

Cryptocurrency Philanthropy Catapults Fundraising for Phase 3 Trials

MAPS, LIANA GILLOOLY, AARON MANGAL, BRIAN NORMAND, WESLEY THORICATHA

ON MARCH 9, 2018, THE NON-PROFIT Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) announced the successful completion of a \$4 million matching grant from the Pineapple Fund for U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Phase 3 clinical trials of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

On January 10, 2018, the Pineapple Fund, created by an anonymous cryptocurrency philanthropist known only as “Pine,” announced that they would match the next \$4 million in donations to support MAPS’ upcoming Phase 3 trials, with a deadline of March 10 (pineapplefund.org). The announcement inspired \$4 million in new gifts from over 550 individuals, which the Pineapple Fund matched in Bitcoin (BTC), for a total of \$8 million. 149 of these new gifts, totaling \$1,093,330, were received in cryptocurrency.

The Pineapple Fund made their first gift to MAPS on December 14, 2017, with a donation of 59.89 BTC valued at \$1 million. Several days after announcing the Pineapple Fund’s first gift, on December 18, MAPS received a second large donation of 51.54 BTC from another anonymous donor. Then, on December 20, MAPS received 88,000 Lunyr (LUN) tokens worth over \$769,000 from yet another anonymous donor.

“Pine’s extraordinary generosity has inspired many others to rise to the challenge of his \$4 million matching grant,” said Rick Doblin, Ph.D., MAPS’ founder and executive director. “We can now truly say that MDMA-assisted psychotherapy will be a gift to the world from the psychedelic and cryptocurrency communities, with MAPS having been unable to obtain any government funding for our research.”



MAPS staff participated in multiple panels at CryptoPsychedelic Summit, an event in Tulum, Mexico, that brought together leaders in blockchain and psychedelic science to discuss new possibilities in research, innovation, and community building.

MAPS was an early supporter of cryptocurrency donations, first accepting Bitcoin donations (maps.org/donate) in December 2013. Currently, MAPS is able to accept donations in Bitcoin, Bitcoin Cash, Ethereum, Monero, or Litecoin. Since then, MAPS has received cryptocurrency donations totaling more than \$7.5 million in support of its work.

As of April 2018, MAPS has raised \$26.2 million of the \$26.7 million needed for its upcoming FDA Phase 3 clinical trials of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. MAPS now needs only an additional \$500,000 to complete funding for the final stage of research needed to make MDMA-assisted psychotherapy a legal prescription treatment for PTSD in the U.S. MAPS is currently seeking an additional \$5 million for European Medicines Agency (EMA) trials to supplement the data gathered for the FDA.

CRYPTOPSYCHEDELIC: BLOCKCHAIN AND PSYCHEDELICS COME TOGETHER IN TULUM

An interview with Brian Normand by Wesley Thoricatha

The original, longer version of this interview was first published in *Psychedelic Times* (psychedelictimes.com). Reprinted with permission from *Psychedelic Times*.

Aside from philanthropy, how might blockchain technology help the causes of psychedelic research, drug policy reform, and fundraising? To explore this intersection, a groundbreaking event called CryptoPsychedelic (cryptopsychedelic.com) was held in Tulum, Mexico on February 3, 2018. Hosted by leading psychedelic advocacy group Psymposia and blockchain consulting firm Decentranet [and co-sponsored by MAPS], this summit brought together leaders and innovators from both of these worlds to ask forward-thinking questions while encouraging new connections and partnerships. Right before the event, Wesley Thoricatha of *Psychedelic Times* spoke with Psymposia co-founder Brian Normand about CryptoPsychedelic and the exciting possibilities that the event would explore.

WT: How did the idea of CryptoPsychedelic come about, and what are you hoping to accomplish?

BN: I started getting involved in blockchain technology over the summer. I had an interest in it back in 2012 right when Bitcoin started coming out. I was interested in it at the time because of the financial crash, but it never stuck. But for some reason, this summer I started really diving into it. I had heard of this thing called the Crypto Cruise in San Francisco, which was a small fundraiser for MAPS that sounded interesting. Nothing really came of that [for me] other than finding out some of the people who were organizing it, but it stayed on my radar.

Fast forward to December 2017: my partner Mike Margolies moved out to Oakland and the person he ended up rooming with was the guy who organized the Crypto Cruise. His name is Matt McKibbin, and he founded a group called Decentranet that works in a variety of blockchain products, consulting, and related areas. We started talking immediately about, hey, we've had this cruise, why not plan a more formal event? Then the Pineapple Fund came around and that got huge amounts of attention, showing that people in the crypto world have the ability to fund projects at this scale.

We've had a very short time to plan it; everything has come together really within the last few weeks. CryptoPsychedelic is not really a conference—it's more of a summit where we want to ask questions about how each of these different fields can

work with one another. Is there common ground here? Can crypto and blockchain be applied to psychedelic advocacy? Can it be applied to issues that we face with the war on drugs and prohibition? The idea of this event is to put people from these different communities in the same room and get them talking to one another. Our focus is on forming relationships and building a new community so that moving forward, we can get to know one another. That's really what we want to do with this event.

