

REPORT OF THE “ ‘atRium’ TRAINING SCHOOL IN COMPUTATIONAL
ARCHAEOLOGY”, 16–20 September 2024

By Ilenia Petrarulo

During the week of September 16th to 21st, 2024, I attended courses organized by the Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno, as part of the 'atRium Training School' in Brno, Czech Republic.

I chose to apply to this program primarily because I was interested in the lessons on spatial analysis using R software. However, over the course of the week, I learned many new things that will definitely be useful for my career path. The lessons were structured in a way that was also accessible for those who, like me, had no prior knowledge of R. In fact, the first day focused on reviewing the basics of R, which was essential for understanding how the program works and for getting an idea of the possibilities it offers in the field of archaeological analysis. I also had the opportunity to talk with other participants, who appreciated the review despite their previous knowledge of the subject.

The second day of the lectures focused on the Ariadne database and the SPARQL language. Having no background in this area and little knowledge of programming languages, I found it somewhat challenging to follow the lesson entirely. However, this lesson taught me what Ariadne is, how it works, how open data is interconnected, and the relationships that need to be established for a successful open-access data system. I had no understanding of the dynamics behind such a database or how much work goes into building it. Despite the difficulties, I am very happy to have learned the basics of the data relationship system.

The third and fourth days were the ‘easiest’ for me in terms of understanding the explanations. During these two days, we learned how spatial analysis works in R and how to develop an archaeological model using the software. As I work with GIS for my PhD project, I found it extremely useful to learn about R's potential in processing spatial data, along with the advantages this tool can bring to a job like mine, both in terms of results and the speed of conducting spatial analyses.

The last day was dedicated to a discussion between participants and teachers, which proved extremely valuable for me. I had the opportunity to discuss my project with experts in the field, who provided suggestions and feedback on the methodologies I should adopt to advance my work effectively. I am particularly grateful to the organizers of the school for facilitating this interaction, allowing for an engaging moment of dialogue.

I am very happy to have had this opportunity. On a professional level, I learned new techniques and tools that will be beneficial for my career, opening up new avenues of research and ideas. I believe it is crucial for an archaeologist to stay updated and to explore the possibilities that technology offers in our field; archaeology, like all professions, is evolving in the contemporary world. We must embrace new tools to understand the behavior of past societies, rather than becoming stagnant in an 'old archaeology' focused solely on material culture.

On a personal level, I met wonderful people, had the chance to discuss both my work and experiences, and learned about different academic environments. I hope to stay in touch with these individuals and meet them again in the future, just as I hope to reconnect with the teachers and organizers of the training school for further discussions and potential collaborations.