

Call for Papers:
International Conference on
The Politics of Future-Making: Childhood, Youth and the Global South
05-06 February 2027
BML Munjal University, Delhi NCR, India

Every generation inherits a world shaped by those who came before it. Yet, every generation also reshapes the world in ways that are unforeseen, responding to their socio-political and economic contexts. Today's children and young people are coming of age into a world marked by the long shadows of colonial conquest, unequal development, and displacement, alongside the more immediate realities of war, democratic uncertainty, climate crises, and technological transformations. These constraining conditions also shape how young people imagine, aspire, negotiate and create their own futures.

The future is not a linear and teleological entity waiting to unfold but a social and political field that is unevenly oriented, imagined or governed (Bryant and Knight, 2019). Across neighbourhoods, classrooms, university campuses, villages, cities, and digital spaces, young people are imagining, anticipating and experimenting with possible versions of their futures as they confront their precarious present. Their everyday lives reveal that futures are not singular, linear, guaranteed nor is it a promise. That is, certain futures are not universally available for all young people but they are actively shaped by histories of power, political regimes and institutions of governance, and uneven access to resources and mobility (Appadurai, 2013). The everyday work of 'future-making' in Childhood and Youth Studies is to ask how collective futures can be imagined, whose aspirations are rendered legitimate and whose are foreclosed, what constitutes inequality and what challenges shape such an enterprise. Moving beyond the field's foundational critique that children were historically understood as '*becomings*'—valued primarily for the adults they would become rather than for their lived experiences in the present—Spyros (2020) advances the concept of children as '*future makers*'. This framing recognises children not simply as recipients of social change but as active agents who imagine, negotiate, and shape multiple futures through their everyday practices and aspirations. In this conference, we seek to build upon this idea and reckon with the 'politics of future-making', as inter-generational, dynamic, and divisive.

The future is a powerful idiom for the field to re-think, as it is often mobilised by political regimes to defer and escape the glaring realities of the myth of modern schooling, unemployment, communal strife, gender-based violence, and political instability. South Asia, where this conference will be located, is among the youngest regions in the world, with a median age of approximately 28 years. This so-called "youth bulge" is frequently framed as a demographic dividend and a driver of future economic growth. However, such narratives obscure the failures of schooling and education, structural impediments of gender, religion and caste, and expose the limits of political participation for young people. The questions that

then arise are: how are we in the Global South conceptualising our futures? What forms of hope, aspiration and imagination underscore conditions of neoliberalism and now, artificial intelligence? How do we begin to imagine collective solidarities across pedagogies and politics?

This conference invites scholars, practitioners, and young researchers to explore these questions through the interconnected lenses of inequalities, mobilities, and futures, placing South Asia in conversation with Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and other regions of the globe. We particularly encourage conversations that foster learning across the Global South, foreground diverse intellectual traditions related to the politics of future-making and young people, and challenge the assumption of a unified universal future for all young people. We welcome contributions that build new comparative conversations, collaborative methodologies, and reciprocal knowledge exchanges across regions and regimes to understand the past and present of young people, and how this aids in re-imagining the futures of new generations.

We invite papers, panels, and creative submissions that engage with (but are not limited to) the following themes:

- Methodological and ethical approaches in researching futures of/ with children and youth
- New theoretical insights around futures and young people
- Comparative South-South childhoods
- Geographies of inequality: caste, class, gender, disability, and region
- Digital cultures of young people
- Young People in politics and social movements
- Migration, displacement, and belonging
- Aspirations, desires, and capacities
- Urban-/ rural futures of young people
- Policy, governance, and rights-based approaches

How to apply

Deadline to submit title and abstract of 300 words: 07 September 2026

Decisions about abstract selection: 18 September 2026

Full paper submission of 5000 words: 15 December 2026

Conference dates: 5-6 February 2027

Please email your abstract and queries to ccyt@bmu.edu.in

PhD students are encouraged to apply. There will be a limited number of reimbursements available to cover travel and accommodation for PhD students.

About Us:

1. Conference host:

[BML Munjal University \(BMU\)](#), was established in 2014, by the HERO group. BMU seeks to nurture ethical leaders who are skilled, knowledgeable, and have the life skills required to lead their organisations to success.

[The Centre for Child and Youth Transitions \(CCYT\)](#), at the School of Liberal Studies (SoLS), BMU, was launched in 2025. It is a one-of-a-kind centre that brings together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and activists who work with and study issues affecting children and youth in the Global South and beyond. The CCYT aims to fill the existing gap in teaching, research, and policy/ advocacy in the area of childhood and youth past, present, and future. Grounded in an interdisciplinary ethos, this Centre aims to identify key and emerging areas for research, plan and carry out teaching programmes through SoLS and engage with non-state and state actors in informing policy decisions and supporting advocacy programmes initiated by young people themselves or their allies.

In collaboration with:

2. [Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies \(MWF Delhi\)](#) is the 11th institute of the Max Weber Foundation in Germany. The forum serves as a bridge between the academic communities in its host country India, the wider South Asian region, and Germany. It seeks to establish and deepen contacts and networks in the field of South Asia-related research. In doing so, it facilitates interdisciplinary research on South Asia in South Asia and with South Asia. MWF's overarching research focus area is 'knowledge cultures in South Asia,' with particular focus on the theme of education and learning.
3. [Shiv Nadar University Delhi-NCR \(SNU\)](#) is a leading multidisciplinary, research-focused university, and the youngest university to be accorded the status of 'Institution of Eminence' by the Government of India.