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Biodiversity in the city: Bergamo and the Astino Valley

Foundation della Misericordia Maggiore of Bergamo

The project consisted of reclaiming and planning, through public-private partnerships, the landscape of the Astino Valley, a precious area of 60 hectares located just outside the city of Bergamo. Rich in history and biodiversity, the area had fallen into a state of disrepair and neglect in recent decades, despite the introduction of development restrictions.

In 2007, responding to the desire of the local community to safeguard and enhance this area, the Foundation della Misericordia Maggiore (MIA) of Bergamo acquired the Astino monastery and the adjacent land, in order to restore the complex and sustainably regenerate its landscape. An intense dialogue with a wide collaboration resulted in 2017 in the underwriting of a plan agreement.

The project foresaw: the restoration of the monastery and farms, the castle and the surrounding paths; the creation of educational itineraries in the Wood of Happiness (*Bosco dell'Allegrezza*); the reintroduction of traditional crops based on organic farming methods and an irrigation network; and the creation of a local branch of the Bergamo botanical garden. A series of cultural, educational and training events were organised. Specific measures were taken to integrate disadvantaged people. By restoring the strong identity and social significance of these sites, the project has fully restored the Astino Valley for the benefit of all the inhabitants of Bergamo and the valley.



In keeping with a long tradition of solidarity carried on by the Fondazione della Misericordia Maggiore of Bergamo, the project has succeeded in enhancing a historic landscape to create a landscape turned towards the future. Combining tradition and novelty, it has promoted a sustainable territorial development considered in its environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions. The landscape of the Astino Valley and its monastic complex have been preserved at the city's doorstep. Continuing the work initiated by the monks, the authors of the project have developed contemporary agricultural and forestry management methods that promote biodiversity. The cultural heritage has been restored, social ties have been forged, and jobs have been created with the strong involvement of the local population. Soft traffic modes have been implemented. Awareness-raising activities and education promote a real landscape awareness. The close co-operation between the different actors, based on an ethical charter, confer to this project an eminently exemplary value.

Recognised for its great value, the Project is part of the Landscape Award Alliance of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, as a source of inspiration.