

Problem-based Learning at the uniMIND Symposium 2022

Part I: Introduction

Purpose statement:

The PBL session brings attendees into critical exchange on relevant topics in the fields of psychedelic-assisted healing, human development, and implementation. The goal of each discussion is to discuss positions, to develop preliminary answers to the leading questions, and to identify further questions in the process. All this will help participants understand current problems better and perhaps inspire them to start new projects. A secondary outcome is to learn from the upcoming generation about their hopes, expectations, and concerns for the future of psychedelic research, therapy, and culture.

Lastly, as a direct result of the session, each group will assign a Representative and create an opening statement for the subsequent panel discussion.

How to participate:

We can only offer participation in the PBL session to on-site attendees of the uniMIND Symposium at Maastricht University. You will find all the preparational materials further down in this document. Each participant can join only one group. Please use the material we prepared for you and try to make use of the recommended further readings/videos.

To register, please follow this Doodle link:

https://doodle.com/poll/g38nm4w9mpt578qd?utm_source=poll&utm_medium=link

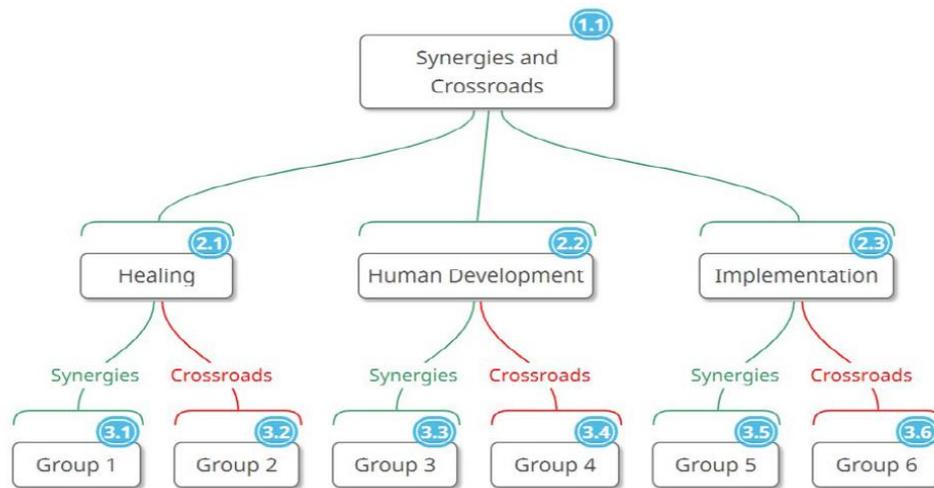
Introduction to the topic:

Integrating the psychedelic experience into contemporary society is a complex process that involves the harmonious involvement of many different players, from individuals to groups and legal entities. A question that arises in this process is, what are the responsibilities of each player involved?

In the context of psychedelic-assisted healing, the therapist has the critical role of co-navigating through the experience with the patient – an aspect to consider, for instance is what kind of guidance is appropriate? Similarly, when talking about psychedelics in the context of human development, the role of the community becomes clear in setting norms and boundaries for a healthy enculturation of such experiences. As enculturation takes place, psychedelics are also subject to increasing attention from various institutions such as NGOs and private companies who have the possibility to shape the implementation of these experiences in society. We invite you to explore this interplay of actors in a pragmatic manner, focusing on solutions to a selection of the pervasive problems in the psychedelic field.

PBL structure:

The fields have been prepared for a discussion of responsibilities in **healing, human development, and implementation**. For each of them, a problem statement is provided, containing critical considerations on each topic, together with a list of readings that aid in understanding the topic. The fields further divide into each one Synergies group that discusses potentials, and a Crossroads group to focus on risks and challenges in their specific topic.



Discussion roles:

Each group has a **Tutor** that facilitates the discussion, keeps time, and manages the assignments.

As a participant, you can either just contribute your critical input to the discussion or you could volunteer as the group Scribe or Representative.

Scribe: take notes of the discussion for further use. Summarize the most important findings, positions, and questions that arise. You will also write down the opening statement that your group representative shares at the beginning of the panel discussion.

