

*Marek S. Szczepański\**, *Weronika Ślęzak-Tazbir\*\**

*People can shut their eyes to grandeur, danger or beauty. And they may shut their ears to a melody or deceitful words. But they cannot escape smells. For smell is a kin of breath. The smell penetrates a man with his breath and people cannot defend themselves against it, if they want to live.*

Patrick Süskind, *Perfume, or the Story of a Murderer* (2006:157)

## **SMELLS OF THE CITY. FRAGMENTATION AND PRIVATISATION OF CITY SPACE FROM AN OSMOSOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

From the five senses that men have, the sense of sight and touch are the most efficient method of examining space and all phenomena that occur in it. It is much more difficult to examine space through the sense of hearing and it is almost impossible to taste it, even if it is humanised. Another human sense, i.e. the sense of smell which enables us to recognise different scents may, due to its transitory and temporary nature, appear to be useless when it comes to examining space. Nonetheless, if we concentrate on all the scents that fill the space, they are frequently a more distinctive and prominent landmark than, for example, a building or a road. Therefore, it seems to be vital that the perspective of sociology of scent be adopted if we want to make a more in-depth analysis and interpretation of space dynamics.

The scents that fill a chosen urban and suburban old industrial region are analysed and observed in this study. What are the scents that fill urban space? On the one hand there is the tempting scent of private space, which is filled with artificial perfumes and air fresheners. However, on the other hand there is the unpleasant and offensive odour from neglected backyards and outhouses; the odour coming from a local beer stand and an aromatic bouquet of cognac in a hotel bar; obnoxious odours emitted by mine slag heaps and the scent of the pine forest.

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\* Institute of Sociology, Silesian University, Warsaw School of Advanced Psychology.

\*\* Institute of Sociology, Silesian University.

We aim to show that a wide range of different smells, ranging from delicate and lovely scents to offensive and foul odours, have a growing influence on fragmentation and privatisation of urban space.

## 1. Introduction, or the smell of city space

The diversity of smells and the richness of the sphere which may be examined by the sense of smell are immense. First of all, due to its elusiveness and, secondly, due to the fact that it happens continuously in the course of our perception and interpretation. Of all the five senses of man, as far as initial associations are concerned, only the sense of sight and that of touch are the best, with all their limitations, to investigate space and phenomena that occur in space. It is much harder to investigate a space by means of one's hearing and it seems nearly impossible to taste it, even if that space is entirely humanised. Similarly, the sense of smell by means of which we recognise smells, odours and aromas might seem totally useless in the perception of space, owing to their elusive and fleeting character. And yet, the smell of a place, if we manage to concentrate on it, may sometimes become a much more characteristic benchmark than a building or a road. That is why osmosociological perspective seems to be justified and helpful in obtaining a more complete analysis and interpretation of the dynamics of space.

The present study aims to offer observations and analyses of the smells of selected city and suburban areas of an old industrial region.

A mixture of what aromas makes up the smell of a city?

On the one hand, an alluring smell of private public spaces, artificially flavoured with perfumes and air fresheners, and on the other, the stench of squalid shacks and courtyards, the reek of a local beer stand and an exclusive bouquet of cognac in a hotel bar, telluric fumes of slag heaps and the aromatic scent of pine forests. Such polar opposites of smells increasingly affect, as we will try to manifest, the city space – its fragmentation and privatisation.

The diversity of smells in the area of an old industrial region is as great as it is vital for the emergence of increasingly distinct boundaries within the city space. The Latin word *fragmentum*, meaning a 'lump', very well captures the nature of aromatic subdivisions of a space. They are vague and elusive, but more and more often they affect the identity of a place and people living there, and that is why they deserve sociological consideration.

## 2. The power of smell

The human sense of smell and human capability to perceive and categorise smells have been long underestimated. In comparison to most animals, human abilities to detect and, first of all, to distinguish between smells, are limited. For years, many scientists considered the sense of smell and the sense of taste to be of lesser importance to mankind. Obviously, people, together with arboreal and fly-

ing vertebrates, are classified as micro-somatic creatures, i.e. with limited olfactory capabilities. Macro-somatic creatures, that is, those for whom the sense of smell is the dominating one, make a completely different use of it. Very few of us know that a human being has five million cells sensitive to smells and that only a part of the inhaled air is subject to olfactory inspection. An average inhabitant of the Earth can only distinguish several, or a maximum of a dozen or so thousand of olfactory notes (Brzezicha, Lisiecki 1989:28). Only highly refined *noses* and they count not more than a dozen, employed in perfume industry or wine production, can identify over 30,000 scents.<sup>1</sup> Yet, this can hardly be compared to the capabilities of dogs in this respect. It has been found, for instance, that a dog can distinguish over 500,000 smells<sup>2</sup>. Cynologists claim with Pythagorean confidence that dogs' sensitivity to smells is 11,500 times higher than that of an average man. The bloodhound is an absolute master and an incomparable tracker in this respect as it can pick a scent which is two weeks old and follow it for 220 kilometres. There can be little wonder therefore that trained dogs are used not only in hunting, but are employed, first of all, in rescue operations, criminal investigations, ruin and avalanche searches and in detecting human corpses. They are also invaluable companions of the sick and the blind.

Dogs can define the emotional condition of a person by distinguishing smells exuded by his or her sweat glands. Experts working with dogs claim that a high level of adrenaline in a person triggers off the so-called 'smell of fear' which can alter his or her individual smell and alarm the dog. A tracker dog would know when an epileptic fit might be approaching or when we are seething with anger. Those unique capabilities of dogs were appreciated by Polish police and its Central Forensic Laboratory which increasingly relies on tracker dogs' in its use of the olfactory method for detecting crimes. By the end of 2006, Polish police units had a total of 257 service dogs involved in crime detection procedures, including 99 that were used in olfactory tests, 144 – in searching for drugs, and 14 – in searching for human corpses (Materiały... 2007). Poland can be proud of its great achievements in the development of the olfactory know-how. Although the Americans were the first to train bees and cockroaches in detecting explosives, yet they use the olfactory method on a much lesser scale than it is done in Poland. In 2006, olfactory tests were systematically used throughout the country. Olfactory experts from forensic laboratories performed a total of 1,372 olfactory tests. An average monthly number of tests amounted to 114. Altogether, 2,730 cases of evidence materials and 3,197 cases of comparative materials obtained from the suspects or the accused were examined (Materiały... 2007).

It is worth mentioning that macro-somatic abilities of dogs are becoming more and more popular in medical sciences, since recent experiments seem to support the role of their sense of smell in detecting cancer. This method of biodetection is being developed in Poland by Tadeusz Antoni Jezierski from

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.antoranz.net/CURIOSA/Z-BIOL.OG.HTM>.

