Programme & Abstracts

22nd–24th October 2025, Online (GATHER.TOWN)

The 33rd Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference

TRAC Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference
www.trac.org.uk

AG TidA
THEORIEN in der ARCHÄOLOGIE

Introduction

We are delighted to welcome you to the 33rd Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (TRAC–TidA 2025), held online between 22nd and 24th October 2025 through the GatherTown platform. This year's conference represents a collaboration between the Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference (TRAC) and Theorien in der Archäologie (TidA), bringing together two organisations that have contributed to debates in archaeological theory across different academic traditions.

Founded in 1990, TidA is the largest organisation in the German-speaking world dedicated to advancing theoretical and methodological discussions in archaeology, with particular emphasis on prehistoric, Roman, and early historic research. Its members represent a dynamic community of early and mid-career scholars from institutions across the D–A–CH region. In partnership with the TRAC Standing Committee, TidA joins this 33rd conference to foster intellectual exchange among Romanists, reflecting our shared commitment to dialogue across linguistic, disciplinary, and regional boundaries.

This year's conference brings together speakers from close to forty universities and institutions across eighteen countries. The diversity of participation attests to the vitality of theoretical Roman archaeology and its international reach. In celebration of the connections between UK academia and the German-speaking world, TRAC–TidA 2025 features two keynote lectures by scholars who have bridged and enriched both traditions. We thank Dominik Maschek (Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie, Mainz/University of Trier) and Manuel Fernández-Götz (University of Oxford) for their time and valuable contributions to the conference. The two keynote lectures exemplify the reflective and theoretically informed perspectives that lie at the heart of TRAC.

The programme further includes a Publishing Workshop hosted by the Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal (TRAJ), providing a forum for discussion on publishing processes and professional development, so vital for our early career colleagues. We thank the journal's editorial team for organising this, particularly Emily Hanscam and the TRAJ Editorial Team: Angela Trentacoste, Berber van der Meulen-van der Veen Brian Buchanan, Cristina Mondin, Dianne van de Zande, Dies van der Linde, Henry Clarke, Julia M. Koch, Sanja Vucetic, Selin Gür, and Stuart McKie.

The programme further features a Publishing Fair, bringing together editors from leading journals and presses in Roman studies alongside experience in coordinating and producing edited volumes. We extend our thanks to all who are contributing to this session, including Blanka Misic (*The Classical Review*), Myles Lavan (*The Journal of Roman Studies*), Tansy Branscombe (*BAR Publishing*), Seth Bernard (*The Journal of Roman Archaeology*), Abigail Graham (Insights into Edited Volumes), and Will Bowden (*Britannia*).

We extend our thanks to our partners at TidA and especially Sarah Scoppie, Astrid Schmölzer, Martin Renger, and Stefan Schreiber for their collaboration throughout the planning process. Our gratitude also goes to LEIZA (Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie), the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies and its Roman Archaeology Committee for their continued support for TRAC. Special thanks are due to the Committee's Chair, Dr Tanja Romankiewicz, Vice-Chair, Dr Tatiana Ivleva, and members Professor Jen Baird, Dr Elizabeth Blanning, Dr Tom Brindle, Dr Eleanor Ghey, Dr Frances McIntosh, Dr David Roberts, Professor Christoph Rummel, Dr Alex Smith and Dr Lacey Wallace. We also acknowledge the contributions of Dr Catherine Teitz (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz), who has helped us promote the conference.

Finally, we thank all session organisers, speakers, and participants whose intellectual creativity has shaped this year's programme. TRAC–TidA 2025 conference is a testament to TRAC's capacity to connect scholars, methodologies, and ideas across borders and generations.

TRAC Standing Committee

Anna Walas, Sanja Vucetic, Dragos Mitrofan, Kelsey Madden and David Spiller

Opening Keynote

Roman Archaeologies in 2025: Reflections on Theory and Practice

Wednesday 22nd October 13:00-14:00

Dominik Maschek (Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA), Mainz)

Moving towards the final months of 2025, it seems fair to state that Roman archaeology stands at a decisive juncture shaped by profound disciplinary, institutional, and political transformations. Situating its reflections within both the author's own academic trajectory and the broader European context since the end of the Cold War, this paper examines how the optimism and internationalism of the 1990s have given way to a climate of neoliberal precarity, rising autocracy, and mounting challenges for the Humanities, for critical thinking, and for the study of the human past. Within this environment, Roman archaeology, or rather archaeologies – drawing on a wide spectrum of traditions, from the empirically and historically grounded approaches of continental Europe (including the Austrian, German, Italian, and French schools) to the theoretically ambitious and globally networked perspectives of the Anglophone world – must confront the intellectual consequences of postmodern relativism and the succession of "cultural turns" that have shaped the field since the late twentieth century.

The paper contends that, while these diverse traditions have each enriched the discipline – through rigorous contextual analysis on the one hand and theoretical innovation on the other – their increasing divergence has also fostered fragmentation and a drift toward de-historicisation. Recent symmetrical or posthumanist approaches, which seek to balance or even prioritise the agency of objects and materials over that of human actors, risk eroding the interpretative centrality of human experience and responsibility when studying the Roman world. Against a backdrop of political instrumentalisation of the past, the paper calls for renewed commitment to contextual, critical, and human-centred scholarship. The central challenge for Roman archaeology in 2025 lies in reconciling its pluralistic intellectual heritage with a shared, historically grounded, and ethically engaged vision of the human past.

Closing Keynote

Darkness unveiled: Confronting Roman imperialism… and why it matters for the present

Friday 24th October 17:30–19:00

Manuel Fernández-Götz (University of Oxford)

This keynote will review the growing body of research that focuses on the 'darker' sides of the Roman world, including military conquest, slavery, and wealth inequality. I will explore different theoretical and methodological approaches that can aid our understanding of the life experiences of those who suffered the most from the sharp asymmetries that characterised the Empire. Crucially, I will also discuss how these darker sides of the Roman past are presented to the public through museum exhibitions and heritage initiatives, reflecting on ways to communicate the more 'uncomfortable' aspects to the broader public. Finally, I will consider why confronting violence and oppression in the Roman world is not just a scholarly exercise, but a matter of key importance for our collective present – and future.

Programme

All times are provided in UK time zone (GMT). On Friday, there will be no papers in the morning.

Wednesday AM — TRAC–TiDA 2025		
Time (UK)	**Room A – Monuments**	**Room B – Theatre**
09:30–10:00	**Registration**	
	I: What do the monuments stand for? The materiality of Roman architecture	
10:00–10:10	What do the monuments stand for?: Introduction (Ulla Rajala & Therese Emanuelsson-Paulson, Stockholm University)	
10:10–10:35	Octagonal columns in pre-Roman Italy (Therese Emanuelsson-Paulson, Stockholm University)	
10:35–11:00	Reconsidering the Meaning in the Forum of Augustus: Materiality, Intention and Reception (Hyun Seo Cho, Seoul National University)	
11:00–11:25	The Messages of Peace on the Ara Pacis Augustae (Gaius Stern, University of Berkeley)	
11:25–11:35	**Break (10 min)**	
11:35–12:00	Atrium Vestae: a monument for people, Vestals or emperor? (Ulla Rajala, Stockholm University)	
12:00–12:25	The oppressive nature of monumental architecture in Gaul (Ralph Haeussler, University of Winchester)	
12:25–12:50	The Odeion of Agrippa in Athens – a misunderstood Monument of Roman architecture? (Margarita Sardak, University of Cologne)	

Wednesday PM — TRAC–TiDA 2025		
Time (UK)	**Room A – Monuments**	**Room B – Theatre**
13:00–14:00	**Opening Keynote: Dominik Maschek, Leibniz Centre for Archaeology**	
	What do the monuments stand for? The materiality of Roman architecture	**II: New Approaches to Roman Theatre Archaeology**
14:10–14:35	One fits all? On the plurality of meaning concerning arches erected for the visiting emperor (Marius Gaidys, Eberhard-Karls Universität, Tübingen)	New Approaches to Roman Theatre Archaeology: Introduction (Jessica Clarke, UCL / BSR)
14:35–15:00	Monumental Memory and Civic Identity: The Temple of Zeus in the Neapolis Vignette of the Church of St Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (Umm ar-Rasas, Jordan) (Jacopo Dolci, University of Nottingham)	The theatre of Nea Paphos: contextualising theatre in Roman Cyprus (Craig Barker, University of Sydney)
15:00–15:25	The evolution and messaging of the use of Imperial Porphyry in Roman architecture (Sem van Atteveld, Leiden University)	Water management in Roman theatres and their development in the Iberian Peninsula (Julian Aponte Henao, University of Granada)
15:25–15:50	Discussion	All the world's a stage: architecture and ordines in the Roman theatre of Bracara Augusta (Hispania Tarraconensis) (Diego Machado and Manuela Martins, University of Minho)
15:50–16:00	**Break (10 min)**	**Break (10 min)**
16:00–16:25		Beyond Naumachia: Water's Function in Theaters of the Roman Decapolis (Clare Rassmussen, Bryn Mawr College)
16:25–16:50		Computational Approaches to Regionalism in Gallo-Roman Theater Design (John Sigmier, University of Toronto)
16:50–17:15		Discussion

	Thursday AM — TRAC–TiDA 2025	
Time (UK)	**Room A**	**Room B**
	III: The past is dead? Lived history, empathy and dark sides of Roman imperialism (and not only Roman)	**IV: Beyond Binaries: Exploring New Conceptual Approaches to Cross-Cultural Interactions in the Roman Empire**
09:00–09:10	The past is dead?: Introduction (Ljubica Perinić; Anton Ye. Baryshnikov)	Beyond Binaries: Introduction (Louise A. O'Brien; Luis Maia de Freitas)
09:10–09:35	Despair in the Forest: The Battlefield Behaviour of Roman Soldiers in the last stages of the Battle of the Teutoburg (AD 9) (Jo Ball, Manchester Metropolitan University)	The Gallic Vulcan is not the Italian Vulcan: Assimilation and Localisation of Vulcan worship in Roman Gaul (Xie Sisi, University of Edinburgh)
09:35–10:00	The 'Mother' and Wife': Using Critical Fabulation to Unlock Women's Lived Experiences of Abuse from Roman Soldiers (Sabrina Nogueira, University of Sydney)	Nature and Indigeneity in Vergil's Aeneid (Alicia Matz, Boston University)
10:00–10:10	**Break (10 min)**	**Break (10 min)**
10:10–10:35	Shards of the Past, meanings of the present: Broken relationships beyond Roma imperialism (Mauro Puddu, University for Foreigners of Siena)	Understanding the self-representation of the auxiliary cavalry in Germania through Social Practice Theory: the case of the totenmahl motif' (Carlos Enríquez de Salamanca, University of Warwick)
10:35–11:00	Fear and lasting in Salona: When the eagles would not rise (Ljubica Perinić, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts)	Economic Interaction and Ritual Exchanges: Applying social economics to Gallo-Roman figurative votives (Christiane-Marie Cantwell, University of Cambridge)
11:00–11:25	Beautiful villages burn nicely: things that Caesar said and things he left unsaid about his British expeditions (Anton Ye. Baryshnikov, Independent researcher)	Beyond the Empire, Beyond Binaries: exploring Irish engagement with the Roman Empire by re-centering elite Irish agency, Beyond Binaries (Karen Murad, University College Dublin)
11:25–11:50	Discussion	"Egyptian", "Roman"? Spaces of differentiation and/or contact in podium temples in Roman Egypt (Esperanza Macarena Ródenas Pere, Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla)
11:50–12:15		The Etruscan 'House': Social Resilience in the Face of Subjugation (Alexis Daveloose, Ghent University)
12:15-12:40	**Lunch**	Discussion
12:40–13:30		**Lunch**

	Thursday PM — TRAC–TiDA 2025	
Time (UK)	**Room A**	**Room B**
	V: Integrating Ancient DNA with Archaeological Theory and Practice	**VI: Reclaiming Materialism: Marxist Tools for Moving Past Theoretical Binary Oppositions in Archaeology**
15:10–15:20	Integrating Ancient DNA: Introduction (Hannah M. Moots; N. Ezgi Altınışık)	Reclaiming Materialism: Introduction (Isabella Bossolino; Dario Monti)
15:20–15:45	Mobility in the Eastern Adriatic from a bioarchaeological perspective in the Roman Period (Tisa Loewen, Arizona State University)	Marxism and class in antiquity: towards a historicist approach (Kostas Vlassopoulos, University of Crete)
15:45–16:10	Bridging archaeological theory and ancient DNA to study the population of Çatalhöyük (Eren Yüncü, Middle East Technical University)	On the morphology of certain Marxian categories for the study of ancient societies (Dario Monti, UCLouvain and Edoardo Vanni, Università per Stranieri di Siena).
16:10–16:20	**Break (10 min)**	**Break (10 min)**
16:20–16:45	Origins, migrations and mobility: the Etruscan ancestry as an archaeological problem (Ulla Rajala, Stockholm University)	Fields, Cities, and Power. Reading Proto-Urban Italy (Agostino Sotgia, University of Groningen)
16:45–17:10	Moving Beyond Migration: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Mobility in the Ancient Mediterranean (Hannah Moots, University of Stockholm)	Examining Gender and Labor Using Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) (Serena Crosson, Stanford University)
17:10–17:35	Exploring matrilocality in history: Insights from ancient DNA (Gözde Atağ and Eleni Seferidou, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology)	Piecing the archaeological fragments of common agendas together: Gramsci's history of subalterns in dialogue with feminist posthumanism (Mauro Puddu, Università per Stranieri di Siena)
17:35–18:00	Discussion	Marxist categories and the end of Eastern Sigillata A production during the Roman Middle Imperial period (2nd – 3rd century AD): the dialectic between structure and superstructure (Paride Parravano, University of Pisa)
18:00–18:25		The Use and Abuse of Marxism in 'Classical' Archaeology (Ian Tewksbury, Santa Clara University)
18:25-18:50		Discussion

Friday PM ONLY — TRAC–TiDA 2025		
Time (UK)	**ROOM A**	**ROOM B**
12:30–13:30		**Publisher Fair**
13:30–14:30		**TRAC AGM**
	VII: General Session	
14:40–14:50	General Session: Introduction	
14:50–15:15	Italian Archaeological Publishing Houses (1950-1970): Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and Einaudi between methodology, ideology and heritage (Camilla Marraccini, IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca)	
15:15–15:40	Artwork representations on Roman provincial coin reverses – some considerations from Deultum, Thrace (Milena Raycheva, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)	
15:40–15:50	**Break (10 min)**	
15:50–16:15	Making a mark: the social significance of Human footprints in Roman ceramic building materials (Elizabeth Shaw, Independent researcher)	
16:15–16:40	Ideology on the Roman Frontier: Patrons, Clients, and Conquered Peoples of Frontier Landscapes (Mir Kameron Kashani, UCL)	
16:40–17:05	Patterns of Cultivation at the Sanctuary of the Great St. Bernard Pass: An Examination of the Votive Inscriptions using Network Analysis (Zehavi Husser, Biola University)	
17:05-17:20	Discussion	
17:20-17:30	**Break (10 min)**	
17:30–19:00	**Closing Keynote: Manuel Fernández-Götz, University of Oxford**	

Session I. What do the monuments stand for? The materiality of Roman architecture

Wednesday • 10:00–15:50 (Room A)

Organisers*: Ulla Rajala (Stockholm University) & Therese Emanuelsson-Paulson (Stockholm University)*

Session abstract

What and how do the monuments communicate? In this session we want to explore the mediating role of Roman architecture. Objects mediate between people in a range of ways, and in so doing are essential from their part to the way that selves are constructed in relation to others - i.e. to intersubjectivity. In recent archaeological, and indeed interdisciplinary, discussions objects are given agency, better repositioning of humans is searched for and the white western nature of the 'human' is questioned; these discussions have reached Roman archaeology, too. Nevertheless, the extent to which such 'material turn' would help archaeology has been questioned, even if the essence of archaeology as the study of 'things' cannot be underestimated.

