

#### **2024 edition students' collective blogs**

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## **Lingua Laguna: water in the architectural, semiotic, and linguistic landscapes of Venice**

*By Ikuo Harimoto, Marian Gabani Gimenez, Dongfang Liu, Javiera Scarratt, and Alexander Van Herpe*

When we were assigned the Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, in the neighborhood of Castello, as the central point of our fieldwork for the 2024 “Linguistic Landscapes” Summer Course at Venice International University, we had to decide on the criteria to delimit the area we would be exploring. Based on Kevin Lynch’s (1960) typology of the contents of the city image, i.e. referable physical forms that people recognize and rely on in their wanderings through the urban space, we reflected on the various possible maps that Venice offered. As pointed out by Lynch, the image of the same physical reality shifts according to the circumstances of viewing, and Venice is the locus where numerous circumstances coexist: for instance, the canals seem to work as an edge for earth-bound wanderers, but a path for water-bound locals. In this reflection, we realized that water could be seen as this ambiguous—or fruitful—element according to which the “circumstances of viewing” shift profoundly. We opted, thus, to define the canals as the limit for our explorations.

Venice is formed by several small islands, connected by canals, lagoons, and waterways. One could argue that this is what makes Venice distinctively attractive to people all over the world. Such geographical features, coupled with its unique history, foreground a particular identity, expressed in signs, art, images, and structures across the city. On the flip side, Venice’s geography and history also bring their own issues: over-tourism, rise in water levels, and sinking foundations. This tension is what intrigued us and guided this project. Starting from the Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, a 14th-century church of Gothic architecture, we wandered through the paths and followed the margins of the canals seeking structures, signs, and images that referred to water, however loose the reference might be. Our goal was to understand if and how water informed and still informs the architectural, semiotic, and linguistic landscape of Venice.

We divided the results of our research into three topics: the uses of water (utility), protection from water-related events (defense), and water as a cultural element. The first topic explores the structures in place to make use of water in Venice and how they differ depending on who is making use of it. The second topic investigates the remnants and the new strategies to defend the land from water-related events and disasters. In the third and last topic, we argue that water is also present as a symbol in the cultural landscape of Venice.

### **The landscape between the utilitarian and the decorative**

The semiotic landscape of Venice is permeated by structures and signs that emerge as testimonies of the different uses of water in the city. While this is not exclusive to Venice, we will see that the centrality of water in the settlement and development of the island is reflected in the cultural and structural elements of the Venetian landscape. Moreover, the diversity of experiences of the city is visible by the placement of these elements. In Psarra’s words, “Venice appears different to the waterborne passenger than to the pedestrian” (2018, p. 232).

The logistics and practicalities of being water-bound are apparent in the landscape, although they can be overlooked or understood differently by earthbound pedestrians. For example, mooring hoops can be found abundantly on the sidewalks (**Images A and B**), but their utilitarian character is more evident to individuals who move around Venice through water. For pedestrians, the hoops become a less utilitarian element, although equally present as an integral part of the city's landscape. In this case, the landscape remains the same for both water and earthbound individuals. The differences lie in the meaning of the elements present in the landscape. One could also argue that the difference in meaning implies in a difference of attention paid to given elements, as well as of their relevance in daily activities.



*Images A and B*

In other cases, the landscape varies depending on the individual's location. Some signs are only visible from the canals, by water-bound observers (**Image C**). During our research, those were the most difficult signs to register, since they tend to be obscured from the pedestrian gaze, not intentionally so, naturally, but due its utilitarian nature. (**Image D**)



*Images C and D*

On the other hand, other signs which are directed at water-bound individuals are hypervisible, standing out from the lagoon and canals alike. **(Image E)** The bricole, panile, and dame are everywhere in the aquatic sections of the Venetian landscape, but they communicate solely with water-bound individuals who are literate in this language. **(Image F)** The earthbound pedestrian, especially the eventual visitor and tourist, remains oblivious to the message transmitted by those structures.



*Images E and F*

Finally, there are other structures that permeate the Venetian landscape and point to a different use of water. Instead of pathways for locomotion and movement, in the following cases water is a resource for survival and defense. The antincendio (fire suppression) system can be easily overlooked by passersby, which once again speaks to how meaning is accentuated or attenuated by contextual cues. ( ) As a utilitarian structure, the bright red color is intentionally chosen to make the system hypervisible in case of need, but it easily becomes part of the landscape in ordinary daily life.



