

# International Geographical Union

## Commission for Young and Early Career Geographers

### **C24.47 COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

The IGU Commission for Young and Early Career Geographers (IGU-YECG), previously a Taskforce was established by the International Geographical Union (IGU) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016 at the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Geographical Congress in Beijing, China with a vision of empowering and nurturing future leaders in Geography. The primary aims of the Task Force are to promote career development for early career Geographers through mentoring, training and sharing; stimulate interdisciplinary, international and inter-generational research conversations between Geographers and acknowledge and elevate the achievements of early career geographers in the Global North and South.

#### **A. Membership**

##### **Steering Committee**

###### **Chair**

###### **Dr. Gaurav Sikka**

Patliputra University, Patna, Bihar (India)

Email: [gauravsikkageo@gmail.com](mailto:gauravsikkageo@gmail.com)

###### **Full Members**

- **Dr. Komali Yenneti (Past Chair)**, School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom
- **Dr. Gabriela Adina Morosanu**, Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy/University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania.
- **Dr. Melgris José Becerra Ruíz**, Working Group on Geographical Issues (GTAG-Venezuela), Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA), Brazil.
- **Dr. Sinenhlanhla Memela**, Rhodes University, South Africa.
- **Dr. Yuping Bai**, Department of Land Resources Management, China University of Geosciences, Beijing, China
- **Dr. Salwa Aabid**, Université de La Réunion, Saint-Denis, La Réunion, France
- **Dr. Ana Merlos Reyes**, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Morelia, Mexico
- **Dr. Richard Sunday**, Federal university of kashere, Gombe, Nigeria
- **Iyanuoluwa Fatunmbi**, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Illinois, USA

###### **Commission's Membership**

The Commission has a listserv at [geo-iguyecg@listserv.wvu.edu](mailto:geo-iguyecg@listserv.wvu.edu) and a Facebook page and group to update geographers about our activities and circulate relevant information. The total number

of members on the listserv is 255, and the Facebook page has 1070 followers (as of 1 December 2024).

## B. Meetings held in 2024

### I. 35<sup>th</sup> International Geographical Congress (IGC)

**Date: 24-30 August 2024 Place: Dublin, Ireland**

IGU-YECCG made a strong presence in the Congress and organized/co-organised the **seven sessions/events** at the Congress. The details of the sessions are as follows:

#### i. ***IGU-YECCG and AGA-YGWG Young and Early Career Geographers Best Paper Award Session.***

In the session, the best paper award with a cash prize of USD 200 was bagged jointly by Vishavjeet Dhanda from the University of Delhi and Ms Olga Chumbicheva from the University of Manchester. The award was instituted by the IGU Young and Early Career Geographers Commission (IGU-YECCG) and the Young Geographer Working Group of the Asian Geographical Association (AGA-YGWG). The award is given to current PhD students submitting a first-authored, original research paper dealing with relevant geographical research in any part of the world. The jury for the award comprised of Prof Michael Meadows, President, IGU, Prof. Elena Dell'agnese, Vice President, IGU and Prof. Punyatoya Patra, University of Delhi. The session was coordinated by Dr. Komali Yenneti and Dr. Gaurav Sikka from IGU-YECCG.



#### ii. ***The Impact of achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (no. 6) on Water Resources***

The session focused on the intersection of sustainable water management and the achievement of SDG 6, which emphasizes clean water and sanitation. The session featured a series of oral presentations that addressed key approaches and challenges in managing water resources under diverse environmental conditions.

The presentations covered topics such as the integration of river and floodplain rehabilitation with flood risk management, the evaluation of rainfall estimation models for improving water resource planning in Mexico, and the analysis of hydro-sedimentary dynamics in river systems for sustainable water management. These discussions provided valuable insights into strategies, methodologies, and experiences aimed at achieving water sustainability, balancing both environmental and societal needs. The session was chaired by Gabriela Adina Morosanu.



