

Positions through dialogue written response

My dialogue with Gemma Copeland began with me showing and explaining to Gemma the work I had completed so far during unit 2, discussing my academic reading and how this was supporting the visual output of my project.

Gemma told me that she liked my project and found the story interesting. She said that the analogue aesthetic worked for the subject matter and could see it being developed as a zine or publication. I mentioned that there is an online aspect of the story, which I haven't explored yet and I was unsure whether bringing a digital element to the project might be an avenue to go down. Gemma advised me to think about what this would do for the project or for those engaging with it to potentially have a digital route.

I also brought up the importance of solidarity in the story of the Liverpool dockers with ships not being unloaded in ports around the world in support, whilst nationally, there was almost no solidarity. Gemma said that this theme could be explored in making connections with present day solidarity movements such as Palestine. We also touched on the demographics of people, who previously had working-class labour jobs and socialist workplaces now finding themselves disconnected and vulnerable to political parties such as reform. This was a particularly useful point in the conversation, because I feel I have been mainly looking backwards in my project and I am aware that connecting with present day and the future might add more to my project. Overall, I think my dialogue with Gemma furthered my enquiry by encouraging me to think about the present-day context my project is taking place within and how the form it takes will interact with this.

After my conversation with Gemma, I had multiple additional dialogues:

I interviewed Moira and John, a couple who work under the artist name The Sound Agents who set up The Dockers Club Facebook group, which I have been using as a source of information within my work. I found out their work with dockers originated from an oral history commission which became a Facebook group in 2020 during lockdown. Since then, it has evolved to become a place for culture to be preserved and people to share memories. They agreed with my perception of the group as a kind of living archive, which made me think of potential ways I might continue to use and interact with the group in my work.

I spoke with a woman called Sue about her memories growing up as the daughter of a docker in the north of the city. She shared her memories of her father's life culturally and socially working as a docker. Sue had a lot of knowledge about working conditions and how identity such as religion, age, background and politics would affect an individual's ability to work and make a living for their family. This furthered my enquiry by deepening my historical understanding of dock work in Liverpool. Sue also had a collection of dockers hooks, which she allowed me to photograph.

I interviewed Tony Nelson, who is a former docker who was sacked during the dispute of 1995-1998. Our conversation covered many topics that I was curious about hearing a first-hand account of, such as the experience of working as a docker and the communist and socialist political culture of the docks in Liverpool and how this changed from Thatcher's era to New Labour. Tony was the youngest docker to be sacked and was very active during the strike. He shared stories of his experiences travelling the world, to ports around Europe, north America and Australia gaining solidarity for the Liverpool dockers internationally. He also talked about how they would communicate during the strike – via fax machine and through an early internet website called labour.net, which is still active with some web pages from the docker's strike. This was useful both in increasing my knowledge, giving further insight and lens to look at the story through, as well as more information on tools used which I could potentially explore through my work.