Roman towns were full of buildings that created different kinds of urban landscapes that affected people's senses. The Roman architecture could be grandiose and massive, full of decorations and friezes. As monuments, the buildings stood for something and they conveyed different ideas and messages. But whose messages they communicated and what was their reception? Could the Roman monuments have unintended connotations? Do they still stand for something? And can we always understand their messages? Or is our perception of these monuments affected by older archaeological theories?

This session invites the interpretations and re-interpretations of pre-Roman and Roman monuments in the core and periphery of the Roman Empire. In addition, the assessment of their reception in the later periods can be explored as well. Especially welcome are contributions that discuss different ontological questions related to monuments.

Octagonal columns in pre-Roman Italy

Therese Emanuelsson-Paulson (Stockholm University)

Columnated buildings have been used for millennia and the styles of the columns have changed over time. Often the changes in the local styles are triggered by events happening in the society, either locally or globally, when a society feels the need to define themselves through its architecture against its neighbours or enemies. The local columnated style was often created as a manifestation of the society's self-identification or political power. The most known example of this is, of course, the Greek Doric and Ionic styles of architecture, which often but not always were hybridized with local traditions in pre-Roman Italy and the later Roman architecture. The mediated messages must have changed when the architecture was hybridized in these new cultural settings.

We find columnated architecture all over pre-Roman Italy, but can we understand the messages being conveyed in these new contexts? Can we understand the difference in the meaning behind the monuments, when neighbouring towns use the same style for different reasons? In constructing Doric octagonal columns, the local society had chosen inspiration from a regional style in the Peloponnese, but seldom with the purpose of reconnecting themselves to the Archaic Peloponnese, but other messages must have been mediated. So, why did the local societies choose to adapt a less commonly used Greek style of octagonal columns? And can we understand what they wanted to communicate when single monuments were constructed in several different local pre-Roman societies?

Reconsidering the Meaning in the Forum of Augustus: Materiality, Intention and Reception

Hyun Seo Cho (Seoul National University)

By reconsidering the materiality of monuments, we can highlight how meaning was constituted in the network of patrons and recipients, as mediated through it. The Forum of Augustus in Rome has been interpreted as one of the most prominent monuments commissioned by Augustus, designed to embody and project his political and ideological program through its material form. While relatively rich written sources initially explain why and how Augustus built this vast complex, archaeological approaches have provided more dynamic interpretations of its functions and meanings. Since Zanker persuasively showed that visual imagery could operate as a means of communication and propaganda, research on Augustan monuments has concentrated on visual elements that collectively shaped the intended meaning of these monuments, situating them within the political and cultural context of that period. Favro further argued that Romans, practiced in rhetorical modes of thought, were able to recognize and interpret non-verbal messages conveyed by material images. These interpretations have deepened our understanding of Augustan monuments, but they have often presupposed a unilateral attribution of meaning and an audience of literate, ideologically compliant recipients. As a result, research has largely restricted itself to reconstructing the patron's intentions.

This paper reconsiders the 'meaning' of the Forum of Augustus as something more complex: a product not only of the messages inscribed in architecture and decoration but also of diverse receptions. The forum's messages could be clearly understood, partially misunderstood, or even disregarded, depending on the social position and experience of its users. By foregrounding these varied responses, this paper argues that the meaning of the Forum of Augustus was constructed within the dynamic interplay between the patron's intentions and the audience's interpretations. Such a perspective highlights the Forum of Augustus as a relational monument, rather than a static transmitter of Augustus's propaganda.

The Messages of Peace on the Ara Pacis Augustae

Gaius Stern (University of California, Berkeley)

The Ara Pacis Augustae, made of Luna (Carrara) marble and one of the most researched monuments of Imperial Rome, delivers multiple messages about Roman military success, peace and prosperity, the regime's agenda to increase the birthrate, Rome's status as the center of civilization, and the glories of Rome's archaic past, not to mention her rise from humble beginnings to hegemon of the Mediterranean (Mare Nostrum). But because the Ara Pacis proclaims so many messages, scholars can easily lose track or be distracted from the main message of the Ara Pacis: the peace Romans were enjoying in 13 BC – thanks to Augustus and his allies – improved everyone's lives over the many previous decades of civil war. Every wall of the Ara Pacis advertises peace and prosperity, although the incompleteness of the modern reconstruction in certain places diminishes our ability to read that and other messages as clearly as the intact monument originally did for the Romans.

The Ara Pacis depicts peace in obvious and subtle ways. Almost all of the men wear the garment of peace, the toga. There is a notable absence of soldiers, compared to monuments like the Domitius Ahenobarbus Relief or Trajan's Column. Other indicators of peace require deeper cultural and historical knowledge. On the West front, a pig, the proper animal to sacrifice for peace, is led to an altar. In the East we see the new cult goddess Pax Augustea, and some scholars think Roma sits across from Pax on a pile of weapons confiscated from the enemy. Vacant priesthoods, whose incumbents perished in civil war, have been filled, particularly the Flamen Dialis and Iulialis. Finally, the Ara shows that fathers can now personally see them grow up, instead of fighting against them in a civil war far from home.

Atrium Vestae: a monument for people, Vestals or emperor?

Ulla Rajala (Stockholm University)

The House of the Vestals (Atrium Vestae) was the residential building of the virgin priestesses of the goddess Vesta on the south-eastern side of the Forum Romanum in the utmost centre of Roman public and political life. In this presentation I will discuss in detail the Trajanic phase of the House and consider the relationships which human subjects could sustain with this monument. Ultimately, I try to discover what it stood for.

During the Republican period the public building works were carried out by the Senate and the censores for the res publica, but in the Imperial times the buildings in Rome were built in the name of the Emperor in his honour. The dating of the last main building scheme of Atrium

Vestae to Trajan's reign is totally archaeological, based mainly on brick stamps: the latest archaeological explorations have reaffirmed the dating. The Temple of Vesta was a symbol for the power and preservation of Rome. To match this symbol, the unique status of the Vestals comprised of three elements: Roman unmarried woman (king's daughter), Roman matron (the queen) and man's role that were needed for the ambiguous role of a mediator. Trajan's House of Vestals was a large peristyle house with three floors and as such suitable for the high status of the Vestals. When we look at the ideological emphases of the written sources and Trajan's entire building programme in Rome, Portus and Ostia, we can see that the emperor tried to fulfil the role of the good king. The House of the Vestals and the Temple of Vesta were notable propagandistic building projects justifiable and desirable for Trajan from the ideological and political points of view. Thus, when the people passed the House, were they thinking of Rome, Vestals or the Emperor?

The oppressive nature of monumental architecture in Gaul

Ralph Haeussler (University of Winchester)

Already in pre-Roman Gaul, architecture was consciously used to manipulate the sub-elite population, communicating numerous messages about power, hierarchy and religion. We notably see this in Iron Age sanctuaries whose layout and design provided the setting for priests, worshippers and pilgrims to acquire diverse experiences within well-structured architectural surroundings. It is therefore no surprise that local elites across Gaul embraced Roman-style architecture since the first century BCE, not to show their Romanitas or allegiance to Rome, but above all as a medium to consolidate or enhance their social status. Simultaneously, the Roman empire is also investing in monumental architecture across the provinces to persuade the local population of their ideological discourses which, together with local endeavours, creates a complex architectural and artistic environment that was omnipresent to both travellers and local residents, shaping their understandings and emotions.

The aim of this paper is to explore how people of various social status and ethnic origin might have experienced particular architectural settings in Gaul, like forum or sanctuary, trying to understand the many means employed in art, architecture and layout to impress passers-by and communicate messages and latent meanings. Architecture and art not only provide the setting for human actions and interactions, but the build environment is also an agent that shapes people's lives. We will also need to explore what makes these places unique to Gaul and distinct from other provinces, while it is important to consider the impact of the downfall of these monumental architectural assemblages during the third and fourth century CE.

The Odeion of Agrippa in Athens – a misunderstood Monument of Roman architecture?

Margarita Sardak (University of Cologne)

Architectural history has developed a viable approach to the study and interpretation of monuments that encompasses many perspectives through the analysis of 'hard' (time, place, creator, occasion, type, form, style,

method, technique) and 'soft' (function, mode, meaning, intention, context, reception) facts. This makes it possible to distinguish precisely between the various actors – client, builder, user and viewer – as well as between intention, motivation, intended effect, actual effect, perception and reception. The challenges lie in the fact that, in the case of ancient monuments, we rarely have enough knowledge at our disposal to reveal all the facts. Thus, evidence that is easier to determine and interpret tends to be overemphasised, while material that is more difficult to analyse is disregarded.

This paper presents a method of studying Roman architecture that addresses the aforementioned challenges and enables a fact-based interpretation of architectural monuments as a means of communication. Using the Odeion of Agrippa as an example, it shows how a systematic approach and a balance between the object -internal and object -external analysis can lead to rich insights, new findings and a reinterpretation of the role of the Agrippieion in the architectural landscape of Roman Athens.

One fits all? On the plurality of meaning concerning arches erected for the visiting emperor

Marius Gaidys (Eberhard-Karls Universität, Tübingen)

When Hadrian visited towns in the Roman East and North Africa, some cities and poleis elected to build dedicated monuments for this occasion. One of those w ere honorary arches as seen, for example, in Perge, Attaleia, and Phaselis. In his work on the travels of emperors, Helmut Halfmann proposed that these monuments functioned as a monumental backdrop for the arrival of the monarch and as gateways into the city. Still today, this is the dominant (if not sole) interpretation on this topic.

This paper argues that this interpretation is not only too narrow but also stands in contrast with one of the very core functions of monuments. As these monuments are, as has been widely acknowledged, erected in expectancy of the arrival of the emperor, I will argue that there are three dimensions within the significance of these arches that are divided by different states of temporality; that is, before and upon the arrival of the emperor, as well as after he has left. By applying temporality, we will uncover different semantic layers to the monument that transcend Halfsmanns interpretation as 'one off' buildings. Moreover, through this lens, we can see a change in the agency of these arches as 'built mediators' between the emperor and the dedicatees that represent the people of a city or a region. Finally, we will highlight that this communication reflects an elite discourse shedding light on the receptibility of these arches.

Monumental Memory and Civic Identity: The Temple of Zeus in the Neapolis Vignette of the Church of St Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (Umm ar-Rasas, Jordan)

Jacopo Dolci (University of Nottingham)

This paper examines the depiction of a Roman-style temple in the Neapolis vignette of the early 8th-century mosaic floor from the Church of St Stephen at Kastron Mefaa (Umm ar Rasas, Jordan), with a focus on the mediating role of Roman architecture in Late Antiquity. Unlike the other topographical vignettes, which primarily depict churches, the Neapolis image foregrounds a pagan monument —the Temple of Zeus —revealing how architecture could continue to communicate civic identity, urban prestige, and collective memory long after its original cultic function had ceased.

Building on archaeological, numismatic, and iconographic evidence, the study situates the vignette within a local tradition of representing the Temple of Zeus as a city emblem and compares it to broader patterns of Roman-period architecture in Transjordanian mosaics. The mosaic demonstrates that monuments could mediate relationships between past and present communities: they were not only visual markers but also active agents in shaping urban self-perception and intersubjective engagement. In the case of Neapolis, the temple's depiction

signals a selective memory in which the city's Roman heritage was preserved, celebrated, and transmitted through visual culture, fostering continuity across shifting religious and political landscapes. By reading the mosaic through the lens of reception, the paper explores how Roman architecture functioned as a communicative medium, conveying layered meanings to contemporary audiences and reshaping civic identity. The Neapolis vignette thus exemplifies the enduring agency of Roman monuments in Late Antiquity, inviting reflection on how architectural heritage was received, interpreted, and repurposed.

The evolution and messaging of the use of Imperial Porphyry in Roman architecture

Sem van Atteveld (Leiden University)

The evolution and messaging of the use of Imperial Porphyry in Roman architecture Sem van Atteveld, Leiden University Discussions of Roman monuments often focus on the analyses of buildings, inscriptions, and iconography, yet the communicative role of the materials themselves has been left less explored. For the Romans, however, 'material messaging' was a central theme. The first use of white marble in the capital, for example, was a deliberate choice, as Popkin has shown, symbolizing Rome's conquest of the Greeks with whom the stone was associated. Among these materials, imperial porphyry, as I will argue, stands out as the most important medium of monumental messaging. This deep purple stone, first brought to Rome under Tiberius from the quarries of the Egyptian Eastern Desert, required complex imperial infrastructure to transport across the empire. Its colour mimicked the most prestigious hues of Tyrian purple, linking the material directly to imperial authority. Porphyry was extensively employed by emperors: Nero commissioned massive works such as the great Vatican basin, while it also appeared in decorative contexts such as the mosaic floors of the Baths of Caligula and the Dacian statues in Trajan's Forum. Yet under Diocletian a significant shift occurred. Porphyry evolved from a prestigious decoration to the very embodiment of imperial power, becoming the central material of monumental architecture.

This paper argues that porphyry was not merely an ornament but a communicative agent in itself. It was a stone that was used as a direct and deliberate mediator between the emperor, his empire, and his subjects, and in doing so transformed the very meaning of the use of material in the Roman monumental space.

