

# EMOTION, LOCATION AND THE SENSES: A VIRTUAL DÉRIVE SMELL MAP OF PARIS. PLEASE USE THIS TEMPLATE FOR YOUR FINAL PAPER

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## ABSTRACT

Immerse yourself in a tour of a city in which you meander based on odour using associative memories to guide you to other memorable locations, to hidden emotions.

Designed with the intent of investigating connections between scents and a city this study uses design to show how emotion, location and memory can be linked at semiotic and personal levels. It explores those links in the form of an art installation, a smell-induced “virtual dérive” smellmap experience through an urban landscape. The audience response was one of quiet reflection, their sniffing was a three-stage process, their written contributions led to an understanding of how certain smells induce types of behaviours and reactions – the smell of coffee induced people to write a story, the scent of wooden floors brought to mind a different era.

Smellmapping poses its own problems; smells are ephemeral thus forcing us to consider the nature of temporality in such creations. Consideration also needs to be taken of how to lead the audience through the landscape. The urban landscape belongs to the humans who populate it; future smell maps need to belong to the permanent and transient populations who inhabit that space.

**Keywords:** urban, smell, emotion, location, map

## INTRODUCTION

We all experience cities in different ways. Have you ever thought about how you might experience your environment if you were to walk without a destination or purpose and to engage in a new way with your

surroundings, and how you might use one of your five senses over the others to conjure feelings or to explore anew? How might your sensory awareness be altered? Would this create a barrier or open up a new world? What might you learn about yourself in relation to your environment? How would you feel?

Based on research into psychogeography I present elements of a city, Paris, communicated through its scents and smells to an audience in a different location. I ask the audience to wander at will through a variety of city locations by smelling one or more scents of smells that I have captured and bottled. In order to ascertain if smells and scents can evoke a response I ask the audience to note down a response (emotion) to one or more smells and/or to note down where (location) one or more of the smells reminds them. I was interested to determine the links between emotion and location through our sense of smell. I want the audience to react to the smells in the bottles and record their first associative thought to recall emotion and location.

## CONTEXT

### *PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY*

The first dérivé of Paris by Guy Debord yielded unities of ambience, spatial localization, axes of passage and exits and defences as illustrated on the map entitled “The Naked City” by Guy Debord (Figure 1).

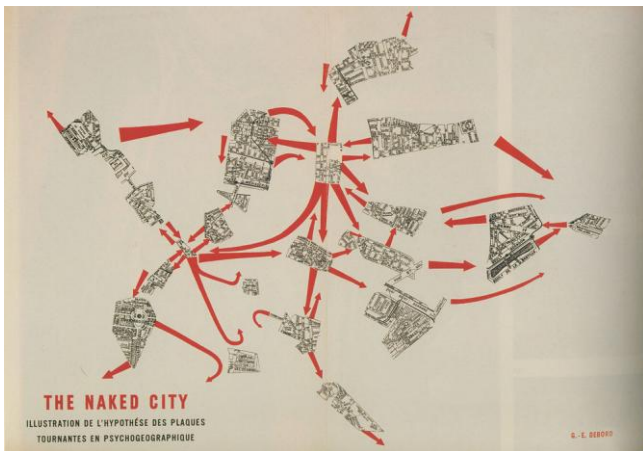


Figure 1. Debord's 1957 psychogeographic map of Paris

Psychogeography's strength is its transience. Any psychogeographically based map represents a moment in time, an archive of a specific moment in time in the life of a city – a pertinent example is the map of the OWU campus (Figure 2) created by drawing around a hand. Students on a summer program at the school followed the route indicating the locations of smells, textures and sounds as well as their positive and negative emotional responses to them.



Figure 2. 2009 Psychogeographic map of Ohio Wesleyan University campus charting smells, textures and sounds.

### SENSORY TOURISM

Sensually-based memory is an area of increasing interest for the tourism industry whose higher-end clients, tiring of activity-based experiences, are seeking to reactivate and relive the good feelings. Mendriatta (2010) suggests that the tiniest aromas and sounds can have a profound emotional effect.

