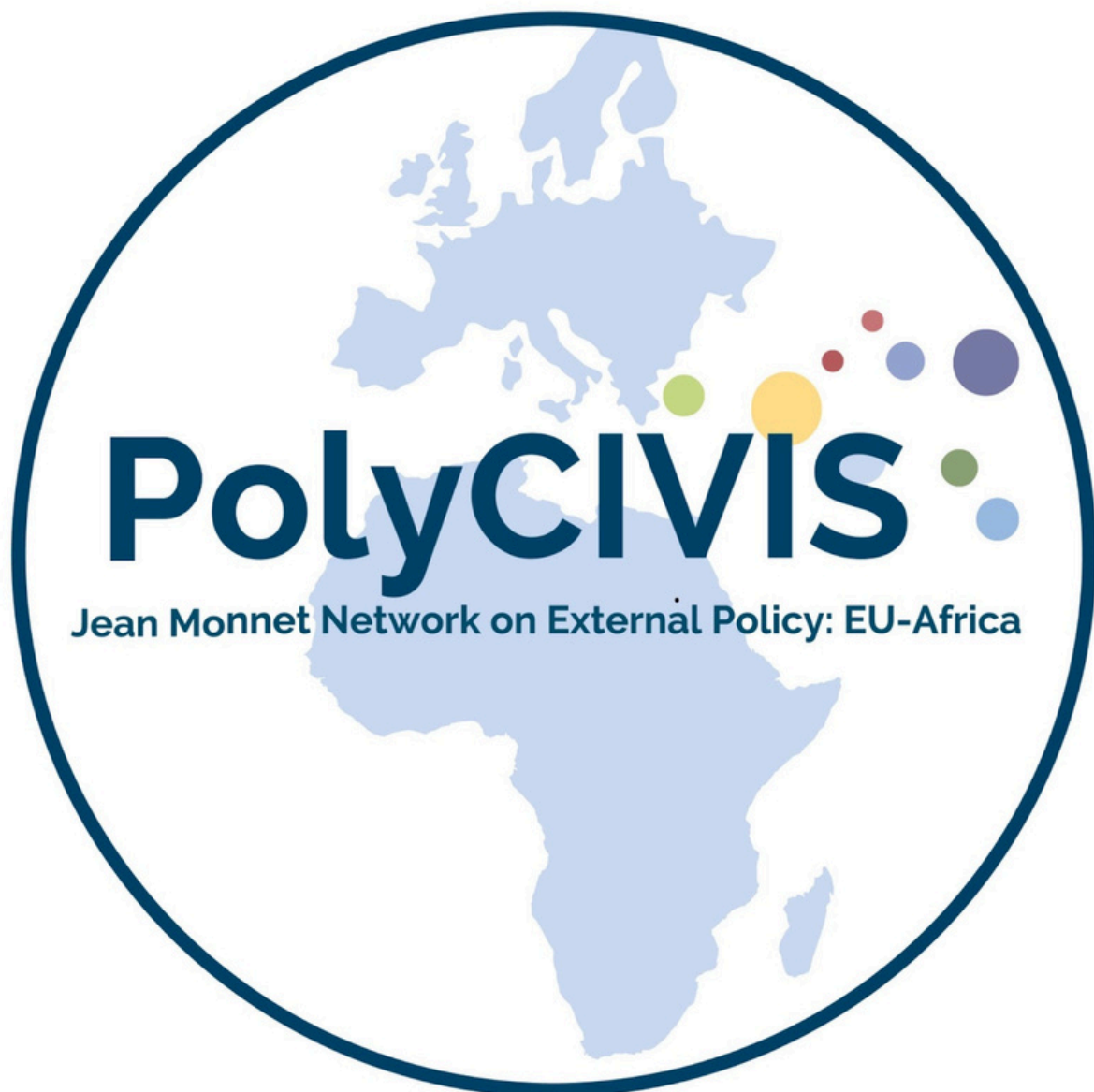


Understanding crises: bridging continents and modeling joint teaching programmes across Africa and Europe

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“We don't need to be too pessimistic. What we do need vigilance as we go forward” - Prof. Mucha Musemwa, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand

PolyCIVIS' involvement at CIVIS Days 2024 was not just about identifying problems but also about actively seeking sustainable, interdisciplinary, and inclusive solutions—a testament to the power of collaboration in the face of global challenges. This perspective serves as the foundation for all initiatives within PolyCIVIS.

At the heart of the 2024 CIVIS Days in Salzburg, PolyCIVIS took center stage, navigating the complexities of the polycrisis that Europe and Africa face. These interconnected crises, from climate change to geopolitical instability, were at the forefront of a riveting public discussion titled "Facing the Polycrisis in Europe and Africa." The conversation underscored the urgency of fostering sustainable solutions, not only to address these crises but also to understand the multifaceted challenges they present.

The panelists, including distinguished academics Prof. Ahmadou Aly Mbaye, Prof. Mucha Musemwa, Prof. Edward Bbaale and Prof. Gudrun Zagel, delved into the intricate links between crises. For example, Professor Mbaye highlighted the alarming correlation between rising temperatures in Africa and increased conflict, stating that *“an increase of 1 degree in temperature is an increase of conflict by 4.5%”*. This connection between climate change and socio-political unrest, underscores the essence of polycrisis, revealing how interconnected crises intertwine across continents. As highlighted by Prof. Mucha Musemwa, *climate change is not just a single challenge but a catalyst that exacerbates political instability, food insecurity, and social inequality*, particularly in regions like South Africa.

PolyCIVIS, through its unique collaborative and cross disciplinary approach, seeks to bridge these continental perspectives, offering a platform for exchanging knowledge and solutions that work

across different regions and through times. Indeed, several speakers emphasized the historical dimension of the polycrisis concept and reinforced the idea that understanding the interconnected crises of today—whether they are environmental, social, or political—requires a deeper recognition of their historical origins and the legacies of past global dynamics.

The concept of "*polysolutions*" emerged as a critical takeaway from the panel—solutions that account for the interconnected nature of crises. Professor Zagel's thought-provoking analysis emphasized the importance of historical context, advocating for applying African crisis-management strategies in Europe and vice versa. In addition, her insights underscored the important role universities play in fostering dialogue and co-creating strategies that tackle these complex, overlapping issues in a holistic and inclusive manner. A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the importance of engaging the younger generation, not only by inviting young people and university students to share their views but also ensuring that higher education acts as a platform to equip them with the knowledge, resources, and tools necessary to address multiple crises. One way to ensure that education is effective in this regard, is by incorporating innovative pedagogies into the learning process.

In the closing remarks, Prof. Anne Weyembergh, PolyCIVIS Project Manager and moderator of the public session, shifted the narrative from one of doom to one of optimism, noting that while acknowledging these challenges is vital, the collaboration and dialogue between Europe and Africa hold the potential for meaningful change. Prof. Weyembergh reminded the audience that, to overcome the polycrisis, *"we need interdisciplinary solutions, inclusive policies, and, most importantly, the voices of the younger generation to drive the future forward"*.



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