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## 1. Introduction

The concept of smellscape extends the broader notion of senscapes (Edwards et al., 2020, pp. 199, 201), integrating sensory experiences into environmental understanding. The suffix “-scape,” derived from the Dutch *landschap* (meaning “a view of the scenery of any kind, including land, water, or clouds” (Simpson, 1989, p. 581), has evolved to describe not just physical landscapes but abstract, sensory, and experiential networks (Gold, 2002; Tuin & Verhoeff, 2022, pp. 170–172). Terms like *childscapes*, *bodyscapes*, and *datascape*s reflect this shift, representing the complexity and diversity of human experiences within various domains. According to sociologist John Urry, who examines tourism and mobility, “scapes” are complex, enduring, predictable networks... that constitute various interconnected nodes of experience or action” (2012). This conceptual shift aligns with the broader definition of “scape” as an impression of something’s distinctive nature (Simpson, 1989, p. 581), emphasising the role of subjects who perceive and evaluate environments. The historical evolution of “-scape” from a term for physical views of nature to one encompassing abstract and sensory dimensions reflects its flexibility and topicality for contemporary contexts.

Smellscape build on the concept of “scape” as a network organising specific experiences or impressions, encompassing both tangible and intangible phenomena of perception, to osmology by describing the physical characteristics of places and the emotional and sensory responses they evoke. The past decade has witnessed a surge of research exploring the multifaceted relationship between smells and environments in various fields, including historical reconstructions, smell geographies, museum exhibitions, urban environments, and pollution studies (Edwards et al.,

## Research Article

# Reconsidering the Origins of Smellscape: Insights from Late Medieval and Early Modern Travel Narratives (Mandeville, Moryson, and Hakluyt)

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**Abstract:** The notion of smellscape is gaining prominence in olfactory studies and fields such as physical, human, and cultural geography. This paper traces the evolution of the smellscape concept, showing that its origins predate studies of indigenous peoples and 20th-century urban planning. Instead of an empirical analysis, this study explores smellscape theoretically and historically through travel writing, a genre fusing fact and fiction and generating epistemological discussions. While descriptions of smell in travel texts may stem from real sensory experiences, they are examined here as textual constructs independent of factual accuracy. Consequently, three key travel narratives were chosen: *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (1357–1371), which contains more than 40 references to smells; *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent* (Vol. 1–4) (1617), with more than 60 references; 12-volume *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, compiled and edited by Richard Hakluyt, with approximately 200 smell references. Selected examples from these works illustrate smellscape’s transformation from a symbolically and culturally rich concept to one reflecting practical and socio-economic realities. They also examine smell incorporation into narratives to shape perceptions of place. Based on the discussed theoretical frameworks and literary texts, smellscape is defined as the unity of a smell’s location, individual interpretation, and interactions with surrounding smells. The complexity of smellscape reveals them as dynamic and heterogeneous “palimpsests.” This study chronologically traces the smellscape’s development and potential theoretical applications by extending contemporary ideas of the concept to the medieval period and the Enlightenment.

**Keywords:** Smellscape; Olfactory Landscape; Sensuous Geographies; Olfactory Studies; History of Smell; Osmology; Travel Narratives

## Highlights:

- Smellscape, introduced in 1984 by Gade, were described by travellers as early as the 14th century.
- Smellscape blend material, environmental, and personal factors, forming an olfactory palimpsest.
- Whether real or metaphorical, smellscape shape and influence a person’s geographical movements.
- A smellscape of one century may be rejected by the next, reflecting changing norms.

2020, pp. 199, 201; Sven Endreß, 2023). Such a variety of areas where scent is used shows its applicability to both small (e.g., building) and large spaces (e.g., city) (Xiao et al., 2021, pp. 1–2). Despite growing interest in smellscape, several key areas remain underexplored. For instance, there is insufficient research into how place-specific smells acquire meaning and evolve within historical and cultural contexts. Additionally, there is no framework for understanding the relationship between smells and spaces, nor a clear account of the term “smellscape’s” emergence and development.

This paper aims to theoretically examine the concept of smellscape, challenging the assumption that smellscape is a modern phenomenon tied to urban studies and contemporary geography. The paper traces their historical roots through late medieval and early modern travel literature, analysing how sensory descriptions of places, particularly olfactory ones, were used to depict unfamiliar territories. The first part presents a chronological review of the literature on smellscape, tracing its conceptual development and comparing key interpretations of the term. This comparative analysis reveals the multilayered nature of smellscape, which ultimately leads to the application of the palimpsest metaphor to describe their dynamic, layered, and evolving characteristics. The second part of the article examines historical examples of smellscape through an analysis of travel writing from the late Middle Ages and early modern period by focusing on three key travel narratives—*The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (1357–1371), *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson* (1617), and *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* by Richard Hakluyt (1598–1600)—demonstrating how descriptions of smell were used to depict and interpret unfamiliar places. With the help of these examples, the paper illustrates how smellscape evolved from symbolic and cultural constructs to practical and socio-economic markers, reinforcing their historical significance and expanding their relevance beyond contemporary urban studies. This research applies a theoretical approach to smellscape alongside cultural geography and travel writing fiction from the late Middle Ages and early modern period—texts that sought to describe unfamiliar places in a detailed and immersive manner. By applying established theoretical frameworks to underexplored texts, this study traces the formation and evolution of smellscape across historical transitions. Primary sources include travel writing fiction and geographical descriptions that document sensory experiences. Secondary sources from smellscape theories help contextualise these olfactory representations within humanistic, cultural and sensuous geographies. Usually, smellscape research relies on controlled experiments, subjective assessments, and psychological evaluations. These methods are extended by smell walking and smellmapping, as well as complementary techniques, including space syntax analysis, 3D modeling, and GIS analysis. Given the multidimensional nature of smellscape, this study integrates literary sources, theoretical research, and cultural geography perspectives. By analysing texts that aimed to evoke sensory-rich places, this approach provides a historical and cultural perspective on the perception of smellscape through time. Thus, the article broadens the theoretical and methodological frameworks for studying smellscape by emphasising the multilayered nature of the term, extending the historical scope, and suggesting their interdisciplinary applications in literary studies, historical geography, and sensory history. The paper is structured into three main sections, including the literature review, discussion of selected quotes from literary texts and conclusions.

## 2. Literature Review

There is no consistency in the development of the term smellscape. Considering the available material on smellscape and the dynamics of the smell discourse, as discussed in detail below, it becomes possible to outline two main periods of smellscape establishment, namely the foundational conceptual stage (1984–2000) and the period of emergent research (2010 to present). In addition to its uneven chronological development, the concept has evolved throughout various scientific fields, from geography to philosophy, from urban planning to linguistics. Thus, the interest in smellscape over different periods and by multiple scholars has contributed to its formation as a cross-disciplinary concept.

To begin, the concept of the smellscape came under scrutiny following Douglas Porteous’ 1985 article on the subject. However, the earliest proto-study in the field of smellscape can be attributed to Jean-Noël Hallé (1754–1822), who was at the origins of French hygiene, occupying the position of inaugural chair of hygiene and medical physics at the Paris Faculty created in 1794, and Napoleon’s private doctor (La Berge, 1992, p. 42; Streets, 2022, p. 44). Hallé, commissioned by the Royal Society of Medicine, investigated noxious smells along the Seine and Bièvre rivers. He undertook a 10-kilometer walk along the riverbanks, documenting every smell he could detect. Afterwards, he published his account entitled *Rapport Sur L’État actuel du cours de la rivière de Bièvre* in the collection *Histoire de La Société Royale de Médecine Année 1776–1789 : Avec Les Mémoires de Médecine et de Physique Médicale*. Key reasons behind this smell walk were health problems, particularly asphyxiation and eye irritation, among sewer workers. These issues stemmed from insufficient sewer systems, poor drainage, and stagnant waters, which caused clogged passages and accumulated filth. Consequently, Hallé was tasked to propose strategies for improving air quality in the affected areas.

