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Professional Expertise, Scientific Knowledge, Citizens' Insights and Non-Knowledge. When to Trust Experience-Based Knowledge Claims

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Abstract

This paper compares the status and qualities of different forms of expertise and distinguishes them from non-knowledge. It contrasts professional and scientific expertise with a less institutionalised and credentialed but increasingly prominent form: practical, experience-based "lay" or "citizen" expertise. Drawing on social studies of knowledge, expertise, science and the professions, the paper asks when expertise claims are reliable and how the value of experience-based claims can be assessed.

Expertise is conceptualized pragmatically as specialized knowledge that provides orientation to others. While different forms of expertise may be provided by different actors, conveyed through different means and relevant in different contexts, they respond to shared validity standards: authoritative claims must be non-ubiquitous, problem-relevant, and advanced by trustworthy, impartial speakers with specialized capabilities. However, these standards must be translated into context- and knowledge-specific indicators. Assessing experience-based expertise is particularly challenging because conventional markers of epistemic authority are absent. The paper discusses two responses that build on professionalising, processing and certifying lay expertise, thereby partially transforming its character.

Keywords

Expertise, non-knowledge, citizens' experience, epistemic authority, scientific knowledge, professional knowledge

Introduction

This paper compares the status of different kinds of expertise and distinguishes them from non-knowledge. In particular, professional and scientific expertise are compared to a much less institutionalised and credentialed, but seemingly up-and-coming kind of knowledge: experience-based, 'lay' or 'citizen expertise,' i.e. a kind of knowledge whose holders have no formal training on the issue in question, but nonetheless make claims to expertise on the grounds of their personal experiences.

The study starts by asking the following questions that will be further refined during the analysis: Under which conditions do we want to acknowledge others as experts and let them guide our actions? When are claims to expertise reliable, and what indicates the value specifically of lay, experience-based claims to expertise? Do such alternative, experience-based knowledge claims challenge the status of professional knowledge? And what are the boundaries of what can count as knowledge?

Citizen or lay expertise has also been called 'experience-based' or 'experiential knowledge,' 'user knowledge,' 'local expertise,' 'indigenous knowledge' etc., and the terms used vary with context and perspective. All these expressions denote a kind of knowledge that can be placed at the outer pole of the dual distinctions often made between different types of knowledge, procedures of inquiry and grounds of sense-making (see Borkmann, 1976; Collins & Evans, 2002; Corburn, 2002; Eriksen, 2022; Fischer, 2000; Krick, 2022; Meriluoto, 2017; Noorani, 2013, Polanyi, 1966).

I am referring to distinctions between, for instance:

- Theory vs. practice
- Research and evidence vs. practical wisdom and judgement
- Training & analysis vs. (sensual) experience
- Explicit vs. tacit knowledge
- Credentialed (or: codified/certified) vs. non-credentialed (non-codified/non-certified) knowledge
- Propositional knowledge vs. know-how

Regarding all these dichotomies, experience-based expertise leans to the right of the spectrum, while scientific knowledge would be placed on the left.

One can also classify different kinds of knowledge by distinguishing typical knowledge holders. *Lay, experience-based knowledge* can be held by the average 'ordinary' citizens. It is based on first-hand or 'lived' experience, often bodily experience and the use of the senses. It is learned in everyday life, explicitly not in formal training and through systematic analysis. It is often tacit or very difficult to articulate, and it may be more easily conveyed through narratives than through abstract concepts and succinct statements (see e.g. Bartels & Garud, 2003). Good examples are the knowledge of patients, who have in- depth experiences with an illness, its treatment and their bodily reactions, as well as the health system; another is the local knowledge of residents and shop owners in a certain neighbourhood. *Professional* or *occupational knowledge,* by comparison, is usually based on both practical wisdom and evidence-based tools and acquired by a mix of work experience and formal training. In contrast to lay citizens, professionals need to navigate between and integrate different forms of knowledge. They need to use them all and find mediating virtues such as prudence, forethought and tact (Alvsvåg, 2009), empathy or 'research literacy' (Eriksen, 2022) to reconcile them. Researchers' *scientific knowledge* is sometimes considered a subtype of professional knowledge and sometimes seen as one of the types of knowledge professionals base their practice on. It leans to the left of the poles sketched above, in that it is analytical, theoretical, explicit, and evidence-based knowledge.[1]