Session II. New Approaches to Roman Theatre Archaeology

Organiser: Jessica Clarke (UCL / British School at Rome)

Wednesday • 14:10–17:15 (Room B)

Session abstract

The session aims to explore the archaeology of Roman theatre from new diachronic and cross-cultural perspectives. Too often studied through a Rome-centric and literary lens, theatre in the ancient world offers a diverse and complex archaeological record that demands fresh theoretical and comparative approaches.

The session invites papers that examine any aspect of theatre archaeology between the Greek Classical period and the late Roman period in the Mediterranean and beyond, including northern/eastern Europe and Britain. This could include the architecture and decoration of theatre buildings or the material culture of theatre – such as the iconography of theatre performances, masks, and actors.

The focus of the papers should be on tracing developments over time and space, identifying moments of continuity or change in the archaeological record of theatre. This could encompass the emergence of regional theatre designs, changes in construction techniques, or shifts in the use and meaning of performance space. Alternatively, papers might focus on the development of theatre iconography and possible regional variations in theatrical imagery or the media through which it was presented. How did theatre architecture and visual culture differ between cities and regions? What do these variations reveal about changing local identities, political dynamics, or social priorities over time?

The key aim of the session is to move beyond teleological models that assume Rome was the driving force behind cultural change in the Mediterranean – a narrative which has dominated scholarly discussions of post-Hellenistic theatre archaeology. Instead, the intention is to highlight the agency of local communities across a wide geographic and temporal frame, and their role in shaping and developing various theatrical forms. In so doing, the session hopes to find fresh theoretical approaches to the archaeology of Roman theatre, reframing it not as a monolithic tradition but a vibrant, pluralistic, and morphic phenomenon with a complex developmental history.

The theatre of Nea Paphos: contextualising theatre in Roman Cyprus

Craig Barker (University of Sydney)

The University of Sydney's Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project has been excavating and researching the theatre of ancient Nea Paphos in Cyprus for three decades under the auspices of the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. During this time the project has uncovered a theatre that served as a venue for performance and spectacle for more than six centuries between the third century BCE and the fourth century CE. Structurally the building's architecture evolved considerably over time, with each new phase often predicated by seismic activity. Analysis of the architectural development shows a theatre that was initially heavily influenced by Alexandrian architectural styles and constructed from local limestone, followed then by Roman modelling in a style that is overall consistent with Sear's Eastern type. The addition of marble façading to the multi-storeyed stage-building, with Imperial sculptural adornments and painted parodoi during the Antonine phase, demonstrates a cohesive aesthetic. In its final phases the theatre was converted into an arena that later still could have been filled with water for aquatic spectacles.

The Paphos building was the earliest permanent, and longest used, theatre constructed in Cyprus. It provides an interesting counterpoint to the other known Roman theatres on the island. What we can see in the architecture of the theatre of Paphos is a provincial theatre, yet it is also fully engaged with broader architectural trends occurring elsewhere – each new phase of the theatre included contemporary designs and architectural features. The shifts

also reflected changing audience tastes and expectations as the theatre evolved from a place of performance to a place of spectacle. The Paphos theatre was also firmly rooted to its urban community, with considerable public infrastructure built around it during the second century CE. It is a building at once both Roman and also Cypriot in its design, construction and usage.

Water management in Roman theatres and their development in the Iberian Peninsula

Julian Aponte Henao (University of Granada)

The following paper analyses the Hispania theatres from the perspective of water management and hydraulic structures, understanding water management in terms of both supply and evacuation processes. On the other hand, hydraulic structures point to the use of sewers, drainage canals, lead pipes, fountains, cisterns, etc., to carry out the stated processes. First, there is an analysis on a pivotal classical source such as Vitruvius and his work on Roman architecture from the Late Republic. A text that briefly discusses water disposal at roman theatres with a detailed description of materials and structures used. Then, the paper takes into consideration structural and ornamental hydraulic elements from the most notorious theatres at Rome (Pompey's, Marcellus and Balbus), as well as the influence of landscape in the theatres' layout. The idea is to give an account of whether Hispania followed the trends from the Italian theatres, developed its own style (like in Gallia), or adapted the role models to its own context. The conclusion is that a mix of both the first and the latter hypothesis , along with the local elites' role was most likely the scenario that shaped the theatres development during the late republic, and specially , the imperial period.

All the world's a stage: architecture and ordines in the Roman theatre of Bracara Augusta (Hispania Tarraconensis)

Diego Machado & Manuela Martins (University of Minho)

The Roman theatre of Bracara Augusta (modern Braga, Portugal), capital of a conventus in the province of Hispania Tarraconensis, offers a rare opportunity to investigate how urban monuments materialised and mediated civic hierarchies in a provincial context. Recent archaeological research, supported by the restitution of its planimetry despite ongoing excavations, has significantly refined our understanding of its architectural form and urban setting. Roman theatres were more than venues for entertainment: their spatial configuration actively structured social interaction, rendering visible the distinctions between the ordines of civic society. This principle is enshrined in surviving legal texts—principally from Italy—which codify seating arrangements according to social rank. In Bracara Augusta, the division of the caveae, the design of circulation systems, and the articulation of access routes were determined at the moment of architectural conception, thereby embedding mechanisms of social performance into the very fabric of the building.

This paper applies a theoretically informed approach to the theatre's architectural analysis, situating it within broader debates on the relationship between built space, social order, and identity formation in the Roman world. By integrating archaeological evidence with comparative examples and legal prescriptions, it explores how the theatre functioned as a stage—not only for performances, but for the enactment and reaffirmation of civic hierarchy. In doing so, the study contributes to discussions on the agency of architecture in shaping communal experiences and reinforces the significance of entertainment venues as arenas for the negotiation and reproduction of Roman social structures in provincial cities.

Beyond Naumachia: Water's Function in Theatres of the Roman Decapolis

Clare Rasmussen (Bryn Mawr College)

When water appears in discussions of Roman theatres, the conversation usually flows toward the spectacular, such as the famous Colosseum naumachiae and Late Roman /Byzantine kolymbethra pantomimes (tetimimi). While many theatres across the empire display water features, this architectural similarity has often been taken to imply

a shared purpose, overlooking the environmental and cultural contexts that shaped regional performance and spectacle preferences.

For an alternative model, this paper reveals three examples of unique hydraulic installations in the theatres of Amman, Jerash, and Gadara, located in the Transjordanian Decapolis, which have previously received little scholarly attention. Built and modified in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, these venues could never have hosted deep -water performances, as their orchestras were not watertight. Additionally, sustaining large-scale aquatic spectacles would be highly impractical given the water -scarce landscape. Instead, they suggest a subtler use of water on stage, one more contextualized to the climate and culture of the region. These three theatres exhibit instances in which water was supplied to waterspouts and fountains located in their proscaenia and orchestras. These features imply more nuanced functions, perhaps as a theatrical prop or sensory effect, an ornamental backdrop, a practical means of cleansing the orchestra between events, or even a combination of these functions. These installations contributed to the theatre's visual experience and upkeep, demonstrating the versatility of water in Roman theatres and distinct regional variation in performance culture. Importantly, these three case studies invite a reassessment of hydraulic spectacle, revealing that the interplay between infrastructure, aesthetics, and audience experience could take diverse forms across the empire.

Computational Approaches to Regionalism in Gallo-Roman Theatre Design

John Sigmier (University of Toronto)

This paper presents a case study in the use of quantitative analysis as an alternative to qualitative typology for the identification of regional patterns in Roman theatre architecture. Gallo-Roman theatres—a group of buildings constructed between the first century BCE and the fourth century CE in Rome's northwestern provinces—are difficult to typologize because they depart from the canonical Roman theatre model in myriad ways. Traditionally, architectural historians have relied on measurement and description to characterize these buildings, a method that succeeds in illustrating the idiosyncrasies of individual theatres but that presents limitations for drawing comparisons across a large architectural corpus. Geometric morphometrics, a quantitative approach that represents shapes as coordinate scatters, and generalized additive modelling, a statistical approach to identifying patterns in space, together present a computational alternative that addresses some of these limitations. I use geometric morphometrics software to digitize the designs of 54 theatres from the Roman Northwest whose ground plans survive archaeologically and run a series of statistical tests on the digitized plans to first identify patterns of design variation within the dataset and then determine whether the variation was regionally inflected.

The results highlight several architectural clusters that correspond geographically to major watersheds in the region. I argue that these clusters were the results of local communities of architectural practice that developed around waterways as communicative arteries. The application of a morphometric approach in this case study allows for a more granular comparative analysis of architectural variation across a wider corpus of buildings than would have been possible using qualitative methods alone and offers new insights into how communities in the Roman provinces generated local theatre forms far removed from those of the imperial capital.

Session III. The past is dead? Lived history, empathy and dark sides of Roman imperialism (and not only Roman)

Organisers: Ljubica Perinić (Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts) & Anton Ye. Baryshnikov (Independent researcher)

Thursday • 09:00–11:50 (Room A)

Session Abstract

Recent decades are marked by a significant change in studying and understanding of Roman imperialism both in history and archaeology. Scholars have started looking at the phenomenon of once paradigmatic Empire from other angles and now are paying attention to aspects that can labelled as 'dark sides' of Roman imperialism: organized violence, exploitation, extraction of resources and many others. One can only praise the focus on such issues not only because they were neglected for a long time but also because many of them are painfully familiar to us. Still, in most cases, scholars tend to look at the past as if it is something dead and silent, a set of objective facts. Battles are presented as rationalized constructs, where fear and panic are just abstract concepts, where losses are numbers and not real people. Hunger within such an approach is merely a fact of the critical food storage, and plague is not a human tragedy but a spread of Yersinia pestis. Of course, this modus operandi is rooted in the own nature of academic research with its cult of objectivity. But history is not only what happened, it is also how people lived through 'what happened'.

We are interested in and welcome papers that deal with history and historiography, different perspectives on how specific events were represented in art or literature or on the inscriptions, and religion in general or cults.

This session invites papers that challenge the traditional boundaries of objectivity by centering emotion, ethics, and empathy in the study of Roman imperialism. How did individuals (soldiers, subjects, the enslaved) feel amidst conquest, displacement, or epidemic? How do we, as researchers, grapple with grief, guilt, fascination, or even numbness when reconstructing histories of exploitation? And how do ancient representations (in art, literature, inscriptions, or religion) mediate these emotional and ethical dimensions?

We welcome contributions that: examine the affective and ethical challenges of researching imperial violence, resource extraction, or forced labor; Reconstruct the sensory and emotional realities of Roman imperialism (e.g., fear in battle, despair in famine, resilience in cult practice); critique historiographical traditions that sanitize or rationalize suffering; explore methodologies for "humanizing" the past, e.g., through microhistory, narrative approaches, or collaborative work with affected descendant communities; analyze ancient artistic, literary, or epigraphic testimonies that convey subjective experiences of empire.

This session explores a number of key questions: How can we balance empirical rigor with empathetic engagement when studying oppression? What responsibilities do historians and archaeologists have toward the "voices" they reconstruct? Can attention to emotion reshape narratives of Roman imperialism—and if so, how? We encourage bold, reflexive, and interdisciplinary approaches that confront the past not as a detached puzzle, but as a visceral, morally fraught legacy.

Despair in the Forest: The Battlefield Behaviour of Roman Soldiers in the last stages of the Battle of the Teutoburg (AD 9)

Jo Ball (Manchester Metropolitan University)

One of the most infamous military defeats in the Roman world came in AD 9 in the Teutoburg Forest, when three Roman legions under the command of Publius Quinctilius Varus were ambushed by a German tribal coalition, and close to annihilated. The battle lasted for three or four days, with multiple episodes of fighting as the Roman troops attempted to break free of the attack and reach safer territory, only to ultimately find themselves outnumbered, surrounded, and without hope. On hearing that many of their commanders had committed suicide, the majority of Roman soldiers surrendered to despair, some following the example of their superiors, others allowing themselves to be killed by the enemy without resistance.

It is difficult to imagine the emotions of the Roman soldiers caught up in the attack on the Teutoburg. They were undoubtedly confused and afraid from the earliest stages of the battle but were able to maintain combat cohesion for multiple days, despite growing exhaustion and mounting injuries. In the end, however, these emotions overwhelmed them, leading to a range of self-destructive responses. But was this a one-off response to the extraordinary events faced in the Teutoburg – or a typical response to defeat and despair by Roman soldiers who were used to victory?

This paper uses the example of the Teutoburg to explore the phenomenon of defeat and despair in the early Imperial Roman army more widely. It considers the emotional responses of Roman soldiers to battle, and considers under what circumstances their anticipated battlefield behaviour could be transformed into a more fear-oriented response. In doing so, it opens up new perspectives on the Roman army and the individual experiences of battle, rehumanising soldiers often seen as little more than cogs in the 'Roman war machine' – while also acknowledging that in cases of Roman victory, their enemies would have undergone the same experiences.

The 'Mother' and Wife': Using Critical Fabulation to Unlock Women's Lived Experiences of Abuse from Roman Soldiers

Sabrina Nogueira (University of Sydney)

This paper is from a larger study about the 'dark impacts' of conflict in Roman Republican Spain on women, who suffered from burdens of care, and the physical and emotional scars that resulted from sexual violence and economic exploitation by billeted soldiers. As the presence of Spanish women in literary and iconographical evidence is fleeting, clouded in stereotypes or sanitised through Roman symbols of 'peace,' traditional approaches fall short in accessing their deeply personal, emotional and traumatic lived experiences of conflict.

In considering how to ethically reconstruct women's lived experiences, I present Saidiya Hartman's methodology of Critical Fabulation, which she used to revive the voices of captives on the trans-Atlantic slave route. The method involves narrating a historically attestable moment from different perspectives, building from and reframing archival details to explore the emotional and physical experiences involved. My fabulations are from the perspectives of two women in Caesar's siege of the Pompeian town Ategua the Mother whose household was massacred, and the Wife who was abandoned and possibly forced to witness the death of her sons (Caes. BHisp. 18–19; Val. Max. 9.2.4). I imagine how these distressing experiences caused the women to interpret the Pompeian coin RRC 469 (46/5) differently. This coin was found near Ategua and, to scholars, ambiguously depicts a female personification of 'Hispania' offering a branch of peace to Pompeius or having it imposed upon her. However, I suggest that the Mother and Wife's experiences with different soldiers mirrored their interpretation of 'Hispania,' as cooperative or subordinate to the iconographical general. Such critical imaginings showcase the possibility of our empathetic engagement with archives to redirect studies about the 'dark sides' of imperialism onto the lives of provincial women.