Hallé accurately described several locations in his investigation, including Pont aux Changes, Quai de Gesvres, L’hôpital de la Pitié-Salpêtrière, Le Clos Payen, Rue Mouffetard, Rue Censier, and Rue de l’Oursine. At each site, he meticulously documented the level of contamination and filth, the sources of dirt and malodours, the primary industries operating there, and the human activities contributing to the production of unpleasant odours. Furthermore, he highlights the associated health risks posed by these environments. Hallé’s observations were situated within a temporal framework, noting the date of his investigation and discussing potential future challenges.

Thus, his work contains descriptions such as:

*Salpêtrière fournissent la plus part de ces matières qui donnent à la yase une couleur noire et une odeur Infecte. Les eaux mêmes de la rivière en sont pénétrées, et lorsque après les avoir retenues pour le service des moulins on vient à les lâcher, il se répand par tout le voisinage une odeur insupportable. (Histoire de La Société Royale de Médecine Année 1776–1789: Avec Les Mémoires de Médecine et de Physique Médicale., 1789, p. lxxvij)*

The fact that smells are mentioned twice in this short excerpt may mean their inability to go unnoticed. Furthermore, this quote illustrates how the stagnation of water caused by industrial activities, specifically mills, contributes to pollution and foul odours in the environment, highlighting the connection between human activities, their impact on the sensory construction of places, and their future perception.

Let us consider another example illustrating how smell permeates the environment:

*La partie de cet atterrissement qui est à la fin du quai de la Feraille, ayant le Pont aux Changes, s’élève par un grand amas d’ordures et forme un tertre sur lequel s’appuie une gouttière qui répond à l’égoût du grand Châtelet. La terre en est noire et de mauvaise odeur. (Histoire de La Société Royale de Médecine Année 1776–1789: Avec Les Mémoires de Médecine et de Physique Médicale., 1789, p. lxxxvij)*

This quote further traces the depiction of the riverbanks, their conditions and the type of odour present there. It provides a physical description of a spot that became elevated due to a significant accumulation of waste. There is also a detailed description of the gutter running through the mound and connecting to the sewer. The ground is described as blackened and foul-smelling, emphasising the decay and pollution caused by waste and sewage in this area. This illustration is an example of smellscape, as the foul smell becomes a defining characteristic of this particular location, shaping the sensory experience of people who encounter it and serving as a marker of the environmental and social conditions of the time.

Hallé's analysis provides insights into the historical conditions of sewage systems in Paris, where the accumulation of waste and stagnant water shaped the olfactory landscape. What makes these observations more relevant is recognising the nuanced role played by the physical layout of spaces, river flows, currents, and industrial activities in creating smells in the area and how they influence socio-economic segregation and community dynamics. Thus, the description of the French riverbanks of the Seine and Bièvre offers one of the earliest examples of a smellscape.

One of the conceptual shifts in studies of smell and places occurred in the mid-1980s when a professor of geography at the University of Victoria, Douglas Porteous, introduced the notion of smellscape, the event which marked the foundational conceptual stage (1984–2000) of smellscape theory development. It should be noted that although Porteous is widely associated with the term's coinage, this is not the case. The formulation of the term smellscape and its explanation is initially rooted in the work of another professor of Geography at the University of Vermont, Daniel Wynne Gade (1936), particularly in his 1984 research on the island of Nosy Be, Madagascar. In his article dedicated to this case study, *Redolence and Land Use on Nosy Be, Madagascar*, Gade offers one of the earliest comprehensive analyses of smellscapes. Thus, he defines the smellscape as an array of smells in a given area, shaped by various factors such as vegetation, human activities, ambient conditions, the size of the location, temperature, wind patterns, air quality, sea breeze, smell intensity zones, seasons, time of year, part of the day, humidity, industrial emissions and waste. Notably, Gade also introduced the term "nasal menu" to describe the diversity of aromas in a given environment. His interpretation of the concept is presented as follows:

*the "smellscape," is an intriguing dimension of place ignored by geographers ... [smellscape is] a smell-defined space. ... smellscape is the distinctive odour which characterises an area ... is mostly the result of land-use decisions. ... intensified by a set of ambient conditions. ... [places set] strict limits to the smellscape. ...consistently warm to hot temperatures increase volatility which in turn promote the emission of odorous molecules. ... humidity also fortifies the smell by providing particles on which the water-soluble odour molecules can coalesce as in an aerosol. ... These fragrant aerosols, heavier than the air into which they are released, gradually descend to near ground level where the human nose can intercept them ... Smellscales can be classified by their distal odour and by their causative origin, among which are industrial effluence, waste accumulation, engine exhaust, domestic vapours, natural vegetation, or horticultural specialisation. (1984)*

Therefore, this quote shows how smellscales arise from the interplay of various circumstances, including environmental conditions (area, land, temperatures), chemical characteristics of air and odours (the weight of fragrant particles or aerosols and their ability to be detected by the human nose), and human, natural and industrial sources (factories, garbage dumps). To sum up, the first definition of smellscape interpreted it as a sensory geography of smell, determined by what and who is present in a place and by the environmental conditions that amplify or diffuse those scents. Gade also advocates integrating the study of smellscales into social, economic, and ecological research (1984). Despite his foundational contributions, Gade is not cited in later discussions sparked by Porteous.

The seminal work of Porteous *Smellscale* (1985) brought the smellscape concept to broader attention and became central for the Conceptual period (1984–2000) of smellscape history. Comparing Porteous's definition with his predecessor, Daniel W. Gade, reveals how each scholar approached the term. In his widely cited article, Porteous states:

*non-continuous, fragmentary in space and episodic in time, and limited by the height of our noses from the ground, where smells tend to linger. Smellscale, moreover, cannot be considered apart from the other senses. Many smells provide little information about the location of their source in space (...) smells are not randomly distributed, but are located with reference to source, air currents, and direction and distance from source. (pp. 359–360)*

At first glance, it is apparent how Porteous's explanation focuses on the more straightforward relationship between odours and their spatial context. In this respect, smellscape captures the totality of odours present in a specific physical location or ordered by a particular space and their interconnections with both the space and the people within it. Moreover, being source-dependent, smellscales have limited spatial diffusion and are temporally fragmented as they rely on the object emitting the smell and the environmental conditions, namely air and wind. Additionally, Porteous, drawing inspiration from psychology, among other disciplines, also emphasised the emotional dimension of smellscales and their ability to influence individuals' feelings and, consequently, evoke recollections and memories. Within this emotional context, he also considered the notion of odour hedonics, pointing out that perceptions of "pleasant" or "unpleasant" smells vary from person to person, highlighting the subjectivity of smell interpretations. As a result, the smellscape functions more than just a backdrop but as a dimension linking the external world with individual perceptions, emotions and memories.

The difference in the approaches of the two main founders of the term, Daniel W. Gade and Douglas Porteous is presented in Table 1 below. It is necessary to mention that both perspectives contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of smellscales, showing their fluidity, subjectivity, and connection to human perception.

The next scholar engaging with smellscape in the foundational stage was Paul Rodaway in *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (1994), where he refined the concept of smellscape by critiquing Porteous for overly equating olfactory experiences with visual landscapes due to their shared "scape" nature. Rodaway emphasises that smells, unlike static visual landscapes, are dynamic, shifting through space and time sensations, creating a "time-space geography" that links present smells to memories of specific places (p. 67). He observes smell's ephemeral and fluid nature, arguing that "Smells do not offer scenes or views, objects arranged and set at a distance from the observer. Rather, smells are present or not present, in varying degrees of intensity and subject to the movement of air (or the locomotion of our bodies through space). Smells infiltrate or linger, appear or fade, rather than take place or situate themselves as a composition" (Rodaway, 2002, p. 64). He also noted that smellscales are geographically specific and influenced by gender, adding complexity to how they are perceived. Interestingly, Rodaway, like his predecessor

Porteous, notes that smell can provide “qualitative information about the nature of the environment and about the people and things in that environment” (p. 68). Thus, Roadway’s concept of “smellscape” captures the fleeting nature of smells, their power to trigger memories and experiences tied to specific places, and their dependence on personal background.