Thinking about different kinds of knowledge is nothing new. You find it in the early Socratic dialogues, for instance, and there have always been societal movements and epistemological debates that discussed alternative bases of insight, rationality and objectivity. Donna Haraway's (1988) feminist perspective on situated knowledges and Thomasina Borkman's (1976) early reflections on the experiential knowledge of self-help groups are stellar examples of the 1970s and 1980s. However, among the different forms of knowledge, the less credentialed forms have arguably a more contested status and have generally received less attention than scientific and professional knowledge, at least within academic discourse and policy-making contexts. In some societal contexts, the degree of *institutionalisation* of 'alternative,' non-credentialed kinds of expertise seems to be increasing. In Norway, for instance, some distinct organizational changes have been made that ensure a more standard involvement of 'experts-by-experience' into policy-making and service delivery. In the health field, we see this reflected by the Norwegian health directorate's ('Helsedirektoratet') guideline of 'knowledge-based practice,' which is to guide all policy-making on health. Knowledge-based practice is defined as consisting of research-based evidence, health personnel's knowledge (called 'experience-based knowledge' within that context) and 'user knowledge,' which denotes the experience-based expertise and needs of patients and caretakers that have to be

[1] Which kind of knowledge is emphasised in sense-making practices, partly depends on context and in particular the mode of public involvement (Alm Andreassen, 2018; Krick, 2025).

taken into account in all health programs and projects (see also Williams & Glasby, 2010). Another example of institutionalisation is the establishment of an internal 'user involvement center' ('Senter for brukermedvirkning') in the Norwegian health directorate that, in parts, consist of experiential, lay experts and is responsible for implementing user involvement in the everyday work of the directorate. Institutionalisation does typically not occur accidentally, but tends to reflect societal developments. The idea that opportunities for public engagement should be extended has become a widely shared consensus amongst policy-makers as well as citizens today around the globe. It responds to the crisis of representative democracy, the loss of trust in state institutions and tendencies at democratic backsliding. The rationale behind efforts at widening citizen involvement is often just as much about meaningful engagement, responsiveness and civic empowerment as well as the increase of compliance and the use of citizens' (knowledge) resources. In any case, embracing lay perspectives as expertise, thus enhancing their status and involving them in the making of policies dovetails with the 'participatory turn' of contemporary public policy-making (Krick, 2021). In the cited Norwegian case, the involvement of users in health treatment and service delivery is highly institutionalised. It is ensured by law, and the inclusion of this kind of knowledge into the health system's management substantiates patient involvement rights. While the health sector is particularly advanced in that respect in Norway, other societal segments seem to slowly follow that example, thus reconfirming the 'participatory dogma' of contemporary governance (Meriluoto, 2017, p.294) as well as trends of 'evidence-based policy-making.'

When the foundations of public knowledge and expertise are being re-negotiated, and practical, experience-based forms of knowledge seem to be gaining ground, new analyses of the relationship of experts, citizens and the state, as well as the relative status of different kinds of knowledge, are called for. If we acknowledge that the criteria we, as societies, have developed to judge the trustworthiness of experts are tailored towards scientific expertise in particular, an important question becomes: Under which circumstances do we want to trust alternative, experience-based knowledge claims made by lay people? How do we know this is (reliable) expertise? And when do we even want to call it expertise?

Expertise is not the same as knowledge

Expertise is not the same as knowledge, and not all knowledge qualifies as expertise. 'Expert' and 'Expertise' are honorary titles or 'epistemological badges' that radiate epistemic authority (Krick, 2022). Expertise is a certain kind of knowledge, the *specialised knowledge that experts hold*. It allows them to make judgements, give advice and identify courses of action; it enables them to offer authoritative guidance and provide us with orientation in the world (Eyal, 2019, p.24; Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993, p.748; Grundmann, 2017, p.26, 42; Krick, 2021, p.46f.; Jasanoff, 2005, p.3; Nowotny, 2001, p.151). Sociologically speaking, 'expert' is a relational concept that signifies a social status, i.e. the status of being recognised by others as *having reliable (a) and useful (b) knowledge concerning a specific problem* (Eyal, 2019, p.22;

Straßheim, 2008, p.292). Expertise can build on all kinds of sources. It can incorporate scientific, professional, and credentialed knowledge, as well as informal, tacit, alternative and non-credentialed forms. It can relate to practical know-how, as well as to scholastic, propositional knowledge and a mixture of these forms.

