

## Living archives

### The project to collect and preserve the sources of political and social movements active in Italy today

An archive and a **library of political and social movements** that resist and fight for the conquest of civil and political rights: this was **the founding act** of the Feltrinelli library. Starting from 1949, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli mobilized dozens of young scholars, who passionately dedicated themselves to the dual task of **collecting** materials and developing criteria for their classification and **archiving**.

*“Political fervour was tempered over whole days of filing, historical perspectives were discussed just as warmly as the problems of enriching the collections and placing materials. But it was by cataloging and strengthening the collections, building detailed and patiently reasoned bibliographies, that the young scholars of the Feltrinelli library learned to scientifically found their work”*

(Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1961)

Much has changed since then. The movements that activate today's squares bring **new demands and claims**, but also **new ways of communication** and **new modes of gathering together and mobilizing**. It is therefore necessary to devise new ways to preserve their imprint.

Thus, *Living archives* was born, a project that continues the **original vocation** of the Feltrinelli Foundation to preserve the documentation produced by movements fighting **for a fairer society and more sustainable development**. More specifically, the project collects documentation, both paper and digital, produced by activists and researchers whose areas of action and interest concern the **most pressing issues for our societies**, such as climate emergency, civil rights and labour.

However, *Living archives* combines this original purpose with a very current reflection: how to preserve born digital materials, which are typically volatile and ephemeral? How to choose what to preserve in the age of informative opulence ? How to engage and involve the public in research on digital sources ?

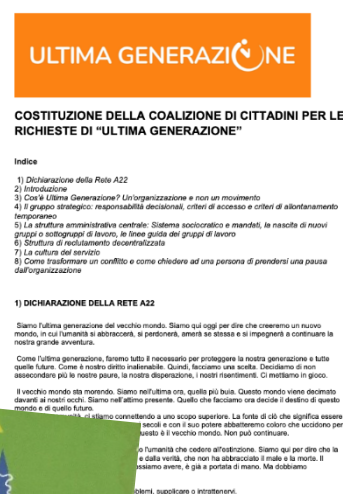
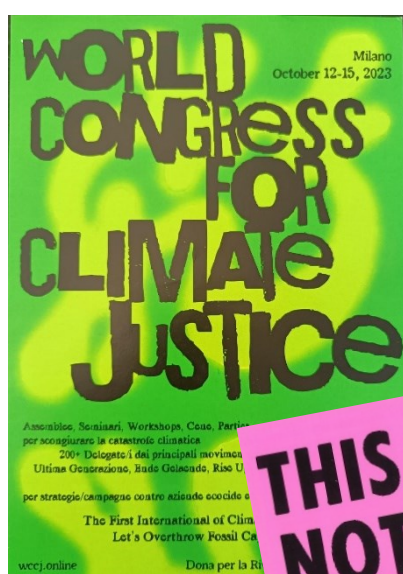
To answer these questions, *Living archives* encourages the **participation of activists, researchers, archivists** by promoting workshops and initiatives where all interested persons can share practices and knowledge on “making movement” and “making preservation”.

The vocation of the project is not only scientific, *Living archives* has a **strong political value**: to preserve the sources of the present as a **presidium for the defence of civil, social and political rights** and as a **testimony** - for the future - of the impact that today's movements have in expanding the sphere of rights of each and every one of us. The project intends to act as an additional « sounding board » for those movements that express voices of dissidence in the streets and squares, and thus hopefully **generate a multiplying effect of participation and civic engagement** within the communities in which we live.

The first most pressing issue for our societies, and for the entire planet, is the **climate change**. Therefore, we started to focus on climate activist movements and groups active in Italy at both local and national levels : **Fridays for future, Extinction Rebellion and Ultima Generazione**. We started collecting materials of different types : posters and flyers from the streets ; books, articles and thesis on the movements or written/produced by the movements ; websites (we've started a [webarchive](#)) and documentation produced and shared directly by the activists themselves : [sources catalogue](#).

In addition to the materials and documentation collected, we conduct and record interviews directly with activists to provide further testimony for the future : [interviews catalogue](#)

All the material collected is described in **the database on the project website** and can be consulted directly online or at the Foundation's reading room (if there are access restrictions related to rights or privacy). In addition, on the project website, each movement has a dedicated page describing its aims and claims and a navigable history. For each movement, we create research support tools, with the help of activists and researchers, freely downloadable: bibliography, websitegraphy, and a socialmediagraphy ([i movimenti](#)).





In addition, after the first round of **workshops Archiving the Present: Participation, Activism, Rights**, which was enthusiastically attended by researchers, archivists, activists (including the organisers of the World Congress for Climate Justice, held in Milan in October 2023, Matteo Spini and Alex Foti) and students, we will publish, in June, an **ebook** that will collect and make freely available the contents of the most interesting interventions, including those of Jeffrey Schnapp and Mariella Guercio, scientific curators of the project, and Professor Seamus Ross.

*Living Archives* is one of the 16 partners of the **European project ACTIVATE - The Activist, the Archivist, and the Researcher: Novel Collaborative Strategies of Transnational Research, Archiving and Exhibiting Social and Political Dissent in Europe 19th-21st centuries** (Horizon – Marie Curie Staff Exchange), which aims, for the next 4 years, to create a **consortium of activists, researchers, archives, museums and universities** among seven countries (Central, Eastern and Western Europe) to activate studies, meetings and exchanges on the topics of **social and political protests in Europe** (in the past and today, in their connections with non-European areas) and **the role of (non-state) archives and museums as active subjects in mobilisations**.

The current situation in the world, where there are **continuous backward steps** in the commitment of the world's major powers to find adequate solutions to slow climate change, makes it increasingly urgent to **support civil mobilisations and raise awareness** among citizens. To continue the project, **we would need continuous support** in collecting and cataloguing the struggles and voices of those who are mobilising today for tomorrow, through the contribution of researchers and archivists.

Specifically, we will continue to **maintain the presidium** for the research and collection of sources and the continuous updating of research tools on the previously mentioned climate activist movements, also taking into account the **new forms of convergence** of mobilisations based in Italy (e.g. World Congress For Climate Justice, Climate Social Camp). We will extend the **campaign of interviews** with climate activists from the local dimension to other Italian regions with a focus on southern Italy (for example, we have already started interviewing climate activists in Apulia). We will continue and implement collaboration with **communication platforms** dedicated to the movements' activities (or managed by them) that publish news and communication materials (articles, photographs and videos) to further integrate the movements' story, such as [Milano in movimento](#) platform.

Finally, if the most urgent and pressing issue for the entire planet is climate change, there are **other very pressing issues that press across our societies and mobilise thousands of people**, such as feminism movements, labour movements, movements for the right to housing, citizenship and migration movements. Themes and movements on which **we expect the project to expand further** in the coming months, as these are not individual issues and single struggles, but are part of **the same commitment** to a society of **climate and social justice**.





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Samstag  
24. April  
2010

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