

Global Dissonant Modernities

17/08 — 21/08

Designing the Future for 20th-Century Architectural Monuments and Sites

The 2026 dual event focuses on the conservation of 20th-century architectural heritage, an epoch marked by starkly uneven levels of institutional recognition and protection. While early modernism has been largely canonised within established Western heritage frameworks, this acceptance is not universal. In many global contexts, even early avant-garde legacies remain vulnerable, while post-war and ideological architectures continue to face contestation worldwide. We aim to address these disparities, exploring how heritage frameworks can better accommodate the complex, often dissonant layers of the recent past.

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CONFERENCE '26



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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Emerging Professionals Working Group (EPWG) of the German National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), in collaboration with ICOMOS Kazakhstan, is pleased to announce a dual event: a **conference**, *Global Dissonant Modernities: Designing the Future for 20th-Century Architectural Monuments and Sites*, and a **summer school**, to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, between **17 - 21 August 2026**.

The event is conceived as a platform for mutual exchange between theoretical and practice-based knowledge, bringing together colleagues from Kazakhstan and the international heritage community, while fostering dialogue between established professionals and emerging professionals. Through this exchange, the summer school and conference aim to create a space for shared learning, critical reflection, and the transfer of experience across geographical and generational contexts.

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Kazakhstan presents a particularly outstanding opportunity for this exchange. As a relatively young independent state, its legal and institutional frameworks for heritage protection have not yet fully integrated modern architecture. This has led to rapid and often contradictory urban transformations, sparking debate among professionals, policymakers, and the public alike. Rather than framing these conditions as a deficit, the conference and summer school approach them as an opportunity for dialogue, comparative learning, and the co-production of knowledge across local and international perspectives.



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Conference Themes and Panels

We invite paper and presentation proposals addressing one or more of the following panels:

Panel 1: Defining Significance – From Terminology to Values and Law

This panel addresses how 20th-century heritage has been defined, valued, and legally recognised. Contributions may explore terminology, international and regional legal frameworks, and criteria for assessing the significance of more recent heritage, reuse potential, and long-term stewardship.

Panel 2: The Dissonance of the 20th-Century – Beyond Architectural Canons

This panel examines the political, ideological, and material dissonances surrounding 20th-century architecture. By engaging with architectural semiotics, the panel will examine how shifting sign values complicate contested histories and contribute to public resistance to preservation. Papers may address the fluidity of meaning, societal perceptions, ideological legacies, and conservation challenges.

Panel 3: Methodology and Capacity Building

Focusing on knowledge transfer across regions and generations, this panel explores methodological approaches, heritage education and dissemination, and capacity building in the conservation of 20th-century heritage. Contributions may address pedagogical models, East-West exchanges, digital tools supporting collaborative heritage practice, and ethical decision-making in reuse processes.

Panel 4: Conservation in Practice – The "Living Laboratory"

This panel focuses on applied conservation strategies through case studies, with a particular emphasis on buildings that remain in active use. Contributions may explore reuse-led approaches that examine environmental sustainability and responsible future use, institutional memory, hidden building histories, material ageing and current state, and practice-based learning through conservation projects.



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Kazakhstan

STIFTUNG
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The call is open to:

- Researchers and academics
- Heritage professionals and practitioners
- Emerging Professionals (EPs)
- Students, doctoral and post-doctoral researchers
- Architects, planners, and conservation specialists

Keydates:

- Deadline for abstract submission: 13 March 2026
- Notification of acceptance: 1 April 2026

Guidelines for the contributions:

- Please complete the form accurately, including all required information (link below)
- Abstract length: maximum 500 words/2000 characters
- Language: English

Submissions Information:

The abstract proposal can be submitted via the following link:

<https://forms.gle/2uSMTdKcCY2ocYdv8>



We will try to accommodate online presentations, depending on the geographical origin of the contributions received. Please indicate whether you will be able to participate on-site or online.

Submissions from Central Asia and other post-socialist contexts are particularly **encouraged** to establish a balanced representation and stimulate the knowledge exchange.

The dual event is organised by ICOMOS Germany and Kazakhstan and their EPWG Teams, and supported by the West-Eastern Encounters Foundation, as well as by the ICOMOS EPWGs of Kazakhstan, Belgium, and Portugal.

We are looking forward to your submissions!