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The Construction and Management of Crises

Crises abound and proliferate. In this panel we intend to examine some neglected aspects of this proliferation by turning our attention to different sorts of crises and asking what they have in common – and where they differ – as governable objects. We are particularly interested – from different starting points – in how crises are constructed and governed. Rather than treating crises as events that evoke governmental responses, we will consider how crises are defined in anticipation, in the moment of discovery and retrospectively. We will also examine how constructions of crises contribute to the strategies and practices of governing them. Contrasting the recent financial crisis with the BSE crisis of the 1990s enables us to trace the processes of identifying and constructing the character of the crisis, with particular attention to the role played by different forms of knowledge or expertise in these processes. Similarly, the two crises offer insights into the repertoire of strategies and practices that may be available to perform crisis management.