<sup>2</sup> It is sometimes said that dogs can distinguish as many as 600,000 smells.

the Department of Animals' Behaviour, Institute of Genetics and Animal Husbandry of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Jastrzębiec. Interestingly, elephants and sharks have an exceptionally well developed sense of smell, the latter being particularly sensitive to the smell and taste of blood. They can detect the presence of blood in a water solution in which blood constitutes as little as one millionth part – this means, more or less, one drop of blood in 115 litres of water.<sup>3</sup> Man can boast of no such abilities, yet the role of the sense of smell in human life, social life in particular, is extremely important. Psychologists were the first to appreciate the role of the sense of smell – although they knew that the sensations of smell were originally less important than those of sight or hearing, they could not remain indifferent to other phenomena which were related to the human sense of smell. First of all, they realised that the sense of smell might acquire a greater significance with a person who had experienced a dysfunction of another of his or her senses. Very often, the blind compensate for the lack of sight not only with the sense of touch, but precisely with the sense of smell. Olfactory capabilities of human beings and the impact of smells on their lives remain only partially explored, but they attract a growing number of scientists in various disciplines. Their efforts were appreciated by the Nobel Prize Committee which, in 2004, awarded the prize in Medicine and Physiology to scientists investigating olfactory abilities of human beings. Two American scientists – Richard Axel and Linda B. Buck – carried out highly complex and long-lasting experiments that provided more information about the human sense of smell (Abbott 2004). It has been long known that human limitations as far as olfactory abilities are concerned are mostly the result of the synthesis of signals that reach the brain. The processing of smells at the level of the cerebral cortex is basically synthetic, that is we encode smells as holistic objects. This means that people are practically unable to distinguish more than two components of any smell (Czerniawska, Czerniawska-Far 2007:10). Jean Baptiste Grenouille, the hero of Patrick Süskind's bestselling novel *Perfume, the Story of a Murderer*, developed his career on the basis of his extraordinary ability, while he himself did not exude any smell at all. Thus, philosophically speaking, he had no sense of identity and maybe this very affliction allowed him to decode with ease all the smells of the world the way they were, as pure phenomena, without any pre-conceptions or earlier knowledge about them. The yearning of man for a more active use of the sense of smell has been epitomised in a number of literary protagonists, not only the murderer of virgins mentioned above. In a similar way, Heinrich Böll chose a man with exceptional olfactory abilities to be the hero of his novel *Clown*: "(...) Apart from melancholy and a headache, I have got one more nearly mystical attribute: I can smell the scent of a speaker on the phone (...). I was disappointed. I expected to hear the gentle voice of a nun, to smell the aroma of watered coffee and dried up cake. Instead, I heard the squawking voice of a man exuding such a penetrating smell of overcooked peas and cabbage that

<sup>3</sup> <http://zwierzeta-swiata.webpark.pl/index2.html>.

I started to cough. (...) I have known well that smell of cabbage from the boarding school dormitory. One of the Fathers there used to explain to us that cabbage is considered to be a means for dulling sensuality” (Böll 1968:15, 99–101).

The winners of the Nobel Prize for their research on smell proved that as many as 3% of human genes are responsible for controlling the sense of smell. This is quite a lot. There exist approximately 1,000 gene codes for the synthesis of receptor proteins relating to aromatic substances (Marchlewska-Koj...). Scientists expect that only some of the genes are actively used and a great number of other genes related to the sense of smell represent an atavistic trait. Sensations of smell are most closely connected with human memory. By means of complex molecular techniques, Richard Axel and Linda B. Buck managed to depict a complete process of perceiving a smell and explained how a smell is converted into a signal in human brain. Their research helped us to understand why smells remind us so strongly events from the past. They managed to solve a combination code, something like a colour mix on a painter’s pallet, which allows us to shape and recognise a memory related to some 10,000 different smells.<sup>4</sup> Such an olfactory memory plays a crucial role in developing one’s identity, the identity of venues and social relations. The famous ‘Proustian effect’, in which the sense of smell helps us to get transferred to the time of our childhood, is the best known example in literature demonstrating the role of the memory of smells. But olfactory reminiscences may be encountered in a number of other books of Polish and world literature, in prose and poetry alike. Also contemporary students, when asked about their olfactory reminiscences, are all willing to reach for their pens and share their experiences, which we will try to demonstrate in the present paper.

Recent observations, analyses and publications leave no room for doubt: the role of smell in human life, and therefore in social life, is unquestionable. Most probably, its true impact remains uncharted as yet, often latent or impossible to grasp, however, it deserves a thorough investigation, including a sociological enquiry. By making a reference to the founders of this subdiscipline of sociology, the sociology of odours, we will try to outline its theoretical framework, and describe the potential of applying such a perspective particularly in urban sociology.

### **3. From the diversity of scents to osmosociology**

Looking for the original source of the reflection on the nature and role of the sense of smell in human life, we have to go back, as usual, to the ancient city of Stagira. It was no one else but Aristotle himself who first described, with the utmost care worthy of a great thinker, his olfactory investigations. He was a pioneer in systematising the diversity of smells that surrounded us by distinguishing sweet, bitter, sharp, pungent and oily aromas. According to him,

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.racjonalista.pl/index.php/s,38/r,1/k,15>.

those basic odours adopt more specific names from tastes that they accompany, because flavours, according to the Stagirite, are more easily recognisable than odours (Arystoteles 1972:64–65). Emphasising human deficiency in differentiating smells, the ancient philosopher noted that crucial characteristics of a smell were much less obvious than the characteristics of a sound or a colour. Of vital significance to sociologists is Aristotle's emphasis on the correlation between sensing a given smell and a simultaneous feeling of pleasure or distress. In other words, he linked specific emotional states experienced by people with the smell sensed at the same time. This is exactly that relation, i.e. emotions and their dependence on the sensed odours, that contemporarily became the object of psychological inquiries. As far as the role of the sense of smell in human life was concerned, Aristotle considered it to be the most imperfect and insignificant of all the senses of man. Much later, Immanuel Kant likewise renounced the sense of smell. He placed it at the very bottom of the hierarchy and attributed to it an exceptional subjectivity and a tendency to falsify the reception of external stimuli. Evidently, Kant did not trust the sensory cognition that the sense of smell offered to man (Grzybowska 2007). Later, Sigismund Freud tried to explain scant interest evoked by the sense of smell by our fear of its ties with latent processes of consciousness, often connected with the erotic sphere protected by social taboos.

