

Bergamo, the Astino Valley Biodiversity in the city

Astino: its medieval splendour, twentieth-century decay, and current regeneration

Monastery and city

In 1117, after a tragic earthquake, the citizens of Bergamo donated some lands in the Astino Valley to a small church which had been built there for the salvation of the city's inhabitants. A Vallombrosian Benedictine monastery was established which within a few years became an important spiritual point of reference for the urban community, while also shaping the local landscape: through the monks' work and the help of the inhabitants of Bergamo, the valley of biodiversity was born.

Landscape and biodiversity

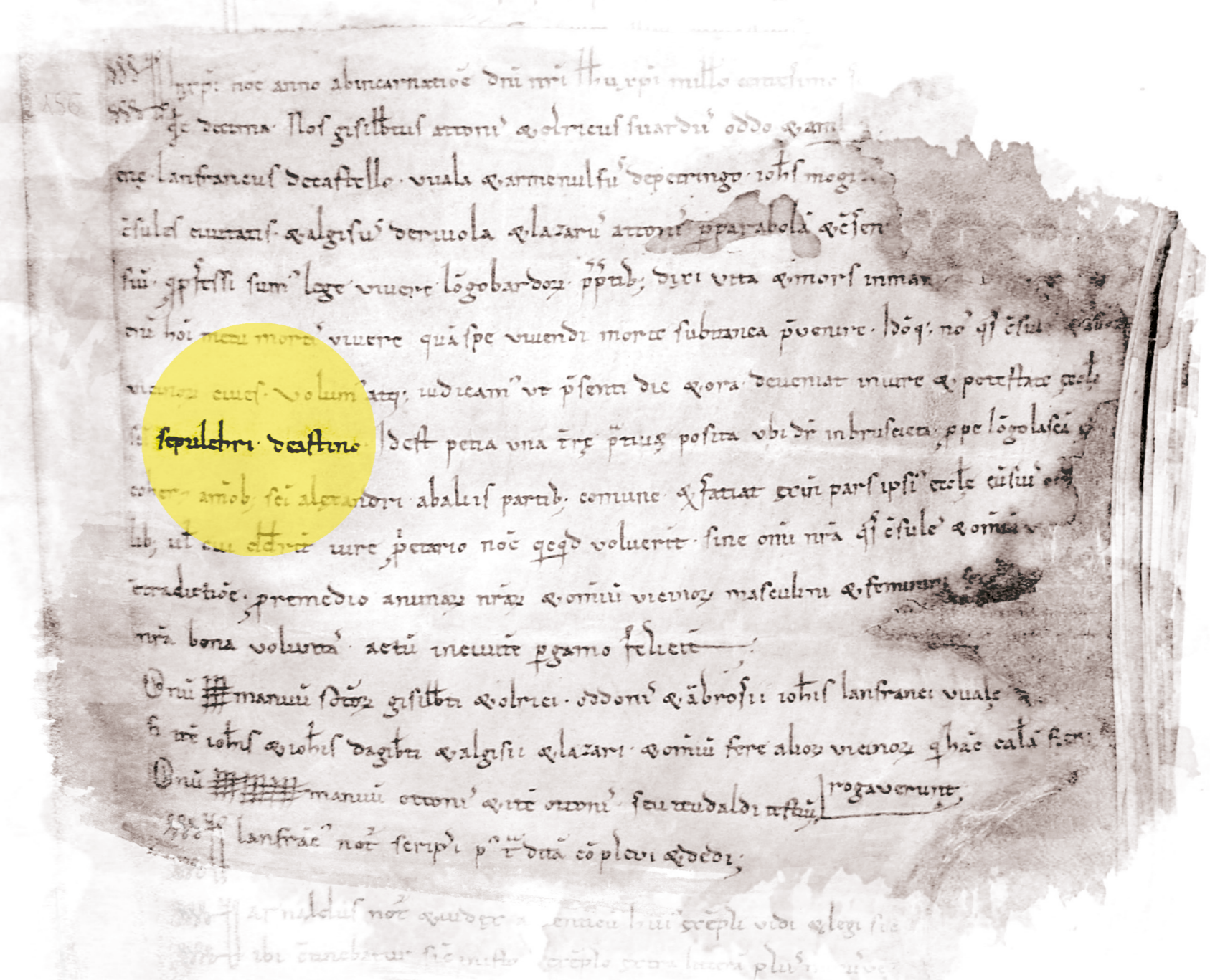
For centuries, the Astino monastery was the cornerstone of a complex ecosystem at the gates of the city, ensuring a high degree of biodiversity, primarily through the close interaction between man and nature. The monks shaped the valley's landscape, which up until then had consisted exclusively of woodland, by digging channels, building dry-stone walls, and introducing new crops.

