The project addresses a phenomenon at the intersection of three major social changes:

- Increasing distrust in institutional knowledge, and anti-intellectual and anti-establishment sentiments in the society,

- A growing tendency to self-organize online communities around certain ideas, and new forms of cooperation online (peer production, open collaboration) and democratization of knowledge creation and distribution resulting in misinformation and disinformation,

- A growing role of automated propaganda and disinformation tools (botnets, paid covert influencers, networks of self-perpetuating professional ideologists).

These challenges are all manifested in the emergence of a sociotechnical system of propagation of ideas, relying on a combination of spontaneous online groups questioning the existing knowledge system, as well as networks of bots developed to influence the public opinion and the political outcomes through disinformation, and paid professionals acting to the same effect.

The project's goal is to analyze the network, structure, and organizational culture of selected misinformation online communities (in particular, language, social structure, leadership, demographic dimensions, reputation systems, internal logic and beliefs, narratives and myths), in a study combining computer science, management, sociology, and ethnography.

The project will rely on a novel Thick Big Data methodology, combining Big Data approaches (TribeFinding, SNA, Machine Learning, Sentiment Analysis) with qualitative ones (digital ethnography, narrative analysis). One of the tangible side-effects of the project will be developing research tools for Polish researchers, as well as an international bot detector.

By performing a highly interdisciplinary project, using a wide array of research methods, the project will advance our understanding of online human and non-human misinformation (advances in knowledge). It will also provide practical and field-tested tools for hostile actors' network detection (hired professionals and bots), as well as aforementioned open research tools for sentiment analysis and tribe finding localized for the Polish language, bringing major social and academic benefits.

The project is going to build on our current knowledge on open collaboration groups, and allow us to see how the cultural and organizational processes already known from them are enacted in misinformation and disinformation groups related to medicine, divisive social issues, and politics.