From Adriatic coast to Lombardy in the Early Middle Ages. Environmental changes, renewal of trade and settlement transformations in Northern Italy (AD 700-1000): a case study

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Thanks to Bryan Ward-Perkins' studies of the urban environments, how the present landscape of Northern Italy it is now settled. Albeit for long considered as the result of Romanisation only, actually this landscape developed from rather complex processes, operating on a macroregional scale. Our research about a specific area from the Lombard territory, Franciacorta of Brescia, demonstrates how the link between Early-Medieval settlement and Roman legacy was less defined than a simple paradigm of mere continuity or discontinuity. In the reshaping of the environment as well as its settlement not only local factors contributed (such as, for instance, the economic interests of the Monastery of Santa Giulia in Brescia). Instead, it was the widely-aging phenomena which linked the area in question to the Adriatic coast and to the urban sites newly-founded there, such as *emporia* related especially to water roads. According to the previous *status quaestionis*, the 6th century was in fact a critical moment from an environmental perspective, but, if on one hand it contributed to sanction the end of dying settlements, on the other it created frames for new patterns in the settlement, of the society, and economical field.

The well-documented panorama provided both by archaeology and history about the properties owned by the Monastery of Santa Giulia in Franciacorta lets us have a closer and deeper look to the consequences and scale – both spatial and chronological – of environmental transformations and climate changes. It was so offered, throughout this significant case study, an occasion to ponder over the renewal of the trades of the 8th-9th century in Europe, considering also the possible effects on settlement patterns at considerable distances.