

PRESENTATION CARBONIA MUNICIPALITY



Carbonia is located in the region denominated Sulcis which occupies the south-west end of Sardinia, from the valley of the river Cixerri to the wide Gulf of Palmas in front of which are situated the islands of San Pietro and Sant'Antioco, two isles of volcanic origin and the biggest along the Sardinian coast.

In 2005, Carbonia became the capital of the newly mandated Carbonia-Iglesias Province which includes 24 municipalities covering over 2000 km² with 147,000 inhabitants and a population density of 71 inhabitants per square km. The municipality covers an area of 14,561 hectares and has a population of 30,447 and a population density of 209,1 inhabitants per square kilometer. Of today's working population 2,82% work in agriculture, 33,55% in industry, 29,14% in commerce, 34,48% in the service sector.

Carbonia, denominated città di fondazione, foundation city, was constructed during the first half of the 20th century and is included in Sardinia's Geo-mining Park. It lies within a landscape context of international significance, recognized by UNESCO in 2004 as an emblematic example within its Global Network of Geoparks. In 2006, Sardinia's Regional Landscape Plan, in implementation of the European Landscape Convention, indicated the Geo-Mining Park as a protected landscape. In 2007, it was included in the European Geopark Network.

Carbonia's landscape context is characterized by rich historic and modern urban settlements and by its important environmental features:

A) Environmental components:

coastal system and cliffs of Capo Altano, Guroneddu and Porto Paglia
volcanic-sedimentary basin with its extensive superficial and deep coalfields
Boi Cerbus lagoons - SCI – Site of Community Importance
sandy beaches of Punta s'Aliga and dunes of Punta s'Arena and Punta Trettu
coastal-lagoon system of the islands of Sant'Antioco and San Pietro

B) History

ancient Phoenician-Punic settlements in Monte Sirai (Carbonia); archeological sites (ruins of Punic forts and necropoli)
foundation cities - Portoscuso, Carloforte, Calasetta, S. Antioco (17th century) Carbonia, Bacu Abis, Cortoghiana (20th century)
diffuse agricultural (furriadroxius) and pastoral (medaus) settlement types

C Human settlement

- coastal towns with the foundation cities of Carloforte, Calasetta, S. Antioco and Portoscuso;
- urban mining centers and villages of Carbonia, Bacu Abis e Cortoghiana;
- mining infrastructure and slag heaps;
- diffuse agricultural (furriadroxius) and pastoral (medaus) settlement types

HISTORY

The land, known from ancient times for its fertility and the richness of its subsoil, attracted many Mediterranean peoples: Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans and in more recent history, the Aragonese. During the early Middle Ages and the 15th and 16th centuries, the Sulcis region decreased in population with the progressive concentration of the people in few inland villages. The coasts were abandoned due to the danger posed by invasions, Barbarian raids, the abandonment of the grain production and malaria. The reoccupation of the territory and hence the demographic inversion started at the end of the 16th century when, during the winter, shepherds coming from the centre of Sardinia led their flocks onto the mild Sulcis hills and, in order to shelter them in those periods of transhumance, built seasonal huts called "medau." They were the first nuclei of the dispersed habitat that still today characterizes the Sulcis territory. At the end of the 18th century this kind of habitat became permanent; it happened that as soon as the place proved to be peaceful, the shepherds began to settle with their families, to farm the land and to replace the huts by masonry houses. The history of Spanish and Piedmontese Sulcis is not marked by particular events while a new liveliness, above all economic, followed to the discovery of a coal field in 1851.

20TH CENTURY: The new employment prospects in the mines produced a gradual, but deep, change in the people and in the territory. The exploitation of the resources of the subsoil, particularly in the Bacu Abis area, increased during the First World War. At the end of the war and with the resumption of international trade, the brief fortune of the Sardinian coal ended; it was the Fascist regime that "rediscovered it" adopting the formula of autarchy from the second half of the 1930's.

During the last months of 1936, the Italian Coal Firm (A.Ca.I.), using the system of the drilling, located the Sirai-Serbariu field that proved to be immense. The expectation of intense activity in the new pits and the consequent arrival of the workforce suggested the idea of founding a new working town near the mines and the port of Sant'Antioco in order to secure the transportation of the extracted materials.

The new town, named Carbonia, was built in a short time and inaugurated by Mussolini in 1938. At the centre there is Piazza Roma around which stand the main buildings: the Torre Littoria (27.5 m.) today municipal tower, the Town Hall, the church, the "after work center" (Fascist institution organizing the workers' free-time activities), the cinema-theatre and two great fountains. The Church of San Ponziano is built in the Modern-Romanesque style in granite and trachyte stone. The rectory and the bell-tower (46 m.), a smaller reproduction of the bell-tower of Aquileia, are adjacent.

After a first period of intense extractive activity, as the Second World War went on, the productive rhythm slackened remarkably. When Fascism ended, there was a renewal of activity (the Sulcis coal represented the only fuel available in Italy for the renewal of the national industry) and a second stage of Carbonia's development set in, from both a demographic and an economic point of view. But soon after the reopening of the international markets and the subsequent competition of foreign coal, the mining industry saw a slow but inexorable crisis that had given rise to a large working and town mobilization. This crisis, together with the closing of the industries at Portovesme, created a difficult economic situation in the Sulcis region to which activities such as tourism, culture and services try to respond.

Today, with increased economic activity in the service sector, Carbonia has opened up to its territory as a provider of services; a positive trend is registered for its SME's. Project Carbonia is positioned within a new policy of economic reconversion to contribute to the new prospects for development that the community has been compelled to put into place.