

## Smell, Space and Othering

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### Abstract

Currently experiencing social shift from the rural/coastal to the urban, Matnog, Sorsogon, in the Philippines is left with markings of people who live by the coast, who are confronted by poverty, a poverty which can easily be seen in the space they occupy. The present article concerns itself less with seeing, but rather forms a spin-off from the spatial discourse to that of the smell/scent of a woman enmeshed with the space she inhabits and enabling the unfolding of the reproduction of social differences. As a way of knowing, a methodology, in this embodied qualitative research, the scent/smell becomes the agent and the space as the agency of power are both explored as a purview in cultural studies. The sense of smell as a socio-cultural construction that establishes social identity and reifies and reproduces social differences is highlighted and positioned. Extrapolating from field work conducted in Matnog demonstrates that the smell of this rural space is rapidly transitioning to that of the urbane and the smell of women who inhabits that space. Through narrative poetry and the presentation of photographs and verbal analyses, olfactory identities and imprints, social differences, identity and spaces are explored, culminating in the transitional reconfiguration of poverty constructs.

**Keywords:** space, smell, othering, olfactory identity, poverty, Philippines

*Anyone who is wont (and every child falls into this category)  
to identify places, people and things by their smells  
is unlikely to be very susceptible to rhetoric*

Lefebvre, 1984 (translated by Nicholson-Smith, 1991, p. 198)

## Introduction

In discourse on spaces and spatiality, much of sense making is associated with sensual apperception. Primary concern in this kind of discourse is made through the senses of sight, hearing, touch and taste that establish a clear illustration of the space and spatiality described. The mentioned senses have always been the take-off points that provide lucid accounts and elaborate on the narratives of space and spatiality due to their tangible nature in arriving at accurate images and metaphors to ascribe space. Human senses are vital in elaborating on these types of discourses but there is a lack of studies exploring the realm of the olfactory sense.

Axel and Buck (in Szczepanski and Slezak-Tazhir, 2009), in their research on smell, note that “sensations of smell are most closely connected with human memory by means of molecular techniques” (p. 106). The received smell is perceived by the brain and is stored in the memory center. The smell, when perceived, is then derived from varied meaning associations as contained in the memory of an individual. Szczepanski and Slezak-Tazhir (2009) state that the sense of smell possesses a very rich and diverse arena due to its elusiveness and continuity (p. 103). Possibilities for metaphoric images, words and language can be accounted for by the smell or scent because smell is more directly stored in the brain than the perception through other senses. A scent or smell, as elusive and indescribable as it may seem, leaves a lasting impression that can be triggered whenever semblances of that scent are detected and opens up further possibilities for deriving meaning.

## Nosing Around Space

In the field of cultural studies, which Hall (in During, 2009, p. 99) describes as a “project that is always open to that which it doesn’t yet know, to that which it can’t yet name,” the sense of smell as a starting point in cultural studies affirms this tenet as an expanded “notion of text and textuality, both as a source of meaning” (2009, p. 105) by acknowledging the idea that smell is also a text that can be read and dissected. Smell becomes a site of discourse that is regulated and disciplined to produce and reproduce social differences.

Grounding the discourse of smell in cultural studies considers the field “as a new conceptualization where social and political struggle take place...culture and meaning would be defined as ideology, as institutions...as subjectivities interpolated by these practices and their institutional formation” (Pollock 2003, p. 6). Because cultural studies enable the unfolding of social differences happening in everyday life, the sense of smell can become a medium of knowing and can act as a device for observing. In this article then, smell is taken as an agent and geo-cultural space becomes its agency, its arena.