One of the first sociologists to become interested in explaining various social processes with the help of human senses was a great representative of formal sociology – Georg Simmel. Underestimated in his own times, Simmel drew attention to the role of senses in sociological studies, becoming the founder of a narrow specialisation known as 'sociology of the senses'. Among sensory impressions that deserved special attention, he emphasised sensations of smell and their role in constructing a social reality and the emergence of social distances and differences. The first known and published paper concerning the sociology of odours was a text written by Gale Peter Largey and David Rodney Watson, entitled simply: *The Sociology of Odors* (Largey, Watson 1972:1021–1034). Currently, many scholars in a number of social studies disciplines turn to odours as to a research laboratory. So far, several papers on anthropology combined with the philosophy of odours have been published, yet the true fore-runners in research and experiments in the area are psychologists who analyse cognitive processes (selected papers: Cann, Ross 1989; Rasmussen 1999; Low 2005).

In Polish sociology, Maria Ossowska was the first scholar who thought that all pervasive odours and aromas should become, sooner or later, the subject of analyses by sociologists specialising in various fields: the sociology of the city, of culture or of art. Her interest in the area can be traced in her notes and memos.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The authors of the present paper wish to extend special thanks to Ms Róża Sulek who was willing to share her invaluable knowledge and insights into the aromatic interests of Maria Os-

To acknowledge the increasing role of odours in creating social reality and their role for the social order and culture, at the Thirteenth Polish Sociological Congress,<sup>6</sup> we proposed to introduce the term *osmosociology*. In our opinion, the notion derived from a combination of the Greek word *osmē*, ‘smell’ and the term *sociology* could denote, at least for the time being, a kind of theoretical and research perspective which takes into account the impact of smells on the diversification of social life, on distances and contacts in particular, but also on broadly understood social relations. This is nothing else but a sociology of odours or aromas. Osmosociology could perhaps be included within the broader term of the ‘third sociology’ used by Piotr Sztompka, or its equivalent, sociology of everyday life. The “third sociology emphasises the intuition, which runs through the whole history of philosophical anthropology and sociology, that man is a ‘social creature’ (...)” (Sztompka 2007:371). According to Sztompka, the third sociology analyses “what Zbigniew Herbert called poetically ‘an interhuman space’, that is a network of multidirectional relations among individuals. In other words, such a network is an individual’s social field, constantly changing and fluid, remaining in a process of endless becoming (...)” (Sztompka 2007:372). In his opinion, the third sociology should deal with everyday human life, thus covering the social life in its entirety: “The entirety of social life is the entirety of situations which people face in their everyday life” (Collins 2004:45).

Smells and their impact on everyday activities, the nature of those activities and their directions, the manner of constructing order and everyday behaviour may be the subject of diverse sociological analyses. Osmosociology may therefore become one of the branches of sociology of everyday life, providing valuable insights into those activities of people that are undertaken customarily, spontaneously and frequently on impulse. We have no doubts that the olfactory sphere of social life may be an element of a style of life, of undertaken rituals, procedures of behaviour and planning, of implementation and interpreting the reality that surrounds us.

*Scent goes straight to the heart and then categorically determines our inclination or disdain, disgust or willingness, love or hate. He who has power over scents, has power over people’s hearts.*

Patrick Süskind, *Pachnidlo* [Perfume, or the Story of a Murderer] (2006:157)

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sowska. What might be an interesting footnote supporting additionally the role of odours in Polish sociology is the fact that Stanisław Ossowski, threatened with an exile in 1940, bought only a bottle of eau de Cologne as part of the preparation for his imminent transportation to the Soviet camp.

<sup>6</sup> Zielona Góra, 13–15 September 2007; a discussion group organised by Bohdan Jałowicki.

#### 4. Osmoresearch perspectives and its potential applications

Scientists with their monitoring and measuring tools are rather helpless when they have to face phenomena that result from such elusive and basically intangible sensations as smells. However, sociologists who study social reality can hardly pass by a whole gamut of social phenomena that happen as a result of the aromatisation or, *a contrario*, desaromatisation of the world in which we are bound to live.

It was, first of all, semiology that dealt with the subject of smells as carriers of meanings. Pierre Guiraud drew our attention to the symbolic structure of *Fleurs du Mal* by Charles Baudelaire, taking a special account of its olfactory layer. According to the author of *Semiology*, the whole structure of the poetic image of the world is centred around the axis linking the stench of Paris and the scent of exotic islands (Guiraud 1974:88–89).

The whole spectrum of contemporary sociological disciplines may serve as paradigms for osmosociology. For instance, cosmetics or scents market may be investigated by sociologists of consumption who study the consumer society and consumers' behaviours. Likewise, experts in social communication may get their chance by picking marketing tricks in the area of scents while studying advertisements and commercials. Sociology of advertising will deal with methods of promoting the sales of individual scents and aromas. Why should people keep buying Chanel No. 5 for years, while other brands have long become forgotten? What is the decisive factor in the choice of cosmetics? What kind of smells our current society is willing to exude?

Smells represent a vast market, worth billions, and rapidly expanding every year. This was demonstrated in serious sociological and marketing research conducted by e.g. SMG/KRC for Coty Polska in March and April 2007. They showed that 39% of the surveyed women regularly bought scented cosmetics at Polish drugstores, while only 33% of them did it a year earlier. The survey also revealed that 71 women in a hundred used scented cosmetics every day or several times a day (*Wiadomości...* 2007).

A sociologist of the body or a sociologist of medicine will treat smell as an element of creation, or a problem that can only be solved by a surgery, by removing, for instance, excessively active sweat glands.

In our opinion, when one bears in mind classical sociological theories, smell should be investigated in an area stretching between formal sociology, sociology of everyday life, symbolic interactionism, reflexive sociology and phenomenological sociology. At the threshold of the research on the social role of smell, we wish to focus our attention especially on the theory of symbolic interactionism, sociology of drama and the work of Erving Goffman. Through the metaphor of the theatre, this author presented the world as a stage and people as actors enacting certain roles. Everyone has a role to play. And everyone has one's front stage and the wings. In their interactions, people reveal only their facades to the external world, while their content is developed in the wings. Various actors –

participants of social life – daily enact millions of roles, creating and adopting their identities to suit the current audience. Thus, a scent will be an element of a costume and a way of creating one's identity. A scent properly chosen will be most helpful in enacting one's role in the way one has planned and devised it. It is much worse when it becomes a stigma, a mark that can hardly be shaken off. In this sense, a scent may also become an indicator of one's status, being critical for the prestige or the scope of power, be it actual or symbolic.

