

# Cellular Vessel

samedi 10 juin 2023, par [Leo Singer](#)

[Cellular Vessel](#) from [Trick Film](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The animated documentary introduces a theory of rhythms into an environmental justice issue : the desynchronization between the pace of the expanding port of Liverpool and the grounded rhythms of local residents. In order to identify the biosocial mechanisms that connect the macro with the micro scales and generate chronic illness, the film takes you on a journey seeking for circadian rhythms, pulsating inside body cells and timing our key body functions. From overflowing polyrhythmia, through heavy dysrhythmia to the darkness of arrhythmia, the film departs from Lefebvre's determinism when a hopeful counter-rhythm in the heart of the community is found.

Agencies of the human/non-human actors and infrastructures are a matter of lively debate in the social sciences and humanities. With this background in mind, the film shifts its analytical focus from ontology to mapping out mechanisms of change across geographic scales : how does the toxicity of expanding global trade get 'under our skin', how is it locally and situationally embodied ? And how do our ill bodies act in response ? This aim is captured in the film's title. Cellular Vessel is the term used for a typical container ship but it also refers to our body cells and vessels acting as bio-social pathways of embodiment.

Given the strong emphasis on Henri Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis in the exploration of biosocial disruption, we started off with identifying moments and spaces of 'polyrhythmia' in the affected community. Within this assemblage, rhythms were captured and presented by the means of video, drawing and animation. The second and the third parts of the film called Dysrhythmia and Counter-rhythm add more complexity by including recorded interviews with local residents. Originally recorded music is another sensual layer chosen to deliver the sense of rhythmic/circadian synchronization alternating with moments of desynchronization. The film is a collaboration between Leo Singer (University of Liverpool) who wrote the script and collaborated on the actual production with the filmmaker and animator Janet Brandon, and the musician Merlyn Sturt. Issues related to the circadian rhythm were consulted with chronobiologist Vanja Pekovic-Vaughan (University of Liverpool). The film was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

The film is part of my broader interest in rhythmic synchronization and desynchronization as constitutive elements of biosocial synthesis. More specifically, my case study is the interaction between the rhythms of the port of Liverpool and the everyday life of its workers and residents. The logistic area in focus suffers from the externalities of the global social metabolism mediated by the expanding port : political abandonment, growing volumes of lorry traffic and a whole range of environmental stressors generate rising levels of premature death and multimorbidity.

Making of the film proved to be an important entry point into the local community. Despite initial problems, I managed to gain their trust and build relationships. This was proved when 35 local

residents attended the first public screening of Cellular Vessel, in the heart of their community, followed by a lively discussion about local environmental crisis. Building on this, the next step in my research will zoom in to the toxic fires and smokes from the docks' scrap metal yards and their dysrhythmic appearance in the lives of the local residents with spikes in COPD emergency admissions. The theoretical aim is to understand the embodiment of socio-metabolic toxicity as life course rhythmic entrainment cascading from the global through the everyday down to the cellular levels of the biosocial totality.

The film is part of a research into dysrhythmia, more on that from D<sup>r</sup>. Leo Singer [here](#).