As an agent of power in the social world, the sense of smell makes possible the evocation of discourses on space because some scents incite negative connotations influenced by the social circles that forms subjective commentaries. Examples are when reference is made to “bad” or “repulsive” smells, or “good” or “acceptable” ones. Such judgments have already been incorporated into the society an individual belongs to and so community members preconceive

attachments to or repulsions of certain scents. Low (2013, p. 691) explains that the “implication [of this] is that they are not only physically transgressive but morally questionable as well.” The varying smells associated with a person or a space lead to the formatted identity that brings about questions of moral standards, of one’s physiological care as influenced by the geographical and cultural space an individual belongs to. Thus, a certain smell can be arbitrarily identified with certain groups of individuals that “mediates both social distance and social proximity” (2013, p. 688) and that might result in discrimination, avoidance and unnecessary judgments.

To elaborate, Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1984/1991) explains that, “bodies resemble each other, but the differences between them are more striking than similarities... [because bodies] imply an analogous difference between spaces” (p. 194). Dissimilarity among bodies is due to the types and kinds of spaces they occupy. Unpleasant smells emanating from individual bodies are part of the olfactory accumulation happening in a certain space due to individuals’ actions, uses, practices, movements, etc. in the space occupied.

Hall notes the value of language and metaphors in the construction of socio-cultural space (in *During* 1993, p. 105). Taking into consideration the realm of the sense of smell, when a scent is arbitrarily associated with or labeled as a specific space or individual, it designates an identity. The sense of smell in cultural studies discourses becomes an agent of power in society as it establishes “acceptable” and “unacceptable” smells. The nose, through smelling, exerts power by naming certain scents as symbolic of spaces and/or experiences in the space. The sense of smell acts as a conduit for othering as it recognizes and accepts a certain type of scent and rejects other scents not within the boundaries of an individual’s cultural and geographical olfactory space and identity. In a way, the nose then only acknowledges what it has been culturally formatted to sense and is displeased by others. Comprehending social identity is understood and “recognized through the smell of the self as enacted in relation to the other” (Low 2013, p. 692).

As the agency of power, space then is constitutive of these compounded and collected smells that are fully embedded in and absorbed by an individual. Scent/smell composes and aids in the construction of a space because “tangible spaces possess (although these words are not ideal here) a basis or foundation, a ground or background in the olfactory realm” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 197). The smell comprises and evokes further meaning derived through a space that marks the identities of individuals and groups dwelling in it. Negative smells/scents become the associative language and words that constitute several descriptions and ascriptions of a space.

A spatial body... a body so conceived,  
as produced and as the production of space,  
is immediately subject to the determinants of that space:  
symmetries, interactions, and reciprocal actions, axes and planes,  
centers and peripheries and concrete (spatio-temporal) oppositions

Lefebvre, H. (1984, translated by Nicholson-Davis, 1991, p. 195)

When smells are constituted by and for an individual in a specific space, these smells when compounded create their spatial identity because the smell individuals release is constitutive for and of their space, and this scent of the space enunciates the kind of social position they possess. Smell, as agent of power, thus shapes questions of power and identities that are consequential to social distance.

Almagor ([1990], in Low, 2009), stipulates that “meaning is the application of the image of an odour to a context with which that odour is associated” (p. 6); thus, constructed meaning and identity of an individual’s “economic, social and cosmological levels [that] may serve in classifying the natural and social universe” (p. 10, footnote #11). The space’s location enunciates already an individual’s social position that determines his/her spatial practice.

The smell of a space accommodates an individual's smell, and thus further emphasizes the individual’s social position and status. “Intimacy occurs between ‘subject’ and ‘object’; it must surely be the worlds of smells and the places where they reside” (Lefebvre, 1984, in 1991, p. 197); thus, the space and spatial arrangements as objects are not the only determinants in reifying social differences, but the smell/scent of the space emphasize this further and deeply embed the subject or the individual in his/her social position because a particular scent/smell is projected onto the body of the individual.

