"THE APPIAN WAY AS A GENERATIVE SPACE: COMMUNITIES AND SHARED HORIZONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN"

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The Muro Tenente Archaeological Park represents an emblematic case of a cultural landscape capable of generating shared narratives, territorial alliances, and participatory practices. Located along the Apulian section of the Ancient Appian Way, between the Ionian and Adriatic seas, the site covers approximately 45 hectares and preserves the remains of a fortified Messapian settlement. More than a place of conservation, Muro Tenente is now configured as a generative space, where heritage is reinterpreted through the dialogue between protection, scientific research, local communities, and contemporary landscapes.



The project emerged from the collaboration between institutions, citizens, and local actors within an international partnership involving the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le province di Brindisi, Lecce e Taranto, the Comune di Mesagne, the Comune di Latiano, and numerous local stakeholders, such as Impact Cooperativa Sociale for archaeological coordination and Cooperativa Arte Contadina for the agricultural component. Thanks to this shared process, a marginal area long perceived as an "empty space" or "wasteland" has been transformed into a laboratory for cultural innovation and participatory management, recognised at both national and international level. Since 2024, the Park has also been included within the core area of the UNESCO serial site Via Appia. Regina Viarum UNESCO World Heritage inscription, further strengthening its role as a Mediterranean node connecting territories and cultures.



The experience of Muro Tenente directly engages with a vision of the Mediterranean not only as a geographical space, but also as a cultural and epistemological field in which heritage is the result of choices, interpretations, and participatory practices. In this sense, the Appian Way is not merely an ancient road, but a contemporary metaphor of relationship: an infrastructure capable of connecting different communities, memories, and multiple identities. The narratives produced within the park are not singular, but arise from the encounter between different actors - archaeologists, public administrations, citizens, researchers, farmers, and migrant workers - who share and negotiate meanings, building alliances and new common horizons. A central role is played by the Ecomuseo della Via Appia, which expands the traditional concept of the museum by placing at its centre not objects, but people, territory, and everyday practices.

The agricultural project HORTUS, with its local, zero-kilometre crops, represents one of the tools through which the archaeological landscape is experienced and reinterpreted in the present.
The presence of workers from different cultural backgrounds, including the Albanian community, makes visible a Mediterranean dimension shaped by mobility, shared knowledge, and everyday relationships. Agricultural practices, languages, stories, food, and the cultural affinities that emerge around work in the fields–constantly monitored by archaeologists– transform the landscape into a space of intercultural mediation, consistent with the idea of the museum as a place of inclusion, dialogue, and the construction of plural heritages.
The experience of Muro Tenente suggests that Mediterranean heritage can no longer be understood as a fixed legacy to preserve, but rather as a shared process through which communities continuously construct common futures.

