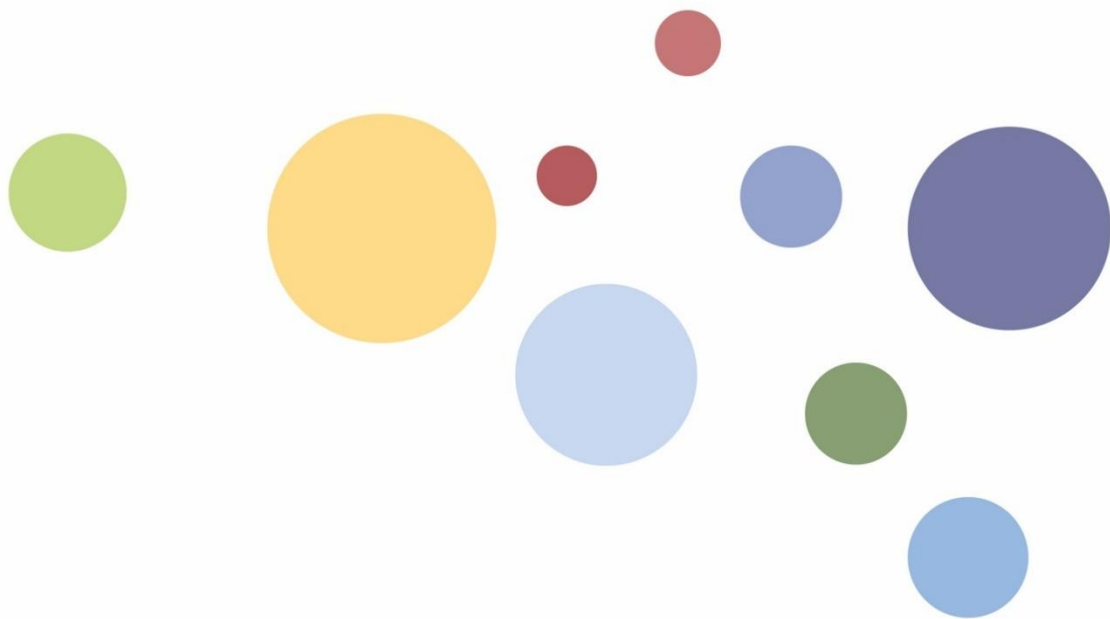


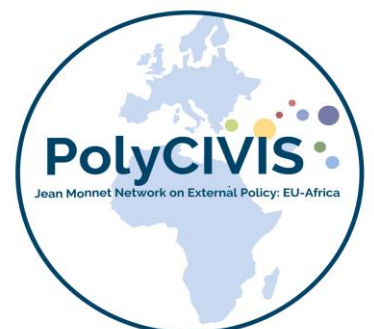
The Role of Law in Tackling Polycrises

| *Policy brief no.20*
September 2026

By Gudrun Zagel



The Polycrisis & Policy Brief Series is coordinated by the *Policy Work Package* which is part of [the PolyCIVIS Network](#). The PolyCIVIS Policy brief series aims to provide actionable insights and recommendations for policymakers, at various levels and to foster dialogue among stakeholders on effective policy responses.



Executive Summary

The world is experiencing a polycrisis in which climate change, food insecurity, public health shocks, migration pressures, and geopolitical disruptions interact to produce cascading social and economic effects. Law is an essential instrument for addressing polycrises because it can organize and steer social behaviour through generally applicable rules. However, existing national and international legal frameworks can also contribute to crises when they fail to prevent and manage them effectively. This policy brief explains how polycrisis challenges legal systems by exploring the relationship between polycrisis and law, and recommends substantive and procedural measures to lawmakers, policymakers, and NGOs to create robust and effective national and international legal frameworks that are responsive to polycrises.

