

Session Proposal

Common Threads: Similarities for a Peaceful Future

(proposed by ICOMOS IIWC, ISCEAH, ISC20C, ICICH)

Chair: Asst Prof., Erkan Kambek (Istinye University & Expert Member, ICOMOS IIWC, ICOMOS Türkiye).
Co-Chair: Asst Prof. Süheyla Koç, Samsun University & Expert Member, Secretary General ICOMOS IIWC.

IIWC Scientific Committee:

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3. Imola Kirizsan (Director of Events Sub-committee of IIWC)
4. Mohd Zulhemlee An (IIWC Member – Malaysia)
5. Erkan Kambek (IIWC Member – Türkiye)

SPEAKERS

1. Prof. Dr. Uğur Tanyeli (Türkiye) He is a distinguished Turkish architectural historian, academic, and author, internationally recognized for his critical and revisionist approach to architectural history.
2. Prof. Dr. Josef Stulc (Czech Republic). A renowned conservation architect and former ICOMOS figure, his extensive work on heritage and dialogue would provide a profound theoretical and practical framing to our session.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This proposed session for the ICOMOS GA2026 Scientific Symposium seeks to explore a profound yet often overlooked phenomenon: the striking similarities in architectural forms, elements, and principles found across disparate cultures and geographies. From the structural columns of Malaysian traditional houses and Georgian "swallow bird" homes to the ornate gable ends of Hungarian and Nepalese dwellings, these parallels present a rich field of academic and philosophical inquiry.

Moving beyond a mere comparative analysis of styles, this session will delve into the deeper, unifying forces that have guided human hands to create such convergent solutions. We will investigate the shared human instincts for shelter, community, and symbolic expression; the common challenges of climate, material, and topography that drive pragmatic innovation; and the universal symbolic languages encoded in our built environments. Why do cultures separated by vast distances arrive at similar structural solutions, spatial organizations, or ornamental motifs? The answers lie at the intersection of anthropology, environmental science, structural engineering, and semiotics.

The core thesis of this session is that the conscious recognition and study of these "common threads" in our global architectural heritage offer a powerful antidote to narratives of cultural division. By demonstrating how different societies have independently arrived at similar answers to fundamental human needs, we can reframe heritage from a marker of separation into a testament of our shared humanity. This understanding is more than an academic exercise; it is a vital tool for cultural diplomacy. It was once said that "ICOMOS is not the UN." Yet, perhaps it is something even more essential: where political bodies may struggle to find common ground, ICOMOS possesses the unique ability to gather diverse locals around a single, undeniable global similarity—our shared cultural heritage. This shared ground fosters a profound mutual respect, builds unbreakable bridges of dialogue between nations, and

actively strengthens the foundational pillars of a more empathetic, collaborative, and peaceful world.

We invite scholars, practitioners, and ICOMOS members to contribute papers and posters that explore these themes. Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Case studies of specific architectural similarities (e.g., jointing systems, roof forms, spatial planning) between two or more distinct cultural regions.
- Theoretical explorations of the anthropological, spiritual, or environmental drivers behind convergent architectural evolution.
- The role of digital documentation and comparative analysis in uncovering and understanding these global patterns.
- The application of this "common threads" philosophy in heritage conservation, cultural diplomacy, and peace-building initiatives.

The aim of this session in Kuching is to weave together these disparate strands of knowledge, celebrating the unity inherent in our diverse architectural heritage and charting a course for a more collaborative and harmonious future.

Panelists:

Chair: Veronica Casanovas (as the chair of the Q&A session where this idea was born - SESSION 2-9-A FOCUS (Resilience) COMMUNITIES AND DOCUMENTATION at Auditorium Hall in Lumbini NEPAL)

Co-Chair: Erkan Kambek

We would invite every colleague who spoke up, representing Malaysia, Georgia, Nepal, India, Japan, and Hungary. This would recreate the diverse and authentic chorus of voices from the symposium. Each panellist would have a short time to present a key visual example of their similar architectural feature (e.g., the structural column, the gable ornament). The majority of the time would be dedicated to a moderated discussion exploring the "why" behind these similarities and their significance for cultural diplomacy today.