A scent may bring people together and bind them, it may make them attractive or vice versa, it may distance them from each other or breed anger. After all, all of us have heard fascinating stories about the role of pheromones in the sexual selection and in the alluring charm of people. Smells are also the carriers of stereotypes which, unfortunately, are responsible for branding races and nations or even social positions. This may be demonstrated by examples taken from the canon of Polish and world literature. The most common stereotype concerns the black race. "Why does a Negro stink? So that the blind could hate him too" is the most drastic racist joke, showing to what extent the stereotype is present in the minds of white people. The phrase 'Murzyn śmierdzi' [English: 'a Negro stinks'] entered in the Polish version of Google resulted in no less than 18,000 hits. Georg Simmel focused his attention in particular on the role of smell in creating social distances. He wrote: "The sense of smell may be defined as a sense of dissociation, not only because it transmits a greater number of repelling rather than attracting stimuli. An olfactory shock grows proportionally to the size of the group we stay with. For this reason, the refinement of culture leads to an individualising isolation. A possibility to gather in the open [where no unpleasant smells can threaten – note by W.Ś.T.] affected the form of social contacts in the countries of the South" (Simmel 2006:203).

Differences in the social position are increasingly determined by the smell which characterises individual social classes. People who have a chance to visit various households, such as doctors working in accident and emergency departments or all kinds of meter readers, are in the best position to provide instructive observations. Let us quote a passage from Günter Grass' novel, describing a stretch of tenement houses in Gdańsk from an olfactory perspective: "I used to go up and down the staircases of tenement houses in which a different smell drifted out of each floor. The smell of stewed cabbage might be dulled by the odour of boiling underwear. One floor higher, one would smell mainly cats or nappies. Each door exuded a smell of its own. Something slightly acid, or something burnt, as the lady of the house was just curling her hair with curling tongs. The smell of elderly ladies: mothballs and lavender. The breath of a widowed pensioner permeated with vodka. Absorbing those smells, listening, watching and feeling, I was learning the poverty and misery of numerous working class families, arrogance and rage of administrative officials speaking pompously correct German who, as a rule, were insolvent (...).

This and much more – (...) accumulated within me. (...) It was enough to reverse the flow of time, to catch the smells, to segregate stench, to climb up the stairs, to climb down, to press the bell, to knock (...)” (Grass 2007:30–31).

These social differences are practically impossible to eliminate: “Personal contacts between the educated and the working classes, so often postulated due to the contemporary social evolution, closer contacts between the worlds, of which ‘one does not know how the other one lives’, even if educated people consider them to be an ethical ideal – collapse when faced with the insurmountable barrier of the sensations of smell” (Simmel 2006:200).

If anyone manages to get rid of the smell ascribed to his or her social class, this is usually connected with an advance in a social hierarchy. One might say that in terms of the differentiation of the olfactory status, people resemble bees: “The sense of smell in a bee plays a crucial role in its social life. By its means, a bee identifies other bees from the same swarm. Individual castes and functions within the swarm also have their aromatic ‘uniforms’.”<sup>7</sup>

A smell can be identified as a stigma by analysing the urban space and that very olfactory stigma will be the contemporary olfactory reason for the fragmentation and privatisation of the space which is the subject of our paper. Contemporary urban space seems to be divided into various scents, both natural and artificial, awful stench and alluring aromas.

This can be distinctly perceived in the responses of students who were asked to offer short olfactory characteristics of the cities they lived in. The extremes of their perception clearly focus on the smells of nature and of ‘culture’, that is, a result or ‘product’ of man’s activity. Much lesser olfactory diversification in terms of the sources of smells can be observed in villages, where natural odours dominate. In the city, we gradually lose our sensitivity, quite often being unable to define what smell is natural and what artificial. Maybe because we have lost some ability for sublimation as far as sensations of smell are concerned, and a life in smog has weakened our unpleasant sensations connected with the smell of exhaust and other industrial fumes. In a similar way, people in villages are not bothered by the reek of manure or other natural fertilisers which city dwellers find offensive. A survey of Silesian cities in terms of their olfactory aspects has yielded exceptionally diversified results and revealed a wide range of odours, as we will try to show below.

## 5. The space of smell and osmonostalgia

The specific bipolarity of the structure of social order, which Mary Douglas based on the opposition between purity and pollution, automatically forces us to place stench on the side of pollution and a beautiful fragrance – in the sphere of purity. However, this is not so obvious: first of all, due to the differences in perception and, secondly, due to cultural differences. It should be borne in

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.biolog.pl/article3617.html>.

mind that every culture has its own specific olfactory space organised by tradition, culinary habits, natural resources which it has at its disposal as well as by the availability of modern cosmetics. In deciphering space, one cannot ignore the work of Edward T. Hall (Hall 1976:81) who devoted quite a lot of attention to olfactory space in his typology. Hall especially highlighted the difference between the East, with its abundance of aromas and scents and the imperfect, scentless West, which is insensitive to olfactory subtleties. One can say that in their drive to maximise hygiene, the people of the Western civilisation have brutally purged their culture of the wealth of any natural smells and now, using artificial methods and ingredients, they are trying to re-install an olfactory layer in their reality.

However, the world literature provides also some evidence of the existence of olfactory stereotypes concerning the Europeans. In his short story *Miss Forbes' Summer of Happiness*, the Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez offered the following description of the newly arrived heroine: "She stank of monkey piss. 'All Europeans stink this way, especially in summer' [...] 'This is how civilisation smells.'" (Marquez 2004:150). Among the inhabitants of Canada who are not the descendants of the immigrants from India, there persists a conviction concerning the nuisance of the omnipresent smell of curry carried around by the Indians, and of turbans mildewing on their heads from too rare unwinding and washing.

With respect to tradition which fostered the presence of smells in culture, it is worthwhile to refer to a Jewish custom according to which each family had to select its own specific aroma composed of a mixture of favourite herbs, fruits and dried flowers, which were kept at home: "Each family had its own scented oils. Recipes were passed on from father to son and were strictly guarded as a family treasure and heritage. Among Jews, there were many eminent experts knowledgeable in the art of pressing spices and mixture making. The women of Jerusalem were allowed to spend one tenth of their dowry on fragrances, scents, etc. Some of them would carry leather sprayers in their sandals. One movement of a toe would produce a cloud of a most exquisite agent of seduction."<sup>8</sup>

The famous medieval Arab traveller Ibn Battuta discerned fragrant women of Mecca, which for us is an evident confirmation of the centuries-long tradition of the culture of aroma that accompanied the inhabitants of the Levant: "The inhabitants of Mecca are very elegant and clean in their dress (...) they use a great deal of perfume and powder for eye-lashes (...). The women of Mecca are extraordinarily beautiful, pious and modest. They too **use perfumes so freely that they will stay hungry in order to buy perfumes for the price of their food.** They often visit the mosque on Thursday night, dressed in the most exquisite attire; and the entire temple is permeated with the fragrance of perfume. When one of these women goes away, the odour of the perfume clings to the place long after she has been gone" (Merton 1986:86).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.you.opoka.net.pl/kulturalia/perfumy/perfumy.htm>.