*Images G and H*

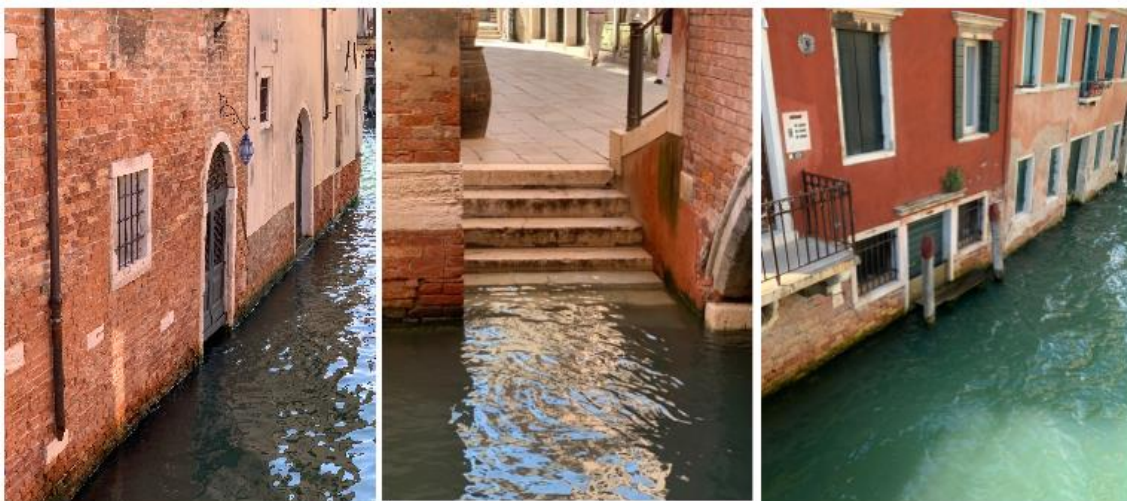
( ) Another example of how meaning is context-dependent, and how the landscape is experienced differently by individuals, are the communal cisterns, once important to the collection of pluvial water, and now exclusively decor items, whose role in shaping the historical and cultural landscape we will further explore later. **(Image J)** However, even as a utilitarian structure, the lions that adorn the wells point to their multi-layered signification in the landscape—and, naturally, to the artificiality of the categories we propose here. Moreover, the lion imagery creates an intertextual continuum with more contemporary structures that offer potable water to pedestrians. **(Image K)**



*Images I, J, and K*

### **On water and against it**

Apart from the daily life utility aspects of water, due to the peculiar geographical and historical background of Venice as an important trading city, the city also needs to be protected against the water. Venice consists of 188 small islands and all the houses are built on piles of swampy soil, which makes it less solid than buildings on the mainland. In addition, during the 20th century, Venice was pumping out groundwater under the city for chemical industry. Due to the caused erosion, according to the account of Zanchettin et al (2020), there has been a gradual lowering of the surface and a significant rise of the water level, which causes the city to sink (1-2 mm a year) in their estimation. Nowadays in the streets of Venice one can find a lot of visual markers of this evolution, like stairs and windows that used to be above the water but which are now flooded (**pictures – SET 1**). On top of that, the daily passage of (motor)boats as a means of transportation or tourist attraction throughout the city causes higher waves which lead to even more damage.



*Picture Set 1*

The water in and around Venice mainly comes from water currents of the Alpine rivers and the Adriatic Sea, which on a regular basis led to flood tides, damaging the city. Already in the 16th century, the Venetians tried to avoid this, by diverting all the major rivers flowing into the lagoon, which eventually resulted in an ever-deeper lagoon environment. Still almost every year, especially in autumn and winter, the so-called “acqua alta” (high tide) causes floods in the lower points of the city, like the famous San Marco square, the lowest point of Venice (64 cm above sea level). The city had to come up with new provisional solutions (Comune di Venezia, 2005), like drainage systems, elevations, little ramparts, iron plaques in front of houses, convex sidewalks etc., which can often be seen on the streets of Venice (pictures – SET 2).



