay and lesbians had a right to exist and be visible. It created a public space of expression for a gay and lesbian subculture. But more than simply putting to the fore a specific culture, it contributed to its definition. In order to legitimate the existence of this community, a process of normalization of the identity "homosexual" occurred. As an example, an advertising campaign organized by the SNEG in 1996 reads, "to consume gay is to affirm oneself' ("*Consommer gay, c'est s'affirmer*")" (Sibalis, 2004:1746). This advertising strategy shows that gay identity was an abstract notion that could be modeled, something the SNEG did not hesitate to do. The *Marais* created its specific codes and it is now common within the LGBT community to judge whether someone's behavior is appropriate, i.e. whether someone's behavior complies with the "rules" of the *Marais*. With the expansion of a gay district comes a normalization of behaviors and practices. Consequently, critics have been expressed by "militant lesbians and from minorities within the gay community" (Sibalis, 2004:1754). Nevertheless, the *Marais* participates in creating and shaping the LGBT community.

Indeed, gay and lesbian associations had found a place with the *Marais* where to gather and create a political project. The existence of a gay district and of gay associations contributed to the development of the LGBT movement. By the 1980s, the LGBT movement was successful in creating the notion of community. This community was based on the notion of identity insofar as it invited all people with a gay and/or lesbian identity to gather for a common political project. Consequently, it presupposed the existence of gay and lesbian identities. The success of the LGBT movement is thus based on this presupposition. The success of the gay and lesbian movement in France can be explained by three factors: the

organization of gay and lesbian groups into dynamic associations in the 1970s, the recognition by the state of the existence of discrimination against homosexuality which contributed to the normalization of homosexuality itself, and the development of a gay district called *Le Marais*. The existence of the *Marais* is crucial because it is the referent used when the LGBT community of Paris is described. Defining the *Marais* as the territory of the French LGBT community would be too much a generalization. Now I will further analyze the notion of LGBT community.

2.3 The LGBT community: a small nation within the nation

There is a LGBT community because there is a process of LGBT community building. It needs to be acknowledged that the LGBT movement rarely encompasses all concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people. Sometimes, the gay and lesbian movement even uses processes of exclusion towards bisexuals and/or transsexuals. Lisa Duggan emphasized the still up-to-date fact that the movement is often centered on gay men (Duggan, 1994:6). Nevertheless, there exists an effort to create a coherent LGBT movement based on identity politics. The main idea is that LGBT people should organize politically because they have in common a different sexual identity discriminated on different levels, from heterosexist state practices to everyday life homophobia. Different strategies are chosen by LGBT activists to construct those identities and/or to prove their existence. Influenced by other social movements, such as feminism and the African-American civil rights movement, the LGBT movement has been keen on constructing the LGBT community as a legitimate minority group in a national setting. The troubled relationship between the LGBT community, the nation and nationalism will be analyzed here in order to better understand homonationalism.

2.3.1 An ethnicity…

The notion of identity is crucial in the gay and lesbian movement. It postulates that because one has a specific sexual identity, one shares a common culture and a similar experience in life. Scholars accurately pointed out that identity politics was central to LGBT politics (Gamson, 1995). Many scholars compared these identity-building processes as similar to those of ethnic groups. Put differently, many scholars pointed out that the LGBT community could be defined as an ethnic group and/or constructs itself as such (Murray, 1979; Epstein, 1987; Vance, 1989; Warner, 1993). It might sound curious that a common sexual practice would lead to creating an ethnic group. But as Gayle Rubin pointed out, "the 'modernization of sex' has generated a system of continual sexual ethnogenesis" (Rubin, 1984:113). Sexual practices became a crucial aspect in the construction of ethnicity. In anthropology, it is common to describe the particularities of an ethnic group analyzing their sexual practices. Conversely, sexual practices also represent a tool in affirming the existence of the ethnic group. Going further, an ethnic group can then come into existence because it has a specific sexual behavior. Consequently, the gay and lesbian community can see itself as an ethnicity because of their specific sexual identity, which shapes their experience.

This strategic move can be explained by Spivak's idea of "strategic essentialism" (Spivak, 1993). Even though activists are conscious that sexuality is historically constructed and regulated by state powers (Foucault, 1976), they choose essentialism so as to make their cause intelligible. To create "a certain quasi-'ethnic' status" for gay and lesbian people is thus an essentialist strategy (Epstein, 1987:135). It is the affirmation that homosexuality is not only a sexual practice but also a whole different experience of life. Like other ethnic groups, gay and lesbians construct a specific culture with their own codes. More importantly, this strategy opens a space of solidarity between the members of the ethnic group because of the sense of belonging to the same group. Essentializing gay identities "constitute "reverse

affirmations" of social labels, adoptive contestations of imposed stigma categories" (Altman, 1982 in Epstein, 1987:145). Essentialism is thus important also because of the stigmatization of homosexuality in society. There is nevertheless an obvious problem in this strategy: the ethnicization of homosexuality and the naturalization of the category make it harder to show homosexuality as a socially constructed category. Epstein foresaw the paradox when he concluded that ethnicity should be considered as a metaphor rather than a fixed category because "the relationships that it entails can come to be internalized as a fundamental part of the self" (Epstein, 1987:152). The gay and lesbian movement is thus entangled in a complex set of categorizations, of which we will see the limitations later on.

What's more, the ethnicization of the gay and lesbian community is a strategy to define the community in relation to the state. If the LGBT community is a minority group recognized by the State, then there exist legal instruments to gain equal rights. The parallel with ethnicity creates a comparison between the discriminations that LGBT people face and the discriminations other minority groups face. It is a comparison that helps legitimizing the gay and lesbian movement as it renders intelligible to the State the importance of the struggle. This intelligibility of the group, through the ethnic model, "was committed to establishing gay identity as a legitimate minority group, whose official recognition would secure citizenship rights for lesbian and gay subjects" (Jagose, 1997:61). As a consequence, the LGBT movement uses the ethnic model as a political tool to get recognition within the system rather than to question it (Jagose, 1997:61). The ethnic minority claim takes radicalism out of the LGTB struggle. Carole S. Vance well summarized the situation in the U.S. context,

> Lesbians and gays are deserving of civil rights, they say, much like women, ethnic, and racial groups. This argument derives less from a self-conscious theoretical commitment to essentialism and more from the pervasiveness of essentialist frames in American culture, particularly in regard to race and ethnicity. In an ideological system that defines these groups as natural, real, and organized according to relatively unchanging biological features, one obvious and powerful symbolic strategy is to claim an equal status for lesbian and gays
>
> (Carole S. Vance, 1989, 167-168)

As we see, the ethnic model is very much linked to a political system capable to apprehend this model. The idea of an ethnic minority group is very convenient for the State. It naturalizes the idea of homosexuality but does not threaten heterosexuality as the dominant structuring pattern of society. It does not question the stability of the State, whose institutions are built so as to federate all citizens. To conclude, the ethnic strategy also gained legitimacy as it successfully provoked a change in state legislations in the last decades. This also explains why LGBT activists have been reticent in questioning a strategy of which we see clear limitations.

2.3.2 … Organized as a nation

The LGBT community can be defined seen as an ethnic group; nevertheless, it does not need to be. It is indeed possible to see it as a nation within the nation. It is useful to go back the definition of Ernest Renan to understand the word "nation". In *What is a nation?*, a conference given at the Sorbonne, Renan said that a nation does not necessarily refers to a group people from the same ethnicity or people speaking the same language, rather, it is a community sharing a common past and willing to share a future (Renan, 1882). The LGBT community shares a common past as members can identify with figures from the past that were notoriously homosexual. They are also conscious of their common history of exclusion, from which LGBT politics is based on. The LGBT community has been keen on

reconstructing a LGBT history in the same manner women's history was reconstructed. David Halperin that LGBT historians, "by preserving 'sexuality' as a stable category of historical analysis not only have they not denaturalized it but, on the contrary, they have newly idealized it" (Halperin, 1993:425). The stabilization of the category "sexuality", only used in its modern sense, is thus a tool to reconstruct a LGBT history, which would not exist otherwise.

Renan also said that a nation is constituted of people willing to join their forces in order to build a future together. He goes further, describing a nation as a group willing to forget so as to build a future (Renan, 1882). This idea of forgetfulness also has an echo in the LGBT community as members of the group forget other aspects of their life (their origins, social status, gender etc.) so as to make their sexual identity the core of their political association. A nation is less a fixed entity than "a soul, a spiritual principal" (Renan, 1882). This spirit takes a concrete expression in the LGBT community through the willingness to live together and act as a political collective. This definition echoes the idea of Anderson that a nation is an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). The LGBT community is in a constant process of formation, in the constant process of forming the community they feel they belong to.

This imagined community becomes visible for the outsider in the *Marais* district, especially because of the controversy surrounding it. Indeed, the gay district has been charged with accusations of communitarianism, corporatism and even militant apartheid (Sibalis, 2004:1753). The issue of ghettoization was apparent during the affair of the flags in 1996. The SNEG had encouraged owners to display the gay flag in front of their shops. In April 1996,

> "The police invoked an ordinance issued by the prefect of police in 1884 and ordered the removal of the flags (which Mayor Krieg contemptuously dismissed as "multicolored rags") on the grounds that the grouped and quasi-systematic display of overly large emblems risks arousing hostile reactions."
>
> (Sibalis, 2004:1752)

The ordinance further encouraged the SNEG to display gay flags so that it was eventually dropped. The symbol of the flag appeared to be a threat to French local authorities. Interestingly, local authorities implied that the display of the flag would encourage homophobic behaviors because of the national pretension that came with it. The people opposing the idea of a gay nation thus reinforce its existence.

2.3.3 Gay nationalism

This brings us to the issue of gay nationalism. The construction of a LGBT political collective as a nation implies that some members of this nation are themselves nationalistic, i.e. keen on proving the existence of the nation. Very simply, LGBT activists want to reverse the stigma imposed on them and for that reason put an emphasis on LGBT people's unique values, and by extension, on the unique value of the LGBT nation. But the matter is of course more complex. Gay nationalism also comes from the fact that belonging to a LGBT community is part of a process of "second socialization" (Epstein, 1987:147). This fact can be seen as a choice, as the socialization is not given at birth. It does not contradict the idea of sexual identity; only it shows that this identity is acquired. Because this shared identity is acquired, it is more difficult to prove its immemorial existence. As a result, the struggle to legitimize the idea of a LGBT nation is a strategy to show a LGBT community solidly established in time.

Moreover, the use of a national rhetoric is also a strategy to establish an identity that exists alongside many other identities. As Epstein wrote, "individuals being socialized into a

gay community will already possess a variety of cross-cutting identities – ethnic, racial, class, gender, religious, occupational and so on – which may claim much greater allegiance and inhibit the secondary socialization process" (Epstein, 1987:147). Ironically, other crosscutting identities are constructed as more essential. Other identities are here considered as more important in one's individual life. LGBT activists fight for the recognition of the community by the state but also by the individual whose sexual identity might be denied by his/her other identities. For example, coming-out is one of the strategies used to assert one's sexual identity. The claim of a gay nation is thus a way to assert the existence of the LGBT community.

Defining the LGBT community as a nation within a nation is not sufficient for our analysis. Indeed, the LGBT nation does not exist as an autonomous entity but is rather embedded in a larger framework. In the case of France, one is not part of the LGBT community only but is part of a French LGBT community. The idea of gay nation has a potential insofar as it gives space for transnational networking. But most LGBT politics has focused on the national level so as to get equal rights. LGBT activists are confronted with the fact that legislation is national so the most effective way to get equal rights is to change national laws. The use of national symbols related to the French nation is thus not surprising. For example, the LGBT culture cannot be independent from the French culture, notably because of the language that is used. Therefore, the LGBT community defined as a nation uses national symbols so as to assert their existence. In this process, people might feel excluded from the LGBT community because they do not recognize the national symbols used.