Odour may (due to the olfactory memory of a human being) create unparalleled ideational projects of private homelands, city spaces, or the space of a specific street, especially when it is rendered in writing by such eminent authors as Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust or Bruno Schulz. The latter depicts in a very evocative manner the olfactory wealth of his cinnamon shops. The title evokes in most readers associations with the smell of cinnamon, while in fact the author uses cinnamon to render a specific colour: "I call them cinnamon shops for the dark wainscot of the colour with which they are panelled. These authentic noble trade outlets which stay open late at night have always been the object of my warmest dreams. Poorly lit, dark and solemn, their interiors smelled of a deep odour of paint, sealing wax, incense, aroma of far-away lands and rare cloth (...)" (Schulz 1978:67). Yet, this is an evidence of the interpenetration of colour, taste and smells in the process of constructing our imaginings of certain places. Many great writers gave expression to their osmonostalgia. Witold Gombrowicz, for instance, returned to his ideational homeland which, for him, was the village of Małoszyce – his birthplace: "(...) I was struck (when walking in Tiergarten) by certain scents, a combination of herbs, water, stones, bark, I wouldn't be able to tell of what... yes, Poland, this was already Polish, like in Małoszyce, Bodzechów, childhood, yes, yes, the same, very close, in the neighbourhood, the same nature ... which I left a quarter of a century ago (...) a cycle has been completed, I returned to these smells (...)" (Gombrowicz 1988:140). And the Prince of Reportage, the late Ryszard Kapuściński, painted images of the land of his childhood, as if woven from smells: "The smell of Pińsk has been coming back to me until now. For there was a little garden next to every house, with plum-trees, apricot-trees and apple-trees. In autumn, the town smelled of preserves which the housewives prepared for winter (...) the boy was lured by a small dark shop with exotic foods and spices whose owner would sometimes offer sweets or a piece of halva. The interior was piled up with tins and jars filled with magic contents. In summer, the overpowering scent reached the street."<sup>9</sup> Kapuściński would also nostalgically return with smells to Pińsk during his countless travels: "Already on the steps of the airplane, we face another novelty: the smell of the tropics, we will soon feel its burden, its sticky substance. (...) This smell will be reaching us from the palm groves nearby, it will emanate from the scorching earth, it will hang over the reeking gutters of the town. It will not leave us, it is a part of the tropics. A novelty? But, after all, it is the aroma that permeated the little shop of Mr Kanzman, "Colonial and Other Goods", at Pereca Street in Pińsk. Almonds, cloves, dates, cocoa. Vanilla, laurel leaves; oranges and bananas sold per item; cardamom and saffron sold by weight" (Kapuściński 1999:7–8).

A countless number of descriptions in literature and in poetry, of images evoked in memory and imagination by olfactory reminiscences gives rise to curiosity and motivates for further research and analysis of the role of the sense

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.kapuscinski.info/page/zyciorys/9>.

of smell and of smells in social life. A diversity of associations and emotions which some smells generate makes us reflect on specific mental maps of smells of particular urban spaces, on the existence of an olfactory attire of each city which, by making the city exceptional and unique, creates its identity and has an impact on the identity of its inhabitants. Thus, it may become an instrument of social communication but, first of all, a factor of growth or, on the contrary, of lack of progress; it may become a tool for modern urban marketing when it becomes a brand, a specific element of a given city and a way of attracting rich investors.

## 6. An aromatic city map

The fact that a city gives off smells was used in the 1990s by the Germans who promoted their capital using the slogan: ‘Berlin, die Stadt die duftet schön’ – ‘Berlin, a city with a fragrant smell’. The slogan turned out to be catchy to this extent that in Alexanderplatz a machine was put up selling containers with air from... Alexanderplatz (Theiss 2008). Smells may help in creating space when they are used as a modern marketing instrument intended to make the place more attractive, and to arouse the interest of affluent visitors. Oppressive smells may become a challenge to the authorities of many cities, who are expected to keep order and take care of the aesthetic aspect of the city. Artificial and natural aromas contribute to fragmentation, segmentation and privatisation of urban space, of districts and streets. The smells of particular places help us to mark them. Some are more important, some are less so; we like some of them and feel the others to be inhospitable. Urban smells evoke emotions and thus they build an intimate relation between the city and its inhabitants: “Paris has revealed itself to me, first of all and from the very beginning, with the full power of its smell. The Paris that I know best, the smells of the metro, it is musty and full of walls that have been pissed on. The smell of the Paris metro – sticky and lecherous – has stuck to me, has become a part of me, just as it becomes a part of the others. The smell of the metro, which I have taken over, although someone else’s, has become my own and in no way did it evoke associations with home and its starched bed linen. Paris stinks and is a difficult place to live in, yet nevertheless I love this place as it is, royal and messy, stinking, full of basements and brothels, intersected by the internal network of the metro and halved by the serpentine of the Seine, just as human body supported by spine and constituting a tangle of guts” (Ryziński 2006).

In the modern urban tissue, we can clearly perceive the actual and symbolic appropriation of urban space by means of fragrances. What does the modern olfactory layer of a metropolis look like?

Undoubtedly, such a good musical metaphor as ‘a city as a symphony of smells’ finds its legitimisation in urban space. Just as perfume, city flavours consist of many diverse notes.

Nowadays, an analysis of the interrelationships between space, spaces of streets, houses, squares, greens and smells that exist in these places requires several perspectives. First of all, as regards the correlation between the city and smell, one should point out its two-way character. On the one hand, smells are naturally present in the city space, on the other hand – the unique atmosphere of a city may become a source of inspiration for creating an artificial fragrance by the cosmetic industry. The first fragrance which was created in homage, so to speak, to an incredible and unique street space was the work of Elizabeth Arden, a Canadian businesswoman fascinated by New York's Fifth Avenue. Subsequent perfume fashion designers attempted to capture the atmosphere of such magic cities like Paris (*Soir de Paris* by Bourjois) or Rome (*Roma* by Laura Biagiotti). The richest source of the 'scents of streets' is provided by an exclusive and snobbish New York brand – *Bond No. 9*. The entire marketing activity of this brand focuses on reflecting the identity of the specific parts of the city by means of scent. New York City, which is a specific mixture of ethnic, cultural and social phenomena, seems to be a mysterious source of olfactory sensations. Among 27 scents created so far, we can find the atmosphere of such unique places in New York City as: Noho, Bleecker Street, Broadway, Bryant Park, Central Park, Wall Street, Chinatown, New Haarlem, The Hamptons, or Little Italy. But the scent creators try to render the atmosphere of the entire city (*Eau de New York*, *New York Flying*) as well as the dream of all its inhabitants strengthened by the tragedy of 09/11 (*Scent of Peace*). A contemporary Swedish performer, Sissel Tolaas, collects smells of various places and people. In her private olfactory archives, she has allegedly gathered 7,000 various aromas. During an art show in Luxemburg,<sup>10</sup> she showed a scent atomiser of her own design and production with aromas of four cities: Berlin, Paris, London and New York.