**iii. *Resilience, Sustainability and Inclusive Growth***

It was a joint session organised by IGU-YECG and the Future Earth Commission. The session looked at addressing some of the key issues related to resilience, sustainability and inclusive growth, with results reflected at the local, regional, national or transnational level. In total, 9 presentations were made across two sessions.

The presentations addressed key issues including disability-inclusive development, spatialities of rural land recreation, risk of extreme heat to health and livelihoods, urban resilience, adaptation of forest communities, and ecological corridors conservation. Dr Pankaj Kumar and Dr Shipra Singh from the University of Delhi and Dr Komali Yenneti from University of Wolverhampton and IGU-YECG coordinated the session.

**iv. *Youth, Culture & the Quest for Global Sustainability***

It was a joint session of the IGU Commission on Global Understanding and the IGU Taskforce for Young and Early Career Geographers. The session was an attempt to bring youth to the forefront of the discourse around the Sustainable Development Goals for the future of the Earth. It recognises the missing youthful voices for achieving the SDGs and developing sustainable communities and makes youth an important part of the solution. Youth participated in the negotiations for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an official United Nations constituency.

Papers presented addressed sustainability by respecting cultural and regional diversity, young geographers to help accelerate the process toward global sustainability and

participation of youth in policy formulation for achieving global sustainability. Prof. Benno Werlen from the Commission on Global Understanding and Dr. Gaurav Sikka from IGU-YECG coordinated the session.



**v. *Navigating your PhD & early career development***

A panel discussion was organised by the GSI Postgraduate and Early Career Network (PECN), to bring together Geographers at all stages of the career cycle to share their experiences, tips and strategies, and the most valuable lessons they've learned so far.

Komali Yenneti from the School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Wolverhampton, Dean Phelan from the School of Geography, University College Dublin, Jennie Stephens, and Ashly Uthaman from ICARUS, Maynooth University, Maynooth, Ireland, were the discussants in the panel discussion.

**vi. *Lightning talk session hosted by Geographical Society of Ireland Postgraduate and Early Career Network (GSI PECN)***

Dr Sinenhlanhla Memela presented a paper titled "Lefebvrian analysis of livestock keeping in Fingo Village, Makhanda (Grahamstown), South Africa". During the session, there were awards presented to postgraduate and early career. Dr Sinenhlanhla Memela won third place in a lightning talk session.





**vii. Social Event for YECGs**

IGU-YECG co-hosted a social event with the Postgraduate and Early Career Researcher Network (PECN) of the Geographical Society of Ireland. The event was organised at Tolka House, Dublin, on 26 August 2024, from 19:30 onwards, and was sponsored by the Journal of Geography in Higher Education. It was an opportunity to meet, interact with, and dine with other postgraduates and early career researchers. More than 300 early-career geographers attended the social event.

**II. XI Latin American Meeting of Geography Students**

**Date: November 11-17, 2024**

**Place: Lima, Peru**

The XI Latin American Meeting of Geography Students (ELEG), held in Lima, Peru, marked an important milestone. This event brought together students, professionals, and academics from across Latin America, fostering collaboration and critical reflection on

contemporary geographic challenges. Held in the vibrant district of Barranco, the week-long event offered a rich array of academic and practical activities that reflected geography's transformative potential.

ELEG XI featured a broad program of 113 presentations, reflecting the region's depth and diversity of geographic research. Key thematic areas included:

- Teaching Geography in Latin America (10 presentations): Addressing Innovative Pedagogical Approaches and Challenges in the Region.
- Geography of Landscapes, Places, and Territories (5 presentations): Exploring spatial identities and territorial dynamics.
- Political Geography and Geopolitics (5 presentations): Analysis of power structures and territorial conflicts.
- Rural Geography, Sovereignty and Food Security (6 papers): Focused on the intersections between geography, agriculture and sustainability.
- Social and Cultural Geography (12 papers): Highlighting the diverse socio-cultural landscapes of the region.
- Urban Geography and Latin American Cities (21 papers): Delving into the processes and challenges of urbanization.
- Critical Geographies, Gender and Territorial Conflicts (16 papers): Examining the intersections between identity, resistance and conflict.
- Geotechnologies in Latin America (8 papers): Presentation of GIS applications and innovations.
- Territorial Management (5 papers): Proposing strategies for sustainable development.
- Geographic Thinking in the Latin American Context (2 papers): Reflection on the philosophical foundations of the discipline.
- Environmental issues and risk management (23 papers): Addressing pressing environmental challenges and disaster resilience.

