



# Call for Papers

## Contesting the Future!

### Political Economy in Times of Ecological Transformation, Geo-economic Rivalry, and Distributional Conflicts

Conference of the DVPW Section Political Economy  
24–25 September 2026, Freie Universität Berlin

Our current era is shaped by profound economic, political, and ecological transformations. Ecological transformation requires far-reaching interventions in existing structures of production, consumption, and finance, which in many places are being postponed or, in some cases, partially rolled back. At the same time, international relations are increasingly characterized by geo-economic rivalry, fragile supply chains, and a reconfiguration of global power resources. Within many societies, distributive conflicts and polarization are also intensifying.

In this situation, the future itself has become a contested object of political-economic struggle. Many of the (implicit) assumptions on which postwar political economy was based – continuous growth, increasing international interdependence, and the expectation that distributive conflicts could be mitigated through future gains in prosperity – are losing plausibility. Instead, scarcity, finitude, and the possibility of real losses are becoming politically salient. Under these conditions, distributional conflicts intensify as societies grapple with how to allocate adjustment burdens, risks, and uncertainties. At the same time, established promises of progress and stability are coming under pressure, while competing visions of the future – such as growth-based transformation strategies, post-growth approaches, industrial policy re-nationalization, or geo-economic decoupling – openly clash with one another. “Contesting the future” thus points to a political-economic constellation in which expectations, interests, and institutional arrangements must be renegotiated, without a generally accepted development path to guide them.

Against this background, the DVPW Section Political Economy invites submissions that address the theoretical, empirical, and normative dimensions of these challenges. The overarching theme is deliberately broad in order to include a wide range of political-economic perspectives. Submissions from all areas of political economy are explicitly welcome – even if they do not directly engage with the conference theme.

Possible questions for contributions include (but are not limited to):

- **Ecological transformation and sustainability:** What political-economic conflicts arise in the context of decarbonization, green industrial policy, and adaptation measures? What economic and political limits of existing growth models become visible? And what role do debates on post-growth, degrowth, and planetary boundaries play?
- **Geoeconomics and international power shifts:** How do strategic competition, trade conflicts, new industrial subsidy programs, and security-driven regulation reshape the international political economy? What new dependencies emerge in areas such as energy, critical raw materials, digital infrastructure, or financial markets?
- **Distributional conflicts and social inequality:** What distributive effects do ecological and technological transformations have, and how are they processed politically? What roles do labor market policy, social policy, tax policy, or monetary policy play in negotiating these conflicts?
- **Political-economic institutions in transition:** How do political systems respond to increasing uncertainty, social polarization, and the pressure of transformative challenges? What institutional innovations are emerging? And how effective are they?
- **Political-economic power, interests, and expertise:** Which actors, ideas, and institutions gain or lose agenda-setting power or influence in fields such as trade policy, financial market regulation, digital policy, or green industrial policy? How do changing forms of economic policy expertise (including the role of AI) matter?
- **Historical perspectives:** What can be learned from earlier phases of geopolitical reordering, macroeconomic crises, or profound ecological transformations?

Submissions are possible in two formats:

- (a) Individual papers: Abstract of up to 250 words
- (b) Panels: Abstract of up to 100 words plus 3–4 abstracts of up to 250 words each for thematically coherent papers

Please send your proposals in German or English to [polecon@dvpw.de](mailto:polecon@dvpw.de) by **27 February 2026**. Decisions on acceptance will be communicated by 27 March at the latest. Given the

high number of submissions at previous conferences, only one paper per person may be submitted and presented. Co-authorship on an additional paper is possible.

The conference will take place at Freie Universität Berlin. A small participation fee (expected to be EUR 30) will be charged to cover catering during the conference.