



International Conference on
Youth Narratives and Cultural Practices Across the Globe in the 20th and 21st Century
28th – 30th October 2026
JNU, New Delhi 110067

CALL FOR PAPERS

Youth, at present, occupies a major demographic share around the world, especially in the developing nations. Their role has been crucial in the realisation of ideologies, governance, economics and socio-cultural contexts in earlier centuries as well but more so in the 20th and 21st century. Literature, cinema, music, digital media, art, activism, and everyday cultural expressions produced by and about young people have consistently articulated experiences of inequality, justice, aspiration, resistance, and belonging. This international conference seeks to examine these youth narratives and cultural practices from a global and comparative perspective, situating them within the broader framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

From the greatest and silent generation who lived through the great depression and the two world wars, to the baby boomers who protested against the Vietnam war, all found solidarity and strength through cultural expressions. While the earlier navigated the challenges of their times and popularized jazz and swing music, the latter led to the creation of “Summer of Love”. On the other hand, Gen X subtly paved its way through MTV culture. The millennials who constitute the largest generation group and are the connection between the Gen Z, Gen Alpha, Gen Beta and the earlier generations, articulate their aspirations, anxieties, and political consciousness through alternative public platforms like graffiti and street play. The later generations are born equipped with the smartness of the gadgets and know that the solution to a problem is just a click-away. They have created a whole virtual ecosystem of expression, activism, mobilisation wherein this ecosystem is one of the sites of movements. Across the world, youth movements have consistently emerged across hierarchical intersections of social belonging, some examples are the 2013 Gezi Park Protests in Turkey, Sunflower Student Movement of Taiwan and 2019 student rebellion in Hong Kong.

The culture and literature that developed around these generations have overlapping tropes that hint at the universality of human development. While the cultural practices and perspective of each of the generations are different, the common denominator is their resilient approach and the hope with which they navigate the challenges. They have been instrumental in shaping social consciousness, collective memory, and future imaginaries. The Mexican Tlatelolco movement, the French Revolution, the Cuban revolution, the Emergency in India, Arab Springs are some popular examples. Their aspirations and articulations influence civil society, government, and human rights discourse. The sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations are a manifestation of this influence.

Youth are actors of change and resistance and the recent youth-led protests in Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Peru, Argentina are exemplars of their awareness and power. The conference will provide an interdisciplinary platform for scholars to analyse youth-led cultural practices as sites of informal learning, social critique, civic engagement, and ecological consciousness. It will examine both historical and contemporary case studies, enabling an internationally situated dialogue between twentieth-century youth movements and twenty-first-century digital and transnational youth cultures.

The conference is premised on the understanding that sustainable development is not solely a technocratic or economic endeavour, but also a deeply cultural and narrative process. Youth cultures play a crucial role in interpreting social realities, questioning dominant development paradigms, and imagining alternative, more inclusive and sustainable futures. By foregrounding youth voices and cultural expressions from diverse regions of the world, the conference aims to explore how issues such as education, gender equality, social inequality, urban sustainability, climate action, and peace are negotiated, represented, and transformed through narrative and culture, as such the conference invokes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations.

In particular, the conference will look at six SDGs- 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 13 (Climate Action), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The conference aims to contribute to broader academic and policy discussions on youth engagement, cultural sustainability, and inclusive development. It seeks to demonstrate how youth narratives and cultural practices can inform more socially grounded, culturally sensitive, and supplement sustainable development frameworks. To realise this aim applicants should preferably situate their papers in alignment with at least one of the SDGs mentioned contextualised within sub-themes listed below.

Themes and sub-themes

Youth and Politics

- Youth as Agents of Political Transformation in the 20th and 21st Century
- Student Movements and Democratisation: Comparative Perspectives from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe
- Youth Activism in the Age of Precarity: Unemployment, Inequality, and Political Expression
- Campus Politics and the Making of Public Intellectual Culture

Youth and Literature

- Literary Representations of Youth in Novels and Short Stories
- Coming-of-Age Narratives across Cultures: A Comparative Study
- Youth, Identity and Migration in Global Literature
- Literature as Social Memory: Writing Youth Movements and Student Struggles

Youth and Cinema

- Cinematic Depictions of Youth Cultures in Global Cinema
- Counterculture, Rebellion and the Youth Hero on Screen
- Streaming Platforms and the New Visual Aesthetics of Youth
- Cinematic Portrayals of Youth Identity, Rebellion, and Desire

Youth and Music

- Hip-Hop, Rock, Folk, and Indie Cultures: Youth Music Movements Worldwide
- Digital Music Cultures and the Globalisation of Youth Taste
- Music as Resistance and Identity

Youth and Social/Digital Media

- Influencers reach and outreach defining Young Publics
- Digital Youth Cultures
- Memes, Movements, and Online Political Expression
- Digital Citizenship and Youth Participation in Public Debate

Youth and Alternative Expressions

- Graffiti, Street Art, and the Politics of Public Space
- Eco-Activism, Slow Living, and Minimalist Youth Movements
- Spiritual Alternatives: Neo-mysticism, Yoga Subcultures and New-Age Youth Groups
- Embodying and Performance-Based Expressions

Who Can Participate?

Scholars, educators, policymakers, practitioners engaged in, but not limited to, the field of Literature, Cultural Studies, Sociology, History, Media and Film Studies, Anthropology, Gender Studies, Urban Studies, Environmental Humanities, and Development Studies.

Conference Highlights

The conference will have keynote and plenary speakers from academia, industry and government. It will have roundtable discussions, workshop, as well as a cultural program and exhibition.

Format: Hybrid mode

Language (Abstract): English (Compulsory) & any one of these (Spanish, Hindi, Portuguese, Italian, French, Russian)

Language (Paper Presentation): English, Spanish, Hindi, Portuguese, Italian, French, Russian.

Publication: Details of the same will be updated on the [webpage](#).

Important Dates (keep checking [webpage](#) for updates)

Abstract submission: 30th March 2026

Acceptance notification: 30th April 2026

Last date for registration: 30th June 2026

Last date for full-paper submission: 30th August 2026

Abstract Submission: [Click here](#) for Youth Conference Abstract Submission

Registration Fee*

Indian Scholars: ₹1500 (INR One thousand and five hundred)

International Scholars: \$30 (USD Thirty)

Contact Details

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Conference Webpage: [Youth Conference 2026](#)

Link tree: [youthconferencejnu2026](#) | [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) | [Linktree](#)

Convenor: [Dr. Lovey Srivastava](#) (Faculty, JNU)

[Advisory Committee](#)

[Peer Review Committee](#)

[Organising Committee](#)

For further details and regular updates please visit the Conference [Webpage](#):
<https://youthconfluence.blogspot.com/>

*The registration fee is inclusive of conference kit, lunch, high tea but not accommodation.