

THE REAL COST OF DELIVERY

Feature Documentary

Over 3,200 packages are shipped every second around the world. Amazon Prime, Instacart, UberEats – we get whatever we want, and we want it delivered to our doorsteps. It's lightning fast and often free of charge. And in a time of a global pandemic, these services are not just convenient – they are essential. But if we aren't paying for this instant delivery (or the free returns), then who is?

It turns out - we all are. In *The Real Cost of Delivery*, we explore how our obsession with convenience is killing the environment at an alarming rate. At the centre of the delivery dilemma is the transportation industry - responsible for a whopping 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions. We go behind the scenes to explore how most of the so-called recyclable packaging we consume ends up in landfills; how the products we return also end up in landfills; and how delivery workers are increasingly being injured (or worse) on the job.

Even as COVID-19 lockdowns lift, the demand for delivery continues to swell just as the global supply chains are hitting historical gridlock. The trickle down effect of globalization, and our insatiable demand for consumer goods made overseas, is becoming clear. And it's not a pretty picture.

The Real Cost of Delivery lays bare these truths, following the unfolding chaos, and exploring solutions. At the root of our overconsumption, according to professor David T. Courtwright is nothing less than "addiction", in the very real and scientific sense of the word. So how can we curb delivery's destructive path and our addiction to it? Can buying locally reduce our carbon footprint? And how can we influence enough people to change their behaviour to make a difference. These are just some of the solutions explored in *The Real Cost of Delivery* - in addition to scientific discoveries, like turning surplus cardboard waste into biofuel, and an enzyme that can help break down plastic waste.



TREATMENT, STYLE & TONE

The Real Cost of Delivery is a visually striking investigation and a call to action. In the tradition of documentaries that became part of the zeitgeist like *The Social Dilemma*, *Tomorrow*, and *The Cove*, *The Real Cost of Delivery* is an exploration of something that defines our time. It is a study of the rhythmic, never ending cycle of movement around the globe and how each of us can take mindful steps towards a brighter, cleaner future.

Through a collection of first person interviews and unfolding real-time stories we meet climate scientists, economists, journalists, psychologists, business owners, factory workers, delivery drivers, seafarers and activists to share a number of sides to a complicated environmental issue.

The film begins with a brief history of the rise of worldwide delivery. Starting with a series of archival videos through to present day sweeping cinematic shots, we follow how we went from getting morning milk deliveries from local farms to shipping iPhones produced in China across the world overnight. This sequence will showcase the tight connections and endless possibilities our current delivery technology offers. We look at a typical home in the developed world, breaking down where the TV, couch, fridge, bed, clothes and shoes of the owner originated, and how much energy it took to bring them all together. It is there that we face a sober reality. Our fast, convenient, delivery economy is killing the environment. What can be done? Can we really have it all?

With the help of Abbie Lindeberg, a Zero Waste Coordinator from Sustainable Connections, we conduct an experiment, following the shipping paths of two products to compare the carbon footprint of each journey. We compare the shipment of a set of dishes from Amazon versus picking up a set of dishes from a local potter. The results will be presented as stark numbers - the empirical and scalable proof that our addiction to the delivery of cheap consumer goods is a main driver of global greenhouse gas emissions.

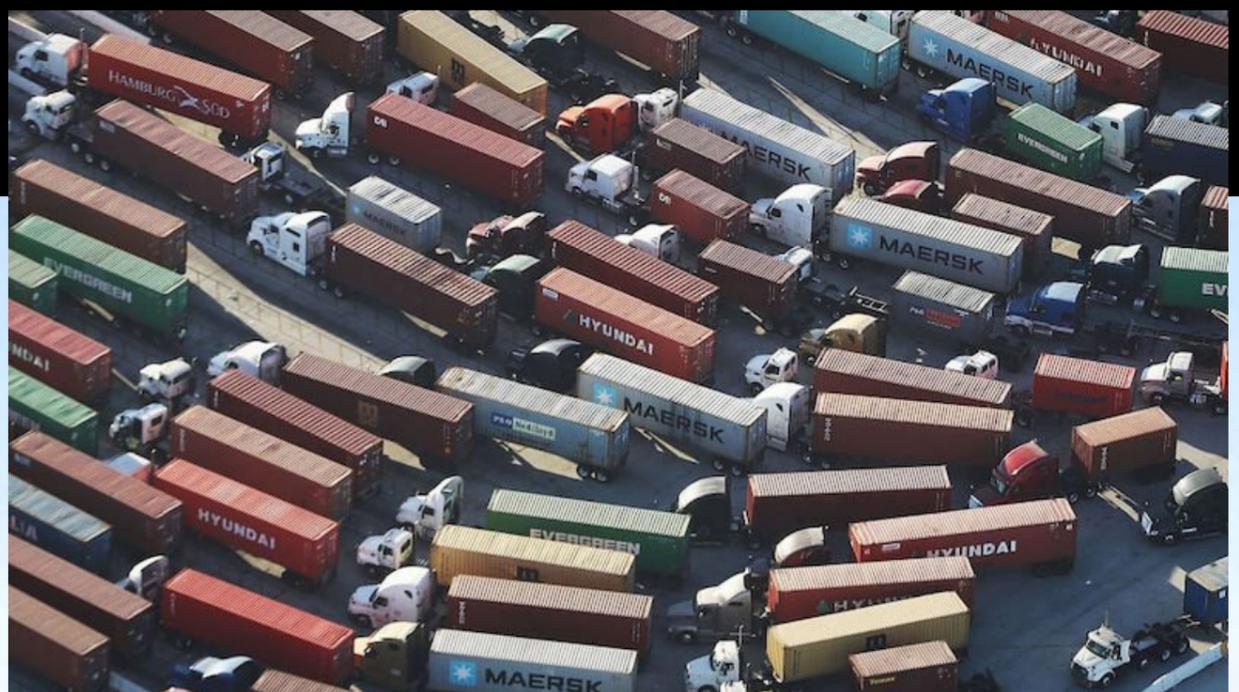
Each of these vignettes is scripted to show viewers how small, individual actions are connected to a larger reality: from the packaging that ends up in a landfill, to the fuel required to ship our recyclables all the way to Malaysia, where much of it is burned or thrown in a landfill. Every time we pick up our phone and order something online, there is a ripple effect that hurts the environment at each stage.