### Methodology and Purview

In studies on smell, assertion for its methodological process is rooted in qualitative inquiry. Largey and Watson (1972, in Low, 2013, p. 688) in their studies on smell state that in accounting for smell, further associations should be listed and subjected to discourse. Grounded in Goffman’s concept of “individual’s structure of experience – in analyzing sensorial biographical reconstructions” (Waskul and Vannini 2008, in Low 2013) that specifically looks into “olfactive and spatial links” (p. 689), the sense of smell becomes the medium for knowledge that documents and memorializes social experience in a space. Relying on embodied qualitative research, Sandelowski (2002, in Low 2013) proposes the need to “embody qualitative inquiry so as to move beyond Western cultural pre-occupations which separate body from mind, as such approaches the veil the potential of locating the body as a ‘point of departure for any practice of knowing’” (p. 690). Sandelowski (in Low, 2013) further insists that embodied qualitative research argues that observations should take into account the researcher’s senses and integrate them during ethnographic work (p. 690).

Tying an olfactory impression of a space to a person smelling of that space constitutes the opening discourse of this article. Taking into consideration the method of embodied qualitative inquiry in this paper also duly recognizes the “senses [specifically, the sense of smell] as an avenue of embodied awareness where participant observation is enhanced in that both the bodies of the respondents and the researcher are accorded due attention” (Pink 2009, in Low 2-13, p. 691). In the following, I will present an account of scents I smelled in a transitioning space inhabited by economically privileged families. The focal point of smell is a woman who showed me her house and with whom I had several conversations. Thus, as a point of comparison, her smell as associated to the scent of the space and my smell as constructed by my space become the basis for identifying her social identity and the social schema present in her space. Acknowledging that the sense of smell is the most subjective among the senses, I extrapolate from my memories the scent associations constructed for me. In this, I describe her social identity, her space and her experiences in space and how the sense of smell reproduces social differences and othering.

Here, I attempt to answer the question *What am I smelling?* as I narrate how I go about recognizing olfactory social identity and social difference in space. *I name the smell* as to how I experienced olfactory othering of another woman in space. *As I remember the smell*, I produce interweaving discourses on space, othering and reproduction of social differences. I draw you into my thoughts and write in poetic narrative to attempt to capture this sensorial experience

for you.

### Where She Is



Figure 1. Coastal area where some families in Matnog live.

*I can see the rapid urbanization of Matnog, Sorsogon, Philippines, a third class municipality that harbors the pier and the trading center. Upon developing the spaces of the pier and trading center, and as it forwards into urbanization, Matnog, a rural/coastal space, seems to have forgotten the people who live by the coast. As the people who live by the coast experience the transition of their space, the attempted naturalization of urban development through spatial additions and arrangements can be seen.*

*Vision is not the only sense currently re-constructed. As rapid as the spatial transition, the smell of the rural/coastal area is becoming derogatory... and so is the smell of the people who inhabit the space because the urban development project only accepts a sanitized smell, far from the piscine scent of the people and the space – it is rendering their smell as unnatural.*

*Is what I smell of the other and that of the space the truth? If recognition of particular smells is contextual in nature and is associated with an individual's memory, an individual may find other scents repulsive or acceptable. If scents and smell are recognized and associated with an individual's experience, then the way I smell may also be pre-formed for me.*

In a study on spaces experiencing social shifts from the rural/coastal to that of the urban, I say (Sta Maria 2014, p. 41) that “spatial assembly [is effected] to promote urbanity as a way of life that is also cognizant of development and progress making any spaces that is symbolic of rural as something that is poor, backward and counter-progressive.” Therefore, as the space transitions from rural to urban, sense of sight or vision is being conditioned to absorb urban representations. Yet sight is not the only sense that is being re-constructed in the development project.