Representative: the group representative will participate in the discussion panel following the PBL session. Together with your group, you will prepare an opening statement of about 30 seconds length for the panel. During the moderated panel, you will represent your own and your group's positions, respond spontaneously to the discussion and you may bring in questions as well.

Discussion facilitators (Tutors):

Group 1: Healing – Synergies	Szabolcs Mészáros
Group 2 Healing – Crossroads	Mia Del Motte
Group 3 Human Development – Synergies	Anna Gaidosch
Group 4 Human Development – Crossroads	Christoph Benner
Group 5 Implementation – Synergies	Marcel Braun
Group 6 Implementation – Crossroads	Lukas Basedow

Part II: Material

On the following pages, you will find all the materials we prepared for you. Please **focus only on the material for your registered group**. If you haven't yet registered, do so via the Doodle poll linked on page one.

There are three sets of materials in total, corresponding to the fields.

1. Please read your field's problem statement carefully.
2. Then look at the leading questions for your specific group (either synergies **or** crossroads). During the PBL session, these will be your central discussion questions.
3. Lastly, familiarize yourself with the further sources we provided. These are conference talks, interviews, and academic or journalistic articles on your topic.
4. Any existing knowledge outside of what we provided here is welcome in the discussion of course.



Healing: Groups 1 and 2

Topic: Therapeutic Models of Healing: What can Therapists do to Facilitate Healing in Psychedelic-assisted Therapy?

Problem Statement:

In recent years, clinical trials investigating psychedelics have shown promise towards their efficacy in the treatment of psychiatric disorders. The term “psychedelic therapy”, broadly defined, refers to the use of a high dose of psychedelic substance administered after intensive preparation with a therapist that will also be present during the psychedelic session, which is then followed by conversational therapy-style discussion to integrate the psychedelic experience.

Research suggests that the therapeutic benefit of psychedelics may result from the quality of subjective experience during the dosing session, as well as learning processes that take place after the experience. But why is the acute psychedelic experience of such great therapeutic value? What factors are predictive of long-term psychological change in psychedelic treatments? And what can therapists do to facilitate safe and effective healing processes in this setting?

As Matthew Johnson explains in his [talk at the INSIGHT-Conference 2021](#), current research on therapeutic models of healing in psychedelic settings suggests that common factors of psychotherapy may, in part, explain how healing takes place in psychedelic therapy. Common factors are features of psychotherapy that are predictive of treatment success, regardless of the specific school of thought or psychotherapy administered. It seems like most, if not all, of these factors are amplified in psychedelic therapy. Common factors include aspects like the development of new self-narratives, enhanced expectations of self-efficacy, and in particular the **therapeutic alliance** - the agreement between therapist and patient on the goals of the therapy, as well as the quality of the affective bond between the two. The therapeutic alliance it is recognized as one of the most important common factors predictive of treatment outcome in clinical psychology.

Additionally, [Wolff et al., 2020](#), explored synergies between psychedelic-therapy-specific factors and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and explained how, in psychedelic therapy, a shift from experiential avoidance towards acceptance may explain long lasting psychological

change. Avoidance is widely recognized as a central maintaining factor of dysfunctional behavior and cognition in a variety of mental disorders. Avoidance can take many different forms, all having in common that they provide short-term relief over aversive situations/stimuli but sustain long-term dysfunctional behavior patterns. Due to the unique learning conditions taking place in psychedelic therapy, avoidance-related beliefs may be relaxed and can be revised and used to promote acceptance. These acceptance-promoting learning processes are also targeted by conventional psychotherapeutic interventions, such as exposure with response prevention in CBT, during which patients are exposed to the avoided or feared stimulus and instructed to refrain from using avoidance techniques – resulting in habituation, cognitive restructuring, and other processes that help patients break out of dysfunctional patterns and promote more functional behavior. Evidence supports the efficacy of exposure interventions and thereby also the value of shifting from avoidance towards acceptance in healing processes. Based on this knowledge, we see a strong need for therapists to be involved in a way that facilitates a shift from avoidance towards acceptance.

