



**21<sup>st</sup> international Conference of  
the Charles Gide Association**

**South Brittany University, Vannes,  
2-4 July, 2026**

**« CRISES »**

The theme of the 21<sup>st</sup> international conference of the Charles Gide Association will be “Crisis”. The concept of “crisis” originated in ancient Greece: the term *krisis* means “interpretation”, “choice” or “decision”. According to Morin and Béjin (1976)<sup>1</sup>, this concept was imported into the social sphere between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, where it referred to a “pathology of social organisms”. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the concept was integrated into political economy.

Nevertheless, crises linked to economic activities are nothing new. Crises caused by soaring agricultural prices were recorded in medieval times, including the great famines of Northern Europe and the Black Death epidemic. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, monetary crises were combined with banking crises in Italy, such as the bankruptcy of the Peruzzi family. These monetary and banking crises also affected the financial sphere from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, such as the bankruptcies of the South Sea Company and Ayr Bank (Douglas, Heron & Co.). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they became increasingly frequent, particularly in the United States during the period of the National Banking System. However, at that time, the concept of crisis echoed theoretical controversies about the future of the capitalist system, with Marxists on one side seeing crises as an evolution of the production system, and Classical and Neoclassicals on the other considering them as accidents, resolved by price movements. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, economic crises became more frequent and increasingly severe, affecting different sectors of activity in different countries. The crisis of 1929, known as the “Great Depression”, became a financial crisis with Black Thursday; the crisis of 2008, this time called the “Great Recession”, was associated with the crisis of so-called “subprime” loans and their financial derivatives; this was followed by the European sovereign debt crisis.

The aim of this conference is therefore to examine, from a historical and multidisciplinary perspective, the various ways in which economic and social thought has approached the notion of crisis. We will examine the developments, continuities and ruptures in the representations of crises, their role in the genesis of new concepts, and the place of crises in the construction of economic, social and political theories.

It will also explore how thinking about crises relates to major historical changes: transformations in modes of production, industrialisation, globalisation, urbanisation, but also ecological awareness and health risk management. By highlighting the diversity of contexts and theoretical responses,

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<sup>1</sup> Morin, Edgar et André Béjin. 1976. « La Notion de Crise : Introduction », *Communication*, 25, pp. 1-3.

this conference seeks to foster dialogue among scholars in historians of economic thought, historians, sociologists, philosophers, political scientists and environmental

Presentations may address the following issues:

- Controversies over crises in the productive system pit several approaches against each other: J.B. Say sees them as simple sectoral imbalances, while Malthus denounces general overproduction linked to insufficient demand. Sismondi emphasises under-consumption by workers, Marx focuses on the systemic crisis specific to capitalism, and the Regulation School analyses crises as structural breaks in regimes of accumulation and regulation. Are crises systemic or accidental? Do they lead to a transformation of the economic system?
- Economic crises, cycles and fluctuations. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, John Stuart Mill, Jevons, Juglar, and then Aftalion and Kondratieff in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were interested in crises as a specific moment in the cycle. Thanks to the work of Burns and Mitchell, and the NBER (*National Bureau of Economic Research*) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, crises can be dated. How did economists identify crises from a statistical or quantitative point of view? What debates did this identification raise?
- Proposals may also address economic history debates surrounding economic observatories and the emergence of national accounting in relation to the measurement, observation and control of cycles and crises.
- The emergence of financial and banking crises and their economic implications. The 2008 global financial crisis sparked renewed interest in the study of stock market crashes and banking crises. Historically, these financial and banking crises appeared as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century and developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These crises are often linked to public debt crises. We can trace the first crises in the banking world back to bills of exchange and the financing of public debt. How and why did financial crises grow in scale? How can we develop the history of thinking about financial crises?
- The origins of economic crises: debates on the endogeneity or exogeneity of economic crises. While Marx considered economic crises to be inherent to capitalism, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century economists saw them as exogenous shocks, either on the supply or demand side. For Friedman, economic crises are caused by exogenous monetary shocks, while for Real Business Cycle theorists such as Kydland and Prescott, they are linked to negative productivity shocks.
- Methodological and epistemological perspectives. Crises are not only historical or economic events, but also categories constructed, interpreted and reconstructed by economists and historians of the discipline. Each crisis, depending on the intellectual and theoretical context, has given rise to competing narratives and explanations: for example, the Great Depression of 1929 was interpreted as a failure of demand (Keynes), a monetary policy error (Friedman), or a structural crisis of capitalism (Marxist approaches). These re-interpretations show that the historiography of economic thought, by choosing to favour certain authors or traditions, itself contributes to redefining the understanding of crises. The conference therefore invites reflection not only on crises as theoretical objects, but also on how they have shaped, and continue to shape, the writing of the history of economic and social thought.
- Methodological and epistemological perspectives. Crises are not only historical or economic events; they are also categories constructed, interpreted, and continuously reinterpreted by economists and historians of the discipline. Each crisis, depending on its intellectual and theoretical context, has generated competing narratives and explanations. For instance, the Great Depression of 1929 has been viewed as a failure of aggregate demand (Keynes), a monetary policy error (Friedman), or a structural crisis of capitalism

