



Report on the 3rd International Conference on Geographical Science for Resilient Communities, Ecosystems and Livelihoods under Global Environmental Change (GORILLA)

4-6th December 2024, Hotel Africana, Kampala Uganda

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Group picture of the GORILLA Conference

Overview

In December 2024, the 3rd International Conference on Geographical Science for Resilient Communities, Ecosystems and Livelihoods under Global Environmental Change (GORILLA) took place in Kampala, Uganda. This biannual conference was organized by the Department of Geography of Makerere University. The GORILLA conference's key objective was to serve as a vital platform to consolidate and disseminate emerging scientific knowledge that can enhance societal well-being. It provided an opportunity to address some of the world's most pressing challenges through innovative approaches and collaborative action. Several hundred participants from academia, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, governments, think-tanks and policy makers from all fields of study joined the event. Among the attendees were Dr. Kanifa Kamatara (MAK), Dr. Anthony Tibaingana (MAK), and Prof. Gudrun Zagel (PLUS) from the PolyCIVIS Consortium.

The GORILLA conference chose the polycrisis as one of its key themes. The conference organizers devoted a whole session to the topic of “Polycrisis: Migration, Displacement, Conflict and Humanitarianism”. The organizers called upon the PolyCIVIS team at Makerere University to coordinate and chair the session. Kamatara Kanifa was co-opted into the National Organizing Committee of the conference to spearhead the coordination of the polycrisis session. Anthony Tibaingana was the Rapporteur for the polycrisis session. Gudrun Zagel was a speaker in the session.



Picture of the Polycrisis Session

The session included more than ten presentations on polycrisis-related issues and the involving problems and solutions. Several presentations discussed crisis situations resulting from climate change, health and politics crisis, land conflicts, or forced migration, and the impacts on migration triggered by these factors. While some presentations described concrete crisis scenarios and the resulting problems and solutions, others described the problems and solutions of crisis scenarios on a theoretical level. Many of the presenters only addressed single crises. The discussions showed how a single crisis, like climate change or a land conflict is interconnected with other societal issues, like living conditions of local communities, refugees and migrants, security, or food supply, which can easily result in a polycrisis.

The session was concluded by an overview presentation by Gudrun Zagel on the topic of **“Polycrisis: What it is and how can we tackle it?”**, which put the previous presentations in the polycrisis perspective and enhanced the understanding of the concept and its challenges. The presentation showed that the numerous crises the world is facing today are not only challenging as such, but they are entangled and reinforce each other.

To tackle such polycrisis situations, it is essential to understand the phenomenon of polycrisis, its drivers and consequences, and the entanglements and interactions of the different crises. Solutions to polycrisis situations require knowledge and instruments from different scientific branches, such as natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and law, and an interdisciplinary approach. We need to understand the functioning, but also the limits of instruments and methodologies of the different scientific disciplines, and we need to develop interdisciplinary methodologies to consider the interactions between the different crises and their solutions to ensure that a solution to one crisis does not aggravate another crisis.



Picture of an informal PolyCIVIS working session at the GORILLA Conference

Conclusion

Overall, the session showed that we are only at the beginning of understanding and developing solutions to the polycrisis. The participants realized that the migration crisis is closely linked to other societal issues, like the local communities' living conditions, food supply, land use, and security, and that one crisis can trigger a polycrisis. Therefore, solutions to the migration crisis must consider their impacts on other societal problems and crises to ensure that the solution to one crisis does not aggravate other crises. In this context, the work of PolyCIVIS aroused great interest among the conference participants due to its relevance in creating knowledge to tackling the polycrisis through international cooperation and knowledge sharing. We hope for a follow-up in the next GORILLA Conference in 2026 to present the results of our collaboration.

Further information about the conference: <https://gorilla.mak.ac.ug/>

Gudrun Zagel and Kanifa Kamatara, 25 February 2025



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