



**“From remains Of the war to the aRchiTecture of peace in
cross-border area of Italy-Croatia“**

FORTIC - ID ITHR0200123

DT 1.1.4 Interpretation plan

Second world war defensive artifacts of Cervia

PP5 – Municipality of Cervia



Italy – Croatia



Foreword

FORTIC's general objective is to strengthen the role of cultural heritage linked to fortifications/defense testimonies of the Adriatic cross-border area, in order to develop sustainable tourism based on innovative digital solutions, and new inclusive development models, which take into account vulnerable groups and are able to promote messages of peace through knowledge.

The coastline of the Municipality of Cervia is characterized by defensive artifacts dating back to the second world war, which represent a “dissonant heritage”, therefore a heritage “that hurts” because it recalls past events not easy to be reconciled with visitors' and citizens' values and everyday experience.

Nevertheless it represents an opportunity to keep alive the memory of a tragic piece of history through those physical testimonies allowing to talk about peace, inclusion, recent history, both for education purposes, as well as for tourism, therefore fostering a positive economic impact.

General objective

The purpose of the interpretation plan is to collect and provide information on the second world war artifacts located in Cervia territory, as basis for the elaboration of specific communication and heritage enhancement paths addressing schools, citizens, tourists.

It is meant to reveal what an object, place, feature or event means and why it matters, allowing to help people to connect intellectually, emotionally, with the place/destination, and therefore to offer visitors memorable experiences, and cope with dissonant heritage.

Historical framework of the defensive heritage of Cervia

The Second World War had a significant impact on Cervia, as on many other Italian towns. During the war years, especially between 1939 and 1945, the town experienced difficult times, with bombings and tensions related to the conflict. Cervia, known for its port and its saltpans, saw air raids and had to deal with the consequences of the war, such as the scarcity of resources and restrictions. However, the local community showed great resilience, trying to keep daily life alive despite the difficulties. After the end of the conflict, Cervia began a process of reconstruction and rebirth, which led to its renowned tourist vocation in the following years.

After the armistice of Cassibile on 8 September 1943, it has been evident from the very beginning, Hitler's will to remain in the Italian peninsula and resist even without the support of the Italians; this would depend on Germany's tactic based on a slow retreat of the troops stationed in the south towards the north, thus creating not only a safe point for the army but also an advanced defense point for the



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German territories. The tactic implemented by the German forces, was the retreating on several temporary lines of arrest and was aimed at slowly wearing down the adversary with the minimum expenditure of forces. Thus the Germans created a series of tactical delaying and resistance lines running parallel from south to north along the entire peninsula. One of the most important defensive line was the Gothic line, due to the fact that it represented one of the last bastions for the defense of the Po Valley. For this reason it had a very different shape from the others: the line cut the peninsula from east to west, extending from the Tyrrhenian coast, in the province of Massa-Carrara, to the Adriatic side of the province of Pesaro and Urbino, on this side, a series of defensive lines were planned in succession until reaching the last one in defense of the city of Rimini.

Added to this concatenated development it was added a line of coastal defense, the Galla Placidia line, a coastal system of bunkers and defensive structures. The line was built with an anti-landing function, in fact General Heinrich von Vietinghoff feared that the Anglo-American troops during the advance from south to north along the Italian peninsula could also foresee a landing on the beaches of Romagna coastline.

The Galla Placidia Line, envisaged extensive use of mined areas at sea and deep anti-tank barriers known as "**dragon's teeth**", trapezoidal-shaped elements in reinforced concrete placed directly on the beaches.

The strong point of this coastal line was represented by the large number of **bunkers** both on the most advanced positions and towards the inland; the fortifications were of different types and sizes and followed the dictates for the construction of military works issued by Hitler.

The line extended along the Adriatic coast for 130 km from Pesaro in the South, toward North up to the mouth of the Po river, and penetrated with its emplacements also inland for about 10 km;

The concern for an imminent landing on the coast of Romagna was so strong that in July 1944 it was ordered to evacuate all the coastal cities in order to allow a clear path for a possible defense in the event of an attack. As known, the Allied disembark never happened here.