Key messages

- ❖ **Law can both address and generate polycrisis risks.** Legal rules shape behaviour, institutions and resource allocation; measures designed to address one crisis can unintentionally intensify risks in connected areas. Polycrisis-responsive law-making must therefore consider cross-sector and transboundary effects from the outset.
- ❖ **Siloed and reactive law-making is not equipped for interconnected crises.** Policymakers need systematic polycrisis analysis that identifies feedback loops, distributional effects, human-rights implications and possible spill overs across climate, health, food, energy, security and migration.
- ❖ **Prevention requires legal commitments that outlast short-term political cycles.** Governments should establish long-term prevention strategies, informed by independent expertise and anchored in legal and institutional arrangements that enable early action.
- ❖ **Resilient legal systems learn, adapt and remain accountable.** Laws should guide implementation and emergency action through cross-sector safeguards, while regular and post-crisis evaluation should identify unintended effects and feed directly into legal reform regular and post-crisis reviews.

(1) Introduction

Contemporary polycrises — the wars in Ukraine and Iran, the energy crisis, COVID-19, and cascading climate impacts — interact in ways that are qualitatively new. Unlike prior global crises (the Spanish flu, the world wars), which could largely be addressed in isolation, today's polycrises produce worldwide compound impacts far exceeding the sum of their parts.¹

Linkage between law and polycrisis

Law occupies a dual role in polycrisis dynamics: it both facilitates crisis emergence and provides an instrument for addressing it. An example is the climate crisis, which was driven by twentieth-century fossil-fuel legislation.² Since 1992, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has provided a legal mechanism for states to cooperate on climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives.³ Yet, the energy crisis arising from the wars in Ukraine and Iran has prompted states to adopt legislation to reactivate coal power plants and subsidise fossil fuels, threatening climate gains. Rules designed to address one crisis can thus entrench or accelerate another — a circular dynamic that only a polycrisis-responsive legal framework can interrupt.

Legal frameworks are ill-equipped to tackle polycrisis scenarios, as decision-makers lack both a conceptual understanding of cascading crisis dynamics and theoretical knowledge of law's functions and limits. Legal frameworks organise societies and balance competing interests; yet they simultaneously shape the conditions in which crises and polycrises emerge. Developing legal frameworks capable of tackling and preventing polycrises requires foundational understandings of the causal mechanisms and cascading interactions driving polycrises, the organizing and steering functions of legal

systems, and law's structural limitations as a crisis-management instrument.

This policy brief addresses this knowledge gap by providing a framework for law-polycrisis analysis and recommending substantive and procedural reforms. Specifically, it helps policymakers, NGOs, and legal practitioners to: (1) understand law-polycrisis linkages; (2) identify law's functions in crisis situations; (3) recognise law's limits in polycrisis management; and (4) determine the essential elements of a polycrisis-responsive legal framework.

(2) Background and Analysis

2.1. Polycrisis and the law

Polycrisis describes interconnected crises that unfold simultaneously and mutually reinforce one another across borders.⁴ An example is the climate crisis which has also fuelled cascading food, water, and housing crises and displacement, disproportionately in the Global South.⁵ Similarly, the wars in Ukraine and Iran have triggered an energy crisis with global economic, food security, and political-stability consequences⁶ — collectively generating conditions worse than any single crisis in isolation.⁷

Law and polycrisis are closely intertwined: law both shapes crisis dynamics and provides tools to address them. It organizes social life, influences behaviour through public policy, and can either reduce or intensify systemic risk. For instance, the conclusion of Free Trade Agreements to boost economic development between trading partners through trade and investment liberalization often not only creates export opportunities which boosts economic activities, jobs and income, but can also come at the cost of increased competition affecting local companies and resulting job losses,

¹ Lawrence et al., 2024; Schreiber et al., 2025

² Hailes, 2026; van Asselt et al., 2018

³ Mayer, 2018

⁴ Schreiber et al., 2025; Helleiner, 2024; Dinan et al., 2024; Lawrence et al., 2024

⁵ Kemp et al., 2022

⁶ Auer et al., 2025; PRIF, 2026

⁷ Tooze, 2022

environmental degradation due to increased exploitation of natural resources or agricultural production, adverse climate impacts, or poor labor conditions and child labor.⁸ Likewise, the climate crisis was enabled in part by industrial and energy laws to promote fossil-fuel use. (Hailes, 2026, pp. 3-4; van Asselt et al., 2018, pp. 141-146). Efforts to reverse such systems can create new risks, including energy instability, transport disruption, and wider economic spillovers (Seshadri et al., 2025). In this sense, law and crisis dynamics form a circular relationship that can only be broken through better law and better lawmaking.