**Table 1.** Contrasting Theories of Smellscape: Gade vs. Porteous

Daniel W. Gade	Douglas Porteous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empirical study</li> <li>• Case study of an island Nosy Be</li> <li>• Smellscape is the distinctive and spatially defined olfactory environment of a particular area, shaped by both natural and human-made factors</li> <li>• Smellscape fluctuate over time due to environmental changes, human intervention, and shifting sensory perceptions. They consist of a dynamic array of odours influenced by vegetation, crops, harvest, land use, industrial activities, climate, season changes, rains, time of the day and year, evaporations, humidity</li> <li>• Smellscape studies may be enriched through the inclusion of such concepts as odoriferous intensity, nasal menu, olfactory effectiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical review</li> <li>• Evaluation and analysis of works ranging from Trygg Engen, Edward Relph, Francis B. Colavita, Susan S. Schiffman to Rudyard Kipling, John Atkins, and Robert Ruark, among others</li> <li>• Smellscape is defined in comparison to landscape; however, rather than capturing a visual scene like a photograph, it represents spatially ordered or place-related smells</li> <li>• Smells do not blend smoothly across space, they are scattered, and they change with time, weather, and movement</li> <li>• From a psychological perspective, smellscape have been analyzed in terms of hedonic reactions to smells, smell tolerances and preferences, emotional or motivational arousal, adaptation, and individual and age-related responses to smells</li> <li>• The study of smellscape can be enriched by incorporating a psychological perspective, including hedonic characteristics, smell tolerances and preferences, emotional or motivational arousal triggered by smells, smell adaptation, and individual as well as age-group responses to olfactory stimuli</li> </ul>

Following the seminal works by Gade and Porteous, the field of smell research did not pay considerable attention to its interaction with the environment for some time. The situation changed with the development of urban studies and further research on the interaction between people, cities and their architecture. The person who combined urban environments and architectural layouts with smells became Victoria Henshaw (1971). In one of her key publications, *Urban Smellscape: Understanding and Designing City Smell Environments* (2013), she follows Porteous in his definition of the smellscape, stating that smellscape is the total environment of the place (p. 5). Henshaw also recognises that humans can only partially perceive a scent at any given time, but they still can hold a mental image or memory of the entire smellscape. Another link of her study to Porteous’ work is noticeable in her inclusion of the subjective perception of smells into the idea of smellscape, as different odours creating smellscape are perceived and interpreted by individuals through their personal experiences, memories, and associations, as well as the cultural representations, prior knowledge, and expectations they bring with them. Moreover, she refers to the hedonistic role of smell, explaining that people’s enjoyment of the odour influences the sensory and experiential identity of the area (p. 35). Among other things, she extends smellscape’s definition, saying that they are formed by multiple odour “ingredients” that may not be unique to one location. Still, the particular blend and balance of odours in a given place can create a distinct and recognisable olfactory signature, which she called a “smell genetics of place” (p. 33). An example of the genetics idea may be the habituation of locals to the smells of their places that they hardly notice or even may find them pleasant when visitors or newcomers immediately sense the unfamiliar aroma (p. 33). Summing up Henshaw’s ideas, smellscape are dynamic sensory landscapes formed by the interaction of smells in a specific urban context and the direct sensory experience of the smellscape’s participants, their personal memories, associations and cultural or ecological expectations of the place. Smellscape can also influence how people enjoy, perceive and experience spaces, highlighting the role of smell in shaping a broader perception of locations and emotional engagement.

Henshaw’s most significant achievement is the introduction of terms such as smellmapping and smellwalking, which subsequently have gained popularity with scholars. In *Urban Smellscape: Understanding and Designing City Smell Environments* (2013), she states that smellwalks stem from sensewalking, during which people focus on sensory information perceived through one or more senses. The first examples of sensewalking were soundwalks undertaken in the centre of Boston, USA, where participants tried to feel the sonic environments of cities and investigate connections between the senses, vision and hearing in particular (Henshaw, 2014, p. 42). This type of walk laid the foundation for further explorations of how people perceive the environment around them in non-visual ways. Smellwalks, in turn, aim to teach participants to master a receptive state of “smelling in search,” enabling them to distinguish between the everyday experience of odours and the focused observation of all available environmental smells (Henshaw, 2014, p. 43). This approach to exploring places can also tap into olfactory memories, where people recall past events or places tied to specific odours, offering a more layered and temporal understanding of urban spaces. First, smellwalks were organised in the early 2000s (Henshaw, 2014, p. 45). Therefore, smellwalking deepens humans’ sensory engagement with environments and highlights the importance of olfaction in collective and individual experiences of place.

Another key researcher contributing to the study of smellscape in the second period is Kate McLean. Smellscape, for her, become relationships between smells and space, smells and time, and smells and people (McLean, 2020, p. 217). Like previous researchers, she also speaks about the time limitations of smellscape. “Temporal knowledge embedded in the smellscape” is revealed through real-time olfactory stimuli, imagination of a possible future smell, rhythms of smell movements that depend on wind conditions and the presence of infrastructure, such as recycling plants or markets, as well as individuals’ rhythms of breathing and moving through smell environments, and social rhythms, such as daily human activities (McLean, 2020, p. 224). The temporality makes the smellscape ephemeral, transient and mutating (McLean, 2020). Furthermore, smellscape are layered and dynamic experiences that can combine the smells of coffee, hot dogs, and flowers at the same time. She also refers

to psychology, explaining that smellscape are not perceived entirely but discontinuously and are parcelled into “odour successions”, where parcels of related sniffs are linked by memory (McLean, 2020, p. 224). Also, like Henshaw, she uses smellwalking to study the odours of places. Her contribution to this methodology is the development of smellmaps of different areas.

It should be noted that these three definitions, elaborated by these three authors, have further developed smellscape and actively involved this term in further research. The following Table 2 will help to see how similar the interpretations of this phenomenon are. It also shows that these definitions share several overarching characteristics despite interpretive differences. Firstly, smellscape are dynamic and fluid, continuously evolving as they shift through space and time. Secondly, they contribute to a distinct sense of place through their unique olfactory composition, shaping how locations are perceived and identified. Then, such personal factors as memory, associations, and even gender play a crucial role in how individuals experience smellscape. Additionally, they possess a temporal dimension, influencing both hedonistic experiences and how people remember and emotionally connect to places. Therefore, this multidimensionality allows us to discuss smellscape palimpsestic nature as it layers, evolves, and fades over time.

**Table 2.** Defining Smellscape

Paul Rodaway (1994)	Victoria Henshaw (2013)	Kate McLean (2017)
A <b>smellscape</b> is a fluid and distinctive composition of dynamic olfactory scenes that emerge and dissipate as they move through the space to which they are tied. As such, it functions as a time-space geography shaped by both environmental and human factors. Smellscape can evoke memories of specific places, and their perception varies across individuals, including differences based on gender.	A <b>smellscape</b> consists of the olfactory patterns of places, formed by unique combinations of scents that create a distinctive sensory identity. Often described as the “genetics of places,” a smellscape is a fingerprint of a location, making it uniquely recognisable. While long-time inhabitants may become used to smells in their surroundings, visitors or newcomers can easily detect pronounced aromas. Smellscape are deeply connected to hedonistic experiences, influencing how people enjoy, perceive, and remember a place. This perception is shaped by personal experiences, memories, cultural associations, and expectations.	A <b>smellscape</b> is a unique, dynamic sensory landscape of smells that shape an individual’s experience of a place. Each location carries a distinct olfactory identity, creating a sensory imprint that differentiates it from others. Fluid and subjective, smellscape are influenced by memories, emotions, movements, and acts of perception, making them both transient and immersive. They also possess a temporal dimension, as scents evoke feelings and associations that shift over time.