(Marxist analyses). These successive re-interpretations illustrate how the historiography of economic thought—through its selective emphasis on particular authors or traditions—actively contributes to reshaping our understanding of crises themselves. The conference thus invites reflection not only on crises as theoretical objects, but also on the ways in which they have shaped, and continue to shape, the writing of the history of economic and social thought.

The notion of crisis is polysemic, so that it cannot be reduced to its strictly economic dimension. Social crises – linked to unemployment, inequalities or tensions in the labour market – political crises – wars, revolutions, the collapse of regimes – as well as environmental and health crises are equally relevant to the social and economic sciences. They remind us of the fragility of equilibria, the complexity of interdependencies, and the necessity of developing theoretical frameworks capable of accounting for uncertainty, disorder, and structural transformation. The conference therefore welcomes multidisciplinary contributions:

- Historical analyses of crises. The agricultural sector was the first to be affected from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, from the Industrial Revolution onwards, economic crises became industrial and commercial crises, as Charles Gide explained. Crises do not repeat themselves identically, or, on the contrary, “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose”, to quote Kindleberger (1983, p. 58)<sup>2</sup>. Can crises of different kinds (agricultural, banking, public debt, political, etc...) accumulate or follow one another, depending on interactions or feedback loops (“diabolic loops”)?
- Health (pandemics) and demographic crises, from the Ancien Régime to the present day: what role have they played in the trajectory of economic growth? Major famines and epidemics likewise raise important questions: how should Malthusian theory be understood and reassessed in light of contemporary perspectives?
- Political crises, crises of political regimes and crises of politics: does a political crisis foreshadow an economic one? What impact does a political crisis have on economic development? Are breaches of the social contract the cause of crises, or do they arise as a consequence of them? Conversely, to what extent do economic crises generate political instability or a crisis of politics? Finally, what forms of regulation or governance reforms are implemented in the aftermath of an economic crisis?
- Environmental and ecological crises. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, economists have argued that limited natural resources could constrain economic growth, a view that persisted into the 1970s amid concerns over resource scarcity, notably oil. From the late 20<sup>th</sup> century onward, however, attention shifted from scarcity to the environmental consequences of resource consumption, particularly pollution from fossil fuels. These developments have fueled ongoing debates: some advocate a gradual ecological transition supported by market mechanisms, while others call for rapid action in response to the accelerating climate crisis, environmental uncertainties (tipping points, irreversibilities), and the risks associated with continued climate inaction.

### **Deadlines and submission:**

Proposals should take the form of an abstract of around 500 words. Session proposals are welcome.

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<sup>2</sup> Kindleberger, Charles P. “1929: Ten Lessons for Today”, *Challenge* 26 (1): 15-18.

Proposals **MUST** be submitted on the conference website:

<https://charlesgideubs.sciencesconf.org>

Deadline for submission of paper proposals: January 16, 2026

**March, 2026:** Notification of decisions to depositors

When submitting your proposals, please specify the relevant theme:

- (1) Crises (conference theme)
- (2) History of Economic Thought and Economic Philosophy, Economic