As we can see, a city can be attired in smell in two ways. By an attempt to lock its unique atmosphere and identity in a bottle of perfume. However, we must not forget about scents that exist naturally in space and which help create the city's identity. The smell of particular places in a city, of a street and specific houses is intrinsically linked with human memory and imagination. There are descriptions of many specific city scents; here is another one – the scent of Amsterdam: "(...) It grows in me every Thursday night. It has become familiar, tamed, still non-identifiable, but so specific that I call it simply – the scent of Amsterdam. The scent of Amsterdam is for me a mixture of the smell of water, the smell of wet stones, of wind stealthily blowing between the houses, of the fumes of ganja which penetrate almost every backstreet, of tobacco, regular traditional tobacco, scented tobacco, cigarillos and cigars. This is also a smell of perfume, of heavy, evening perfume, of intensive female perfume and also of man's perfume, exotic, sophisticated, non-aggressive but successfully penetrating under the skin. Frequently also the smell of rain, of wet asphalt, of wet soil, of wet

<sup>10</sup> *Dysfashional*, Rotonde 1, 62, rue de Bonnevoie, Luxemburg, 21 April – 27 May 2007, curators: Luca Marchetti & Emanuele Quinz.

pavement. The smell of meat fried in a Turkish fast-food restaurant, the smell of French-fries oil, coleslaw to go with kebab, ketchup for take-away pizza, hot chocolate, hot coffee in plastic cups, scented incense from small cafes. At the beginning, it was irritating, rather disgusting. It was alien, not mine, strange. The smell of an alien place. The smell of a space which is not mine. However, I've been taming it for such a long time, I've become acquainted with it long enough for it to become recognisable, long enough to be able to say 'o yes, here I am again' when I inhale the smell of the city in the evening, it passes through the nose, enters the lungs, spreads within me, becomes domesticated..."<sup>11</sup>

As we can see, smell is strongly related to what we call 'homely atmosphere'. Smell makes us feel at home, rooted, it makes space hospitable to us. An inhospitable olfactory space provokes aversion and rejection both by its permanent inhabitants and visitors. There are also some aromatic descriptions of Warsaw. It is enough to mention the symphony of scents included in Julian Tuwim's *Kwiaty polskie* [Polish Flowers]. But also contemporary students who make professional research of urban spaces can recreate the mental olfactory map of the capital: "The smell of Warsaw represents a peculiar combination of aromas. The smell of rail or public transit is a mixture of spaces, passengers and the vehicle itself. Ośka, the author of the blog [oskaa.blog.pl](http://oskaa.blog.pl), describes conditions making Warsaw resemble Delhi in the monsoon season: "The smell of trams in the rain is a very peculiar composition. Inside one can smell: wet people, wet jeans, wet coats." (Theiss 2008). The smell of Marszałkowska street is quite alarming: it combines the smells of kebab stands, perfume from the Galeria Centrum shopping mall and peculiar smells from the nearby peep-shows and sex bars.

And what kind of aromas will people who find themselves in the city centre smell? Around the Palace of Culture and Science, which is supposedly the city's landmark, one can encounter an entire gamut of "scents" which are more like stench than perfume. This is accompanied by a 'specific aroma' emanating from the underground of the local railway station Warsaw-Śródmieście and the Central Railway Station itself as an autonomous smell centre. This is the city centre, this is what the visitors to the capital encounter when their noses are hit by the smell of sweat, bustling and other smells typical of this city. But Warsaw also means the smell of a hot night in June, of grass in the green suburbs, the fragrance of chocolate from the Wedel factory in the Kamionek district near the Powszechny Theatre" (Szymańska-Michalska 2007/2008).

## 7. Reading the city with the nose

When scrutinising a city from the osmosociological perspective, we can notice three main planes on which smells play a discernible role. Smell is a factor determining the identity of a place and its inhabitants. Aromatisation of space, be it artificial or natural, results in the segmentation of space and its users.

<sup>11</sup> <http://amsterdamka.blox.pl/html>.

We can distinguish the urban olfactory dominants and aromas of individual city areas. The notes of the head and the notes of the heart. Those that one can smell with one's nose and those which survive in the memory of the inhabitants, as is the case of Aleja Najświętszej Marii Panny [Holy Virgin Avenue] in Częstochowa: "(...) Finally the Third Avenue. Here, there were three oases of scent, they all have survived until nowadays, although not all of them have preserved the power of their fragrance. The first one – the Cepelia shop smelling of leather, wool and timber – I have already described some time ago. The second one – a leather shop smelling of tannin. The ladies would enter there, pretending they wanted to buy gloves or purses, but in fact to have a look at fur coats on the mannequins. The latter were of no interest to me and therefore I would drag my mother to the last place – to a sweets shop across the street from the Cepelia shop (there was also a porcelain stand there). The interior of the shop was filled with a fragrance which was intoxicating – a mixture of chocolate, vanilla and I don't know of what else. In my opinion, it was much better in comparison with the smells of the Wedel shop in the Second Avenue" (Skiba 2007). Scents provide a clearly visible privatisation (olfactory appropriation of space – petrol stations, bakeries, coffee shops).

Smell is an agent creating the identity of a place and its inhabitants. This is confirmed by the existence of several geographic olfactory archetypes, such as: the smell of Lebanon (associated with the most precious aroma in the world – that of cedar wood), the smell of the desert – bringing the associations of heat and sand, the smell of Venice – more precisely, the stench of canals, the smell of the London fog... Columbia – in contrast to a general opinion that it smells of coffee and cocaine – just like other Latin American countries promotes itself as a country smelling of oranges. At the same time, when travelling across the countries of the Iberian Peninsula, we can see their attachment to the smell of oranges. Hotels put up appealing advertisements speaking about the traditional fragrance of orange in their rooms. The power of the colonists has found its reflection in marking the conquered area with its own smell, in this case – the smell of oranges. It is worth mentioning here that the relationship between Columbia and oranges was shown by Gabriel Garcia Marquez who made his hero, Jose Arcadio Buendia, discover the spherical shape of the Earth by comparing it to an orange. This circular vision of the world and the smell of oranges accompanied also the contemporary painter and sculptor Fernando Botero, who placed a huge canvas representing this fragrant fruit in the National Museum in Bogota.

