



## **“Neighborhoods”: Engaging students into inquiring about their local communities from a place-based perspective**

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This poster presentation describes the rationale for constructing a microworld – “Neighborhoods” – aiming to engage students into active exploration of the past, present and future of their local community. It has been designed as a digital tool to situate learning into the students’ localities by giving them the opportunity to explore their own perceptions, representations and inquiries about their neighborhoods. Story-telling is coupled with the visualization of events in space and time to allow students to get involved with topics of their local environment which are of personal significance to them and in order to facilitate their historical understanding.

“Neighborhoods” is an open, exploratory learning environment where students can easily explore digital components describing instances of their neighborhood. Based on MaSToHF construction kit ([http://etl.ppp.uoa.gr/content/download/Material/eslate2/mastohf\\_kit\\_en\\_v1\\_7.zip](http://etl.ppp.uoa.gr/content/download/Material/eslate2/mastohf_kit_en_v1_7.zip)), this microworld utilizes components such as a timeline, an image map, several descriptors of the city’s buildings and other important sources to facilitate exploration and meaning-making processes of their local environment. It connects geocoded data to time and allows students to pose questions related to changes in their localities and historical continuity. The fact of visualizing spatiotemporal information generates a constructionist environment for students to work with and explore the various digital artefacts of the microworld and assist them into subsequently getting involved with real inquiries of their local environment. Students collaboratively explore significant buildings of their area by importing data in a database and by later combining them to provide answers to questions such as “how did our street looked like 20 years ago?” or “when was our school built?”. We argue that by setting questions of this kind, students are acquainted with the history of their local communities while they are also enabled to create their own stories or incorporate relevant information into broader socio-historical context. “Neighborhoods” utilizes place-based education principles with the aim to help students develop strong bonds with their community, enhance their appreciation of their local world and turn them into committed active citizens (Smith, 2007).

### **References**

Smith, G. (2007). Place-based education: breaking through the constraining regularities of public school. *Environmental Education Research*, 13(2), 189-207.