Minimum Documentation Fiche
composed by regional working party of SARDEGNA, Italy

01. Picture of the town

Depicted item: Carbonia, aerial view
source: photo by Carbonia Municipal Historical Archive
date: 1939

1. Identity of building

1.1 current name of urban complex
Carbonia,

1.2 variant or former names
–

1.3 number & name of street
–

1.4 town
Carbonia

1.5 province/state
Sardegna, Sulcis region

1.6 zip code
09013

1.7 country
Italy

1.8 national grid reference
39° 9'57 N  8°31'36 E
1.9 classification/typology
Mining company town, new town

1.10 protection status & date
The historical town centre is protected as “identity heritage” by the Regional Landscape Plan (Piano Paesaggistico Regionale, 2006). In 2011 the municipality of Carbonia won the “European Council Landscape Award” for its long time planning program aimed to preserve the modernist urban scheme and develop it in a contemporary way.

2 History of building

2.1 original brief/purpose
Carbonia began as an industrial, residential and administrative centre close to the mine of Serbariu, in Sardinia. Planned and built by Azienda Carboni Italiana (A.Ca.I.), a public company involved in coal mining and strongly supported by Fascism to develop autarchic policy. It was built between 1937, the year in which the planning phase began, 1938, the year of its inauguration, and 1942, the date which essentially saw the end of a building programme updated year after year in order to deal with the increasing influx of miners. The proximity and interdependence of the manufacturing and residential areas is, in this sense, a key to understanding the entire project: the mine, the home and the large central square define the principal elements of the urban form of Carbonia, the spatial and functional reference of a townfactory.

2.2 dates: commission/completion
Commission 1937
Completion 1938-42

2.3 architectural and other designers
Gustavo Pulitzer Finali, Cesare Valle, Ignazio Guidi, Eugenio Montuori (urban planners and main public building designers)

2.4 others associated with building
Giuseppe Santi, Luigi Lenti, Salvo D’Angelo, Zorko Lach (residential typologies designers) and Renato Di Tomassi, Giuseppe Marongiu, Leo Calini, Vito Cionini, Renzo Reali, Enrico Ceppi (contractors chief engineers and managers)

2.5 significant alterations with dates
The town plan was improved after II World War until now, with new residential and commercial neighbourhoods, not aligned to the original “garden city” and modernist design.

2.6 current use
The town has retained the original destination until now, in spite of the mine industries progressive failing.

2.7 current condition
Medium

3. Description

3.1 general description
The initial town project was conceived in 1937 and the task assigned directly to Trieste architect Gustavo Pulitzer-Finali already the principal A.Ca.I. planner in Istria and the major inspiration for the first urban development plan, and Rome architects Cesare Valle and Ignazio Guidi. The town was initially meant to accommodate 12,000 miners, a number destined to increase exponentially in the subsequent years of mining activity. Special attention was given to the choice
of the site and the relationship the new town would establish with the mine as well as with the
gradient and the sea, the major environmental features of the surrounding territory. Indeed, the
project for the town was organised on some principles formulated in garden city theories,
borrowing especially the naturalistic and picturesque look that had characterised some of its main
models. The broad avenues crisscrossing the town, the central Piazza Roma, the hub of the urban
composition, and the low density residential neighbourhoods.

Only two years after its inauguration day, the town plan was improved, changing the cultural
references and looking to modernist and rationalist urban models, characterized by intensive
blocks, iso-oriented streets, large and open urban scenes; but, unfortunately, the imminent war
interrupted the enlargement works and left some districts unfinished.

3.2 construction
The whole town was realized in less than four years, involving a lot of different contractors, each
one related to a single public building or residential typologies blocks and districts.
All building were constructed using local stone masonries for the elevation, alternating between
architectonical details in fair face stone and large plastered surfaces; all the slabs are in reinforced
concrete beams and hallow flooring blocks.
In every public building were largely used national marbles (travertine, marmo cipollino e calacatta,
bardiglio) in order to improve architectural quality, hygiene and national stones industries.

3.3 context
Carbonia is located in one of the less populated Sardinian region, but rich in mine (not only coal,
but also argent, plumb, zinc) from the prehistorical to Punic, roman, mediaeval and until modern
age. Whereas, the surrounding territory is still rural and wild, revealing all the complexity of a
peculiar landscape, the distinctive feature of the Sulcis region.
The mine shafts, which are silhouetted against the deserted rural landscape, are telling examples
of a highly innovative construction project and signs of one of the most significant and impressive
territorial and social transformations in twentieth century Italy.