Earlier global crises such as wars, the Spanish flu, industrial air pollution could mostly be addressed without accounting for cascading effects on other systems. By contrast, contemporary polycrisis situations occurring in our globalized world, are characterised by causal entanglement and inter-systemic feedback loops that are difficult to anticipate and manage. (Lawrence et al., 2024, pp. 6-8). For instance, the 2026 war in Iran has given rise to a worldwide energy crisis, disrupting global trade and resulting shortages of food and other essential supplies, fueling a global economic slowdown. Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a worldwide economic crisis with supply-chain breakdowns, medical and food security challenges, mental and social problems, increasing poverty and rising public debt leaving the vulnerable behind.⁹ Taken together, these examples underscore the imperative of adaptive national policies and international cooperation in addressing the transboundary character of polycrises.

Law's core functions — organising and steering societal behaviour and creating crisis preparedness¹⁰ — were designed for linear crisis scenarios in which interests can be

balanced one at a time. Adapting legal frameworks requires both a clear understanding of polycrisis complexity and of the role, functions and limits of law to address crisis situations — prerequisites for the substantive rules and procedural mechanisms proposed in this brief.

2.2. The role and functions of law in addressing the polycrisis

Essentially, law is a system of rules that organises societal behaviour, balances competing interests, and maintains order.¹¹ This organisational and steering capacity makes law well-suited to addressing the polycrisis and establishing mechanisms for international cooperation — on the condition that it is attuned to the systemic aspects of polycrisis dynamics.

(i) Legal frameworks for addressing the polycrisis

Polycrisis situations are primarily governed by national law. It is up to states to create legal frameworks that enable a stable and sustainable society. Part of it comprises rules for managing and preventing (poly)crisis situations.¹² However, given the global causes and the entangled and cascading effects of the polycrisis, international cooperation and coordination among states is key, as individual states are often unprepared or simply unable to act in isolation. A telling example is the climate crisis, which requires international cooperation to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and develop adaptation solutions to cope with extreme weather, food and water crises, and global climate migration.¹³ Likewise, the COVID-19 situation required multilateral cooperation to address the health, economic, and societal challenges.¹⁴

Comparative legal research should examine how issues such as climate-adaptation,

⁸ Kutscher et al., 2025; Food & Water Watch & Council of Canadians, 2008; Adeyemi, 2025

⁹ Davies & Hobson, 2023

¹⁰ Raz, 1979; Bandopadhyay, 2017

¹¹ Hart, 2012; Raz, 1979; Habermas, 1996; Luhmann, 2004

¹² Bandopadhyay, 2017

¹³ UNFCCC; Meyer, 2018

¹⁴ Davies & Hobson, 2023

public-health and emergency-law frameworks allocate preventive duties, coordinate institutions, require risk assessment and provide for oversight and review. It should identify which legal designs enable governments to address systemic and cascading risks across different constitutional, administrative-capacity and regional-cooperation contexts.¹⁵

(ii) Law's functions in addressing and preventing crises

A key task of law is to ensure a safe and sustainable society by preparing for potential crises.¹⁶ A crisis – such as war, economic collapse, pandemics, or political insurrection – creates situations that usually challenge the stability and boundaries of legal orders.¹⁷ In line with the organizational function of law¹⁸, legal orders typically contain emergency rules and mechanisms to manage and control crisis situations. These emergency powers permit states to act rapidly to protect the life and health of the population. There is, however, also the chance that the rules prove inadequate to respond to crisis situations that may have unexpected impacts on other areas of society or reinforce a crisis situation.¹⁹ Moreover, crisis rules typically give decision-makers and authorities exceptional powers that may be abused. Overall, crisis situations challenge legal systems and reveal whether a legal order is adequate and robust or rather contributes to the emergence of the crisis due to its inadequacy.²⁰ These challenges existing in linear crisis situations, are multiplied in polycrisis situations.