Approximately 120 young geographers from various Latin American countries participated, including students from Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge in a collaborative environment, fostering cultural exchange and discussion of topics relevant to Latin American geography. The diversity of perspectives provided a rich basis for dialogue, and many young geographers were inspired to create new projects that address the challenges facing their communities. In addition, networks were established that will facilitate future collaborations in research and community action.

The event featured keynote presentations on disaster risk management and water resources sustainability, complemented by interactive workshops on technical training and problem-solving. Panel discussions critically viewed socio-environmental conflicts, territorial resistance, and green capitalism. Excursions to Barranco were the program's mainstay, allowing participants to explore the physical geography of the coast, analyse vulnerability to natural hazards, and interact with local communities.

The XI ELEG was impactful, academically and professionally. Participants returned with new perspectives on conservation, postextractivism, and climate change adaptation. From a

professional standpoint, the event strengthened Latin American geographic networks, fostering collaboration and resource sharing among students and professionals. These connections promise to drive future research and projects that contribute to sustainable development in the region.

Following this event, we have strengthened the network to produce a thematic book under IGU-YECG that promotes the advancement of geography and the thinking of young Latin American geographers. It is urgent to consolidate a network of committed young geographers who generate new knowledge and offer innovative perspectives on the realities of Latin America, thus influencing global geographic science.



### III. IGU-YECG Bihar-South Africa Academic Connect

**Date: 17-24 November 2024**

**Place: Patna, India**

International Geographical Union Commission for Young and Early Career Geographers in collaboration with Postgraduate Department of Geography, A.N. College, Patliputra University, Patna organized Bihar-South Africa Academic Connect on 22 November 2024. Dr. Sinenhlanhla Memela, Senior Lecturer, Rhodes University, South Africa delivered a lecture on "Transforming Living Spaces and Cultural Practices". Dr. Sine Memela discussed the evolution of South Africa's traditional rondavel housing styles due to urbanization, globalization, and modernization while highlighting how cultural norms tied to the rondavel have been preserved in contemporary designs. She also noted parallels with the integration of Mithila painting designs into modern housing in Bihar, India. The event began with a welcome address by Prof. Pravin Kumar, Principal of A.N. College,



Patna. Guest of Honour Prof. N.K. Jha, Registrar, Patliputra University, emphasized the importance of international collaborations like the Bihar-South Africa Academic Connect for improving higher education in Bihar. Chief Guest Prof. Rash Bihari Prasad Singh, former Vice Chancellor, Patna University stressed the need for sustainable transformation of living spaces while conserving cultural and natural heritage. Over 150 participants, including faculty members, research scholars, and students, attended the event. Under the academic connect, a joint field survey was organized at Mithila Chitrakala Sansthan, and Jitwarpur village (art village being developed by Govt. Of Bihar) in Madhubani, Bihar. Dr. Memela explored the Bihar Museum, Patna University and Bihar State Higher Education Council, Govt. of Bihar in Patna further strengthening academic and cultural ties.



#### IV. Special Invited lectures by IGU-YECG

**Date: 18 November 2024**

**Date: 26 November 2024**

**Place: Patna, India**

**Place: New Dehli, India**

The Department of Geography at Patna University was celebrating 75 years of existence, and Dr Memela was invited to give a guest seminar presentation on 18 November 2024, titled: "Architectural Transformation but Cultural Utilisation of Space Remains". Under the academic connection, she shared about the ongoing Bihar-South Africa academic connect. The second part of the presentation discussed the current projects of IGU-YECG and encouraged young and early careers to join IGU. The guest seminar lecture was organised by Dr. Prerna Bharti, Patna University.





