

Methods for Imagining Creative Work Futures

Being Creative:
Research and Collaboration

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Positionality



Professor Daniel Ashton

Professor-Cultural & Creative Industries

Research interests

- Work and the Creative Economy
- Culture, Data and Place
- Arts and Cultural Organisations

[More research](#)

✓ Accepting applications from PhD students.

[Connect with Daniel](#) ^

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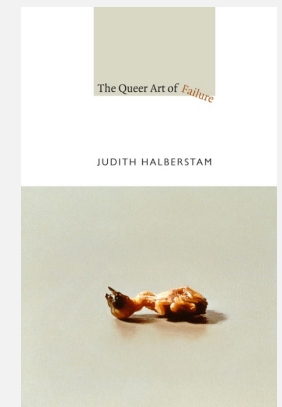
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Cultural Work and Higher Education

‘We have to untrain ourselves so that we can read the struggles and debates back into questions that seem settled and resolved’ (Jack Halberstram, 2011: 11).



“The author is clearly well intentioned and wants students to recognise what they are likely to face by way of difficult employment conditions and poor (if any) pay. However, the contradictions of building a critical and practical consciousness into learning production skills with negotiating the disappointing realities of many work situations is not explored with any sharpness”

Well-intentioned higher education practitioners

- Stuart Hall (2007) higher education has been ‘pulled or driven principally by vocational or economic questions’
- I don’t really want to be taught about stuff that is irrelevant to me when I’ve got stuff to be getting on with. I just want to get on with it, rather than having to sit in a classroom to watch someone talk about something that’s not really important to me (cited in Ashton, 2013).
- When it comes to time and dedication, I’d rather a physical output. It’s real and it’s there, instead of looking into things deeply (cited in Ashton, 2013).

Project One: Creative Contexts

When: 2011-12

Funder: Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE)



Project team:

- Dr Dan Ashton (Bath Spa University)

Project aims:

- Facilitate students sharing experiences of work placements in a range of media industries.

**CREATIVE
CONTEXTS**

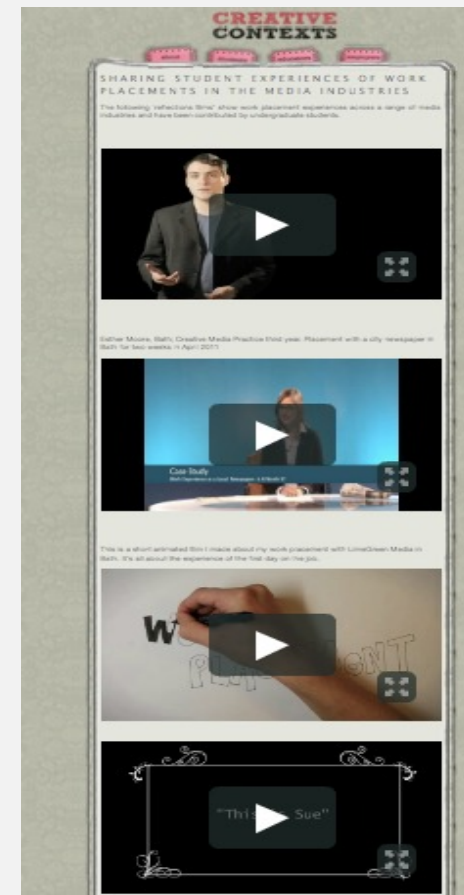
A critical and practical consciousness ... with sharpness

SHARING STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF WORK PLACEMENTS IN THE MEDIA INDUSTRIES

The following 'reflections films' show work placement experiences across a range of media industries and have been contributed by undergraduate students.

Students' understanding and imagining ways of working in the cultural and creative industries by using their creative practice.

More in: Ashton, D. (2013). *Creative Contexts: Reflecting on work placements in the creative industries.*



Project Two Unexpected Enterprises

When: 2018-19

Funder: Enterprise Educators UK



Project team:

- Dr Emma Agusita (PI; UWE)
- Dr Dan Ashton (Co-I; Uni of Southampton)
- Professor Jon Dovey (Co-I; UWE)



Project aims:

Encourage students to think critically about the changing nature of creative careers and contribute this critical dimension to higher education pedagogy.

Themes and creative activities

Self-promotion

Self-Promotion Group

Task 1: (10 minutes recommended)

Using the template provided, audit your social media use – this requires you to think about, describe and reflect on how you currently use social media networks/platforms/channels for personal and/or professional use. This encourages you to consider the strengths and weaknesses of your current use, whether there are barriers to using it in the way you would like to and if there are opportunities for enhancing your use e.g. by reviewing and making changes to the way you represent yourself personally and professionally.