Decay and maize monoculture

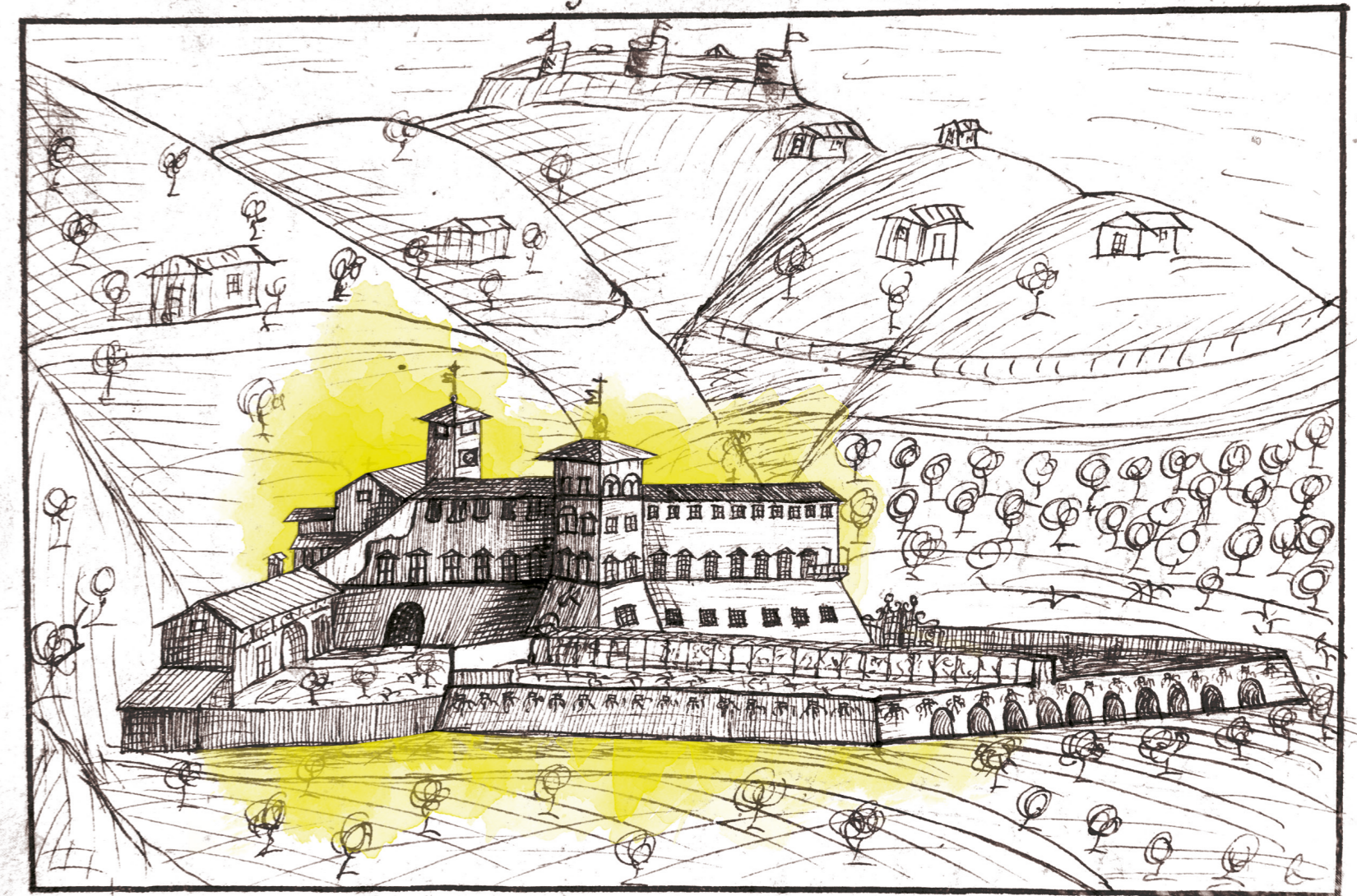
In the early twentieth century, the monastery became a private farm. The whole structure was in a state of disrepair. One arm of the cloister was demolished, despite the superintendency's opposition. The valley, converted to maize monoculture, lost much of its biodiversity. The area came to be perceived as a neglected suburb of the city. Property speculation attempts were made and the real-estate company owning the land planned to convert it into a golf course.

