

Geopsychiatry: The time has come for a new transdisciplinary integrative discipline

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Summary

Psychiatry is an ever-changing field connected to new spirit of time, knowledge and technology, particularly in our era of artificial intelligence and psychopolitics. There is a growing recognition of the essential link between geography, culture, human rights, psychopolitics and mental health. Geopsychiatry offers a critical lens through which we can better understand and respond to global mental health challenges. Mental health or the health of mind is interconnected with the health of local place and likewise with the health of the earth. By integrating geography, ecology and mental health sciences in additive (multidisciplinary), interactive (interdisciplinary) and holistic (transdisciplinary) way the nascent field of geopsychiatry provides a special and ecological framework for understanding how the environment shapes both individual and collective mental health in the Anthropocene. The global environmental and geopolitical crisis, migrations, urban overcrowding and climate changes emphasize the need for a new paradigm that connects mental health with planetary health.

Key words: *geo-psychiatry, mental health, geopolitics, psychopolitics, clash of civilizations, empathic civilization*

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INTRODUCTION

Psychiatry is an ever-changing field connected to new spirit of time, knowledge and technology, particularly in our era of artificial intelligence. Psychiatry has long recognized the role of complex bio-psycho-socio-spiritual factors in promotion of mental health and treatment of mental disorders. Likewise, the influence of geopolitical, social, cultural, religious and political factors on mental health and mental illnesses are well recognized (Javed & Persaud, 2024). Geopsychiatry is an emerging conceptual and clinical framework that explores how geographic, environmental, ecological, sociocultural and political factors shape and modulate mental health and mental disorders, mental wellness and mental illness, mental salutogenesis and psycho-pathogenesis, mental resilience and fragility, the normal and the abnormal. The focus is on the impact and effects of globalization, population growth and movements, climate change, natural and man-made disasters (wars, terrorism, etc.), industrialization, urban conglomerations, agricultural production, socio-economic transformations, cultural practices in the mental wellness-mental illness processes and geopolitics (Castadelli-Maia & Bhugra, 2022). It is a transdisciplinary and integrative field that brings together psychiatry, geography, mental health sciences, neurosciences, environmental sciences, political sciences, anthropology, sociology, agronomy, architecture, geopolitics and psychopolitics,

and public and planetary health. Geopsychiatry emphasizes that the psyche/mind is not an isolated system but one embedded in geo-biosphere and it can be an essential psychiatry for the Anthropocene. Geopsychiatry considers multiple scales – from the micro (individual exposure climate changes, pollution or heat) to the macro (cultural dislocation, migration, and global ecological change). The concept of geopsychiatry is associated with social psychiatry, transcultural psychiatry and ecological psychiatry. Unfortunately, at the present time, very little geographical, mental-health relevant information is available to psychiatrists in clinical practice. Using modern information technology, geopsychiatry may produce a new type of knowledge for better understanding the links between mental health, mental disorders and place where people live, work and play. GeoPsychiatry challenges purely individual and neurobiological conceptions of mental disorders and expands them to whole health and planetary dimension. As there is a strong link between mental health and geography, the new journal Geopsychiatry dedicated to advancing the burgeoning subdiscipline of psychiatry (Bhugra, 2025) is of the great importance for research and promotion of the public and global mental health in our volatile, uncertain, complex, competitive, conflictive and ambiguous world.

This editorial outlines the theoretical foundations, core principles, and practical implications of geopsychiatry, from clinical practice to global mental health promotion.

FROM GEOMEDICINE TO GEOPSYCHIATRY

Health and diseases have always been connected with geography. As environmental changes accelerate, medicine and psychiatry face shared challenges to understand how geography shapes health. Geomedicine investigates how geography, such as climate, altitude, pollution, and soil or water composition affects health and disease distribution, diagnosis, and treatment. Its origins lie in nineteenth-century medical geography, when physicians began to map patterns of disease according to climate and place. Contemporary geomedicine integrates geographic information systems (GIS), environmental toxicology, and epidemiology to identify how local conditions, such as air quality, altitude, soil composition, radiation exposure, and pathogen ecology, influence health quality. Modern geomedicine bridges environmental science and clinical medicine, providing spatially precise data that can guide prevention, diagnosis, and health policy. While geomedicine focuses on somatic diseases, geopsychiatry extends this framework to the mental health sphere. Geopsychiatry has added new conceptual layers: the psychological meaning of place, the ecological self, and mental health consequences of planetary change.