The Line, built by the Todt organization following the dictates of the German armed forces, provided for the gathering of fortified nuclei in correspondence with the most sensitive locations and with the greatest probability of landing; at the end of the conflict, the defensive structures were demolished either as a result of the demilitarization of the territories imposed by the Peace Treaties or by the processes of "deleting any evidence of memory", partly abandoned and in rare cases reused without any attention to conservation. At present, fragmentary traces of the Galla Placidia Line remain. The Line is made up of a total of approximately 3000 bunkers of which only a small part has been located to date. Many bunkers have been demolished or are unrecognizable because they have been incorporated into contemporary buildings, others are finely camouflaged and used as storage or cellars.



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In recent years, numerous research projects have been launched regarding the bunkers of this line, denoting a growing attention to this heritage. The commitment, by local associations, in bringing to light not only in physical terms but also in historical terms the military outposts has been the push to also start academic research on the subject to promote a conscious conservation of this difficult heritage.

Evidences of the Galla Placidia Line are today still very well visible, especially in the locality of Milano Marittima.

Function of bunkers and dragon teeth

The basis of the German fortified lines built throughout Italy was the concept of Regelbauten, namely a standardized and codified defense. During the Second World War, the engineers of the Wehrmacht had the opportunity to organize in detail the large catalog of these war objects that had already been in use for half a century.

The construction was entrusted to the Todt Organization, also known by the acronym O.T., taking the name from its founder, the German engineer Fritz Todt. In the 1930s, the organization became famous throughout Europe for the construction of roads, but with the beginning of the war it began to worry about the construction of war artifacts, becoming a paramilitary organization in all respects. The construction of all German defensive fortifications was entrusted to the O.T. which in the occupied countries used forced labor to build the great defense works. Characterized by a rigid hierarchical structure, it saw its maximum expansion and strength in 1944. According with Hitler strict indications, the artifacts were built with top quality material and had to be equipped with specific type of weapons that must be present in these defensive positions, the obstacles that must surround them to avoid attacks by heavy vehicles, the connections that must connect the bunkers to each other and the absolute necessity of equipping the bunkers with appropriate ventilation against gas-based attacks.

By following Hitler strict indications, the O.T. gave birth to the concept of standardized construction "Regelbau". A very simple organizational concept was applied: each type of bunker was assigned a standard number, each of which had a specific task. Such an orderly management allowed the Organization to build fortified lines in an extraordinarily rapid time, relating optimally to the local conditions, strategies and geography of the places.

Todt's organizational work led to a catalog of about 700 models, punctually described in technical-operational manuals called Typenheft. These booklets collected all the useful information for the construction of the bunkers both from a structural and formal point of view, up to defining in detail the plant equipment. Examples in the photo below (https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/archive/2.13.167/invnr/1022/file/NL-HaNA_2.13.167_1022_01)





Among the several models of bunkers, among the most used bunker models along the coast, and which we can also find in Cervia and Milano-Marittima, there are Regelbau and Tobruk ones, whose main characteristics are listed below:

Regelbau 668

Length: 7.65 m

Width: 7.65 m

Height: 4.4 m

Concrete used: 210 m³ (strength B – Level B ensured fire resistance with a 220 mm caliber projectile and a single hit with a 500 kg bomb or a 300 mm caliber projectile)