Prevention is law's most under-utilised crisis function. Law's steering capacity – exemplified by electric-vehicle incentives or renewable-energy subsidies to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions and prevent the climate crisis – should in principle enable early action in crises on the horizon.²¹ In practice, however, immediate emergencies typically require the attention of lawmakers and policy makers and displace preventive legislation. For instance, the climate crisis and demographic ageing²² have been recognised for decades yet remain inadequately addressed – increasing the risk that crises on the horizon compound into polycrises.

2.3. The limits of law in addressing and preventing the polycrisis

Law is mainly a reactive instrument: Law is fundamentally reactive: legal rules respond to pressing situations that demand immediate action, while crises on the horizon – not yet constituting imminent danger – are deferred.²³ Maslow's hierarchy of needs offers an explanatory framework: physical and safety needs systematically crowd out longer-term considerations.²⁴ The result is that acute emergencies (COVID-19, wars, extreme-weather events) are met swiftly, while structural risks (climate change, demographic ageing) receive piecemeal, politically contingent responses that foreclose strategic solutions.

Law requires compromise to achieve consensus: Consensus-driven lawmaking – whether in national parliaments or international negotiations – frequently produces vague or weak rules. The climate-law record illustrates this trade-off: the 1992 UNFCCC and the 2015 Paris Agreement achieved rapid acceptance precisely because their obligations were vague and flexible, while the 1997 Kyoto Protocol's binding emission targets took eight years to enter into force and never secured US

¹⁵ International IDEA, 2021; Chan et al., 2026

¹⁶ Bandopadhyay, 2017; Zwitter, 2012

¹⁷ Agamben, 2005; Head, 2017

¹⁸ Raz, 1979

¹⁹ Dinan et al., 2024; Davies & Hobson, 2023.

²⁰ Zwitter, 2012; Gross & Ni Aoláin, 2006

²¹ Raz, 1979; Luhmann, 2004; Sunstein, 1990

²² UNDESA, 2023; Lokshin, 2025

²³ Saliternik & Shlomo Agon, 2024

²⁴ Maslow, 1943; Adepoju, 2025

ratification.²⁵ Legal instruments thus reflect politically acceptable compromises, but not necessarily what crisis situations actually require.

Lawmaking takes time: There is a structural tension between the speed crises reaction demands and the deliberative time good lawmaking requires. Imminent threats to life, health, or the environment require immediate legal action – a challenge, if existing legal frameworks are not adequate to handle the crisis, or the crisis has unexpected aspects. An example is the COVID-19 crisis that produced legal measures with unintended effects and raised legal controversies that are not resolved until today.²⁶ Well-balanced legislation, by contrast, requires years of negotiation and impact assessment to finally reach consensus on the adoption of a new rule. This structural tension is particularly acute for addressing crises on the horizon, where prevention windows exist but political urgency is absent.

2.4. Designing Polycrisis-Responsive Legal Frameworks

Despite its limitations, law remains a suitable instrument for addressing and preventing polycrisis because it can implement generally applicable policies that guide social behaviour. Since effective lawmaking takes time, prevention must be prioritised. Lawmaking grounded in predefined constitutional and international legal frameworks is more likely to produce balanced rules, thereby improving legitimacy, acceptance, and compliance. To bridge the gap between polycrisis prevention and the realities of lawmaking and implementation, national and international legal frameworks must be adapted to create a more robust response.