Task 2: (25 minutes recommended)

Using information provided from the Facebook profile and People Per Hour (freelancing site) profile for the music producer Jerry.M., produce an outline LinkedIn profile – Use the LinkedIn template provided to create the profile.



The template requires you to write a profile summary – choose one of the approaches to writing a summary from the printed article described in the article '3 templates that will make writing the perfect linked in summary a breeze' (e.g. 'the blended summary' or the 'personality summary' etc.) The article 'How to create a killer LinkedIn profile that will get you noticed' also has some ideas on profile creation.

Spaces and networking

Spaces and Networking Group

Task 1: (5 minutes)

As a group, generate a list of components ('assets') that you consider are important/significant/valuable in creating spaces and environments that enable cultural and creative workers/practitioners/entrepreneurs/professionals to network and collaborate.

Components/assets may include:
People (e.g. groups, individuals, organisations, companies etc.)
Spaces (e.g. non-physical spaces or Places (e.g. buildings, areas/locations etc.)
Technologies (e.g. tools, platforms etc.)
Products
Services
Activities/Practices
Skills (e.g. technical/social/cultural)
Knowledge (of...)
Experience (of...)
Other resources

Try to think of specifics e.g. names of people, places, products, technologies.

Tasks 2 & 3 over the page...



Task 2: (10 minutes)

Create representations of these components using drawings/words (using sticky notes) or by making plasticine models (as a group you will be mapping all the representations onto an A1 sheet of paper so ensure they are made at an appropriate scale to fit)

Task 3: (20 minutes)

In turn, each group member should select an asset of their choice/creation and place it onto the asset map (the A1 sheet with concentric circles in it) according to how they view it:

By placing in centrally on the map you are indicating it is of most value/importance/significance/contributes most. By placing it less centrally, in the outer circles you are indicating it is of less importance/value/significance but that it is still valuable.

When placing the asset on the map say what it is and why you are placing it in your chosen location on the map.

Any 'assets' that have connections between them e.g. people and places can be shown using string/blue tack to connect them.



Business plan

Business Plan Group

Task: Make a business plan 'zine' (35 minutes)

"A zine, pronounced "zeen" (just like the end of the word magazine), is a homemade publication. There are no set-in-stone rules for making zines. A zine can be about anything you're interested in... The content and appearance of a zine is completely up to the creator and can be as simple or as complicated as you want" – Celia Perez, *Brightly*

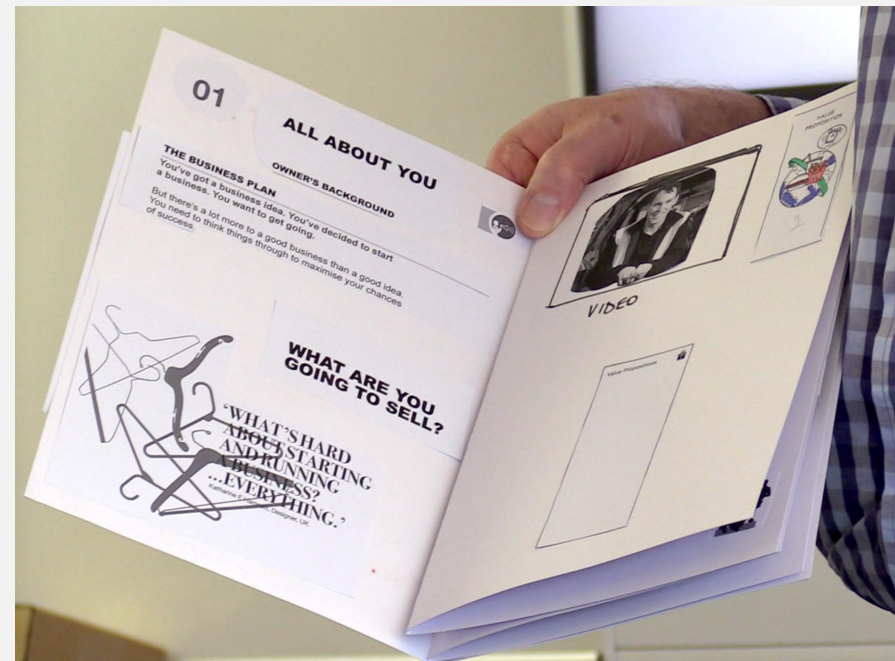
Using the materials provided – business plan templates, examples, articles and guides – layered with your own annotations/drawings/writings make a zine that explores/challenges/reflects on creative/cultural business planning...

- Review the materials
- Try to consider what might be relevant for creative and cultural workers who want to engage in their own forms of enterprise – what might be most useful? Are there new ways of thinking about and doing business planning?

