



ICOMOS TheoPhilos ISC Conference Session
'Doctrinal' Texts in an Age of Living Heritage:
What/Who are They For, and Do We Still Need Them?

Kuching, Malaysia, October, 2026
Borneo Convention Centre, Kuching

1. AIMS AND THEMATIC SCOPE OF THE SESSION

This session, hosted by TheoPhilos, is called in support of the important work of the ongoing Review of the Doctrinal Text Adoption Process in the context of Living Heritage. In an age when local communities and regional interests have an increasing say in conservation processes, this session will discuss whether it is still feasible or desirable to attempt to develop universal principles for the conservation and care of historic places. It will discuss the case for (and against) continuing to produce such documents, and the practical experiences of attempting to do so.

Bringing the topics of Living Heritage and 'Doctrinal' Texts together prompts some fundamental and provocative questions for conservation. For example, what place can universality have in a Living Heritage context? Can Outstanding Universal Value be managed without developing 'universal principles'? At what scale is universalism feasible – global, or regional, national, or not at all? Is universalism more feasible for some types of 'Doctrinal' Text than others? What should be the relationship between tangible and intangible forms of heritage, or does Living Heritage subvert/eliminate that conventional distinction? Can 'Doctrinal' Texts ever hope to be ageless, or are they historically contingent, just like any other historic structure?



2. FORMAT

The session will be structured around a series of short presentations in PechaKucha format – up to 20 slides and 6m 40s length. These will be followed by a fruitful discussion. We encourage TheoPhilos members and non-members alike to propose papers and to contribute to the session; the aim is to bring a broad range of ISCs and ICOMOS members together to discuss this important issue. It is hoped that the papers and discussions will help inform the current Review of the Doctrinal Text Adoption Process.

The presentations and discussions will cover the following themes:

1. What is a 'Doctrinal' Text, and are they compatible with Living Heritage?
2. What role, if any, should 'Doctrinal' Texts play in a Living Heritage context?
3. How can we speak of universalism in a Living Heritage context?
4. Personal (positive or negative) experience/examples of the use of 'Doctrinal' Texts in a Living Heritage context

3. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Submission of abstracts for proposed papers is via this web form: <https://www.icomosga2026.org.my/en/abstract>. When submitting your abstract, please ensure that in answer to the first question ('Submission Category') that you select 'Session', and then the third option. The deadline for submissions is **Thursday 30 April 2026**.

The choice of papers to be presented at the conference will be made by reviewers appointed by the Organisational Committee of the session. Authors of the submitted papers will be informed of the decision of the reviewers within three weeks of the deadline.

Please note that presentations are in **PechaKucha format**, and so are limited to up to 20 slides and 6m 40s length. The aim of the presentations is to provide the context for the following discussions. Presentations are in-person only. By participating in this conference you agree to the video of the sessions being published on our website via YouTube.

Following the conference, the proceedings will be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal *Protection of Cultural Heritage*, published by ICOMOS Poland, ICOMOS ISC TheoPhilos, and the Lublin University of Technology. [Submission information for authors](#).

The Organisational Committee
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