Conclusion of chapter

In this chapter, I gave a brief historical overview of the French gay and lesbian movement in order to understand how the LGBT community came to existence and to analyze the similarities it has with the idea of nation. The success of the LGBT movement is based on the recognition by the state of a LGBT minority. The construction of a LGBT community is a way to become an intelligible entity for the state. The focus of this chapter was made on the LGBT community in Paris. I do not mean to generalize the situation in Paris to the situation in France; nevertheless the LGBT community in Paris is the most visible and the one, which is most under scrutiny in the media and politics. Moreover, the community in Paris is considered as the most mainstream for LGBT politics. I argued that a national rhetoric is diffused in all mainstream LGBT politics. The LGBT community, a recent historical construct, is an attempt to federate people who share a similar sexual identity and so presupposes the existence of sexual identity. Sexual identity becomes the core in the construction of the gay nation. What is very important in this history is that sexual identity became so prominent that it shadowed other aspects of identity. As a result, the LGBT community is rather homogeneous but does not acknowledge this homogeneity. Sexual identity becomes the trope upon which activists organized, regardless of other factors. We thus observe a denial of intersectionality, what Ernest Renan could have called a conscious forgetfulness. Unfortunately, this forgetfulness has as a consequence that the LGBT community has exclusionary politics. In the community-building process, there are simultaneous processes of exclusion. First, it is apparent that in the community, gay men are dominant, thus excluding other groups it is supposed to include by the use of the acronym LGBT. Second, the LGBT movement is dominantly white and middle-class and gives little space to diversity (Sibalis, 2004). Third, the focus on French politics excludes *de facto* non-French citizens willing to be part of this community. In the following chapter, I will analyze the concrete forms these processes of exclusion take.

Chapter 3
Locating the LGBT community: the French gay nation

On June 30, 2012, one of the main French newspapers, *Le Monde*, published an article entitled "Is the new nationalism gay?" It is the first time that a major newspaper has dwelt on the question of homonationalism. The author of the article accurately summarizes the tensions present within the LGBT movement and observes that these tensions are now going beyond internal debates. In the article, one striking point is that the author is asking whether homonationalism has reached France or not. This naïve stance is a good starting point for the analysis; nevertheless it diminishes the importance of the critique as it implies that homonationalism might not even be present in France. Now we should go back to the conference organized in Amsterdam in January 2011. The conference was co-organized by the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) located in Paris. French scholars were thus well aware of the issue of homonationalism. The French scholars present in Amsterdam, such as Eric Fassin and Didier Eribon, recognized the existence of homonationalism in France and were trying to analyze the specificities in the country.

Locating the LGBT community within a national space is one of the most fruitful questions in gender studies and this chapter will focus on the specificities in the French national space. First, I will analyze forms of sexual nationalisms that were debated in France in recent years. In doing so, I will highlight the constraints a movement based on sexual orientation face to make their cause intelligible. The discussion about the LGBT community in the previous chapter will serve as a starting point to understand how activist strategies are framed. At last, I will analyze processes of exclusion that the concept homonationalism encompasses. I hope to show how homonationalism manifests itself in the specific setting that is the French LGBT community based in Paris.

3.1 Sexual nationalisms in France

Homonationalism is a form of sexual nationalism. It is difficult when talking about sexual nationalisms in France to ignore the recent debates that shaped the political life. The first debate in 2003-2004 led to the ban of headscarves in schools. A second debate about French national identity, launched in 2007, was also extremely gendered and divided the French political scene. The most recent debate led to the ban of the Islamic full veil in all public space in 2010. All three debates revealed the discomfort of French society with Islam. The concept of *laïcité* (French secularism) was used extensively to justify the passing of legal restrictions. Moreover, all three debates divided the feminist movement. Indeed the trope of equal rights between men and women was used to legitimate the laws. The feminist movement was thus instrumentalized but it should not overshadow the fact that many feminists actively participated in the debates.

It is important to go back to those debates because similar issues and tensions are found in the LGBT movement. Interestingly, Nicolas Gougain, spokesperson of the umbrella association inter-LGBT, declared, "As much as these discussions, notably around the Islamic veil, traumatized the feminist movement, they are very far from our concerns"[5] (Birnbaum, 2012). Gougain was responding to the question whether homonationalism was important within the LGBT movement. Gougain, representative of more than sixty associations in Paris, apparently ignores that what he calls discussions could have an interest for the LGBT movement. He disconnects the LGBT movement from the feminist one as much as he does not acknowledge the possible intersections between Islam and homosexuality. It is the reason why I want to emphasize the importance of these debates in understanding homonationalism.

[5] "Autant ces discussions, notamment autour du voile islamique, ont traumatisé le mouvement féministe, autant elles sont très loin de nos préoccupations" Le Monde, June, 30, 2012

3.1.1 The gender of immigration

I would first like to take a look at processes of immigration in the French context as it has an impact on the perception of migrants. The words xenophobia and racism are often used interchangeably but I would like to assert to difference in meaning. Xenophobia is extensively used in the French media to explain the rise of nationalistic ideas in politics. It is convenient to think that nationalism is caused by a certain fear of foreigners, as suggested by the use of the word, because fear is an emotional reaction to a threat. Racism, on the other hand, is more problematic because the subject is actively convinced of his/her superiority over another race. The use of the term racism also highlights the existence of race itself and thus recognizes that the foreigner mentioned above is imagined with a particular skin color (Ezekiel, 2006).

Xenophobia, understood as the fear of the foreigner, is expressed towards the foreigners living in France. The question is to know who is considered as a foreigner in the country. It is important to recognize the strong racial component of xenophobia because not everybody is considered a foreigner (Ezekiel, 2006:257). Following the Second World War, France witnessed waves of immigration facilitated by the country's economic growth. The ordinance of November 2, 1945 codified the rules of immigration, organized mainly through granting work permits to migrants and following the idea of family reunification. Most work permits were granted to men.[6] The process of decolonization also generated waves of migration and explains important patterns of immigration as scholars have amply documented. I will come back later to the history of decolonization as it is discussed in political debates. In 1986 and 1993, the Pasqua laws tightened the rules of immigration and

[6] Ruling n°45-2658 (November 2, 1945) relating to the conditions of entrance and stay of foreigners in France

only family reunification and the right of asylum were kept.[7] The last ordinance regarding immigration was passed in 2004 and further tightens the control over illegal immigration.[8]

Even though the immigration laws are gender neutral, they are based on family reunification thus organized around the idea of heterosexual marriage and family. Marriage, as an institution regulated by law, follows a heterosexist conception of the State. Peterson defines the heterosexist state through the process of "the institutionalization and normalization of heterosexuality and the corollary exclusion of non-heterosexual identities and practices" (Peterson, 1999:39). Indeed, marriage in French law is the union between a man and a woman. Though the Civil Code is not explicit about the gender of the spouses, the article 144 reads "a man and a women cannot get married before they reach 18" thus making non same-sex partnership a condition in access to marriage.[9] Consequently, a non-French citizen who wishes to come and live in France with his/her French same-sex partner is excluded from gaining citizenship on this basis. Similarly, the children of a same-sex female couple will not be granted citizenship if the biological mother is not a French citizen.

Moreover, the immigration laws are also based on the idea of the nuclear family, i.e. a couple and their dependent children. The access to citizenship for non-national women is highly gendered as women are viewed primarily as mothers. In this framework, grandparents and other family members are not considered as eligible for immigration. The nuclear family pattern does not recognize other patterns and thus collides with family patterns known by migrants. The rules of immigration are also embedded with assumptions of the place of women in society. Marriage seems to remain the main reason why women would supposedly apply for citizenship, as part of policies based on family reunification (based on the nuclear

[7] Law n°86-1025 (September 9, 1986) relating to the conditions of entrance and stay of foreigners in France, J.O. n°86 (September 12, 1986) and Law n°93-1027 (August 24, 1993- relating to the control of immigration and conditions of entrance, reception and stay of foreigners in France

[8] Ruling n° 2004-1248 (November, 24, 2004) relating to the legislative part of the code regarding entrance and stay of foreigners and asylum seekers

[9] Civil Code, version of March 12, 2012

family pattern). If women migrants are viewed first as wives and mothers, men migrants are perceived as breadwinners. In her study of "fortress Europe", Helma Lutz showed how the immigration laws in the EU reinforce the inequalities between immigrants and the "native Europeans" (Lutz, 1997). As she writes, the immigration laws "contribute – on an ideological level – to the reinforcement of static perceptions: immigrants are bound to traditions whereas the 'native Europeans' are increasingly shaking off repressive old-fashioned lifestyles" (Lutz, 1997:105). The immigration laws thus participate in the reification of family norms and in the negative perception of immigrants as being non-modern, as being backwards. This state of affairs should be kept in mind, as many stereotypes of the "immigrant" are present within the LGBT community. The pervasive racism present in the LGBT community is a consequential aspect of homonationalism.

3.1.2 Gender and *laïcité*: debate about the headscarf

It is difficult to summarize the complexity of the role played by feminists during the debate that led to the ban of the headscarf in schools in 2004. Nevertheless it is necessary to mention here because it deeply polarized the feminist movement. The complexity comes from the fact that feminists actively participated in the debate and were invited by politicians to participate. The question is thus raised whether feminists fell into the trap of femo-nationalism as their critiques were instrumentalized for political purposes. Sara Ferri presented a paper in Amsterdam in which she explained "women's labor together with the radical potential of feminist critiques has been instrumentalized by this legislation that integrated them both in a nationalistic and xenophobic discourse" (Costache, 2011:106). Ferri, who introduced the term femo-nationalism, showed that the recognition by the state of feminist concerns led to the instrumentalization of the feminist movement. Her analysis

implies that it is first and foremost the state, which has a xenophobic discourse. I would suggest that we should not forget that it is not only the state but also feminists themselves who can hold xenophobic discourses.

Indeed feminists are divided on the question whether the wearing of the veil is a sign of oppression for women and whether the state should regulate it. The state eventually passed two laws, one banning the veil in schools and the other banning the full Islamic veil in all public places. The laws were legitimized by the fact that France is a secular (*laïque*) country, thus allowing the state to regulate what they consider as religious signs (Ezekiel, 2006:257). Judith Ezekiel pointedly showed how the debate and the ban in 2004 divided the feminist movement. Her analysis is written prior to the ban of the hijab but her ideas, I would argue, are also valid for the hijab debate.

Ezekiel distinguishes two trends during the headscarf debate, i.e. a national feminism and a feminism of color (Ezekiel, 2006:268). On the one side, feminists supporting the ban work in a national framework and consider that *laïcité* is a fundamental French specificity (Ezekiel, 2006:268). Moreover, they claim that the veil is a symbol of the oppression of women worldwide (Ezekiel, 2006:268). In doing so, they project the wearing of the veil as a symbol of oppressive regimes. In this scenario, women are not given any agency as the veil is constructed as something that is imposed upon them. The specter of racism lies behind those assumptions and renders migrants living in France as representatives of this oppression that exists elsewhere but goes unremarked.

On the other side, the most prominent opponent of the ban, Christine Delphy, argued that it is a women's right to choose whether to wear a headscarf (Ezekiel, 2006:269). For Ezekiel, Delphy represents another extreme because of her alignment with profoundly sexist men (Ezekiel, 2006:269). But Delphy has a similar analysis when she claims that the choice between fighting sexism or racism is a false dilemma (Delphy, 2006). Delphy denounces the

use of feminism to render racism acceptable (Delphy, 2006:60). She adds that the danger lies in the disconnection of the anti-racist and anti-sexist struggle (Delphy, 2006:70). Both authors thus recognize that the debate cannot ignore the intersection between racism and sexism. The division comes from a prioritization of one of the two struggles.