Urban space, due to its invention as part of modernization, does not exactly have an organic and natural smell because modernization, urban development, is a man-made construct in

relation to space and spatial arrangements. In order to make it more acceptable for people, the scent of the urban space has to be concocted. At the onset of modernization, in which urban development played a major role, acceptable smells become more and more homogenized. If scent is taken as a kind of branding and image formation, then urbanization may have also prescribed particular scents to specific spaces in order to distinguish this type of development. Lefebvre (1984/1991) states that like “everything in the modern world, smells are being eliminated” (p. 197) and that almost all spaces that are heading towards the direction of urbanization release the “hygienic” smell that attempts to eradicate natural smells that can be derived from a space (1984/1991). In these urban spaces, there is that constant need to smell clean; and to smell of its opposite is something that is repulsive and inappropriate.

Urry (2000) further notes that “modern societies are sensitive to smell and institutions organise to prevent those smells which are deemed to be ‘unnatural’ (these may of course include many smells such as rotting vegetables which are quite ‘natural’)” (p. 98). Rural/coastal spaces transitioning to the urban is proliferating an artificial smell that it is attempting to present as “natural”. In a rural/coastal space, a piscine smell is natural because of its geographic location but due to promotion of the urban project so as to be deemed acceptable by the people, the natural and organic piscine scent is being rendered as unnatural by advertising a smell that is associated with that of the urban. This in turn, naturalizes the artificial smell of the urban in a rural/coastal space that is consequential to identifying and associating any smell that is not within the urban parlance as something that should be rejected. Because the urban space is anchored to the concepts of development and progress, the rural/coastal space then takes on the opposing concept. Therefore, any smell associated with that of the rural/coastal space and the people who smell of this space is labeled as poor. And as the space and the individual continue to smell these artificial scents, then what used to be the natural scent becomes rendered as “unnatural” and something to be rejected.

Making the artificial scents emanate from the urban spaces encourages individuals to associate urban development with something imagined as the space to inhabit, the kind of development to choose, and the direction that one should take. Therefore, anything that smells differently does not coincide with the kind of knowledge urban development desires. Urban development smell becomes the more appropriate and acceptable smell for many. In its consistency in making itself reek among spaces, it successfully makes urban development more appealing, acceptable and natural. It follows suit then that the practice of urban development, through its smell, reifies its status as the only way to develop.

Almagor (1990b, in Low, 2009) says that “[s]mells are usually not known in isolation but as ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ accompaniments to human activities in certain cultural, social and physical settings” (p. 5). As part of the urban agenda in formatting a particular scent of the space, rejection and/or acceptance of a smell can also be translated into the kind of space that is preferred, inclusive of its lifestyle, norms, cultures and ways of living. Due to the categorization of smells that are deemed appropriate and inappropriate, smelling a scent that is unfamiliar/unexpected may become functionary in the following ways: (1) as a device for stereotyping people; (2) representing oppositions through “positive” and “negative” pole-categorization; (3) meaning attribution associated with particular smells based on specific contexts; (4) demarcating processes and divisions in society and nature; and (5) as symbols of cyclic processes in culture and nature (Almagor, 1987, in Low, 2009, p. 9, footnote #11).

Smell, when released in a space and by an individual dwelling within it, communicates social differences. Acknowledging the notion that smells are already established in a space due to

practices and uses via individuals, then in the discourse of space and its scent, one can already typecast associative words that connote the social position of both the space and individuals. It is not only the space that reifies their identity in social strata, but further reification happens through and by the individual who smells of it. The establishment of urban spaces and their representations includes a smell that makes one feel special, better than the others, more modern and developed than the other, while the other who does not smell of this space is and may be different.