### SMELL MAPS

“You Are Here”, an exhibition that maps the psychogeography of New York. Curated by Katherine

Harmon, it opened at the Pratt Gallery in New York in September 2010. The exhibition featured a “Scratch ‘N Sniff NYC” (Figure 3) which, as stated by Twilley, N (2010) on her blog “...consists of two maps, twelve smells, thousands of scratch ‘n sniff stickers and a variable number of linguistic descriptors. A “majority preference” map on the left-hand side extrapolates from Vosshall’s “olfactory demography” to show the dominant odour perception framework in each neighbourhood. Next to it on the right, a crowd-sourced “personal favourite” map will ask each exhibition visitor to position their own smell biases and understanding within the city.”



Figure 3. 2010 Twilley's Scratch 'n' Sniff of New York.

### SMELL MAP AIMS

#### ORIGINAL AIMS

- Present a city environment (based on Paris), communicated through its smell and scents
- To create a studio-based “dérive” of Paris according to the ideas generated by Guy Debord and the psychogeographers
- To find out if smell evokes an associative memory of either another location or an emotion

#### ARGUMENTS

- That smell can evoke memories that recall location and emotion
- Design can be both artistic and participatory, that the audience are willing to participate

- Smell can be an emotional, interactive and participatory experience

## DESIGN

### SMELL SELECTION

I drew on personal memory, asked friends who live(d) in the city and referenced Wyatt, C (2003) "I know that when the time comes to leave this city in a few years, I may forget some of the sights and sounds. But if I shut my eyes, I know that, imprinted on my memory, I will always have the smells of Paris."

### SMELL FABRICATION

Smells were created using recipes developed in my kitchen (Figure 4), black velvet, plastic bags, 100% alcohol and Polish vodka, distilled water, Gauloises cigarettes smoked by a friend (Figure 5), coffee grounds, baked baguettes, fried steak, urine, some essential oils, wine, wax polish.

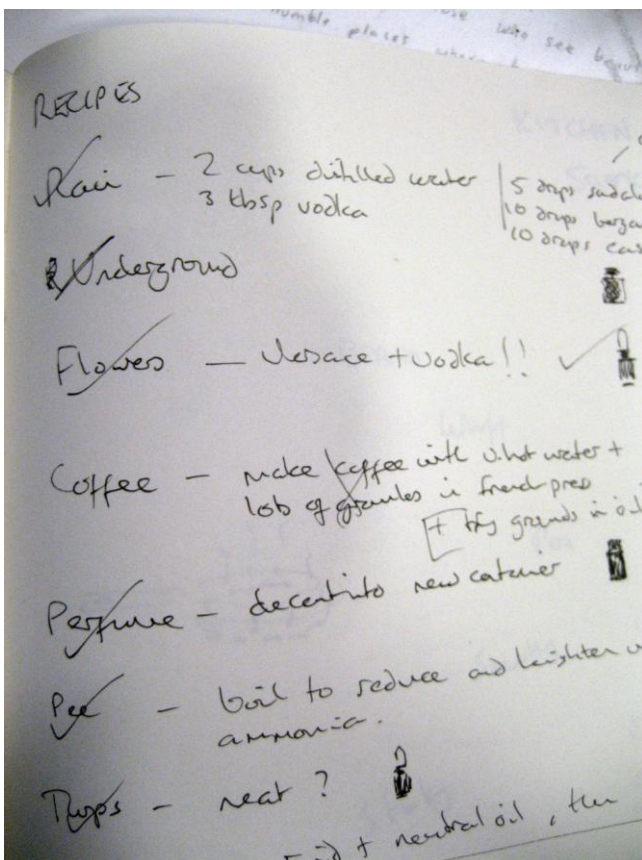


Figure 4. Smell Map smell recipes



Figure 5. Collecting the scent of Gauloises using a plastic bag, black velvet and a smoking friend

### SMELL HOUSING

Creating the right atmosphere and ambiance of a Paris perfume counter was an important consideration. I purchased antique bottles and essential oil bottles (Figure 6) for the 11 scents placed onto individual "mirrored" shelving.



