

What can we learn about crisis management in the polycrisis era? Insights from Finland's international public policy network

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine organizational crisis management from a polycrisis perspective. We examine how network governance reacts to multiple simultaneous crises and the lessons learned from these reactions.

Design/methodology/approach – Our study analyzes interview data gathered from the Team Finland network, which includes public and non-governmental organizations. The network primarily offers internationalization services for small- and medium-sized enterprises. The data were analyzed to better understand the complexities associated with polycrisis and their connection to organizational and regional resilience.

Findings – We analyzed 28 interviews and public sector administrative documents from which three main categories emerged: (1) awareness of crises, (2) adaptation by reorganization and (3) rethinking regions. The ability to collaboratively navigate the complexities of the polycrisis era was particularly highlighted.

Originality/value – This study combines themes of polycrisis, network governance and resilience, prioritizing the development of regionally sensitive crisis-response frameworks that integrate public and private sector resources and treat multiple crises as a unified challenge.

Keywords Polycrisis, Crisis management, Public organization, Network governance, Resilience, Region, Team Finland

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Managing and navigating crises plays a pivotal role in public organizations (Bundy *et al.*, 2017). Crises are inconceivable, unscheduled and unexpected events that make accurate planning challenging (Williams *et al.*, 2017). Since the 2007 financial crisis, societal disruptions have become more severe, emerged more quickly and overlapped (Homer-Dixon *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the plurality and interconnectedness of crises at various regional levels in the current era is called a polycrisis (Henig and Knight, 2023; Lawrence *et al.*, 2024).

Polycrisis has attracted interest from researchers in various fields (Søgaard Jørgensen *et al.*, 2024) and increased attention on public sector practices. Studies have considered institutional design variants in a cross-country comparative context (Kuhlmann *et al.*, 2024). This article's contribution to public policy network management is consistent with the trust-based

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partnerships and dynamic networks characteristic of new public governance thinking (Osborne, 2010). It also addresses specific tasks and services that can be produced through cross-sector activities based on the collaborative governance model (Ansell and Gash, 2008). However, few studies combine the themes of polycrisis, network governance and resilience. This study examines the impact of polycrisis on the resilience of organizations acting in various regions of global markets from a crisis management perspective.

Public sector actors play a critical role in mitigating the negative impacts of crises within their administrative territories (Mizrahi *et al.*, 2021). In Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), public governance is characterized by a stakeholder model (Byrkjeflot *et al.*, 2001), which shapes how Nordic public organizations respond to crises and collaborate with private and non-governmental organizational (NGO) actors. As members of the European Union (EU), the European Economic and Monetary Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Finland's economic stability and business performance are linked to international trade and geopolitical security. Successive crises, including the 2008 financial crisis, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and recent energy price shocks, have significantly impacted Finland's economic landscape (CFI, 2024).

The conceptualization of crisis management as a networked activity of public policy is based on empirical findings from the Team Finland network, which demonstrate what can be learned about crisis management in the polycrisis era when networks must constantly evolve. Public organizations must plan networks that operate in contexts in which crises are normal. Factors that influence organizations' and regions' ability to adapt to their operational environments and modify their practices and services must be understood. The neo-endogenous approach is a method of comprehending the interaction between organizations, regions and networks, integrating the assessment of regional resources and roles with the significance of transregional governance networks (Olmedo and O'Shaughnessy, 2022; Ward *et al.*, 2005).

Team Finland is a public policy network comprising more than 80 teams worldwide. It was established in 2013 to coordinate public sector efforts to support Finnish companies' internationalization. The network includes public sector actors and publicly funded organizations to boost exports, facilitate small- and medium-sized enterprises' global expansion and attract international investment (Team Finland, 2019). Similar network initiatives, such as Team Sweden and Team France Export, have been developed across Europe.

Here, we examine the Team Finland network as a case study to understand how network governance reacts to multiple simultaneous crises. The network is an exemplary case because of its multi-level structure, integration of public and private actors and significant role in supporting internationalization efforts. Our qualitative research focused on interviewees' experiences of crisis management and organizational and regional resilience. This study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. How has awareness of disruptions, organizational reactions, and evaluations of regional approaches evolved within the Team Finland network as a result of the crises?

RQ2. How have these changes altered crisis management?

First, this paper examines the theoretical foundations of polycrises and resilience, highlighting their implications for network governance and regional development. Second, the research methodology is presented and a qualitative case study approach and data collection through thematic interviews with key actors in the Team Finland network are outlined. Third, the findings illustrate how network actors navigate crises through cross-sectoral collaboration, organizational adaptation and regional rethinking. Finally, the discussion and conclusions synthesize these insights, offer actionable recommendations for policymakers and identify future research directions to enhance resilience in public policy networks.