*Picture Set 2*

In 2003, under the supervision of Berlusconi, Venice decided to take more drastic measures with the launch of the MOSE project, the construction of an artificial dam under the water in three places on the coast of Venice, which can come up when the tide is out. (Umgiesser, 2020) The project also faced a lot of criticism, as it was incredibly expensive, it would have a negative impact on aquatic fauna and flora, and it did not even offer certainty of success. (e.g., Water Technology 2019) After a long period of corruption and mismanagement, big floods in 2019 with unforeseen damage provided an acceleration in the building process. In 2020 the project was finished and proved to be efficient, so the city of Venice finally seems protected from the water floods (Umgiesser, 2020).

### **Water as a cultural element**

If on the one hand water informed much of the practical aspects of people’s everyday life in Venice, on the other hand, it became part of the symbolic grammar of the city. In the region we explored, there is no lack of references to the sea, navigation, water, aquatic life, and so on. Many of those references are quite literal, but some merely gesture towards the topic of water, establishing a metaphorical relation. Moreover, some of the images and texts become part of the symbolic ecology by “accident” or by a process of recontextualization of other imagery. We identified three ways in which water plays a role in

forging the symbolic grammar of Venice: as memorialization and contemporalization of past practices and events; metaphorical relations and the establishing of an identity; and processes of recontextualization and negotiation of the local and the global. We should note, nonetheless, that those occurrences often overlap, revealing a multilayered symbolic grammar in the linguistic landscape of Venice.

Memorialization and contemporalization, for example, can be seen in the aforementioned [once utilitarian] cisterns, which now function as adornment and relics. The mark on the Basilica's external wall (**Image L**) memorializes, we suspect, the flood of 1902, evoking affects that highlight paradoxically the fragility of "firm land" and the permanence of brick walls. The ever-present gondole (**Images M and N**) are also an example of contemporalization of past practices that helped to forge the identity of Venice in the global and touristic imaginary: as mobile structures that are no longer means of transportation, but ways of offering the curious tourist (in several possible languages) a way of "authentically" (Kirshenblatt Gimblett, B.; and Bruner, 2012) experiencing the water.



*Images L, M, and N*

This imaginary is translated and articulated into imagery. In some cases, this imagery is part of the construction of a Venetian identity catered to tourists and visitors. For example, the bucintoro miniature ( ) materializes Venetian history and rituals in a transportable souvenir. However, water is also a core element in the visual identity and in the discourse of locals and natives of Venice. It is present, for instance, in commercial branding (**Image P**) and in activist and political ephemera. **Image Q**, a poster from Morion Laboratorio Occupato (@cso\_morion on Instagram), shows the organization's logo, a squid. The animal is, due to the Lab Morion's efforts in advertising its events and actions, present in every corner of Venice where the posters inhabit. Similarly, in the protest poster in **Image R**, aquatic animals not only populate the visual landscape but are invoked as symbols of resistance to perceived threats to Venice's existence.





*Images O, P, Q, and R*

Finally, water is an element that foregrounds not only Venice's uniqueness but also its connectedness with discourses elsewhere. The kalamarinios (@kalamarinios on Instagram) sticker (Image O) is an artistic intervention that can be found in several places outside Italy, but it gains a different meaning due to its emplacement (Scollon & Scollon, 2023). As observed in Lab Morion's posters, the squid is not a neutral image in the Venetian landscape. Kalamarinios becomes, thus, part of the local landscape while also present in landscapes as far as the Czech Republic. Being part of international discourses can be used for political goals as well. The Laguna Pride poster (Image T) uses the seahorse as its central image.



*Images S and T*

While the animal brings to the forefront the links between Venice and water, metonymically represented by the reference to the Laguna, it also evokes discourses on queerness (more specifically transness and transmasculinities) very present in the anglophone world (see, for example, J.C. Pankratz's play *Seahorse*; Mackenzie's piece on queer animals for Greenpeace International; and BBC-sponsored documentary *Seahorse: The dad who gave birth*, directed by Jeanie Finlay). Water imagery, thus, functions both as a mark of Venice's uniqueness and its position within global discourses.

## Final considerations

Exploring the surroundings of Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, we came across many examples of how water informed and continues to inform social, economic, and cultural practices in Venice. Naturally, these phenomena are not restricted to this particular region and, one could claim, not even particular to the city. Nonetheless, the salience of water and water-related elements in the architectural, semiotic, and linguistic landscapes is an invitation to further exploration of the conditions that make Venice ever-present in people's imaginary all over the world while suscitating all sorts of affects in natives, locals, and visitors alike. The structures, signs, and images presented here are just a scratch on the surface of the multilayered landscape of Venice, and the analyses reflect the authors' own experience of the region, colored, expanded, and often limited by our academic, linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds.

