

Call for submissions

## XII<sup>e</sup> Conference of the French Association of Political Economics (AFEP)

Paris, July 4-7, 2023

### **Crises and inequalities:**

### **How to inhabit the world of tomorrow?**

*Organized by LADYSS, CESSMA and LIED research units, and by Université Paris Cité*

*AFEP is a general scientific association which objective is to promote pluralism in economics. The annual AFEP conference is an important moment for the association and for the community of French economists. It allows the pluralism of theories, methods and objects to come alive. Beyond that, the conference encourages dialogue and interdisciplinarity within the humanities and social sciences. This is why **proposals for papers other than economics (sociology, management, anthropology, geography, regional planning, political science, history, philosophy, law, etc.) are welcome and encouraged.***

While the 2010 decade has seen the consequences of the subprime mortgage crisis of 2007-2008, the 2020s are certainly those of structural transformations, marked by the impact of polymorphous crises (pandemic, war, energy crisis, climate change and shocks...).

These interlocked crises affect societies, their inhabitants and institutions, which have unequally overcome the previous episodes. Each crisis accelerates the previous transformations and degradations, sometimes in the name of innovations meant to overcome the contradictions that gave birth to it. We must therefore understand how the different phenomena we are currently observing combine themselves and how it is essential to define them properly. Facts show that the socio-ecological degradations are ahead of schedule. They resonate with pervasive social tensions, which call into question the very habitability of the planet. After having ignored the warnings launched more than 50 years ago and disseminated by scientists and activists, political and economic leaders seem to discover that five of the climate tipping points are approaching, in addition to the quantified crossing of six of the nine planetary limits defined by the Rockström team – the year 2022 having been marked by the recognition of the crossing of two planetary limits (fresh water cycle and chemical pollutants) –, and with no noticeable change in the race for economic power. For social scientists, considering economic, social and environmental inequalities together is a key issue; however, having it understood by public opinion and above all by political and economic leaders is facing serious difficulties. This is what we propose to discuss at the 12<sup>th</sup> AFEP Congress, by articulating **four main lines of questioning**: first, how do social and environmental inequalities fit together in the light of past and current developments? Then, what is the role of relations – political, economic, social – between

territories at the national, European or even international level, in the socio-economic transitions to be implemented? How, at the same time, to reduce socio-fiscal, labor and gender inequalities, which have been well entrenched in our societies for many years? And finally, how could and should public action respond to these issues?

**Combined social and environmental inequalities** are thus at the heart of socio-ecological crises. This is even more striking since the world experienced a period of lock down for large populations, during which the time for growing exchanges has been momentarily suspended. Thinking about the world after COVID-19 was, for a few months, an opportunity to think about a better world, considering then that, in the crisis, we were able to understand what we were losing. The populations strongly felt the differences in the access to environmental resources and heritage (parks, natural spaces, land, air and water quality, etc.) and the differences in the exposure to pollution and risks (industrial, health, professional). These differences are most often compounded by already prevalent socio-economic inequalities. The prospect of a better "world after" is long gone. The interweaving of environmental and social issues adds a great deal of complexity and results in tensions between political or organizational priorities. For example, if we de-carbonize the economy (without even going so far as to talk about degrowth), how do we ensure redistribution and, more generally, continue to finance social protection systems, pensions, etc.? Thus, questioning the role of social protection in the ecological transition cannot be left out.

The positive thoughts of relocation, of awareness of finitude, or of connection to the living world that surrounds us, have certainly produced effects on people – such as the "bifurcators", who may have attracted our attention – but in reality the signs of tougher times are omnipresent. We can mention, in particular, tensions over resources and energy, a deteriorated relationship to work, the resurgence of inflation, which itself has structural sources related to our dependence on fossil fuels, and the impact of this inflationary context on income distribution, the destabilization of international value chains and the capture by some countries of strategic metals and minerals for the energy transition. In contrast to the expansion of platform capitalism and the "tech" sectors, many sectors of activity are struggling, devalued or plagued by chronic under-investment, particularly in healthcare, education and, more broadly, in the services that meet people's basic needs.

Contrary to a widely shared intuition about the phenomenon of digitization, these crises have also reaffirmed the need to question the materiality in which our lifestyle and sociability are formed. The lockdown and then the outbreak of war in Europe, the rise of reactionary populism and the threat of energy shortage, show how **the production of our material conditions of existence is based very concretely on flows of matter and energy that link together territories** (urban or rural; in the North or in the South; endowed with natural resources and heritages or endowed with capital created by humans, etc.). The way in which these flows are organized and composed also reveals the vulnerabilities, tensions, power relations and asymmetries that characterize the relationship between territories and the populations that live and work in these areas. The issues of energy and food supply or access to rare-earth elements illustrate some of the socio-ecological sustainability challenges we face in the development trajectories of our societies.

These crises also reveal **inherited inequalities, which they contribute to increase**. The 2008 crisis brought to light the underlying inequalities in income and wealth. Beyond the increase in poverty, the frequency of crises highlights access to health care as a source of inequality between privileged and precarious populations, particularly in countries where social protection systems are fragmented. It also reveals another "hierarchy" of occupations and work activities that is not based on the simplistic hierarchy, dear to standard economics, linked to the equivalence between the level of qualification and salary achieved through productivity. The primacy given to the "lead climbers" ("*premiers de cordée*" in French) against the front-line key workers (also "*premiers de corvée*" in French) has thus become a simple but powerful representation. This hierarchy also intersects with a gendered division of labor, since many of these "frontline" workers are women. While women were on average less infected with COVID-19 than men worldwide, they were hit harder by the general decline in employment; a finding that was accentuated for black women in the United States. Women have been laid off more, have experienced income losses while enduring increased domestic work and domestic violence during lockdown. In general, implemented economic policies – while supporting aggregate demand – did not mitigate the effects of the crisis in terms of precariousness and domestic work for women.