Dr Sinenhlanhla Memela delivered another lecture on "Transforming Living Spaces and Cultural Practices in India and South Africa" at the University of New Delhi on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The presentation occurred after the field visit in North Bihar, India. The presentation revealed similarities in India and South Africa, which showed that architecture can transform but cultural practices remain. The second part of the presentation discussed the current projects of IGU-YECG and encouraged young and early careers to join IGU. Dr Rajesh Kr. Abhay, Teacher in-charge of geography, at Dyal Singh College, University of Delhi organised the lecture.



**V. 4th Asian Young Geographers Workshop**  
**Date: 29 September-02 December 2024**

**Place: Yuxi, China**

The 4th Workshop of Asian Young Geographers was held in Yuxi City, Yunnan Province, China from November 29th – December 2nd, 2024. The workshop was jointly organized by Young Geographers Working Group of Asian Geographical Association (AGA-YGWG), International Geographical Union Commission for Young and Early Career Geographers (IGU-YECG) and Working Committee for Young Geographers of Geographical Society of China (GSC-WCYG) and hosted by Yuxi Normal University, Yuxi, Yunnan Province, China. The workshop theme was- "Geography of Asia under Global Change".

Dr. Gaurav Sikka represented IGU-YECG and in his keynote talk on “Youth for Sustainable Action in Bihar: Synergising-IGU-YECG and AGA-YGWG” highlighted the importance of engaging with youth to achieve sustainable development milestones. He showcased two case studies from Bihar-Jeevika, young women-led self-help groups achieving rural sustainability and Environmental Warriors, a student’s initiative to protect small birds like House Sparrows. He presented the existing and future collaboration activities of IGU-YECG and AGA-YGWG. The workshop witnessed 07 keynote talks, 12 technical sessions, 01 editors session, more than 150 young geographers participating.



### C. Planned Meetings for 2025

- I. IGU Thematic Conference 2025  
Date: 12-15 April 2025 Place: Cairo, Egypt
- II. 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Young Geographer Workshop  
Date: TBA Place: TBA
- III. Southern African Association of Geomorphologists, 2025  
Date: TBA Host: TBA  
Proposed Activity: Best Paper prize
- IV. IGU Geography and Sustainability Symposium in China;  
Dates: TBA; Host: Beijing Normal University, China

### D. Networking

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2017 between the US based **International Association of Young Geographers** and IGU-YECG, is active for providing a new domain for the website, maintaining the website, financially supporting the IGU-YECG and IAYG Best Paper Awards.

- **Young and Early Career Geographers Working Group on Geography and Sustainability (IGU-YECG\_GeoSus)**

IGU-YECG collaborated with IGU Commission on Geography for Future Earth and established a Young and Early Career Geographers Working Group on Geography and Sustainability (IGU YECG\_GeoSus) in 2021. Chairs - Dr. Moroşanu Gabriela Adina (Steering Committee Member, IGU-YECG, Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy) & Dr. Xutong Wu (Faculty of Geographical Science, Beijing Normal University). This working group is an extension of IGUYECG and aims at complementing the activities of IGUYECG in the areas of sustainability. The mission of YECG-GeoSus is to promote research and education in sustainable development for young and early career geographers. While the working group complements the YECG Taskforce in the areas of sustainability, it aims at promoting, coordinating and supporting geographic research and education in an integrated and sustainable perspective.