Shards of the Past, meanings of the present: Broken relationships beyond Roma imperialism

Mauro Puddu (University for Foreigners of Siena)

Archaeology has the power to reveal the complexity of the past highlighting details overlooked by grand narratives, yet it often struggles to convey human experience in ways that evoke empathy and emotion. While cinema or literature can immerse us in the stories of others—people who in fact, often, never existed—archaeological discourse, for reasons of rigour, reduces lived lives to accurate, yet far-from-human-sentiment, data. Conversely though, we know the past can be successfully mobilised to inflame exclusion and hatred that fuel the "us VS them" nationalist discourse, raising the paradox that masses can "feel" rage in the name of the past, while struggling to empathise with individual lives of millennia or centuries ago. How can archaeology bridge this emotional gap and foster empathetic connections across time?

Shards of the Past, Meanings of the Present is an archaeological project that has addressed these questions through two exhibitions, held in Venice (2023) and in Masullas, Sardinia (2024), in collaboration with the Museum of Broken Relationships (Zagreb). The exhibitions focused on people invisibilised by Roman imperialism, such as rural workers, enslaved labourers, women, and children, and explored how they did what we do everyday: creating and sustaining social relationships through interacting with each other, with the past, with power, and with their landscape, in conditions of exploitation. By juxtaposing artefacts from Roman-period Sardinia, a region deeply exploited and enslaved by Rome, with contemporary objects donated to the Museum of Broken Relationships from people all over the world and with artefacts from, the exhibition invited audiences to experience what is generally seen as an emotionally distant past through familiar media of everyday life, body, intimacy, and loss.

This paper reflects on the methodological and ethical challenges, the success, and the failures of such a curatorial practice. It argues that juxtapositions and effective engagement can re-humanise the Roman past beyond the usual masculine elites, resisting nationalist appropriations and promoting instead solidarity, empathy, and awareness of social injustice.

Fear and lasting in Salona: When the eagles would not rise

Ljubica Perinić (Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts)

This paper examines the failed rebellion of Lucius Arruntius Camillus Scribonianus in Dalmatia (41–42 CE) through the lens of military symbolism, fear, and endurance. Scribonianus, supported by the senatorial opposition and the legions VII and XI stationed near Salona, briefly challenged Claudius' legitimacy in the aftermath of Caligula's assassination. The uprising collapsed within five days, triggered not by military defeat but by a striking prodigy: the legionary standards could not be raised from the ground, nor could the eagle be adorned. Ancient sources (Suetonius, Cassius Dio, Tacitus) recall this extraordinary event, echoing the unmovable signa at Lake Trasimene (217 BCE) and suggesting that Roman soldiers were trained not only in tactics but also in the historical and moral significance of precedent. This case illustrates how education, religion, and collective memory shaped military discipline and loyalty. The legions' refusal ultimately secured Claudius' throne, earning them the titles Claudia Pia Fidelis and associated rewards, traceable in inscriptions and coin hoards.

By framing the event as a manifestation of fear and endurance rather than mere superstition, the paper highlights the centrality of symbolic signs in sustaining imperial authority and the lived experience of Roman soldiers.

Beautiful villages burn nicely: things that Caesar said and things he left unsaid about his British expeditions

Anton Ye. Baryshnikov (Independent researcher)

Caesar's British campaigns have been extensively studied by philologists, historians and archaeologists. It was the archaeologists who gathered some very interesting new evidence and brought Caesar and his account of British expeditions back as a matter of debate. The events of 55 and 54 BC start to become more visible. Material evidence with an account written by Caesar forms an existing narrative that does not differ much from the previous ones.

This paper is an attempt to go through Caesar's account again and focus on what Caesar mostly left unsaid (and, sadly, the archaeology has not discovered yet): the devastated fields, burnt crops, destroyed villages. The ultimate goal of this is not labelling Caesar as vicious imperialist (which he indeed was) or claiming thar Roman imperialism has dark sides (which is obvious) but to think if (and how) those unsaid things can be brought back to history and become a part of contemporary narrative of Caesar's British wars.

Session IV. Beyond Binaries: Exploring New Conceptual Approaches to Cross-Cultural Interactions in the Roman Empire

Organisers: Louise A. O'Brien (University of Liverpool) & Luis Maia de Freitas (Swansea University)

Thursday • 09:00–12:15 (Room B)

Session Abstract

The Roman Empire was immersed in cross-cultural interactions which led to the influence and integration of diverse cultures within the empire and beyond. This cultural diversity has been studied through the application of various theoretical models and methodologies, including cultural entanglement (first proposed by Stockhammer in 2012), hybridity and third space, theorised by Bhabha, and explored in archaeology by Steel, or the middle-ground (progressed by Richard White, to name but a few. However, such approaches have often been binary in nature, focusing on the classical (or Graeco-Roman) perspective of such assimilation and ignoring the reception or resistance of indigenous groups for a more nuanced and balanced perspective.

This session panel, therefore, welcomes papers that propose or discuss the application of new interdisciplinary concepts that decolonise and go beyond such binary methods to approach the study of cultural interactions, shared identity and syncretic material evidence between indigenous groups and the Roman empire. Papers must consider not only the Roman perspective, but also the reception or impact of indigenous peoples, or their role in cultivating or resisting cultural assimilation within the Roman state, as well as colonies and provinces and other empires Rome had contact with. This work will reconsider previous binary approaches to cultural contact, considering the introduction of Roman rule or culture not solely as a form of conquest but as a form of emulation. Such interactions, whether they be through art, religion, politics, or language, indicate that indigenous communities were active participants in the assimilation process, whether this be through the integration of Roman material into native culture or the cultivation of shared cultural identity in an environment which cannot be defined solely by cultural labels such as 'Roman', 'Greek', 'Egyptian', or 'Syrian'. This panel aims to foster a collaborative approach to cross-cultural interactions and the conceptualisation of identity within both Roman and indigenous cultural contexts.

The Gallic Vulcan is not the Italian Vulcan: Assimilation and Localisation of Vulcan worship in Roman Gaul

Sisi Xie (University of Edinburgh)

The very nature of polytheistic religions, which permits the interaction and assimilation of deities and ritual practices across different religious frameworks, has long facilitated studies of interpretatio romana. This term, originally used by Tacitus, refers to the practice of identifying a "foreign" deity with a Roman counterpart. As Cicero remarks, "the gods have as many names as there are languages among humans…Vulcan is not Vulcan in Italy, Africa, and Spain" (Cic. Nat. D. 1.83–84). Traditional models of interpretation, particularly interpretatio romana, have often been portrayed as a unilateral translation of indigenous deities into Roman terms, which fails to fully capture the complexity of religious exchange resulting from military and commercial contacts between Italy and the provinces. Vulcan, as invoked by Cicero, offers a compelling case study for examining religious interaction between Italy and the provinces. Notably, literary and epigraphic evidence reveals no recorded effort to equate Vulcan with an indigenous deity in the western provinces.

In the absence of interpretatio romana, this study will investigate how Vulcan was received, represented, and worshipped in the Gallic provinces. The focus on Gaul is prompted by two factors: the abundance of material evidence from this region, and the perceptible similarities between Gallic and Italian ritual practices. According to Stockhammer's discussion of hybridity and entanglement, the votive iconography, dedicatory formulas, and ritual

practices are understood as the “end product” of complex processes of religious and cultural intermixture. Although it remains challenging to cleanly separate “Roman” from “indigenous” elements, this study will underscore the multivalency of Vulcan as a god of fire and forge, while highlighting his distinctive roles in Roman Gaul, ultimately contributing to broader scholarly debates on cross-cultural interaction within the Roman world.

The Etruscan ‘House’: Social Resilience in the Face of Subjugation

Alexis Daveloose (Ghent University)

Etruscan communities underwent a significant transition during the Classical and Hellenistic periods (ca. 400 - 1 BCE). As Rome gradually conquered Etruria, multiple social conflicts are reported throughout the region, and we see more traces of social promotion than ever before. In these turbulent times, robust strategies for social organisation were necessary, as elite status and family patrimony were more vulnerable than ever. This paper argues that lineages organised themselves along the lines of ‘houses’, constituting a ‘house society ’ in the Lévi-Straussian sense. While the concept of the ‘house society ’ has been proposed for the Etruscans before, it was thought to apply to the earliest periods only, as state formation is deemed incompatible with ‘houses’.

This paper argues against this neo-evolutionist line of thinking, instead proposing that the Etruscan ‘house society’ became more relevant than ever during and after the Roman conquest. Networks between ‘houses’ intensified and both residences and tombs became important focal points of the ‘house’, serving as arenas in which ‘house’ members could cultivate their (group) identity and secure their agendas. This type of social structure offered elites crucial instruments to secure their position and to cope with the disruptions brought about by Rome. By creating a tight network of intermarried ‘houses’, elites could deal with the rise of nouveaux riches and also functioned as spokespersons for the community during the interactions with Rome and its officials. As such, the self-adopted mechanism of the ‘house’ provided opportunities for local communities to preserve their identity and internal workings, while their sovereignty was stripped away. Despite the relative stability offered by the ‘house’, Etruscan communities were far from static and it is also argued that the adoption of the Latin language and Roman citizenship was accompanied by considerable changes in which the Etruscan ‘house’ was represented.

Understanding the self-representation of the auxiliary cavalry in Germania through Social Practice Theory: the case of the totenmahl motif

Carlos Enríquez de Salamanca (University of Warwick)

In this paper, I propose we consider the instances of cross-cultural interactions that fell under the umbrella term of Romanisation under the understanding of social practice theory (SPT). This theory, stemming from the sociological work of Giddens, Bourdieu, Sahlins, and Ortner, among others, posits a dialectical relationship between agency and structure, meaning that social structures emerge as a result of the practices of human agents, and at the same time, these structures become the medium through which human action can be expressed. Furthermore, a key aspect of SPT which will serve to analyse ancient practices, and which I highlight in this paper, is that of practical consciousness - the consciousness of social agents of how to navigate the structures of their world without direct discursive reflection. Having given an overview of SPT, the paper then follows up by considering the self-representation of auxiliary cavalrymen in the provinces of Germania during the Empire, with a particular focus on portraiture in the form of the totenmahl (funerary banquets). This portraiture, conspicuous in the ancient world, was adopted by this social group but, in the overwhelming majority of cases, it was also accompanied by reiter (rider) or calo (groom) reliefs. However, we find a few tombstones where the 'structural' or preceptive norms for this sort of portraiture are challenged or ignored.

The argument here presented is that SPT can help us make sense of the variations in this portraiture, and thus to analyse cultural changes driven by a social group which fell in a liminal position between Romans and non-Romans. In this way, SPT emerges as an analytical framework that allows us to consider cross-cultural and inter-

cultural interactions without falling into the binary opposition which has characterised Romanisation studies in the past.

Economic Interaction and Ritual Exchanges: Applying social economics to Gallo-Roman figurative votives

Christiane-Marie Cantwell (University of Cambridge)

This paper proposes social economics as an analytical framework to understand products of cross -cultural interactions in the Roman West, presenting a case study of Gallo -Roman figurative votives. Social economics adopts elements of agency and structuration theories, recognizing that the economy is a social system like any other. Economic actions (production, distribution, consumption) are then socially informed, rational, decisions, made by agents, influenced by, and influencing, their context. Recently adopted for the study of the Roman economy, it has yet to be deployed for questions of cross -cultural religious interactions in the Roman Empire, despite its applicability. Indeed, economic actions underlaid ritual dedication. Taking as a case study figurative votives, these statuettes, representing animals, humans, or body parts, were made (produced) and transported (distributed), specifically for dedication (consumed) — they had economic lives. The Gallo -Roman figurative votives are especially interesting as they appeared in the province following Roman conquest, descending from the Etrusco -Italic tradition, with no Gallic precedents. They have been understood as the product of cross -cultural interactions, an Indigenous acceptance of Roman ritual and iconographic norms, adopted with limited reinterpretation. Yet, by reading them through social economics, focusing on individuals as producers and consumers, regardless of their cultural identity, this paper identifies two registers of figurative votives, which developed based on the level of connectivity of locals with Romans, the intensity and frequency of cross -cultural interactions. In urban sanctuaries, more integrated in the transportation networks of the Empire, consumers prefer red standardized terracotta votives, while in isolated rural sanctuaries, they opt ed for individualized stone statuettes. Ultimately, this paper provides an innovative framework for cross -cultural interactions in the Roman West. It showcases that they can be explored without having to qualify or oppose cultural identities, rather focusing on the articulation of self at different contextual levels.

Beyond the Empire, Beyond Binaries: exploring Irish engagement with the Roman Empire by re-centering elite Irish agency

Karen Murad (University College Dublin)

One of the least-explored examples of cross-cultural interactions in the Roman world is that of Irish communities with the Roman world. While much work has been done in the last decade or so to rectify this, very little of this work has foregrounded the agency of the individuals and communities engaging in cross-cultural interactions, focusing instead primarily on the mechanics and logistics of exchange. While this work continues to deliver new insights into networks of exchange and trade, the emphasis on the physical remains of interaction rather than the individuals and communities driving it means that the nuances of cultural interaction have yet to be explored in depth.

My recently-completed doctoral thesis sought to fill this gap in research by examining the experience of Irish communities living on the edge of the Roman Empire, in particular the role played by Irish elites in cross-cultural engagement. This focus allowed for the rejection of the traditionally Romano-centric approach to cross-border interaction and re-centered Irish agency; additionally, the traditional binary approach of Roman versus native was further rejected by a comparison within the Irish elite experience, where regional patterns in the archaeological record appeared to indicate that different elite communities in Ireland were engaging in fundamentally different ways with the Roman Empire. This paper aims to present some of the findings of this project, in particular the evidence supporting the hypothesis that much of the archaeological record of Hiberno-Roman interactions may be plausibly interpreted through the lens of indigenous elite agency as expressions of status and power, as well as the

geographic and temporal differences in the archaeological record which further support the argument that “Irish” experiences with the Roman Empire should not be viewed homogeneously but rather as discrete interactions which differed between regions and communities.

“Egyptian”, “Roman”? Spaces of differentiation and/or contact in podium temples in Roman Egypt

Esperanza Macarena Ródenas Pere (Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla)

The Roman period was a very productive period in terms of temple building in Egypt: traditional temple precincts were expanded with the construction of gates, shrines or other adjacent structures, previous temples were reconstructed, new temple complexes were built, and Roman emperors were depicted in the Pharaonic guise in its wall reliefs.In addition, new temples were added to previous Egyptian structures. At the entrance of both the prestigious temples of Karnak and Philae, smaller temples often called podium temples were built at the beginning of the Roman period. Their architecture was distinctly Roman compared with the traditional style of its nearby Egyptian temples, for they included a podium a, a prostyle entrance and Corinthian capitals, etc. In addition, statues bases and other inscriptions of Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors have been found within these temples or in their surroundings.

