

CLAS Events – Easter Term 2026

Monday 01 June – 5:00 pm | Book presentation (in English)

Room S1, First Floor, Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, CB3 9DA, Cambridge, UK

Polycrisis. Environmental collapse, the rise of the far right, and competing narratives. A View from Latin America

A presentation based on the book “*Polycrisis. Cómo enfrentar el vaciamiento de las izquierdas y la expansión de las derechas autoritarias*”, Siglo XXI, 2025

Speaker: [Maristella Svampa](#) (Simón Bolívar Professor 2022)

About the book:

Note: The following is an informal translation provided for contextual purposes. It is not an official translation of the book or publisher’s text.

In the early 2000s, Latin America was the beacon of progressivism: the Pink Tide generated enthusiasm with policies of social inclusion, income redistribution and the expansion of rights. Almost as a spoilsport, even then Maristella Svampa acknowledged these achievements but identified signs of ideological exhaustion in verticalism and the absence of self-criticism, the commitment to an extractive economy at the expense of environmental sustainability, and the rhetoric of a welfare state that clashed with its inability to provide real responses to society.

Now, at a time when progressivism appears powerless in the face of the far right, or retreats and becomes even more moderate, this book offers a striking characterisation of the present, grounded in the certainty that there is no lost paradise to which we can return.

If the pandemic was an extraordinary crisis that exposed inequalities and gave rise to the illusion of “emerging better”, the post-pandemic period confronts us with a systemic polycrisis, which is not merely the sum of collapses (environmental, economic, political), but rather a new context and a shift in regime in which “the old no longer works”. The far right has understood this better than anyone and, while we are scandalised by their levels of cruelty, they implement strategies of political accumulation that we tend to dismiss as mere irrational excesses.

As the biologist Lynn Margulis argued, the evolution of life is not the result of competition, but of cooperation among organisms in an interdependent world. With a focus on Latin America and taking into account the global geopolitical landscape, Maristella Svampa traces and reconstructs experiences of collective organisation in which a counter-hegemonic project is taking shape. Without idealising them, she invites us to consider how these could be strengthened and scaled up, what their relationship with the state might be, and how to avoid the risk of an autonomy that ultimately serves neoliberalism.

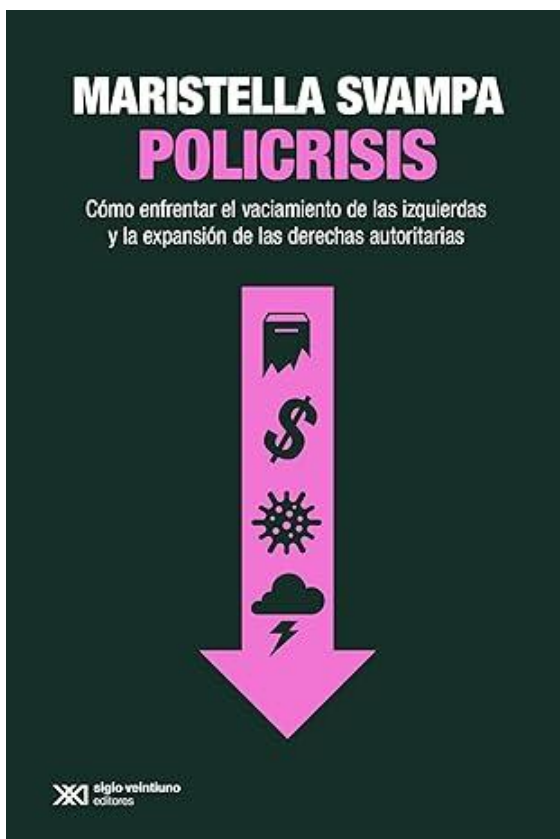
Polycrisis is a fundamental essay for beginning to weave, amid fragility, the threads of the future.

About the author:



Maristella Svampa holds a degree in Philosophy from the National University of Córdoba and a PhD in Sociology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. She is a senior researcher at CONICET, based at CeDInCI. She has received numerous distinctions, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Konex Platinum Award in Sociology, the National Prize for Sociological Essay for her book *Debates latinoamericanos. Indianismo, desarrollo, dependencia y populismo*, the Simón Bolívar Chair at the University of Cambridge, and the Forster Prize from the Humboldt Foundation.

She is a driving force behind the Ecosocial Pact of the South (a Latin American collective) and the Transitions Team (Argentina). Her most recent books include *Chacra 51. Regreso a la Patagonia en los tiempos del fracking*, *Las fronteras del neoextractivismo en América Latina*, and, with Enrique Viale, *El colapso ecológico ya llegó*, published by Siglo XXI Editores.



[*Policrisis: Cómo enfrentar el vaciamiento de las izquierdas y la expansión de las derechas autoritarias*](#)

Maristella Svampa (Author)