**YECG GEOSUS Working Group Initiative: Joint Scientific Publication on Geography and Sustainability – 2024 Progress**

In preparation for the 2025 launch of the *Geography and Sustainability: Integrating Emerging Research and Innovations* publication, significant progress was made in 2024 by the YECG GEOSUS working group. This joint scientific project aims to bring together young and early-career geographers to share innovative research that addresses the critical environmental and societal challenges we face today. Throughout 2024, extensive negotiations and collaborative efforts were focused on shaping the publication's core objectives. The working group also laid the groundwork for organizing the book into thematic sections, addressing key topics such as sustainable cities, water resources, land use, climate change, territorial planning, and human security. These themes were carefully selected to reflect both theoretical and applied research, with a focus on emerging trends and case studies that can inspire real-world solutions for sustainability. In 2024, a series of discussions and planning meetings were held to finalize the structure and content of the publication, ensuring that the contributions will not only showcase the expertise of young geographers but also strengthen the role of geography in addressing global sustainability challenges.

- IGU-YECG has collaborated with the **IGU Commission on Global Sustainability** and signed **The Jena Declaration** for planning future events with Prof Benno Werlen, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, UNESCO-Chair on Global Understanding for Sustainability.
- IGU-YECG has collaborated with the **Young Geographer Working Group of the Asian Geographical Association** to jointly organise Best Paper Award Sessions in the IGU Congresses and the Annual Asian Young Geographers Workshop. To date, 4 Annual Asian Workshops have been organised successfully.
- IGU-YECG collaborated with **Postgraduate and Early Career Researcher Network (PECN) of the Geographical Society of Ireland** and organized events during the 35<sup>th</sup> IGC, Dublin, Ireland, August 2024.

IGU-YECG collaborations are aimed to align with the **UN SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals** – which emphasizes the importance of partnerships, which can enhance youth engagement in global and local initiatives.

## E. Publications

ROMANIAN ACADEMY  
INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY

REVUE ROUMAINE DE GÉOGRAPHIE

ROMANIAN JOURNAL OF GEOGRAPHY

**Call for papers**  
Special Issue  
Volume 69, no. 2, 2025

Guest Editors : Gaurav Sikka<sup>1,2</sup>, Gabriela Adina Moroşanu - Mituşeriu<sup>2,3</sup>, Bianca Mitrică<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1</sup> Patilputra University, Patna, Bihar, India  
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more information and access:  
[www.rjgeo.ro](http://www.rjgeo.ro)

Paper submission:  
[igar@geoinst.ro](mailto:igar@geoinst.ro)

REVUE ROUMAINE DE GÉOGRAPHIE

ROMANIAN JOURNAL OF GEOGRAPHY

**IGU YECG Special Issue**  
**Geographies of Change:**  
**Emerging Perspectives from Young and Early Career Geographers**

The *Revue Roumaine de Géographie / Romanian Journal of Geography* is the main scientific journal of the Institute of Geography, Romanian Academy, and one of the most significant publications under the aegis of the Romanian Academy. Established in 1957, the journal has evolved through various titles, becoming the *Revue Roumaine de Géographie* in 1990. Since 2009, it is published biannually, offering a platform for quantitative and qualitative research across diverse environmental science topics, including geomorphology, climate change, land use, biodiversity, and urban development. The journal is indexed in international databases such as Scopus, Copernicus and DOAJ, and is accessible via [www.rjgeo.ro](http://www.rjgeo.ro), with exchanges with over 200 libraries globally.

Scopus DOAJ EBSCO INDEX COPERNICUS INTERNATIONAL

In collaboration with the **National Committee of Geography of Romania**, led by Prof. Dan Bâlţeanu - Member of the Romanian Academy - from the Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy, and the **Young & Early Career Geographers Commission of IGU**, we are pleased to announce an open call for contributions from young geographers.

The research papers could address topics aligned with the following sub-themes, among others:

- **Sustainable Urban Development:** Exploring approaches to the implication of geographical methods and knowledge in urban planning, blue-green spaces, and resilient cities.
- **Climate Change and Human Impact on the Environment:** Investigating the geographical implications of climate and environmental changes and strategies for adaptation of communities.
- **Cultural Landscapes and Identity:** Analyzing how cultural practices shape and are influenced by geographical changes, in the actual and future contexts of global migration.
- **Digital Geographies:** Bringing in the perspectives and experiences of young geographers regarding the impact of AI and GIS on geographical research, spatial analysis, education and community engagement.
- **Any other relevant emerging perspectives on the theme of the special issue.**

We invite proposals that include a tentative title, an abstract, and up to 5 keywords. Detailed manuscript submission guidelines can be found at <http://www.rjgeo.ro/for-authors.html>

Join us in advancing geographical research of and sharing your insights with a global audience!