Pfeiffer argues that these podium temples were intentionally placed outside the temple but within its sacred enclosure to mark a break with Ptolemaic temple practices and as such, der Kaiserkult also nicht unmittelbar in den ägyptischen Tempelkult integriert war, but I wonder if such a rigid differentiation can be established. When does the line between “Roman” and “Egyptian” begins and ends in terms of space liminality? If the imperial shrine is part of the temple τέμενος, would it not be considered part of the Egyptian temple? Is this temple a mark of otherness or proximity, of “integration” or “differentiation”? With the hope of answering these questions, I will try to explore the meaning behind the instalment of podium temples that may go beyond political or cultural binary explanations from the point of view of new cultural trends such as the spatial or performative turn.

Session V. Integrating Ancient DNA with Archaeological Theory and Practice

Organisers: Hannah M. Moots (Stockholm University) & N. Ezgi Altınışık (Hacettepe University)

Thursday • 15:10–17:35 (Room A)

Session Abstract

The rapid growth of the ancient DNA field has often meant that its integration with archaeological theory has not been widespread in the discipline as of yet. However, we hope that interdisciplinary settings like this will provide an opportunity to bridge archaeogenetic research with archaeological theory and praxis, and to explore how this integration can contribute to theory building. As one example, "migration" often serves as the dominant explanatory framework in archaeogenetic interpretations of past population change. Yet mobility has always occurred in diverse and context-specific patterns, encompassing a range of modalities and motivations. Migration-focused interpretations may, even when unintended, bring concepts with it across disciplines and from past theoretical approaches, such as culture-historical archaeology. We hope a deeper engagement with archaeological theory and existing archaeology scholarship and data will help ancient DNA researchers study identity, community, and mobility and the complex ways they shaped ancient societies, influencing kinship and family-formation practices, social stratification, cultural identity, and the development of urban infrastructure. Interpreting such diversity requires moving beyond reductive models and engaging with theoretical work that conceptualizes mobility as a socially embedded, multifaceted phenomenon.

This session invites contributions that explore the intersections between archaeology theory and ancient DNA. We welcome a broad range of topics that foster dialogue across allied approaches, including theoretical, archaeogenetic, biological, and historical. We welcome diachronic and cross-cultural comparisons that situate the Roman world within broader theoretical debates and consider the longue durée in relation to imperial and post-imperial transformations, especially those attentive to the political and epistemological stakes of reconstructing the past.

By fostering dialogue across disciplines, this session seeks to explore the intersection between archaeological theory and archaeogenetics, and examine how these nexus can contribute to the building and development of theoretical approaches.

Engaged Across Theory- Essential for Population and Mobility

Tisa Loewen (State University of New York Cortland)

This session Integrating Ancient DNA and Archaeological Theory and Practice has an explicit goal to foster dialogue across disciplines around archaeogenetics with hopes of making meaningful theoretical engagement. Large collaborative projects, often with similar interdisciplinary goals, continue to grow in complexity, size, and scholar diversity, increasing the need for willingness to interact and capacity to converse specifically around theory.

One popular supplement to studies using molecular genetics is biological distance analysis. These approaches have been used together for decades and share the same foundational research making their comparative value promising. Additionally, both methodologies have straightforward and well-established steps for data collection and statistical analysis. Nevertheless, the theoretical justification which makes the leap between data and analyses for both approaches can be opaque. Much of these processes and their fundamental theories are embedded in data cleaning and analytical tools, such as GUI's, making them a poorly understood "step".

Importantly, both approaches for examining movement and differences among people dance precariously between meaningful contributions to understanding the past, or affirming phenotypic typologies with high level statistics. Theory, and specifically quantitative theory, is an essential bulwark which demarcates the thin distinction between sound and inaccurate science. This discussion reviews key theoretical components to biological distance

analysis which can share or be distinct from molecular analyses. Furthermore, it considers broader concepts in population studies and demography which assist in bridging cross-disciplinary divides and prioritizing deeper critical application over routine data production.

Origins, migrations and mobility: the Etruscan ancestry as an archaeological problem

Ulla Rajala (Stockholm University)

The question of Etruscan origins has puzzled historians from Antiquity, mostly because their language was non-Indo-European and it is not clearly related to any other European languages. Traditionally, there have been three theories on the origins: either the Etruscans migrated from the north from central Europe or from Anatolia in the east, or their origin was autochthonous. Even if migrations as an explanation have been nonexistent in recent Italian archaeology, mobility has become widely researched. In recent decades aDNA studies have addressed the problem of Etruscan origins. This paper reassesses the results recently published by Posth (2021) and Zero (2024) on ancient Etruscans and other central Italians. These results are assessed for representativeness and they are considered in the light of recent history of Italian archaeology. Are archaeologists interested in the origins of the Etruscans? If not, why?

Moving Beyond Migration: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Mobility in the Ancient Mediterranean

Hannah M. Moots (Stockholm University)

“Migration” often serves as the dominant explanatory framework in archaeogenetic interpretations of past population change, yet mobility has occurred in diverse and context-specific patterns, encompassing a range of modalities and motivations. This project examines how archaeogenetic studies can explore various modes of mobility, beyond migration, especially through interdisciplinary collaborations and the integration of historical, archaeological and bioanthropological sources. We identify challenges in the study of mobility patterns - such as equifinality that arises from working with small, geographically heterogeneous datasets and the spectre of culture-historical archaeology’s fixation on migration - and suggest possible solutions, such as developing a shared terminology across disciplines. To illustrate the theoretical points raised above, we reanalyze archaeogenetic data from port cities of the Mediterranean in the context of complementary information from allied disciplines.

Port cities are an excellent arena to shed light on the diverse patterns of mobility, as they are important sites of interaction between the maritime world and the hinterlands beyond, between local and diasporic populations. The primary case study will be insights gained from archaeogenetic and mobility isotope data for 20 individuals from Isola Sacra, the necropolis for Rome’s primary trading port. The complementary nature of these two analyses, combined with insights from archaeological and textual sources, provides a complex picture of mobility in the Roman world which could not have been fully understood from either source alone.

Bridging archaeological theory and ancient DNA to study the population of Çatalhöyük

Eren Yüncü (Middle East Technical University)

Combining 131 paleogenomes with bioarchaeological and archaeological data, we studied social organization and gendered practices in Çatalhöyük East Mound (7100 to 5950 BCE), a major Neolithic settlement in Central Anatolia. In early Çatalhöyük, burials in the same building were frequently close genetic relatives, suggesting that houses were used by biological family members. In later periods, however, individuals buried in the same building were often genetically unrelated, despite sharing similar diets. We found no indication of sex-biased mobility into Çatalhöyük.

Meanwhile, in all periods, within-building genetic connections were predominantly maternal rather than paternal. Burials of female subadults also received a higher frequency of gifts than male subadults. Our results reveal

how kinship practices changed while specific practices prioritizing female lines persisted for 1000 years at Neolithic Çatalhöyük.

Exploring matrilocality in history : Insights from ancient DNA

Gözde Atağ and Eleni Seferidou (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology)

Past societies are commonly characterised as matrilocal, patrilocal or bilocal depending on post-marital residence patterns. Archaeological evidence thus far has recognised mostly patrilocal societies across the world, with rare contested exceptions, that were considered “outliers” to the established rule of patrilocality. The advent of ancient DNA analyses has provided the opportunity to evaluate the genetic aspects of past social structures, offering an independent line of evidence. To date, the majority of ancient DNA studies report on patrilocal societies and highlighted patriline connections. However, recently, three ancient DNA studies reported on genetic evidence for matrilocality and matriline connections across broad geographical and temporal scales. Here, we draw on these three studies to explore past social organisation forms in light of new evidence and reconsider preconceptions that continue to endure over time.

Session VI. Reclaiming Materialism: Marxist Tools for Moving Past Theoretical Binary Oppositions in Archaeology

Organisers: Isabella Bossolino (Université Libre de Bruxelles) & Dario Monti (UCLouvain)

Thursday • 15:10–18:15 (Room B)

Despite its foundational role in critical social theory, Marxism remains marginalised in much of contemporary Roman and pre-Roman archaeology. Yet recent works demonstrate a renewed interest in Marxist perspectives, not as a unified doctrine but as a dynamic strand of research. In this sense, Marxist archaeology emerges as a "third way" beyond the worn-out dichotomy between the rationalist and keen-to-generalisation processualism and the postmodern particularism of postprocessualism. This session seeks to reclaim and expand the role of Marxist approaches as powerful interpretative tools for understanding ancient societies across the Mediterranean and beyond. Rather than privileging systems models or hermeneutic relativism, we propose to prioritise the analysis of material relations, while critically engaging with and further developing the analytical categories of Marxist thought in dialogue with the specificities of the ancient world.

We invite contributions that reassess the socio-economic foundations of ancient communities, examining inequality, exploitation, surplus extraction, and ideological reproduction. Particular attention is welcome to approaches that integrate Marxism with post-colonial and feminist frameworks, expanding the notion of subalternity to encompass a plurality of marginalised subjectivities. How do colonisation, resistance, and social transformation appear when reinterpreted through a historical materialist lens? What are the limits and potentials of Marxist analysis in addressing the complexities of pre-Roman and Roman-period societies?

In addition to case studies focused on specific regions, periods, or social groups, we particularly encourage reflections that interrogate the theoretical and methodological implications of applying Marxist categories to the archaeological record. We invite not only the use of Marxist conceptual tools, but also their critical testing, refinement, and adaptation to ancient contexts. In particular, we view materialist analysis as providing a clearer, more grounded, and intellectually rigorous framework for interpreting Roman imperialism and the dynamics of intercultural interaction.

Contributions may range from re-readings of classical sites and material culture to comparative studies linking the Roman and pre-Roman worlds to broader global or longue durée frameworks. Analyses of subaltern lives, household economies, rural and urban production, and labour relations are especially encouraged. This session aims to provide a space for rethinking the theoretical foundations of ancient Mediterranean archaeology, and to explore how materialist approaches can yield deeper insights into the historical dynamics of power, economy, and social change.

Marxism and class in antiquity: towards a historicist approach

Kostas Vlassopoulos (University of Crete)

Class is undoubtedly a key concept for Marxism; already in the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels argued that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. And yet, famously, Marx never offered his own definition of class. Marxists have attempted to derive a Marxist theory of class from the various writings of Marx, which point in rather different directions. As if this were not enough, the linguistic turn and postmodernism have challenged seriously the validity of traditional Marxist conceptions of class to the breaking point. Over the last twenty years, and in particular after the economic crisis that erupted in 2008, Marxism has returned to the forefront with vengeance. If the concept of class is to return as a key tool of historical analysis, it will require rethinking in the light of the advances of historical methodology and knowledge over the last few decades. Antiquity provides a uniquely valuable vantage point from which to re-examine class historically.

In this paper, I will argue that we need to eschew essentialist approaches to class, and instead conceptualise cl ass as a historical process constituted by four distinct axes: work, exploitation, inequality and the horizon of expectations. Each of these axes had its own distinct historical trajectory, while they were at the same time entangled in various ways; a history of class as a historical process must examine concurrently both the particular trajectory of each axis as well as their interrelation in space and time.

Human, all too (non-)human!! On the morphology of certain Marxian categories for the study of ancient societies

Dario Monti (UCLouvain) & Edoardo Vanni (Università per Stranieri di Siena)

Following the ongoing publication of the complete works of Marx (MEGA: Marx -Engels -Gesamtausgabe), some previously unknown aspects of his philosophical thought have clearly emerged – aspects that could only previously be intuited. In particular, it is now indisputable that Marx's theoretical framework is not monolithic or linear, but has undergone significant transformation over time, taking innovative and unexpected paths. This complexity also refutes some criticisms levelled at Marx, such as those concerning ethnocentrism and his naive concept of cumulative progress in history. This renewed perspective on these two aspects is particularly interesting for those studying ancient societies, as it restores two historically important tools of materialism with renewed relevance: the use of comparison as a heuristic and political tool to find different practical solutions to organise a more fair society over time and space, and the ability to rethink 'time' and 'history' in other 'dimensions'. Finally, Marx's gradual loss of focus on the primacy of production becomes clearer, while the contradiction between a given society in time and space — or socio-economic formation — and the appropriation of nature takes centre stage in his theoretical discourse. In other words, Marx's ecosocialism emerges, adding the natural environment as a new element to historical configurations.

This unprecedented recomposition of nature and culture makes Marx tremendously relevant within the contemporary debate on the ontological turn in historical disciplines. These configurations, which could be termed 'socio-ecological formations', are more dynamic and versatile than the concepts of 'mode of production' or 'socio-economic formation'. They allow us to reconsider historical changes in ancient societies in a denser and more meaningful way. This is a tool yet to be tested, which could give a different rhythm to our narratives. This contribution aims to explore some of the theoretical, historical, and disciplinary consequences for archaeology.

Fields, Cities, and Power. Reading Proto-Urban Italy

Agostino Sotgia (University of Groningen)

This paper, taking its cue from Emilio Sereni’s reflections, aims to explore the use of a “materialist” lens as a tool for interpreting the agrarian history of the earliest urban communities in Central Italy around the turn of the first millennium B CE. By combining economics, agrarian history, and anthropology with modern techniques of spatial analysis and post-dictive GIS modelling, the paper seeks to test whether Marxian categories and the methodology proposed by Sereni still provide effective tools for investigating historical dynamics of power, economy, and social change. In particular, the analysis situates itself within the broader debate on the formation of elites and the modes of appropriation and management of agricultural resources, with the aim of assessing how agrarian transformations contributed to the emergence and consolidation of urban structures.

Through the experimentation of spatial models, the study will attempt to highlight not only the relationships between production and settlement, but also the processes of social inequality and the redefinition of communal relations. Returning to Sereni, therefore, does not simply mean an exercise in erudition, but rather an attempt to reactivate an approach that, precisely in its ability to interconnect economy, territory, and society, can still today offer powerful interpretative tools for understanding the complexity of historical change.