To counter this overwhelmingly white feminism as well as the state instrumentalization of women's rights, the emergence of a feminism of color might have helped in challenging the dominant discourse. Ezekiel shows that proponents of this feminism of color are struggling daily "in a country infused with interlocking racism and sexism" (Ezekiel, 2006: 268). Unfortunately, the most visible association, *Ni Putes ni Soumises!* (Neither Whores, nor Subjugated!) was also instrumentalized and quickly lost its radical potential. The association was created after a French girl of Algerian ancestry was tortured and set on fire at the age of 17 in Vitry-sur-Seine, a suburb close to the French capital. The incident sparked outrage throughout France and led to the founding of *Ni Putes ni Soumises*. The association was soon accused of being a right-wing feminist movement as it was granted much financial help and acknowledgement by the government of Sarkozy (Bouteldja, 2004). From its creation, the association denounced the wearing of the veil and eventually supported the ban (Ezekiel, 2006:268). They were used by the state as the proof that even women from the Muslim faith rejected veiling in the name of "the new republican national ideal" (Ezekiel, 2006:271).

The question of who is entitled to participate in the debate is crucial. Obviously, there is no homogeneous feminist movement. What was most problematic during the headscarf debate is the fact that the feminist movement was reduced to a homogeneous group supposedly supporting the ban. Indeed most media presented the feminist movement as pro-ban (Ezekiel, 2006:268). In that sense, the feminist movement is instrumentalized even if some feminists did support the ban. Moreover, feminist associations of women of color do

exist but they remain mostly invisible, except if their struggle was in favor of the state's legislation. Here, we also see the impact of French secularism in shaping the debate as social movements are bound to work within a secular framework.

3.1.3 French national identity: Sexism as "other"

In 2007, during the French presidential elections, a manifesto entitled "Not in our name! Against the racist appropriation of feminism by the French Right-wing" [10] was published. The text, which was written by Elsa Dorlin, professor at Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne, stressed the curious new interest of French politicians about gender equality and women issues and denounced its racial implications. In the manifesto, Dorlin notes a racialization of feminism, a political discourse based on the so-called openness of the French nation towards gender equality. Dorlin denounced a political discourse using feminism as a pretext to "racialized" sexism. In this perspective, sexism would only exist within the French citizens from migrant origins, notably Muslims. The manifesto also witnesses how political discourses use feminist discourses, claiming them as a so-called priority.

Two years later, the debate about French national identity launched by president Nicolas Sarkozy echoed the concerns expressed in this manifesto. It would seem absurd that France would need a debate about national identity as if the latter was threatened. In reality, the debate was the occasion to create this so-called national identity. Feminism was put in front as a major characteristic of the French identity (if there is such a thing that is) thus creating a sexism coming from the "outside". Not only would it come from the outside but also there was a stress on the fact that it would be a threat coming from an outside enemy. The racialization of the debate is here very clear and led to political consequences as the

[10] "Pas en notre nom! Contre la récupération raciste du féminisme par la droite française"

government expressed a need to « protect » the national identity. As *The Telegraph* reported, the minister Eric Besson will "hand in this month a "synthesis" of the debate to the president, who will decide whether new legislation is required to better protect French identity" (Samuel, 2010).

As a consequence, the debate about the headscarf and French national identity participated in the vilification of the image of the Arab men. Indeed women's oppression became the prerogative of Arab men (Guénif and Macé, 2004; Ezekiel, 2006; Dorlin, 2007). First, I should explain that the words Islam and Arab are more and more often used interchangeably despite their obvious difference (Dorlin, 2007). The vilification of Muslim men was directly pointed at people of Northern African descent as they represent the majority of the population with Muslim faith in France (Insee, 2008). Here again all migrants from Maghreb are far from all being of Muslim faith. Elsa Dorlin denounced the tendency in France to « racialize » religion. If it is true that most Muslims living in France come from Maghreb, there is no logical conclusion in saying that all Muslims are from that part of the world (Dorlin, 2009). The focus on an exotic sexism, i.e. coming from the "outside", is paradigmatic. As Guénif and Macé analyzed, the focus on violence such as immolation, excision and stoning leads to the idea that sexism is a privilege of the "Arab boy" ("*garcon arabe*") living in the suburbs of Paris or of the polygamous "African man" (Guénif and Macé, 2004). The reality is that there is no reason to believe that sexism exist more among migrants and sexual violence bears neither race nor class (Jaspard, 2003).

The debate about French national identity brought back to the fore the idea of republican universalism. It is difficult for any social movement not to appeal to French universalism. Put simply, the republic is said to be universal because it supports universal values, i.e. values that all human beings are entitled to adopt (Schor, 2001:53). Republican universalism is "the defining trait of the French republic, its most enduring value, its most

precious asset" (Scott, 2004:35). In this framework, the citizen does not have a sex, a race, an ethnicity, a class, a gender or a sexual orientation (Schor, 2001:62; Ticktin, 2008:885). Feminist scholars have long critiqued this so-called universal citizen as the latter was in fact thought as a "white non-disabled heterosexual man" (Lister, 2004:66). Nevertheless, the strength of French universalism makes it impossible for social movements to ignore it. Some feminists, for example, used the argument to legitimate the headscarf ban in schools (Ticktin, 2008: 877). The appeal of republican universalism often ignores that France is a postcolonial state (Dorlin, 2006). As a consequence, the argument is most often used only when "it fits a larger national narrative about a superior state of civilization" (Ticktin, 2008:885). There is thus a thin line between universalism and nationalism. The strength of universalism might be understood and used as a nationalistic tool.

As we see, feminism has been in recent years caught up in turmoil. This can be explained by several factors, some of those are specific to the French context. First French secularism is often used to legitimate the conscious blindness to towards religion. In reality, all debates about *laïcité* revolve around Islam, not Catholicism. Moreover, the appeal to republican universalism can sometimes be transformed into an appeal to nationalism in the sense that it positions French values as morally superior. The constraints of the feminist movement share many similarities with the LGBT movement. For example, the construction of sexism as "Other" sheds light on the similar construction of homophobia as an outside phenomenon. Moreover, the vilification of the Arab man as the oppressor of women creates the impossibility of the existence of Arab gay men and lesbians. It has thus been really useful to highlight those constraints in order to understand homonationalism. We can see how intricate the two movements are, contrary to what Nicolas Gougain would have us believe. I will now turn to how homonationalism takes shape in the French context.

3.2 Homonationalism in France

There is little doubt left about the existence of homonationalism in France. As we saw, the relation with the feminist movement and the state is fraught with pitfalls. Similarly, the LGBT movement also uses a problematic nationalistic approach, in order to get national recognition. The conditions to get national recognition come with exclusionary politics. I had the opportunity to do my fieldwork in April 2012, during an auspicious time for the LGBT movement. Indeed, the question of gay marriage was debated during the presidential elections and the left wing candidates had promised to fulfill the wish of LGBT activists. The elections also witnessed the development of xenophobia in a significant scale, a fact confirmed by the results of the elections with the success of the openly racist extreme-right wing candidate Marine Le Pen, who was granted 17.90% of the votes at the first ballot.[11] In other words, one discourse about inclusion was counter-balanced with a discourse on exclusion.

The scholarship shows that homonationalism works on different levels. It can be seen as a strategy of the LGBT movement to get recognition, by constructing homosexuality as morally legitimate in society. But it is also the troubled relationship between the LGBT community and the state, the former accepting the latter as a legitimate system in which they want to belong. Homonationalism can also be found on a more individual level, in which homophobia is embodied by the image of the foreigner. In this latter case, it positions the French nation as the protector against homophobia. If homonationalism does exist in France, it is useful to analyze its specificities within the LGBT community in Paris. I do not pretend to explain the complexity of homonationalism, but rather to show different aspects of it.

[11] The presidential elections consist of two ballots. Only the two candidates granted with the most votes at the first ballot could access the second ballot. Marine Le Pen, candidate for the Front National, finished third and thus did not make it to the second ballot. The official results of the presidential elections can be found here: http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/a_votre_service/resultats-elections/PR2012/FE.html Last access: July, 1, 2012

3.2.1 From internationalism to imperialism: working with universalistic claims

Republican universalism in France is comparable to the U.S. exceptionalism analyzed by Puar. It posits France as a unique country with a specific tradition. The crisis of republican universalism is well known in feminist scholarship (Schor, 2001; Dorlin, 2006; Ticktin, 2008). Nevertheless, it is a fundamental strategy that is used to legitimate a social movement. As Eric Fassin pointed out, this is a republican ideology founded on the refusal to admit distinctive identities (Fassin, 2006). As a consequence, minorities are seldom debated in the public space and communities are accused of communitarianism. It is for example the case of the *Marais*, sometimes depicted in the newspapers as "a geographical and metaphorical "ghetto" and the headquarters of gay 'corporatism', 'communitarianism' or 'militant *apartheid*'" (Sibalis 2004:1752). The accusations expressed towards the gay district of Paris reflect the way minorities are conceptualized in France (Sibalis 2004:1752). It is precisely to avoid those accusations that the LGBT community appeals to universalism.

The campaign for the universal decriminalization of homosexuality, launched in 2006, is a perfect example of the appeal to universalism. The initiator of the campaign was Louis-Georges Tin, former student at the *École Normale Supérieure* and president of the Representative Council of France's Black Associations (CRAN) since 2006. Louis-Georges Tin is a very interesting figure in French activism because he is the representative of the umbrella organization fighting against racism and also a fierce LGBT activist. The CRAN, which brings together one hundred and twenty associations, aims at fighting against discriminations based on race and works for the memory of slavery and colonization.[12] In parallel, Tin founded in 2004 the IDAHO, i.e. the International Day Against Homophobia. Two years later, a campaign aiming at the universal decriminalization of homosexuality was

[12] See the website of the organization: http://lecran.org/?cat=234 Last accessed: July, 1, 2012

launched through the IDAHO committee.[13] Many international public figures supported the campaign and the French Minister of Human Rights and Foreign Affairs, Rama Yade, agreed to take an appeal at the UN (MacFarquhar, 2008). The campaign was co-sponsored by France as well as by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union (Mepschen et al., 2010:972). On December 18, 2008, the declaration on ending acts of violence and related human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity was presented in the General Assembly at the United Nations (MacFarquhar, 2008). As of March 2011, eighty-five countries had signed the declaration.[14]

The Declaration can also be interpreted as part of a gay imperialistic agenda. The first sentence of the declaration reads: "we reaffirm the principle of universality of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights whose 60th anniversary is celebrated this year".[15] It is no surprise that France was the initiator of the Declaration as the appeal to universalism is particularly important in French politics. A declaration at the UN level is also fundamental insofar as it strengthens the LGBT movement on a national level. But the enthusiasm created around the UN declaration was also counter-balanced by a counter-declaration that states that "the effort threatened to undermine the international framework of human rights by trying to normalize pedophilia, among other acts" (MacFarquhar, 2008). Here we observe an appeal to universalism and to the human rights discourse on both sides. The counter-declaration can also be seen as a response to imperialism. As Eric Fassin explained, homosexuality is decriminalized mostly in Western countries (Birnbaum, 2012). As a consequence, a campaign with universalistic claims might be interpreted as purely Western. The Declaration might thus be seen as an aspect of homonationalism, as it posits

[13] The IDAHO committee was at the initiator of the Declaration and is still fighting today for the adoption of a UN resolution, which would have a more constraining effect. See: http://www.idahofrance.org/actualite-idaho-france_lire_nos-communiques-de-presse_92_8_4.html?PHPSESSID=27d2b8232743774ec8e90b94b7ad54ea Last Accessed: July, 1, 2012

[14] Source: http://geneva.usmission.gov/2011/03/22/lgbtrights/ Last Accessed: July, 1, 2012

[15] The declaration can be found here: (last accessed: July, 1, 2012) http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/UN_declaration_on_sexual_orientation_and_gender_identity

Western countries as more advanced as defenders of a cause recognized as a universal human right. Furthermore, it legitimates Western foreign intervention in the name of tolerance towards sexual minorities as the latter is now inscribed at the UN.