Please submit articles to [igar@geoinst.ro](mailto:igar@geoinst.ro), [biancadumitrescu78@yahoo.com](mailto:biancadumitrescu78@yahoo.com) before February 28, 2025.

## F. Popularization (to highlight the expertise of geographers on social issues):

### a. Publications: newspapers or reports for public or private actors (from local to national in the local languages of the members)

S. Memela, South Africa's modern rondavels: family homes may be changing, but traditions remain <https://theconversation.com/south-africas-modern-rondavels-family-homes-may-be-changing-but-traditions-remain-242247> (December 27, 2024)

[https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/cultural-values-resilient-amid-urbanization-in-south-africa-and-bihar-claims-expert/amp\\_articleshow/115569271.cms?utm\\_source=whatsapp&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=AmpArticleshowicon](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/cultural-values-resilient-amid-urbanization-in-south-africa-and-bihar-claims-expert/amp_articleshow/115569271.cms?utm_source=whatsapp&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=AmpArticleshowicon) (November 22, 2024)

### b. Interviews as expert in media (radio, TV, etc.)

### c. Events promoting geography education (GeoNight and others)

YECG GEOSUS Working Group GEONIGHT Event: **Earthbound Pages – Exploring Geography and Sustainability**



On April 12th 2024, the YECG GEOSUS Working Group organized an online event titled *Earthbound Pages: Exploring Geography and Sustainability*, designed to engage participants in an interdisciplinary discussion on sustainability through literature. The event invited attendees to bring an example from a publication that resonates with their research, facilitating a broad conversation on global environmental challenges and sustainability issues.

Geonight initiative of the YECG GEOSUS working group aimed to raise participants' awareness of the diverse sustainability topics in Geography by sharing insights from various academic fields, as the YECG GEOSUS group consists of postdoctoral researchers from universities worldwide, each with expertise in different aspects of sustainability. Through this collaborative book lecture format, the event sought to broaden geographical thinking by encouraging participants to connect their research with new methods and perspectives on sustainability. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, the event explored the intersections of geography, sustainability, and related fields, with the goal of sparking new ideas for integrating sustainable approaches into participants' own work. Additionally, participants were offered access to further readings and resources to deepen their understanding of the sustainability topics discussed, enhancing their knowledge and promoting continued learning.

### **G. Archival Contributions**

All the reports of IGU-YECG meetings were sent to the IGU secretariat. We use our Commission website, LinkedIn and Facebook page as a kind of archive. It offers all available meeting reports, photos and annual reports representing our meetings.

The current (accurate) URL of the commission's website: <https://iguyecg.org/>

It serves also as an on-line archive of the Commission with all meetings, conference alerts, job opportunities available, as well as photo galleries related to the IGU-YECG activities. The website represents the major tool for the exchange of information among the members of the Task Force and other young scholars.

<https://www.facebook.com/IGUYECG/>

IGU-YECG has expanded its online presence through running a fully fledged, active and updated Facebook page. Regular updates on IGU meetings, IGU-YECG events, young scholar competitions, members' updates and other relevant information is uploaded on the page. A Facebook group is also in process to share academic resources useful for early career academics like Teaching materials, geography promotional material and new research.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/igu-yecg/>

A LinkedIn account helps IGU YECG connect young geographers globally, share opportunities, and boost visibility. It fosters networking, collaboration, and professional growth, enhancing the commission's impact and support for early-career geographers.

This report is structured following the instructions of the IGU Executive Committee.

**Dr. Gaurav Sikka**  
**Chair, IGU-YECG**