The nature of smellmapping depends on rhythm analysis. The importance of this method was also mentioned in a recent study by Emre Söylemez and Turgay Kerem Koramaz, which pointed out the practicality of studying rhythm analysis for understanding urban life in metropolitan environments, where the rhythms of individuals, communities, and systems (like transportation or labour) converge. Therefore, according to McLean as well as Söylemez and Kerem Koramaz, rhythm analysis focuses on the temporal (time-based) and spatial (space-based) dimensions of social and physical environments, which are relevant in evaluating smell and its penetration in the environment (Gebze Technical University, Turkey et al., 2024). Consequently, creating smellmaps enables the visualisation of temporal rhythms and spatial relationships, rendering the fleeting olfactory world into static representations. The process of smellmapping reveals the connections between odours, place, and memory and undeniably connects the emotional and psychological dimensions of smellscape. Smellmaps also preserve the temporality of smellscape and delineate geo-locations of smells, as well as their range, intensity, and combinations. The process of smellmap creation consists of initial smell walk, smell detection and data collection, where attention is paid to the notion of temporal and spatial dynamics, and then data transformation into sketches, animations, and watercolour visualisation. Afterwards, the resulting drawings are digitalised with the help of various signs and colour schemes to convey the intensity of the smell, its movement and distribution limits, and the source of the scent.

The relevance of smellscape studies was further confirmed by the development of smell-sensitive urban planning and its importance for the sustainable development of societies and their buildings. In *Sense of the City: An Alternate Approach to Urbanism* (2005), Mirko Zardini claims that every city has its smellscape, with citizens “recognising the identity of individual cities by their unique sounds and smells” (pp. 21–22). Historically, architecture favoured vision, treating smells and sounds as “disturbing elements” that should be minimised or eliminated (p. 20). Yet, despite efforts to introduce standardised, sanitised odours, many cities have retained their distinct olfactory identities. Places like Central Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Orient, among others, continue to possess recognisable aromas, demonstrating that smellscape play a critical role in defining place (Zardini et al., 2005, p. 21). Zardini adds that sensory thresholds change with time and culture, showing that smellscape evolve and adapt rather than remain fixed (p. 21). Although there is no direct definition of a smellscape in *Sense of the City: An Alternate Approach to Urbanism*, it can be inferred that the concept goes beyond the mere connection between smell and place, encompassing the dynamic nature of odours, shaped by factors such as time, culture, and environmental changes, while resisting efforts at homogenisation.

Anna Barbara’s book *Invisible Architecture: The Experience of Place through Smell* (2006) already has an affirmative headline asserting the existence of odours in constructions. The book explores the “architecture of olfactory structures” (Barbara & Perliss, 2006, p. 10), shifting the focus from how places are shaped by smells to the architectural construction of smells themselves. Barbara draws metaphorical comparisons between the olfactory system and certain places, arguing that architecture can reflect the anatomy of the nose. One of her examples is the Temple of Luxor, which resembles a nose, and the need for this place was dictated by Egyptian embalming rituals and smelling substances used by people (Barbara & Perliss, 2006, pp. 21–22). She speaks of such edifices as homes of smells, suggesting that the urge to work with odours was the initial impetus for erecting various structures (pp. 21–22). Barbara’s study shows that spaces do not just influence smells or vice versa, but smells are also sources of inspiration for architects.

The establishment in 2006 of the academic journal *The Senses and Society* was the subsequent significant development in recognising sensory perception in understanding locations. The opening article of the inaugural issue, written by the journal’s editors-in-chief and titled *Introducing Sensory Studies*, marked a long-anticipated milestone—or “revolution”—in sensory studies across multiple disciplines. The journal signalled a



formal acknowledgement that sensory experiences extend beyond physicality and bodies and shape subjective feelings, establishing links between history, society, and culture. This preface further introduced the concept of the sensorium as a dynamic and evolving “apparatus” for sensory engagement with reality, defined by social, historical, and political contexts (Bull et al., 2006). Recognition of all senses, without an exceptional focus on eyesight, made *The Senses and Society* a platform for studying olfactory experiences beyond the confines of the physical body. It allows the exploration of spaces and their diverse characteristics—such as race, class, power dynamics, economy, rituals, and food traditions—through the lens of smell. The distinction of smell as an integral aspect of place perception is emphasised in the special issue published in 2007 and titled *Senses and the City*, which raises critical questions about the role of all the senses in urban studies by advocating for developing an “architecture of the senses” that acknowledges the full range of sensory experiences in the city. The introduction also highlights the persistent “olfactory silence” in the study of urban life, drawing attention to how the sense of smell has been neglected in urban and cultural research (Adams & Guy, 2007, pp. 133–134). The issue further encourages a multisensory approach to urbanism, urging scholars to move sensory studies from the margins of urban discourse to the forefront (Adams & Guy, 2007, p. 136).

Today, urban studies are experiencing an increase in scholarly attention. There is notable research on the relationship between smellscape and the evaluation of odour as pleasant or unpleasant. For example, papers such as *A perceptual model of smellscape pleasantness* (2018) explore the hedonic evaluation of odours in different locations, identifying perceptual qualities of places through their positive and negative smells. This approach highlights the power of odours to enhance or diminish the overall experience of a place, providing critical insights for crafting urban planning and design strategies that integrate sensory and emotional dimensions. This research offers nine indicators that influence smellscape pleasantness, namely intensity, purity, cleanliness, freshness, calmness, liking, familiarity, appropriateness and naturalness (Xiao et al., 2018). However, the impact of odour extends beyond hedonic reactions to include adverse effects of smells on health, demographic changes, outdoor activities, and sensory overload. The latter issues are part of the case study of a New Jersey neighbourhood near sewage treatment plants, trash-to-steam incinerators, a chalk factory, an aluminium smelter, and the pervasive diesel emissions caused by increased truck traffic in that area. Thus, the study of stench in New Jersey’s area demonstrates that in addition to positive or neutral emotional reactions, smellscape can cause direct health outcomes in its subjects (Kitson et al., 2019).

Another aspect of the history of smellscape is its evolution within more abstract and conceptual directions. Parallel to the geographically-, territorially- and city-based development of the smellscape concept, a less chronologically consistent evolution has occurred in the psychological, linguistic, cultural and anthropological exploration of smellscape. Trygg Engen (1926–2009) is considered a pioneer and founder of the psychological study of olfaction, as his research focused on psychophysics, memory, and cognitive processes related to olfaction. He introduced notions of olfactory perceptual development and odour hedonics, discussed the role of language, context, and expectation in odour experience, and developed the idea of odour memory. Even today, his books *The Perception of Odors* (1982) and *Odor Sensation and Memory* (1991) are crucial for olfactory discourse. One of his terms is “odour space” (pp. 48–51), which refers to mental representations of smell rather than physical environments and stands for “a sphere with an axis of clarity, a radius of strength, and a circumference of note”. In this context, the axis of clarity stands for a simple and distinctive odour or a more complex one. Radius entails the potency of the odour, and note is a qualitative characteristic or type of odour. Within this mental construct, the problem of odour naming also arose. Odours are difficult to conceptualise abstractly, and their naming is also challenging. For instance, one might name and imagine the blue colour of the sky, but odour recall relies on specific object-based associations and sources (e.g., lemon, rose, barn) (pp. 48–51). Thus, Engen’s “odour space” explores a mental model of arranging odours in the outside world and how individuals mentally categorise and differentiate between various smells.

