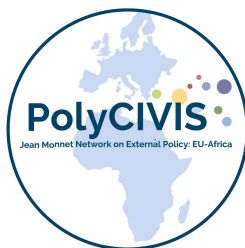# REPORT: PARTICIPATORY METHODS FOR TEACHING THE POLYCRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION WORKSHOP

BY POLYCIVIS COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION WP

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Venue: CIGASS, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Polycrisis Handbook Workshop in Dakar was designed to explore how educators and students in the Euro-African region understand the idea of polycrisis, establishing a cooperative setting to discuss participatory teaching methodologies and strategies. More specifically, under this workshop NKUA and University of Sfax aimed to:

- Recognize contextual approaches, examining the ways in which polycrisis is viewed, taught, and discussed in various educational contexts.
- Encourage active participation of students and educators to showcase cutting-edge teaching techniques, resources, and approaches for addressing polycrisis through real case scenarios.
- Provide useful insights useful for the creation of an extensive Polycrisis Handbook for wider educational usage, gather real-world examples and thoughts on instructional methods to polycrisis.

Participatory tools and techniques were explored methodologically in order to engage participants to a critical thinking approach emphasizing the systems thinking concept that transcends the PolyCrisis project. Throughout the implementation of this workshop the complexity of engaging local educators and students was merged as a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the limited participation from the host community, the attendees demonstrated significant enthusiasm exploring the concept of polycrisis through innovative educational frameworks such as art, role play and gamification. The workshop emphasized the importance of proactive strategies to enhance local engagement, the adoption of multidisciplinary and decolonial teaching approaches, and the development of participatory educational materials

Introduction

This report describes the design, the implementation and the outcomes of the *Polycrisis Handbook Workshop*, an onsite participatory workshop held under the PolyCIVIS Conference Dakar 2025. The workshop was designed as a collaborative initiative, bringing together stakeholders, PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, and interdisciplinary academics from Africa and Europe. Its primary aim was to foster reflection, knowledge exchange, and critical discussion on the concept of *polycrisis*, understanding how educators and students in the Euro-African territory address the concept of polycrisis, engage participants with educational practices and teaching methods, and collect insights and examples to inform the development of the Polycrisis Handbook.

The workshop was implemented within the broader framework of the *Polycrisis Handbook* deliverable, part of Work Package 5 *Communication and Dissemination*. This handbook aims to equip higher education teachers and academics with practical, research-informed tools and participatory methodologies for engaging students with the complex realities of polycrisis in innovative, relevant, and inclusive ways. The *Polycrisis Handbook*—focusing on participatory methods for teaching polycrisis in higher education—ought to be co-designed with meaningful contributions from a wide range of stakeholders, particularly higher education students and educators from all PolyCIVIS partner universities. To address the voices of educators and students, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Sfax University decided to include participatory methods and collaborative activities through workshops and online surveys to engage students and educators. The Dakar conference provided an ideal environment to launch this process, offering the right combination of timing, format, and participant diversity. The presence of both African and European partners made it a strategically significant opportunity to begin shaping truly inclusive and contextually grounded educational resources. The participants of the workshop included a diverse range of voices: academics who have incorporated polycrisis themes into their teaching and research; MSc students who have encountered the concept through courses, seminars, workshops, and webinars; and early-career researchers such as PhD candidates and postdoctoral fellows already engaging with polycrisis in their academic work. This rich mix contributed to the workshop's depth and relevance, enabling dialogue across disciplines, generations, and cultural contexts. These objectives guided the workshop's structure and ensured a focus on collaboration, regional diversity, and real-world applicability.

Workshop Details

The Polycrisis Handbook Workshop brought together 12 participants, 2 master students with background in international relations and migration studies, and 1 academic with background in Geography, while the others were consortium members —academics, postgraduate students, and early career researchers—from diverse academic backgrounds. It was held for two hours and a half in English and French to accommodate a multilingual group. For the selection of participants an online invitation was sent to the hosting university (Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar), disseminated to other universities in Senegal, as well as to all consortium partners. The workshop took place at the CIGASS, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar on 25th of April 2025 in the afternoon, facilitated by Dr Evika Karamagioli and Eleni-Panagiota Stoupa.

Various participatory methods and techniques were used throughout the workshop to encourage participants to engage in critical thinking, with a strong focus on systems thinking—extending beyond the scope of the PolyCrisis project. These included open-ended questions, brainstorming sessions, world café discussions, and storytelling. Through these methods and techniques the workshop aimed to explore how educators and students approach the concept of polycrisis in the Euro-African context, engage participants with diverse educational practices, and collect practical insights to inform the development of the Polycrisis Handbook.