Polish cities are also famous for their smells, particularly industrial cities with dominant smells of slag heaps and other telluric aromas: of crude oil, metals but also pottery or chocolate.

Aromatisation of urban space is more and more frequently used in the marketing of tourist services, in an attempt to attract sensitive noses desiring olfactory sensations. This is the case of the Croat isle of Hvar, whose lavender fragrance no male has resisted so far; of Sri Lanka with its unique scent of tea, or

of the Portuguese Óbidos, which advertises itself as the town with the strongest smell of chocolate and cocoa in the world. Also Cieszyn promotes itself as the ‘town smelling of magnolias’. The imaginary *Jasminum* of the film under the same title is a little town dominated by the fragrance of jasmine and, moreover, three extraordinary friars smelling of cherry tree, bird cherry tree and plum live in the ‘jasmine’ monastery.

## 8. Ghettoisation of space from the osmosociological perspective

Smell becomes also a kind of imprint, a brand from which it is difficult to free oneself, which makes it an imperative for a given area and for all that happens there. For the purpose of deciphering smells in a space, a semiological perspective seems to be quite useful. Smell endows space with meaning and is its integral element.

Smells in the urban space are also responsible for ghettoisation, segmentation and privatisation of urban territories. The current divisions of urban space are even more clearly reflected in the following fragment from Bolesław Prus’ *Lalka* [The Doll], which shows a clearly olfactory projection of ethnic segmentation onto the segmentation of the city: “What the hell smells so much of garlic here, Mr Klejn? (...) How these Jewish scoundrels are flocking into Krakowskie Przedmieście! Couldn’t the kike, one or another, stay near Nalewki or at least Świętojerska?” (Prus 1969:214).

For the last dozen years or so, we have been witnessing a successive and at least symbolic appropriation of public urban space by the so called underclass who, being clustered in a small fragment of a district, inhabit hazardous and filthy parts of the city centre as well as the outskirts on the one hand, and on the other hand, by the new middle class who inhabit the new, gated communities which pop up like mushrooms. The new city ghettos – the inhospitable spaces which prevent both the permanent residents and visitors from fully participating in the space, and thereby in the life of the city. These are divisions of the city space into areas that repel and discourage, which bar the daily dialogue of all inhabitants with their city at the same level of participation, understanding and influence.

The city is segmented into distinct areas of fragrance and stench, which transmit and reflect the areas of wealth and poverty. Thus, we have urban salons which more and more frequently welcome the achievements of olfactory marketing – i.e. which are artificially aromatised and bring about pleasant associations and reserves of poverty and stink, urine and dirt. Both are hermetically closed by the inheritance of status and differences in the cultural capital of their inhabitants.

Egalitarianism of stench which is specific for the space of urban reserves of poverty and destitution and which has been so vividly presented by the master of description of the “aromatic” crime, Patrick Süskind – breaks down when it clashes with spaces appropriated by the emerging middle class which treats

the exclusive fragrance as an element of power, prestige and a status symbol. Two dimensions within the extremes of purity and pollution, order and chaos, stink and fragrance help to separate concrete fragments of urban space: isolated ghettos, of which the inhabitants of a given city become more and more aware. The crystallisation of the mental olfactory map with distinctly marked borderlines of districts both good and bad, those of the elite and of the plebeians, safe and dangerous, stinking and fragrant is usually related to actual processes of social segregation in the urban space. Nice smell has always been associated with wealth, affluence and a sense of security: "If someone wishes to be rich, let him smoke an expensive cigar with closed eyes. Just like one who revisits the places of his youth, I manage, when smoking a cheap cigarette, to return with my whole inner self to the period when I used to smoke such cigarettes", wrote Fernando Pessoa (2007:400), who used to say that the sadness that accompanies him has its source in the excess of consciousness. Another hero of great literature, Hans Castorp, had a strange snobbish custom of wetting his fingers in perfumed water after each meal. Leopold Bloom was pestered by the stink of fried kidney. Holly Golightly, the heroine of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* regained her peace of mind only when surrounded by the smell of silver and expensive crocodile purses. Students asked by us about the smells of their cities could hardly distinguish individual ingredients of the city's 'perfume'. They usually defined the aromatic map of their towns using generally stigmatising terms: this place stinks of poverty, and that one smells of bourgeois upstarts.

## 9. Fragmentation and privatisation

Our initial attempts to describe social reality by means of smells, or rather attempts to perceive mankind and its culture from the osmosociological perspective helped to distinguish a variety of paradigms. By their means, we may interpret smell as a peculiar costume which we can put on in order to create an image – in this case – of an urban space. Coco Chanel used to say that: "a woman who has no favourite perfume is like a woman without a future". In this sense, a city without its own smell seems to us nowadays to be stripped of a layer of its identity and without any chance for a glorious growth. There is a subconscious positive connotation in a pleasant fragrance, and of hope for a good future; after all, a contemporary pop star, Patrycja Markowska, also used to sing: "You're the smell of my future".

Nevertheless, there are cases of real and symbolic appropriation of street space by means of smell, just like in everyday simple situations; for instance, an area is appropriated by the homeless, smokers at a common table, persons using perfume in excess. This is a kind of symbolic violence which makes us feel uncomfortable in a given place which is no longer common, but 'somebody else's'. Here, we can also mention olfactory offensives of either urban *arbitri elegantiarum* (discreet scent of perfume, aroma of a Cohiba cigar or the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie), or at the other extreme, the distinctly marked olfac-

tory defensives or urban “skunks” (excessive use of perfume, mothballs, lack of hygiene, nicotine, tobacco, marijuana). Smell contributes also to the privatisation of space and its appropriation. Streets are for all practical purposes fenced off due to the presence of, say, a fish market, flower market or a *made in China* cotton market, a tea market in Sri Lanka or a pottery market with a predominant smell of burnt clay.

The most distinct case of appropriation of urban space is the current use of olfactory marketing and artificial aromatisation of areas in front of bakery shops or coffee shops, with the aim of attracting customers who ‘cannot resist’.

Other examples of street space fragmentation include urban green areas, rubbish dumps, scatological areas and sacro-olfactory spaces filled with a scent of sanctity associated with melted candles, fire and incense.

