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The environmental impacts of human activities on the karst of Sardinia (Italy)

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Carbonate rocks of different ages characterise almost 9 % of the surface of Sardinia. These areas are often rich in both surface and underground karst features and are intrinsically vulnerable territories of great naturalistic and scientific value. Human activities have since long time had an important role in the geo-environmental changes of these karst areas, but their impact has increased considerably in the last centuries. The most significant pressures on the environment, such as industry (especially mines and quarries), urban settlements, tourism, agriculture and military settlements are here illustrated. The degree of human-induced environmental pressure on these areas is evaluated using an experimental method based on the Disturbance Index as defined by Van Beynen & Townsend (Environmental Management, 36(1) (2005), pp. 101-116) and here adapted to better meet specific requirements for this particular geographical context.