At the national level, the appeal to universalism can also be observed as many LGBT associations struggle not to be accused of communitarianism. This fact can be seen from the early organizing following the beginning of the AIDS crisis. The first associations were created by homosexuals but members of those associations avoided the topic of homosexuality (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:195). For example Daniel Defert, who founded in 1985 the association *AIDES* after the death of his partner Michel Foucault, refused any identification with gayness. The fight against AIDS could only be framed through a universalistic discourse, with a conscious ignorance that homosexual people were more affected by the disease. This strategy was a response to a growing homophobia linked to the AIDS crisis (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:195). But it also reflected a call to universalism, as associations "persisted in regarding their action as removed from any element of gay activism and, *in good republican tradition*, without any reference to a so-called homosexual identity" (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:197, my emphasis).

Another striking example can be found in the statement of purpose of the association *SOS Homophobie*. Founded in 1994 in Paris, the association "struggles against homophobia, works towards a better acceptance of the diversity of sexual orientations and struggles for the visibility and equal rights of LGBT people".[16] They intervene in schools to increase teenagers' awareness about sexuality in general and homophobia in particular. The focus on a higher visibility is a proof that the association is keen on showing their legitimacy in representing the LGBT community. They struggle so that the LGBT community can be better

[16] SOS Homophobie "lute contre l'homophobie en vue d'une meilleure acceptation de la diversité des orientations sexuelles et pour lutter pour la visibilité et l'égalité des droits des personnes LGBT" Website: http://www.sos-homophobie.org/lassociation Last Accessed: July, 1, 2012

represented in society, i.e. without prejudices. In their charter of interventions, the association stresses the importance of republican universalism. The statement reads:

> "Commitment of members:
> - Republican universalism: interventions are strictly situated in a republican universalistic frame thus excluding all communitarianism: it is only about bringing respect of human beings and equal rights, not to promote particular rights"
>
> *(SOS Homophobie*, Charter of interventions)[17]

The association stresses the fact that homophobia concerns everyone, not only homosexuals, and that the association does not represent a community but all human beings. The appeal on republican universalism (as well as secularism as we will see later) in the Charter shows how some LGBT associations negotiate their space in politics. The example of *SOS Homophobie* is the most obvious but it can easily be explained by the fact that they intervene in schools. Indeed, French education is very centralized and all educational programs are highly controlled by the Ministry of education (Ezekiel, 2006:267). Activists are thus more constrained in their actions.

The appeal to universalism cannot be reduced to a Manichean problem. Indeed, republican universalism gives LGBT associations a great amount of potential to frame their politics. In the name of universalism, LGBT activists argue that all discrimination should be fought against, including homophobia. In the name of universalism, equal rights for LGBT people could be acquired. But it is also very problematic because it posits the French society as exceptional, as unique. Moreover, it is ignorant of differences between and among human beings. The universalistic discourse reflects how the LGBT movement negotiates their space within a national framework. But it also represents a pitfall when it serves as an argument that legitimates imperialist and/or nationalistic discourses.

[17] "Engagement des intervenants: universalisme républicain. Les interventions se situent dans le cadre strict de l'universalisme républicain à l'exclusion de tout communautarisme: il s'agit seulement de faire progresser le respect de la personne humaine et l'égalité des droits, et non de promouvoir des droits particuliers."
Available in their website: http://www.sos-homophobie.org/charte-de-nos-interventions-en-milieu-scolaire last accessed: July, 1, 2012

3.2.2 *Laïcité* and homosexuality: working with secularist claims

If republican universalism is at the heart of the republican project, so is the concept of *laïcité* or French secularism. As Ivekovic rightly pointed out, *laïcité* is "at the core of the formation of the nation in France beyond religious differences of that time, that is why it is so important and that is why the French are so paranoid about it" (Ivekovic, 2004:1119). Paranoid might not be the perfect word but *laïcité* is certainly used in many debates about the French nation. The concept of *laïcité* was developed and eventually integrated into French law at a time where nationalism blossomed, i.e. in the end of the 19th century. The 1905 French law on the Separation of the Churches and State was the law in which *laïcité* became constitutive of the state (Haarscher, 2004). French secularism is reciprocal as it forbids any religious involvement in state politics as well as any state involvement in religion (Haarscher, 2004). *Laïcité* has a long history but it is interesting to note that the word appears in the first article of the constitution: "France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic, and social Republic".[18]

It is thus no wonder that social movements are putting *laïcité* as one of their principles. The debate about the headscarf ban is one obvious example. Judith Ezekiel recalls that during the debate, the French intellectual Alain Finkielkraut called schools "temples of laïcité" (Ezekiel, 2006:267). Secularism was thus used as the reason to ban all religious signs from schools. Similarly, the association *SOS Homophobie* clearly stresses the principle of *laïcité* in their Charter, stating that all militants observe strict neutrality towards religion.[19] While secularism can be seen as a uniting force, it can also be a factor of division if people want to assert their right to difference over the stifling force of *laïcité.*

[18] Constitution of October 4, 1958: http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/english/8ab.asp Last accessed: July, 4, 2012

[19] http://www.sos-homophobie.org/charte-de-nos-interventions-en-milieu-scolaire last accessed: July, 4, 2012

But *laïcité* is also, it shall not be forgotten, a political concept and is constantly used and adapted to specific situations. The position on *laïcité* of the collective Gay Muslims of France (*Homosexuel-les Musulman-es de France* or *HM2F*) is in this regard enlightening. The association, created in 2009, chose to take a secular stance but puts the stress on the fact that *laïcité* is not the absence of religion but "a position respectful of the freedom of religion of each citizen" [20] (HM2F report, 2011:2). The assertion is correct indeed even though, historically, *laïcité* was in fact often hostile to religion.[21] Their report, published in November 2011, is entitled "homonationalism" and is an account of the situation in Paris. The association reports about two recent events symbolizing homonationalism. First, the association was not accepted to join the Inter-LGBT, the umbrella committee organizing the gay pride in Paris every year. The reason given was that the HM2F was taking a dogmatic position with their name, because claiming a Muslim identity, incompatible with the secular position of the committee (HM2F report, 2011:2). The position of the Inter-LGBT is with few doubts, considering the political situation in France, an expression of a lack of comfort towards Islam, if not an anti-Muslim racism.[22] The HM2F shows that a thin line exists between the defense of *laïcité* and anti-Muslim racism.

Second, the HM2F reports that the Confederation of European Muslims LGBT associations (CALEM) refused to work with them and explains the homonationalism lying behind this decision. The reason given was that the members of HM2F are "Muslims of France" and not "Arabs" thus they do not qualify to participate (HM2F report, 2011:2). Interestingly, we observe here a double exclusion of the association, considered too "Muslim"

[20] "une conception de la laïcité qui soit respectueuse de la liberté de croyance de chaque citoyenne"
[21] When voted in parliament in 1905, many members of parliament expressed strong anti-clerical views (Haarscher, 2004). Their support of *laïcité* was thus carried by certain hostility towards religion. Similarly, as we saw, *laïcité* developed hand in hand with nationalism and the nationalist state was keen on controlling religious institutions (Mosse, 1985). Moreover, recent debates about the headscarf also witnessed the use of *laïcité* towards certain hostility towards Islam (Ezekiel, 2006).
[22] I choose the word anti-Muslim racism instead of Islamophobia because I consider the former more accurate. Islamophobia refers to a fear of the religion Islam, especially when considered as a political force. Anti-Muslim racism, on the other hands, refers more accurately to a discrimination based on a supposed religious affiliation.

by one side, and not "Arab" enough by the other side. HM2F explains this marginalization from CALEM by the fact that they struggle not only against Israeli homonationalism (or "pinkwashing") but also European and Arabic homonationalism (HM2F report, 2011:5). They are thus accused of criticizing their own camp. Moreover, they are marginalized because they refuse to portray Islam as the sole reason behind homophobia. As they pointedly show:

> We think that the conference of Arab LGBT associations – some of them exiled in Europe, with little experience and unaware of European LGBT politics – are being used for homonationalistic purposes by European associations, which only welcome gay Muslims in the position of victim, rejecting their culture of origin and rejecting Islam.[23]
>
> (HM2F report, 2011:3)

Here, a dominant LGBT political scene decides who can be represented. LGBT politics are not *per se* anti-Muslim but they reflect, I argue, the larger political situation in France and Western Europe, a political situation dominated by mistrust towards Muslim immigrants. The association has a point as CALEM was invited by the Inter-LGBT to participate in the gay pride parade in 2011. HM2F thus unravel homonationalism by showing how Islam is constructed as the sole reason behind homophobia and the sole reason why LGBT asylum seekers would leave their country of origin (HM2F report, 2011:5).

The example of the collective HM2F symbolizes how homonationalism works in France. The association chose a secular stance, i.e. they chose to focus on Islam as a culture, so as to be intelligible in the French associative space. But they were still marginalized in the name of *laïcité*, by a dominant LGBT community dubious and ignorant of Islam. HM2F is constrained to work in a political space, which, as we saw, constructs the impossibility of the existence of gay Arabs (Dorlin, 2006). Like republican universalism, *laïcité* represents a potential for LGBT politics, but also a force ignorant of differences between LGBT people.

[23] "Nous pensons en cela que la *conférence des associations arabes LGBT* - qui sont pour certains d'entre eux réfugiés en Europe, inexpérimentés et connaissant mal la politique politicienne du milieu LGBT européen -, sont utilisés a des fins « homonationalistes » par des associations européennes qui ne veulent d'homomusulmans que dans une position victimaire, en rupture avec leur culture d'origine et rejetant l'islam"

3.2.3 Homosexuality and the French nation: Working with nationalistic claims

The doubt becomes clearer about the nationalism of the LGBT movement in Paris. In their strategies, the LGBT community is ignorant of differences among LGBT people. The LGBT movement is nationalistic because it seeks to unite all LGBT people regardless of their differences. In that sense, the movement is keen on creating a LGBT nation. But as we saw, a LGBT nation is always embedded in a national framework. In their attempt at being intelligible as a group, the LGBT community seeks to be included in the French political space, using tools such as republican universalism and *laïcité*. The question is raised about the cost of these nationalistic strategies. If the LGBT movement in Paris is a French gay nation, then who is excluded from it? It is time to focus on the event that sparked the debate about homonationalism in France. In April 2011, a few weeks after the conference in Amsterdam, the Inter-LGBT revealed the poster they had chosen for the yearly gay pride in Paris.

Poster for the 2011 Gay Pride in Paris
"Walk of pride LGBT: for equality, in 2011 I walk, in 2012, I vote"

The poster was received with a lot of criticism. The poster had a double meaning: the rooster is a symbol of the French nation but it can also be read as a pun, the expression « proud as a rooster» (translated literally) being widely popular in France. The joke showed how the discourse about homosexuality was linked to the idea of nation. Some argued that, because the Gallic rooster is a symbol of the French nation, the poster expressed nationalistic views and excluded non-French people. When I first saw the poster representing the Gallic rooster, I immediately recognized the animal as a symbol of the nation. Despite my intuition, I could not explain why I knew it was a symbol of the nation. As Anderson wrote, the nation is "an imagined political community" and in this community, people recognize symbols as belonging to the nation-state in which they live (Anderson, 1983:6). In that sense, nationalism is a "powerful and effective ideology" that gets inscribed in people's imaginaries (Mosse, 1985:9). It is only logical that it is used so widely in political life to legitimate the very existence of the nation (Anderson, 1983). It is possible to trace the history of symbols but it is not necessary to have the feeling of belonging.