Activities of Polycrisis Handbook Workshop

Introduction to the goals of the workshop

Setting the stage for critical thought and interdisciplinary discussion, the workshop started with an introduction to the idea of polycrisis using the Greek myth of Pandora's Box, highlighting the intricacy and interconnectivity of global challenges. Participants were then informed about the Polycrisis Handbook, the goal of the workshop to gather ideas, experiences, and tactics from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds for the co-design of the handbook, as well as the role of the participants in this procedure. Re-considering the myth of Pandora's Box, the participants had to explore the forces, challenges and possibilities that are unleashed if we open Pandora's Box and what must be ensured is placed inside to guide us towards resilience.

Icebreaker activity

An interactive icebreaker exercise called "Crisis Connections" was implemented to encourage rapid participation of all. Then participants cooperated to develop a case study on PolyCrisis under the theme "Climate Crisis". Following the mapping, participants reflected on a guiding question: "Do you think polycrisis is a concept that is worth teaching—and if so, how?". This prompted rich discussion about the educational relevance of polycrisis and how it might be addressed through academic curricula and participatory learning methods. In parallel, a significant discussion emerged regarding the pedagogical framing of "polycrisis"— as a descriptive concept or as a structured theory.

Understanding PolyCrisis Handbook's Purpose & Scope

The goal and essential elements of the Polycrisis Handbook were presented to participants in the following session. This section sought to provide a mutual understanding of the handbook's objective, which is to operate as a useful, interactive tool for institutions of higher learning dealing with the intricate realities of polycrisis. Participants were invited to consider the following topic to foster deeper engagement: "What are the key elements that make a handbook engaging, practical, and impactful for both educators and students?" Participants brainstormed ideas and expressed their thoughts while working in small, mixed groups of kids and educators. They wrote their contributions on sticky notes. In addition to providing insightful feedback on the handbook's layout, this cooperative activity promoted intergenerational discussion about efficient teaching methods and resources.

Discussing educational methods

The session on educational methods invited participants to reflect on participatory educational methods related to complex global issues. Through a collaborative brainstorming role-play exercise, participants explored the question: "What are the key elements/contents/ formats that make a handbook engaging, practical, and impactful for both educators and students?". This role-play prompted a more thorough discussion of the value of context-sensitive teaching techniques as well as how polycrisis might be taught to promote students' understanding and the growth of initiative-taking, solution-oriented thinking. Three additional guiding questions: "What makes a teaching experience truly engaging and participatory?", "How can we effectively teach Polycrisis to foster deeper understanding and initiative-taking solutions? ", "How could the teaching procedures be made more participatory?" prompted rich dialogue and critical reflection. Insights were gathered through group discussions and sticky-

note contributions, revealing a strong interest in participatory, interdisciplinary approaches that connect theory with real-world relevance.

Co-Designing teaching methods for Polycrisis

In the co-design session, participants built upon the insights gathered during the earlier "Crisis Connections" exercise to collaboratively develop teaching methods tailored to polycrisis education. Working in small groups, each team selected a relevant teaching approach and created a brief description outlining how it could be applied to address interconnected crises in educational contexts. They were then asked to define clear, practical steps for implementing their method within a classroom or training setting. This hands-on activity encouraged participants to bridge theory and practice, drawing from their own disciplines and experiences. To guide reflection and refinement, groups were prompted with the question: "What works? What could be improved?" This led to thoughtful exchanges about feasibility, adaptability, and the importance of context-sensitive teaching strategies.

Closing

The workshop concluded with a wrap-up session that summarized the key takeaways, highlighted participant contributions, and outlined the next steps in the development of the Polycrisis Handbook. Organizers emphasized how the insights, teaching methods, and collaborative ideas generated during the workshop would feed directly into the handbook's design phase. Participants were invited to share their reflections and provide feedback on the workshop format and content, offering valuable input for improving future sessions. The closing also reinforced the importance of ongoing collaboration among PolyCIVIS partners and reaffirmed the shared commitment to co-creating meaningful, participatory tools for teaching about polycrisis in higher education.

Outcomes

Forces, challenges and possibilities are unleashed under polycrisis; what may can lead humanity towards resilience

- Challenges: global forces, internal cooperation, loss of humanity, the concept of resilience becomes problematic since it describes the problem but does not address it.
- Possibilities: new paths of collaboration and cooperation between countries, need to develop a just approach, prioritizing fairness, equity, and inclusion in addressing societal, environmental, or economic challenges
- Actions: development of more funds, better understanding of history, adoption of responsible behavior in consumption, positive use of science, development of more participatory teaching methods, transferability of knowledge into action, preventive thinking, proactive approach, agility, leadership
- Must ensure scientific knowledge, willingness, create – share approach on knowledge, trust.

