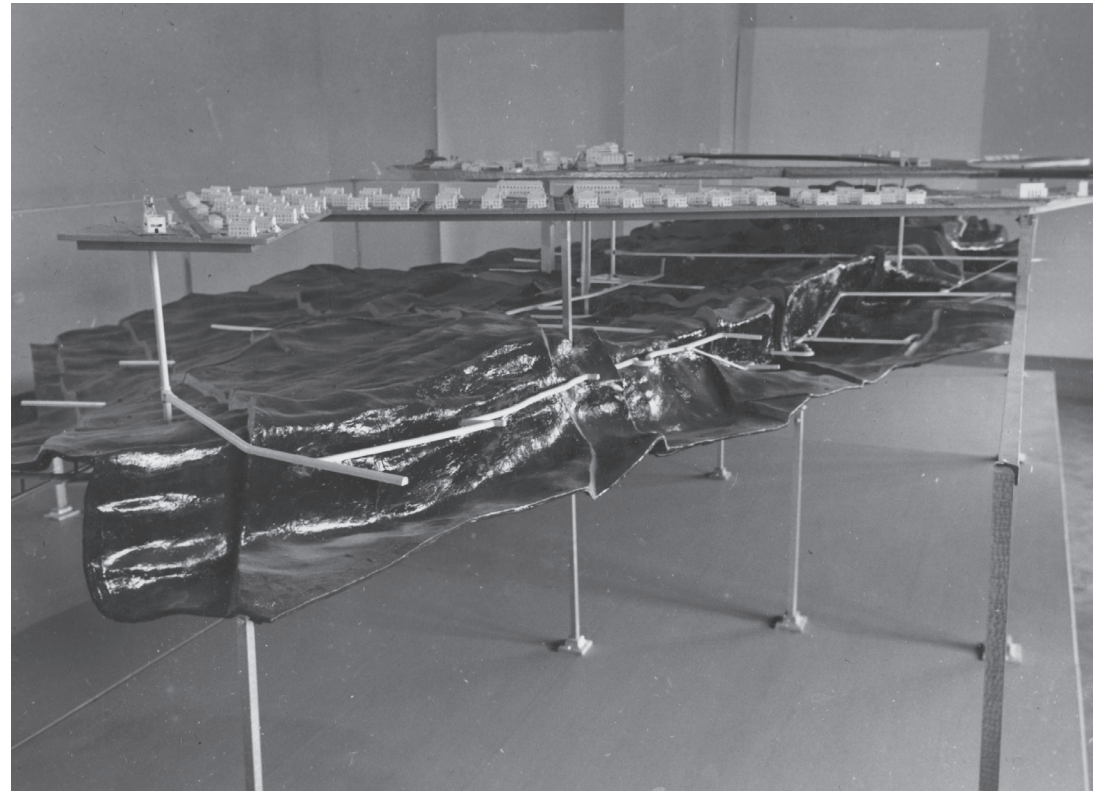


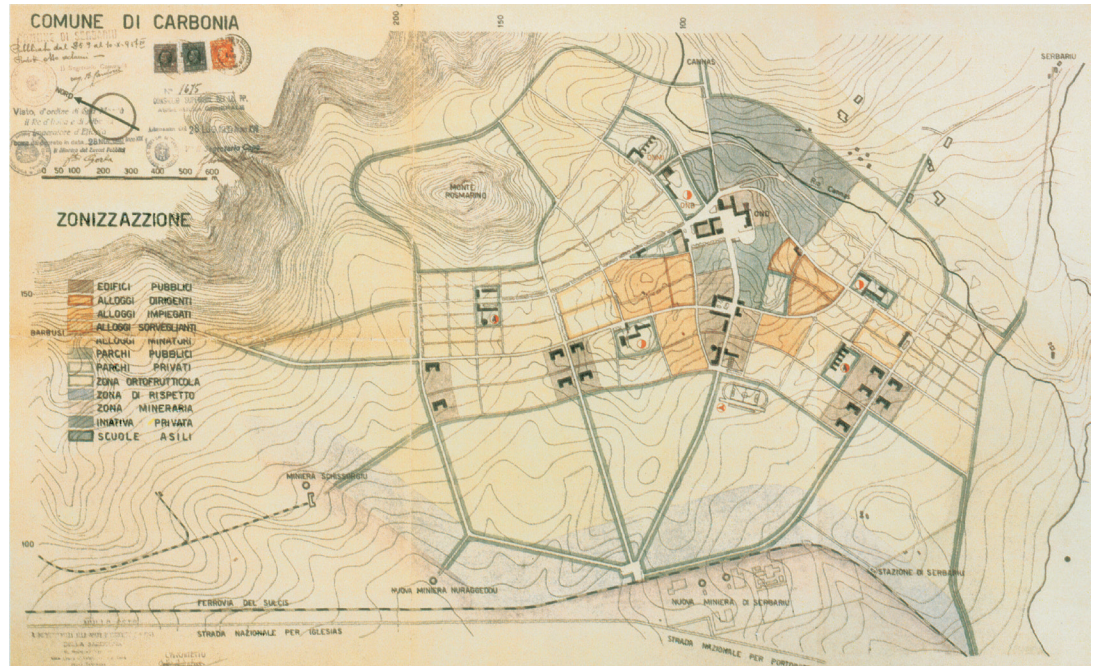
THE MACHINE CITY

Aligned and ordered with precision and repetitiveness, almost obeying a military rule: thus the houses of Carbonia appear (and still now) in the historical photos of the foundation city. The main system of the great machine for coal extraction also governs the city, a true machine the organization of labor.