I will briefly explain the history of the Gallic rooster to understand its significance. Gallus in Latin means rooster as well as the Gauls as explained by Suetonius in Twelve Caesars (Pastoureau, 1998). The use of the Gallic rooster to refer to the French people goes back to the XIIth century. Nevertheless, it only became the symbol of the French nation when the idea of nation became to develop, i.e. during the Renaissance (Pastoureau, 1998). The symbol became widely used during and after the French revolution and is used in many occasions. For example, it is used by tour operators and is the symbol of the French cinematographic company Pathé. The symbol is thus visible on an international scale. Interestingly, it is also used as the symbol of the French national football team. It shows that masculinity is an important aspect of the symbol as the Gallic rooster supposedly rules over the barnyard. The use of the symbol shows that the nation is also performative because it is

constantly re-enacted by different actors (Bhabba, 1990 in Imre, 2007:269). The organizers of the pride chose this symbol to disrupt its meanings and to reclaim a symbol usually associated with the extreme-right wing.[24] They chose to do so using humor. Indeed the parallel between the pride of the rooster and the pride of LGBT people is funny as the pun is intended. In doing so, the organizers claimed a central place within the nation.

By claiming a space within the nation, we observe a normalization of the LGBT community, which no longer wants to be in the margins. A homonormative process is thus present (Duggan, 2002; Puar, 2007). Nevertheless, the poster says more than that. First, it bridges the gap between rural and urban spaces. Indeed, homosexuality is often interpreted as being an urban phenomenon. Paris is also a symbolic location because it has a huge homosexual community and a gay district. At the same time, the Gallic rooster is a symbol of rural spaces. The poster thus plays with the stereotype that LGBT people only exist in big cities for the reason that it is in big cities that homosexual subcultures develop (Mosse, 1985:32). Moreover, the poster is also a tribute to the extravagance of the LGBT community. The Gallic rooster is portrayed wearing a boa, i.e. a long thin stole of feathers usually worn around a woman's neck. The boa is also a symbol used by gay men performing cross-dressing. Nicolas Gougain, at the Inter-LGBT center, declared that the poster was a tribute to transvestites who contributed to the LGBT movement.[25] The "fabulous rooster" is not one of normativity for it emphasizes difference. Playing with gender stereotypes, the poster reclaims the fabulous gay figure, which falls outside a normative framework. The poster shows a complex gay rights movement, striving for equality but also emphasizes its difference. Thus the poster is a call for multiple interpretations.

[24] Statement of the organizer's committee, the Inter-LGBT center in Paris, published in *Libération*, April 15, 2011. Accessed April 1, 2012: http://www.liberation.fr/societe/01012332001-sur-l-affiche-de-la-gay-pride-des-plumes-qui-font-debat

[25] "L'affiche de la gay pride, pomme de discorde entre association", in Le nouvel Observateur, April 17, 2011. Accessed April 1, 2012: http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/societe/20110417.OBS1451/l-affiche-de-la-gay-pride-pomme-de-discorde-entre-associations.html

Here it is very clear that nationalistic claims create a strong potential for LGBT politics. But it was followed by exclusionary politics that were strongly criticized. Most of the critics were published in LGBT newspapers (available online) but also on social networks such as Facebook (where groups were constituted, asking for the removal of the poster). Interestingly, the debate was relayed by only one main newspaper, *Le Figaro*, and only for one reason thus silencing other aspects of the debate. The fact that the Gallic rooster is a sign of masculinity was ironically not so much discussed. I would argue that mostly men dominate the LGBT movement, therefore this fact was not considered strange. About the debate, two major criticisms were expressed.

An association called The Shelter, which helps young people rejected by their family because of their homosexuality, argued that the poster was stigmatizing the LGBT community by reinforcing stereotypes. The association regrets that stereotypes are still so widely used because it can lead young people, denying their own sexuality because of these clichés, to severe depression. The association added that years of work were undermined by such an initiative.[26] I would argue that the association found in transvestites the perfect guilty persons instead of questioning the structures of the French society. In doing so, they create a division between "the normal" figure of the homosexual who has a place in society and the "abnormal" who refuses to conform to society. In doing so, they attempt to find acceptance "with claiming sexual moderation" (Mosse, 1985:40). Interestingly, the point of view of The Shelter was the only one, which was relayed by *Le Figaro.*[27] This partial account shows how the exuberance of the LGBT movement, little as it might be, is portrayed negatively in mainstream discourses. The media, as well as the association, chose to focus on "a normalization of gay sexuality" (Mepschen, et al. 2010: 970).

[26] "Gay Pride 2011: l'affiche ne plaît pas à tout le monde, *Le Parisien,* April 15, 2011 Accessed April, 1, 2012 http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/gay-pride-2011-l-affiche-ne-plait-pas-a-tout-le-monde-15-04-2011-1409377.php
[27] "Polémique autour d'une affiche de la gay pride", *Le Figaro,* April 15, 2011. Accessed April 1, 2012. http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2011/04/15/97001-20110415FILWWW00577-gay-pride-parisaffichеretrait-demande.php

Another major critic was brought to the fore by the association *Lesbians of Color*. Indeed, they denounced a racist initiative precisely because of the link between the rooster and nationalism. First of all, it can be pointed out that the rooster is white. This strange and unfortunate choice was made to create a visual, which uses the three colors of the French flag, i.e. blue, white and red. Moreover, the Gallic rooster is sometimes used in posters from the extreme-right wing party, *Le Front National*. For this reason, the symbol might be associated with racism. The political debates about immigration and the French national identity, which occupied the political sphere in the last two years, contributed to the stigmatization of immigrants and people of color.[28] Moreover, the very fact that some considered the poster racist was not relayed in any mainstream media, nor discussed by any politicians.

The incorporation of LGBT rights is connected to the exclusion of minority groups, notably Muslim immigrants. Mosse's phrase resonates here perfectly "the spectacle of one outsider to buy his entrance ticket to society at the expense of another is common enough" (Mosse, 1985:41). It shows that the LGBT movement cannot ignore the larger national framework in which they are embedded, especially when using national symbols. The poster is not necessarily exclusionary if the nation is defined as plural but it cannot be ignored that some groups are currently excluded from the idea of French nation. Indeed, the state finds an interest in the LGBT rights movement to exclude other groups by claiming that some cultures are intolerant towards homosexuality and thus should not be welcomed on the French territory. The debate surrounding the choice of the poster is of utmost importance as it created a dialogue between LGBT activists. And this is significant for a movement still marginal and which has yet to be reinvented.

[28] I use the terms "immigrants" and "people of color" as two different entities and I do not want to create an amalgam. Indeed, people of color can be from the French collectivities overseas and are therefore French from birth. "Immigrants" refers to the persons born from a different nationality, understood as a different citizenship. In the media and in politics, the use of the term "immigrants" is often used to refer to immigrants and their children, even if the latter were born in France. I use the two terms together because both groups are likely to experience racism whatever their citizenship or skin color may be.

Conclusion of chapter

Until now, we have seen that the LGBT community of Paris could only be defined as a French LGBT community, as it is a community framing political strategies within a national framework. In a country that does not acknowledge the existence of specific communities, the LGBT community built itself using the political tools necessary to be intelligible to the state. Most specifically, the LGBT movement in Paris works a lot with republican universalism and *laïcité*. Both tools create the potential but also the limitations of the LGBT movement. Moreover, I argue that those tools are sources of homonationalistic politics. Indeed, they ignore the differences among people belonging to the community. First, it excludes those living in France but who are discriminated against and not recognized as French or who do not wish to be recognized as (only) French. Second, it constructs a French society as unique because of its republican values and superior because of a higher tolerance towards sexual minorities. This chapter has not been entitled homonationalism for a reason. Indeed, I argue that all LGBT politics are embedded in a national space and limited by specific national constraints. But the LGBT community is embedded within a larger framework that cannot be ignored. The constraints do not excuse the active processes of exclusion that occur within the LGBT community. Moreover, there is always the risk of being instrumentalized by state politics. All political parties can also be homonationalistic when for example recognizing LGBT rights in the name of French universalism, considered as exceptional, or for imperialistic purposes. As Puar wrote in *Terrorist Assemblages*, there is no such thing as political coincidences (Puar, 2007:205). The positions taken by the Inter-LGBT and the construction of a homophobia only existing in the suburbs as well as the debate about French national identity are thus not coincidental. Recognizing the LGBT community as a French gay nation is the starting point from which we can consider how to displace this LGBT community.

Chapter 4
Displacing the LGBT community: case study with ACT UP, Paris

To displace the LGBT community means looking for strategies that take into account the challenges highlighted earlier. As we have seen, the LGBT community is best described as a French gay nation. But this assertion should not automatically lead to homonationalism. My journey into this topic brought me to the association ACT UP in Paris. It might seem awkward to the reader that ACT UP was chosen as the focus of study as the association has been defined as "mostly middle class white gay men" (Foster, 2003:403; Bosia, 2009:79). What's more, ACT UP fights primarily against AIDS even though it was born out of the LGBT movement. In fact, many people imagine ACT UP as the center of the LGBT rights movement because the association has enjoyed a high visibility since its creation in 1989. I chose ACT UP Paris because it has been at the center of the debate against homonationalism and it is their very high visibility that brought me to them. Even though the history of ACT UP has been well covered by many scholars, I will consider the association only in its most recent history. This choice will allow me to focus on the transformations of ACT UP's strategies following the significant changes within the LGBT rights movement itself.

First, I will briefly introduce the history of ACT UP, Paris to highlight their specificities compared to ACT UP in the United States. In doing so, it will allow me to explain why ACT UP is the heart of the challenges that the concept homonationalism encompasses. Second, I will explain their strategic choices during the presidential campaign of 2012. The relationship between the association and the government is revealing of the link between state politics and homonationalism. At last, I will propose some final remarks about the potential of ACT UP for displacing LGBT activism (through AIDS activism) but will also consider the limitations of the association.

4.1 The AIDS crisis and the inception of ACT UP Paris

The association ACT UP Paris was created in 1989, two years after the eponymous association of New York. It seems quite late for an association whose prime goal is to fight against AIDS. But from its creation, the association ACT UP Paris distanced itself from other French associations struggling against AIDS. First, it was the first time that an advocacy group asserted loud and clear that they were part of the homosexual community. More than that, it was the first association to "call for the foundation of a homosexual *community*, something no other movement previously thought to defend" (Fillieule and Duyvendak, 1999:200, original emphasis). This militant decision was significant in a country in which communities are not recognized as political groups. Besides claiming a strong homosexual identity, ACT UP also moved "to the broader question of AIDS and society, with the pandemic proving intimately tied to real experiences of marginalization" (Bosia, 2009:81). As a consequence, ACT UP managed to form coalition with other groups more at risk towards the disease and marginalized because of the stigma related to the disease.[29]

Even though ACT UP Paris was based on the American model of its twin association, the French context proved decisive in shaping the strategies of the French association. Indeed, it can be argued that ACT UP Paris was always "within the French traditional sphere of influence" and based its politics adapted to the local context (Bosia, 2009:86). I will now turn to the history of ACT UP and the development of the association over the years. I base my analysis on the one written by Michael Bosia, who wrote his dissertation comparing the politics of AIDS in France and the United States, because of its accurateness (Bosia, 2005). I will further strengthen my analysis by using writings of members and/or former members of the association.

[29] I use the word disease but I am aware of the word has political implications. Therefore, I use the word with Crimp's notice in mind: "AIDS does not exist apart from the practices that conceptualize it, represent it, and respond to it" (Crimp, 1987:3).

4.1.1 The creation of ACT UP, Paris: a response to the AIDS crisis

ACT UP Paris was created on the model of the American association based in New York City for similar reasons. Seen as "a disease for gay men, emanating from New York" (Bosia, 2005:296), homophobic comments were flooding over the news. Moreover, the irresponsibility of the state towards the pandemic raised the anger of those stricken by the disease. It is for all those reasons that some HIV-positive men living in Paris decided to take a more militant approach. When Didier Lestrade created ACT UP in Paris, he had travelled to New York City and knew how the association worked. Once created, the first members of ACT UP Paris were "overwhelmingly identified as gay and directed their primary actions within the gay community" (Bosia, 2005:303). In their official brochure, the association always presented itself, and still does today, as "an association born out of the homosexual community".[30] Not only were they mostly gay men but also they were also predominantly white and middle-class. Didier Lestrade and Christophe Martet were both journalists and had both worked in New York City.

