

Summary

Rheumatologies in the making is a study of medical knowledge creation in encounters between patients and health workers in a Norwegian hospital ward. The thesis adopts an approach to communication as a cooperative and competitive process of world-making. Drawing inspiration from Fredrik Barth's work among the Mountain Ok of New Guinea, it takes the individual exercise of creativity as point of departure, and sets out to investigate how meaning was made and remade in the encounters of differently positioned persons at the ward and beyond, at a time when rheumatological knowledge was undergoing rapid change.

Beyond its primary concern with meaning and interaction, the thesis sheds light on several phenomena in the penumbra of which those encounters took place. One such phenomenon is a wave of health services reforms implemented in the decade preceding the study and during its data collection phase. A second is the transformation of rheumatology during that same period from a subspecialty which proponents continuously fought for resources and attention, to one occupied with applying a line of major block buster drugs, thus generating capital flows of previously unimaginable proportions.