

# Carl Heese

University of Bonn

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## Office Contact

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## Personal Information

Citizenship: German.  
Date of Birth: 12th October 1988.

## Fields of Interest

Microeconomic Theory (primary); Political Theory, Behavioral Economics (secondary).

## Education

2014-present      Ph.D candidate in Economics, M.Sc in Economics, *University of Bonn*, Germany;  
Expected completion: Spring 2020  
2007-2012      B.Sc and M.Sc (with distinction) in Mathematics, *University of Münster*, Germany

## Non-Academic Work Experience

2013-2014      Financial Consultant, Nagler & Company

## Research Visits

08/2019-06/2020      Exchange Scholar, *Yale University*, USA  
05/2017-07/2017      Visiting Ph.D student, *London School of Economics and Political Science*, UK

## Research Papers

1. Voter Attention and Distributive Politics (**Job Market Paper**)
2. Persuasion and Information Aggregation in Elections (with Stephan Lauermann)
3. Motivated Information Acquisition in Social Decisions (with Si Chen)  
(my co-author received the 2019 Econ JM Best Paper Award for the paper.)
4. A Non-Parametric Elicitation of Probability Weights (with Si Chen)
5. Policy Uncertainty and Signalling in Referenda (with Deniz Kattwinkel)
6. Strategic Understatements (with Deniz Kattwinkel)

## Teaching Experience

2019- summer 2020 Certificate of College Teaching Preparation (CCTP)  
fall 2019 Yale University, Introduction to Corporate Finance (undergrad), Teaching Fellow  
summer 2017-2019 University Bonn, Collective Choice (undergrad), Teaching Assistant  
fall 2017 University Bonn, Mathematics for Economists (grad), Teaching Assistant  
summer 2011 University Münster, Algebra 2 (grad), Teaching Assistant  
summer 2010 University Münster, Linear Algebra 2 (undergrad), Teaching Assistan.

## Honors and Grants

2019 *Wallis Institute Annual Conference on Political Economy*  
graduate student presenter (1 per year);  
paper: "Persuasion and Information Aggregation in Elections"  
2019 7,200 EUR research funding for the project "Motivated Information Acquisition in Social  
Decisions" from the Collaborative Research Center (CRC) TR 224 through project A1  
since 2018 research fellowship, *Collaborative Research Center (CRC) TR 224*;  
2017 doctoral scholarship, *German Academic Research Service (DAAD)*  
2014-2018 doctoral scholarship, *German Research Foundation (DFG)*  
2012 Deutschland-Stipendium

## References

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## External Presentations

2019 *Wallis Institute Annual Conference on Political Economy, Wallis Institute Rochester,*  
*Microeconomic Theory Lunch, Yale University*  
*International Conference on Game Theory, Stony Brook Center for Game Theory*  
*SAET Conference, Society for Advancement of Economic Theory*  
*Conference on Economic Design of SED, Hungarian Academy of Science*  
2018 *Yale Theory Breakfast, Yale University*  
*European Doctoral Program Annual Jamboree, European University Institute (EUI)*  
*North-American Summer Meeting of the Econometric Society, UC Davis*  
*SAET Conference, Society for Advancement of Economic Theory*  
*European Summer Meeting of the Econometric Society, University Cologne*  
*LSE PhD Seminar, London School of Economics and Political Science*  
2017 *European Winter Meeting of the Econometric Society, Barcelona Graduate School of Economics*  
*European Doctoral Program Annual Jamboree, University Pompeu-Fabra*  
*27th Jerusalem Summer School in Economic Theory (poster), The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.*

## **Job Market Paper**

### *Voter Attention and Distributive Politics (Job Market Paper)*

Demographic groups in the population pay systematically different attention to politics and acquire different levels of information. This paper studies the effects of heterogeneous attention when a reform may benefit one group at the expense of others (distributive politics). In the benchmark, when the information of voters is exogenous, a median voter theorem holds, and a welfare-enhancing reform is not adopted if it is not preferred by a majority. When information is endogenous, attention shifts election outcomes into a direction that is welfare-improving. Even when a welfare-enhancing reform is not preferred by a majority ex-post, under certain conditions, there are equilibria where the reform is adopted. The key driver of the results is that voters who are more severely affected by a proposed reform will pay more attention, consistent with empirical studies (“issue publics hypothesis,” Converse (1964)). This information advantage translates into voting power, precluding the majority from exerting its dominance.

## **Working Papers**

### *Persuasion and Information Aggregation in Elections (w/ Stephan Lauerermann)*

This paper studies the Bayes correlated equilibria of large majority elections in a general environment with heterogeneous, private preferences. Voters have exogeneous private signals, and a version of the Condorcet Jury Theorem holds when voters do not receive additional information (Feddersen & Pesendorfer, 1997). We show that any state-contingent outcome can be implemented in some Bayes-Nash equilibrium by an expansion of the exogenous private signal structure. We interpret the result in terms of the possibility of persuasion by a biased sender who provides additional information to voters who also have noisy private information from other sources. The additional information can be an almost public signal that almost reveals the state truthfully. The same additional information is shown to be effective uniformly across environments so that persuasion does not require detailed knowledge of the distribution of the voters’ private information and preferences. In a numerical example with uniform voter types, we show the effects of persuasion with already 17 or more voters.

### *Motivated Information Acquisition in Social Decisions (w/ Si Chen)*

*2019 Econ JM Best Paper Award for Si Chen*

Individuals can often inquire about how their decisions would affect others. When do they stop the inquiry if they prefer one of their options for selfish reasons? We show causal evidence with a laboratory experiment that having a selfishly preferred option makes individuals more likely to *continue* the inquiry when the dominant information received up to that point suggests that behaving selfishly harms others. In contrast, when the dominant information up to that point suggests that being selfish harms nobody, individuals become more likely to *stop* acquiring information. Drawing on the Bayesian persuasion model of Kamenica and Gentzkow (2011), we propose a theoretical model showing that this information acquisition strategy can be optimal for a Bayesian agent who values the belief of herself not harming others but attempts to persuade herself to behave self-interestedly. The model predicts that strategic information acquisition motivated by self-interest can reduce the decisions’ resulting negative externalities and *improve* the welfare of the affected others. This prediction was indeed found to be the case in our experiment.

### *A Non-Parametric Elicitation of Probability Weights (w/ Si Chen)*

This paper proposes an innovative non-parametric method to elicit probability weights as in Prospect Theory . This method trades off risky rewards and delayed ones. It has the following two advantages: first, it does not require functional form assumptions on the utility function, nor elicitation of the utility function; second, it is compatible with both monetary and non-monetary incentives. Requiring only a few measurements, it is also easy to implement.

**Miscellanea**

Languages: German (native), English (proficient, CAE), French (fluent, DELPH), Turkish (Basic, Ankara University “Temel Türkçe” certificate).

Programming: z-Tree, SQL, SAS (certified Base Programmer for SAS 9)