*As Matnog, Sorsogon continues on with its urban development agenda, will it provide a sensory experience of notions of development?*

*I thought that this urban development project was for everybody... but why does the space by the coast smell differently? Is there something wrong with the way I recognize the smell? Whose scent is different?*

### **What I Smell**

*I looked around her space  
Saw the paved road,  
The path I walked on  
To reach her house.  
Seeing her from the fence made of bamboo,*

*I know that she saw me too.  
We smiled at each other  
as I continue to walk towards her  
to shake her hand.  
She kept looking at me uneasily  
as I feel her eyes  
rolling up and down  
and trying to make sense of what I look like.  
I smiled at her  
And she seemed comforted  
By that smile.*

*She finally asked me  
to come inside her house  
and take photos –  
for us to talk more.*

*I adjust my camera  
and placed it before my eyes,  
properly angled  
to take a photograph  
at eye level,  
ready to click.*

*I can see the inside of her house  
from the door where I was standing.*



*I was ready to click  
but my hands shook.  
I feel my camera  
sliding from my hand.  
I was sweating.*

*I just can't stay long in that space  
it is because of the smell.  
I cannot think of just one word  
to describe that smell.*

*What I recognize  
Is the smell of fish,  
rusty water,  
of clothes washed in that rusty water.  
It smelled of her children's sweat  
Of molds  
Of stuffy, dusty air.  
It smelled of dirt  
that has been attempted to be cleaned  
several times*

*The house – the space is dark  
Too dark  
that I can even smell this darkness  
Looming around the space*

*As I smell this,  
I saw children with small portions of food  
Probably fighting over the last piece on the plate  
Children not being able to move  
Crying just so.  
I can see her hushing the children  
Or probably already silent  
Huddled up in the corner  
Of that house – that space.  
I can see her picking up  
The scattered things on the floor  
Washing the dishes  
Telling the children to clean up.*

*As I smell this,  
I can see her and the children  
Lying down on the floor  
Sleeping – one leg on each other  
Because the house –  
the space –  
is cramped.*

*But these smells are familiar to me.  
I know this scent that reeks  
Of the other houses there.*

*I walked up to her –  
closer.  
I asked her a few questions.  
I can smell her.  
And I think,  
She can smell me too.*

*This time  
I am uneasy.  
I tried avoiding her eyes.  
But she caught my glance.  
We stared at each other  
Each, knowingly.  
Because, she too recognizes her own smell  
And, she knows my smell too  
Which is not her own.*

*I excused myself  
And asked permission  
to take photographs  
Outside her house.  
Instead of taking a picture  
Of the house from eye level  
I lowered my head  
And captured a blurred picture  
of her doorstep*

*I try to take a hold of myself  
And took photos  
Of the outer part of her house.*

*I can only show you  
the photographs  
I attempted to take,  
For you to understand  
what it smells like  
because I cannot  
bottle up that scent  
For you to smell it as well*



*I just can't stay long in that space  
because that smell reeks.  
It creeps up from my toes  
going upwards to my head.  
That smell clamps on my skin and envelopes me...  
until I choke and find myself breathless.*

*I went out and tried to smell something different –  
something that is not of this smell that I recognize  
but refuse to acknowledge.  
I stayed outside and breathed –  
trying to take in any scent.  
Fast and short inhalations.  
But it was too late.  
The smell of that space is already in my pores.*

*The smell of the space/place is overpowering.  
It is wrapping itself tightly myself, pulling me down,  
and forcing me to stay.*

*It is that smell that makes you stop where you are  
in order to inhale everything  
that is presented before you.*

*In that space/place.*

*The smell freezes you –  
forces you to close your eyes  
as it evokes deeply seated emotions of loneliness.*

*That smell tells you to stay  
as if whispering to you that when you leave,  
you will only find yourself back in that space/place.  
It tells you that you have no control over things,  
power relinquished, moving in circles –  
a crumbling of one's spatiality.  
It is that smell that knows no other scent...*

*Only that of despair.  
She knows it too.  
For we both know this scent.*

*I just can't stay long in that space.*

*I want to grab her hand  
pull her out of that space  
and tell her to breathe  
and to smell something else other than this.  
But I just can't do that.*



*What I wish and hope for is that no one smells this and stays.*

### **I Name the Smell**

Space does not exactly release its own smell because it is bestowed by dwellers and inhabitants who use and make use of that space. The ones who release smell are the individuals who constitute such markings in the spaces they occupy. Human bodies are composed of similar substances but what distinguishes one from the other is smell. In determining differences amongst individuals, Borthwick (2000, in Low, 2009) explains that the smell that emanates from an individual's body and as perceived by others becomes a form of othering wherein "an individual defines the self through a difference in smell, and also negates the other as the not-I" (p. 14).