We now know that the psychedelic compound, although at the center of the treatment process, cannot achieve its full potential without guidance – therapists represent a key role in screening and preparatory processes, as well as support during, and integration after the acute psychedelic experience. The crucial importance of the therapeutic involvement, as well as current insights into mechanisms behind the therapeutic benefit of psychedelics, leave us with the question: what are therapists' responsibilities to facilitate these processes? What interventions, attitudes or approaches are needed to make the treatment effective? And what are potential challenges or risks that need to be considered?

Due to the intense nature of the psychedelic experience, the therapist's role has also been described as “walking someone to hell and back” - they provide support and trust to ensure the patient will feel safe and become part of the patients' most profound emotional experiences of a lifetime. On the other hand, during psychedelic therapy, patients are in a unique state of enhanced suggestibility, which puts a lot of pressure on therapists not to influence patients with their own beliefs or even plant false memories, fall into the trap of metaphysical framing/“guru complex” or cross other kinds of clinical boundaries during the process. Usually, therapists are advised to take a non-directive approach during the dosing sessions to avoid such risks, but at times, gentle deviations from non-directive approaches could be beneficial to support the healing processes. For example, based on the account of a shift from avoidance to acceptance, it may be beneficial to provide some cues that encourage acceptance of the acute psychedelic effects when patients are showing a lot of avoidance during the dosing session. This balancing act can be described as a **metaphorical bus, in which the patient and therapist are travelling together. To ensure a safe and effective “bus ride” in psychedelic therapy, we now need to find out: when should therapists take the wheel, and when should they let the patient drive the bus?**

Having these risks in mind, metaphysical explorations are a key element of psychedelic experiences. Not only it is difficult for a therapist to avoid having a stance on these potential

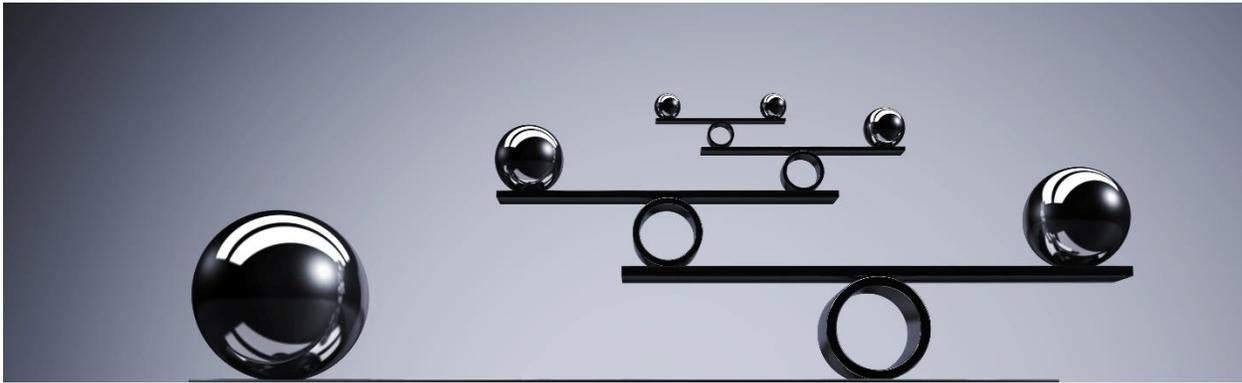
insights, it may also be unwise. In their paper, [Timmerman et al., \(2022\)](#) reveal that metaphysical beliefs may be subject to change following a psychedelic experience. Together with accumulating evidence that mystical-type experiences are a predictor of long-lasting therapeutic outcomes, it seems that certain changes in perceived truth can have a ripple effect on one's quality of life. This aspect is emphasized in ayahuasca retreats which draw heavily on neo-shamanic practices. Here, the visitors are presented with specific metaphysical framings for their experiences, as way to deal with both acute and chronic experiences. For example, negative experiences may be attributed to demonic or corrupting influences, and the participant is encouraged to engage in a relationship with supernatural, protective forces in their daily lives. While it is easy, from a Western point of view, to dismiss the veracity of such framework, it nonetheless provides a way to visualize problems and externalize the source of distress, which can have significant therapeutic value.