Figure 6. Collection of bottles and liquids to create the smellmap scents

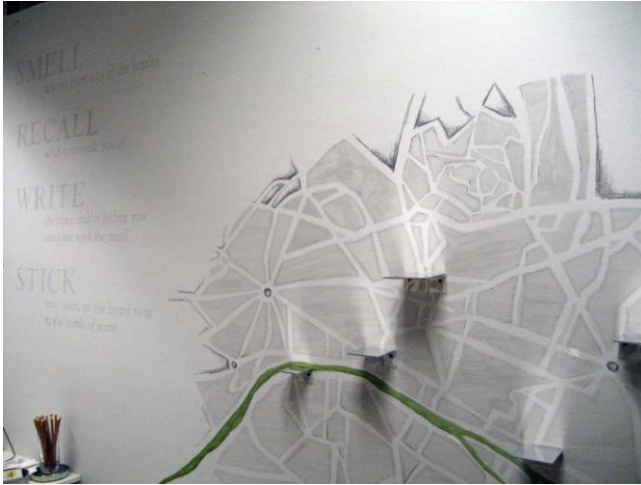


Figure 7. Mirrored shelving for scent bottle placement. Shelves attached to graphic Smellmap.

### SMELL INSTALLATION/GRAPHICS

Designing an unimposing plan view of the city (Figure 8) gave context to the arrangement of shelves. The design, based on a street map, was hand-drawn using grey marker, graphite and watercolour. As an interactive event instructions (Figure 9) were essential; both legible and minimal allowing for individual interpretation. For audience participation I deliberately selected pencils and pale blue and yellow post-it notes to retail the ambience. Cards (Figure 10) itemizing the smells were added for those with curiosity (although they were rarely examined).



Figure 8. Underlying plan view of Paris streets and the River Seine

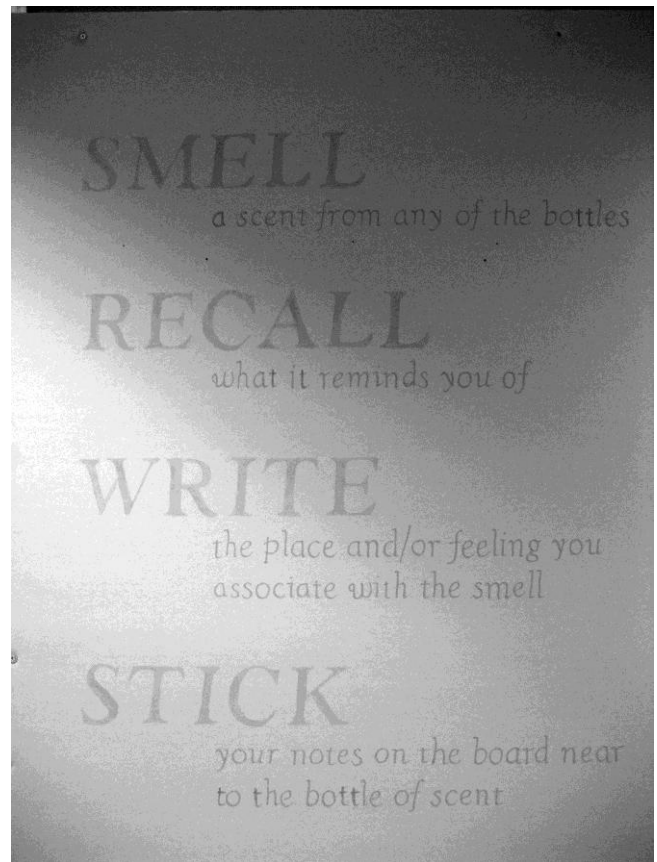


Figure 9. Hand-written instructions



Figure 10. Exemplar Smell Card (one of 11 designed to accompany the Smell Map event)

## EVENT DETAILS

### TIMESCALE

The Paris Smell Map event took place from October 29, 2010 through November 8, 2010 at Edinburgh College of Art as a part of their Open Day for prospective students. I also invited a number of personal contacts from the art world and the non-art world. Signage (Figure 11) to the event was designed based on the visual lexicon of the smellmap.



Figure 11. Signage to the event was posted in the building and used the visual lexicon of the smellmap

### AUDIENCE

- The audience was willing to participate in the interactive element of the exposition (Figure 12), indicating that such an audience is open to new experiences, and to take risks. There were some noxious smells in the display and despite being able to read other comments the audience were still curious enough to sniff for themselves.



Figure 12. Audience voluntarily participating in sniffing

- Age varied from late teens to late 60s and was not recorded in any systematic way. There were no

small children. Ascertained from photographic and video evidence.

