

Call for Panels and Papers

Conference of the Research Section „Comparative Politics“ of the German Political Science Association (Deutsche Vereinigung für Politikwissenschaft, DVPW)

“Citizen’s trust and societal polarization in times of transformation.

Comparative Perspectives from different world regions”

March, 27th – March 28th 2025

Organized by Saarland University & University of Duisburg-Essen

at Saarland University, Saarbrücken (Germany)

in cooperation with: DVPW Standing Group “Demokratieforschung“, DVPW Standing Group „Diktatur- und Extremismusforschung“, DVPW Standing Group „Europa- und Regionalismusforschung“, DVPW Standing Group „Political Parties“

Organizers: Daniela Braun, Kristina Weissenbach and Georg Wenzelburger

The topic of the conference

The main objective of this conference is to examine from various perspectives one of the most pressing issues of representative democracies: Citizen’s (dis-)trust in “their” political system, in institutions and politicians. To contextualize the study of trust and distrust more broadly, we also welcome submissions that examine the linkage between citizens and the state more generally – a linkage that can be expressed in different ways (for example: public opinion/citizens’ attitudes; political behavior such as political participation, party membership and affiliation, civic engagement, protest behavior, but also feelings or emotions).

Across different world regions, citizens face times of rapid or long-term transformation related to migration and integration, climate change, technological change, gender inequalities, Europeanization or region-specific challenges, among other issues. These transformations cause uncertainty, frustration, the feeling of not being represented, insecurity or hate on the side of many citizens while others embrace the challenges in an entrepreneurial way. In democracies around the world we observe the rise of societal polarization, social divides and disconnection between citizens and the state and a new quality of distrust and mistrust in established politicians and political institutions.

These developments raise important questions – theoretically, empirically and practically - about how to regain citizen’s trust, to create solidarity and to re(build) linkages between citizens and the state in order to overcome the rise of societal polarization around the world. They become particularly pressing in light of new parties (such as challenger/populist/extreme parties) and players who add to these polarization processes and benefit from it.

The 2025 Conference of the Research Section “Comparative Politics” of the German Political Science Association wants to bring together scholars who examine these developments of citizen’s trust, linkage and societal polarization in context of the aforementioned transformations. We encourage panels and papers who examine various facets of these findings in a comparative way and invite regional, European and global perspectives. We especially welcome panel and paper proposals that focus – in addition to the supply side – on the demand side of citizen’s trust or even include citizen science approaches into their research designs. Contributions could for instance examine:

- Citizen’s attitudes and different forms of behavior and representation as part of citizen’s trust in democracies around the world.
- The role of new parties and new players for societal polarization processes and citizen’s (dis-)trust in established structures and politicians of democratic political systems.
- The connection between transformational processes in specific policy areas (migration and integration, climate change, technological change, gender inequalities, Europeanization, region-specific challenges) and citizen’s (dis-)trust in democracy.
- New forms of participation, membership, affiliation and civic engagement within and beyond established institutions of democracy.
- The role of AI and innovations in these engagement processes.
- New forms of participatory governance strategies.
- The nature and role of public spaces in these processes.
- Emotional and psychological aspects of (dis-) trust and (dis-)linkage.

The Comparative Politics Research Section encourages different theoretical, conceptual and methodological approaches and welcomes the growing body of methods used in the field, in order to improve our understanding of the various facets of citizen’s (dis-)trust. It is open to various sub-disciplines, with different methodological and empirical approaches and with scopes ranging from single case studies to large-N comparative papers.

The conference topic is the result of two international research projects which are part of the Horizon Europe programme: [ActEU](#) (led by University of Duisburg-Essen & Saarland University) and [PROTEMO](#) (led by Saarland University).

Technical information

- The meeting aims to attract established scholars along with young academics (Ph.D. candidates and postdoctoral researchers) from across the world. It is a central aim of the German Political Science Association to increase the proportion of young scientists and women at its events, who are therefore particularly encouraged to apply.
- Panels are 90 minutes in length and may comprise at maximum four individual papers. Linked panels may also be considered. Both open panel ideas inviting paper submissions and complete panel proposals will be considered.
- The panels can be (in their entirety) in either German or English. The working language of the conference is German and English; a limited number of closed panels in French

may also be invited. DVPW *Standing Groups* and *Thematic Networks* or a team of at minimum two individual scholars are eligible to submit panel proposals.

- As part of the Conference a Business Meeting of the Section as well as a practitioner's panel in cooperation with NRW School of Governance / Institute for Political Science (UDE) will be organized. We will open some of the panels to a wider audience to make political science research more visible to the general public. A conference website will be available here: <https://www.uni-saarland.de/lehrstuhl/braun/forschung-und-aktivitaeten/tagungen.html>.

Application procedure

The organizers welcome the submission of panel proposals in the first step. The submission of single papers, which will be organized into fitting panels, will be possible in the second step together with closed panel submissions.

- **Open panel submissions:** The deadline for submitting panel proposals (open panels) is **August 30, 2024**. Proposals shall not exceed 800 words, including a 200-word summary. Please send your panel proposal to the conference organizers: tagung-dvpw-vergleich-2025@uni-saarland.de
- The list of accepted open panels will be announced by **September 16, 2024** and circulated with an invitation for paper submission by the team of organizers.
- **Paper and closed panel submissions:**
 - The deadline for submitting **paper proposals** to open panels will be **September 30, 2024**. The team of organizers will collect the submitted paper proposals and share a detailed list for final approval with all panel chairs. The final decision on the acceptance of papers will be taken by **October 11, 2024**.
 - **Closed panel proposals**, which are totally finalized with abstracts and summary and include a maximum of 4 paper proposals within the scope of the panel, can also be submitted until **September 30, 2024**. The team of organizers will inform submitters of closed panels by October 11, 2024, too.
- Until **October, 25, 2024** all participants are asked for mandatory conference registration and payment of the conference fee (between 25 and 30 euros; paid via the DVPW conference platform). The conference program will be published in early November. Hotel pre-reservations in Saarbrücken will be open until mid-December.