An auxiliary framework shaping the understanding of smellscape is the one provided by Yi-Fu Tuan (1930–2022) and his works, particularly *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values* (1974) and *Passing Strange and Wonderful: aesthetics, nature, and culture* (1995). Yi-Fu Tuan, founder of humanistic geography, spoke about the multisensory perception of the environment and the inseparability of perceptual channels. He emphasised that place is known through various modes of experience, such as passive ones (internal sensations without external manifestation) that include taste, smell, and touch and active modes (outside perception aimed at objectively exploring the world) that involve seeing, hearing, and thinking. Even though Tuan does not explicitly speak about smells, his mental concept of entire sensorial space perception incorporates olfactory experiences as part of the overall sensory impression that forms individuals’ abstract understanding of a location over time. Furthermore, he writes that smell is a “rich unconscious background” to daily life, subtly enhancing experiences without being consciously noticed. He also links smell perception to memory and points out that loss of smell associations with places disrupts the personal connection with them, creating a sense of disorientation and emotional impoverishment (Tuan, 1995, pp. 55–59). While Tuan does not explicitly address smellscape, his work provides a theoretical vision of how smells contribute to a place’s experiential and emotional dimensions.

In the cultural sphere, the primacy of olfactory discussions belongs to Alain Corbin, a French historian who described the cultural history of smells in 18th and 19th-century France. His work laid the foundations for the cultural study of smells and their relationship to the urban environment, society and public areas (Corbin, 1986). Corbin’s exploration of the “foul and the fragrant” in urban and private contexts has influenced discussions about the role of smell in shaping experiences and perceptions of space. For instance, he writes about the role of the toilet in the mid-19th century as a place to promote cleanliness and hygiene. It was believed that keeping this place clean and orderly could enhance not only health but also improve discipline and societal values. Despite Corbin’s work predating the formal concept of “smellscape,” his research laid crucial groundwork for understanding the smell of the environments within historical and cultural dimensions.

While discussing the history of smellscape, it should be noted that this concept arises within the overarching framework of the history of smells. The study of how odours have been perceived, categorised and valued across different historical periods, cultural, social and economic factors that influence the importance and devaluation of certain odours, and the role of scents in shaping social hierarchies and identities are some of the vast arrays of the topics discussed within the history of smell. Smellscape, by contrast, emphasizes locations and environments where olfactory experiences shape spatial perception and the arrangement of smells within certain places. It demonstrates the spatial dimension of smells and gives rise to the notion of smellscape (Tullett et al., 2022). This means that smellscape focuses on the synchronic interaction between place, personal experience, and the meaning of smell. The history of smells is concerned with the diachronic analysis of smell, changes in smell lexicons and the cultural history of olfaction, entailing domains of perfumes, fashion, medicine and botany, among others (Menini et al., 2022). In summary, while smellscape focus on the immediate and direct sensory experiences and environments shaped by odours, the history of smells looks at the broader narrative of how those experiences and perceptions have developed and changed over time.

The short examination of principal works and scholars engaged in smellscape discourse presents evidence that the development of the concept in question was interspersed across various historical periods, thereby allowing the discernment of two main stages in smellscape studies, namely foundational conceptual stage (1984–2000) and the period of emergent research (2010 to present). Additionally, it was also the subject

of research in other fields, such as psychology, cultural studies, and anthropology, among others, contributing to smellscape dimensionality and expanding its nature to a multidimensional formation, which can be equated to the idea of palimpsest, where one level of meaning is layered on top of another, and this can happen countless times. Regardless of different approaches, the smellscape is a unified theoretical framework for understanding how humans perceive and interpret olfactory environments within specific contexts and periods. The examples in the next section further demonstrate the importance of incorporating scent into place perception and reveal the deeper historical roots of smellscapes.

### 3. Mapping the World Through Smellscapes

Travel narratives from the 14th to 16th centuries were written to shed light on distant lands. The genre of travel literature encompasses ethnographies, maritime narratives, memoirs, road and aviation literature, travel journalism, and war reporting, all united by the goal of describing and explaining the world around them. Though written with a claim to truthfulness, travel accounts are rich with emotion, as personal experiences and beliefs shape travellers' perceptions of their surroundings. Reality undergoes a transformation as it is shaped through the traveller's perception and further mediated by the act of writing. Travel experiences become travel texts, meaning the world is not reflected as it is but reconstructed, contributing to travel writing's ambiguity, deception and its label of an "entertaining fraud" genre. Travelogues' features, namely a borderline position between reality and fiction, the blend of truth and invention, and the impossibility of verifying authors' statements, attract attention and contribute to their prosperity. The liminality of travel writing can also be defined as "fictions of factual representation," highlighting its position between reality and imagination, where narratives blend observed experiences with literary construction (White, 2019, p. 22). Despite the factual unreliability and lack of objectivity, imperial powers from the 13th to 16th centuries effectively used travel accounts to gather new lands' strategic, economic, and cultural characteristics. The reliance on travel texts suggests that the information provided there was sufficiently valuable for imperial purposes, such as expansion, trade, and governance. Moreover, certain descriptions in travelogues could be verified and replicated by the subsequent traveller, which means that excessive fabrication would have undermined the narratives' practical function. Relying on travel writing as a source of knowledge and being unable to verify its authenticity creates an epistemological dilemma in which readers are bound to remain uncertain (Thompson, 2011, p. 30; White, 2019, pp. 22–34, 22).

This epistemological instability extends beyond factual descriptions of landscapes and cultures to the realm of sensory perception. As travelogues mediate experiences through subjective and selective narration, they also construct sensory landscapes, particularly smellscapes. Personal biases and engagement with aromatic prompts are mapped onto a sensitive perception of the environments and cues available there, which makes these texts relevant for studying how places were mediated and perceived through the senses, particularly through the sense of smell (Youngs, 2013). It is essential to mention that the liminal nature of travel narratives, shaped by subjectivity and partial truthfulness, frames smellscapes as textual constructs rather than direct reflections of real-world sensory experiences. Taking texts of this genre, I traced the number of references to smells in some of its main works, including *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (1357–1371), *An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent* (Vol. 1–4) (1617) and 12 volumes of *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589; expanded 1598–1600) edited by Richard Hakluyt. The narrative of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* contains more than 40 references to various smells, volumes by Fynes Moryson Gent have 64 references, and most importantly, the collection of writings from 15th- and 16th-century travellers in 12 volumes contains 207 references to smells. To obtain these numbers, I counted the references to smell in general and then separated those related to place. Examples were selected through a collection of descriptions where the noun "smell"<sup>1</sup> is used, or its synonyms or through verbs that refer to the action of smelling itself. The analysis presented in this article is based on the vision of smellscape as defined by Gade, supplemented by an understanding of its multidimensionality, which resembles palimpsest. However, it should be noted that while smellscapes may not be the primary focus of travel literature, they are a rich and prominent element within it.

In the attempt to reexamine the progression of smellscapes' history, it will make sense to start with one of the essential English books of travel writing of the late Middle Ages, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, which chronicles a journey beginning in the Holy Land and extending to India, China, and beyond. The Book of John Mandeville (also known as *The Travels of John Mandeville*) was published in the late 1350s or early 1360s. Initially written in French, the text had been translated into Latin, German, English, Italian, Czech, Danish, and Irish by the 15th century, reflecting its popularity. It is a first-person account attributed to the hypothetical Sir John Mandeville, an English knight from St. Albans, who claims to have spent thirty-four years travelling to the Holy Land and beyond, encountering fantastical sights, creatures, and customs. However, no historical evidence exists that a real "Sir John Mandeville" existed.

The Book of John Mandeville is a hybrid work that intertwines travel writing, fiction, scholarship, science, religion, ethnography, and cultural commentary. It borrows from earlier medieval texts, including those by Odoric of Pordenone (a Franciscan missionary to Russia and Asia, c.1330) and William of Boldensele (a Dominican pilgrim to the Holy Land, c.1336). Given its extensive use of external sources, the book also partially resembles Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, which will be discussed later. The Book of John Mandeville is a hybrid work that intertwines travel writing, fiction, scholarship, science, religion, ethnography, and cultural commentary. It borrows from earlier medieval texts, including those by Odoric of Pordenone (a Franciscan missionary to Russia and Asia, c.1330) and William of Boldensele (a Dominican pilgrim to the Holy Land, c.1336). Given its extensive use of external sources, the book also partially resembles Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, which will be discussed later.