Examining Gender and Labor Using Social Reproduction Theory (SRT)

Serena Crosson (Stanford University)

Dominant approaches to women's labor in Roman antiquity currently lack a robust theoretical foundation in defining what labor is and how to engage with gendered labor divisions across time. In response, I suggest we turn to Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), a Marxist- feminist school of thought, to critically define and examine women's labor in Roman antiquity, its representations, and the implications for studies in Roman material culture. Scholarship on women's labor in Roman antiquity has seen two dominant trends over the last decade and a half: (1) New Institutional Economic (NIE) approaches using women's productivity, which explain Rome's economic "success" as a proto-Capitalist empire, and (2) studies in "working" women's lived experiences, which focus too dearly on agential liberation at the expense of broader considerations for the ancient social organization of labor . On both sides, it is often the case that scholars do not provide a definition of labor at all, or reduce the discourse to a matter of waged versus unwaged work. SRT theorists, in contrast, define labor as an ontological fact of human existence, a starting point that Marx himself observed.

To study labor is to study how human social organizations reproduce themselves, often through gendered divisions of labor, as seen in Roman antiquity and beyond. Following Marx's labor theory of value, but with critical attention towards the querelle des femmes , SRT theorists explain the nature of labor as socially (re)productive, and investigate its role in the "perpetuation of entire social systems" through unequal divisions of labor.. To take a Marxist -feminist approach to labor and ancient gendered social relations, then, requires a direct engagement with the intellectual history of Marx's labor theory of value and its enduring relevance for studies of Roman material culture today.

Piecing the archaeological fragments of common agendas together: Gramsci's history of subalterns in dialogue with feminist posthumanism

Mauro Puddu (Università per Stranieri di Siena)

Over 90% of the Roman world consisted of people without power: enslaved individuals, peasants, soldiers, miners, fishermen, potters, builders, caretakers, and others whose lives, while composing the mosaic of diversity of the Roman world, were shaped by exploitation and inequality. Their specific material experiences of Roman imperialism differed across gender, ethnicity, origin, and occupation. Yet, they all have one crucial thing in common: neglected by white elite-oriented, ableist androcentric narratives of the past, they share a permanent broken relationship with history. One specific marxist category, that of subalterns, formulated by Sardinian philosopher of Albanian origins Antonio Gramsci (1929–1935) while in the fascist prisons, offers a powerful framework for rethinking this historical seizure.

Although Gramsci's idea deeply influenced critical theorists such as Edward Said, Judith Butler, and Gayatri Spivak, some contemporary archaeological theories seem to treat subalternity in fragmented ways, detached from its Marxist origins, risking to neutralise its social strength. This paper explores the paradox of a theory created to grapple with fragmentation that has itself become dispersed, often unacknowledged, across other frameworks. I will explore how much a powerful paradigm today at the forefront of the fight against discrimination and injustice both in archaeology and beyond, such as posthumanism, and the theory of subalterns share with each other. By tracing these breakages in archaeological theory, I argue that re-engaging with the Marxist roots of subaltern studies can only benefit new paradigms to better understand the material lives of the Roman majority.

I will do this by linking Gramsci's reflections on subalternity to the funerary and landscape archaeology of social groups from Roman period Sardinia, while also interrogating the limits of these categories in practices, particularly in the histories of women. Finally, I ask whether the apparent divide between Marxist analysis and newer critical paradigms is overstated, and whether acknowledging their shared commitments could provide a

more coherent and politically engaged archaeology at a time when both Marxist thought and gender and decolonial theories are marginalised, when not appropriated and abused, by far-right agendas.

Marxist categories and the end of Eastern Sigillata A production during the Roman Middle Imperial period (2nd – 3rd century AD): the dialectic between structure and superstructure

Paride Parravano (University of Pisa)

From a materialistic perspective, the element that ultimately determines history is the production and reproduction of real life. But "ultimately" does not mean "the only". Juridical institutions, philosophy, religion, science, art and historiography, military and political events – namely, the superstructure – exert a robust influence on the structural processes of the socio-economic formations. It can hardly be denied that the relationship between structure and superstructure was given substantial scholarly attention, but its heuristic value has, by no means, been fully explored. This presentation proposes a fresh look at the matter, taking into consideration material culture and historical interpretation. The Eastern Sigillata A (ESA) originated in Plain Cilicia and Northern Syria and became one of the most widespread ceramic tableware in the Levant during the Roman period. However, whilst the factors of its birth have been thoroughly hypothesised, those of its end have not.

To tackle this issue, after a review of the data concerning structure and organisation of the ESA production and distribution, structural and superstructural factors of contraction will be investigated. These may have included changes in the production process and in its control, institutional instability at the local level, and the "crisis" of urban hubs of distribution. Thus, economic mass factors, institutions, and events interacted with one another dialectically. In fact, ancient economic systems were not able to transform the premises of their existence in the results of their reproduction, as in the capitalistic cycle. As a consequence, ancient economies were also affected by extra-economic factors. In short, this discussion will not only clarify the material history of a ware and the social reality that produced it in times of transformations, but also ascertain whether explaining economic phenomena through (also) non-economic causes is possible even through a Marxist lens. After all, as Marx himself taught us, the contradictions are agents of transformation and development.

The Use and Abuse of Marxism in 'Classical' Archaeology

Ian Tewksbury (Santa Clara University)

In order to understand what historical materialism offers the study of 'Classical' archaeology and history, it is necessary for us first to understand how 'Classics' has used (and abused) the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. From the publication of The Communist Manifesto in 1848 to the May 1968 revolution, the primary question of Marxist Greco-Roman history and archaeology was the transition from communal, kinship-centred social organization to the slave mode of production. No single intellectual figure better embodies the transformation of Marxist materialism after 1970 than Moses Finley.

This paper provides a synoptic history of Finley's Marxism, charting his use of the 'Marxian' economic anthropology of Karl Polanyi, his dismissal from Rutgers University on account of his communist sympathies, and the reductively binary debate (status vs. class) that arose between Finley and de Ste. Croix. Furthermore, this paper outlines the history of 'the new orthodoxy' Finley created at Cambridge University in the 1970s and 1980s, which effectively effaced serious debate on the question of the mode of production from the study of economic archaeology and history. In conclusion, Finley's communications with Italian Marxist archaeologist Carandini are used to frame the critique of Finley's abuse of historical materialism. The materialist path forward for ancient Greco-Roman history and archaeology is best served by returning to the study of the slave mode of production. After 50 years, this will allow ancient archaeology once again to build research agendas across disciplinary boundaries of

classics. Most importantly, it will allow us to speak seriously and clearly to the global proletariat and the crises of capitalism we all must overcome if we hope to survive.

Session VII. General Session

Chair: Conference Committee

Friday • 14:40–17:05 (Plenary)

The General Session of TRAC-TiDA 2025 presents paper proposals that engage critically and creatively with any aspect of Roman archaeology, broadly defined. This session contains contributions that do not fall within the scope of a themed panel but nonetheless offer theoretically informed, methodologically innovative, or conceptually provocative perspectives.

Italian Archaeological Publishing Houses (1950–1970): Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and Einaudi between methodology, ideology and heritage

Camilla Marraccini (IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca)

During the 1950s, Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli became one of the main representatives of the cultural policy of the Partito Comunista Italiano. He became the public defender of socialist humanism in the countries of the Soviet bloc. The problem that classicists with a left-wing orientation were dealing with was clear: re-semantizing the images of archaeology and antiquity and giving it a new social scope. The problem of a historiography that lacked an updated method and ideologically compromised involved both the academic environment and the broader public. This sprung the collaboration between Bianchi Bandinelli and Einaudi's publishing house, at the time one of the most prominent and culturally active publishing houses, with collaborators such as Cesare Pavese, Ernesto de Martino and Ambrogio Donini.

The relationship between Einaudi and Bianchi Bandinelli, his work as a preface writer and counselor, and the books chosen to be published, show a conception of classical art and archaeology influenced by the nationally-popular Gramscian model, but also the need to re-publish, through a thoughtful contextualization, authors and books that had been compromised by their ideologies, such as Leo Frobenius, or translate into the Italian market authors that came from the soviet block, like Michael Rostovtzeff. By studying the private correspondence of Bianchi Bandinelli with Einaudi and other left-wing publishing houses, and looking at the books published between 1950 and 1970, this paper will give an overview of how classical archaeology was shaped, perceived, and re-interpreted in the post-war climate, in light of the recent fascist misuses of classical scholarship.

Artwork representations on Roman provincial coin reverses – some considerations from Deultum, Thrace

Milena Raycheva (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

The paper attempts to revisit the lasting discussion of why and when cities across the Roman empire placed depictions of artworks – such as paintings and sculptures – on their coin reverses, through some examples from the Roman colony of Deultum in the province of Thrace. This discussion is traditionally challenged, on the one hand, by the difficulty of distinguishing with certainty works of art (or urban realia) from personifications and concepts, and on the other, by the common art and mythological themes widely shared in the Graeco-Roman world. Recent research, combined with rare archaeological chance, has identified at least two instances of actual marble sculptures that were featured on Deultum's coinage in the 3rd century: a Minerva with a shield, and a Perseus and Andromeda group.

The comparison of coin imagery and the extant fragments from the monuments shows that both sculptures were rendered with particular attention to detail, even in the limited space of the coin reverse. Furthermore, they enjoyed certain longevity in the city's repertoire. The paper considers whether these visual choices were aesthetic,

political, religious, or held some other meaning, and whether their appearance on coinage could be linked to any particular event or phenomenon.

Making a mark: the social significance of Human footprints in Roman ceramic building materials

Elizabeth Shaw (Independent researcher)

Actual Roman footprints preserved in ceramic fabric, many of them with hobnails, occur across the Roman world. Through theoretical approaches of object biography and contextual archaeology and having assembled a database of 124 examples, this paper examines the social significance of such footprints. Using techniques from forensic science, it will discuss whether they may have been made deliberately. It will also consider to what extent they were part of the manufacturing process and examine any votive or other significances they may have had for their makers. The paper will demonstrate that some human footprints in Roman CBM were made accidentally by people treading on the soft clay while carrying out some tasks or, in the case of small children, playing. As such, what they tell us is that the people were busy. Some deliberate impressions, especially on military CBM, may have been made to test the readiness of the clay for stacking before firing. This is evidence for the manufacturing process, but may carry no further significance.

However, some of the footprints in Roman CBM do appear to have been made deliberately to represent the person who made them in an important building, like the impressions from the sanctuary at Pietrabbondante. In this way, the less important people, who are often invisible, could give themselves a sense of literally being part of a grand building and, in the case of temples, of being closer to the deities concerned. This is a way for ordinary people to memorialise themselves. We will discover that footprints carry a variety of meanings. Each one may have held a different significance for its maker and that footprints in Roman CBM should not be dismissed as merely accidents or mischief.

Ideology on the Roman Frontier: Patrons, Clients, and Conquered Peoples of Frontier Landscapes

Mir Kameron Kashani (UCL)

This paper approaches ideology as a process that helped create the military networks in Germania Inferior, during the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, particularly emphasizing the archaeological assemblages of fortresses and colonies founded along the length of the Rhine. It explores the impact of ideology on the economic and military policies pursued by Rome's ruling classes in founding colonies in the Rhine-Meuse Delta. More specifically, the paper looks at what different archaeological material from settlements can tell us about the penetration of patron-client systems of power, which reflect specific ideological and political goals of the Roman elite. It also explores how patterns of distribution of militaria data form an important role in determining those political goals. For instance, how much of the distribution of militaria in the frontier is explained by veteran resettlement versus direct military interventions in tax collection and resource exploitation as part of a broader political economy?

This paper argues that the applications of Imperial power and the relations between patrons and clients in antiquity are experienced via intersections of identity and how socio-political identities become visible in the archaeological record of the frontier zones by tracking the distribution of militaria over different periods of Roman occupation. It posits that the ideology behind patron-client power systems as an integral piece of Roman frontier creation, as it exists within the much larger imperial-ideological framework that informed Rome's territorial expansion into Germania Inferior.

Patterns of Cultivation at the Sanctuary of the Great St. Bernard Pass: An Examination of the Votive Inscriptions using Network Analysis

Zehavi Husser (Biola University)

High atop the Alps, the Great St. Bernard (GSB) is the most important alpine pass that connected Italy with the territories north of it. According to Livy, the native Seduni Veragri attest that the surrounding mountains they populated were named after the deity Poeninus, whose sanctuary is found at the summit (Livy 21.38.9). Eventually the Romans established in the imperial period a small temple to the local god, by then hybridized with Rome's highest deity. This temple to Jupiter Poeninus lay on the pass on the so-called Plan de Jupiter, which the Romans called Summus Poeninus.

This paper will examine patterns of cultivation at the sanctuary during the Roman period by providing the initial results of a network analytical study of a collection of votive inscriptions found at the GSB. In particular, this essay will investigate the identity of the dedicators, the purpose of their dedications, as well as the complexity and breadth of their invocations. In this way, this paper will evaluate the Roman impact on the indigenous sanctuary dedicated to Poeninus. This investigation will incorporate information gathered from recent archaeological excavations and the rich numismatic material at the site. Quantitative data is processed using the igraph package of R. Visualizations of one- and two- mode networks are created using Gephi; any maps are produced using the ggplot package of R.

Workshops

Publishing Workshop (TRAJ)

Thursday 13:30–15:00 (Plenary). Room B

The Editorial Board of the Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal (TRAJ) welcomes you to a publishing open house with members of the editorial team. Come prepared with questions about publishing your first research article, transforming your dissertation or PhD thesis chapters into a manuscript, or general questions about TRAJ and the publishing process! Please also feel free to just drop by for a chat about your research -- all are welcome.

Publisher Fair

Friday 12:30–13:30 (Plenary) Room B

You will have the chance to meet a selection of publishers and editors from archaeology disciplinary areas, ask questions and find out more from them about their specific publication process. This session brings together editors and contributors from leading journals and presses in Roman studies to discuss publishing practices, peer review, and opportunities for early career researchers. Aimed at demystifying the publishing process, the session offers practical advice and open discussion on how to navigate academic publishing.

Speakers: **Blanka Misic** (*The Classical Review*), **Myles Lavan** (*The Journal of Roman Studies*), **Tansy Branscombe** (*BAR Publishing*), **Seth Bernard** (*The Journal of Roman Archaeology*), **Abigail Graham** (*Insights into Edited Volumes*), and **Will Bowden** (*Britannia*).

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Friday 13:30-14:30 (Plenary) Room B

Join us for the Annual General Meeting where we will review the year's highlights, present financial and operational reports, and discuss plans for the coming year. This is an opportunity every TRAC participant to engage with the Standing Committee and contribute with ideas and suggestions!

TRAC is currently seeking another colleague to join its Standing Committee. All TRAC participants at the conference are eligible to vote and be voted into the TRAC SC.

