Students and the city. Towards meaningful, immersive learning experiences for young urbanists.

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I will share my experiences in introducing innovative and immersive urbanism teaching methods in Poland. Since the fall of communism, the country has developed quickly in several ways, but the notion of "common good" - including urban space - has been somehow neglected, and only recently is being rediscovered. Improving the cities in a rational, sustainable and creative way requires architects and urban designers with a broad range of skills and sensitivity. I have been experimenting with immersive learning experiences to stimulate students knowledge, involvement, empathy, and creative problem-solving, on 2 levels of education:

- For introducing students to understanding the city, methods included: exercises referring to students own urban experiences, study trips, experiential learning outdoors in the urban space with elements of public participation, simulation and role-playing games, charrette-style exercises based on the design thinking methodology - with feedback on various design options and simple real-live prototyping techniques (projections, cardboard, tapes, chalk, etc.).

- In advanced urban design studios, Problem/Project Based Learning (PBL) methods included: working for external clients (municipalities, investors, airports), guest
lecturers and critiques, cross-disciplinary teamwork of architecture, economics and design students, elements of participation, VR prototyping, working with local NGOs and media, etc.

In particular, I would like to share my experiences from international cooperation and workshops within the Erasmus+ (Europe) and Fulbright Specialist (USA) programs.

Immersing students in a process similar to real professional challenges and providing a structured way towards finding valuable solutions resulted in increased engagement and enthusiasm in students' work, as compared with ordinary classes. Immersion and exemplarity of the meaningful educational experiences recall the notion of "flow" (Csíkszentmihályi) - an optimal experience and efficient activity, where satisfaction (for students) results from performing realistic tasks, which have right defined goals, where feedback is available, and which gives instant possibility of using the possessed skills.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Michal Stangel - urbanist, professor and vice-dean for research at the Faculty of Architecture, Silesian University of Technology. Previously worked for EDAW in London (on London 2012 Olympics masterplan, Nassau regeneration and Dubai Waterfront). Received Bauhaus Dessau Foundation scholarship. As Fulbright visiting researcher at MIT participated in the Zaragoza Digital Mile project. Principal designer for over 50 urban design projects – master planning, regeneration and public spaces. Received 30 awards and mentions in design competitions (including winning the competition Cracow - Nowa Huta of the Future) as well as the ministerial award for excellence in urban planning (for a former military site redevelopment masterplan). Interested in urban design, public spaces and combining education, research and practice in the methodology of Project Based Learning. Founder of TEDxSilesianUniversityofTechnology. Member of the Council of Polish Society of Urban planners and the national Main Urban Planning Committee. Author of three books and numerous articles, available at politechnikaslaska.academia.edu/MichalStangel.