This paper examines references to smellscapes using the following edition: Pollard, A. W. (Ed.). (1900). *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. The version of the Cotton Manuscript in modern spelling, with three narratives, in illustration of it, from *Hakluyt's Navigations, Voyages & Discoveries* (1915th ed.). Macmillan and Co. The copy was reproduced from the original artefact and remains as true to the original work as possible. The search was done through keyword search, close reading and analysis. In this work, a hypothetical Mandeville describes the following olfactory experience:

*And in mid place of that vale, under a rock, is a head and the visage of a devil bodily, full horrible and dreadful to see, and it sheweth not but the head, to the shoulders. But there is no man in the world so hardy, Christian man ne other, but that he would be adread to*

<sup>1</sup> The synonymous range includes the following (provided in alphabetical order): acridness, ambrosia, aroma, attar, emanation, emit, fetor, filth, foetid, foulness, fragrance, fust, get wind of, greasy, incense, inhale, lusciousness, malodour, musk, nose, noxiousness, odoriferousness, odour, otto, perfume, pong, pungent, rancidity, rankness, redolence, reek, reeking, savouriness, savour, scent, sniff, spice, stench, stink, tang, whiff. Regarding the word search methodology, the analysis was conducted using both keyword searches and manual reading and interpretation of the texts.

*behold it, and that it would seem him to die for dread, so is it hideous for to behold. For he beholdeth every man so sharply with dreadful eyen, that be evermore moving and sparkling as fire, and changeth and stirreth so often in diverse manner, with so horrible countenance, that no man dare not neighen towards him. And from him cometh out smoke and stinking fire and so much abomination, that unneth no man may there endure. (Pollard, 1900, p. 185)*

The passage describes the setting of Perilous Valley, as John Mandeville calls it and according to whom, it is also the entrance to Hell. The “vale” appears as a horrifying and supernatural place where a devilish figure, or a devil’s visage, is partially visible under a rock. No man, neither Christian nor heathen, could bear to approach without a surge of dread, for the scent alone—a dynamic mix of stinking smoke and fire—seems to awaken ancient fears. The imperceptible moment of odour complements the description of nature. It should be noted that this is an example of a metaphorical smellscape, which demonstrates how the idea of the “odour of sanctity” was ingrained in the society of the time and was perceived as an actual physical category. The “odour of sanctity” was a feature of the piety of priests and saints, while stench symbolised sin and moral corruption. In Greek culture, pleasant smells like ambrosia—the mythical food or drink of the gods—were universally associated with gods, irrespective of their moral behaviour, symbolising inherent divinity, and were associated with divine power and immortality. In the early Christian tradition, all priests had a good smell as it was believed that they had a good moral and should know God’s smell. Priests’ pleasant smell was fuelled by the scent of the roses with which they adorned themselves on feast days and the incense that was an integral part of the church and rituals. Holiness and good smell also appealed to rich people, who were buried wrapped in fragrances and herbs (Classen et al., 1994, p. 53).

The shift in smellscape from Greek culture to Christianity reflects the difference in the concepts of divinity and morality. In Mandeville’s quotation, the stench of the valley evokes fear and dread, forming part of the olfactory palimpsest that overlays Christian ideas of sin and sanctity onto a real place crossed by travellers. Smellscape, thus, reflect not just physical environments but also shifting cultural and moral frameworks, as seen in the transition from Greek to Christian interpretations of smell.

Smells associated with sinfulness, piety, or death were potent, yet the absence of any odour could provoke an equally profound sense of fear. In the Late Middle Ages, when the stench of decay was a common experience, the absence of any smell could hint at something unnatural or foreboding. This contrast can be noticed in the following passage, which continues the place description from the previous quote:

*And I trow, that unneth should any country have so much people within him, as lay slain in that vale as us thought, the which was an hideous sight to see. And I marvelled much, that there were so many, and the bodies all whole without rotting. But I trow, that fiends made them seem to be so whole without rotting. But that might not be to mine advice that so many should have entered so newly, ne so many newly slain, with out stinking and rotting. And many of them were in habit of Christian men, but I trow well, that it were of such that went in for covetise of the treasure that was there, and had overmuch feebleness in the faith; so that their hearts ne might not endure in the belief for dread. (Pollard, 1900, p. 187)*

The eerie lack of rot—the bodies lay “whole”, untouched by decay, which should have consumed them by now—created a strange smellscape devoid of the expected stench of death. The absence of putrefaction made the air distressingly clean, as though fiendish or, in other words, demonic powers had preserved the bodies in some unnatural state, suspending the usual decay processes. The odour landscape allows us to reflect that the absence or presence of odours can serve not only as a sensory experience but also as a guide to geography and social practices. In the case of the above quotation, the absence of the expected smell of decay might signal something unnatural or even evil in the realm of medieval Christian beliefs. The odour or lack of it reflects an underlying spiritual and moral landscape, where the natural process of rotting could symbolise the moral decay of those who succumbed to greed (“covetise”) or weakness of faith. By applying the concept of smellscape to this passage, it is possible to see how the idea of smellscape is socially and culturally shaped by the medieval worldview, how the lack of stench disrupts the expected sensory and moral order, creating the valley as a place where the natural and supernatural worlds collide, which contributes to the multilayeredness of smellscape, and how the inclusion of olfactory environments in spiritual and geographical contexts reveals the historical significance of smell for place description in mediaeval era.

In Mandeville, there is also a noticeable tendency to associate smell descriptions with locations tied to the residence of people in power or places where they make brief appearances. For instance:

*This palace, where his siege is, is both great and passing fair. And within the palace, in the hall, there be twenty-four pillars of fine gold. And all the walls be covered within of red skins of beasts that men clepe panthers, that be fair beasts and well smelling [emphasis added]; so that for the sweet odour [emphasis added] of those skins no evil air may enter into the palace. (...) And many folk worship those beasts, when they meet them first at morning, for their great virtue and for the good smell [emphasis added] that they have. (Pollard, 1900, pp. 140–141)*

The quote describes the palace’s interior and its aesthetic and symbolic significance. Despite the small size of the passage, it contains three references to positively described smells, illustrating their symbolical association with cleanliness, preservation and respect. The sweet smell is a metaphorical barrier, protecting against evil and preserving a healthy environment. This palace is more than a site of grand architecture but of moral and spiritual growth. The mention of the panther in this passage is no coincidence, as it was a highly popular animal in medieval culture according to bestiaries, collections of information resembling encyclopaedias that originated in antiquity and became widespread in the Middle Ages, where real and fictional animals were described in prose, verses and through illustrations, usually with an allegorical and instructive purpose. According to these writings, the panther was thought to have a sweet breath that the dragon feared. Moreover, the panther was considered a symbol of Christ, with its sweet roar evoking Jesus’ voice and his manner of speaking. Additionally, all animals follow the holy panther, just as Christianity calls upon all people to follow the guidance and protection of Christ (Clark, 2006, p. 42, 57, 123; Morrison & J. Paul Getty Museum, 2019, p. 272). Summing up, the integration of religion into everyday life of the Middle Ages was reflected in the symbolic interpretations of animals and their parallels with wealthy representatives. The smellscape, in this case, is a convergence of multiple layers, including the religious spirit of the era, the moral and allegorical significance attributed to the animal, and the demonstration of material splendour. This example demonstrates that a smellscape can reflect certain periods’ cultural values and worldviews.