4. Evaluation

4.1 technical
High value. The master plan of Carbonia, whose building went on only four years, conceived and
synthesized the English “Garden City” model with the modernist and rationalist urban grid, derived
from German, French and Italian contemporary new towns, producing an high quality urban
landscape, still now perceived and appreciated.

4.2 social
High value. Carbonia is more than a company town, it was a social experimentation, witnessing
also today as politics, contractors and workers can do together to create a new high quality urban
complex and promote elevate residential standards for miners.

4.3 cultural & aesthetic
High value. It represents a modern concept of planning, integrating industry, town and landscape in
a total organism, where each one creates relationship with the others and received directions and
limits.

4.4 historical
Carbonia is the largest Italian XXth sec. new town and it is also articulated in two suburbs
(Cortoghiana, 5 km far from town centre, and Bacu Abis, 10 km from Carbonia). It concretized the
Fascism autarchic policy, but also the power of its inhabitants resulting, after II World War, to
overpass their heavy past and the progressive mining industries failure.

4.5 general assessment
The architectural design of main public building, as so as miners and engineers residential typologies, reflect a very high value of their architects and builders, joined to the idea of creating an authentically “new town” in a very rural and archaic Sardinian region. Carbonia planning mixed early XIIXth sec. urban models and most radical experimentation of XXth city planning, giving back a system various, coherent and clearly recognisable still today.

5. Documentation

5.1 principal references

Bibliography:
SANNA, Antonello, Tipi e Caratteri dell'abitazione razionale: il laboratorio Carbonia, a cura di, CUEC, Cagliari 2004.
ATZENI, Paola, Carbonia in chiaroscuro, a cura di, Envisual Editrice, Carbonia 2002.
MARIANI, Riccardo, Fascismo e città nuove, Feltrinelli, Milano 1976.
BARDI, Pier Maria, Carbonia, “Lo stile”, marzo 1942.
Carbonia, nuova città della Sardegna, “Architettura”, 1940, n. 9;
Filmography:
• Carbonia – Durata: 18 minuti e 51 secondi Nazionalità italiana Lingua: italiana Anno di produzione: 1941, B/n, sonoro, Sogg. in “Catalogo Storico” di E.G. Laura, datato 1941;
• Carbonia, Città nuova. Aspetti della vita quotidiana dei minatori - Giornale Luce C0013, 15/04/1940;
• Italia Carbonia La zona mineraria – Giornale Luce B1456, 08/02/1939;
• Italia. Carbonia. Mussolini arriva in Sardegna per inaugurare la città mineraria di Carbonia – Giornale Luce B1431, 21/12/1938;
Archives
Archivio IACP, Carbonia
Archivio Storico Comunale, Carbonia
Archivio Società Umanitaria, Carbonia
Archivio di Stato, Cagliari
Archivio Cesare Valle, Roma
Archivio Ignazio Guidi, Roma
Archivio Eugenio Montuori, Roma
Archivio Gustavo Pulitzer-Finali, Parma
Archivio Storico Istituto Luce, Roma
Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma

5.2 visual material attached
01_Carbonia original urban plan, 1937 (Cesare Valle architectural archive)
02_Carbonia aerial view, 1940 ca. (Eugenio Montuori architectural archive)
03_A mine workers low density residential district, 1938 (Archivio di Stato, Cagliari)
04_A mine workers intensive residential district, 1940 (Eugenio Montuori architectural archive)
05_A town centre perspective, Piazza Roma, 1938 (“Architettura”, 1938)
06_The school, 1938 (“Architettura”, 1938)
07_Some miners residential typologies, 1939 (“Architettura”, 1938)
08_The mine executive manager villa, 1938 (Eugenio Montuori architectural archive)
09_watercolor sketch of an unrealized project for an high-density district (Eugenio Montuori
architectural archive)
10_general view of the “Serbariu Great Mine”, 1939 ca (Municipal Historical Archive)

5.3 rapporteur/date
Antonella Sanna, February 2015

6. Fiche report examination by ISC/R
name of examining ISC member: date of examination:
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