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The aluminium dreams that lost their shine



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The aluminium dreams that lost their shine

Auteur

Mimi Sheller (Sociologue)

Fichier vidéo

Transcription écrite

I'm going to talk about my book Aluminum Dreams: Lightness, Speed and Modernity. It's a project that began when I saw some beautiful advertising from the Alcoa shipping company, and they were running cruises in the Caribbean in the 1940s and 1950s.

And it seemed funny to me that I knew Alcoa was a company that makes aluminium, and I knew that there was bauxite mining in the Caribbean. I got interested in the fact

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Health and social effects of a metal that is in everything

They also argued that aluminum has health effects on the body, and in fact there was fairly recently a TV programme shown in France, on France 5, and it was a story about the health effects of aluminum, and how it's in many of our foods, it's in our vaccines, it's in makeup, it's in antiperspirants. And some people believe that it has neurological effects on the brain when we get too much accumulated in our bodies. So a part of the movement against the metal is also about its health effects. These are all things that I researched for this book, and I wrote it on an Apple Mac

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Book, which is of course made from aluminum. Some of us have heard about the problems in the factories in China, where they're making Apple products, and workers have been killed through explosions. Those are explosions due to the aluminum dust, which accumulates in the air when they polish the Mac Book products. Again it's a side of the industry, the dark side, that we don't really think about.

Ultimately, I hope in writing this book that it will challenge us to really look at where our things come from, what are they made from. All of the things we depend on to be mobile, and even our mobile communications systems - our computers and our iPhones and our satellite communications - they all depend on this metal. And yet we have no idea, most of us, how it got here and what effects it's having, and we really need to think in the future whether we can continue to use it in the way we are, or whether we need to be much more careful with our use of it, and recycle, and think about reducing the amount of aluminium that we use.

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Aluminium seduced us with its promise of rapid mobility, speed and lightness, as the ingredient of a new modern age. But it also has a dark side, Mimi Sheller says.

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