- Viewers/sniffers spent at least two minutes studying the different “perfumes” based on video recordings:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLIUC2eCG8s>  
 and  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAC\\_QfD3-8U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAC_QfD3-8U)
- Viewers participated by adding post-it notes (Figures 13 and 14) to the display. The total tally of post-it notes was 532.



Fig 13 Detail of scents with some notes added



Figure 14. Post-it notes added to the Paris Smell Map 2010

## EVENT OBSERVATIONS

### SNIFFING

- Sniffing (Figure 15) was commonly in three phases; initial sniff, secondary sniff, pause, third sniff. Some people suggested this was to get an initial aroma, to recollect and to confirm/validate. This appears to be a quick process of checks and verification of memory.



Figure 15. Sniffing was commonly a 3-stage process

- Some people noted that they had to go away and return as they knew that the scent reminded them of something but it took a while for it to come back to them, they needed the time. This indicates to me that the “fun” element and humour is minimal and that humans take their smell recollections very seriously.
- No noticeable difference of response, approach or attitude between age groups. College students also took part, as did staff.

### AUDIENCE WRITTEN RESPONSES

- The responses are human – uncontrollable and random; they veer in different directions (Figures 16 and 17). They all have their own responses to the scents. Despite my desire to have people write the location and emotion they followed their own associative memories. Controlling an end-user creation requires letting go.

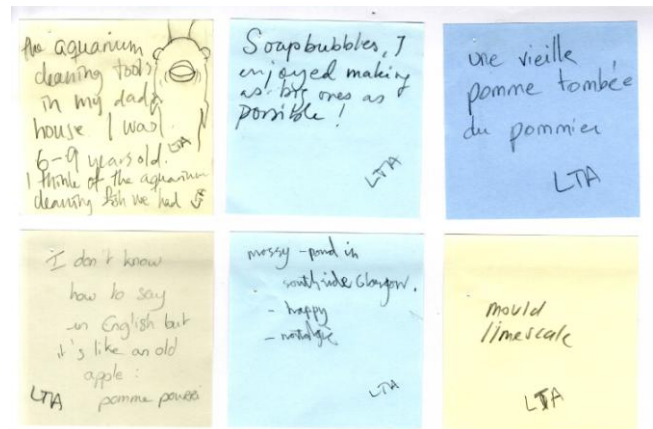


Figure 16. Randomised audience responses to evocations of emotion and location from smells (1)

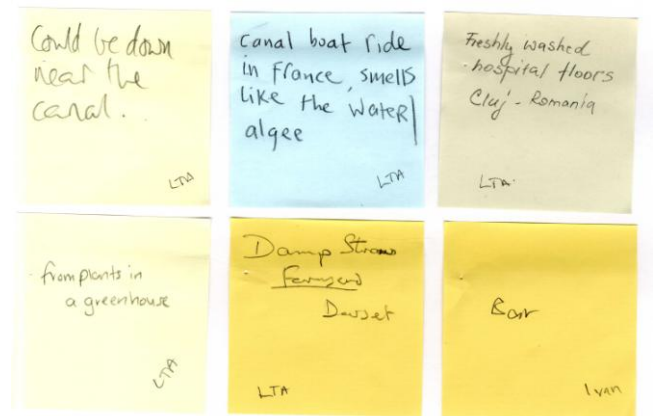


Figure 17. Randomised audience responses to evocations of emotion and location from smells (2)

### AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO THE GRAPHICS

- Six people asked if the background plan map was of Edinburgh. This means that a plan view without street names or a title actually tells you very little about the location in question. It also tells me that all my styling of the shelves and general ambiance was not adequate to suggest Paris. An alternative view here is that the smells took over from the styling and the participatory and personal nature of the event was more important to the audience.
- I developed the cards as a means of explaining what I meant by emotion and location. The cards also contained a unique coding showing where the scents emanated from in the city and where they belonged on the Smell Map. The cards were displayed subtly and very few people looked at them, although one went missing during the course of the event.