THE GARDEN CITY

The choice of the garden-city model also leads back to the key idea of a compensation to be realized in domestic daily life, compared to the inexpressible hardness of the work in the mine. Carbonia chooses a panoramic valley, with a view of the "inner sea" between the Sulcis islands; it is endowed with a plan of general green space, where the tree-lined avenues are planted with great pines. The landscape planner is Porcinai, landscape architect of excellence, thus like Pulitzer, Valle and Guidi - internationally recognized planners who design the city: the quality of the urban system is another form of compensation of the mine's human and landscape impacts.



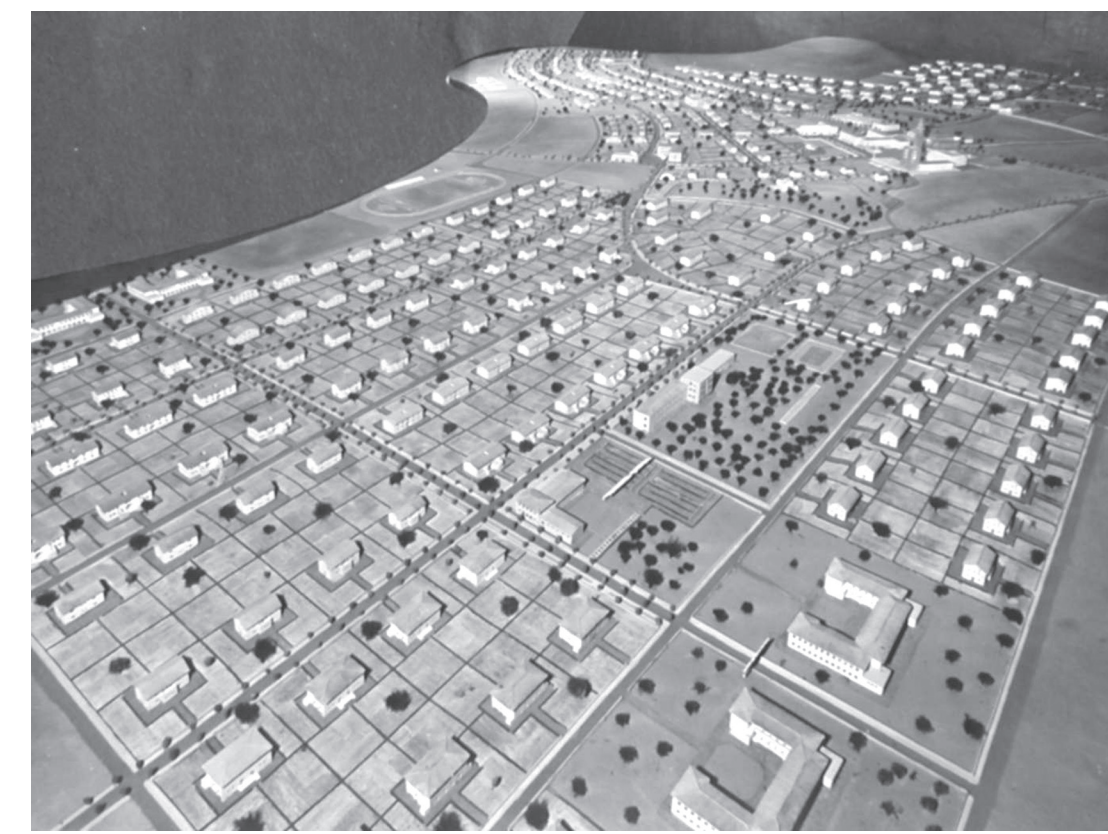
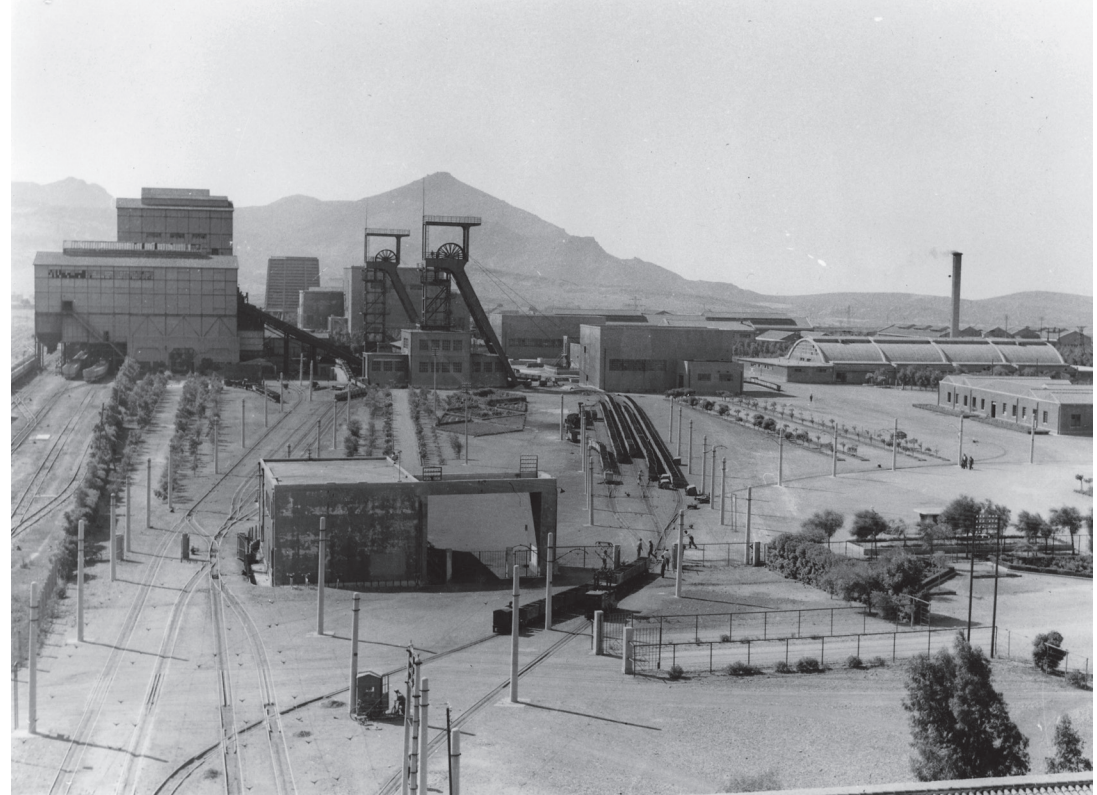
THE HOUSE IN THE GARDEN