The polycrisis era

International trade has faced multiple crises over the last decade, challenging the public sector's ability to support the private sector and NGO actors in their fields in Nordic countries. The 2008 financial crisis is considered a starting point for the current crisis-ridden era. Crises take many forms, such as hybrid threats and armed conflicts. To name just a few: The 2014 annexation of Crimea, Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, the Israel–Palestinian conflict, Brexit, the rise of populist Trumpism, the 2018 trade war, the COVID-19 pandemic and deepening inflation and energy crises. These crises have overlapped, impacting businesses and locations in different ways.

Crises are not new; however, they are occurring more quickly, are more severe, and overlap more than they did even two decades ago (Homer-Dixon *et al.*, 2022). The plurality of these crises is why the polycrisis era is so named (e.g. Helleiner, 2024; Henig and Knight, 2023; Lawrence *et al.*, 2024). Polycrisis can emerge at local and global levels (Lawrence *et al.*, 2024). Helleiner (2024) distinguishes the four types of polycrises: spatial (where they occur and how widely), temporality (e.g. from months to decades), generality (e.g. whether part or all of society is affected) and the full traits (e.g. different combinations of the first three).

Lawrence *et al.* (2024) suggest that crises tend to be linked and may worsen each another with deeper and more complex negative impacts than if they occurred separately. They describe these interlinkages using the domino effect concept but emphasize that crises can emerge and be linked through multi-directional feedback loops. For example, economic turmoil causes anti-globalist economic behavior and vice versa. An energy crisis can be caused by many interlinked crises (disengagement from fossil fuels, the war in Ukraine, supply chain disruption, hybrid influencing) and vice versa, impacting economic turmoil and anti-globalist economic behavior.

Societies are facing a process revealing “global systemic risks” (Homer-Dixon *et al.*, 2022, p. 3) and the related weaknesses of old structures and systemic interlinkages of societies, and various forms of economic protectionism have emerged. However, enhancing thematic governance networks to cope with interregional challenges is necessary. Helleiner (2024) demonstrated protectionism through economic hazards linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and weaponization. The pandemic revealed the vulnerabilities of unreliable global markets, especially the problems of global supply chains and high dependence on foreign decision-making. To reduce such vulnerabilities, interest in more protected supply chains and greater self-reliance has increased. According to Helleiner (2024, p. 5), “National resilience, rather than global efficiency, became a popular new mantra in ways that reinforced the criticisms of economic globalization.” In addition, weaponization reveals the rethinking of economic ties and narrowing them to partners who could be considered allies (*ibid.*).

Resilience in crisis management

Reactions to polycrisis, such as attempts to reduce vulnerabilities related to global interconnectedness, offer different adaptation methods. Linking and overlapping crises are continually testing the resilience of global economic systems and related actors. We understand the improvement or maintenance of resilience as a way to survive or succeed in navigating a polycrisis, thus, as a fundamental part of crisis management. In this study, we followed the conceptual framing of Morsut *et al.* (2021) for crises, which links vulnerability, resilience, risk awareness and social capital. Vulnerability refers to sensitivity to shocks and disruptions (Martin, 2012). Systemic vulnerability is not a new phenomenon, but it has increased due to intensified global (economic) integration, openness and interdependence, which expose regions and localities to the harm of episodic crises (Hudson, 2010; Pike *et al.*, 2010). Recent crises have been so severe that societies have begun rethinking global interlinkages and taking action to reduce their systemic vulnerabilities.

Actions to reduce vulnerability are part of wider adaptation processes, where resilience is observed as the (re)actions of actors and the reorganization of structures (Dawley *et al.*, 2010;

Martin and Sunley, 2015). Martin (2012) and Martin and Sunley (2020) defined situations that reflected variegated forms of resilience. *Engineering resilience* refers to situations in which a system and/or actors can resist or bounce back from shocks to their previous state. The *ability to absorb* shocks can include minor changes but does not require changing core functions or structures. *Bounce forward* is a step that ideally leads to positive adaptability by reorganization while maintaining core performance. Finally, *fundamental transformation* is required when the scale or nature of the shock is so severe that recovery requires structures and functions to be reconfigured.

Forms of resilience are related to key actors' abilities to react to and shape processes to obtain certain outcomes (Halonen, 2019; Kurikka and Grillitsch, 2021). The focus is on how key actors interpret and translate changing conditions and how these interpretations shape their reactions to change (Bristow and Healy, 2014). Furthermore, key actors do not act in isolation; they are connected to multiple forms of social capital through their networks. According to Morsut *et al.* (2021), social capital built on norms, values, trust and networks facilitates the ability to improve resilience and crisis management. Social learning and knowledge creation processes are part of improving resilience, as they can be utilized to better confront unknown and unexpected future situations (Hudson, 2010). They usually require institutional arrangements to gather knowledge, analyze the world's trends, anticipate crises and improve actors' ability to proact (rather than react) to changes (Evenhuis, 2020). In this study, we consider proactiveness as the basis for risk awareness, which refers to a collective acknowledgment of variegated risks that potentially leads to preventing or mitigating the negative impact of risks (Morsut *et al.*, 2021).