Nevertheless, the association was committed to "defend all the populations touched by AIDS" (Bosia, 2005:303). Bosia situates the application of this principle with the *Affaire du sang contaminé* (Blood contamination affair). Like in other countries, a number of hemophiliac people had been contaminated through blood transfusions. Hemophiliacs and gay men were divided in the affair, mostly because the former considered themselves as victims who did not "deserve" to get AIDS (Bosia, 2005:292). The contamination occurred in the years 1984-1985 and hemophiliacs got an indemnification in 1989. Nevertheless, the state had declined any responsibility in the affair. ACT UP managed to form a coalition with some hemophiliacs by focusing on the accountability of the state (Bosia, 2005:292). Joëlle Bouchet,

[30] The latest brochure written, dates back from 2006. The brochure can be found on this website: http://www.actupparis.org/IMG/pdf/brochure-presentation-aup.pdf Retrieved: July, 20, 2012

a mother whose son had been affected through blood transfusion, joined ACT UP and became active in the association. As Bosia tells the story:

> Bouchet and radicals in the organization were able to develop a common narrative on the issue when they joined forces to argue that the highest Socialist ministers had abandoned Republican values in favor of what Martet calls the "revalorization of business" that was part of the French engagement with economic globalization after 1984.
>
> Bosia, 2005:304-305

As Bosia writes, ACT UP positioned itself as defenders of Republican values rather than opponents. The scandal of the infected blood was thus portrayed as due to the neglect of the government towards Republican values. The government was accused of favoring instead neoliberal values instead (Bosia, 2005:305). This strategy is crucial to understand how the association works. Indeed, ACT UP is not in opposition to the state but rather claims a place at the center, by doing the work the state neglects to do. The marginalization brought by AIDS becomes the basis from which militants form their political struggle, by claiming that marginalized groups are also "entitled to the protection of the government" (Bosia, 2005:294).

The creation of ACT UP was thus a response to the AIDS crisis but also a strong statement regarding the responsibility of the state in dealing with the crisis. As a consequence of their coalition with hemophiliacs, the minister of Health and the minister of Social Affairs back in 1985 were prosecuted for manslaughter in the late 1990s, but were eventually acquitted (Ingram, 1999). The most important aspect of ACT UP is that AIDS is now considered a political disease. In the words of Emmanuelle Cosse, the first woman who became president of ACT UP (1999-2001), everything in the AIDS crisis is "a matter of personal willingness, indeed, but also and foremost of political willingness"[31] (Cosse, 2008). Cosse herself came to ACT UP because she saw AIDS as revealing the inequalities of French society in its margins (Bosia, 2009:83).

[31] "Tout est question de volonté personnelle, certes, mais aussi et surtout politique"

4.1.2 Visibility and zaps: the history of the pink condom on *Place de la Concorde*

The main strategy of ACT UP consists of zaps, direct actions designed to engage the public on specific issues. In their weekly meetings, the members of the association always propose ideas for zaps. It is precisely zaps that are at the origin of their fame, because they are thought so as to get media attention. While it is impossible to give an overview of all the actions they organized, I decided to present one of their most memorable zaps. On December 1, 1993, ACT UP erected a huge condom over the Luxor Obelisk, on Concorde Square in the center of Paris. The event was organized for the World AIDS day, an event created in 1988 to raise awareness about the pandemic (Hoban, 2007). The zap of ACT UP was to have a huge impact and even made it to the cover of New York Times (Cosse, 2008).

The pink condom on *Place de la Concorde*
Height: 40m/132ft – Width: 2m/6,6ft
(ACT UP, Paris, 1993)

The success of the zap lies sometimes in the challenge made towards the authorities. A key strategy of ACT UP is civil disobedience, justified because of the insufficiency of state institutions. (ACT UP, 2007). In their brochure and during meetings, the association insists that they do not have the choice but to disobey the law, when all other options have been wiped out. Civil disobedience also means pacifism and the members have as a principle to lie down (what is called a die-in) in case of intervention by the police. In the case of the pink condom, ACT UP had concluded an agreement with Benetton so that the latter would cover expenses in case of lawsuit. The association was at that time, already in court with the *Centre des Monuments Nationaux* (National Monuments Centre), which complained about the fake blood sprayed on the Statue of Liberty in Paris in a previous zap (Cosse, 2008).

Emmanuelle Cosse wrote retrospectively about her experience at the Concorde (Cosse, 2008). The action had been kept secret during the public meetings at the *Beaux-Arts* and was prepared with only the core members of the associations. Well prepared, members of ACT UP arrived at 5.45 a.m. at the *Place de la Concorde*. Putting the condom over the Obelisk only took three minutes, with the help of a crane. The condom was chosen because ACT UP considers that the condom is (until today) the only way to protect against HIV-AIDS. They wanted to raise awareness on this issue and challenge health public policies. Policemen arrived twenty minutes later on the square. The members then called the Ministry of Health to dissuade the police to take any action. As a result, no member was arrested or taken to the police station. Two hours later, the condom was taken off of the Obelisk. The zap was a success as many journalists had had the time to come and take photographs. With this action, and because the logo of ACT UP was visible on the pink condom, the association became highly visible and had enjoyed this visibility since then. Their radical action also benefited other associations struggling against AIDS (Cosse, 2008). It also gained a reputation as an "association of radicals", which it still has today.

4.1.3 The development of ACT UP, Paris: a postcolonial approach

ACT UP developed over the years and diversified its membership. It has been argued that the success of ACT UP is due to their postcolonial approach, in a country, which is still ill at ease about the history of colonization (Bosia, 2009). As a result, ACT UP appears to be unique within the French LGBT scene. One of the reasons behind this approach is that some members of the association were already militants during the Algerian war and the extreme left movements following May '68 (for an account on the period, see Shepard, 2012:83). Members of the FHAR, including Hélène Hazera who is today a militant at ACT UP, were also fiercely against colonization (Shepard, 2012:104). In the 1980s, the antiracist movement, most notably the association *SOS-Racisme*, brought new light to the issue of racism in France and some members, such as Emmanuelle Cosse, later joined ACT UP (Bosia, 2005:308). More importantly, Bosia argues that the "alter-globalization" movement of the 1990s also deeply influenced the policies of ACT UP (Bosia, 2009:70). The development of the association is also, as we will see, linked to the reinforcement of laws regarding immigration.

This postcolonial approach is best illustrated by ACT UP's interventions, which on several occasions led to the disruption of anti-AIDS treatment trials (Bosia, 2009; Patton, 2012). For ACT UP, the choice to run treatment trials in African and Asian countries is part of a colonial legacy, which considers Asian and African people less worth than European people. As Bosia emphasized, "ACT UP Paris stands apart in its willingness to challenge the ethical basis of drug trials" (Bosia, 2009:69). Indeed, the association was at the forefront of efforts to denounce drug trials in several African countries as well as in Asia. As early as 1997, ACT UP denounced the use of placebos in a trial happening in Ivory Coast, as a grave endangerment of the persons involved in it. Moreover, the study focused on prostitutes, which was justified with the reasoning that prostitutes were at risk anyway. Informing the National Agency for Research about AIDS of these ethical issues, ACT UP received an answer from

the director Jean Dormont, stating "Yes this protocol could be better, but in Africa, we must do simple. We cannot really do medicine" (ACT UP, June, 1997). Since then, ACT UP has been challenging many treatment trials, most notably in Cambodia in 2004 and Cameroon in 2005 (ACT UP, July 16, 2004; ACT UP, January 20, 2005). Following ACT UP's interventions, both trials were stopped by governmental decisions (ACT UP, October 1, 2004; ACT UP, February 8, 2005).

The political choices of ACT UP, in relation to other countries are reflected at the national level. Indeed, ACT UP works "through a postcolonial opposition to the role of the French state at home and abroad" (Bosia, 2009:70). In France, ACT UP reacted to the strengthening of immigration restrictions and formed a commission on the rights of immigrants in 1991 (Bosia, 2009:84). They struggled to ensure that undocumented HIV-positive persons would be included in the Debré law (1997), which stipulated that persons with a serious illness could not be expelled from France (ACT UP, October, 1999). Second, they also lobbied the parliament for the passing of the Chevènement law (1998), which provided legal documents and access to medical care for the same persons (ACT UP, October, 1999). But ACT UP goes further through a constant denunciation of anti-immigrant policies (Bosia, 2009:84). They participated with immigrant rights organizations in many demonstrations against governmental policies (Bosia, 2009:85). Notably, they joined in 2005 the demonstration for the ninth anniversary of the expulsion by the police of undocumented migrants who had taken refuge at the St. Bernard's parish in 1996.

Using a postcolonial stance, ACT UP's strategy lies in carefully building coalitions with marginalized groups in France so as to challenge state institutions as much as to challenge the neocolonial policies of the French government. As a result, ACT UP, Paris gained visibility worldwide and stands apart in the struggle against AIDS as well as in LGBT politics. We will now turn to their recent actions in parallel with the presidential elections.

4.2 The presidential campaign of 2012

ACT UP Paris does politics. So as to be intelligible in the French political sphere, ACT UP faces the same constraints highlighted earlier. Navigating a sea of universalistic ideas, ACT UP finds its strength in reclaiming those universalistic ideas to make them their own. As we saw with the infected blood scandal, the association accused the state of having abandoned Republican values, thus positioning themselves as supporters of those values. With their action at the *Place de la Concorde*, militants were stating loud and clear that AIDS concerned everyone, and not only the gay community. With their actions abroad, ACT UP bridged "more directly the national and the global to extend the universal promise of the French Republic beyond the cultural boundary of France" (Bosia, 2009:83). Postcolonial and universalistic, ACT UP seems to have a lot to offer.

It is in this light that I arrived in Paris in April 2012 to do my fieldwork. I soon learned that militants were really busy and had little time to offer. They were closely following the presidential campaign, marked by the fact that all parties from the left had promised to make gay marriage legal. At the same time, they had organized their own campaign, entitled "AIDS: defeat the campaign",[32] launched in December 2011 (ACT UP, December 1, 2011). Nevertheless, I had the opportunity to meet several activists and to learn about their strategies regarding the forthcoming elections. ACT UP was well aware of the debate about homonationalism and I argue that this awareness is reflected in the work they did during the campaign. First, they positioned themselves as a new left that does not exclude marginalized groups. Second, they actively participated in the antiracist struggle in a period in which Marine Le Pen was appearing everyday in the media openly expressing racist views. I observed how their actions reflect their antinationalistic perspective.

[32] "Sida: battre la campagne": with this strange formulation, ACT UP emphasizes that it is not only about being included in the presidential campaign but also to question how the campaign is organized.

4.2.1 "We are the left because we make it" (ACT UP, 1997)

When I met the president of ACT UP, the first thing he showed me while talking about homonationalism was a poster made in 1997, in which the association claimed "We are the left because we make it[33]". He emphasized that this slogan is at the core of all ACT UP strategies. After the legislative elections of 1997, ACT UP saw the opportunity to participate in the newly formed left-wing coalition.[34] Militants wrote a manifesto that stressed the need of a truly alternative left. As the manifesto claims:

> We are the left that struggles, and has always struggled for our own quality of life and the quality of life of all. For the immigrants, the unemployed, homosexuals, women, the homeless; for people with HIV, drug users, prisoners; for all the people who every day must submit to exploitation, repression, and discrimination.
>
> (ACT UP, 1997, translated by Bosia, 2009:308)

The manifesto was a warning to a left seen as "too soft", not attentive enough to marginalize groups in the French society (discussion with the president ACT UP, April, 2012). Coming back to 2012, the association still has the same position, and when it comes to political parties, considers itself as outside of the mainstream political party system.