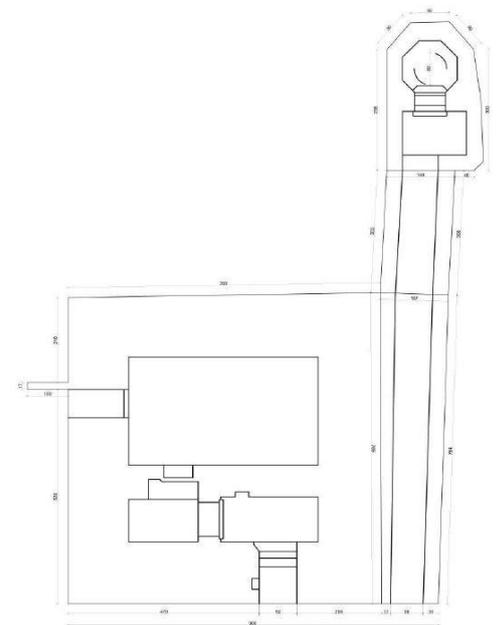
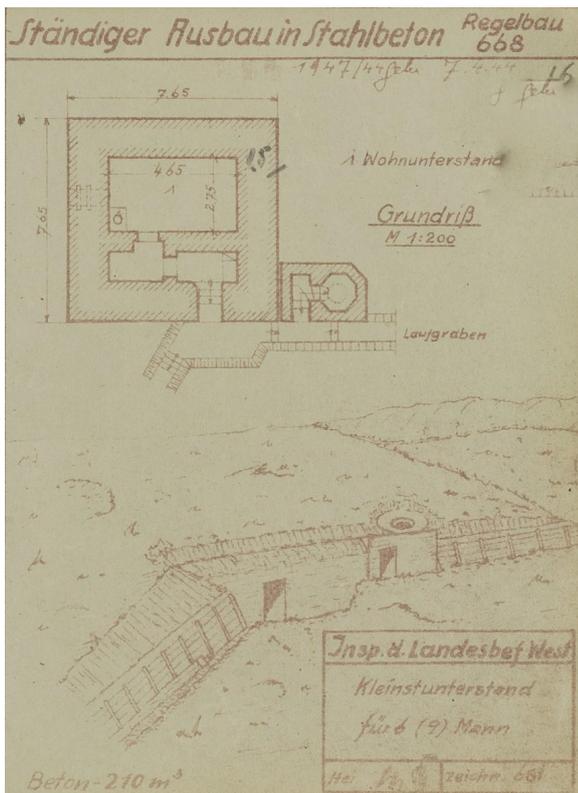
This bunker model has thick reinforced concrete walls 1.5m wide. It is completely underground and is divided into several rooms. The path from the entrance to the room to house the men, 6 in total, is zigzagged to allow the bombs to explode and protection from gas attacks. The largest room is intended for the troops and there is an emergency exit often covered externally by plants and foliage. At the entrance of the bunker a trench was sometimes built which, if present, connected the Regelbau to a Tobruk used as an observation and attack post. Along the Galla Placidia Line, examples of both R668s



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coupled with Tobruk, usually Vf58cs, and alone have been found. The features described can be traced back to a general model of bunker; along the Galla Placidia Line, R668s with Tobruk attached are found which differ from the previous description but which have a long lateral corridor leading to the Tobruk.



<https://www.lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de/Regelbauten/Atlantikwall/RB668.htm>

Regelbau 669

Length: 13 m

Width: 11 m

Height: 5.10 m

Excavation: 120 m³



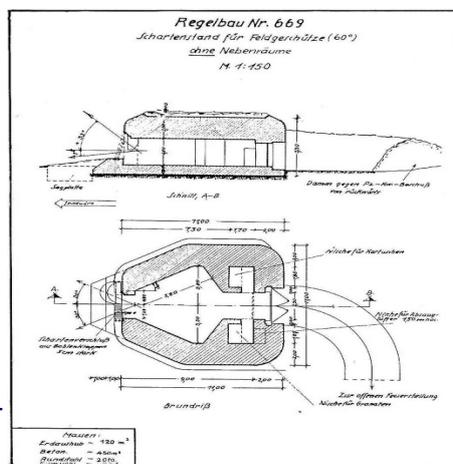
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Concrete used: approx. 450 m³ (strength B)

Round/profile iron used: approx. 30 tons

The model was originally designed for the army and was a closed gun emplacement with an open front for field shooting at 60°. From the drawing we can see the entrance with two rooms for ammunition on the sides and finally the gun emplacement.