Organizational and regional resilience are interdependent phenomena. Regional resilience builds on active organizations and the quality of their collaboration, which supports the participating organizations' resilience. Regional preparedness to face crises varies depending on their administrative culture, infrastructure, natural resources and economic structures (Lebel *et al.*, 2006). Higher trust in government and denser personal networks predict better and faster recovery (Sadri *et al.*, 2018). Thus, regions can be understood as actors in administrative or legislative tasks and the bodies that conduct them. However, a region's ability to respond effectively during crises depends on the capacity of local institutions to establish network governance for the region and the willingness of organizations and individuals to collaborate within and beyond their own expertise and regions (Gong and Hassink, 2017; Luoto *et al.*, 2021).

The neo-endogenous approach recognizes the centrality of local conditions in terms of production, services, human resources and governance. In addition, local assets or liabilities are sufficiently recognized through transregional or translocal dynamics, where multi-level public policy networks function as effective structures that transcend organizational silos, administrative boundaries and territorial borders (Gong *et al.*, 2022; Olmedo and O'Shaughnessy, 2022'; Ward *et al.*, 2005).

Therefore, a better perspective is formed when situational pictures are created simultaneously from different positions. Crisis awareness emerges from combining transregional knowledge resources, while actor flexibility and collaboration lead to network service reorganization. In the geostrategic approach, knowledge of regional conditions improves our understanding of how trends and crises change the roles of the regions and organizations operating within them. The effects of crises are often global; however, their impacts are rarely consistent across regions. From a resilience perspective, it is beneficial to operate in many different regions but with varying intensities, actions and schedules depending on the situation (Bishop, 2019; Conz and Magnani, 2020). The concept of "reaching out" illustrates how a region or actor can connect to an economic center by utilizing networks as tools or bridges to create new opportunities related to various themes, regions and actors (Allen, 2016; Ek and Rauhut, 2023).

From a governance standpoint, regions are developed on multifaceted networks that combine expertise, where public, private and NGOs benefit while promoting shared goals.

This is required to anticipate the complex processes and unpredictable dynamics of change (Sørensen *et al.*, 2021). Navigating disruptions requires coordinating different interests, geographical levels and expertise. Network governance and collaboration¹ are considered answers to these challenges (Davies, 2011; Wang and Ran, 2021).

Research methods

This case study explores how the Team Finland network navigates crises and the changes induced within the network as part of broader crisis management efforts. This study elucidates the challenges polycrisis presents to businesses, stakeholders and regions (Thomas, 2011). Following Homer-Dixon *et al.* (2022), we focus on changes in cultural-institutional systems, including legitimacy, governance and international order, and in systems of production and related organizations. These changes are critical elements in broader crisis management processes. Therefore, this study situates the responses from the Team Finland network within a dynamic and systemic understanding of polycrisis challenges.

Qualitative data were collected through thematic interviews with core and partner actors. Interviewees were considered development contributors and mediators (Halonen, 2022; van Lente *et al.*, 2020); they were selected because they possess specialized professional expertise and in-depth knowledge of international trade, regional development and network management. This expertise accords meaning and credibility to statements on export-promoting networks. Furthermore, their “in-betweenness” across diverse levels, arenas and actors positions them as essential connectors for various stakeholders.

Interviewees were selected to ensure that all organizations represented in Team Finland’s steering group were included. We focused on these organizations because of the steering group’s central role in coordinating the network’s operations and overseeing the implementation of its strategic goals. Within these organizations, a snowball sampling method (Patton, 2002) was employed to identify individuals with relevant expertise. The interview process continued until data saturation was reached.

In summary, 28 interviews were conducted with representatives from public organizations (the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Business Finland, Finnvera and ELY the Centers for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment) and NGOs representing the interests of the business community (EK the Confederation of Finnish Industries, the Central Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Finnish Enterprises). The interviews encompassed the international, national and subnational levels of the Team Finland network’s operations. The presence of organizations in the case study varies across regional levels, meaning that some organizations may operate at multiple regional levels, while others may not.

Interviews were conducted between December 2022 and December 2023 in Finnish. The interviewees were pseudonymized as R1–R28. Thematic interviews focused on three themes: governance and networks, disruptions and transitions and regional perspectives. To form these themes, we utilized secondary sources and materials, including available documents and prior research on relevant public sectors. This ensured that the themes were grounded in existing knowledge and contextualized within a broad research framework (Cresswell and Poth, 2018).