Collaging/modifying/re-mixing and other creative methods are encouraged!



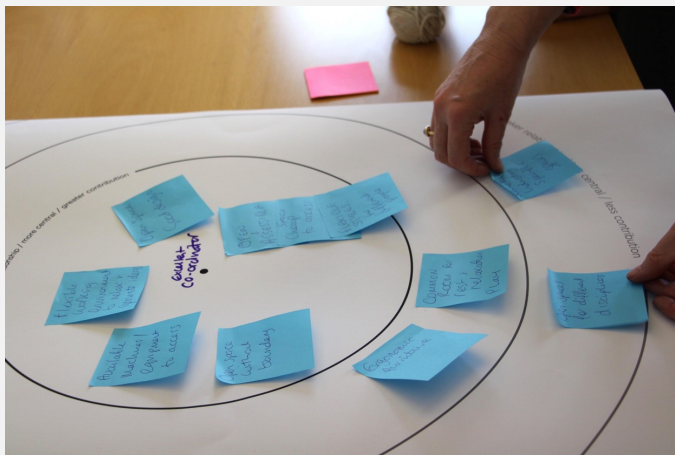
Business Planning: Failure, shortcomings and everyday practice



Self Promotion: Narratives of the self and the world

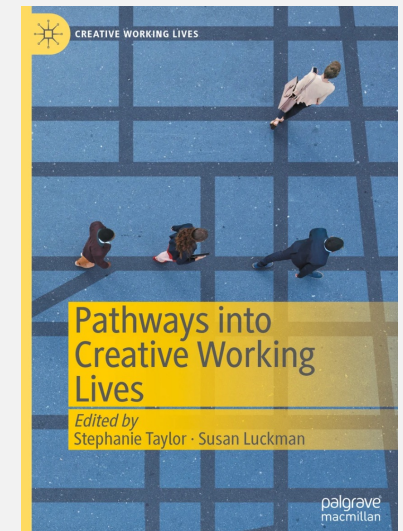


Spaces and Networking: Reimagining creative collaboration



Remix methods for remixing creative work futures

- The creative methods enabled participants to go beyond the emphasis on the entrepreneurial self and how to fulfill entrepreneurial futures to question the availability and nature of work.
- The remix methods aims to challenge the status of authoritative resources and industry norms.
- More in: Agusita and Ashton (2020) in *Pathways into Creative Working Lives* and at <https://www.unexpectedenterprises.org/#Home>



Project Three: Diverse Capacities

When: 2023-24

Funder: Arts and Humanities research Council

Project team at the University of Southampton:

- Professor Will May (PI)
- Professor Dan Ashton (Co-I)
- Dr Aiysha Jahan (PDRA)

Project aims:

Develop and sustain new connections between local government officers, creative communities, and creative industry professionals across sectors in the region.



Postcards of Promise



<https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/doingdatadifferently/>

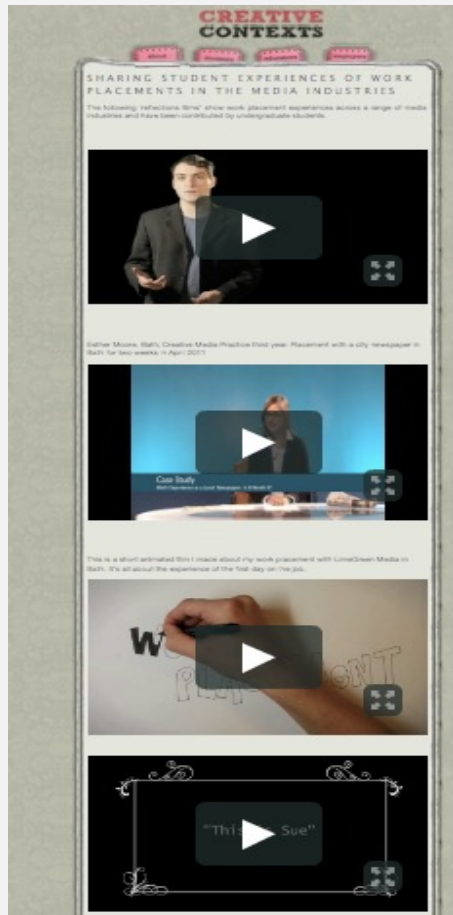


Practitioner Commissions



More in: Ashton, D., Jahan, A., and May, W. (2024) *Building bridges across creative and cultural sectors: A Think-Kit by Diverse Capacities*. DOI <https://doi.org/10.5258/SOTON/PI178>

Closing Reflections



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