Another example is from *An itinerary written by Fynes Moryson*. Being a Cambridge-educated aristocrat, Fynes Moryson is known for his extensive travels across Europe between 1591 and 1595, followed by a journey to the Holy Land from 1595 to 1597. His work is full of detail, accurate descriptions, maps, and even a record of his expenses. Moryson initially wrote in Latin but had to translate it into English to reach a wider audience. This account is a rich resource for anyone interested in historical travel routes, notable landmarks, mapping and finances. He also provided extensive material on Irish customs and institutions, with brief discussions on England and Scotland. In his works, Moryson includes numerous sensory details, particularly smells that capture the olfactory experiences of his destinations ('Fynes Moryson (1566–1630), *An Itinerary* (1617)', n.d.). To systematically identify references to smell, this study applied keyword searches and close reading, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of olfactory descriptions within the text. One example of smells is his description of the County of Namures:

*The County of Namures so called of the Cheese Citie, hath Mines of Iron and plenty of stony Coale, contrarie to all other Coales in that it is quenched by the infusion of Oyle. It hath also an ill smell [emphasis added], which they take away by the sprinkling of Salt, and it burnes more cleere having water cast upon it. This County hath also quarries of Free-stone, and of Marble of divers colours. (p. 93)*

This passage proves that smells have historical roots and were integral to geographical and cultural perception in earlier periods. The smell of this passage is industrial, mineral-rich, dominated by the pungent and ill-smelling odours of iron mines, stony coal, and local cheese produce. The coal emitted a strong, unpleasant smell, which the inhabitants attempted to neutralise with salt, hinting at a persistence of odour that required intervention. The mitigation of "ill smell" through human action "sprinkling of Salt" illustrates how the smell was part of the lived landscape and everyday routine, with specific odours tied to geography (mines, quarries) and human intervention. The description also supports the argument that smells are dynamic and transitory due to people's modifications. Moreover, the smell of the landscape was also shaped by the local delicacy—cheese. References to three different odours, namely coal, salt and cheese, extend the idea of an olfactory palimpsest, where each scent layer shapes and influences the next, making them mutually dependent. Therefore, Namures' coal industry conveys practical information about local resources and serves as an early form of smell—sensitive to environmental rhythms (coal burning), geographical conditions (mines and quarries), and human practices.

From metaphorical to practical examples, smell instances are integral to descriptions of physical surroundings within their cultural, spiritual, and geographical contexts, contributing to a deeper reading of historical and moral circumstances. The last example is more straightforward and can be easily placed in the context of travel. It is a passage from a critical 16th-century multi-volume work of travel narratives collected and edited by Richard Hakluyt with a descriptive title *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation Made to Newfoundland and the River of Canada, and the Voyages made unto Virginia and to the coast and inland of Florida; with the Letter Patents, Discourses, Observations and Advertisements belonging to the Voyages of this eighth Volume* (originally published in two editions: 1589 and 1598–1600). Hakluyt's personality differs from other travel writers, primarily because he was an editor and collector of works rather than a traveller himself. In fact, the only country he ever visited was France. His origin in a leather and fur trading family, belonging to the Worshipful Company of Skinners, enabled him to receive scholarships and become a student of prestigious institutions in London and Oxford (Westminster School and Christ Church), where he gained knowledge of theology and geography—the latter an emerging field at the time. He also studied languages, including Latin, Greek, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Italian, to stay informed about the latest travel reports and developments (Mancall, 2008, pp. 1–10).

Reading foreign travellers' narratives provided him with a fresh perspective on England's foreign policy. He discovered that Spain and Portugal had profited immensely from centuries of overseas ventures in the East and West. Even the French, not traditionally a maritime power in the 16th century, had claimed parts of North America based on Cartier's discoveries in the 1530s. Additionally, Spain, Portugal, and France's international expansion meant the spread of Roman Catholicism rather than Protestantism. These facts made him concerned about the role of England in the dimension of travelling and discoveries. Hakluyt also understood that colonies could be lucrative, particularly if English settlers sent valuable goods back home. As a result, becoming aware of England's slow progress in securing overseas territories for profit and influence, Hakluyt became the leading advocate for English expansion in North America and the Spice Islands in the Southwest Pacific (Mancall, 2008, pp. 15–24).

His major work, *Principal Navigations*, is a vast collection of documents by various authors, explorers, and travellers in multiple forms and genres that remain largely unedited and authentic. The volumes of *Principal Navigations* lack a unifying narrative, but the thematic connections, namely English maritime expansion, exploration, and national ambition, give it coherence, making it a completed piece of writing. Furthermore, Hakluyt supplemented them with his prefaces, dedications, and letters, highlighting his editorial vision and promotional efforts for explorations. Thus, his personality and work reflect two decades of English naval enterprise, the Elizabethan political system, and England's colonial ambitions.

To investigate smells, this study applied a word search using selected smell-related synonyms, close reading, and textual analysis to *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* (Vol. 8) (Hakluyt, 1903–1905)<sup>2</sup>. This volume includes *The First Voyage to Virginia*, an account of the 1584 expedition led by Captains Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe under the patronage of Sir Walter Raleigh. This voyage marked the English discovery of part of the region now known as Virginia, where the following description appears:

*A sweet smell [emphasis added] from the land.*

*The second of July, we found shole water, wher we smelt so sweet [emphasis added], and so strong a smel [emphasis added], as if we had bene in the midst of some delicate garden abounding with all kinde of odoriferous flowers [emphasis added], by which we were*

<sup>2</sup> In all cases, the list of synonyms remained unchanged. During close readings, particular attention was paid to variations in the spelling and usage of the word "smell." The most common variation observed was "fmell," reflecting the historical use of the long s (ſ), a typographical convention in early modern English and print culture. The long s (ſ), visually similar to the letter "f," was frequently used in place of the modern lowercase "s" in certain positions within words, particularly at the beginning or in the middle. While this orthographic feature does not alter the meaning of the term, it is indicative of the script and printing practices of the period. The synonymous range includes the following terms, listed in alphabetical order: acridness, ambrosia, aroma, attar, emanation, emit, fetor, filth, foetid, foulness, fragrance, fust, get wind of, greasy, incense, inhale, lusciousness, malodour, musk, nose, noxiousness, odoriferousness, odour, otto, perfume, pong, pungent, rancidity, rankness, redolence, reek, reeking, savouriness, savour, scent, sniff, spice, stench, stink, tang, and whiff. Regarding the word search methodology, the analysis combined both keyword searches and manual reading to ensure comprehensive identification and interpretation of olfactory references within the text.

*assured, that the land could not be farre distant: and keeping good watch, and bearing but slacke saile, the fourth of the same moneth we arrived upon the coast, which we supposed to be a continent and firme lande, and we sayled along the same a hundred and twentie English miles before we could finde any entrance, or river issuing into the Sea. (p. 298)*

The passage description of sailors' encounter with a strong, sweet smell from the land illustrates odour's site-specificity, acting as a sensory indicator of proximity to land. The ability of background odours to provide geographic information aligns with the definition of smellscape, where odours signal environmental changes, in this case, "odoriferous flowers" guide the sailors to a nearby coastline. The gradual shift from scent to visual confirmation of land also mirrors olfactory landscapes' layered and transient nature, where sensory input is fleeting yet graspable in forming connections with place. The sailors' ability to smell the land before seeing it adds a layer of mystery, evoking the allusiveness of smellscape as an experience that precedes and interacts with other senses, particularly sight. The quotation shows that smellscape are not a modern phenomenon but were historically used as navigational and geographical guides on territories.

