

## Handout

**We might have seen it coming: Newsreels of the 1950s and 1960s represent the past, and mirror the present and environmental future?**

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Information on: [www.wochenschau-forschung.de](http://www.wochenschau-forschung.de)



*Fig: Die Zeitlupe No. 830 from 21 December 1965*

The cinema newsreel was shown as part of the cinema programme and was therefore an important medium and the only way of communicating news to a wide audience through powerful moving images.

### Experts and critics on urban life:

- Architect Dr. Ernst May (*Ufa-Wochenschau* No. 56 from 21 August 1957)
- Prof. Friedrich Tamms „Städte für morgen“ (“Cities for tomorrow”) (NDW No. 635 from 30 March 1962)
- Expert on „Epidemic of road accidents“ (*Ufa-Wochenschau* No. 359 from 14 June 1963)

The aim of the newsreel was to inform and entertain viewers and to present Germany as a reliable partner to foreigners. Newsreels shaped people's impressions of divided Germany, both at home and abroad, as footage was exchanged between newsreel companies around the world. They are an important source of history. Most newsreel companies closed down at the end of the 1970s - the last of them in 1986.

Each newsreel edition was about 300 metres long - 10 minutes - and contained about 8-15 short reports on a variety of subjects: politics, economics, culture, foreign countries, animal stories, technology, fashion, disasters, cityscapes and sports. The films were usually accompanied by music and sound, and the voice-over could give the report a certain tenor, not only factual but also ironic.

### Topics from 1953 – 1959:

- Noise pollution, traffic and accidents, discussion of speed limits
- Dangers of nuclear weapons, peaceful use of nuclear energy
- Increasing demand for energy and continued coal mining → Coal marketing crisis
- Peace and disarmament, protest against hydrogen bomb and nuclear tests
- Pollution (water), natural disasters, animal welfare

**Additional topics from 1960 – 1965:**

- Urbanization
- Shortage of nurses and care workers
- European trade, use of pesticides
- Automation, accidents at home and at work
- Waste and recycling projects

**Reporting on air pollution and noise:**

- Staged story about noise as an urban evil (*Welt im Bild* No. 127 from 1 December 1954)
- Air pollution in Japan: Dust plague over industrial area (NDW No. 420 from 14 February 1958)
- Debate in the Bundestag on the Air Pollution Control Act, but the cause is not mentioned, only noxious gases are mentioned, and industrial chimneys are shown (NDW No. 514 from 4 December 1959)
- Complaints about noise in the neighbourhood (*Ufa-Wochenschau* No. 176 from 9 December 1959)
- Noise abatement as an election issue (NDW No. 647 from 22 June 1962) and a model example from Switzerland (NDW No. 651 from 20 July 1962)

**Reporting on nuclear energy:**

- On the occasion of the commissioning of a nuclear reactor in Great Britain, interview with Otto Hahn, who predicts the end of the coal age (*Ufa-Wochenschau* No. 21 from 19 December 1956)
- But the dangers of nuclear reactors were also recognised early on: Report on the destruction of radioactive milk as a result of a reactor accident (NDW No. 404 from 23 October 1957)

**Reporting on packaging and waste:**

- Interview about apples at the market: "Why do you mainly offer foreign apples?" - "They are better sorted, better packaged [...]" (NDW No. 666 from 2 November 1962)
- Waste recycling in Lausanne, Switzerland: Waste is converted into heat - electricity and hot water for city districts (NDW No. 610, 29 September 1961) - in Germany 10 years later.
- Expert: "If we don't want to perish in our own filth, we have to collect rubbish in permanent containers." (*Ufa-Wochenschau* No. 340 from 1 February 1963)

**A proposal for a newsreel exhibition:**

- A brief explanation of newsreels at the entrance
- In the centre of the room, newsreel production and transition to television production
- Stands on the highlighted problems
- Comparisons with current TV and online programmes on the same topics
- Involving people by creating their own news on environmental and social issues

All newsreel editions are available at: <https://www.filmothek.bundesarchiv.de/>