https://www.regelbau.dk/regelbau_allermodeller.asp

Ringständ or Tobruk

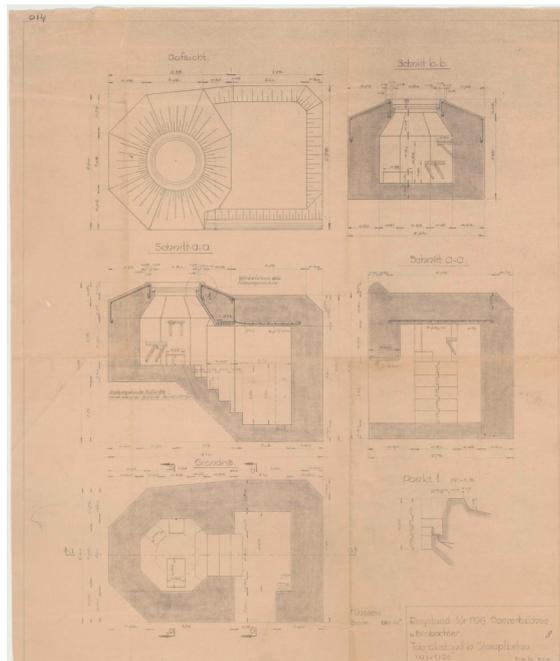
The basic model consisted of a reinforced concrete underground room with a circular opening on the roof where the gunner could carry out observation and fire operations using a light weapon, only the head and shoulders protruding from the ground. Access to the station was guaranteed by a staircase that led down to the underground entrance. The fortification was permanent and had to include underground shelters for crews and ammunition; it had to offer protection against small calibers and splinters, for this reason the Ringständ had to be made of reinforced concrete covered by a large mass of earth; the ceiling, walls and floors had to have a thickness of at least 40 cm. The specific characteristic of the Ringständ was that they were completely buried, leaving only the upper ring visible. In this way they were completely camouflaged and almost invisible to aircraft. This was later defined as both an advantageous characteristic and a disadvantage in the case of thick vegetation, the Tobruk were redefined and improved until 1944 when the Regelbauten catalogue listed 44 different models.



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In Cervia we can find VF58c and VF 61a. The model Tobruk VF58c was 2.35 m long, 3.7 m wide, and 2,75 m high. The structure is very compact and small in size, it is completely underground and able to resist 50 kg aerial bombs or artillery shots up to 105 mm. The room that housed the artillery was provided with an 80 cm hole in the roof. The model was used both for fire and observation operations, it could accommodate one or two men inside.

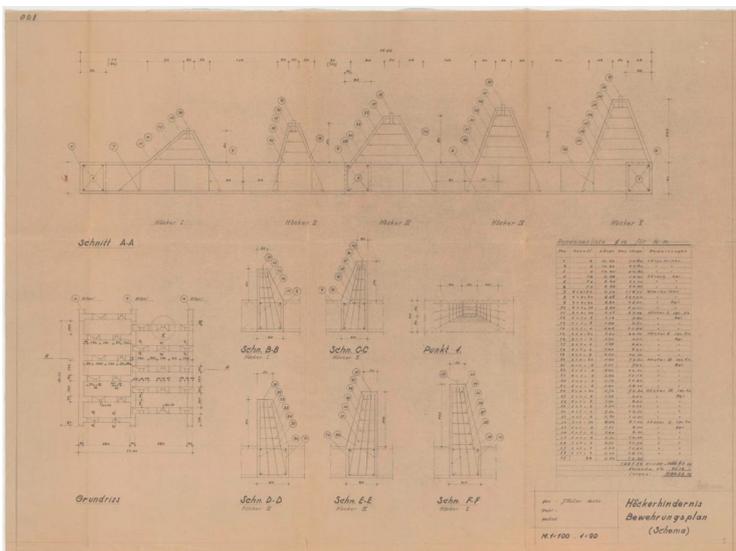


https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/archive/2.13.167/invnr/1038/file/NL-HaNA_2.13.167_1038_10

Dragon teeth

The widespread use of armored vehicles gave rise to the development of numerous obstacles to impede their advance. Starting in the 1930s, alternative structures to traditional moats were built, the so-called "dragon's teeth": they consist of truncated pyramids in reinforced concrete of different heights positioned at a short distance from each other so as to form a wide defensive strip, they were connected to each other by a continuous concrete base. The first use of this defensive system was along the Franco-German border where it was used as the main anti-tank barrier. Even on Cervia coast we have numerous testimonies of these artifacts that were used in all the Italian defensive lines as an outpost, in fact they preceded the bunkers that constituted the lines, or in areas that were difficult to defend such as the coasts.





https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/en/research/archive/2.13.167/invnr/1036/file/NL-HaNA_2.13.167_1036_12

Remaining of defensive artifacts of Cervia

The failure of the Allied landing and therefore the failure to use the fortifications of the Galla Placidia Line made these arrangements, in the period immediately following their realization, simple accessories and immediately posed the problem of their disposal. With the end of the war this problem affected all the works present in the innumerable defensive lines built by Todt and scattered across Italian territory.