To ensure the validity of the findings, the analysis was based on authentic excerpts from interviews. By incorporating direct quotes, we highlight key insights from individuals working in various organizational and regional contexts. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of experts’ perspectives, emphasizing the significance of their experiences in the network’s governance and crisis management processes (Cresswell, 2013).

The data were coded using NVivo14 software according to our analytical framework, which was grounded in theory and supplemented with perspectives emerging from the data. The analytical framework (Table 1) was built on theoretical insights from the literature and aligned with the study’s research questions and objectives, ensuring the qualitative reliability

Table 1. Coding framework to analyze crisis management and resilience in the Team Finland network

Theory	Theory-based subcode	Main code -> main category of crisis management
Polycrisis Homer-Dixon et al. (2022)	Awareness of multiple crises	Awareness of crisis
Resilience Morsut et al. (2021)	Learning and knowledge creation	Awareness of crisis
Resilience Morsut et al. (2021)	Social capital: norms and trust	Awareness of crisis
Resilience Martin and Sunley (2015)	Forms of resilience: bouncing forward	Adaptation by reorganization
Network governance Sørensen et al. (2021)	Coordination and resource sharing	Adaptation by reorganization
Regional resilience Hudson (2010)	Reducing vulnerability	Rethinking regions
Neo-endogenous development Ward et al. (2005)	Transregional dynamics in governance	Rethinking regions
Neo-endogenous development Allen (2016)	Reaching out: connecting to economic centers	Rethinking regions
Resilience Evenhuis (2020)	Institutional arrangements for anticipation	Awareness of crisis
Resilience Morsut et al. (2021)	Proactiveness as basis for risk awareness	Awareness of crisis

Source(s): Authors' own work

of the research. The first column presents the theoretical foundation, linking the coding process to relevant academic concepts.

The second identifies theory-based subcodes that capture the dimensions derived from the literature and bridge the theoretical and empirical findings. The third column categorizes these subcodes into overarching thematic main codes that structure the qualitative analysis. This approach ensures a consistent and theoretically grounded coding process, enhancing the understanding of crisis management and resilience within the Team Finland network.

In the last phase of the analysis, we created a broader picture of crisis management by identifying the following types of crises: geopolitical, biological, geological, economic and political. Based on empirical data, three main categories of crisis management were constructed, which are interrelated and partly overlapping: (1) awareness of crises, (2) adaptation by reorganization and (3) rethinking regions (see [Figure 1](#)). The first two categories

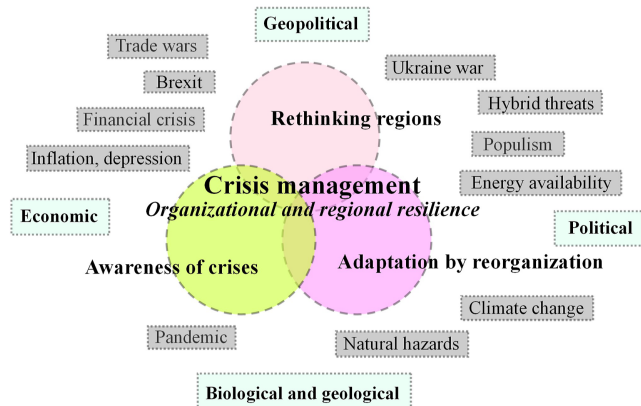


Figure 1. Broader picture of crisis management in the polycrisis era: analytical framework for organizational and regional resilience. Source: Authors' own work

of the analytical framework, awareness of crises and adaptation by reorganization, lay the groundwork for the third category, rethinking regions. A change in crisis awareness leads to changes in the network's structure and operation, which affects how activities and services continue in different regions and how regions are repositioned within the world trade system. However, the evolution of a crisis is nonlinear. The ever-changing landscape of crises means that crises occur simultaneously at different stages of development, shaping the network's activities.

Findings

Awareness of crises

The data highlighted the core tasks of network actors as part of crisis awareness, e.g. a diplomat's ability to act in natural disasters, political turbulence, pandemics, wartime or other crises or challenges. In the dataset, perspectives on the necessity of network governance and its sustained and effort-demanding long-term construction are highlighted.

R7: Network collaboration cannot simply be something that just succeed, because when people know each other, they trust each other. It must consistently succeed within a system where collaboration functions smoothly in any situation.

The findings reveal the importance of Team Finland's emphasis on cross-sectoral collaboration in fostering resilience and adaptability during crises. This demonstrates that collaborative frameworks can support rapid adaptation in a polycrisis context.

The following quotation encapsulates the linking logic of multiple crises and the transition from reactive to proactive strategies in crisis management through organizational learning. This indicates the evolving complexity of the world economy and systemic interconnectedness, highlighting the need for better preparedness and vulnerability management.