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## **Cash & Power – Informal use of infrastructure in Santissimi Apostoli, Venice**

*By Ignes Bordwell-Vezzano, Kaiko Lenhard, Qianxue Li, Miriel Vandeperre, Michelle Wyseure*

In this blog, we present our exploratory study of the linguistic landscape of the neighbourhood surrounding the Chiesa dei Santi Apostoli di Cristo in Venice. By the term linguistic landscape, we refer to “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region”, as defined by Landry and Bourhis (1997). The fieldwork was carried out in the context of the VIU Summer School ‘Linguistic Landscapes: Using Signs and Symbols to Translate Cities’ that took place from June 24 until June 28, 2024. Our survey of the area focused on how bottom-up street communications (meaning those not put up by the city and its officials) differ between residential areas, more frequently utilised by locals, and busy thoroughfares frequented by large amounts of tourists.

### **Insula**

The insula of Santi Apostoli in Venice, located in the Cannaregio district, is divided into two significantly different sections: a vibrant commercial area and a quiet residential zone. The Strada Nova, a bustling thoroughfare, characterises the commercial section with its lively atmosphere, attracting both tourists and locals. This area is lined with shops, cafes, and restaurants, reflecting Venice’s commercial vitality and serving as a hub for social and economic activity. In stark contrast, the residential area behind the Strada Nova and the Church of the Holy Apostles offers a serene escape from the bustling main street. Narrow streets and small squares reveal a quieter side of Venetian life, with the Campo dei Santissimi Apostoli serving as dividing line. This square and the surrounding streets showcase historic homes and everyday Venetian existence, emphasising a slower pace and a more intimate community feel.

The history of the insula of Santi Apostoli in Venice is deeply intertwined with the development of its notable landmarks. The building and subsequent improvements of the Church of the Holy Apostles (Chiesa dei Santi Apostoli), dating back to 643 AD, played a significant role in shaping the commercial aspects of the surrounding Venetian area. Central to community life and adorned by architects like Mauro Codussi and Alessandro Vittoria, the church became a focal point that influenced neighbouring buildings. This influx of commercial activity laid the foundation for the area to develop into a vibrant commercial district, a trend further solidified by the 19th-century construction of the Strada Nova as part of a project by Niccolò Papadopoli to provide better pedestrian access between Rialto and the train station (Romanelli, 1988, 412-6.). The project cut through the fabric of the insula, demolishing buildings and narrow streets in order to impose an alien organisational principle focused on the traffic of large amounts of people (Ibid.). This bustling thoroughfare cemented the area’s status as a bustling centre of trade and commerce in Venice’s rich urban landscape and is in its very history connected to the divide between the local neighbourhoods and the tourist fare we will explore in this text.

## Frontstage vs Backstage

Vital for social encounters, political representation, and self-expression, public space is where publics gather and connect, shaping cityscapes through perception and impromptu actions (Orhan, 2022, p.204). Given the indistinct duality and dynamic between publicness and privateness (ibid.) and the time-specific characteristic of space (Lefebvre, 1967, p. 10), linguistic landscape study allows us to reflect on a certain moment in a static fashion (Lu, 2023).

The frontstage and backstage theory can be a useful tool for interpretation. Frontstage is for the public and services, where individuals are aware of being watched and act habitually, intentionally, or subconsciously to a scripted routine or societal norms and expectations; while backstage, a safeguarded private space, is free from all those and allows people to reveal their true selves (Goffman, 1956, p.66-132; Lu, 2023). Viewing tourism in this framework, backstage refers to the authentic daily life of the hosts, while cultural representations presented to tourists constitute frontstage (MacCannell, 1976, p.91-96; Wang, et al., 2024, p.3).

During our exploration, we noticed that the main streets were extremely crowded and bustling with business activities. However, just a few steps away, the adjoining alleys seemed quiet, or even deserted, with several nameless vacant dwellings and closed restaurants and hotels. As Venice suffers from housing problems and over-tourism, these may suggest the transformations of space functions— (residential) private backstage gave way to public service frontstage, being (unsuccessfully or over-rapidly) commercialised or reoriented. Consequently, what has emerged are ‘tourist spaces,’ where visitors are often perceived as intruders who inevitably disturb the local balance (Urry, 1990, in Zanini, 2017, p. 165).

