Arvida Memories
City testimonies generating heritage and self memory

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The "Arvida Memories" project has been designed to collect and showcase a series of testimonies provided by long-standing Arvida residents who have witnessed the emergence and development of the city since the mid 1920s. The stories offered during this survey represent a welcome addition to the collection of urban archives – maps, photographs and administrative documents – by providing a human or, shall we say, a living dimension that includes practices, experiences, portrayals and emotions. The collection of memories certainly contributes to the scientific documentation of Arvida, but it also constitutes, in its own right, an immaterial ethnological heritage, the focus for a feeling of belonging, even of pride, boosting the self esteem and increasing the standing of the witnesses as actors of living history.

During the project, a special partnership was forged with the Centre d'hébergement Des Chênes, Jonquière's long-term housing and care facility, which receives people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. As such, the ethnological survey takes on an entirely different meaning since the urban heritage thus recalled becomes not only an objective to be reached, but also a tool for stimulating and calling forth long-term memories.

Through an analysis of the various issues and challenges punctuating "Arvida Memories," we wish to retrace, in the manner of a heritage life cycle, the emergence of a collective urban heritage, as well as the conditions for a transformation – or a turnaround – that sees heritage become, in return, the breeding ground for a quest for personal memory slowed by disease. In other words, we will reflect upon interactions between memory and heritage performances, locating the project as a factor contributing to the overall well-being of the city.

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