The Role of Archives in Political and Social Mobilisations : A Transnational and Interdisciplinary Perspective

Programme Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
28 Aug 2026, 11:00 - 13:30	House 1 T1003
THEME	CONFERENCE
H - The Institutional Setting	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

Since the “Archival Turn” of the early 2000s, the humanities and social sciences have increasingly adopted archives as a research subject rather than merely a resource. This has resulted in a series of studies questioning for example the historicity of archives, their itineraries, and their silences or biases in particular. Some of this research specifically analyses the role played by archives — in the sense of archive centres, and not only their collections, and fonds — within our societies as agents of change and mobilisation. These studies contextualise and put into perspective their social and political role through interdisciplinary and comparative approaches that examine their transnational dynamics.
An EU-funded Marie Curie Staff Exchanges project has been underway since early 2025, building on this line of research. Entitled '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 Century)', the project aims to encourage and deepen dialogue between archivists, researchers and activists, recognising that the boundaries between these groups are permeable and shifting. The project brings together a consortium of 18 academic and non-academic partners, including heritage institutions such as archives and museums, from nine countries in Western, Central and Eastern Europe. Taking a long-term view on a European scale, the project will firstly contribute to a entangled and transnational history of the consortium's archive centres from the 19th century to the present day. Secondly, it will analyse how objects used or produced by protest movements become archives. Thirdly, it will examine the challenges posed by audiovisual documents, native digital formats and social networks for archivists, researchers and activists.
This panel brings together some of ACTIVATE's partners, as well as researchers involved in collective projects in Europe and internationally, who share common questions and will contribute to the discussion through their experiences and specific case studies.

Participants

Convenor

- François Vallotton (University of Lausanne)

Panelists

- Caroline Moine (Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, Centre d’Histoire Culturelle des Sociétés Contemporaines)
- Anja Kruke (Archive of Social Democracy of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, President of the International Association of Labour History Institutions, IALHI)
- François Vallotton (University of Lausanne)
- Giovanna Fossati (Utrecht University)
- Maciej Kowalewski (University of Szczecin)

Papers

Activating archives: a comparative transnational history

Caroline Moine (Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, Centre d’Histoire Culturelle des Sociétés Contemporaines)

Material Culture in Social and Political Mobilisation

Anja Kruke (Archive of Social Democracy of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, President of the International Association of Labour History Institutions, IALHI)

For a history of alternative media in Europe from the 19th to the 21st century: theoretical and archival issues

François Vallotton (University of Lausanne)

Global Audiovisual Archiving: Fostering Collaboration and Rethinking Audiovisual Heritage

Giovanna Fossati (Utrecht University)

Archives of social movements and the local context

Maciej Kowalewski (University of Szczecin)

Source: https://cish2026.recentglobe.org/events/the-activist-the-archivist-and-the-researcher-novel-collaborative-strategies-of-transnational-research-archiving-and-exhibiting-social-and-political-dissent-in-europe-19th-21-st-century/

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