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• We strongly recommend using headphones to help prevent feedback.

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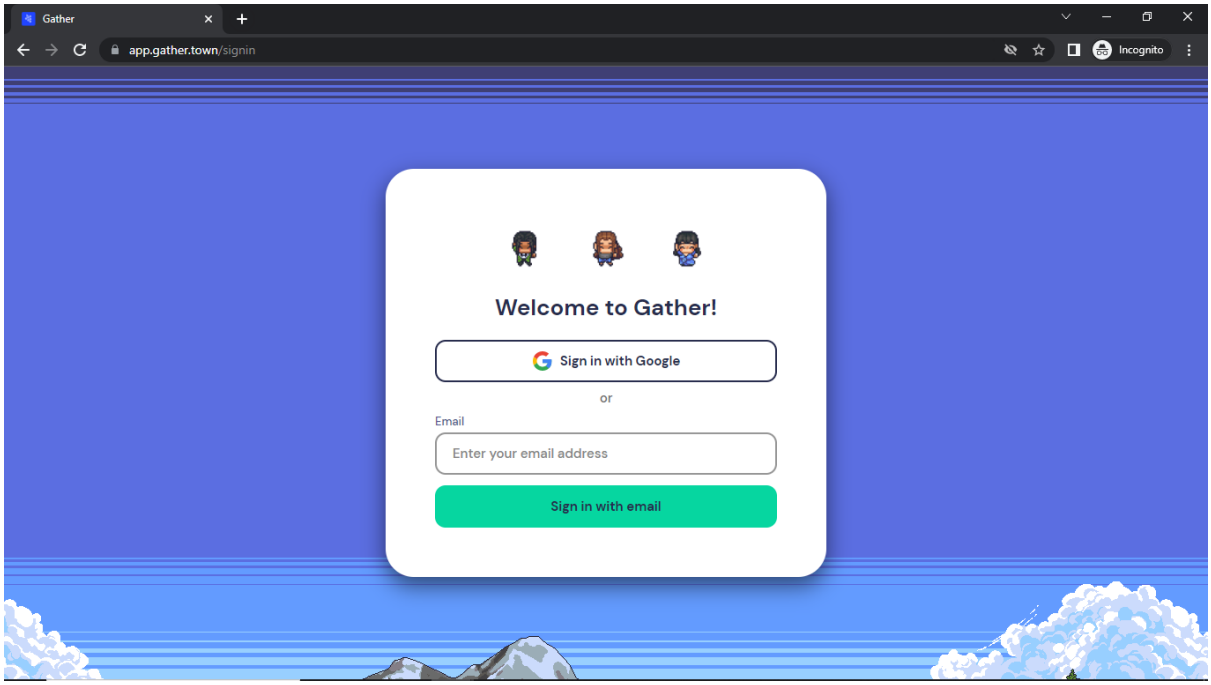

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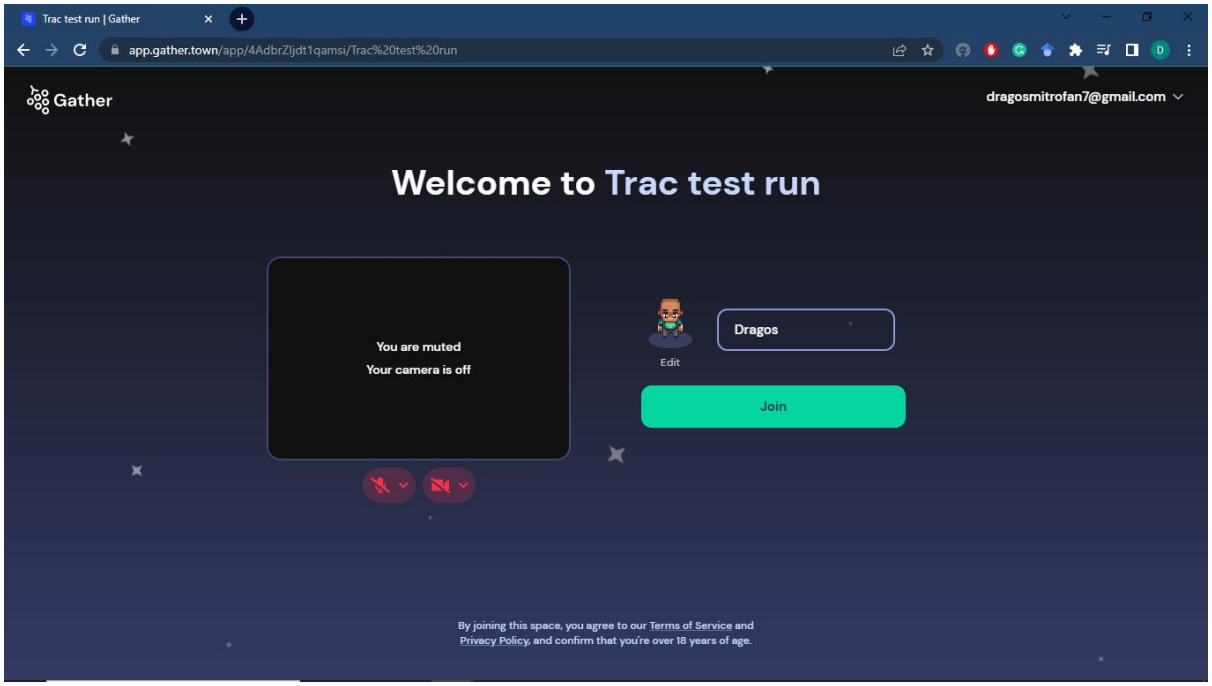

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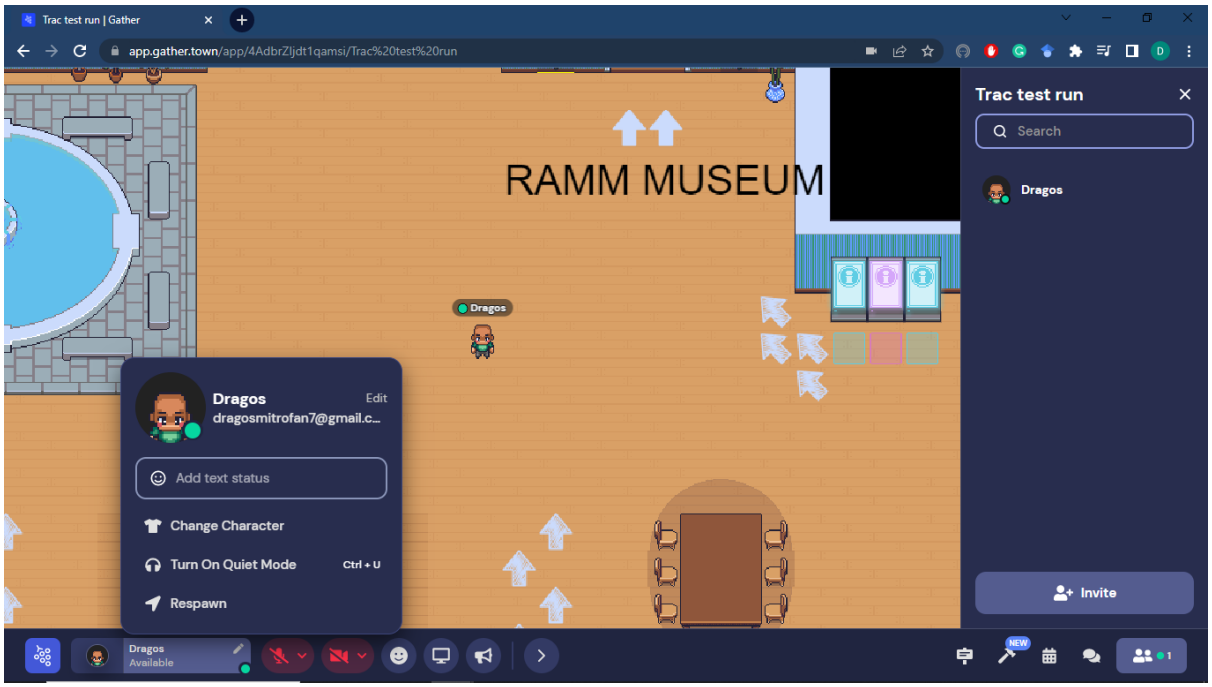
• If you are already in the space, you can still change the looks of your avatar by clicking your name in the bottom left of the screen and then select 'change character'.



- For more details on the 'Quiet' mode and 'Ghost' mode please see here

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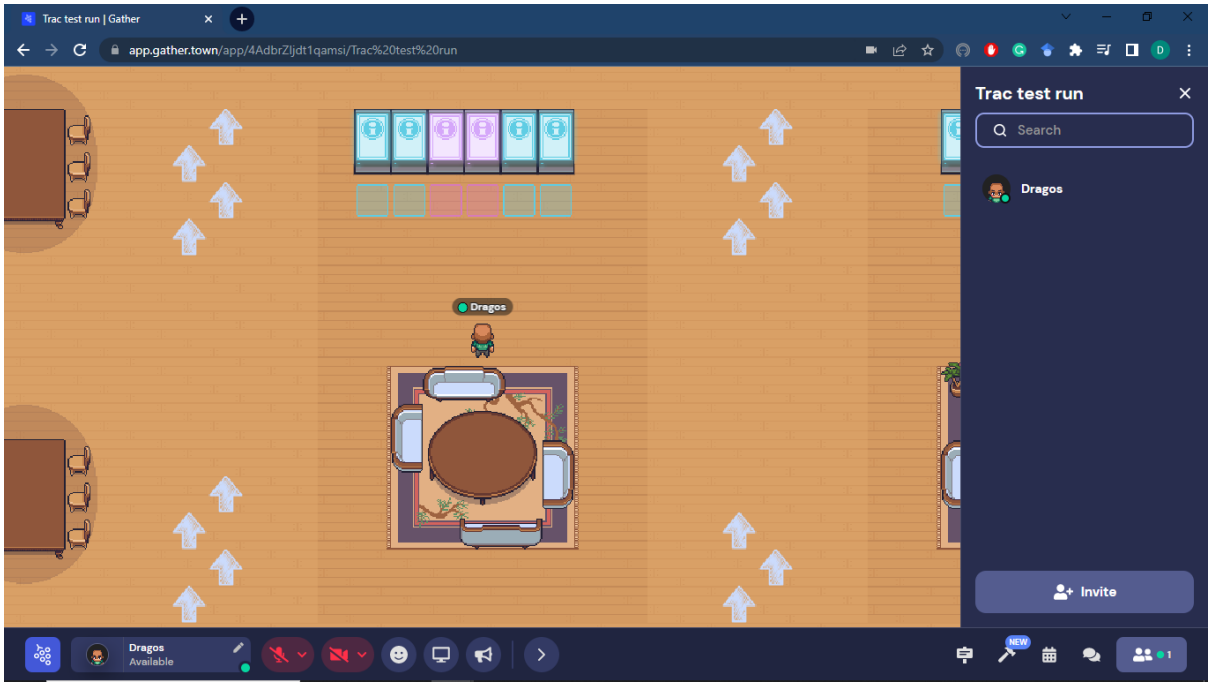
- Across the conference site are ‘Private Areas’. When you are in these areas (marked by a slightly darker floor and the text that pops up when you walk in) only the other people in that specific Private Area can see and hear you.
- 

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• We would encourage everyone to have their microphones off as default until in a situation where they are happy to be heard

• We would encourage everyone to have their video on, but this is of course absolutely your choice, please do whatever you feel comfortable with

• Please be aware of where you are standing when you are interacting with other members o If forming a social cluster, please be mindful that you are not too close in proximity to posters or other 'interactive' items (as denoted by a square area of colour change on the floor near said item) as to avoid 'cross-talk' (generally the activation area will be 2-3 paces away from the object).

Interaction within Gather will be subject to the same TRAC Code of Conduct as other online events. Although much of the site is customisable, we would request that you use your usual name. This will help other delegates find you if they want to chat, and means that newer TRAC members can find other academics with ease. It's much like a name badge!

Setting your status

There are three Status modes you can enter:

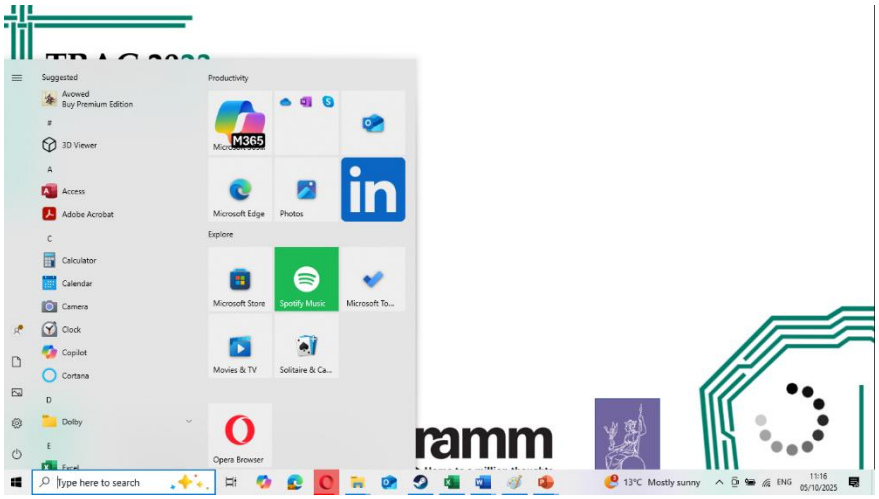
Available: This means you're free to talk and can hear/see people around you.

Do not disturb/Quiet mode: You'll only connect to someone's audio/video if they're one tile away from you (instead of the normal three).