R11: I think proactivity is important for us now; reactivity has perhaps been left behind in recent years. The situation in the operational environment has changed. Companies that could only react—that time is perhaps over. In that sense, it was a stroke of luck that the COVID-19 pandemic occurred before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and we saw the vulnerability that Finland and the EU region had built into their production chains during the era of globalization. This became partly visible during the prolonged pandemic due to shortages of medical equipment. Now proactive preparedness is more the rule than the exception.

Many interviewees underscored the importance of continuous monitoring and weak signal literacy in the contemporary business environment, which is characterized by unpredictability and rapid change. Organizations must be able to identify subtle indicators of potential disruptions and effectively disseminate relevant information in a format that facilitates actionable insights into businesses and public policy. A proactive approach to information management and decision-making is required. Interviewees identified the need for a broader utilization of assessments to expand perspectives and consider external factors when assessing opportunities and making decisions. This anticipation enhances the awareness of future possibilities and enables more strategic planning and action, which is an underutilized network resource. Furthermore, broader collaboration and information sharing are important.

R2: The network has vast opportunities, but they are not fully recognized. However, we still tend to view things through our own organization's lens. The network's role is seen as less significant than that of our own organization. We should actively engage more in networks and with broader representation.

Risk management is associated with awareness and anticipation. The experiences of Finnish enterprises facing risk management challenges during Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 highlight this symbiotic relationship. The subsequent imposition of retaliatory sanctions partly contributed to fostering adaptation to the forthcoming challenges. These measures enabled

diversifying dependencies on certain sectors in Russia, such as food exports and elevated enterprises' global situational awareness.

The interviewees suggested that companies develop crisis scenarios when operating in geopolitical risk regions with unpredictable market dynamics, including an uncertain outlook.

R17: Regarding China, all companies must develop various strategic crisis scenarios. Large companies certainly do so; they have many resources at their disposal for this purpose. The unpredictable outlook of the Chinese market poses such a significant challenge that despite Finnish companies exiting Russia, there has not been a notable trend of them pivoting toward China as an alternative.

Despite challenges and uncertainties posed by the Chinese market, large companies continue to maintain their presence there. The Chinese market is vast and enticing. For example, much of the activity in the machinery sector now happens in China: "This market is where the action is happening" (R17). This underscores the importance of reevaluating multiple regional strategies and adapting to the unique characteristics of each market. Overall, the need for continuous monitoring, proficiency in identifying weak signals and the integration of risk management into strategic planning underline the imperative for organizations to adapt and thrive in an increasingly uncertain world.

Adaptation by reorganization

The evolving global landscape, characterized by geopolitical disruptions and shocks, has prompted significant transformation in the operational environments of Finnish companies with international reach. Recent geopolitical upheavals, such as the Russian war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic and the repercussions of Brexit, have induced service-related responses in the Team Finland network, particularly as a form of demand for new services and service modifications.

Adaptation by reorganization, based on the functionality of network governance, is vital and evidenced by our analysis. Interviewees highlighted the benefits of network governance during crises, which helps them reorganize operations. Strong network governance facilitates innovative service development, enhanced coordination of activities and familiarity with partners' services and processes, thereby enabling more efficient and comprehensive crisis-response strategies.

Furthermore, disseminating up-to-date information is a central function of network collaboration during crises, as it supports correct and timely reorganization. The data highlight various perspectives on the significance of information and the experience of open knowledge sharing within the network. Examples of the collected data include the implementation of a shared customer relationship management system among public actors, mobility restrictions, service offerings, briefings on sanctions and the rapid transition of operations to virtual and online platforms.

Organizations have exhibited wide-ranging responses and adaptations to multiple crises that reflect both challenges and opportunities. These responses encompass activities ranging from introducing novel services to modifying existing service delivery mechanisms. The dynamic nature of organizational responses reflects the need for flexibility and agility when navigating crisis scenarios. Furthermore, organizations have leveraged network governance to bolster their resilience. They do so by tapping into shared resources, expertise and support systems to effectively manage the complexities inherent in crisis environments.

R22: In disruptive situations such as COVID-19, business operations become difficult or impossible. I think the network succeeded well in this regard; quick response measures were implemented within a week and, for example, [. . .] increased loan approvals ten-fold per day. The network responded effectively.

Service adaptations and resource allocations reflect a more transformative approach, namely, reconfiguring functions in addition to structures. Service-related responses based on data

encompass service modifications through which a network can address evolving circumstances. These modifications include new services and instruments such as advisory and financial services, revamped service packages and terms, expedited service processes and foreign support services, such as mapping out new market areas. Examples include service modifications, such as COVID-19 financing for businesses, Brexit support measures for companies operating in the UK and theme- and sector-specific funding, such as the Food from Finland program. This program was a response to the cessation of food exports to Russia, part of counter-sanctions that were imposed after Crimea was annexed in 2014; the program improved Finnish food companies' access to international markets. These examples are responses to a polycrisis that follows short- and long-term crises, concerns some parts or the whole of society and emerges at different regional levels. All should face relatively short reaction times.