Considering approaches and specific examples from different frameworks of healing, it becomes apparent that the guide has an important responsibility in choosing how much to intervene and in which ways. We invite you to discuss these matters through the lens of the synergies and crossroads present throughout the problem statement, by focusing on the following questions:

Synergies (Groups 1)	Crossroads (Group 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are mediators of positive therapeutic outcomes (e.g., set, setting, therapeutic practices, traits, ...)? • What level of therapist involvement or directivity is ideal for facilitating beneficial change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it dangerous to assume that psychedelic therapy constitutes an exception to already established clinical and ethical norms in psychotherapy? • What difficulties could arise in terms of metaphysical framing in psychedelic therapy?

Recommended reading:

1. Prof. Dr. Matthew Johnson at INSIGHT 2021. *Psychedelics, Psychotherapy, and Pitfalls*. Find the recording in this [shared OneDrive folder](#).
2. Michelle Baker Jones for the MIND-Foundation Blog. [Walking Each other Home](#).
3. Wolff, M., et al. (2020). [Learning to Let Go: A Cognitive-Behavioral Model of How Psychedelic Therapy Promotes Acceptance](#). (Apart from abstract and conclusion for the general idea, please make sure to read the section “**A Cognitive Behavioral model of how psychedelic-assisted therapy promotes acceptance**” as well as “**Direct Implications of the Model for Clinical Practice**”)
4. Nayak, S. & Johnson, M. W. (2020). *Psychedelics and Psychotherapy*. Find the PDF in this [shared OneDrive Folder](#).
5. Timmermann, C., et al. (2022). [Towards psychedelic apprenticeship: Developing a gentle touch for the mediation and validation of psychedelic-induced insights \[...\]](#)



Human Development: Groups 3 and 4

Topic: Making Psychedelic Experience an Instrument of Human Development.

Problem statement:

The human development approach, as defined by the United Nations, is about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. Focused on improving people's well-being, opportunities and choices, this approach also ties into the topic of psychedelic use and culture. The aim of this PBL assignment will be to identify and assess which factors make the psychedelic experience instrumental to human development.

To understand the potential psychedelic experiences might bear in this regard, it may be useful keep in mind the various examples of how psychedelic experiences shaped previous societies. From the religious use in the context of shamanic traditions and mystery cults, over the use as tools for subversion and consciousness expansion in the hippie era, to the contemporary use as treatments for mental disorders, the ways in which psychedelics can be woven into society and culture are plentiful. These different practices have largely reflected the values and ideals of the groups using them, within their historical context. When creating contemporary frameworks for mind-altering practices, we will have to be conscious of the values and ideals that guide us in this process to discern which practices to keep, and which ones to avoid. One concept that has been proposed in this respect is called 'Bewusstseinskultur'.

The term 'Bewusstseinskultur' was coined by the German philosopher and neuroscientist Thomas Metzinger. It translates to 'culture of consciousness' and holds in its core the assumption that some states of consciousness are more valuable than others. According to this framework, the aim of communities should be to critically assess which states of consciousness can be valuable, regardless of their origin, and cultivate these states in a sustainable manner.

Herein, the connection with psychedelics becomes apparent. Psychedelic experiences provide a broad range of states of consciousness, both in terms of acute altered states and consequent long-term states. Bewusstseinskultur can be used as a practical philosophy to

assess these various states in the societal context, cultivate the valuable states help enculturate the psychedelic experience with human development goals in mind. The main scope of this discussion group is to reflect on how this can be done in practice.

Discussions about the perceived authority of different cultural implementations of psychedelics have historically shown to spark disagreements. Bewusstseinskultur may provide a remedy for this by directing our focus to finding the practices most suitable to achieve a desired state of consciousness, in a bottom-up manner. This puts the responsibility of realizing and cultivating desired states in the hands of the community, rather than a governing body.

