

District Images – a Return to the Past

Stimulus question	How well do you know your city? Do you know the area around your school? How much have the surroundings changed over the years?
Overview	<p>“District Images” is a mini field and archival study that involves looking for old photographs of the neighbourhood and/or selected buildings (e.g. school, community centre, library). Participants will create new versions of archival images and compare what used to be and what is currently there and, in the process, learn about the importance of photography in documenting local history. The activity will also be an opportunity to visit places where one can obtain information about the past, such as the local archive, the city hall and... a meeting with senior residents.</p> <p>As a result, the participants will learn more about the history of their neighbourhood, gain valuable experience by having a chance to contribute to the creation of the local archive.</p>
No. of participants	Up to 20 people
Time	The activity consists of 4-5 steps, which – depending on the mode of work – can be completed during a cycle of 2-5 sessions.
Location	The activity can take place in the school, common room, community centre, library or any other suitable place with access to computers and the Internet.
Resources and equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • room with computers and access to the Internet, scanner and projector, • colour printer + paper supply to print photos, • participants’ camera-enabled smartphones or photo cameras, • micro USB cable (to connect mobile phone/camera to computer), • mobile storage media (e.g. USB flash drives), • map of the area or city (from City Hall, bookshop, newsagent’s or Google maps – an interesting area can be selected and printed out in desired size), • sheets of paper, clipboards and pens, • folder to collect materials, • permission to use collected images.
How to go about it? Preparation	<p>Content-related preparation: approx. 2 hours.</p> <p>View the www.abc.tychy.pl website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the essays “Flashbacks from the Construction of a Big City” by Agnieszka Ociepa-Weiss and “Tychy from A to Z” by Patryk Oczko (in the “Essays” tab on www.abc.tychy.pl) • Get acquainted with the idea of social archives: www.archiwa.org <p>Initial Internet search to see if archival images of selected buildings and surroundings exist and are available.</p>

Arrange a meeting with the local institution(s) that keep(s) old photographs (e.g. city hall's architecture department, city archives, library, museum, memorial hall, etc.) informing them that you will be interested mainly in photographs of a particular building/area.

Arrange a meeting at a local senior citizens' club informing them that you will be interested in memories and private photographs of a particular building/neighbourhood. Seniors should have time to prepare their photos.

Collect office supplies.

Set up the room – arrange chairs in a circle, turn on the computers, check that the printer is working, and that there is enough ink and paper.

**Step 1: investigation
(approx. 30 minutes)**

1. The starting point for your local work will be the example of the city of Tychy and its virtual map. Briefly explain the history of Nowe Tychy to the participants and refer them to the virtual map available at www.abc.tychy.pl. In order to learn more about the history of Nowe Tychy and the everyday life of its residents, the circumstances of the decision on the expansion of the city and its stages, see the "Essays" page at www.abc.tychy.pl. The texts "Flashbacks from the Construction of a Big City" by Agnieszka Ociepa-Weiss and "Tychy from A to Z" by Patryk Oczko will be particularly valuable for the script.
2. Introduce the participants to the way the map works, the search tool, the descriptions of the photographs, the type of photographs and the subject matter presented, so that they can navigate the archive by themselves and have a closer look at it.
3. Introduce the idea of creating a "local photo archive" related to a selected building. Start by searching for pictures of the area in the Internet resources. Print the images you have found as you go. What were you able to find? What is not there?
4. Brainstorm the question of where else old photographs documenting the city space might be available? Once you have collected the answers, explain where you invite the participants to visit.

**Step 2 (optional): visit
to a local institution
(approx. 45 minutes, by
prior appointment with
the employee)**

1. Once there, initiate a conversation with a staff member. Encourage participants to present photos found on the Internet and ask for as much information as possible about them. This is also the time for questions to the expert: who keeps old photographs of the city? When was the city begun to be photographed? How are these photographs stored? The staff member will show you the archive and/or the photographs by prior appointment.
2. The participants choose the photos related to the building/area (they can be photographed on the spot or requested in the form of scans) and note down all information available.

**Step 3 (optional):
a meeting with senior
citizens (approx.
45 minutes - by prior
appointment)**

1. The meeting should start with a presentation of the photographs you have found so far on the Internet and/or in the local institution. In pairs or small groups, the participants can be asked to collect memories and information about particular photographs from the senior citizens, who can then show their own family photographs brought from their homes

and related to the given building/neighbourhood. Selected photos can be photographed by the participants and important information about them can be written down.

2. Following the work in smaller groups, the most interesting observations should be shared among the participants and selected photographs should be presented. It is important that they are submitted to you and printed before the next session.
3. Note: it is important that the seniors are aware of the purpose of the meeting and are invited to see its effects.

Step 4: Re-photographing the space (approx. 45 minutes)

1. Begin with a summary: spread on the tables all the photos obtained so far from a) the Internet, b) the local institution (optional), c) the family albums of seniors. Arrange them – according to your best knowledge – from the oldest to the most recent.
2. Distribute the photographs among the participants.
3. Go on a walking tour: each participant should try to find the place where one of the archival photographs was taken and then try to take a contemporary photo as close as possible to the archival image.
4. When you return, help the participants upload the photos to a computer or a shared storage device. You can also ask them to send the photos to you by e-mail. Note: it is advisable to have a shared folder for the project with separate subfolders for archival and contemporary photos. For clarity, you should name each file with the initials of the contributor.

Step 5 (approx. 1 hour)

1. Before the session, print out the re-photographs taken by the participants and make sure that you have all of the previously acquired archival photos printed.
2. Ask the participants, working in pairs or small groups, to combine archival and contemporary images into pairs/groups that document the same place/recreate the same shot.
3. By using the information obtained and the notes taken, the participants are to prepare as comprehensive a description of archival and contemporary photographs as possible.
4. Such materials can be used as follows:
 - a. placed in a folder and taken to a relevant local institution with a request for inclusion in the archives;
 - b. displayed on the institution's website;
 - c. presented in the form of an exhibition (in the school/community centre/library/memorial chamber/city hall, etc.).

Possible variations

1. The activity can be completed during two approximately 2-hour-long sessions: the first one consisting of Step 1, Step 2 and/or Step 3 (optionally), and the second one consisting of Step 4 and Step 5.
2. The simplified version – you can collect and prepare materials from the local institution yourself and present them to the participants.
3. If the activity is carried out in the course of 2–3 sessions, you can encourage participants to acquire additional photos from their families.
4. If you are working in Tychy, you can spend more time with the participants and work with an interactive map to find as much source materials as possible (this can replace Step 1 and Step 2).