Here is a linguistic landscape showing how frontstage and backstage are negotiated through ‘staged authenticity’, the phenomenon where the backstage is (re)presented on the frontstage (MacCannell, 1999, p.96-100; Urry, 1990, p.9). In the following photo, such a gate (common in our region) divides two public areas: the bustling main street and an alley whose entry is only symbolically restricted. This creates a scenario where privacy control and management (backstage) is staged within a publicly accessible passage (frontstage), regulating outside interactions. These gates requalify public alleys as Privately Owned “Public” Spaces, potentially shifting them to semi-public or quasi-public status; by influencing how public space is perceived or experienced by the public, the transformation intends for subtraction rather than enhancement of public amenities (Radović, 2020, p.315).

An example of the gates: the ability to control connectivity, and thereby to be more or less private, is an essential characteristic of good-quality human and urban spaces as conflicts and conflicting freedoms can be mediated (Mehaffy & Elmlund, 2020, p.461).



## Irregular use of Infrastructure

One highly visible phenomenon on the insula is the irregular use of infrastructure for informal communication along Strada Nova and in residential areas. While many infrastructure elements with smooth surfaces attract stickers and graffiti, the most striking contrast is between the types of communication on ATMs along major roads and the square in-wall ENEL electrical boxes in residential streets. Due to their unique placement – flush with the wall instead of in front of it like rain pipes or fire hydrants – ATMs and ENEL boxes are neither entirely part of the building nor wholly public space. They are privately owned, but public-facing and two-dimensional. As bottom-up communication is rarely removed from them unless it impedes functionality, they can serve as informal canvases and noticeboards.



(Map of insula)

## ATMs



The highly visible location of ATMs turns them into attractive spaces for public discourse and protest – addressing passers-by as well as the briefly captive audience of ATM customers. The stickers found here are generally high-contrast or brightly coloured and while some have messages from commercial actors, such as a recurring round sticker advertising a tattoo shop, others reference broader societal discourses, such as a yellow sticker drawing attention to the issue of carbon emissions and burning fossil fuel or stickers criticising capitalism. Others have less direct messaging but multiple axes of intertextual reference, such as a sticker reading ‘Sam was here’ that is, on the one hand, an homage to the ‘Straight Outta Compton’ logo, which is itself a reference to the US ‘Parental Advisory’ warning label. On the other hand, “[Name] was here” stickers also reference more well-known examples like ‘BNE was here’ or the “Kilroy was here” graffiti of World War II.

(Stickers on a cash drop box on Strada Nova, Venice)



In a striking departure from the usual pattern where bottom-up expressions of speech do not interfere with the functionality of ATMs and are removed infrequently, one particular instance stood out: black paint had been sprayed directly on the ATM screen, rendering it unusable, while the adjacent wall bore the slogan 'Free Palestine', also in black spray paint. Just two days after capturing this image, all traces of the graffiti had been meticulously removed, erasing the visual protest.

(Graffiti on an ATM near Ponte San Felice, Venice)

### Electric Boxes

We now move on to our second unit of analysis – ENEL (Italian National Board of Electricity) electricity boxes. These boxes appear in the linguistic landscape of the city mostly through graffiti (often illegible) but, more poignantly, through their repeated usage as public notice boards for and by Venetians. The most common sights are trade workers offering their services, or homeowners seeking them. The practice does not appear to be restricted to the specific period of our visit – scraps of older, similar notices could often be seen.



(Example of minimally altered ENEL box)



Other types of local services are also advertised, as well as requests for housing. In the image below, a Ukrainian woman offers her services as a house cleaner, and a couple working in retail advertise their need for a home. It is interesting to note that they know their audience. They advertise to the Venetians living in Venice, making it clear the value they place on keeping the historic centre ‘alive, active, and populated.’ They know their target audience – Venetian homeowners – and know how and where to reach them – with a message of regard for their lives in the city, posted on the electric boxes they often use to communicate.

(example of trade workers offering their services, pasted over a homeowner looking for worker for a restoration project)



(electricity box including messages from a young couple searching for housing and a Ukrainian woman searching for work)

This couple’s messaging allows us to open a brief aside on a salient social issue in Venice. As frontstage dominates, the backstage diminishes, and residents feel frustrated that their private lives and ownership are being eroded by touristic pressures (Zanini, 2017, p.166.) Gentrification ensues, transforming urban areas into exclusive markets proliferating entertainment and tourism venues (Gotham, 2015, in *ibid.*). This shift has enriched the frontstage, raising living standards, convenience, and property values, but has also driven out residents to more affordable locales, leaving behind a

disproportionately high number of vacant homes repurposed for tourism-focused businesses, including second homes and properties owned by non-residents (*ibid.*, p.170-172). We can see this conflict manifesting itself through informal communications in the linguistic landscape.





