When I first came to Venice in 2004 I tried, as a sort of autodidact to decode the esthetic of Venice. I observed the façades of the great palazzos on the Canal Grande, including the Ducal Palace, and was struck by the complete indifference to anything that was not the façade. “Aha,” I thought, “an esthetic derived more from scenography than architecture,” and was quite proud of myself. A bit later I learned that John Ruskin had said as much a century and a half before. I came to believe that it was impossible to make an original observation about Venice, a thought which I felt was no less than fatal to my project. It was not until I saw the beginnings of Wolfgang Scheppe’s Migropolis project that I understood the possibility of inventing a visual language to describe contemporary Venice. Migropolis interrogates the mechanisms that define and determine the city’s modernity while also engaging in a theoretical debate on the nature of a post-modern, visual, culture.

Lewis Baltz
Migropolis is a large scale project concerned with the transversality of an urban territory subjected to the conditions of globalization. The term globalization is misused in a societal consensus where it prospers as a pretentious gnosis still being a mere void abstraction. The Migropolis-project lays open the system of globalization by the means of a concrete, minute and tangible exposure of global structures on a confined urban territory. The practices to achieve this are the result of a detournement: reapplying the affirmative modes and visual techniques of a society of the spectacle in a discursive way.

It is the metropolitan area of Venice that is empirically investigated as a complex and paradox paradigm being exceptionally exposed to change caused by a worldwide connectivity, reference and interdependence of predominant values in economy and culture. The project's aim is to develop visual strategies for outlining the structures of Migropolis based on the territory of Venice, that acts due to its excessive numbers of tourists and immigrants as an anticipatory model of globalization.

In the pervasive society of the spectacle, one encounters an almost absolute hegemony of the fictionalized image. Reflecting this, the project attempts to visually represent identifiable phenomena in the city of migration with new cognitive methods in photography, data visualization and image-based technologies. The focus is on the representation of discoursive - as opposed to persuasive - acts of visual communication.

This specific methodical approach is based on an epistemological doubt in the cognitive properties of visualization within the context of a performative system of images, as being in use in a society whose public consensus is established through the rhetorics of imagery. The collaborators tried to explore the options and techniques of a visual language within a societal iconicographic infrastructure that is aimed to pictorial affirmation. The mediated culture is based on fictionalization as a means of image-production. The project instead tries to develop a new practice of the discursive image. This practice is going to be established in all genres of visual communication: notational systems as used for displaying quantitative data. Mapping and cartography as used for displaying qualitative data and case studies. And a graphic treatment for the representation of psychogeographic analyses of the territory in question.
The Monopoly gameboard is a singular societal visual paradigm for a connotation of territory and economy. Because of this metaphorical quality, it is used as a background for the logical structure of the Migropolis project. There is also a tradition in the Situationist movement of using gameboards, the rules of games, and game theory. Moreover, chance plays a decisive role for the topic of this survey. Once, the interviewee of a case study, that had migrated from a country with a devastated economy and without any prospects, told the interviewer: “You were really lucky to be born elsewhere.”
In winter 2006, under the aegis of philosopher Wolfgang Scheppe, a collective of students from the IUAV University in Venice fanned out to subject their city to a process of forensic structural mapping. Out of this field work, conducted in the Situationist tradition, there developed a three-year urban project that produced an enormous archive comprising tens of thousands of photographs, case studies, motion patterns and statistic data. In this archive, Venice, the place of longing at the junction of three migration corridors, emerges as a front-line European city and an exemplary prototype of the increasingly globalized city in which a decimated inner-city population meets armies of tourists and a parallel economy supported by illegal immigrants. In a map cleverly branching out into essays, visual arguments, data visualizations and interviews, the globalized territory of Venice is microscopically dissected and defined as an urban metaphor: the city becomes an “atlas of a global situation”.

## Escalation of the Globalized City.

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**Exhibition schedule:**

- Bevilacqua LaMasa, Venice
  - October 8 – December 8, 2009
  - And further venues

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**Book published by Hatje Cantz:**

- Ed. Wolfgang Scheppe,
  - foreword by Angela Vettese,
  - essays by Giorgio Agamben, Valeria Burgio, Marco de Michelis and Wolfgang Scheppe
- C. 1216 pp., c. 3,000 ills., c. 2,500 in color
- 17 x 24 cm, hardcover
- 2 volumes in slipcase
- € 68.00, $ 105.00, £ 60.00
- ISBN 978-3-7757-2485-2
- October 2009

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www.migropolis.com
Wolfgang Scheppe

Vita

Wolfgang Scheppe works in a field of transversality where science and visual arts overlap. He holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, Germany. His primary areas of study included Communication Pragmatics, Politics of Representation and Speech Act Theory, resulting in his dissertation, Speech Act Theory and Philosophy of Language. Wolfgang Scheppe has taught at different institutions and has many publications in the area of visual culture.

Professionally, he established Wolfgang Scheppe Associates (WSA), a multidisciplinary creative office specializing in the development of communications- and identity-strategies for countries, organizations and corporations as well as non-profit projects. The work of WSA has received international acknowledgement in a large number of essays, reviews and features. WSA received numerous awards from the Art Director's Club of Berlin and NewYork, several European Design Awards and other prices.

Among his most widely acclaimed projects is his co-founded and co-authored visual archive on urbanism, named Endcommercial, that has been published as a book and shown to international acclaim at leading art institutions in the US and Europe. His work is usually aimed to construct large archives in collaboration with collectives established for the respective topics, and an epistemic reflection on the capacity of cognition in visual communication. Great effort is dedicated to the logic structure of the archive.

Wolfgang Scheppe’s work has been exhibited at KunstWerke Institute for Contemporary Art (Berlin), Storefront for Art and Architecture (NewYork), Fondation Cartier pour l’Art Contemporain (Paris), Fondazione Olivetti (Rome) and Haus der Kunst (Munich) among others.

He teaches politics of representation, image theory and philosophy at the IIAV, Venezia.


www.migropolis.com
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