Positions through triangulating: synthesis

My enquiry has revolved around telling the story of Liverpool Dockers. I began my project exploring the idea of image degradation through 100 iterations, using different analogue and digital techniques, such as scanning and printing. This led me to research DIY political graphic materials, London Docklands banners and then Liverpool dockers, a workforce central to Liverpool's history and identity as a city, and a part of my family history. With the intention of representing a community being eroded. Using techniques of image degradation and collaging photographs of dockers has allowed me to explore my position as a socially engaged 'archivist', collector and designer of this material. My aim initially was to both resurface and preserve this history through these techniques.

To explore the graphic language of this community further, I narrowed my lens to the dispute of 1995-1998, during which 500 Liverpool dockers were sacked. This story was not well supported by the national press or central government, and it was difficult to find information about what happened. Unable to travel back home to Liverpool, I discovered a Facebook group where former dockers and their families maintained their community, sharing photos, flyers, banners and stickers from the dispute. I felt this source brought more value to my research than other "official" forms of knowledge, such as academic journals. Jack Halberstam's The Queer Art of Failure strengthened the idea of using "low brow" sources such as Facebook as places to find value. I began looking at the group as a primary source and as a kind of "living archive" which I could gather ephemera from.

In Loving Memory of Work by Craig Oldham and The Battle of Orgreave by Jeremy Deller offered visual and social approaches to working with communities connected to labour history, through design, archiving and collaboration. I continued using collage, along with images of graphic materials, and comments from the group to make a sequence of images telling the story of the Liverpool dockers in their own words and visual language. The images were printed in black and white on coloured paper, referencing union cards and the quick and cheaply made political ephemera used during labour disputes. Adjusted Margin by Kate Eichorn articulated the importance of the photocopier as a tool of political resistance and supported the methods of my work.

Over the summer I continued my research and began conducting interviews with former dockers and family members about their experiences and memories of the docks, which I later transcribed, as well as posting and interacting with people in the Facebook group. I also discovered The Dockers Charter, a newspaper published by the dockers during the dispute, which provided further graphic inspiration to draw on, such as fonts, icons and layouts, which made me think about how I could use the text from my interviews. Neighbours by F.A.T studio was an important visual reference that supported my exploration of the newspaper format as a form of output for my project.

Following this I started to explore the newspaper format, using my interviews as content, with photos I took along with graphics from the Facebook group, the dockers archive at Liverpool Central Library and graphics from the Dockers Charter. I experimented with illustrating using typography, using the shape of a dockers hook and text from my interviews, with the tool representing the manual labour history of dock work.

Moving forward, I would like to bring more handmaking in to my work, as a way to represent the importance of human labour within the docker's story, whilst still exploring text and publications. My exploration of different media through my project has evolved, and I'm now looking beyond preserving the culture and asking in this current moment, what is the prevalence and importance of talking about the story Liverpool Dockers? What is the relationship between Liverpool and it's labour history today? How can this be explored visually?