(A real estate firm speculatively approaches homeowners, reflecting interests in encroaching on residential areas)



(A university requests affordable housing for students and staff, indicating local housing market challenges)

Such tensions mirror the ongoing struggle between preserving private, community-oriented spaces and meeting the demands of commercial and developmental interests. The landscape of a city invites collaborative customisation and emphasises socio-cultural attributes over top-down pre-settings. The separation of our research area into two zones (one touristic, the other Venetian and residential) is an acknowledgement of these social tensions in the city, and an attempt to observe their impact in the linguistic landscape. In other words, since the audiences that interact with the ATMs and electric boxes differ (although at points certainly overlap), what differences can we observe in their messaging? What different priorities shine through?

Finally, it must be said that it is not our intention to misrepresent the ‘neighbourhood notice board’ style usage of the ENEL boxes or the intensive usage of ATMs as places for bottom-up messaging as a totalising reality. Regarding the ATMs, two were almost completely devoid of stickers, which we attributed to their placement in more peripheral, less visible parts of Strada Nova, which would void them of the function of places for speech acts seeking the highest amount of visibility. For the ENEL boxes, interesting examples of alternative usage stand out, such as a faded artwork by (or at least in the style of) northern Italian street artist Blub, and two collages utilising figures from iconic art pieces. Albeit stirring images which could warrant their own extended discussion, these were only three out of three dozen electric boxes we found within the insula and are the exception rather than the rule. In contrast, 20 boxes had been outfitted with still recognisable neighbourhood notices (and even more could have existed – we cannot discount the possibility of notices on the remaining boxes having been torn up or unmade by the weather).



(A collage by an unknown artist and a (vandalised) artwork by Blub or an imitator)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, by examining commercial and residential areas, we sought to highlight the dynamic interplay and contrasts between frontstage tourism activities and backstage local life. Our analysis has shown that the ATMs and ENEL boxes serve as attractive canvases for bottom-up messages, showcasing the community's voice, but are often used in differing manners, in accordance with the audience that is being targeted. The ENEL boxes were usually outfitted with messages pertaining to the daily lives and work of locals. The ATMs, on the other hand, were often used as high-impact canvases for statements which sought the wider audience provided by a busy tourist-filled thoroughfare, including political statements, protests, and promotion of businesses.

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## The Creame of the Crop: an Analysis of Multilingual Signs around the Frari, Venice

By Katie Baker, Emily Cooper, Gabriel Labrie, Nicla Pennacchio, and Esther Roza

As part of the Summer School, Linguistic Landscapes: Using Signs and Symbols to Translate Cities, our team was tasked with carrying out a case study starting from the Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari Basilica in the sestiere of San Polo, Venice.

While exploring the area around the Frari, we noticed the following sign in front of a bar:

*What does this divergent text tell us about the potential audience? What do the spelling mistakes tell us about the owner or the creator? (cf. Spolsky Handwritten bottom-up sign with divergent text 2008, 31). in Italian and English (Calle de le Chiovere)*



*The boundary of the sestiere of San Polo, highlighted.*

The questions raised by this image piqued our curiosity about multilingual signage. Therefore, we decided to focus on signs containing more than one language (cf. Backhaus 2005 on Tokyo and Moser 2020 on Luxembourg City). Due to time constraints, the shaded area of the sestiere was omitted for this analysis, thus limiting our evaluation to the streets immediately surrounding the Santa