WT: I think there is some really compelling shared territory between these two worlds. With psychedelics you have the cognitive liberty movement, and with cryptocurrency it's all about economic liberty. At the core, it's about freedom, in a sense.

These are people who see things differently, who want to make positive, long-lasting changes in a system where we see a lot of corruption. Both worlds are comprised of people who are looking to make things better.

BN: Yeah, I think you hit on it with freedom: the ability to make your own decisions. One of the things I want to touch on as a common ground in both of these fields is regulation. This is a core issue that both the crypto world and psychedelics face. That's something that I would really like to explore—the parallels between both of these worlds, and the spectrum between government regulations and self-governance. I think you're going to see

increasing regulation attempts in the U.S. in terms of ICOs and considering tokens securities. A lot of different things are going to start being talked about by regulators, but it's not going to stop the momentum, just like prohibition is not going to stop drug use. I think that's where these fields are sort of at right now. It's interesting to me how they both have the potential to invert existing paradigms.

WT: Yeah, absolutely. They seem to both be part of the new paradigm emerging within the old one, and so there's friction there of course, but both seem inevitable. Psychedelics will completely revolutionize the field of mental health and have a ton of cascade effects, just like crypto is going to completely revolutionize economics and banking and have a ton of cascade effects as well.

BN: I think there's a lot of crossover between people who are interested in crypto, decentralized applications, and use cases, and the people who are looking at psychedelics for mental health, cognitive liberty, PTSD, and all these things. These are people who see things differently, who want to make positive, long-lasting changes in a system where we see a lot of corruption. Both worlds are comprised of people who are looking to make things better.

WT: It's really exciting. So for this event, can you describe the format?

BN: There will be four conversation panels. One is going to focus on the science and research behind psychedelics. Another one is going to focus on drug reform advocacy, going beyond the research and using the science to inform different directions we're heading. Then we'll have a crypto panel and give an overview to the psychedelic people about what crypto is, where it is going, what the potential is—just an overview. Then we're going to mix both of those groups into a crypto-psychedelic panel. Not knowing what to expect is what's making this so fun. We don't have talks scheduled, and there are no presentations or speeches. It's really going to be an organic thing that just goes in whatever direction it goes.

CRYPTOPSYCHEDELIC: COLLIDING WORLDS

by Liana Sananda Gillooly

Over the past year, I have become integrated into the blockchain community, drawn by the technology's groundbreaking ability to transparently decentralize trust, and the community's emphasis on creating real improvements to our systems that can seismically shift the world.

I found that many of the original theorists and architects of this emergent technology were also psychedelics enthusiasts. The longstanding relationship between tech and psychedelics is well-documented, and even more overt in the crypto world.

I met Matt McKibbin through Natalie Ginsberg of MAPS ahead of the Cryptos & Psychonauts & Cannabis Cruise that he produced in the summer of 2017, which was the first time, to my knowledge, that leaders of these communities were brought together. Directly after the success of the dinner cruise, Matt determined that he would produce another event of a similar nature in Tulum, Mexico, in February. Fast forward a few months, and I had the great pleasure of introducing Matt to Mike Margolies, who was co-directing Psymposia at the time. Three days after they met, they excitedly informed me that they had partnered on the Tulum event, and decided to call it CryptoPsychedelic. Around this time, the Pineapple Fund made its first \$1 million donation in Bitcoin to MAPS, bringing the relationship between these two communities to light.

I don't think any of us knew what to expect of the first-ever CryptoPsychedelic event. I found myself declaring that the point was to bring together two revolutionary communities of curious, intelligent, visionary people to see what kind of "brain-babies" could be made. If nothing else, this wouldn't be boring.

This event captured the crescendo both of these history-making communities are amidst. MDMA is in its final push through the FDA to become the first legal psychedelic medicine available in the US, while several cryptocurrencies have (at least briefly) exceeded the market cap of many mid-sized

countries. Both of these tools have the potential to massively impact society. Timing is everything. I found myself reveling in the cosmic coincidence of the establishment of new wealth in a population keenly interested in social benefit, arriving at the pivotal moment when more capital than ever is needed to complete ground-breaking research into psychedelic therapies. The idea of staggering wealth landing in the hands of people supportive of our cause is truly exciting.

At the event, I discovered that most of the psychedelic and drug policy community were new to crypto, and many were skeptical of anything coming out of the tech community that claimed to hold the key to resolving major problems in the world. I also found that many psychedelic enthusiasts from the crypto world were unaware of the daily horrors of the illegal

and racist war on drugs, and new to the great work of MAPS and long road of bringing groundbreaking therapies to the world. New synapses were created as these two networks collided.

I was aware of a deep tension felt by many of my peers in the drug policy world: Here is a population of people, generally perceived as privileged, seemingly creating wealth out of thin air, and declaring their intentions to transform the world with an intangible technology that is hard to grasp. And yet, our

new allies, an inspiring group of mostly young crypto people shares the disillusionment of our current failing systems, and are ardently experimenting with building new models with the aim of rendering the existing model obsolete, have a unique set of capabilities that could hasten the ending of the drug war and legalizing of psychedelic therapy.