The altered geopolitical landscape following the Ukrainian conflict necessitated novel service requirements, notably in the realm of advisory services for companies navigating sanctions. The Finnish–Russian Chamber of Commerce swiftly began offering advisory services in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Organizational changes were observed alongside service adaptations. In 2021, the Finnish–Russian Chamber of Commerce transitioned to EastCham, focusing on Ukraine, Central Asia and the South Caucasus region. This transformation highlights an adaptive response, organizational agility and realignment to current geopolitical dynamics, leading to significant changes among the stakeholders and actors involved.

R12: We continued to support EastCham, which changed when Russia attacked Ukraine over a year ago and all export promotion efforts to Russia ceased. At that point, the Finnish–Russian Chamber of Commerce became a sanctions advisory service focusing on assisting companies affected by the Russian situation. Meanwhile, the Team Finland network sought alternative markets.

The exploration and mapping of new and alternative market territories are intertwined with resource allocation, as evidenced by the strengthening of expert resources within Team Finland's foreign network. The aim is to systematically survey and assess market opportunities while considering the location of personnel.

A crisis may also entail a withdrawal from geographical territories, as exemplified by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

R17: Well, half of the Finnish community left [from China], who were basically employees of companies.

Policy actions and long-term developmental strategies are critical elements of crisis-response activities. The significance of national policy actions during crises is highlighted below. This quote elucidates the response of foreign networks to a novel market disruption.

R9: In the foreign network, the basic role in this new market upheaval was quickly identified. This encompasses changes in the operating environment, government subsidies, and legislative restrictions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in its traditional role, took on the task of addressing trade policy issues and related reporting, while Business Finland complemented this with its own identification of market opportunities and analysis of changes in value and production chains. A trade policy negotiating group was established, with Minister Skinnari serving as chair. It functioned effectively and strengthened Finland's preparedness and resilience stance. Furthermore, industry associations were involved and individual companies were partially utilized.

The establishment of a working group suggests a long-term strategy to strengthen resilience and preparedness, especially in Eastern Finland. By addressing the immediate impact of the crisis and planning for future challenges, the government implemented a developmental strategy to mitigate risks and promote stability in the eastern border regions.

Rethinking regions

The growing awareness of chain-like polycrisis and adaptation through reorganization underscores the significance of rethinking regions. This entails a heightened recognition of the imperative to expand perspectives and comprehension concerning global markets and the consequences of deglobalization. This shift is exemplified by the collaborative engagement now undertaken in endeavors to explore markets, which emphasizes the significance of a global market presence.

The data reveal that resources acquired toward the end of the pandemic were directed toward Southeast Asia and several European countries because of the EU's internal market. Despite movement restrictions during the pandemic, labor mobility within the EU remained feasible. This encouraged recognition of the value of broad partnerships in addressing various crises. Network governance-based crisis management helps acknowledge opportunities that extend beyond China and the USA; therefore, better use of the EU region should be considered.

Rethinking the role of global regions, related alliances and the relocation of company operations has led to several policy changes. Companies have sought to diversify their production and supply chains by, for example, relocating their operations from China to Singapore and broadening their scope in the Asian region. Similarly, companies that withdrew from Russia redirected their activities toward Eastern and Southeastern Europe. For example, Nokian Tyres, which ceased operations in Russia by 2023, is now establishing a production facility in the EU in Oradea, Romania. This strategic move enabled Nokian Tyres to rebuild its business foundation independently of Russia. This shift represents a tipping point that leads to transformative resilience through the establishment of the industry's first carbon-neutral factory, where the steam used in tire manufacturing is produced without fossil fuels (Nokian Tyres, 2022). The company has continued to expand the capacity of its plants in Finland and the USA to geographically diversify its production and further mitigate possible political and geopolitical risks.

Relocation to more stable business environments and the use of hubs exemplify a rethinking of regions. The role of network governance in disseminating information to partners is pivotal to understanding the changes in the polycrisis situation of Team Finland's foreign network. Annual regional policies were integrated into domestic regional corporate customer account plans. The objective is to establish a genuine "from regions to the world" approach and vice versa. The following quote demonstrates regional awareness and heightened sensitivity through the proactive response to Brexit in London.

R10: Brexit in London; as soon as Brexit occurred and before it came into effect, we had meetings. Weekly meetings were established, and we looked at where we stood, what each organization in the network should do, and how organizations in the network can prepare well—who does what—we then agreed on these responsibilities. We were very agile and well prepared as a whole network, not just within organizations.

Considering the challenges posed by Brexit and the Chinese market, innovation and creativity are paramount in uncertain times. Rethinking regions embraces a flexible mindset to navigate crises and capitalize on opportunities. Crises, often viewed negatively, can also serve as catalysts for renewal and development and provide new opportunities. Therefore, a proactive approach must be incorporated into regional strategies to recognize crises as potential drivers of growth through geographic segmentation.