Participatory educational methods

- Teaching methods: decolonial approach, different views of scholars from different places of the world multidisciplinary framework, concept vs theory, systems thinking, creative interactive ways of teaching such as art or audiovisual exercises

- Polycrisis Handbook: case studies, attractive colours – pictures, choose keywords, less reading, short text, audiovisual material, interactive methods, role play, solutions, gamification (games), solid as a base, quiz questions, access to official data through platforms, updated content/data per year, online tools

Challenges, Opportunities and Lessons Learned

Following the implementation of the workshop, the facilitators had the opportunity to identify opportunities, challenges, and lessons learned. More specifically, the low level of involvement from local educators and students brought to light opportunities as well as difficulties in creating inclusive learning environments.

On the one hand, the imperative need to engage the local voices, experiences and thoughts in the educational sector in order to co-create the Polycrisis Handbook underpinned the difficulties on engaging local communities of the host universities to actively participate, since insufficient participation may reduce the quality and significance of these workshops. On the other hand, it should be highlighted that despite their small number, the local participants who attended the workshop were extremely enthusiastic, especially about the idea of "polycrisis," and they showed a strong desire to learn more about it in formal educational settings. However, the active participation of those present demonstrated the potential for deep engagement when individuals feel their contributions are valued. This presents an opportunity to design future workshops that are more inclusive and responsive to local contexts.

A key lesson learned is the importance of using proactive approaches to involve local educators and students. Early outreach, joint preparation with host institutions, and including regional concerns into the workshop's curriculum are all part of this. By doing this, future workshops can make sure that they strengthen local communities in addition to sharing information, creating a more inclusive and participatory learning environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The workshop in Dakar aimed to create a collaborative space for discussing teaching strategies capable of responding to polycrisis.

The workshop proposed several actionable insights, including securing more funding for education, promoting historical awareness, encouraging responsible consumption, and fostering leadership and adaptability. Innovative teaching methods such as decolonial and multidisciplinary approaches, systems thinking, and participatory learning were championed to better address polycrisis complexities. A key proposal was the development of a comprehensive Polycrisis Handbook featuring case studies, visuals, concise texts, interactive tools, and solutions-oriented content. This resource aims to make complex issues more accessible and actionable, supporting educators and students in building resilience and

proactive responses. The Dakar workshop ultimately emphasized the importance of trust, engagement, and knowledge-sharing in navigating the global challenges of our time.

Next steps

TIMELINE	JUNE 25	JULY 25	AUG 25	SEPT 25	OCT 25	NOV 25	DEC 25	JAN 26	FEB 26	MAR 26	APR 26	MAY 26
SURVEY	X	X	X	X								
SFAX WORKSHOP					X							
ATHENS WORKSHOP							X					
TECHNICAL PROVIDER						X	X	X	X	X	X	
FINAL DELIVERABLE												X