The bunkers represented a heavy burden for the Italian state, and the demilitarization started very soon. The bunkers were initially stripped not only of all their equipment but also of their numerous metal components, and were then left in a state of abandonment until 1947 when the peace treaty signed in Paris forced Italy to demolish the fortifications in numerous areas of the peninsula. The coasts of Romagna were not considered and no specific instructions were provided for demilitarization; despite



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this, significant dismantling works still took place. The works that escaped demolition operations were abandoned to the undisturbed action of nature that covered them with sand and earth or swallowed them up in the surrounding vegetation. As often happens with military works built during a conflict, the bunkers were also condemned to systematic cancellation not only through demolition but also through reuse and camouflage.

There are several examples of recovery: invested by a real “process of metamorphosis” the outposts present on the coast or in the immediate hinterland were adapted to the main tourist-receptive structures that immediately populated the coast. Below the example of a Tobruk enclosed in the garden of the hotel, Aurelia used as storage for gardening tools.



The prevalent reuse action is by private citizens who have modified the fortifications according to their needs: the bunkers have often been plastered and finished, equipped with access doors and new holes for ventilation and lighting, softened in their appearance, they have integrated the rooms of the houses by acting as pantries, basements or warehouses.

With regard the dragon teeth, they can be found in Cervia among boulders positioned as breakwater in the canal harbor.

Since January 2020, restoration work has begun on 3 bunkers found during excavations at the construction site of the new Milano Marittima seafront. A major recovery and research effort coordinated by the CRB 360° Association with the Municipality of Cervia that allowed to bring to light a part of history and preserve a heritage of collective memory. The Association plays an important role in the collection, and cataloguing of objects, memories and photos of that time, as well as an important role of maintenance of the artifacts in cooperation with the Municipality.



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So far several bunkers have been found along canals, inside private houses and hotels along the seaside:

a) Along the canals

- Embankment of the canal in Viale Vittorio Veneto: Bunker Tobruk → Inside there are residues of fluorescent paint that were used to identify the exits
- Embankment of the Canale della Cupa: Bunker Tobruk → Discovered by chance, on the side of the bunker the marks of the bullets are visible
- On the eastern bank of the Madonna del Pino Canal: Bunker Tobruk

b) In private homes

- In Cervia in a private garden in Viale Vittorio Veneto, corner with Via Paisiello: Bunker MID I → Inserted in the home, it housed a mortar
- Viale Vittorio Veneto, corner with Via Paisiello, on the opposite side: Bunker MID I In the home opposite

c) By hotels and along the seaside

Some bunkers are located in the area behind the bathing establishments, near or inside hotels, sometimes incorporated into the construction. In some cases the upper trap door, filled with sand, was used as a flowerbed.

- Nautical Club: Bunker Tobruk located in the garden of the Club
- Hotel Aurelia: Bunker Tobruk used as storehouse
- Near Bagno Peppino: Bunker Tobruk located behind the bathroom. In the circular slit there was a machine gun or a mortar.
- On the Milano Marittima Lungomare, in the area near Porto Canale: Bunker Regelbau 668 with Tobruk attached



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Private Tobruk in the Aurelia Hotel



Tobruk restored on the seafront



Regelbau 668 restored on the seafront



Private Tobruk Vf58c on the canal bank



Tobruk Vf58c in the Circolo Nautico



Tobruk Vf58c in canale dei Pini bank



Private Bunker in Viale Vittorio Veneto



Private Regelbau 669 in the Hotel Franca
Private Tobruk Vf58c of Villa Pina

Inside the hotel



13) Tobruk demolished in Porto Canale

**Enhancement of the heritage**

Even today it is difficult to find a common line on the actions to be taken on some testimony of the past especially when these legacies are directly linked to historical moments that convey controversial memories that risk transforming the cultural heritage from a "common good" to a "divisive element". The Second World War generated a vast set of "memories to forget" often cut off from any safeguard initiative even if they are present not only in the personal stories of individuals but also, in a more tangible way, on the territory. This legacy has not only been difficult to manage but also strongly divisive; we can in fact note two attitudes towards it: that of those who, recognizing the value of this legacy, propose actions of protection, knowledge and enhancement; that of those who, on the contrary, intentionally try to erase it.

