As Rittel first suggested in the last century, planning problems are complex, indeterminate, lack clear boundaries and outcomes, and might therefore be described as ‘wicked’ (Rittel & Webber, 1973). We might go on to describe the contemporary condition is one of super-complexity, uncertainty and rapid change. Campbell, writing on urbanism more recently suggested that ‘no segmented group or individual can possess the complete view needed for working with complexity’ (Campbell, 2018). In this context there is a role for ‘hybrid’ professional graduate, architect and planner, able to practice collaboratively across disciplinary boundaries.

While several postgraduate courses exist which enable students to work with parallel disciplines, since 2016 we have been teaching a hybrid qualification which enables architecture students, within the final two years of their accredited course, to follow a pathway which is taught alongside postgraduate urban planning, and to qualify with an award which leads to either, or both professions. The students work together, within local communities engaging with live urban problems to develop design research projects which cross disciplinary and institutional boundaries. The development and implementation of this course has clarified the anticipated overlaps in knowledge within the two professions, but also revealed significant differences in approach, priorities and method. It has also led us to question if we are shaping better qualified architects, better qualified planners, or a new kind of professional for which we do not yet have a distinct name.
Now that this course is maturing and our graduates are pursuing their varied careers we are in a position to reflect on their, and our experience; to understand what particular skills and insight might be gained from working in the space between disciplines – not simply additional, but potentially richer skills– and how this approach might benefit future practice.


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

Kirsty Macari has over 14 years’ experience in diverse roles across local government in both Urban Planning and Economic Development. She is currently a Lecturer in Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Dundee and a Director in private practice. She has maintained an evolving interest across the function of planning and the relationship of urbanism and placemaking and explores this through the lens of education and place based pedagogy. Kirsty is a Board Member of Architecture & Design Scotland, an appointed Academician with the Academy of Urbanism and passionate urbanist who believes in transformative and collaborative approaches to support the wellbeing of people and places. She has delivered papers and workshops to a wide variety of audiences across the UK, USA, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Kirsty is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute’s General Assembly and Scottish Executive Committee. She is also a member of their Planning and Accreditation Panel.

Helen O’Connor is an architect who has taught full-time on the University of Dundee MArch course since 2000, designing and delivering studio teaching at all levels of the course. Helen has developed, and is now leading the jointly accredited (ARB and RTPI) Masters in Architecture with Urban Planning. Helen has a strong interest in Architectural Pedagogy, regularly attending and presenting papers to national conferences which explore aspects of studio practice, and is currently undertaking an Educational Doctorate qualification at The University of Sheffield, focusing on the development of critically reflective approaches to practice through the transdisciplinary design studio of MArch with Urban Planning. She has extensive experience as an external critic and examiner in Architecture schools (uk based and internationally) and for professional bodies.