Geopsychiatry tends to integrate ecological determinants of the mental health into both diagnostic framework and therapeutic interventions. The geopsychiatric nexus is defined as a dynamic system involving five codependent layers: ecosystem – place – community – individual – mind. Changes in one layer influence on other layers. For an example, environmental degradation affects community stability (social cohesion and collective resilience), which in turn affects individual psychological stability and fragility (individual resilience, well-being and mental health). Conversely, promoting ecological restoration or community green spaces may enhance collective and individual well-being and mental health). Climate and ecological psychiatry as a part of geopsychiatry addresses mental health response to climate changes, natural disasters, and displacement. Geopolitical, sociocultural and ecological matrix of life is very important from the mental health perspective. The progression from geomedicine to geopsychiatry underscores that healing the mind requires healing the environments in which minds dwell because healing the environments improves mental health and human well-being.

GEOGRAPHY OF MENTAL HEALTH

Geography of mental health speaks to us that where we live affects the way how we live, our mental health and well-being. It explores the spatial distribution, environmental determinants and place-based patterns of mental health and well-being as well as incidence and prevalence of mental disorders (Bhugra & Ventriglio, 2023; Philo et al., 2024). Spatial epidemiology explores how mental disorders are distributed across geographic areas, identifying clusters or gradients linked to social deprivation, urban density, environmental stressors, etc. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have become indispensable tools in mapping mental health disparities and visualizing how sociocultural, geopolitical and environmental factors intersect spatially. The geography of mental health emphasizes the importance of emotional bonds people form with their surroundings and a sense of belonging (place attachment and place identity). Ecosystem distress syndromes are more and more prominent. For an example solastalgia (solas from lat. solacium – comfort, algia – pain from greek), the term coined by Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht refers to pain or emotional suffering caused by losing comfort from one's home environment due to environmental change. Reconnecting with nature for mental health restoration through eco-therapy or nature-based psychotherapy is useful and available medicine. Geography with its knowledge about the world has much to offer to the mental health research and policy strategies and tactics (Jones, 2001). Clinicians informed by geopsychiatry could extend the traditional biopsychosociospiritual model to a biopsychosociospiritual-geographical model.

GEOPOLITICS AND GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH

Geopolitics refers to how power, territory, and global inequalities shape international relationships and resource distribution. Global mental health is not just a medical issue, it is also geopolitical one. Mental health disorders become a mirror of geopolitical instability and the mind/psyche as a register of global violence. A geopolitical model of mental health involves 6 dimensions: 1. Epistemic: Who and how defines mental health and illness? 2. Economic: Who funds research and care? 3. Political: How does power shape fragility and vulnerability? 4. Environmental: How does climate and place affect mental life? 5. Psychobiological: How biological predisposition interacts with environmental stress and challenges? 6. Cultural identity: How is suffering understood locally

in different cultures? So, geopolitics of mental health examines the unequal global flows of knowledge, medicine, and funding. Geopolitical events determine mental health and mental disorders. Wars, displacements, sanctions, climate changes, and neoliberal austerity policies all shape mental health problems, psychological suffering and mental disorders.

GEOPSYCHIATRY AND GEOPOLITICS

Geopsychiatry and geopolitics together reveal that mental health is a geographical and political phenomenon. Geopsychiatry gives psychiatry a geographical conscience, and geopsychopolitics gives geography a psychological depth. Their integration can guide: more ethical global mental health interventions, trauma-informed refugee and climate policies, and new ways to understand the planetary psyche in crisis. A geopolitical psychiatry or geopsychiatric geopolitics would. 1. map how global forces (wars, migrations, climate, capitalism) produce psychological suffering, 2. critique how psychiatry itself is part of geopolitical power (through global mental health agendas, diagnostic systems, etc.), 3. propose context-sensitive and place-based forms of care and healing. Conflicts and wars in many parts of the world, erosions of human rights, e/migrations, misinfodemics, accelerating climate changes, air, water and environment pollution, deforestation, and natural disasters are causing increasing instability, insecurity, unpredictability, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and vulnerability. These factors contribute to terrible suffering in an increasing number of people with various phenomena of new normality, pathological normality, normal pathology and an increasing rates of various mental disorders and suffering (Jakovljevic, 2025a,b). The growing global burden of mental disorders and slow progress in their prevention and treatment has prompted calls for more coherent, effective and efficient geopsychiatry and global mental health enlightenment (Jakovljevic, 2023, 2024).