But which states of consciousness are the ones we value and want to cultivate? Metzinger proposes that a good state of consciousness should: 1) minimize suffering, 2) have epistemic value¹, and 3) increase the probability for the occurrence of more valuable states. Bearing these characteristics in mind, we can try to assess to which extent the states of consciousness induced by psychedelics fit into Bewusstseinskultur. This is no easy task due to the highly versatile nature of the psychedelic experience. Acutely, such an experience can range from horrifying to ecstatic, based on many factors. Moreover, preliminary evidence shows that in the long-term, psychedelics may alter not only mood, but also potentially alter metaphysical beliefs or strengthen political inclinations. These changes may influence the kinds of conscious experiences one can have, in ways that fit well with the goal of human development, but also potentially against it.

For some it may be easier to see the potentials in the enculturation of psychedelics than the dangers. Psychedelic research provides promising evidence for psychedelics as facilitators of beneficial psychological change. At the same time, psychedelics may seem to facilitate feelings of nature-relatedness and feelings of interconnectedness, all in line with what good states might be. Many of the same hopes were seen clearly in counterculture of the 60s. However, chasing this desired state of consciousness came with unintended consequences: many of the proponents fell prey to escapist tendencies, and whereas the altered state seemed highly desirable for the individual, it increasingly failed to meet the criteria at the community level.

To conclude, it seems that the enculturation of psychedelics comes with significant potentials and challenges. Through the framework of Bewusstseinskultur, communities can have tools to create shape norms in a critical way, that emphasizes personal responsibility – both towards oneself, and towards the group. We invite you to discuss these matters through the lens of the synergies and crossroads present throughout the problem statement, by focusing on the following questions:

¹ Simply put, a state with epistemic value enables us to gain more knowledge, to learn about more aspects of ourselves and our environment. This state may be reached by having conversations, reading or listening to information, or through direct experience of certain valuable states.

Synergies (Group 3)	Crossroads (Group 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can psychedelic experience be integrated into society in a way that promotes human development? • Which aspects of psychedelic experience can lead to greater well-being and human development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the biggest challenges in the enculturation of psychedelic experience? • Which factors can prevent people from being able to distinguish meaningful from detrimental states?

Recommended reading:

1. Dr. Henrik Jungaberle at INSIGHT 2021, Making Integration a Science-based Concept - Therapy, Counselling and Self-development' (in [shared OneDrive folder](#))
2. Patrick Wentorp on the MIND Blog: [How can Bewusstseinskultur help us deal with the human condition?](#)
3. Eric Lonergan on the MIND Blog: [Psychedelics: Politically Pluripotent](#)
4. Dr. Brian Pace on psymposia: [Jake Angeli: The Psychedelic Guru Who Stormed the Capitol](#)
5. Lyons & Carhart-Harris (2018), [Increased nature relatedness and decreased authoritarian political views after psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression](#)
6. Timmermann et al. (2021), [Psychedelics alter metaphysical beliefs](#)



Implementation: Groups 5 and 6

Topic: The Drivers of Psychedelic Implementation: Building Business and Infrastructure

Problem statement:

With existing evidence for the medical potential of psychedelics advancing, it seems that a critical point in the discussion on the course of implementation could soon be reached. To successfully bring psychedelics into mental health and beyond, new regulations, infrastructure, and discourse are needed. But how can potentials and risks be carefully weighed? Who are suitable drivers in regulatory changes? Which institutions and legal entities will create a better tomorrow with psychedelics in medical contexts and in personal and societal development?

The path to implementing psychedelics is complex, ranging from drug development and clinical trials, across development of best practices, the training of therapists, public education, harm reduction, and the creation of clinics and health centers. And this list on only concerns the medical implementation. Soon the discussion on self-development retreat centers and other non-medical uses of psychedelics could become relevant, which adds yet more complexity with new potentials and challenges.

One central factor to progress in the modern world is inevitably money. Since the beginning of the proclaimed Psychedelic Renaissance, we have seen several approaches to raising funds for psychedelic implementation. One example comes from non-profit entities such as universities and NGOs, which are funded by government grants and private donations. Academic institutions may provide reliable data that is not influenced by economic interests, yet the crossing from academia into society rests in other actors' hands.

