

In healthcare, late 20th and early 21st century have witnessed some remarkable medical developments, but also the fall of professionals' hegemony and the increased influence of some rival actors (Light 2000). The so-called "new media" play a major role in this process, with the internet becoming a place, where people search for medical knowledge, an arena of communication and creation of communities around some health-related problems. Sharing information, but also trust in some medical practices, have become the basis for the rise of epistemic communities, which comprise of a wide spectrum of representatives of various groups – doctors, nurses, different types of experts, but also patients and their families, politicians, journalists and even celebrities. Together, they cluster around some health-related problems that they find important, take part in discussions, exchange information, plan future actions and set goals, also related to public policies. Epistemic communities concentrate around some medical treatments and procedures, which may be accepted; official, accepted but not publically funded (where both are parts of the evidence-based medicine paradigm, EBM), or alternative, unaccepted (and therefore not financed) by the healthcare system.

The aim of the project will be to describe the dynamic changes that take place within the field of healthcare. Field is one of the key theoretical concepts of classic French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, which enables us to analyze relations that take place within this section of social structure. Persons and groups within the field of healthcare share some similar goals, concentrate on some similar social values, compete for some resources, or capitals, within the field. The field is dynamic. Its participants engage in a struggle for influence, positions, even domination, but also not to be excluded from its scope. Others only try to aspire to be part of it.

The healthcare field constitutes our metaphorical "center" – with medicine based on scientific research and data, official, (in most part) funded with public resources. In turn, the title "borderlands" are linked with alternative or complimentary medicine, new practices, not (perhaps yet) sanctioned legally or in medical procedures and guidelines.

Planned research will base on an analysis of some chosen examples of the creation and dynamics of such epistemic communities concentrated around health-related problems, as well as their fight for positions in the field in Poland. We will study cases as varied as the struggle for legalization (and reimbursement) of medical marijuana, perinatal care and tensions arising around the medicalization of this area, or actions of the anti-vaccination movement. An epistemic community focused around the conviction that medical marijuana is effective and should be funded with public resources, indeed managed to introduce the problem into the healthcare field in Poland.