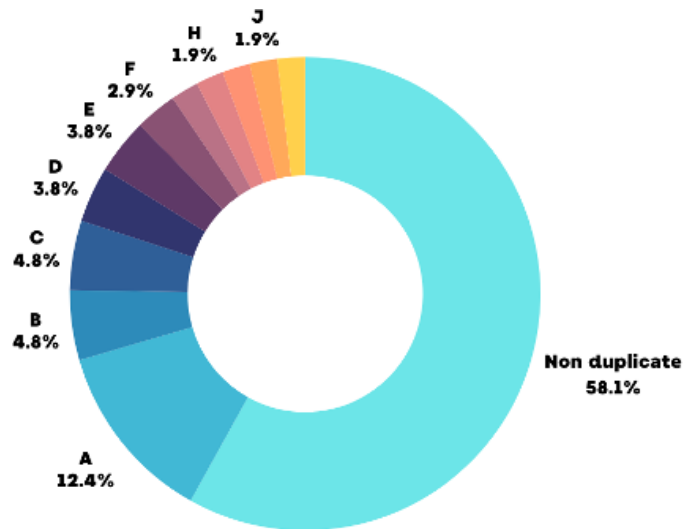


*A larger version of the previous map with all insulae apart from Frari and Nomboli shaded, and the routes around the basilica and the Vaporetto stop are highlighted.*

Maria Gloriosa dei Frari Basilica, which permeates the insulae of Frari and Nomboli. We also examined the shortest path from the Basilica to its closest vaporetto stop, San Tomà, as this is a common route taken by ourselves and other tourists (cf. Lynch 1960, 46--49).

Furthermore, only signs of the A4 format or larger were included. The size and language criteria allowed for systematic, thorough data collection in the defined area. Our final corpus accounts for 105 signs.

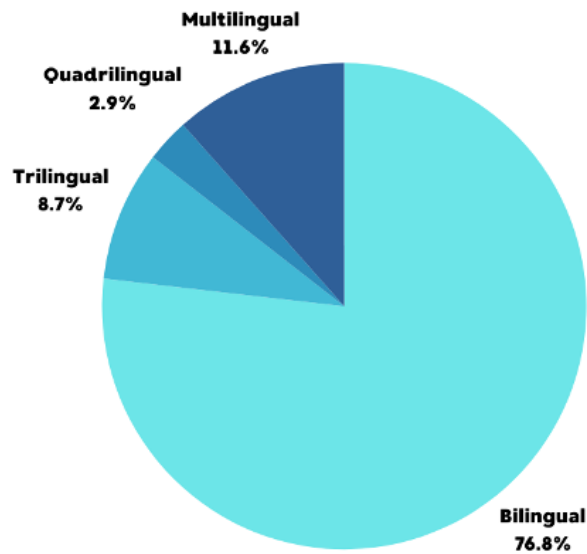
## Duplication



From the start of this project, we knew our perspectives of Venice and its sestieri would be biased due to our various identities: as tourists, students and our individual abilities, interests and backgrounds. For these reasons, we considered how we could best analyse the sestieri through an objective lens; using statistics with taxonomies, to challenge our perception.

Out of the 105 signs we catalogued there were 44 duplicate signs; the purpose of the majority of these duplicates was to advertise, as opposed to providing information or warnings. This suggests the types of posters duplicated were funded by organisations that had the means to do so, and therefore able to maintain this status. This is evident as the most duplicated signs advertise culture exhibits. This begets the question of who is the intended demographic: locals or tourists?

As short-term visitors in Venice, this dichotomy permeates every part of our analysis, as well as the setting of Venice itself as a popular tourist destination. This is further emphasised by the polarity between bilingualism and other forms of multilingualism – as stated in the following chart.



Many of the duplicate signs also featured the correct legal documentation needed in Venice. This suggests that there is a level of control over how Venice is perceived and that it must be driven by those with the funds. This curation is catered towards tourists which aids in maintaining this economy and provides little for the locals; who must hand make their signage on a smaller scale.

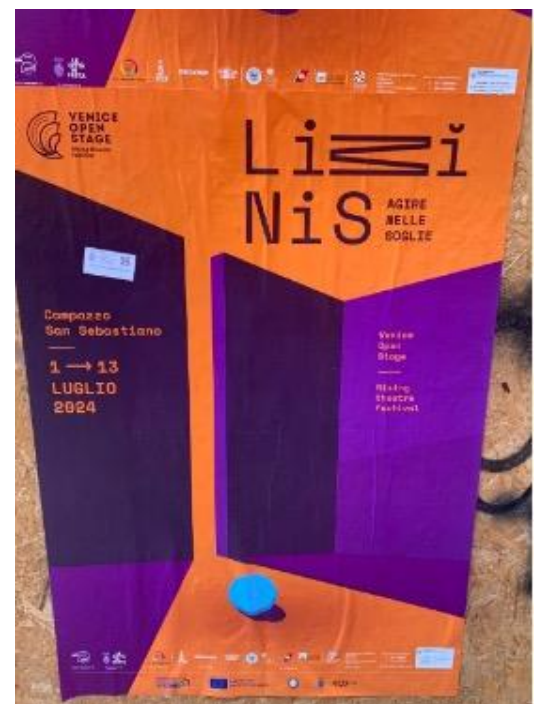
### Discourses

As previously mentioned, a specific set of signs has been analysed as part of the field research, for which several taxonomies apply.