During the presidential campaign, ACT UP refused to communicate with political parties affiliated with the center and right wing. They organized a meeting on April 12, in which they invited four left-wing political parties running for the presidency to debate specific issues. In a publication, they explain the reasons why they refused to invite parties from the center and the right wing. The center party did not have equal rights for LGBT people in their program. Moreover, the association has always refused all communication with the extreme right National Front, a party they consider anti-republican. The reason why they did not invite the party of Sarkozy is most interesting. The article explains:

[33] "Nous sommes la gauche parce que nous la faisons"

[34] The legislative elections were organized in 1997, one year earlier than expected, because the president Jacques Chirac had decided for the dissolution of the parliament. As a result, a newly formed left-wing coalition led by Lionel Jospin, was elected. The coalition, called "Plural left", grouped together socialists, communists, ecologists, and other alternative left parties.

> We do not want a right wing which hates us, which imposes taxes on our healthcare, dismantles hospitals, makes a succession of racist and xenophobic laws, uses institutional homophobia, expels people to countries where they will not be able to receive health treatments, privileges ideological obscurantism and repression towards science, human rights, duties concerning healthcare, all the topics at the heart of this debate.[35]
>
> (ACT UP, April, 12, 2012)

This statement is interesting because it puts the struggle against AIDS in a broader framework, one that refuses discrimination. We find here the demand for state accountability about universal healthcare so significant in French politics. ACT UP also refers to the health reforms made under Sarkozy, characterized by budget cuts. In a country where the antiracist struggle is much linked to the left wing, ACT UP positions itself as definitely on the left side of the political landscape. With this debate, they emphasized that the struggle against AIDS is a struggle against all forms of discrimination.

4.2.2 An antiracist stance: Queering Joan of Arc

ACT UP, Paris is at the forefront of the struggle against racism and xenophobia and considers this cause crucial in AIDS activism, as stigmatized groups are likely to be more threatened by the disease. Indeed, a report from 1999 had shown "the profound inequalities between French and foreigners in terms of incidence of the disease, earliness of detection and access to treatment" (Fassin, 2001:7). Moreover, people with poor living conditions were also more likely to get severe infections related to AIDS (Fassin, 2001:7). The denial of class and race inequalities fuelled ACT UP's anger towards the government.

[35] "Nous ne voulons plus avoir à faire à cette droite qui nous hait, qui a mis en place des impôts sur notre état de santé, démantèle les hôpitaux, accumule les propos et les lois racistes ou xénophobes, pratique l'homophobie institutionnelle, renvoie dans des pays où elles ne pourront se soigner des personnes gravement malades, privilégie l'obscurantisme idéologique et la répression à la science, aux droits humains et aux impératifs de santé sur tous les sujets qui seront au coeur de ce débat."

Before 2012, ACT UP already had an impressive resume in their struggle against xenophobia. As we saw, they fought for the inclusion of HIV-positive undocumented migrants in the healthcare system. Moreover, they created a poster in 2005 with a portrait of Sarkozy with the slogan "Vote Le Pen" (ACT UP, December, 19, 2005). ACT UP, as well as a collective for undocumented migrants, was at the origin of the initiative (ACT UP, December, 19, 2005). According to Bosia, Sarkozy went to court so as to forbid the poster to be displayed (Bosia, 2009:87). Nevertheless, it was possible to see the poster in the streets of Paris in April 2012. We notice that ACT UP has been fighting against the politics of Sarkozy, which they have considered xenophobic since at least 2005, i.e. two years before Sarkozy was elected president. The date is no coincidence as it was a response to the riots that started in the suburbs of Paris on October 27, 2005 (see Fassin, 2006). Though the poster might have appeared as shocking and far-fetched in 2005, it is interesting to notice that Sarkozy did appeal to the voters of the National Front between the two ballots (Lemarié, 2012).

"Vote Le Pen" (ACT UP, Paris, December 2005)

The most symbolic action that ACT UP Paris organized during the presidential elections was the demonstration around the statue of Joan of Arc in Paris. On April 22, when it was announced that Marine Le Pen had gathered 17.90% of the votes, ACT UP decided to react to what they considered as a sign of the widespread racism in the French society. They chose the statue Joan of Arc, as it is the symbol of the extreme-right party. The party organizes a demonstration at the statue on May 1 of each year.[36] The ACT UP demonstration gathered more than a hundred persons to denounce the hatred expressed against "minorities, undocumented migrants, prostitutes, black and LGBT people" (France Info, April, 30, 2012). The demonstration was beautifully entitled "Joan of Arc was an undocumented Arab trans HIV-positive lesbian" and received significant media coverage. The name Jeanne d'Arc was subverted into "Jihane", a name of Arab origin. As the right-wing daily newspaper *Le Figaro* prosaically reported, the demonstration was a gathering of "gays parading against racism" (AFP, April 30, 2012). The newspaper did not develop more the implications of their own title.

Demonstration in front of the statue of Joan of Arc (ACT UP, Paris, 2012)

[36] See website: http://www.frontnational.com/terme/jeanne-darc/ Last accessed: July, 31, 2012

At last, I would like to mention the action ACT UP organized the day of the elections. On May 6, 2012, at 8 p.m., it was announced that the Socialist François Hollande was elected as the new president. To celebrate, a huge crowd symbolically gathered at *Place de la Bastille*, the same place which was chosen when the socialist Mitterrand was elected in 1981. ACT UP welcomed the election of a left wing president but reiterated their ideas of how the left should look like. Militants had prepared a poster stating, "Change must really be now", that they displayed in the middle of the crowd. The sentence is a reference to the political slogan of Hollande during the campaign, which read, "Change is now". The size of the poster and the number of militants present at the event show how well prepared the association was. We recognize here the strategy of ACT UP to get media attention by choosing an event in which all media were present (see Gamson, 1989).

Militants of ACT UP, Paris carrying a poster on *Place de la Bastille*
"Le changement, ce doit être vraiment maintenant"
(ACT UP Paris, May, 6, 2012)

4.3 ACT UP and homonationalism

To do my fieldwork, I chose ACT UP, Paris following my intuition. I was eager to find ways how to counter homonationalism even when located in the center of the LGBT movement. ACT UP was a perfect choice as the association has a strong homosexual identity, but is also fighting against discrimination based on race. Moreover, I knew that ACT UP had a postcolonial approach in their politics and the scholarship showed that French nationalism was deeply linked with the history of colonization (Dorlin, 2006). My intuition was soon fulfilled when I learned that ACT UP also actively participated in the debate around the rooster poster, a debate that I situate as the starting point of the debate about homonationalism.

First, the association directly tackled the issue by organizing a meeting devoted to the issue and by demanding the removal of the poster for the 2011 gay pride. Moreover, the vice president of ACT UP initiated a Facebook group to denounce the nationalism inherent in the poster. What's more, I argue that ACT UP indirectly participates in struggling against homonationalism by proposing an alternative activism. While being an association claiming a strong gay identity, ACT UP remains purposefully at the margins of mainstream LGBT politics. On one side, the association reinforces the idea of gay community, but on the other side, the association focuses its work with other marginalized groups, and not always LGBT groups. I argue that this peculiar situation is due to the fact that ACT UP distances itself much more from state politics while, at the same time, they actively try to challenge and change state institutions. This ironic situation has to be understood in ACT UP's political strategy to publicly challenge the state and, more specifically, the public health system as the latter is at the core of the AIDS crisis. Moreover, ACT UP is anchored in the French political space and their actions are inspired by universalistic ideas. Their defense of a public health service to resolve the AIDS crisis show that ACT UP is fighting inside the system.

4.3.1 "What is homonationalism?"

I asked the militants I met from ACT UP what homonationalism meant to them. Most of them were aware of the word and had heard it before. All of them referred to the debate of last year about the poster for the 2011 gay pride. When the poster was revealed, ACT UP had organized a meeting to discuss the choice of the poster with other activists. The meeting, I was told, was very explosive. One militant confessed that someone accused ACT UP of being an association of "white faggots". Indeed, the association is mostly composed of white persons. In fact, I did not see any people of color during the public meetings I attended in April. The accusation was surely formulated not because ACT UP is dominantly white but because they enjoy a huge visibility. That is to say that whiteness is equated with the possibility to be visible. However, the accusation seems too easy as ACT UP immediately supported the removal of the poster and denounced the nationalistic aspect of it. In fact, another member of ACT UP initiated a Facebook group called "The official poster of the gay pride 2011 MUST CLEAR OFF".[37] In this example, homonationalism was seen as the appropriation of nationalistic symbols by the LGBT movement.

Another understanding of the concept was the reference to LGBT people supporting the extreme right wing and subscribing to the nationalistic ideas of Marine Le Pen. This understanding is certainly influenced by the publication in 2012 of the book "Why did gay people moved to the right?"[38] The author, Didier Lestrade, is the founder of ACT UP, Paris. The book is a pamphlet denouncing contemporary LGBT politics and tackling homonationalism. The topic is centered on gay men and is thus very limiting. Lestrade asserts that many of his gay friends in the LGBT community are racist towards Arabs, which leads him to assume how they vote (Lestrade, 2012). Racism is lumped together with nationalism.

[37] "L'affiche officielle de la Marche des fierté 2011 DOIT DEGAGER". The group can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/groups/197296573642803/ Last Accessed: July, 31, 2012
[38] "Pourquoi les gays sont passes à droite"

The author, as founder of ACT UP, is famous for his defense of the existence of a gay community. He defended this model against Republican universalism, which he considered blind towards racism and homophobia (Martel, February 1, 2012). Consequently, he blames the universalistic ideas spread in the LGBT movement today. At the same time, he constructs the idea of a gay community that was once universalistic. I agree with Martel that this nostalgia for a time that supposedly existed is contradictory with his argument (Martel, February 1, 2012). Lestrade has a point when describing a LGBT community that always used universalistic ideas in its rhetoric but it is unclear why this rhetoric has, according to him, become nationalistic.

The LGBT community is in a very complex situation in which they get more and more recognition by the state perhaps at the expense of another marginalized group, i.e. people of Muslim culture. It seems that a part of the LGBT community has become nationalistic because of their acceptance of the nationalistic and xenophobic ideas legitimated by the state. Another activist explained that he had rarely seen such a xenophobic atmosphere in France today. This acceptance of nationalistic ideas did not surprise the members of ACT UP. As a transsexual activist explained, people who experience discrimination love to discriminate against others. Another young activist added that some people were using a scapegoat so as to reject their own discrimination. To him, they escape their condition of victim by becoming the executioner. In other words, discrimination engenders discrimination. Though there might be some truth in this explanation, it is not satisfying enough because there is no reason why a discriminated group could not join forces with another discriminated group.

Last, but not least, homonationalism was a concept that was perceived as coming from academia. The gap between academia and activism is still huge. Nicolas Gougain, the spokesperson of the Inter-LGBT, considers that the debate about homonationalism has no place in France (Birnbaum, June 30, 2012). In his words, the debate “is intellectual wanking

that concerns ten academics. We, in the meantime, are in the field[39]" (Birnbaum, June 30, 2012). In ACT UP, a militant told me that she was always dubious of students! It seems that she had seen many students coming to ACT UP eager to learn from activism, but not with activism. When I talked about homonationalism, several militants thought immediately about the scholar Marie-Hélène Bourcier, whom they know personally. Homonationalism was thus a strange concept coming from academia and the discussions I had with activists usually changed focus from homonationalism to a dialogue about racism and nationalism. The word homonationalism did not have the same success in "the field" as it had during the conference in Amsterdam.

4.3.2 Potential and limitations of ACT UP: final remarks

Because of their position in the margins of the LGBT movement and because of their opposition to the state, Act Up *de facto* engages against homonationalism. The heart of my argument is to show that ACT UP, Paris, located at the center of LGBT activism and yet purposefully in the margins of the LGBT movement, offers with their intersectional approach an alternative to homonationalistic practices. I would argue that ACT UP struggles not only directly against homonationalism but also against the possibility of homonationalism. They struggle for equal rights for LGBT people but not at the cost of being included in a racist nationalistic society. Thus ACT UP questioned the national framework in which they want LGBT people to be included in. It does not mean that the association escapes all accusations. Any LGBT association is part of a national framework and ACT UP is no exception. Nevertheless, ACT UP chooses a position that highlights marginalized groups in society.

