



TRANSITIONEN

42. KONGRESS

**DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR SOZIOLOGIE
UNIVERSITÄT DUISBURG-ESSEN | CAMPUS
DUISBURG 22 – 26 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Call for Papers

Democratic Transitions? Social Movement Activism After Autocracies

Panel of the Development Sociology/Social Anthropology Section at the 42nd Congress of the German Sociological Association, September 22 - 26, 2025 in Duisburg, Germany

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of social movement activism worldwide, with movements challenging entrenched regimes and advocating for political and social transitions. In Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, autocratic governments have recently been overthrown by social movements that lobbied for the return to democratic governance. In Syria, an autocratic leader has been ousted by a militant movement, giving new hope to parts of the Syrian population that better futures lie ahead. However, the situation remains fraught with uncertainties, as transitions often entail complex and unpredictable outcomes. While these cases reveal diverse patterns and dynamics, they also highlight the risk of creating opportunities for more radical or oppressive regimes to emerge. This diverts our attention to the strategies social movement activists employ to navigate the political spaces that have emerged after the uprisings.

Against the backdrop of these recent examples, but more broadly, we would like to focus on how political transitions are negotiated through the following questions, though not limited to them:

- How do social movements fill those pivotal movements of change?
- Which strategies do they employ to navigate the political spaces?
- Under which conditions do social movements professionalise and become political entrepreneurs?
- How can they negotiate power with the more established political leaders?
- How do they deal with potential threats from opponent parties and co-optation by more powerful actors??

We seek contributions that investigate these dynamics in an empirically grounded manner and that, by examining different approaches to social movement activism, offer new insights into the potential roles that social movements can play in transitions towards democratic governance.

We invite abstracts of up to 300 words by the end of April 2025 to be sent to Susanne Brandl at susanne.brandl@uni-passau.de.

Session organizers: Lucas Cé Sangalli, Antje Daniel, Judith Ehlert and Eva Gerharz