One of the different perspectives used to approach such signs is an attempt to categorise them based on the type of taxonomy they represent, and the “artistic” discourse is observed extensively.

Despite appearing monolingual, the peculiarity of this sign lies in its being written almost completely in Italian. The title reads “LIMINIS”, a genitive of the Latin word limen, which translates to doorstep or threshold depending on the context, used to advertise a theatre festival. The Italian subtitle “AGIRE NELLE SOGLIE” which translates to ‘acting in the thresholds/doorsteps’ adds to this sort of exchange taking place in the thresholds, involving a mixed meaning and feeling of separation and continuity between inside and outside.

The graphics used in the poster connote a doorway which accompanies the title, emphasising the use of liminal space and culminating in this powerful example of a multimodal sign.



## Bottom-Up Private Signs



Our corpus highlights bottom-up private signs, these are signs in which the creator deliberately chose to include languages other than Italian in their advertisements. This of course can signify multiple implications; openness for instance.

For example, this sign with 'Open' is written in multiple languages. We see "APERTO" at the top of a cardboard/solid board which we can assume was written first. Underneath it is a printed sign with the same "APERTO" in typed letters to which the words "OPEN", "ABIERTO", "OUVERT", and "GEÖFFNET" were added, in handwriting. The owner here decided to expand their reach by adding the word open in more languages.

We see the same type of pattern in the commercial signs in the following images:



Although these can be perceived as an openness towards people speaking in languages other than Italian, it can also be seen as a commercial tactic. These are two different shops advertising mask-making workshops that both advertise in more than 2 languages, perhaps also attempting to rival each other.

Since these signs display more than 2 languages, it raises a question of whether this would expand their reach further than the signs only displaying English and Italian.

Nevertheless, beyond these superficial commercial tactics, could it be that the decision to exploit or exclude certain languages from Venice’s signs points to a more implicit, yet subtle, bias towards those visiting the city? More specifically, are languages being selected in a way that aims to exclude groups of individuals from the city’s own discourse, allowing only certain individuals to access the information presented through signage? Take the following sign as an example:



At first glance, we are faced with a seemingly innocent tourist-focused sign, indicating the price of entry, visiting hours, and clothing permitted when entering the infamous Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari Basilica. However, delving beneath the surface, it could be assumed that the decision to translate select parts in different languages (for example “audio guide”), constitutes a tactic that allows authorities to actively address specific nationalities whilst excluding others.

This becomes particularly evident when we consider the section of text referring to “i residenti nel Comune di Venezia”, which states that ‘Residents of the municipality of Venice can enter free of charge by showing their ID card at the ticket office’, written exclusively in Italian. This poses the following questions: why are Venetians addressed in standard Italian, rather than Venetian dialect? Surely, this would be an effective method of tackling the gradual extinction of such dialects within the Italian context. Yet, apart from the fact that one of the defining features of dialects is their almost exclusive use in oral communication, it would be a discrepancy in terms of audience design to write an official message regarding the exemption from the entrance fee to one of the prominent, world-known monuments in Venice in the local dialect. Also, since not all residents of Venice were born and raised with the local dialect, the use of standard Italian, which may be assumed to be omnipresent among all residents of this Italian city, seems to be the optimal choice in this situation. On a deeper level, these first observations raise interesting research questions about the ideologies and implicit bias held by those who create this type of signage.



## Conclusion

In conclusion, we must consider that with more time and fewer geographical constraints, we could conduct a more thorough examination of the area and varying taxonomies in more detail. One option we could consider concerns the method of data collection; which we could apply to the taxonomies of linguality or distribution etc. Especially the method of eye-tracking which proved extremely effective at this stage and seems to have great potential in the field of applied linguistics and semiotics (see, among other studies, Chana et al 2023). In our analysis, we were able to review the use of multiple languages on public bottom-up signs to present the varying dichotomies around the Frari.

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