Because the scent or smell is embedded in memory, an individual who has previous associations with particular scents or smells designates specific social constructs and meanings through smell. Low explains that "memory reconstructions emplace them within specific social roles that are emotionally revisited through olfactive recall, situated within embodied social contexts" (2003, p. 698). Therefore, identifying a scent of an individual assigns a specific social identity corollary to an individual's social space and place and vice versa. Once the scent or smell is embedded in memory, then it becomes difficult to erase. Reproduction of social differences is repetitively done as the sense of smell operates to associate and attach labels to an individual and the place he/she inhabits. The sense of smell becomes the agent of power as this sense constructs and re-constructs what is socially acceptable, nasally identifying how one is different from the other. The space, as an agency of power, operates by building boundaries and demarcation lines between areas with smells that are acceptable and those that are not.

### **I Remember What I Smell**

Once smelling begins, the individual imagines and recalls from his/her memory any recognition attached to the smell that provide clear accounts for the meaning of the scent. Tuan (in Urry 2000) further notes that "even if we cannot name the particular smell it can still help to create and sustain the sense of a particular place or experience that has been visited or lived in previously" (p. 97) because one has already associated that scent with a particular space, thing, event or experience. Thus, when an individual smells something, even if he/she comes from a different space and time, imagination and memory still operate in identifying the smell.

Low (2013) explains that "smells and memories operate in conjunction toward shaping self-identity and social relations" (p. 689). Smells are socio-culturally constructed with necessary standards of acceptability and unacceptability which are established by a social group. The smell, in itself, is archived in memory because this is socially and physiologically experienced by an individual (2003, p. 691).

*I may not exactly come from the space where the woman whom I smelled dwells in – I know that my social experience has already constructed a set of scents that have already created clear demarcation lines between what comprises the social life of the woman from Matnog, Sorsogon, and what the acceptable social life and space should be.*

"Smells envelope us, enter our bodies, and emanate from us. Yet when we try to describe smells, olfactory epithets do not quite provide accurate descriptions" Low, K. (2009, p. 4). Difficulty in placing a particular word or phrase to name a particular scent is rendered pointless

because the sense of smell by the nature of its construction results from a union of thoughts that is inextricably linked to varied experiences. This may be the reason why in naming scents one does so based on language ascriptions for other senses. An example would be calling a scent “sour” or “sweet”, which are taste categories, or saying, that a smell is “strong” or “soft”, which are derivations from the sense of touch. Low explains that “sense of smell works alongside sight, and taste, respectively, in one’s reconstruction of past experience... this goes to show the multi-sensorial nature of memory recall” (2013, p. 691).

Miller (in Low, 2009) notes that “the lexicon of smell is very limited and usually must work by making an adjective of the thing that smells” (p. 4) in the attempts at describing the scent experience enabling the derivation of meaning/s communicated by a particular scent. Descriptions of the smell then often become metaphorical and necessitate abstraction because its foundations in linguistic meanings are from memory and imagination. Seremetakis (1994, in Low 2013, p. 693) states that “memory is a culturally mediated material practice that is activated by embodied acts and semantically dense objects” (2013, p. 693). Memory accumulated through and by the physiological senses is deftly recorded. Odors or scents rely heavily on “an odor inventory [based on] observation instead of independent identities because odors are highly contextualized concepts” (Low, 2013, p. 5). Smells are not prescriptive; instead, they are more inscriptive due to their subjective and contextual nature that constructs a certain meaning for a particular scent.