Accordingly, lawmakers, policymakers, NGOs, and other relevant actors should work together to implement the following legal and non-legal measures:

(3) Recommendations

Policy recommendations	
(i) Enhancing the understanding of polycrisis (polycrisis thinking)	Effective polycrisis governance begins with a shared understanding of polycrisis and its cascading effects across policy areas. Political actors should therefore engage experts in risk management, systems thinking, and interdisciplinary analysis. This knowledge must inform national and international law-making and implementation processes to prevent adverse effects of legal frameworks on other crisis situations.
(ii) Developing a tailored model for polycrisis analysis	Integrating polycrisis thinking into lawmaking requires a tailored framework for polycrisis analysis that can be applied consistently in legislative and implementation processes. The Cascade Institute's Polycrisis Analysis Guide can serve as a useful model for risk assessment methodology.²⁷ Additional relevant substantive criteria can be drawn from the UN Sustainable Development Goals for comprehensive targets across interconnected domains²⁸ and international human rights instruments – including the UDHR and 1966 UN Covenants²⁹ as internationally recognised baseline standards.

²⁵ Mayer, 2018
²⁶ Dinan et al., 2024
²⁷ Lawrence et al., 2024a
²⁸ United Nations, 2015; Huck, 2022
²⁹ Bantekas & Oette, 2024

	State institutions, NGOs, and scientific experts should contribute to the development of nationally adapted models, as well as to treaty negotiations at the international level.
(iii) Creating a long-term polycrisis prevention strategy	Because polycrisis management is difficult, prevention must be a long-term priority. States should develop prevention strategies that are insulated from electoral cycles and complement polycrisis analysis frameworks. The current strain on the EU Green Deal, intensified by the energy crisis linked to the wars in Ukraine and Iran, illustrates how short-term responses can undermine longer-term goals. Developing such a strategy requires sustained cooperation among political actors, lawmakers, NGOs, and independent experts.
(iv) Implementing the polycrisis analysis and prevention strategy in the lawmaking process (polycrisis mainstreaming)	National, EU, and international law-making processes already allow ministries and stakeholders to participate (European Commission, 2026), but they often assess interests in a linear way that overlooks the systemic feedback loops that generate polycrises. Polycrisis analysis and prevention strategies must therefore be formally integrated into law-making processes, with mandatory systematic input from systems-thinking experts and relevant NGOs. As a secondary benefit, integrating systemic analysis at an early stage of the law-making process can streamline deliberation and speed up the law-making process.
(v) Resilience in law-implementation and enforcement (polycrisis resilience)	Legal frameworks must include clauses that guide implementation and enforcement so that competing interests can be balanced without creating new crisis risks. International human rights law offers adaptable templates — proportionality and exception clauses such as Art 19(3) CCPR or Art 10(2) ECHR. However, relevant clauses should be adapted to capture polycrisis feedback loops across policy domains, not merely sector-specific restrictions.
(vi) Evaluating the robustness of the legal framework (polycrisis monitoring)	Robust legal frameworks require regular review, especially after crises, to assess how emergency systems perform and whether prevention measures are effective. Existing models, such as EU Trade and Sustainable Development chapters³⁰ and UN human rights review mechanisms³¹, offer useful templates. Inputs from relevant NGOs participating in these processes should also inform these reviews. Findings should directly inform the adaptation of national and international legal frameworks.
(vii) Additional non-legal measures (polycrisis awareness)	Because lawmaking and implementation are slow, non-legal measures are also needed to build awareness of polycrisis risks. Governments and NGOs should

³⁰ European Commission, 2026a; Velut et al., 2022; Romanchyshyna, 2023; Kommerskollegium, 2016

³¹ Bantekas & Oette, 2024; McCall-Smith, 2023

	develop communication strategies and educational programmes that help the public and decision-makers recognise emerging risks and support preventive action. Public understanding of polycrisis risks would strengthen compliance, improve policy legitimacy and support, and reduce dependence on short-term electoral cycles.
--	---

(4) Conclusion

Law and law-making are essential for managing the polycrisis because they create general rules that balance competing societal interests. However, existing national and international legal frameworks are not yet equipped to prevent or address polycrises effectively. To unlock law's full potential, these frameworks and processes must be adapted to support polycrisis thinking beyond short electoral cycles. This requires three key reforms: (i) developing

tailored polycrisis analysis frameworks and long-term prevention strategies in law-making processes; (ii) ensuring that legal frameworks are well-balanced and attentive to diverse societal interests potentially affected by polycrisis scenarios; and (iii) instituting regular reviews of legal frameworks, including after emergencies, to keep them responsive to evolving risks. These reforms should be supported by public engagement, interdisciplinary expertise, civil-society and local knowledge.

