

The role of Experts

Definition of experts

Traditionally, experts are seen as people with a lot of experience within a certain field, and usually experts come from the academic world or are working as highly qualified professionals in public or private organisations.

Experts are people who put data into knowledge, hence knowledge is not neutral but based on the expert's experiences and intelligence. (Data + experience + intelligence = knowledge)

Experts are aware of available methods for analysing data within their field and choose consciously between these methodologies knowing the virtues and limitations of each.

We usually understand experts as people interpreting scientific data. They are still experts, but we are just broadening up the understanding and definition of experts. Marketing companies and commercial research use "normal people" as experts when they want to make research about products etc.

Traditionally, experts are characterised as specialists, but what does it mean to be a specialist? It means a person who knows a lot about something, but when we are talking regional development based on wellness, citizens may as consumers be specialists although they do not know what competencies were involved in supplying these wellness facilities. Other experts will know more about the supply conditions and how wellness products are developed.

Hence, in relation to the creation of a holistic regional development processes and identification of a regions key competencies, we believe that it is actually an idea to think more like marketing people and it is important to have a broader understanding of what experts are and how they can support the development process. The reason for this is that a regional development process – especially if you want it to be holistic and based on the wish to provide wellness - is composed of many factors and interests. First of all you have the overall economic development of the region, which provides capital to investments. Business people should therefore have a chance to interpret data with their experience of running a business. Secondly, you have the social development of the region, which also provides resources for investment, but investments of a more human oriented character, such as good learning possibilities for all, good child care possibilities for families, flexible and inclusive labour markets and focus on public health. Hence, citizens should have a chance to interpret data with their experience of being citizens in the region. Thirdly you have the environmental development, which is there to make sure that economic and social development is not taking place in a way that it harms the regional nature and cultural heritage, and people with experience within culture and nature should therefore have the chance to interpret data.

A regional development process, which is holistic and based on the wish to provide wellness, should be much more inclusive than a traditional regional development process, hence aspects such as social dialogue, consultation processes, democracy and bottom-up processes have a very important role to play. When you look at these aspects, experts get another meaning and the definition of experts becomes much broader, inclusive and flexible. This does not mean that traditional experts are no longer useful or should no longer be used in the process of translating data into knowledge, it only means that it is important to look at the definition of experts in a broader perspective.

Criteria for choosing expert

If you want to begin a holistic regional development process, based on the wish to provide wellness, we believe it is important to redefine what an expert is and make sure that things are seen in a broader perspective.

We believe that it is important to categorise experts into three groups, which we find have different entrances and methods to forecast changes and solve problems; 1) Traditional experts, 2) Policy makers and private decision makers and 3) Alternative experts or "wild cards".



Regional Key Competencies

- a way to manage structural changes (ATG)

Traditional experts are researchers and specialised professionals. Policy makers are politicians and managers on a political level, and private decision makers are managers from private organisations and private consultants. Alternative experts or “wild cards” as we also call them are people representing e.g. cultural environments, migrants, students, young people or seniors, who normally are not consulted in these kinds of development processes.

Hence, the redefinition of experts is a very good way to introduce more bottom-up processes and democratic processes. The media can be actively used in this connection.