Odors or scents, as stored in the memory of an individual, also provoke emotions. As stored in memory, the perceived scent may bring about emotive language which may be consciously or subconsciously done. The scent becomes a reminder of a specific emotion that is elicited from the individual who makes use of the sense of smell. That is why there are instances when some scents make us happy, sad or probably nostalgic because these smells may remind us of an experience that directly refers to past emotive particularities.

Observations of the scent as metaphorized and imagined become a legitimate account of the scent due to its experiential meaning. Almagor (in Low, 2009) contends that, “meaning is the application of the image of an odor to a context with which that odor is associated” (p. 6). Thus, one smells and identifies the scent dependent on one’s own memory, imaginings and abstractions. Communicative meaning of a scent may be derived through the combination of associative and emotive language that has been embedded in the memory of an individual who senses a particular smell.

Drafting a narrative of scent or smell entails for them to be rendered as cultural signifiers. Lefebvre (1984/1991) notes that “the aim [of] these [scents/smells] should be ‘signifiers’ and to this end words – advertising copy” (p. 198). The smell/scent becomes “the link to that which is signified” (1984/1991). In communication, the scent/smell becomes a composite of the knowledge, thought, experience, event or thing in order to complete the meaning of what the scent/smell means. In constructing meaning, scent or smell are the constituents of “that transportation of everything into the idiom of images, spectacle, of verbal discourse, and of writing and reading” (Lefebvre, 1984/1991). Smell is constitutive of meanings in thought, knowledge, objects and experiences. What is smelled is not specific, instead, a part of a complete knowledge experience to make sense of reality and some kind of truth. The sense of smell memorializes the meanings associated with a particular space.

As mentioned above, the smell of a space contributes greatly to the smell of a person inhabiting this particular space, and thus, constructs a “socially acceptable olfactory identity” (Low, 2013,

p. 689) that is maintained through practice of deodorizing and odorizing in removing malodours and perfuming respectively. This is true as much for a space as it is for an individual.

*In the case of this woman in space, her social identity is maintained by making her remain in the confines of her space. She recognizes her own social identity when she smells others who do not give off a similar scent. She feels then that her smell is unacceptable in other spaces because as she smelled others who do not smell of her and of her space, she remembers that she is not acceptable in other spaces.*

*In the urban project where smells of the urban constantly promote a deodorized and artificial smell (sanitized – to smell clean; floral – to feel happy, among others), what is embedded in the memory of individuals located in transitioning spaces as that of Matnog, Sorsogon, is that their smell threatened, negated the urban space. What is flaunted before her is the scent of development which can be found in other spaces that are not of hers. This makes her feel that she does not belong in this space and that she would need to negate her own smell in order to fit in.*

What we both remember is her olfactory identity that denotes to her something constructed as rural, backward and poor. It has already permeated her pores. This olfactory identity of hers is embedded in her memory and that of mine... a constant reminder of her space, place and location. Embedded in her memory and mine, is her social identity deemed to point to the rural and to poverty. In this kind of sensorial memory, reproduction of social differences occurs because even if I am not smelling her or she is smelling me, the woman will already have recognized that she is different – not of the urban space... not of the developed space... and not of the rich. And, in this smell she will always remember that I made her feel othered when she smelled me; and she too othered herself through her smell.

*As the Philippines take on this urban project, what is constructed is not only the physical addition of spaces but, more so, the sense of smell itself. Through this urban project, we will always remind people who do not smell of the urban space as negated and self-negating identities, socially unacceptable and different. This urban project and the smell that is constructed becomes an olfactory imprint in space that continues to reproduce social differences.*

Odours which bespeak of nature's violence and largesse, do not signify; they are what they are in all its immediacy: the intense particularity of what occupies a certain space and spreads outwards from that space into surroundings."

Lefebvre, H. (1984, translated by Nicholson-Davis, 1991, p. 198)

*I othered her when I smelled her and the space she lives in and we both are still caught in this olfactory net.*

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