References

- Adepoju, O. E. (2025). Not “woke” agendas, basic human rights: Reimagining disaster preparedness through Maslow’s lens. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 13, 1533117. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1533117>.
- Adeyemi, S. (2025, November 24). ‘Inside Africa’s thrift boom: Top second-hand clothing importers and the multi-million-dollar economy,’ *Business Insider Africa*. <https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/inside-africas-thrift-boom-top-second-hand-clothing-importers-and-the-multi-million/70pf4kq>.
- Agamben, G. (2005). *State of exception*. University of Chicago Press.
- Auer, C., Bosello, F., Bressan, G., Delpiazzi, E., Monasterolo, I., Otto, C., Parrado, R., & Reyer, C. P. (2025). Cascading socio-economic and financial impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war differ across sectors and regions. *Communications Earth & Environment*, 6(1), 194. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-025-02119-1>.
- Bantekas, I., & Oette, L. (2024). *International human rights law and practice* (4th ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009306409>.
- Bandopadhyay, S. (2017). Laws and crisis management. In Farazmand, A. (Eds.) *Global encyclopedia of public administration, public policy, and governance*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31816-5_851-2.
- Chan, T., Mehryar, S., Podesta, M., & Beswick, A. (2026). *Climate change adaptation laws and policies: A review of trends, gaps and opportunities in 35 countries*. Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/publication/climate-change-adaptation-laws-and-policies-a-review-of-trends-gaps-and-opportunities-in-35-countries/>
- Davies, M., & Hobson, C. (2023). An embarrassment of changes: international relations and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 77 (2): pp. 150–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2022.2095614>.
- Dinan, S., Béland, D., & Howlett, M. (2024). How useful is the concept of polycrisis? Lessons from the development of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Policy Design and Practice*, 7(4), 430–441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2024.2316409>.
- European Commission. (2026). *Law-making process*. https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process_en (accessed 28 May 2026).
- European Commission. (2026a). *Sustainability impact assessments*. https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/analysis-and-assessment/sustainability-impact-assessments_en (accessed 28 May 2026).
- Food & Water Watch & Council of Canadians (2008). *Lake Naivasha. Withering under the Assault of International Flower Vendors*. <https://ftp.itc.nl/pub/naivasha/PolicyNGO/FWW2008.pdf>.
- Gross, O., & Ní Aoláin, F. (2006). *Law in times of crisis: Emergency powers in theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1996). *Between facts and norms*. MIT Press Cambridge.
- Hailes, O. (2026) Fossil fuel abolition in international law and arbitration, *Journal of Environmental Law*, eqaf039, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jel/eqaf039>.

