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**Methodological challenges in studying contestation of health and wellbeing**

Themes such as vaccines, complementary therapies or food are widely debated in consultancy rooms, media and cafeterias. These discussions are often heated and polarized. A social scientific research project on these topics may encounter the same heat and divisions; people may want to take part in what research has to say or reframe the research in ways that the researcher did not mean nor want. Many societal actors, such as healthcare professionals, professional associations, healthcare authorities, and different citizen groups may have a stake in these debates. This makes research on disputed areas challenging.

In this talk, I argue that studying contested areas of health and wellbeing requires specific skills that can be learned and reflected upon. Based on my own research into alternative therapies and vaccine hesitancy, I will outline some of the major challenges and methodological possibilities in these kind of studies. One of my themes will be engagement with the researched population groups and individuals, which sometimes ends up with trying to prevent activists to intervene with research details, such as research data, methodological approach or outcomes of the research. I discuss the differences between different knowledge domains studying topics aimed at researching contestation of health and wellbeing. I discuss the media framings when the researcher is engaged in public discussions around these themes, looking into the role of powerful and marginal voices in these discussions and the positions that the researcher can aim to take or is given in media discussions. The presentation highlights the importance of research ethics and the necessity of researcher’s self-reflection.