

# Preparing for the Psychedelic Renaissance: Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications of Neuropharmacology in Psychotherapy

## Project Description

Based on promising, preliminary results from clinical trials, it seems likely that some psychedelics (especially psilocybin and MDMA) will be introduced into psychiatry. This development may shift public perception of these substances, which have a history of use outside medical contexts. It also raises a range of ethical, epistemological, legal, criminological, policy, and social questions that urgently need to be addressed before a potential reclassification of these substances in German (and possibly international) law. This project assembles experts from various fields to critically accompany the ongoing research and prepare medical institutions, regulatory agencies, and society at large for the upcoming psychedelic renaissance.

## Scientific Objectives

- Ethnographic description and analysis of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy
- Investigation of ethical questions regarding informed consent, gender and power dynamics
- Analysis of the epistemic status of psychedelic experiences
- Survey on attitudes on psychedelic drugs
- Clinically, criminologically, social scientifically, ethically, and legally informed guidance for policymakers

## Methodological Approach

- “Multisite research” project within a grounded theory framework
- Qualitative research: interviews, ethnographic observation of clinical work and laboratory research, conceptual and philosophical work, systematic literature review, and document analysis
- Quantitative research: online cross-sectional survey to gather public attitudes toward psychedelics and their use for the treatment of mental illness
- We analyze and combine the different data using the principles of abductive analysis

## Work Packages

**WP1:**  
Clinical and Ethical  
Dimensions of Psychedelic  
Therapy

- Systematic reviews of empirical studies
- Systematic review of reasons/ethical questions
- Views from patients, therapists and professionals
- Ethics of power imbalance
- Novel aspects in therapeutic relation
- Ethics of informed consent
- Identity and personality changes

**Lead:**  
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**WP2:**  
Public attitudes on the use  
of psychedelics for  
psychiatric disorders

- Literature and media analysis
- Design of survey and development of items
- Qualitative follow-up interviews
- Combination of findings from qualitative and quantitative study
- Preparatory patient information material

**Lead:**  
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Voigt

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**WP3:**  
Philosophy of Science and  
Epistemology

- Investigating the tension between objective and subjective methods in psychedelic therapy
- Investigating the methodological issues with isolating explanatory variables and double-blind trials
- Investigating the epistemic risks for the individual
- Workshop on the philosophy of psychedelics

**Lead:**  
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**WP4:**  
Psychedelic Therapy Amid  
the Crisis of  
Psychopharmacology

- Social scientific analysis of psychedelic therapy & the crisis of psychopharmacology
- Ethnographic account of psychedelic therapy
- Laboratory ethnography of development of novel psychedelics

**Lead:**  
Prof. Dr. Nicolas Langlitz

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**WP 5:**  
Legal, Criminological, and  
Regulatory Aspects

- Review international law reforms & proposals
- Criminology of psychedelic use
- Modes of regulation / problems of off-label use
- Human rights and Constitutional Law
- Roundtable on regulation and rights
- Problems of research
- Policy proposals

**Lead:**  
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WEBSITE:

[https://psychiatrie-psychotherapie.charite.de/forschung/suchterkrankungen/psychedelic\\_substances\\_research\\_group/research\\_projects/psychedelsi/](https://psychiatrie-psychotherapie.charite.de/forschung/suchterkrankungen/psychedelic_substances_research_group/research_projects/psychedelsi/)