Mobilisation and rebirth

The first attempts were made by the city's authorities and inhabitants to protect Astino. From 1951, the City Council introduced restrictions to prevent urbanisation. Local associations took action to avert speculation and rekindle the interest in Astino. Following the mobilisation of the urban inhabitants, eager to reverse the decay of the area, on 21 November 2005 the Bergamo City Council committed itself to pursuing a policy of public-private synergy for the regeneration of the area. On the occasion of Expo 2015, the Monastery and the Astino Botanical Gardens were opened to the public, to the benefit of the local inhabitants.

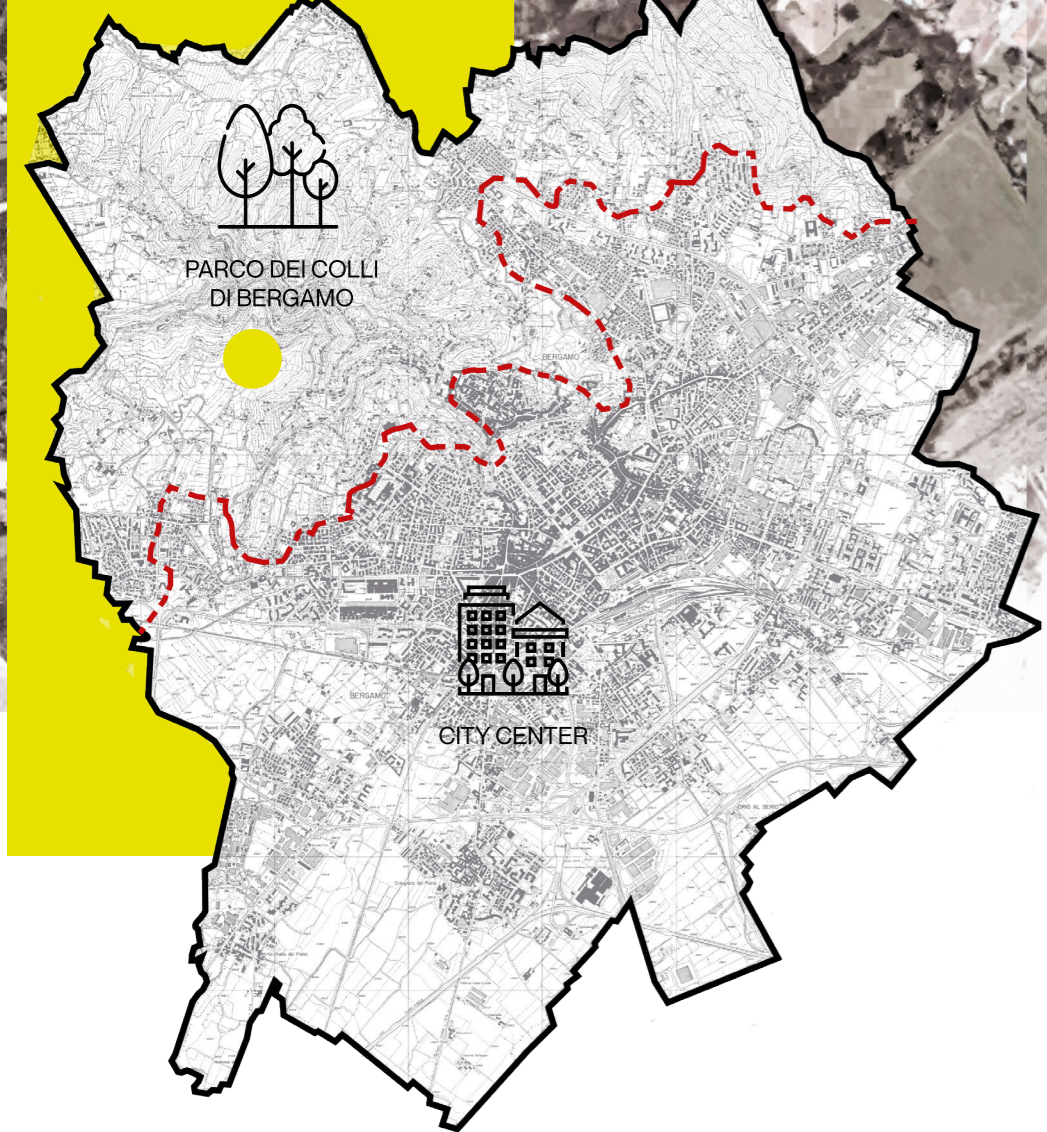


Iconismus Monasterij Astinensis.



Bergamo, the Astino Valley Biodiversity in the city

Perimeter of the territory of the city of Bergamo. Dashed in red, the borders of the Parco dei Colli, with the location of the Astino Valley (yellow spot).



At the centre of the municipality of Bergamo, a short walk from the historic centre of a city of 130,000 inhabitants (300,000 including the hinterland), lies the Astino Valley, which enshrines the history and biodiversity of this area. In the Middle Ages, a Vallombrosian monastery was built there that shaped the local landscape and ensured the development of its biodiversity. Starting in the aftermath of World War II, local and regional authorities introduced restrictions to protect the area as a green space within the territory of the industrialised city. Nevertheless, the monastery and its surroundings first fell into private hands and were then abandoned, turning into a peripheral and neglected agricultural area. The aim of this ambitious project is to complete the process of regeneration and planning of the Astino Valley landscape that began in 2007. In that year, the monastery and its farmland were acquired by the Fondazione Misericordia Maggiore di Bergamo, which in collaboration with the public authorities and with agricultural enterprises and cooperatives embarked on a project of refurbishment of the complex and of regeneration of the valley's landscape, based on biodiversity and organic