To explore the story of supply chains, we work backwards from the frustrated customers on their phones trying to order out of stock Christmas gifts, to the stores with empty shelves, to the overworked/understaffed trucking companies, to the 100+ shipping barges stuck anchored outside the Los Angeles ports, unable to unload their cargo of 200,000-300,000 20-foot shipping containers. These containers hold almost 50% of all imports to America and their workers have been stuck at sea for up to 20 months. Behind these delays are a series of supply failures: power outages in major production cities in China, the lack of cargo ships (because they are stuck in North America), material shortages, thwarted attempts at unionization, the shutdown of factories throughout the western world, and the process of globalization that has the world putting its entire manufacturing and delivery chain in one tipping basket. The visual telling of this story is contrasted by reenactments that portray the rest of us consumers at home clicking the "buy now - free shipping" button at an ever increasing rate.

When it comes to profiling solutions, The Real Cost of Delivery follows a similarly active creative approach. We explore extraordinary innovations with scientists John McGeehan and Dr. Sun-Mi Lee, who are both engineering organisms that can naturally break down our delivery waste and perhaps even turn it into a net positive energy source.

Through this combination of archival footage, interviews, dynamic reenactments and active portraits, The Real Cost of Delivery promises to entertain viewers and challenges them to re-think something fundamental to contemporary life - how we engage with the world as consumers.



OUR POTENTIAL SUBJECTS

Karen Weise

Karen Weise is the Seattle tech correspondent with the New York Times, covering Amazon, Microsoft and the silicon valley tech scene. She previously worked with Bloomberg News and is a graduate of Yale and Berkeley. She has done in-depth research on Amazon and Jeff Bezos and is following the plight of Amazon workers, including Emily and Maren.



Emily Cunningham & Maren Costa

A graduate of the University of Washington with a Masters of Science in Information Management, Emily Cunningham works as a tech designer. She has worked with tech giants like Microsoft and was hired as a User Experience Designer with Amazon in 2013. Maren Costa is a University of Washington graduate and also worked as a designer for Amazon. They are both founding members of the Amazon Employees For Climate Justice group and were both fired after speaking out against the company's climate injustices. In April 2021, the National Labour Relations Board determined that the firing was illegal.

Emily and Maren continue to campaign with Climate Justice and Maren now works with Microsoft, and is working on a pre-launch start-up called Carbon Zero Financial as a product designer and climate advisor.

Amazon Employees For Climate Justice

Amazon Employees For Climate Justice is a group of Amazon workers who are concerned about the company's carbon footprint, climate actions, business tied to the oil and gas industries and treatment of workers. Their organized walk out protest triggered a response from Amazon, who launched The Climate Pledge, which some protestors are calling an empty promise. Amazon then responded by firing key members of the movement, Emily Cunningham and Maren Costa.





M. Sanjayan, PhD

M. Sanjayan is an Emmy nominated global conservation scientist, writer and television host and is currently the CEO of Conservation International, which works to engage massive corporations in green initiatives. He has hosted documentaries for PBS, BBC, National Geographic, Discovery, Showtime and VOX.

John McGeehan, PhD

Professor John McGeehan is the Director of the Institute of Biological and Biomedical Sciences at Portsmouth University, and the lead researcher at the Centre for Enzyme Innovation. He is working on a ground-breaking project developing natural enzymes that can degrade plastic waste.

“I believe we are just scratching the surface of what can be achieved with enzymes. In relation to plastics for example, while we are making progress we need to explore biological chemistries that can tackle the wide variety of plastics that are polluting our environment.”



Sun-Mi Lee, PhD

Dr. Sun-Mi Lee is a Senior Research Scientist for the Clean Energy Research Centre at Korea Institute of Science and Technology. She holds a PhD in Chemical Engineering from The University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Lee and her team have recently created a microorganism that can transform cardboard shipping boxes into a substance that can be refined into biofuel! This burns cleaner and is more energy efficient than ethanol.



Patricia van Loon, PhD

Patricia is an Assistant Professor at the division of Supply and Operations Management at the Department of Technology Management and Economics at Chalmers University. With a background in Industrial Engineering and Operations Management, she has done thorough research on closed-loop supply chains and sustainability, exploring how we can reduce our environmental impact in online retail. She works with manufacturers to close the loop on their product waste and properly recycle and reuse.



Abbie Lindeberg

Abbie is a graduate of Washington State University with a B.S in Environmental Science. Since graduating she has worked in environmental outreach ever since, and is now a Toward Zero Waste Coordinator with the Sustainable Connections Group, working with local businesses to promote green business strategies.

David T. Courtwright, PhD

David T. Courtwright is an historian, author and professor at the University of North Florida who has written extensively on the history of drugs and addiction. He theorizes that our relationship with fast, cheap consumerism is an addiction. Consumers are promised happiness - a hit of dopamine - whenever we purchase a product. Our brains begin to rewire, believing that the more we buy, the happier we will be. And the promise of rapid delivery to our doorstep is the ultimate hit.

