THE MANY WAYS TO GATHER POLITICAL INFORMATION
Changing Patterns of News Media Attention

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INTRODUCTION

► Abundance of choices 
  → more fragmented audience

► Worries: News avoidance, information cocoons

► Research interest:

  How do people get information on politics? 
  And how does this vary among people and in different contexts?
KEY CONCEPTS

- Audience fragmentation (Napoli, 2011; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012)

- Explaining news media attention
  - Uses and gratifications (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2000)
  - Habits, ritualized usage (Rubin, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1987)
  - Schemata and decision heuristics (Marewski et al., 2009; Rummelhart, 1984)
  - Civic duty (Poindexter & McCombs, 2001)

- Media repertoires (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Taneja et al., 2012)
METHODS

► Semi-structured interviews
► Data from Austria
  ● Austria’s media system: “democratic corporatist model” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004)
► 48 respondents
► Varying in age, education, and gender
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>High</th>
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FINDINGS: INFORMATION PATTERNS

Aims

Overview
Breaking news
Background information
Specific issue

Patterns

Relying on routines
Picking things up
Social filtering
Active seeking
Contrasting views
Talking to people
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FINDINGS: MEDIA PREFERENCES

- Broadcast-first
- Online-first
- Print-first
"Zeit im Bild keeps you up to date. If the alarm sirens sound, for instance, you immediately learn what’s going on."
(f | 22 | basic)

"In the evening, I frequently watch TV. First, I often screen the *Teletext* for news. As I am no Internet user, I have a TV set, *Teletext* and newspapers."
(m | 72 | basic)

"I start my day with the radio. I listen to *FM4* and that is important for me because I want to know about current issues and I like the coverage."
(f | 42 | intermediate)

"[If there was a referendum in two weeks], I would watch talk shows on TV like *Bürgerforum*, […] or interviews in the *Zeit im Bild*, mainly in the *ZiB 2*."
(m | 22 | high)
"To receive the newspaper early in the morning allows me to get up date; without doubt, that’s worth my money."
(m | 49 | basic)

"The first thing that I do in the morning is open my paper. I usually read it in reversed order starting with the obituaries […] then it’s arts, then politics […] and what is important to me, regional events."
(f | 73 | intermediate)

"[In contrast to my childhood], TV does not play a role any more. Newspapers have taken its place."
(m | 49 | basic)

"We’ve tried [several different papers], but getting so much information overwhelms me in the morning. That’s why I decided to read newspapers only on weekends."
(f | 41 | high)
"There has been a fundamental change: from TV to the Internet, one now completely replacing the other."
(m | 20 | basic)

"I browse Facebook to see what others have recently read and posted. Very often, they post what has been published in papers and magazines."
(f | 27 | high)

"We don't have a TV set any more. We only stream. [...] That's our way of watching TV."
(f | 26 | intermediate)

"I read the news on my mobile. [...] I don't buy newspapers because I feel that I already know what they are writing about."
(m | 43 | intermediate)

"Normally, I check my mobile phone immediately when I get up to see whether there are messages from my friends. I also go to [several news websites] to get an overview what's going on around the world."
(m | 22 | high)

Background information

Social filtering

Relying on routines
People’s ways to gather political information are manifold

No evidence for avoidance or isolation

- Keeping up-to-date is important
- But: political information is rarely sought deliberately

People have different (but overlapping) media repertoires

- They “rely on habit and iteration in creating their media repertoires” (Taneja et al., 2012, p. 964).