[39] "C'est de la branlette intellectuelle qui concerne dix universitaires. Nous, pendant ce temps-là, on est sur le terrain."

ACT UP is in the center of the LGBT movement but proposes alternatives that I situate as being a standpoint against homonationalism.

First, it should be stressed that ACT UP is one of the few organizations that deserves the label LGBT. I would argue that this awareness towards the sexual minorities the label LGBT purports is a sign of their broader awareness towards minorities. It is not surprising to notice that the membership counts many gay men, as they were the ones behind the creation of the association. Today, the association also counts a significant number of lesbian and transsexual persons. In the public meetings I attended, there was actually one woman more than men and several transsexual persons.[40] An ACT UP commission on transsexuals deals with the link between transsexuality and AIDS. Moreover, there are also women who identified as straight, such as Emmanuelle Cosse who became president of the association in 1999. ACT UP also has a strong HIV-positive identity but everybody is free to join the association.

Struggling against marginalization, ACT UP chooses carefully whom to work with. I understand their strategy as a standpoint they choose, i.e. being at the margins to fight with other marginalized groups. An activist told me that, according to her, the state does not care about HIV-positive people. That is the reason why ACT UP purposefully stays with the margins, because their own experience positions them as the margins of society. As we saw earlier, they are working with associations against racism and for undocumented migrants' rights. They also chose to support an association called the STRASS[41], an association of sex workers. ACT UP considers that the marginalization and stigmatization of sex workers is detrimental to AIDS awareness. Their close work with the STRASS, demonstrated by the fact that some members are militant in both associations, show how much stigmatization is important in ACT UP's work. Sex work was actually a priority when I did my fieldwork

[40] The members of ACT UP never mentioned bisexuality but I did not raise the question. Therefore I cannot comment on the ideas about bisexuality that the members might have.
[41] Syndicat du travail sexuel

because the government had just introduced a law project to criminalize clients rather than only sex workers, very much like in Sweden (see Kulick, 2003). Once again, we see that the struggle against AIDS can only be tackled, according to ACT UP, by a struggle against the marginalization of some groups.

Their work on sex work in France reflects their action against the treatment trials in Africa and Asia also performed on sex workers. An activist told me about an interesting show aired on television in 2004, when ACT UP questioned the ethics of treatment trials[42]. At the same time of ACT UP's action, a debate was aired on a French cable news channel. Patrick Buisson, future advisor of Nicolas Sarkozy between 2005 and 2012, organized the debate and other "experts" were invited to discuss the topic of homosexuality. Looking closer, the experts were: Buisson, who created the Ministry of National Identity with Sarkozy[43], Renaud Camus, supporter of the National Front, Alain Soral and Pascal Sevran, both openly racist (Martet, 2012). The last one, the gay activist Guillaume Dustan, stated that the French society should not bother with "the niggers buggering under the banana trees and running in the savannah" (Martet, April, 30, 2012). The activist who told me this information said that nobody then cared about those racist remarks said on television. This is to me a perfect example of homonationalism, because all the experts claimed to have the right idea on homosexuality, quoting at length Marcel Proust, and especially because the man behind the debate about French national identity led the debate.

To me, ACT UP's strong opposition to the state explains why they do not fall into the homonationalistic trap. But their radicalism might not always be the best solution. An activist told me that, by being too radical, ACT UP was sometimes stuck on some issues. For example, ACT UP had a project to intervene in prisons to raise awareness about AIDS. They

[42] The show can be found here: http://tv.yagg.com/2012/04/30/quand-patrick-buisson-animait-un-debat-nauseabond-sur-lhomosexualite/ Last accessed: August 10, 2012

[43] The Ministry existed between May 2007 and January 2009. It was suppressed following fierce criticisms, including the creation by the EHESS of an "Observatory of the institutionalization of xenophobia".

mentioned the model of intervention of *SOS Homophobie*, which is claimed to be apolitical and neutral, but eventually opposed to it for the reason that *SOS Homophobie* is too consensual. Their point of view is true to a certain extent, but is explained by the fact that *SOS Homophobie*, because they intervene in schools, might lose their accreditation if they do not accept the conditions given by the Ministry of Education. ACT UP did not manage to intervene in prisons as their political discourse is clearly in opposition with the penal system and because they did not accept the conditions given to them by the penitentiary system. The activist I talked with was disappointed that the project, for which he had struggled, did not happen and said that it is not always beneficial to be too radical because in the end nothing is done. However during the meetings I attended, many activists said that ACT UP should be more radical in the future.

ACT UP's position of resistance to the state is the most visible outcome of my fieldwork. From the discussions I had, it appears that the responsibility for the rise of nationalism and xenophobia is most often put on state politics. This is interesting because it takes the responsibility away from the hands of LGBT activists. ACT UP does struggle, as a LGBT association, against the rise of racist nationalism but their opposition is mostly expressed towards the state. It could be suggested that it is also necessary to focus on the LGBT community itself, i.e. to work so as to change the so-called mainstream LGBT movement. As we saw, the LGBT community is also responsible for the way they portray minorities, and for example how they construct Islam as the sole cause behind homophobia. By displacing a community based on the ethnicization of sexual identity and by taking an intersectional approach between different factors of oppression, it would be more difficult for the state to appropriate the LGBT struggle. The struggle against homonationalism should start with the LGBT community, and in my case study, with ACT UP.

Conclusion of chapter

ACT UP is first and foremost an association with a strong homosexual identity. The members of ACT UP present themselves as "faggot" and "dykes", strong terms that they appropriated. A certain gay nationalism can be perceived in public meetings. The awareness of the militants is understood as the result of their experience as homosexuals living in a heterosexist society. There is a certain pride to be a member of ACT UP. But ACT UP also actively struggles against other forms of discrimination and marginalization. They manage to displace the LGBT community by being aware of the inequalities that co-exist with the homosexual identity. ACT UP considers that discrimination is a crucial factor in the spreading of the AIDS pandemic. The success of ACT UP lies in their constant denunciation of inequalities as well as the xenophobic atmosphere that is present in society and legitimated by state politics. ACT UP's strategy to make coalitions with other associations shows their willingness to join forces so as to fight against state-supported inequalities.

ACT UP is by far not the only LGBT association to denounce the nationalistic atmosphere in the LGBT community but they have the advantage of being part of the LGBT center in Paris. As a result, though they position themselves in the margins, they are in the center of the LGBT movement and are favored by a much bigger visibility. I argued that ACT UP struggles against the possibility of homonationalism. But the challenge lies also in opening a space for a more inclusive LGBT movement, even though ACT UP itself cannot claim to represent minorities. They were once accused of being an association of "white faggots" and are thus being careful when taking positions so as not to speak in the name of minorities. To conclude, the potential of ACT UP and their actions might sometimes also have limited impact as they are considered too radical and therefore the message they want to send is sometimes not heard or consciously misinterpreted by the media.

Conclusion

> "Was the price for this morality too high? That depends upon how the conflict between society's felt need for cohesion and tolerance of the outsider can be resolved."
> (Mosse, 1985:191)

Challenging homonationalism requires more than a change in attitude. The LGBT movement gathers as a community of people sharing common interests through their sexual orientation. But the issue is more complex as there is no LGBT movement outside a national framework. In other words, the LGBT movement is national and it is their nationality that forms the basis on which they organize their struggle. As we saw, the LGBT community of Paris is struggling to gain equal rights and eventually has to explore ways on how to be intelligible to the French state. Moreover, the LGBT movement is informed by its own nationalism, i.e. gay nationalism, which played a crucial role in the creation of a gay collective identity. This strategy has come with exclusionary practices. At the national level, homophobia is racialized and becomes a reason to stigmatize immigrants, most notably Muslims. At the international level, homonationalism appears when activists start caring more about LGBT rights in the global south, while denying the defects of their own state.

My research question was to find ways on how to be aware and challenge homonationalism while being a major actor in LGBT activism. I looked at how it was possible to displace the LGBT community from within. I showed that ACT UP has the potential to disrupt the mainstream LGBT activism's narrative of national belonging, through an antinationalistic and antiracist approach. Charles Taylor advocates that, in a multicultural society, "different expressions of cultural and sexual identity have a place, not just alongside each other, but in dialogue" (in Mepschen et al., 2010:973). But it is necessary first to create the conditions for a dialogue to happen. Challenging homonationalism requires creating

spaces of resistance in public space. ACT UP Paris, I argued, created some space of resistance by collaborating with other associations in their fight against AIDS and against racism. Their postcolonial approach serves as a shield against the possibility of homonationalism. They always collaborate with other groups, whether in France or abroad. Moreover, ACT UP positions itself in the margins of the LGBT movement and is more radical than other HIV-AIDS organizations. One of the reasons is that ACT UP is more than a gay and lesbian movement. It also works for transsexual rights but also sex workers' rights, whose stigmatization in society is detrimental to AIDS awareness. But by radically challenging the system, the association is itself marginalized in public space.

Eric Fassin wrote in 2012 "We should not exaggerate the homonationalistic phenomenon in France"[44] (Fassin, in Birnbaum, June 30, 2012). His optimism should not hide the reality of the French case. What Fassin meant with this sentence is that the instrumentalization of the LGBT rights movements by the state has been less prominent than in the Netherlands for example. No politician, the extreme right wing included, has advocated tolerance towards homosexuality as a characteristic of real French people. The debate about French national identity hardly mentioned homosexuality at all. Nevertheless, LGBT rights are used as a proof of the modernity of the country and are used by left wing political parties to create a different political project. In a society in which racism and xenophobia are gaining more and more strength, it is hardly a coincidence. As Duggan suggested already in 1994, we must reconceptualize the relation between LGBT politics and the state so as not to fall into the pitfall of instrumentalization. In France, almost all associations are affiliated with a political party and ACT UP is no exception as they only discuss with left-wing parties. ACT UP is more than an LGBT rights movement but also has its own political project. As it seems, the LGBT movement, whether in opposition or in support, is always linked to state politics.

[44] "Il ne faut donc pas exagérer le phénomène homonationaliste en France."

I learned a lot during my journey into the world of ACT UP. The first lesson is obvious but should be repeated: there is no activist guilty and no activist innocent of homonationalism. During my fieldwork, I found myself struggling with how to study homonationalism in activism. The trouble I felt reflects the gap between debates discussed in academia and activism. Activists are dubious towards academics and hardly accept to consider any criticism. As a student, I can unravel the processes of nationalism but I remain a white French person in a comfortable position. Revealing a tension between academia and activism is nothing new. But it is necessary to make this tension productive. What I learned from this study is the importance to acknowledge one's own position, i.e. the position from which I speak. Homonationalism can be everywhere and countering it implies questioning our own position. In a world where the nation is the strongest force to define us ("where do you come from?" is often the first question asked when meeting someone), we have to acknowledge the extent to which the nation-state defines us.

Is the price for the normalization of homosexuality too high? My journey into this topic brought me to consider the question seriously. Historically, it seems that the inclusion of a group is always stained by the exclusion of other groups (Mosse, 1985). But it does not have to be so and the fascinating journey of the LGBT movement is not finished yet. The LGBT movement needs cohesion, which brings a lot of challenges along. I think we should support the displacement of the LGBT community so as to create a more inclusive community. But we also need to reconfigure the role of the state, as it is impossible to separate the link between the state and activism. For example, it is possible to question the extent to which the state is legitimate in representing the nation. Similarly, we can question the responsibility of the state in defining who belongs and who does not belong in French society. The troubled relationship between the state and the LGBT community could be a fertile ground from which to create a more inclusive political project.

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