# ANALYSIS

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

- The event was calm and thoughtful, engaging and participatory
- Viewers wandered aimlessly through the smells in a *dérive* manner
- Smell is seductive, thought-provoking and serious
- It is impossible to replicate a city through one of the five senses
- The smells acted as catalysts for viewers to recall and reminisce
- The audience cannot be controlled in the way that they respond
- Associative memories were evoked and written down onto 532 notes

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Each of the notes was coded. On reading the notes I detected patterns of response and catalogued the responses using spreadsheet software (Figures 15, 16, 17).

	Sheets		Charts		SmartArt Graphics				WordArt					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
	Code	Number	Location Personal	Location Universal	Emotion Specified	Emotion Unspecified	Object	Person	Era/Age	Activity	Comment	Event	Other	Story
2														
3	LSC	1		1										
4	LSC	2		1						1				
5	LSC	3												
6	LSC	4												1
7	LSC	5												
8	LSC	6		1					1					
9	LSC	7												
10	LSC	8												
11	LSC	9	1											
12	LSC	10												
13	LSC	11		1										1
14	LSC	12		1										1
15	LSC	13		1										
16	LSC	14												
17	LSC	15	1											1
18	LSC	16		1										1
19	LSC	17												
20	LSC	18												
21	LSC	19		1										1
22	LSC	20		1										
23	LSC	21		1										
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26	LSC	24												
27	LSC	25	1											
28	LSC	26												
29	LSC	27												1
30	LSC	28												1
31	LSC	29	1											
32	LSC	30	1											1
33	LSC	31												
34	LSC	32		1										1
35	LSC	33												
36	LSC	34												1
37	LSC	35												
38	LSC	36		1										
39	LSC	37												1
40	LSC	38												
41	LSC	39												1
42	LSC	40												1
43	LSC	41	1											1

Categories Most Often Cited (Percentage of Total)	LSC	MSL	RCM	JDT	PSA	AGV	PVH	PDT	FLB	HDV	RSM	CSM	LTA	AVN
Object	65	55	70	69	71	65	64	58	67	32	30	30	45	64
Location:Universal	35	55	35	22	42	27	52	28	41	43	40	47	45	25
Emotion:Unspecified	51	40	50	36	38	43	33	17	30	27	53	47	37	31
Story	12	20	15	17	4	14	19	31	20	19	25	56	42	42
Location:Personal	14	5	10	22	8	11	19	25	2	24	27	33	47	42
Activity	23	10	15	11	0	5	5	25	4	24	32	47	21	8
Person	14	0	25	25	13	41	10	14	9	5	27	12	3	8
Era/Age	7	10	10	11	0	19	2	19	0	38	28	7	13	6
Emotion:Specified	14	0	0	11	8	14	14	17	20	8	7	18	11	3
Other	0	10	5	6	0	5	5	3	2	8	0	7	3	0
Event	23	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	4	3	0	0	0	3
Comment	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	11	8	0

Location:Personal	FLB	MSL	PSA	RCM	AGV	LSC	PVH	JDT	HDV	PDT	RSM	CSM	AVN	LTA	Musty Cellars
Location:Personal	2	5	8	10	11	14	19	22	24	25	27	33	42	47	
Location:Universal															Urine
Location:Universal	JDT	AVN	AGV	PDT	LSC	RCM	RSM	FLB	PSA	HDV	LTA	CSM	PVH	MSL	
Emotion:Specified	22	25	27	28	35	35	40	41	42	43	45	45	47	52	55
Emotion:Unspecified	MSL	RCM	AVN	RSM	PSA	HDV	JDT	LTA	LSC	AGV	PVH	PDT	17	18	20
Emotion:Unspecified	0	1	3	7	8	8	11	11	14	14	14	14	17	17	20
Story	PDT	HDV	FLB	AVN	PVH	JDT	LTA	PSA	MSL	AGV	CSM	RCM	LSC	RSM	Gauloises
Story	17	27	30	31	33	36	37	38	40	43	47	50	51	53	
Activity	PSA	LSC	AGV	RCM	JDT	PVH	HDV	MSL	FLB	AGM	PDT	LTA	AVN	CSM	Coffee
Activity	4	12	14	15	17	19	19	20	20	25	31	42	42	56	
Person	PSA	FLB	AGV	PVH	AVN	MSL	JDT	RCM	LTA	LSC	HDV	PDT	RSM	CSM	Coffee
Person	0	4	5	5	8	10	11	15	21	23	24	25	32	47	
Era/Age	MSL	LTA	HDV	AVN	FLB	PVH	CSM	PSA	LSC	PDT	RCM	JDT	RSM	AGV	Perfume
Era/Age	0	3	5	8	9	10	12	13	14	14	25	25	27	41	
Event	PSA	FLB	PVH	AVN	LSC	CSM	RCM	JDT	LTA	AGV	PDT	RSM	HDV	CSM	Wax Polish/Wooden Floor
Event	0	0	2	6	7	7	10	10	11	13	19	19	28	38	
Object	MSL	JDT	PSA	AGV	PDT	RSM	CSM	LTA	HDV	AVN	FLB	RCM	PVH	LSC	Wine
Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	5	5	23	
Object	RSM	CSM	HDV	LTA	MSL	PDT	PVH	AVN	LSC	AGV	FLB	JDT	RCM	PSA	Drains
Object	30	30	32	45	55	58	64	64	65	65	67	69	70	71	

