

Timescapes of Portugal in Montréal is a project that aims to investigate the olfactory memory of the Portuguese exiles who immigrated to Montréal at the time of the economical and political crisis of the 1950's until 1974. How do the smellscapes of the city they left take shape in the city they live in now? How do the mental imprints one keeps translate in the reality of the environment?

One of society's perceptive forces that is rarely considered in the development of architectural projects is the dynamic of olfactory memory. I have drafted this proposal in order to investigate how we can redefine the way in which we build our cities according to time-based architectural structures moulded by olfactory systems.

This proposal is part of a larger project which stems from my M.Sc.A. research in Architecture and Planning on the subject of [the spatiotemporal perception shaped by the olfactory memory](#). I am pursuing this study within a Philosophy - Cognitive Science PhD. This project, which would be an opportunity to understand how our brain and body respond to different kinds of spaces and places, would therefore allow me to further my research.

The reality of the environment is shaped by the unstable ground of our memory, which encodes our experiences, our encounters, and other associations that we live in different places. Its geometry is static, yet constantly flooded by various dynamic stimuli which are all possibilities for the individual to make sense of the space.

How much of what we perceive is a product of our mind? We call upon our memory unceasingly to act, to move. We construct mental representations of the space invariably. We adopt various frames of reference into which we integrate diverse elements, hence forming a mental structure representing the important spaces of our life. Thus, our memory is anchored in space.

What we have felt, thought, wanted since our birth influences our present. The environment is a field of perception submerged by temporal vectors which define a multiplicity of separations,

mergers and organizations for every one. Time is threaded through everything we perceive. It does not correspond to the reality of an external object but to us, the perceiving subject, because our perception follows various temporal rhythms.

Built of mnemonic structures, the multiple fluxes of smells creating a mobile and intangible topography alter our perception of the spatio-temporal structure of the environment. The smellscape, which is like the *theatrum memoriæ* of significant moments we have lived with smells, draws past and future spaces into the present moment. These timescapes are outlines of our Theater of Olfactory Memory repertoire.

details :

In Montréal, there are approximately 11,000 residents born in Portugal (Statistics Canada. Population census, 2006). The Portuguese community, which is very active, is settled in the heart of Plateau Mont-Royal district. We would like to ask 20-60 immigrants to walk us to spots in the city where smells make them remember places in Portugal. Combining vocal recordings and mindmapping, our method of collection will allow us to harvest the participants' *smellstories*.

A map layering the participant mind imprints will be composed afterwards. And the superposition of all maps will expose a collective olfactory memory triggered by past Portuguese cities. In addition, it will reveal various levels of realities experienced by an individual in relation to the intangible frame of buildings and places that belong to a different city.

Printed (large format) versions of the maps could be exhibited. All or selected maps could also be translated into interactive ones that would be accessible online to anyone wishing to select places on the map to add their (smell)memories. A topography of an intangible world of the city would then progressively be disclosed.

All data harvested would eventually be incorporated into an applet that will allow to compile smellstories in different cities. Part of [@smellcity](#) - [smell.city](#) development, the device will offer an interactive platform for users wishing to add their impressions, interact with stories already there, and pinpoint places on the map to add their memories and/or stories from other cities.

estimated production timeline:

time	for
3 weeks	research; selection of participants
1 week	organization of the survey; <i>commented routes</i> logistics
8 weeks*	<i>commented routes</i> in the city with all selected participants *number of weeks depends of number of participants
6 weeks	compilation of stories; graphic composition of the map
1 week	large format print production
6 weeks*	online map integration / vizualisation *optionnal step

evaluation of the costs:

type	costs (\$CND)
equipment for survey (micro, pad, misc.)	620.00
transport (in Montreal)	60.00
production fees	3,920.00
basic digital development, setup and integration	1,600.00
TOTAL :	6,200.00