Appendices

Full agenda

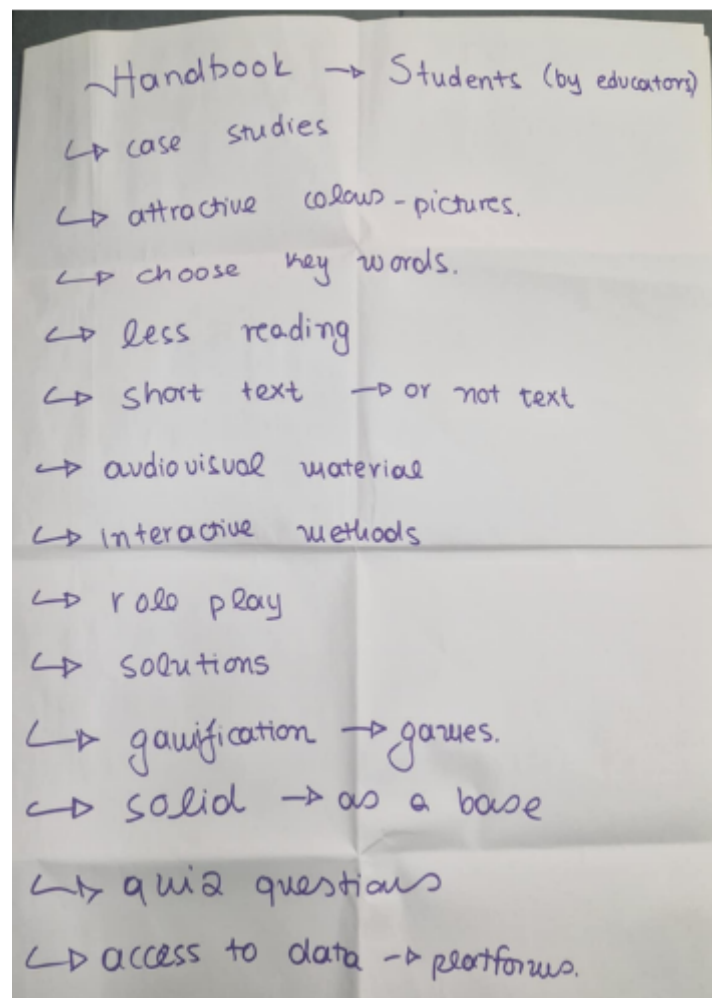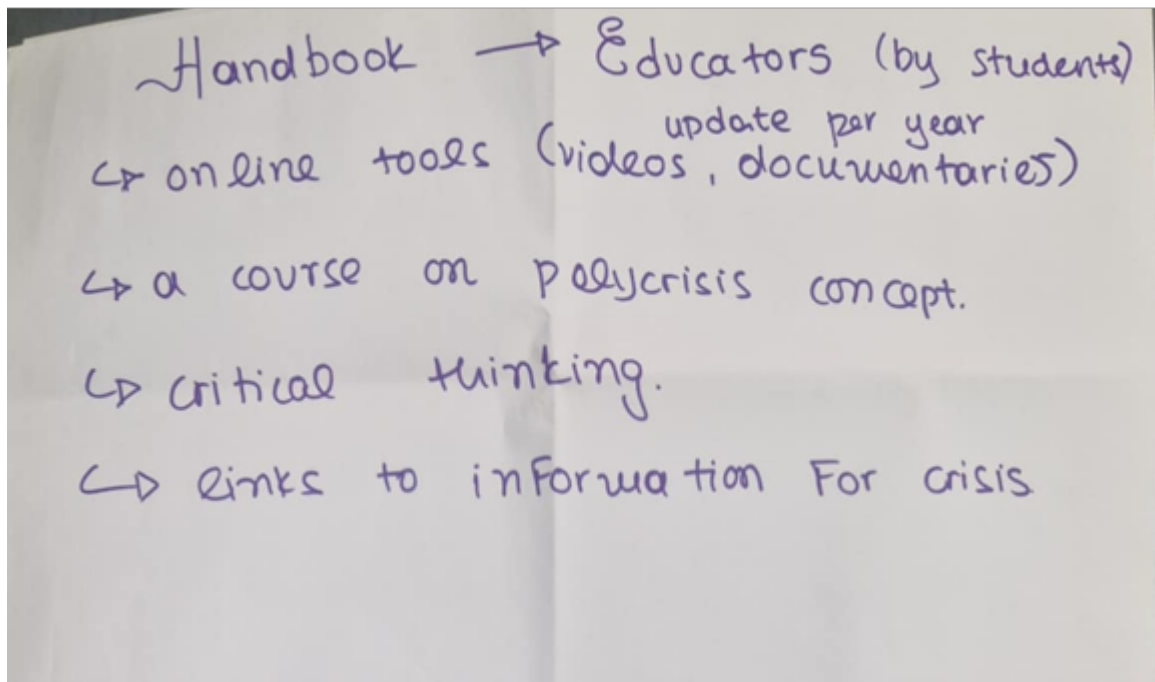**14.30 - 17.30 Polycrisis Handbook Workshop**

Led by PolyCIVIS Communication and Dissemination Work Package

- Roundtable
- Part 1 - Welcome and Icebreaker activity
- Part 2 - Polycrisis Handbook Purpose and Scope
- Part 3 - Discussing teaching methods
- Part 4 - Co-designing methods for teaching the polycrisis and wrap-up

Photos

Polycrisis Handbook

Handbook → Educators (by students)
↳ online tools (videos, documentaries) — update per year
↳ a course on polycrisis concept.
↳ critical thinking.
↳ links to information for crisis

Handbook → Students (by educators)
↳ case studies
↳ attractive colours - pictures.
↳ choose key words.
↳ less reading
↳ short text → or not text
↳ audiovisual material
↳ Interactive methods
↳ role play
↳ solutions
↳ gamification → games.
↳ solid → as a base
↳ quiz questions
↳ access to data → platforms.

Polycrisis Education Exercise Template: " Crisis Connected"

Group Number:

Step 1: Data Insights from "Crisis Connected" Exercise

Summarise key findings of themes from the "Crisis Connected" Exercise

(types of crises identified, interconnections, common challenges, or insights about impact)

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-
-

Step 2: Selected Teaching Method
Chosen Method: [Insert the teaching method]

Short Description of the Method: [Explain how the method works/core elements, and why it is effective for teaching polycrisis]

Step 3: Justification of the Selection Method
Why this method fits: [Describe how the method aligns with participatory teaching methods of polycrisis and support learning about interconnected crises]

Polycrisis Education Exercise Template: "
Crisis Connected"

Step 4: Implementation Steps
Outline a step-by-step guide for using the teaching method in a classroom or training setting:

1. **[Preparation - resources, materials, context setup]**

2. **[Introduction - how to present the topic]**

3. **[Facilitation - how to guide the teaching]**

4. **-Assessment - how learning outcomes will be evaluated]**

Step 5: Key Considerations

List the challenges, adaptations, or notes for diverse learners/settings:

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