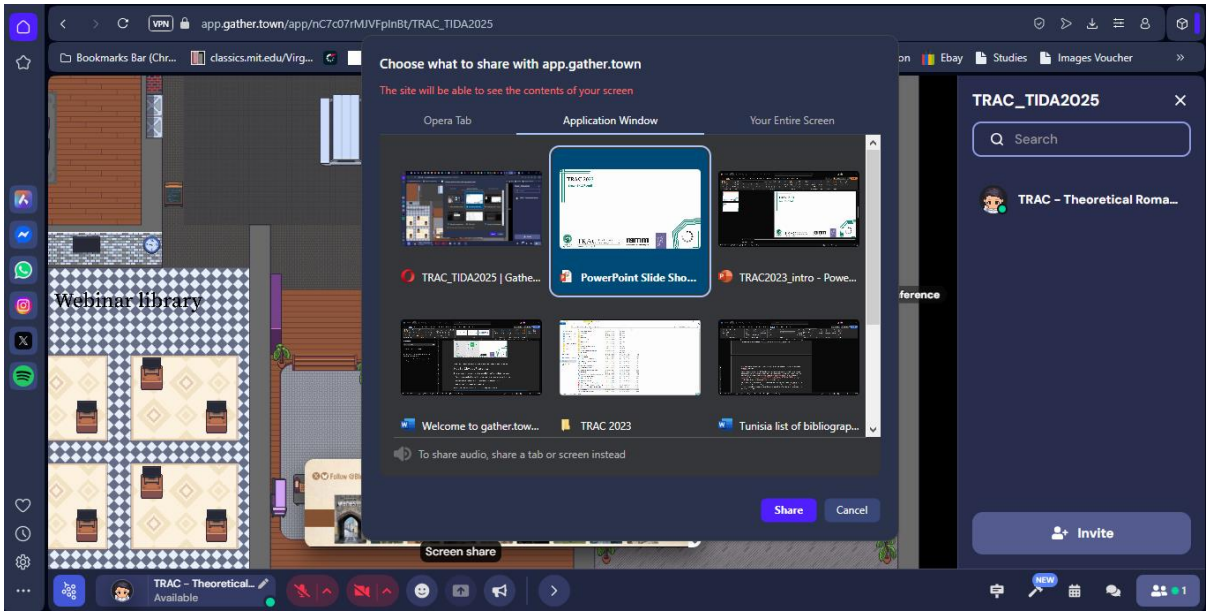
An icon representing your Status can be seen above your avatar's head, when someone hovers over your desk, and from the Participants Panel.

Screen sharing and presenting

Gather.town is a little bit tricky with the screen sharing ability, in the sense that the presentation must first be open, then press the windows key (or CTRL+ESC).

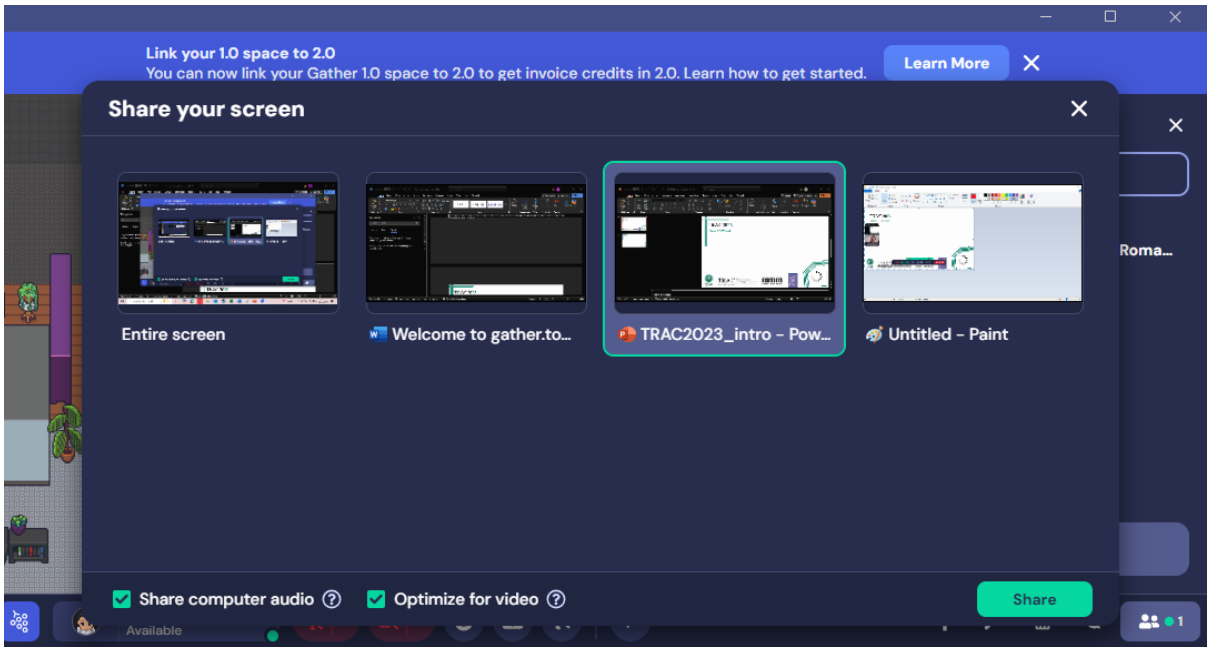


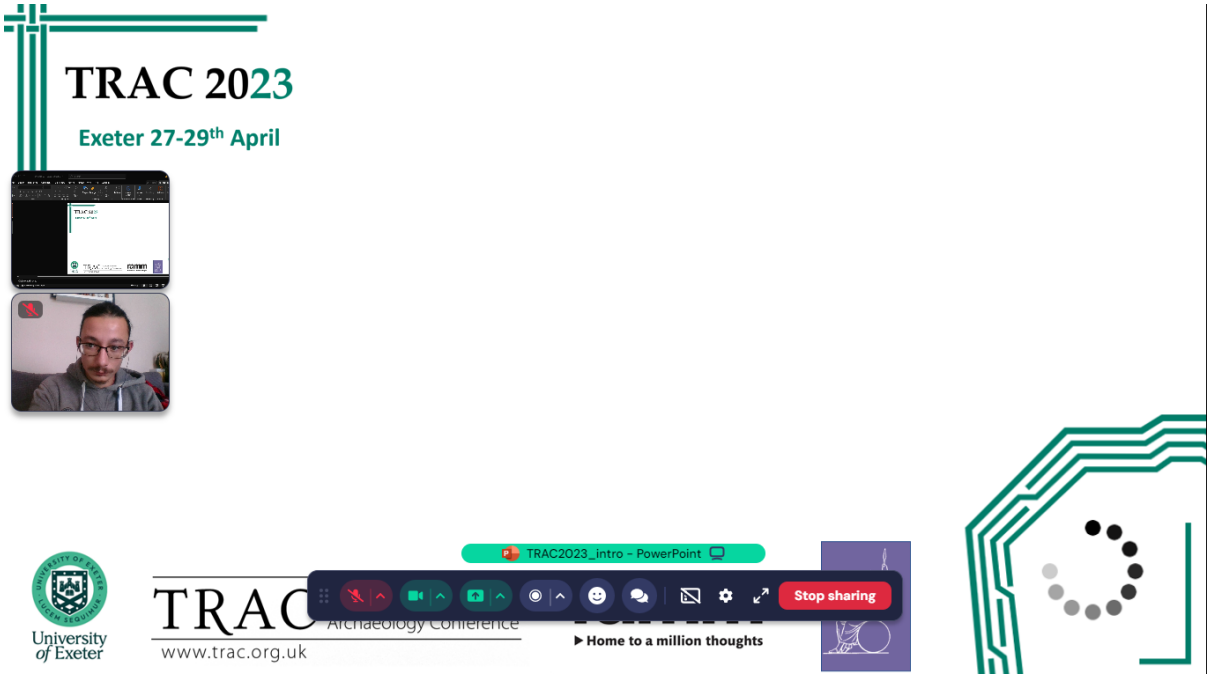
Select the browser tab where gather is open and then share tab as below from the application window



Following that you can click back on the slide show and go thorough your presentation. Unfortunately, in the browser version you will not be able to see yourselves or the other participants whilst your presenting.

The app version is way simpler and recommended, as there is only one screen share option (remember to optimise for video and share sound) and does not require the laborious steps above.





Not-So-Obvious Features

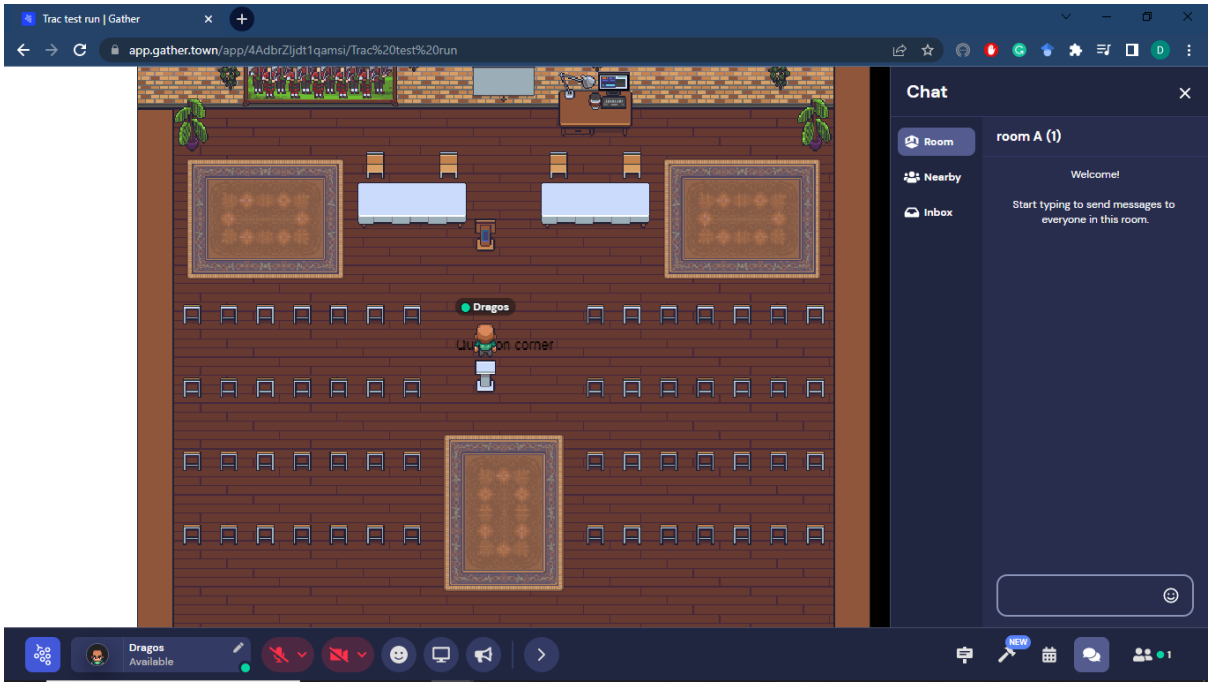
Here are some things you might find useful but aren't immediately obvious.

• There is a messaging feature that allows you to message people in four ways:

1. Individually by clicking on their name in the participant panel,

2. In the entire conference room (Room)

3. Locally to the people you are video chatting with. (“Nearby”)

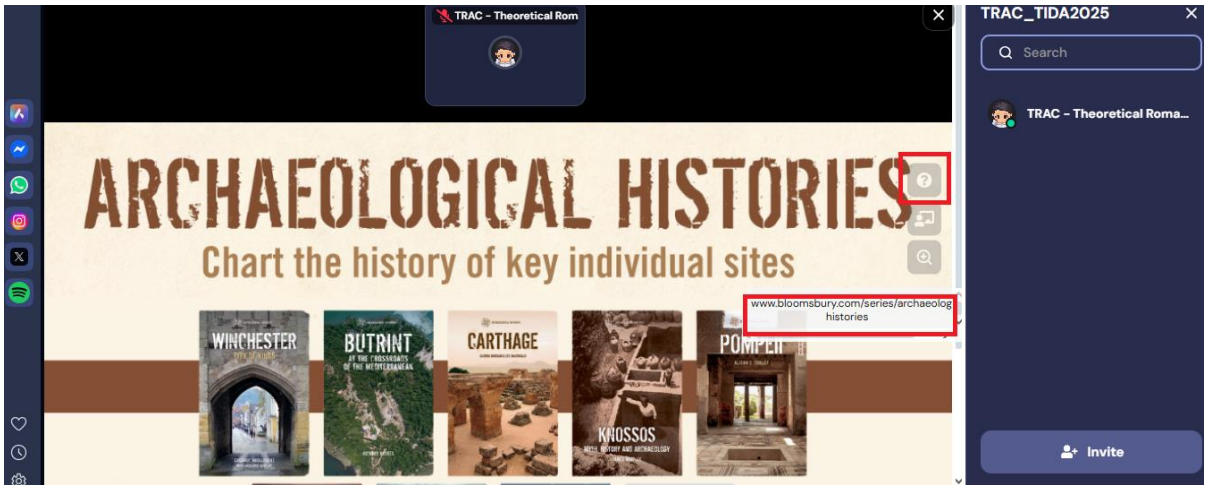


• There is a locate feature to find others by clicking their name in the participant panel. There is also a follow feature to automatically move your avatar to follow another user. The participant panel is the bottom-most option in your toolbar on the left.

• Want to full screen someone else’s video? Just click on their video.

• Talking to a group of people? Click the box with two white arrows to the right of the video carousel to open the grid view.

Some object will have an image attached, with further details present in the image caption. You can see this if you hover your mouse on the right hand side of the image as below



Session interactions in conference rooms

The Speaker/presenter spot is the one on the stage marked with an orange bullhorn symbol. People can hear you from anywhere in the room however, this is more for aesthetic reasons :D

Following feedback from TRAC2023, the entire session rooms A and B are set up as a single private space, as opposed to our 2023 event, where we had specific 'spotlighting' spots for speakers and separate private areas for audience to interact whilst listening to the talk.

That means that everyone can hear/interact with each other, including with the speaker. This was chosen as a simpler alternative to enhance asking questions and simplify communication between sessions organisers, speakers and audience and help with timekeeping.

Toolbar explanation:

- Gather Logo = Will open settings and allow you to go to the home page
- Avatar = When your camera is on you can pin or full-screen yourself
- Name = Personal menu: allows you to change your avatar, set a status, turn on quiet mode, and respawn
- Mic = turn mic on or off and change settings
- Camera = turn mic on or off and change settings
- Smiley face = Emotes that appear above your avatar
- Computer screen = Screen sharing ability
- Info board= Messages distributed by the TRAC organisers
- Calendar= It will show you the scheduled talks
- Participants= shows you the list of active users in the conference

Map and Rooms

- The spawn points where delegates will enter the gather space are in the lobby. Here you can find further information points about gather.town and access one of the other rooms. We will have 3 such rooms (Conference A, B and the Rooftop Lounge, North end of the lobby) with the first 2 dedicated to sessions (as indicated in the conference program).
- To enter or exit a room move towards and through the door/elevator/lift.

- The main lobby features smaller rooms, such as a meet& greet area, a video library/coffee area featuring the 2023 and 2024 TRAC webinars, as well as a publisher display

Technical difficulties

- Refreshing the page will fix most things!
- If that doesn't work, try muting and unmuting your mic and camera in Gather.
- Check if your browser permitted camera and mic access
- For additional troubleshooting guidelines click here