Interviewees suggested that the Team Finland network should offer more comprehensive support to Finnish enterprises currently involved in global markets and emphasize the importance of nurturing international partnerships and initiatives aimed at innovation. This approach is crucial during crises. This involves gathering adequate information to understand the potential growth avenues. The following quote from a Team Finland partner indicates the need for heightened responsiveness and active engagement in identifying potential opportunities:

R27: We should gather information about what the possibilities could be. What roughly moves in each country [with Recovery Resilience Facility funding]? We should aim to maximize Finland's receipt, not just what is given for distribution, but how Finnish companies maximize that receipt through their own deals and projects in other countries. This was one instance where we felt we had to push forward and take a crucial role in the pilot stages.

Discussion

The analysis of resilience in crisis management within the Team Finland network identified three main categories: *awareness of crises*, *adaptation by reorganization* and *rethinking regions* (see Table 2). These categories can be applied to thematically similar cases, i.e. public policy networks seeking to construct strategies that anticipate changes, collaborative efforts to share expertise and territorial awareness to navigate the complexities of polycrisis.

The *awareness of crises* includes transitioning from a reactive to a *proactive approach to crisis* management, combined with lessons learned from previous crises, which allows organizations to better prepare for unforeseen events. Increased awareness of disruptions in the polycrisis era has led to more proactive approaches for identifying and anticipating various future scenarios, thereby reflecting a form of advancing resilience by [Evenhuis \(2020\)](#), [Hudson \(2010\)](#) and [Morsut et al. \(2021\)](#). This shift is also evident in the *necessity for strategic crisis scenarios* that acknowledge the unpredictable nature of geopolitical power dynamics and their impact on global markets ([Massey, 1993](#)). By applying a neo-endogenous regional development method, crises can be managed more effectively through local partnerships that provide place-based and tacit knowledge. This strategy optimizes the use of local resources and enhances regional competitiveness through network governance, as pointed out by [Olmedo and O'Shaughnessy \(2022\)](#).

Table 2. Crisis management in the polycrisis era

Main category of crisis management	Subcategory of crisis management	Description
Awareness of crises	Proactive approach to crises	Adopting a proactive approach to navigating crises and capitalizing on opportunities
	Necessity for strategic crisis scenarios	Recognizing the need for public organizations and companies to develop strategic crisis scenarios in unpredictable market dynamics
	Importance of information dissemination	Disseminating information within the network to understand changes in the operating environment
Adaptation by reorganization	Utilizing collaborative engagement	Engaging in collaborative efforts to explore global markets and opportunities
	Strategic resource allocation	Strengthening expertise resources and systematically assessing market opportunities
	Changes in companies' operations	Companies enhancing regional awareness and diversifying production and supply chains
Rethinking regions	Emphasis on comprehensive support	Aiming to offer comprehensive support for enterprises involved in global markets
	Increased territorial consciousness	Increased ability to recognize the importance of territorial consciousness adapted to a polycrisis world
	Focus on the EU and beyond	Allocating additional resources to Southeast Asia, the US, and European countries, for example, emphasizing the utilization of the EU market
	Enhanced regional policies and operational relocation	Enhancing alignment between domestic regional policies and foreign network plans, recognizing the need for flexibility and up-to-date strategies and potential relocation of companies' operations

Source(s): Authors' own work

Organizations can identify vulnerabilities and develop contingency plans by simulating various crisis scenarios. Furthermore, the data emphasize the *importance of information dissemination* across networks to maintain situational awareness. The ability to share relevant data and knowledge rapidly ensures that all stakeholders are informed and can make timely decisions. This improves the collective response to crises and supports coordinated efforts among the public, private and NGO sectors in network governance.

Adaptation through reorganization highlights the need for collaboration and within-network governance. First, by *utilizing collaborative engagement*, organizations can adapt internally, more effectively exploring new markets and opportunities. Further, *strategic resource allocation* fosters innovation and enhances the overall resilience of a network by pooling resources and expertise. However, research on Swedish municipalities' crisis management indicates that municipalities that participate in networks with fewer partners achieve better goal attainment (Nohrstedt, 2018). This suggests that strategic resource allocation emphasizing "quality over quantity" is crucial for adapting to crises. Strengthening expertise and systematically assessing market opportunities allow organizations to be more agile and responsive. This may require *changes in companies' operations*, such as diversifying production and supply chains and including potential relocation. This is another practical response to crises resulting from outdated global system structures (also Homer-Dixon *et al.*, 2022). Finally, *emphasis on comprehensive support*, offered for enterprises involved in global markets, was seen to improve the overall network's capacity to withstand and adapt to disruptions, benefiting the regions in which these organizations operate and supporting their resilience. Network-provided support is critical for helping enterprises navigate global markets by offering guidance, resources and insights to address the challenges faced during crises. The emphasis on support reflects a network's commitment to fostering resilience and sustained growth.

