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Trust and Expertise: The Institutional Dimension of Expertise

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Expertise in policy making and governance

- Expertise is more important than perhaps ever; complex issues, social complexity, complex forms of policy delivery, global embeddness
- Paradoxically, many government are scaling down their policy rather than expanding it; advice is increasingly sought in the market and from NGOs
- Executive agencies (still) harbor extensive expertise. The 'density' of expertise varies; regulatory agencies in knowledge-intensive sectors have high 'density' while service delivery requires less expertise



The institutional dimension of expertise

- Experts derive their legitimacy from their institutional affiliation and professional training
- All expertise, but particularly policy expertise, is highly specialized. Institutions accumulate expertise (or 'intellectual capital'); 'the knowledge-intensive organization'. Thus, in policy making expertise is an institutional attribute more than a description of the qualities of staff
- A crisis of expertise should be associated with poor assessments of agencies and low levels of institutional trust



Empirical analysis

- The paper studies variations in the level of institutional trust (or overall assessment) among different types of agencies in Sweden; regulatory agencies, law-enforcing agencies and service-delivering agencies
- Institutional trust is overall high in Sweden
- Long tradition with autonomous agencies
- The analysis uses data collected by TNS Sifo, a private company



	2013	2015	2017
Regulatory agencies			
Consumer Protection	46	48	53
Financial Market Inspection	38	34	36
National Bank	43	41	44
Food Security and Health	34	40	44
Law enforcement			
Police	26	35	31
Tax Enforcement Authority	37	37	38
Prosecution Authority	32	35	34
Courts	32	33	30
Taxation Office	45	51	50
Migration	-27	-28	-30
Social welfare			
Health and Welfare	17	18	16
Jobs and Employment	-27	-28	-30
Social Insurance	-11	-4	-6
School Inspection	14	16	15

Comment: The assessment index ranges between +135 and -65.

Trust and expertise

- The table suggests that agencies with a high 'density' of expertise enjoy higher levels of trust among the citizens than do service-delivering agencies with lower 'density'. The more experts the more people will trust the agency
- Potential explanations:
- Service-producing agencies are more likely to disappoint their clients than are regulatory agencies
- Poor service to citizens are more likely to be covered by the media than cases of regulatory agencies' poor performance
- The legitimacy crisis of expertise is more common when that expertise is exercised outside its institutional context?



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