Hakluyt's 12 volumes also include descriptions of trees and flora from various parts of the world, from the Americas to the East. For instance:

*Neverthesse we went that day on shore in foure places to see the goodly and sweete smelling trees [emphasis added] that were there: we found them to be Cedars, ewetrees, Pines, white elmes, ashes, willowes, with many other sorts of trees to us unknown, but without any fruit. The grounds where no wood is, are very faire, and all full of peason, white and red gooseberies, strawberries, blackberies, and wilde corne, even like unto Rie, which seemed to have bene sowen and plowed. (Hakluyt, 2014, p. 195)*

Or:

*There is no place be it never so little, but it hath some trees (yea albeit it be sandie) or else is full of wilde corne, that hath an eare like unto Rie: the corne is like oates, and smal peason as thicke as if they had bene sowen and plowed, white and red gooseberies, strawberries, blackberies, white and red Roses, with many other floures of very sweet and pleasant smell [emphasis added]. (Hakluyt, 2014, p. 200)*

In early modern England, trees and forests were present in various aspects of life, economy, and culture. Timber was an essential resource for some developing industries, including iron-forging, glass-working, salt-boiling, and shipbuilding. The rapid growth of these fields has even raised concerns about the depletion of wood resources, which was reflected in the Tudor statutes. One notable example is "An Act for the Preservation of Woods" (1543) in 35 Hen. VIII. c. 17. Some of its key points were about the retention of trees for timber, for instance, in coppice or underwood felled at 24 years of growth or younger, 12 mature trees should be left untouched. Another regulation was that forests cut down before age 14 must be enclosed for 4 years to protect the growing trees from livestock. There were also regulations on transforming woodlands into farmland or pasture. This regulation's main aim was to ensure timber availability for critical situations, indicating a proactive approach to resource management during the Tudor period (*Statutes of the Realm*, n.d., 977–979). Later, in the 17th century, after Hakluyt compiled his editions, Arthur Standish (fl. 1552–1615), an English writer on agriculture, stated, "No wood, no Kingdom", implying that sustainable use of natural resources is tied to the political and economic stability of the realm. Standish noted that the destruction of forests led to high prices for fuel and food, which, according to him, had accelerated since 1605 compared to the previous twenty years. To improve the situation, he suggested planting more trees and fruit trees to increase food supplies, eradicating pests, breeding wild birds and poultry, and reducing the number of pigeon houses due to their excessive grain consumption. Furthermore, Under Queen Elizabeth I, multiple woodland surveys were conducted to assess forest conditions, an initiative which continued after her death. Forests also served as habitats for deer, as these animals were protected by law as royal prerogatives, reflecting the intertwining of natural resource management with royal power and governance (McRae, 2012, pp. 412–416). Therefore, forests and wildlife were deeply intertwined with governance issues, national identity, and industrial development.

This short description of the realities of the early modern times implies that interest in flora can be attributed to England's deep appreciation for its forests and its actions to sustain adequate levels of plantation. Additionally, the emphasis on trees underscores that what was familiar and valued domestically became an immediate focus of attention in newly explored regions. Trees' economic importance and role in power dynamics in England made the newly encountered flora even more specific. Novel olfactory experiences reminded them of their realities and the critical role of greenery in their lands.

The evolutionary development of smellscape, illustrated by examples from literary sources, is visually represented in Table 3. The table summarises how different travel texts from the 14th to 16th centuries use olfactory descriptions to convey diverse purposes and effects. The table includes types of smells, the purposes of their descriptions and how these smell references shaped people's perception of places. It is possible to notice the evolving use of smells—from metaphorical and moral connotations to more practical functions. Although this article cites a limited number of direct quotes, the undertaken analysis of approximately 300 references to smells in the mentioned texts suggests that olfactory descriptions in travel writing evolved from metaphorical and religious symbolism (Mandeville) toward more tangible references to industry, production, and natural features (Moryson and Hakluyt). Therefore, the findings can be applied more broadly and extrapolated to this study's broader body of texts. The shift in smellscape's types, purposes and meanings can be attributed to the changing priorities of society, where increasing engagement with trade, exploration, and environment led to an emphasis on practical and observational descriptions of smellscape.

This section has shown that the discussion of 14th to 16th-century travel narratives reveals the early importance of smellscape—olfactory environments that provided sensory cues about place. These passages from works by Sir John Mandeville, Fynes Moryson, and Richard Hakluyt show that smells were crucial not only for geographical orientation but also for cultural, spiritual, and moral realms. The above quotes also prove that no matter how authentic a smellscape is, it still provides the necessary information to comprehend the place. Mandeville's descriptions of Perilous Valley illustrate how stench symbolised sin, while the absence of expected odours signified something unnatural. Similarly, Moryson's account of Namures highlights how industrial smells were managed through human intervention, showing the interaction between environment, cultural and economic practices. The final example, from Hakluyt, emphasises how sailors used the sweet smell of land to navigate the sea. These historical examples demonstrate that smellscape have deep roots, serving as both practical and metaphorical guides in shaping human perceptions of place and history and contributing to establishing new practices and traditions long before modern urban studies.

**Table 3.** Evolution of Smellscape in 14th- to 16th-Century Travel Narratives

Book Title	Author	Type of Smellscape	Purpose of Description	Effect/ Meaning
<i>The Travels of Sir John Mandeville</i> (1357–1371)	John Mandeville (1356–)	Metaphorical/Religious	Underscoring a religious idea of sin and sanctity by associating foul smells with Hell and moral corruption.	The intertwining of religious doctrine and symbolism influences smell perception.
		Mysterious	Creating an eerie, supernatural atmosphere where the absence of expected smell signifies unnatural forces.	
<i>An Itinerary Written by Fynes Moryson Gent</i> (1617)	Fynes Moryson (1566–1630)	Industrial/Geographical	Describing the environmental impact of industrial production and human interaction with unpleasant odours.	Human adaptation to and control over the sensory environment and its perception.
<i>The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation</i> (1589; expanded 1598–1600)	Richard Hakluyt (Editor) (1552–1616)	Navigational/Geographical	Highlighting how smell aids in navigation and the identification of land.	The interaction with the territories around through smell perception.
		Natural/Botanical	Documenting new flora and natural resources in foreign territories through their smell characteristics.	The enrichment of geographical knowledge of exotic places through smell perception.

#### 4. Conclusions

This article explores the concept of “smellscape,” which refers to dynamic and multilayered olfactory environments specific to particular places—whether metaphorical locations, industrial sites, cheese-producing regions, or spatial reference points. Smellscape are shaped by and contribute to environmental rhythms, geographical location, historical background, and cultural practices. While real sensory experiences often inspired the descriptions of smell in travel writing, they are ultimately mediated through narrative conventions, selective representation, and literary imagination. This paper examines smellscape as textual constructs embedded within travel narratives, focusing on how they are represented and function within the text rather than verifying their authenticity. Thus, the results and conclusions of this research remain independent of whether the described conditions reflect actual historical realities, emphasising the interplay between observed sensory stimuli and their literary reconfiguration. The power of smellscape contributes to the concept of olfactory palimpsest—layers of smells evoking memories and associations with the past and present. The nature of smells is sensitive to changes in norms across different times and eras. Additionally, smells are also mediated through travel narrative, existing at the intersection of observed reality and literary construction. The study analyses English travel texts from the 14th to the 16th centuries, including works by Sir John Mandeville, Fynes Moryson, and Richard Hakluyt, demonstrating how smellscape functioned as geographical, historical, social, and cultural characteristics. The analysis of approximately 300 smell references from the selected texts suggests that patterns in the evolution of olfactory descriptions can be extrapolated and applied more broadly to the broader body of texts from the late Middle Ages and early modern period. The concept of smellscape, now integral to urban studies and sensory geography, partially takes its beginnings in travel writing, where olfactory landscapes were simultaneously part of both the real and textual worlds, as early accounts documented and reinterpreted the scents of foreign lands, shaping cultural perceptions of place and influencing the later theoretical frameworks that define the sensory dynamics of modern urban environments. The findings suggest that smellscape’s interpretations could be improved and expanded further, as the current study is a theoretical exploration and does not include empirical research, such as sensory ethnography, field studies, or experimental data—all of which could provide deeper insight into the experience of smellscape. Moreover, the concept’s complexity underscores its relevance not only to urban planning or sensory studies but also to historical geography and osmology. To advance the study of smellscape, interdisciplinary approaches—including sensory geography, digital smell mapping, and experimental methodologies—could offer a more nuanced understanding of how olfactory landscapes shape human perception and spatial experience. By acknowledging limitations and outlining future directions, this paper highlights the ability of smellscape to offer insights into human interactions with the environment, as well as historical, cultural, and social practices. Expanding empirical investigations in this area could further broaden the applications of smellscape studies in both academic research and practical domains.

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