Rethinking regions includes various aspects that indicate the positionality of different regions in diverse situations related to an ongoing polycrisis. For example, *increased territorial consciousness* and adjusting policies help public organizations and companies reorganize their operations, for instance, to reduce systemic dependencies and increase flexibility. The increased territorial consciousness has relocated the *focus on the EU and beyond*, which has practically meant re-emphasizing the EU market and additional resources elsewhere.

Crisis management in the polycrisis era involves a change in the role regions play in the interdependent world trade system, in which increased territorial awareness is crucial for *enhanced regional policies and operational relocation*. Similar to Helleiner (2024), territorial awareness requires an understanding of the geographic, geopolitical and societal dimensions of crises and their economic, political and societal impacts. Recognizing these factors aids in the development of strategies that address regional policy variations during crises. Deepened territorial awareness and use of place-based knowledge allow for more targeted, region-specific responses. Aligning domestic and international policies ensures coherence and maximizes the effectiveness of resilience strategies. Finally, intensified regional policies integrate local initiatives with broader network goals to create a unified approach to crisis management.

Conclusions

In response to our research questions, the Team Finland network demonstrated increased awareness of disruptions by shifting from reactive to proactive crisis management, notably through scenario planning and enhanced information sharing. Organizational reactions have evolved through structural and strategic adjustments, such as collaborative engagement, resource reallocation and operational diversification. The evaluation of regional approaches has also deepened, with an increased emphasis on territorial awareness, alignment of regional and international strategies and more targeted engagement with global markets. Together,

these developments have altered crisis management by promoting anticipatory governance, stronger network-based coordination and adaptive regional strategies suitable for this complex polycrisis era.

Based on our findings, policymakers should prioritize the development of region-sensitive crisis-response frameworks that integrate public and private sector resources, addressing multiple crises as a unified challenge. A small country with limited resources such as Finland must build strong regional expertise across various geographic levels to ensure strategic precision. Enhancing collaboration allows Finnish companies to diversify their supply and production chains, penetrate emerging markets, and reduce their vulnerability to global disruptions. However, given these constraints, resources must be directed to where they will have the greatest impact, thus minimizing the risk of misallocation. This increases resilience in the face of international crises and fosters stronger ties between public and private sectors.

This study adds value through its application to the resilience and polycrisis frameworks. It offers practical insights into how public policy governance strategies can be adapted to improve regional and organizational preparedness. By emphasizing the integration of public, private and NGO sector resources, this study offers insights and practical considerations for practitioners aiming to strengthen resilience in crisis management during the polycrisis era.

Because Team Finland's network strategy was last updated in 2019, before major global disruptions occurred, it must be assessed whether incremental updates or comprehensive revisions are needed. Regular strategy reviews, particularly regarding resource allocation, enable more adaptive responses to an evolving crisis landscape. While the strategy may not define specific regional priorities, collaboration between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Business Finland can ensure that resource allocation is guided by key indicators, such as export volumes and market opportunities (Team Finland, 2019). A broader evaluation should also consider aligning the strategy with the changing geopolitical and economic contexts to maintain its relevance and effectiveness in future crises.

This study has some limitations. As a case study, the findings were specific to the Team Finland network and its unique purposes and practices. Although not fully generalizable, these findings offer valuable insights into crisis management strategies that can inform networks facing similar challenges in diverse contexts. By linking empirical data with established theoretical frameworks, this study enhances our understanding of effective crisis management practices. Furthermore, the case study provides insights into public-private network governance, offering practical considerations for decision-makers and practitioners addressing the challenges posed by polycrises (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2004).

Future studies should examine how the public sector, NGOs and businesses can contribute to societal resilience planning and crisis management. It would also be useful to study polycrisis and resilience from the perspective of comprehensive security. This study highlights new opportunities for collaboration and innovation, such as integrating private sector expertise with public sector objectives.

The analysis of Team Finland network's resilience in crisis management demonstrates the need for a multifaceted approach that fosters awareness, promotes willingness to learn and builds a foundation for continuously relevant information and knowledge. The organizational capacity for adaptation reflects the ability to change policies and operations as needed. Rethinking regions and their interdependencies is key to understanding the complexities of a polycrisis world, while the integration of strategic foresight, resource allocation and territorial policies emphasizes the importance of a holistic and adaptive strategy in building organizational and regional resilience.

Notes

1. There are many similarities between the concepts of network governance and collaborative governance. In this study, network governance in the context of policy networks is discussed as a method to organize public services more generally, whereas collaborative governance is examined in the context of implementing shared values, trust and goals within networks (Wang and Ran, 2021).

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