Silesian olfactory notes which we have treated as our laboratory were not as subtle: “I associate Orzesze with a smell of cars passing the town centre, with the fumes of their exhausts. The centre has a smell of fleeting moments, of pursuit after money and shopping. On days of scorching heat, it smells of hot asphalt. Sometimes one can smell a peculiar sweet and sour aura that hangs above shops. As of recently, the centre also smells of a Tesco supermarket... this is not the best of smells” (Widuch...). Or: “I open the window. Yes. Naturally, my neighbour from the house next to mine is burning plastic and old rubber in his stove. The chimney is belching smoke as black as tar. He is truly thrifty, that’s a fact. But why can’t I breathe fresh air? He must be cold. He always starts his stove in the evening, so that no one sees what he is up to” (Winiarska...).

Maybe there is some truth to an old saying that Silesian air is like poverty: dirty, stinking with smoke from burning anything that is fit for burning.

The notes of the head that we singled out included: exhaust, chimney smoke, slag heaps and dirt, while the notes of the heart included: the smell of bread (Radzinków), crude oil (Czechowice-Dziedzice), slag heaps (Piekary Śląskie), beer (Zabrze), the Rawa river (Katowice and Świętochowice) and, finally, yeast and hop (Tychy). Such an olfactory repertoire is not exhilarating, but side by side with sad ‘reminiscences of exhaust’ there were also descriptions highly attractive for the nose: “The smell that is produced, also thanks to me, is called the strawberry scent. Each year, more or less at the same time at the end of June, the divine fruit begins to ripen. The scent is fairly intensive, because there are a dozen or so of strawberry farmers in the vicinity and our area can be called a small strawberry-growing region. Some of our customers praise our fruit saying that, having crossed a certain line, more or less near the Rybnik Reservoir, one can smell the characteristic scent in the air. That is why people come all the way from Rybnik to buy our strawberries” (Wałach...).

## 10. Smell as the cities’ future and a factor of their development

One can hardly ignore the fact that smell, as an inherent element of human culture, underwent an evolution as a result of civilisational progress and so-

cial development. We have learned to wage a war against bacteria that used to contribute to an incredible stink that pervaded everything and accompanied everyone. One can hardly find a better description of the social commonwealth of stink than the one presented by the author of the recently filmed “aromatic” bestseller dealing with a case of murder: “In the age in question, cities were permeated with a stench as foul as to be inconceivable for contemporary people. Streets stank of horses’ dung, courtyards reeked of urine, staircases stank of rotting wood and rats’ excrements, kitchens – of rancid cabbage and mutton fat; never-aired rooms stank of old dust, sleeping rooms – of soiled linen, damp eiderdowns and a stinging sweetish fetor of chamber pots. Fireplaces belched the stink of sulphur, tanneries exuded the odour of caustic lyes, slaughterhouses gave off the reek of clotted blood. People stank of sweat and unwashed clothes; foul breath of rotten teeth issued from their mouths and the odour of onion came from their stomachs, while their bodies, if they were not extremely young, exuded the smell of old cheese, rancid milk and swollen, cancerous tissues. Stink came from the river and stink filled the squares and the churches. It stank beneath bridges, as well as in palaces. A peasant stank just the same as a priest, an apprentice just like his master’s wife; all noblemen stank – even the king stank, stank like a beast of prey, while the queen stank like an old goat, summer and winter long. Because in the eighteenth century, the decomposing abilities of bacteria were not yet curbed and, therefore, no human activity, be it constructive or destructive, no sign of germinating or ebbing life, could exist without the accompaniment of stink” (Süskind 2006:56).

Civilisational progress was accompanied by the development of perfume and chemical industry, which permitted people to take greater care of personal hygiene. Mass-produced soap and its availability, except for social classes that were completely excluded and deprived of any means, resulted in at least a relative olfactory standardisation, thus putting an end to the egalitarianism of stink and, at the same time, starting the era in which scents were applied as a peculiar attribute of power and superiority. Since the time when various types of scents could be simply bought, as they were readily available on the consumers’ market, we have started to treat smell as a kind of a costume that we can put on and play our role of a nubile maiden ready to get married, or a rich businessman exuding a cloud of elegant aroma of Partagas Eminentes cigars.

Nowadays, a smell may be of assistance in the development of cities by attracting crowds of tourists desiring to experience olfactory sensations, and to check with their own noses whether a given city indeed smells of something that it has earlier advertised. An artificially created smell of a Portuguese town which lives on its chocolate festival, mentioned above, may serve as a good example.

“Each year, during one of the autumn weeks, the Portuguese Óbidos smells of cocoa – this is due to the International Chocolate Festival. This pearl of the Estremadura architecture is visited by professional confectioners, experts in this noble product, chocolate gourmets, gourmards and tourists from all over the world. The condition for active participation in the event is an innovative application of chocolate in the culinary art.

The International Chocolate Festival in Óbidos was initiated by a mysterious citizen of the town who made a fortune in the sweet business in the US and allocated a part of his money in this unique initiative. Wishing to extend the tourist season in his beloved birthplace, he came up with the idea of organising one of the sweetest events in the world. This proved highly successful in a place devoid of any chocolate traditions. He managed to mobilise the local authorities, he attracted international giants of the chocolate sector, connoisseurs and travel agencies.”

Source: <http://www.mytravelblog.pl/podroze/carley/europa-portugalia-obidos-estremadura.html>

City authorities now face the task of creating various elements of the cityscape that would attract tourists and investors, and the olfactory fame of a city may easily evoke greater interest among them. Negative connotations, however, should definitely be avoided, as is the case of Trzebinia or Silesian Czechowice-Dziedzice, where the stink of crude oil rectification is so unbearable that only the local inhabitants who are used to it and for whom it is no longer as offensive can function normally there.

The diversity of city smells represents an endless source of new sensations for city users, and hence observers of city life, who turn their noses into their primary tools of observation. We tend to traverse the city, to become *flâneurs* who use that part of their faces to describe individual city districts, sensitive to the beauty of subtle aromas, but also to the smell of poverty and deprivation. As sociologists of the city, we do not indifferently pass by the areas that evoke olfactory disgust – we wish to revitalise not only the minds of people, but also the foul smelling stretches of contemporary ghettos. Just like Zbigniew Herbert, who felt with his very skin the poverty of suburban houses and expressed his olfactory longing to alter their sad character:

Suburban houses with sunken windows  
houses coughing quietly  
shivering plaster  
houses with thinning hair  
sick complexion (...)  
I wish I could give you names  
fill you with all the fragrance of India (...) (Herbert 1998:27).

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