In this context of polymorphous crises, **elaborating, deciding, formalizing, implementing, evaluating, consulting, discussing, negotiating, reinterpreting, proposing, mobilizing, opposing and contesting are recurrent actions at the heart of the complex processes of public action**, whatever the economic, political, social and historical context of the States and their society. Public action is thus always the result of the co-construction of action programs by plural and diverse actors (public, private, from civil society, experts, donors, etc.) located at different scales of intervention (local, national and international), with competing interests and visions of the world and participating in the regulation of public policy sectors (fiscal policy, social policy, etc.). However, public action puts two poles in tension: the State and civil society – which are in constant interaction –, combining trust and allegiance, resistance and capacity for action, domination and responsibility. On the one hand, the strength of State's capacity (its administrations) to regulate society and its territory – as holder or administrator of authority – is questioned. On the other hand, public action presupposes the autonomy of civil society, made up of citizens, endowed with the capacity for mobilization, action and contestation. In this sense, the notion of public policy as grasped by economists should make room for forms of collective mobilization that are also political. The political forms taken by the tensions between actors and public or collective policy modalities differ according to the historical trajectories followed. They will thus be powerfully tested by current or future socio-ecological crises.

The 12<sup>th</sup> AFEP Conference will thus provide the opportunity to **better understand the impact of the crises on the transformation of institutional arrangements and the rise of inequalities in the broad sense (economic, social, environmental, gender)**. Will these changes make it possible to overcome the contradictions of the previous period and reduce inequalities? Or will the forces of dominant interests be exercised so that the "world after" does not move too far away from the "world before"?

*The AFEP Conference will be an opportunity to debate on the structural changes that this call evokes. The themes of the conference are varied, as are the approaches. Anything that sheds light on the regime changes at work and on the future worlds built under pressure today will be useful to our community. In the spirit of openness that characterizes the pluralist approach promoted by AFEP, the conference remains open to all themes and approaches. **Therefore, proposals that do not explicitly address the theme of the conference are welcome and will be considered by the scientific committee. Proposals for thematic workshops (open or closed) will also be highly appreciated.***

Organizing committee: Nicole Azoulay, Irène Berthonnet, Rudy Bouguelli, Thibaud Deguilhem, David Distelrath, Elisa Grandi, Pascal Grouiez, Sabina Issehnane, Petia Koleva, Thomas Lamarche, Éric Magnin, Riyad Manseri, Vinicius Martinez, Renaud Metereau, Cécile Mouchel, Iris Nikolopoulou, Pepita Ould-Ahmed, Antoine Rebérioux, Camille Signoretto.

Scientific committee: Élodie Bertrand (ISJPS, CNRS, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, France), Lise Bourdeau-Lepage (Université Lyon 3, EVS-CRGA, France), Robert Boyer (Institut des Amériques, EHESS, France), Lynne Chester (University of Sydney, Australia), Cédric Durand (Université de Genève CEPN, Switzerland), Ben Fine (Soas, University of London, United Kingdom), Fabien Girard (Université Grenoble Alpes, Faculté de Droit de Grenoble, France), Gaël Giraud (Environmental Justice Program, Georgetown University, United States), Jean-Christophe Graz (CRHIM, Université de Lausanne – IEP, Switzerland), Sabina Issehnane (Université Paris Cité, LIED, France), Florence Jany Catrice (Clersé, Université de Lille, France), Agnès Labrousse (Sciences Po Lyon, Triangle, France), Thomas Lamarche (Université Paris Cité, Ladyss, France), Nathalie Lazaric (GREDEG, CNRS, France), Jonathan Marie (Université Sorbonne Paris Nord, CEPN, France), Robert McMaster (Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom), Pepita Ould-Ahmed (Université Paris Cité, CESSMA, France), Gael Plumecocq (INRAE, AGIR, LEREPS, France), Jill Rubery (Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, Royaume-Uni), Felwine Sarr (Université Gaston Berger, Senegal), Laurence Scialom (Université Paris Nanterre, EconomiX, France), Camille Signoretto (Université Paris Cité, Ladyss, France), Julien Vercueil (Inalco, CREE, France).

**Three types of submissions are possible:**

- scientific paper proposal: each author submits a proposal (with an extended abstract: two pages with bibliographic references) on the online platform;
- closed thematic workshop proposal: each workshop coordinator proposes a theme and a list of speakers, collects the communication proposals and animates the workshop if necessary;
- open thematic workshop proposal: each workshop coordinator proposes a theme which, if accepted, may lead to a specific call for papers sent by the coordinator. The communications grouped in the thematic workshop will be chosen among the proposals of scientific communication responding to the general call and/or to this specific call.

**Deadline for submission of paper proposals or thematic workshop proposal**, *via* the website <https://afep2023.sciencesconf.org> (two-pages abstract): **January 2023, 16.**

**Notification of acceptance of the paper proposal**: March 2023, 31.

The day of July 4 is reserved for the **doctoriales** and will be the subject of a specific call. For more information: [doctorants@assoeconomiepolitique.org](mailto:doctorants@assoeconomiepolitique.org).

The congress will combine plenary sessions with parallel thematic workshops. In order to encourage exchanges with non-French speaking colleagues, papers in English are welcome.