farming. This project, centred on the synergy between government and private stakeholders, has also involved disadvantaged actors and the local inhabitants. Through memoranda of intent and agreements between government and private actors, the creation of an Ethical Commitment Statement and, more generally, the participation of agricultural enterprises and cooperatives, this planning of the Astino Valley landscape has led to the refurbishment of the monastery and of adjacent farmhouses (Cascina Convento and Cascina Mulino), as well as

Astino in figures

of the local castle and footpaths, the creation of educational itineraries within the Allegrezza wood, the reintroduction of traditional cultivations – based on organic farming methods – and of the water supply system – reflecting the centuries-old work of the monks – and the establishment of a new branch of the Bergamo Botanical Gardens. In parallel to all this, a range of cultural, educational, and training initiatives connected to the landscape and food production have been undertaken, with the aim of restoring the Astino Valley for the benefit of the inhabitants of Bergamo.

58.46 ha
Overall surface of the Astino Valley

24.53 ha
Astino and Allegrezza woods – Nature reserves

6.97 ha
Astino Valley branch of the Bergamo Botanical Gardens

26.94 ha
Farmland

1.45 ha
Itineraries, biological corridors, and buffer areas

+400,000
Visitors for the 2015-2019 period

1 **5**
RESTORATION OF THE MONASTERY (reception and catering facilities)



PEDESTRIAN / CYCLE PATHS (2017-2020)



1
RESTORATION OF THE SANTO SEPOLCRO CHURCH



A CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN LANDSCAPE STUDIES: FROM THE UNIVERSIT  D'ET  TO THE MASTER COURSE IN LANDSCAPE STUDIES.



3
RESTORATION OF CASCINA MULINO



6
CROPS BASED ON ORGANIC FARMING METHODS



2
RESTORATION OF CASCINA CONVENTO (planned)



CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND TRAINING INITIATIVES



5
RESTORATION OF THE ALLEGREZZA CASTLE (planned)



4
LOCAL BRANCH OF THE BERGAMO BOTANICAL GARDENS



SITES OF COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE

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