Figures 15, 16, 17. Using spreadsheet software to analyse the emotions and locations.

Quantitative analysis yielded unexpected results. Some smells were popular than others. The smells led the audience to write about far more than just location and emotion; namely objects, people, activities, eras, events as well as what I termed “unspecified locations” (e.g. granny’s bedroom) and unspecified emotions. I designed a map (Figure 18) to summarise the findings. The trails are marked in coloured pencil and the destinations are hand-written.



Figure 18. Designed response to the where smells took the audience

- The most written-about smell was that of Gauloises!
- Musty cellars encourages recollections of personal locations/spaces
- Urine made people recall universally known locations
- Strong cheese evoked specified emotions
- The smell of recently smoked Gauloises cigarettes elicited unspecified emotions
- Coffee evoked stories
- Coffee made people recall an activity

- Perfume conjured memories of people
- Wooden floors brought an era or an age to mind
- Wine made people think of an event
- Drains prompted recollections of object

## BOOKS OF EVOCATION

The post-it notes are laden with emotional content and as such commence new narratives of their own (Figure 19). To both preserve them and showcase them as such I selected randomly placing them with small photographs I took in Paris. I combined individual “bande de lecture” photographs (a slightly larger version of a contact print used by French photographers) and post-it notes in hand-covered photo albums (Figure 20). Together they form new narratives as note and image interact on a single page, and follow each other as part of a new sequence.



Figure 19. New narratives formed from the emotional recollections evoked by smell

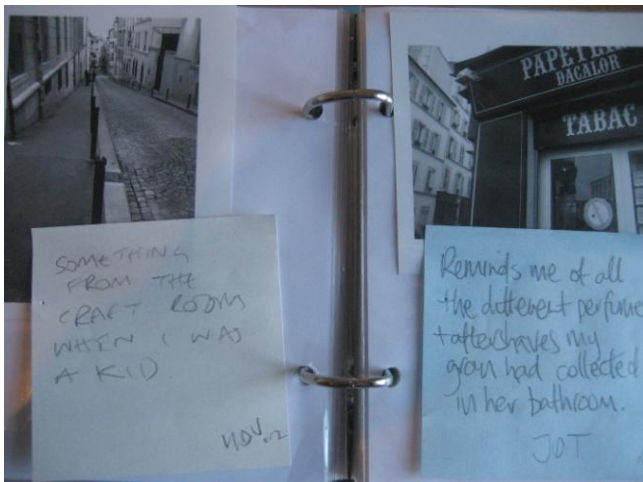


Figure 20. Post-it notes and bande de lecture photographs displayed and preserved

## SMELL MAPPING IN THE FUTURE

In discussing current issues facing mappers Cosgrove, D (2004) suggests that there is still much to be done in adding humanity to the urban landscape and to modern cartography, “The contemporary city presents both complex new challenges and enormous opportunities for mapping as do emerging survey and plotting technologies. Indeed, the map may be the only medium through which contemporary urbanism can achieve visual coherence...The goal of rendering legible the complex, dynamic and living entity that is a city remains an urgent one... Urban space and cartographic space remain inseparable; as each is transformed their relationship alters.”

Urbanism concerns the environment and the humans that live, work and play within it. It is with this in mind that I base current Smell Map development on local research, encouraging the population (permanent and transient) to take part in creating their own sensory cartography.

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