What emerged was a lot of mutually beneficial dialogue. Both groups were able to expand out of their respective echo chambers, becoming exposed to perspectives other than their own, exposing blind spots, and entertaining new avenues of growth. It was personal, and at times uncomfortable, as intentions and beliefs were carefully examined. Transformation can be messy. At times I found myself mediating between these communities, who spoke different dialects, and had their own way of going about improving the world. I felt my own perceptions tested. Ultimately, I left feeling like the work had only just begun, and feeling grateful for the willingness from all to do it, and the container to do it in.

There is a new technology emerging that stands to greatly impact our global systems and societal structures. These technologies take on the energy from which they were made. CryptoPsychedelic is an opportunity for us to purposefully imbue this emergent technology with the attributes inherent in the psychedelic experience: openness, connection, unity, unconditional love, and a sense of well-being. Additionally, our movement in mental health and drug policy reform can be fueled by a boon of resources, and influenced by whole systems thinking.

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At CryptoPsychedelic, not only did we get to explore the ways in which these movements are impacting the world, we got to examine the ways in which these tools can impact each other.

CRYPTOPSYCHEDELIC: REFLECTIONS FROM MAPS STAFF

*An interview with Merete Christiansen and Natalie Ginsberg
by Aaron Mangal*

After CryptoPsychedelic, Aaron Mangal caught up with Merete Christiansen, MAPS Executive Manager and Assistant to Rick Doblin, and Natalie Ginsberg, MAPS Policy and Advocacy Director, to reflect on their experience in Tulum and to explore what they're excited about at the intersection of cryptocurrencies and psychedelic science.

AM: How have you seen cryptocurrencies affect psychedelic research as a whole?

MC: Funding has been the most influential impact in my opinion. Cryptocurrencies are a relatively new form of value, and have brought wealth to many who previously did not have capacity to give to funding initiatives in such a major way. MAPS first started accepting Bitcoin donations in 2013. Since then, we've received well over \$7 million in cryptocurrency donations.

AM: What are your thoughts on the mysterious cryptocurrency donor "Pine" and the Pineapple Fund?

NG: It's awesome. I'm really grateful. The \$4 million matching grant from Pine was so inspiring to so many donors. It felt like Pine was activating the community, rather than just donating as an individual. In connecting to the crypto community I do think Pine was very helpful in inspiring donations by demonstrating the capacity for the crypto community to make change.

Something I heard at CryptoPsychedelic that I appreciated from the crypto community was a criticism of how traditional wealth is often held—people just sit on billions of dollars—which clogs up the system and prevents our financial system from flowing freely. I appreciate those in the crypto world who believe in moving that money now—there are such urgent problems that we simply cannot afford to wait. And by Pine just going "Here's \$86 million dollars, boom, let's go!" Doing that in this way was just so inspiring.

The crypto community gets that it's time to make big change now. And they are not following the traditional model of just making money and sitting on it. They want to put that back into the community. This is not what everyone is doing, so this is why we need people like Pine to be inspiring that.

AM: What was the CryptoPsychedelic crowd like, and what were the conversations about?

MC: The event was unlike any event I've ever been to. Some psychedelic and crypto events are fairly niche events where most people there have a fundamental agreement on many topics. At CryptoPsychedelic, we brought two niche groups together that have many fundamental differences of opinion. It made for very interesting conversation! It was inspiring to see so many intelligent people learning from each other and having civil discourse about disagreements and differing opinions.

NG: It's true—people usually identified with either the cryptocurrency space or the psychedelic space, even though both spaces were interested in the other. It was quite funny because people were asking each other if they were a "cryp" or a "psych" person.

It was special to be in Tulum in such a beautiful venue for a summit that really facilitated us all connecting in meaningful ways. There were also some tensions because we do have very different approaches to work and what we're trying to do. But that was part of the process.

Lots of people who are in the crypto space say they don't trust anything, at least not the current systems, and cryptocurrency is their way of dealing with that. In the psychedelic world, it's kind of the opposite, where psychedelics are about trusting the universe and (in the extreme) trusting everything. So there's something really interesting about that tension, and how these communities are still clearly connected, and finding the value in each of these spaces.

Another tension I found was that the crypto space is very male-dominated, and especially white male dominated, and I'm concerned about what the implications are for this brand new developing space. I also saw a lot of openness around changing that which was really cool.

AM: What gets you most excited about the synergistic potential of cryptocurrency and the psychedelic research community?

MC: There is amazing potential in both the crypto and psychedelic spheres for innovation and new ways of interacting with ourselves and others. I'm excited about the opportunities that exist, especially for people who have been historically burdened and held back by our existing financial system, societal norms, and perpetuation of multi-generational trauma. Cryptocurrencies offer a new way of interacting financially, and if implemented responsibly, a new platform for participation on a global scale, raising up those who have been undeserved and undervalued. Likewise, psychedelics offer a potential for healing and self-growth that may be more effective than our current approaches to mental and physical healthcare by facilitating openness to new understandings of ourselves and our interconnectedness to each other and the planet. 🌍