Many NGOs operate for charity, by providing access to education and guidance free of charge. On the other hand, however, the progress from such institutions is often slow and relies on external funds. Some NGOs seek to counteract bottlenecks by combining their forces with for-profit sister companies. For example, the MIND Foundation is supported by the OVID Clinics, and MAPS by MAPS Public Benefit Corporation.

How Does a Public Benefit Corporation Compare to Other Corporations?

Non-Profit Corporation	Public Benefit Corporation	Traditional Corporation
Tax Exempt Status	Pay Taxes	Pay Taxes
Operate for Charity	Operate for Profit	Operate for Profit
Does not profit as an organization	Spends profits on a specific benefit	Spends profits any way desired
Not obligated to be transparent with progress	Obligated to be transparent with progress	Does not operate specifically for a benefit or charity
No shareholders or stocks	Shareholders and Stocks*	Shareholders and Stocks

From: <https://mapspublicbenefit.com/our-mission/>

Another approach comes from the newly emerging psychedelic industry, where for-profit businesses invest in research and development while collecting revenue from patents and stakeholders. This approach allows for raising large funds for research and clinical trials in parallel, which significantly shortens the time required for implementation. Nevertheless, patenting novel psychedelic derivatives or therapy methods can be seen as controversial, because it creates competition and exclusivity instead of open access and benefits stakeholders instead of patients. To counteract that notion, some companies dedicate parts of their revenue to philanthropy and the support of non-profit players. For example, recently, ATAI Life Sciences, the largest biopharmaceutical company involved in psychedelic research, launched ATAI Impact, which aims to support NGOs and educational initiatives.

Lastly, there are independent philanthropists that may enable research, therapy, and the creation a psychedelic infrastructure. But since the industry is growing rapidly, a tendency can be observed that potential donors rather invest, therefore disadvantaging the non-profit institutions. Thus, another possible approach emerged, called “constructive capitalism.” Companies that choose this path commit to cap the executive compensation and donate or philanthropically invest all non-business essential revenues to social causes such as Dr. Bronner’s in the psychedelic field (see: [David Bronner at INSIGHT 2021](#)). The benefit of this approach is that activism exposure instead of paid advertising provides consumer awareness and loyalty for the companies. At the same time, shareholders cannot push the company for not using profits to further maximize revenues, while the exit payout is done on a flexible schedule.

Considering all these different routes to access it becomes clear that implementation and enculturation of psychedelics in medicine and society is anything but a straightforward task, and all the listed approaches contain potentials and special challenges. We invite you to discuss these matters through the lens of the synergies and crossroads present throughout the problem statement, by focusing on the following questions:

Questions examples for Synergies (group 5)	Questions examples for Crossroads (group 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you see potential synergies in the creation of institutions to make psychedelics accessible in a way that benefits patients and society? • How do conditions differ between medical and non-medical implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main challenges players and society face in the creation of institutions to advance psychedelic research and therapy, and their implementation in society? • How are equity and access challenged in the medical vs. non-medical creation of a psychedelic infrastructure?

Recommended reading:

1. Interview with Florian Brand, ATAI Life Sciences CEO ([feel free to skip to 19:50](#))
Psychedelics – The New Psychiatric Frontier
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_za-DbAobo
2. David Bronner from Dr. Bronner’s at INSIGHT 2021 ([feel free to skip to 11:00](#))
Psychedelics at a Crossroads: we need constructive not extractive capital
Find the recording in this [shared OneDrive folder](#).
3. Rick Doblin (MAPS) and Christian Angermayer (ATAI)
PSYCH Investor Summit: Research & Development - For-Profit or Non-Profit? That is the \$100b Question
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXJON3kmNjY>
4. Shayla Love, VICE
Psychedelics Are a Billion-Dollar Business, and No One Can Agree Who Should Control It
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/3aggyd/psychedelics-are-a-billion-dollar-business-and-no-one-can-agree-who-should-control-it>