-
- Hart, H. L. A. (2012). *The concept of law* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Head, M. (2017). *Emergency powers in theory and practice* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Helleiner, E. (2024). Economic globalization's polycrisis. *International Studies Quarterly*, 68(2), 1–9. W. (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sgae024>.
- Huck, W. (2022). *Sustainable Development Goals. Article-by-article commentary*. Beck, Hart, Nomos.
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). (2021). *Emergency law responses and the COVID-19 pandemic*. International IDEA.
- Kemp, L. et al. (2022). Climate endgame: Exploring catastrophic climate change scenarios. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* 119 (34), 1–9, e2108146119, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2108146119>.
- Kommerskollegium. (2016). *Implementation and enforcement of sustainable development provisions in free trade agreements – options for improvement*. National Board of Trade. <https://www.kommerskollegium.se/globalassets/publikationer/rapporter/2016-och-alldre/publ-implementation-and-enforcement-of-sustainability-provisions-in-ftas.pdf>.
- Kutscher, L., Notté, E., & Anderson, K. (2025). Child Labour in the Extraction of Strategic Raw Materials: A Review and Risk Assessment. *Green Health*, 1(2), 14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/greenhealth1020014>.
- Lawrence, M., Homer-Dixon, T., Janzwood, S., Rockström, Renn, O. & Donges, J. F. (2024). Global polycrisis: the causal mechanisms of crisis entanglement. *Global Sustainability* 7, e6, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2024.1>.
- Lawrence, M., Shipman, M. & Homer-Dixon, T. (2024a). Introduction to polycrisis analysis. A Guide to the Cascade Institute's Approach. <https://cascadeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Introduction-to-Polycrisis-Analysis-Guide-October-2024.pdf>.
- Lokshin, M. (2025, February 19). *Global aging: The (almost) invisible crisis shaping our future*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/global-aging-the-almost-invisible-crisis-shaping-our-future/>.
- Luhmann, N. (2004). *Law as a social system*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198262381.001.0001>.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370–396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>.
- Mayer, B. (2018). *The international law of climate change*. Cambridge University Press.
- McCall-Smith, K. (2023). Good, better, best? Human rights impact assessment in crisis lawmaking. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 27(9–10), 1326–1344. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2022.2057955>.
- Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF). (2026). Blog post, *The Strait of Hormuz in perspective: One global chokepoint, multiple vulnerabilities, compounded effects*, <https://blog.prif.org/2026/05/06/the-strait-of-hormuz-in-perspective-one-global-chokepoint-multiple-vulnerabilities-compounded-effects/>.
- Raz, J. (1979). The functions of law. In J. Raz (Eds.), *The authority of law: Essays on law and morality*, pp. 162–179. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198253457.003.0009>.
- Romanchyshyna, I. (2023). Tackling labour rights and environmental protection through Trade and Sustainable Development chapters: The European approach. In M. Egan et al. (Eds.), *Contestation*

and polarization in global governance, pp. 343–356. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800887268.00027>.

Saliternik, M., & Shlomo Agon, S. (2024). Proactive international law. *University of California Law Journal* 75(3), 661–712.

Schreiber, D., Hassnaoui, S., Weyembergh, A., Brosig, M., Kanifa, K., & Tibaingana, A. (2025). *From polycrisis to polysolutions: An interdisciplinary approach to complex global challenges*. PolyCIVIS Polycrisis and Policy Brief Series.

Seshadri, A. K., Gambhir, A. & Debnath, R. (2025). Navigating systemic risks in low-carbon energy transitions in an era of global polycrisis. *Global Sustainability* 8, e6, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2025.7>.

Sunstein, C. R. (1990). *After the rights revolution*. Harvard University Press.

Tooze, A. (2022), "Welcome to the world of the polycrisis", *Financial Times*, 28 October 2022.

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). (2023). *World social report 2023: Leaving no one behind in an ageing world*. United Nations. <https://desapublications.un.org/publications/world-social-report-2023-leaving-no-one-behind-ageing-world>.

Van Asselt, H., Merril, L. & Kulovesi, K. (2018). Fossil fuel subsidies and the global climate regime. In Skovgaard, J. & van Asselt, H. (Eds.). *The politics of fossil fuel subsidies and their reform*, 140–155. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108241946.010>.

Velut, J., Baeza-Breinbauer, D., Bruijne, D., Garnizova, M., Jones, E., Kolben, M., Oules, K., Rouas, L., Pittet, T., & Zamparutti, F. (2022). *Comparative analysis of Trade and Sustainable Development provisions in free trade agreements*. London School of Economics. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/business/consulting/assets/documents/TSD-Final-Report-Feb-2022.pdf>.

Zwitter, A. J. (2012). The rule of law in times of crisis: A legal theory on the state of emergency in the liberal democracy. *Archives for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy*, 98(1), 95–111.

Author

Dr. Gudrun Zagel, Assistant Professor, Department of Public, International and European Union Law, University of Salzburg, Austria

Acknowledgements



The CIVIS network is a consortium of 21 universities in Europe and Africa. In October 2023, it initiated the PolyCIVIS project, focused on confronting the Polycrisis in Europe and Africa through Research, Policy and Education. The PolyCIVIS project is funded by the European Union, Erasmus+.

Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.