Carbonia's first working class families were housed in over 600 terraced houses, with nearly 1000 square metres of land each. The houses were standardized, but the cultural model was reassuring: all the houses rose on local trachite bases, were made of the same stone and covered by familiar sloping roofs. Each one, however small, had separate rooms and bathrooms, in a historical phase in which this standard was anything but expected in the rest of the island.



THE MINE

In the town of Carbonia, the urban and industrial systems are indissolubly linked by a tight reciprocity bond. The reasons at the base of the foundation of the town are - as didactically evidenced by its name - tied to the extraction of coal and the relative town plan consequently descends from it. The main and most direct reference is therefore the "Great Mine" of Serbariu: a real factory at the gates of the town: it's rigorously laid out, according to the principles of the Howardian Garden City, close to the town but distanced by a large undeveloped green belt. The urban design of Carbonia, its road system, its residential hierarchy and its successive plans of development are programmatically based on the mine: the three main road axes radically converge towards the pits, confirming them as fulcrum and metaphor for the entire complex. The "great Mine" of Serbariu was created starting in 1936, when the intense programme of explorations and surveys promoted by the Regime ascertained the expansion of the coal seam beyond the original site of Bacu Abis, going past the coast line and pushing it to the bottom of the sea. In the proximity of the village of Serbariu, a site of very thick carboniferous lens was found and the two deep pits were dug, which are still present today, seeds of the future mining and urban settlement.



The city «...will rise on a hillside that slopes gently towards the Serbariu mine, opening to a vast panorama of the plains not far below and the Tyrrhenian Sea beyond, providing significant scenic resources for a variety of numerous views [...] the general configuration of the chosen area lends itself to clear plan organization in terms of the adhesion of the road network to the land contours as well as in terms of solar orientation»

Gustavo Pulitzer-Finali, designer of Carbonia's original plan, 1937

CARBONIA. COMPANY-TOWN

Carbonia began as an industrial, residential and administrative centre close to the mine of Serbariu, the largest coal field. Planned and built by Azienda Carboni Italiana (ACAI), a public company which would invest enormous amounts of money in order to complete the task in the shortest possible time, 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 are, 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 town-factory. This spatial model was replicated in the surrounding territory that, even today, reveals all the complexity of a new 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.

1938



1940



2007



THE TERRITORIAL SYSTEM

The story of the foundation of new towns in the Sulcis region between 1935 and 1942 has been reconstructed thanks to photographs, plans and projects that record the building of Carbonia and the working villages of Bacu Abis and Cortoghiana. This was the period when an extensive mining programme transformed the Sulcis region into a full-scale construction site.

The sources of this enormous project were the coal mines, which were indeed silhouetted against the landscapes that were as yet empty of houses and towns. Then one could glimpse the basic nature and contradiction that this landscape represents. One still can. It was an incomplete and fragmentary modernisation plan yet one which was simultaneously able to produce a uniform whole. Carbonia, Bacu Abis and Cortoghiana were where the most innovative landscape in the whole of Sardinia was developed. From the nucleus of eighty homes in Bacu Abis, the seed of the coal town-territory, to the large town of Carbonia with its 50,000 inhabitants, we see the emergence of an image of a highly symbolic island and territory and a crystallising moment in the debate on architecture and the twentieth century city.

