Natalie Bouchard, Bourse de diffusion mai 2019

A presentation given on June 28, 2019 as part of the 23rd annual meeting of the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness (ASSC) which took place in London ON Canada.

The Theater of the Olfactory Memory — On olfactory consciousness
doi: 10.160B/ASSC23
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334162474_THE_THEATER_OF_THE_OLFACTORY_MEMORY_-_On_olfactory_consciousness | the visual part: http://www.natalieb.ca/talks/natalieb_20190628_ASSC23_visuel.pdf

According to the enactive approach to the mind, we enact the world mentally through our interactions with it (Thompson, 2010; Varela et al., 1991, Maturana & Varela, 1987). Moreover, according to Andy Clark (2016), our brain is active all the time, dashing off thousands of predictions of what we might encounter and thus preparing our body to deal with it. As a consequence, our brain processes most of the time more inputs from itself than from the outside world (Feldman Barrett, 2017; Seth, 2015; Hohwy, 2013). But not only the structure of our reality is built from an intrinsic brain activity that call on prior knowledge that experience has laid down in our synaptic connections, it is also tinged by the fictional narratives (Vaihinger, 1911) that take shape through our affordances and our conceptual inferences.

How do these ideas translate when we focus on a sensory system in particular? Numerous odorous harmonies occupy the environment, which, when captured by our olfactory system, allow us to evolve, by conscious or distracted mental projection, between the virtual planes of innumerable places encoded in our memory (Eichenbaum., 2017). I call these odorous harmonies olfactory ambiances. Olfactory ambiances affect our olfactory memory, which in turn affects three important aspects our mental live: spatiotemporal patterns, the emotional valence associated with these patterns, and our olfactory experience of the world, which I call its “smellscape.”

I propose to present to ASSC-23’s research community, my reflection on the subject and the model I am currently building to study the influence of smells on human spatiotemporal perception. A model powered by two field surveys (2011 and 2018) where a commented course method and cognitive mapping tools where combined to gather data.