To explain what fueled the two diametrically opposed behaviors, it is necessary to question the concept of cultural heritage, the processes that lead to its definition and what leads social groups and individuals to attribute this value to the assets present in the territory.

The identity of a community has always been linked to the ability of the individuals who compose it to preserve, manage and process the material and material traces in its history. Upstream of this process is the attribution of a value to what is being transmitted, cultural heritage is therefore the set of everything to which a community has given value, in a shared manner, and has therefore tried to transmit. The concept of heritage is therefore closely linked to the way of living and relating to the past and is not identified only with material things or places but has a much broader dimension. The mutability that this concept contains is evident, a process of interpreting the past to build, or reconstruct, the identity of the present. The fundamental point of the process of defining heritage is the act of selection. Unlike the past, which retains an infinite dimension, cultural heritage has a finite dimension delineated by society, or by part of society, which it represents and whose values it embodies.

It is clear that the Galla Placidia Line, and in general all the historical heritage of the Second World War, represents a clear example of dissonant heritage. The dissonance lies in the message and values that that heritage, composed of bunkers and military outposts built on Italian soil by the German invaders,



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incorporated and then transmitted within a society that did not consider it acceptable and definitively condemned it.

The actions launched on the remains of the Galla Placidia Line aim to achieve an "inclusive" management of this dissonant heritage. For a long time, bunkers remained inconvenient objects that recalled occupation, death and destruction; cumbersome objects that were difficult to convert to new functions at a time, that of the economic boom immediately after the war, in which reconstruction aimed to overcome the sad memories of the past. Today it is necessary to analyze this **dissonant heritage** and be able to translate and communicate its meaning, only in this way will it be easier to accept the diversity of this heritage and save it from oblivion.

Consequently, the outposts and other works that populate both the coasts and the urbanized hinterland will lose that character of incomprehensible concrete objects, they will no longer be simple abandoned skeletons, but they can be read and perceived as fragments of a story but also updated, avoiding however the cancellation of the memory of what they were. The location, mapping, knowledge and valorization of the bunkers are essential to understand not only the past that is enclosed in these assets but also to provide indications for the communities that relate daily with this heritage, to educate and to develop a critical awareness.

In 2020 the Municipality of Cervia conducted works for the renovation of Milano Marittima seafront and in that occasion, in cooperation with CRB 360 cultural association decide to restore and museumize the evidences of that inconvenient past, in order not to forget and as educational visit offer.

The most important restoration was done on the Regelbau 668 merged to a Tobruk Vf58c located not far from the canal port. The outpost was used for both observation and attack activities. Before the restoration, the artifact was completely hid by the vegetation



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Inside there is a wall decoration of a fake door surmounted by a crown. On the sides there are two columns on which rest a cat and a dog respectively. The representation is accompanied by an inscription. The door surmounted by a crown. On the sides there are two columns on which rest a cat and a dog respectively. The representation is accompanied by an inscription “It is dangerous to wake the cat, the dog's tooth is fatal, but the most frightening thing of all is man in his madness”. The sentence is slightly modified from the original aphorism. In the sentence of the poet Schiller the animals mentioned were the lion, replaced here by the cat, and the tiger, replaced by the dog.

It was customary among soldiers to dedicate bunker structures to women and to engrave their names at the entrance as witnessed by the photo below.



The inside of the bunker is equipped with objects of that time to reproduce the uses of the spaces: toilette, dismissal, main space for radio communication.



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The Municipality of Cervia included the heritage in the virtual tour of the city <https://www.pearleye360vr.it/cope/adripromtour/index.htm> , and during the year it is possible to visit them thanks to the cooperation with the CRB 360 Association.

Nevertheless it is necessary to work more on this heritage to with particular reference to the inclusion and accessibility to vulnerable groups. To this purpose, ICT and creative industry can be effective. This is a work that FORTIC project will give the possibility to do:

- creation of multimedia contents for metaverse and Immagine Cevia App
- creation of printed materials
- creation of specific media campaign
- organization of working groups with locals and cultural association to define the messages and enhance the elements allowing to light the interest of visitors according with the targets (schools, general public, vulnerable groups)