GEOPSYCHIATRY AND PSYCHOPOLITICS

Our time is characterized by a shift from Foucault's biopolitics (coercion in managing bodies and populations) to psychopolitics referring to managing minds and mental states of people (Prozorov, 2021). Geopsychiatry and psychopolitics deal with how psychological life interacts with power, place, and sociocultural structures,

but they come from slightly different traditions, one more clinical/geographical, the other more philosophical and political. Psychopolitics links psyche/mind and power, in other words how political and economic systems govern minds, thoughts, emotions and behavior. In other words, psychopolitics is the study of how power operates through psychological mechanisms – how emotions, desires, and thoughts become sites of political control. Rather than governing people through coercion as in traditional power, modern systems often govern through freedom, self-management, and internalized control. Psychopolitical power shapes the emotional, behavioral and mental landscape of society. Psychopolitics define mental health not only as a medical or personal issue, but as a social and political one. Psychopolitics asks “What’s wrong with the system that makes you feel this way? A psychopolitical understanding of mental health encourages: 1. critical reflection seeing how power shapes mental states and emotions, 2. collective care and moving from individual therapy to community solidarity, and 3. resistance, resilience and antifragility through slowness, refusal, and rest. Understanding mental illness in this context means recognizing that anxiety, depression, and burnout are not just personal failings – they are symptoms of political economy that colonizes the mind.

Geopsychiatry and geopolitics intersect in how environment (place) and power (governance) shape the psyche/mind. Together, they suggest that mental health cannot be separated from the spaces we inhabit (geo-) and the system that govern us (psycho-politics). A combined approach might study how urban, rural or digital environments function as both psychosocial and cultural spaces and political powers.

GEOPSYCHIATRY AND UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Mental health protection, promotion and restoration necessarily involve consideration of human rights issues. Erosions of human rights are erosions of mental health. Human rights and social justice globally are affected by geopolitical factors in different ways. Human rights to life, dignity, education, health, freedom of expression, prosperity and protection from discrimination are fundamental rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, nationality, religion, or economic status. Healthy community means that all individuals have a responsibility to respect and ensure the rights of others as their own rights fulfilling life for themselves and those around them. Human rights are regulated by international laws implemented by state, regional and global institutions

(the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted in 1989), so that human rights represent an obligation for everyone, without exception, to respect the rights of others and others. The concept of human rights is grounded on empathization, so that promoting the empathic culture of human rights and preventing human rights violations could be the driving and transforming force behind public mental health promoting programs (Jakovljevic, 2025b). GeoPsychiatry recognizes the importance of global ethics and human rights respect for individual, family, collective and global mental health. Human rights violations are linked to the social and epistemic injustice and significantly increase the incidence and prevalence of mental disorders. Geopolitical factors, particularly in the context of wars and terrorism, regularly lead to human rights violations, suffering and mental ill-health. Having in mind the fact that environmental destruction and human rights violations impair mental health it is logical that their protection and promotion should be an ethical duty for GeoPsychiatry practitioners.

GEOPSYCHIATRY AND EMPATHIC CIVILIZATION

“Mental health for all in the 21st century” is the slogan of an idealistic humanistic project of the World Health Organization (WHO) that refers to the human rights and mental health for all, social justice, solidarity, and the culture of empathization (Jakovljevic 2024a). The three terms bionomia or bionomy (law or order of life), biophilia (love of life and nature) and bioempathy (ethical understanding of all life) are background for better understanding of geopsychiatry and its role in the promotion of empathic civilization in order to overcome the clash of civilizations (Jakovljevic, 2025a,b). Bionomia refers to the principles or laws that govern life and how living beings interact with their environment. It represents the concept of natural order, sustainability, ecological harmony and balance. It is interesting that Erich Fromm coined the term “biophilia” meaning “passionate love of life and of all that is alive” what refers in general to the innate human affinity for nature and living beings. Biophilia represents the concept of connection, attraction, well-being, and nature-inspired design. Bioempathy is the capacity to cognitively understand and emotionally respect life from the perspective of all living beings and ecosystems. Empathizing individual, family, community and public commitment to health literacy is the best way towards health promotion. Living in geographies that support bionomic

needs, emphatic resonance and biophilic fulfillment is linked to better mental health and less psychiatric morbidity. Geopsychiatry in some way involves psychiatric applications of bionomic, biophilic and bioempathic principles to promotion and restoration of mental health. Culture of empathization grounded on bionomia, bioempathy and biophilia is an essential force to transform the fragility into antifragility (resilience), the conflict into cooperation and the war into peace. It has the potential to improve mental health and well-being at all levels, from individual and family level to community, public and global level.

CONCLUSIONS

Geopsychiatry is an emerging transdisciplinary integrative field in mental health sciences that emphasizes a close connection between mind, place, and planet, both in health and disease, in mental wellness and mental illness. It promotes a pathway toward transdisciplinary, integrative, sustainable, and culturally responsive and contextually grounded mental health care for the 21st century. Recognizing that the human mind is both a product and a steward of its environment, geo-psychiatry stresses importance of the global mental health enlightenment and the earth sustainability. By integrating ecological awareness into clinical practice and policy, geopsychiatry can play a central role in fostering both individual and planetary resilience and mental health.

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