Regarding a) the *reliability* of expertise claims, two requirements stand out in expertise studies that build on such a wide, encompassing expertise notion: Reliable (or trustworthy) expertise is indicated by (1) the specialised *capabilities* and *competences* or those deemed experts (Eyal, 2019, p.36; Grundmann, 2017, p.26; Krick, 2018, p.214f.; 2021, p.51; Straßheim, 2008, p.292) and (2) a certain disinterestedness of these agents that supports the objectivity or generalizability of their claims (Haas, 2004, p.576; Krick, 2018, p.215; Krick & Holst, 2019, p.126; Lentsch & Weingart, 2011, p.361; cf. however Grundmann, 2017, p.26, 45). These standards can translate into quite different conditions and indicators, depending on the type of knowledge in focus.

The b) *usefulness* of knowledge and expertise has to do with (1) its *relevance* for a specific problem (its 'issue-relatedness' or 'problem-orientation') and with (2) its *specialisation and originality* (or 'non-ubiquitousness') (Krick, 2022, p.1004; see also Haas, 2004). While the importance of relevance may be self-evident (though sometimes taken for granted for exactly that reason), the specialization criterion might need to be explained with regard to non-scientific expertise: This kind of knowledge is particularly useful when it is precisely *not* 'everyday knowledge' that simply everybody (including policy-makers or scientists) would also have, just by living on earth and being a human being. Mundane, easily acquired knowledge (such as how to book a hotel online) or knowledge irrelevant to others' actions (like what you had for breakfast) would typically not be considered expertise. The experiences of migrant youths living in a deprived neighbourhood, by contrast, can serve as an example of experience-based knowledge that is often desperately sought by planning authorities interested in involving those affected by urban development, yet hard to come by because of the general distance of the elites from these social groups and the particularly low degrees of active participation by these citizens.

Table 1

Pragmatist quality criteria of reliable, useful expertise

Reliability	Usefulness
a) Specialised capabilites and competences of an expert	a) Relevance (or issue-relatedness) of claims
b) Expert disinterestedness (or impartiality)	b) Specialisation & originality (or non-ubiquitousness) of claims

If we do not want to call any claim 'expertise,' we need to ask under which circumstances we want to trust knowledge claims and let them influence our courses of action. In particular: When do we want to trust experience-based, lay expertise claims? How does the quality of lay expertise claims compare to professional and scientific expertise? Can the normative criteria be modelled on more conventional forms of expertise, or do we need a fundamentally different heuristic?

Same standards, different manifestations—juxtaposing scientific and citizens' expertise

To be sure, citizen expertise does not answer to epistemic quality demands in the same way as scientific expertise, which is the most prestigious and widely acknowledged kind of expertise that I will use for contrasting and clarifying purposes in the following.

First, citizen expertise is not based on rigorous, systematic analysis, which is the main scientific method of knowledge production & validation and the essence of academic proficiency. Second, it is not 'neutral,' 'objective' or independent of interests in the same sense as academic expertise. When it comes to lay, experience-based expertise, the line between insights and interests is particularly hard to draw. Of course, scientists are never fully 'neutral,' either. What they focus on may have a very personal grounding, research funding sources are often private, and any discipline's trajectory is, of course, deeply socially entrenched. Yet, one of the main and defining characteristics of experiential experts is that they cannot detach themselves from the things they make statements about because they are personally affected by them.

Citizen expertise is based on firsthand, lived experience and insights that come with being part of a phenomenon (Blume, 2017, 94). Experiential knowledge is "truth learned from personal experience with a phenomenon rather than truth acquired by discursive reasoning, observation, or reflection on information provided by others" (Borkman, 1976, p.446; see also Collins/Evans, 2002; Meriluoto, 2017; Noorani, 2013). Experience-based experts *speak on behalf of something that is part of themselves* (their body, their environment, their service use) (Strasser et al., 2019, p.65). It can be argued that lived experience provides the knower with equally rich data and a method for drawing conclusions and making knowledge judgments that is comparably valid as scientific approaches to knowledge production and validation. Experience is the essence of competence of non-credentialed experts. Besides, citizen expertise can be just as specialised and non-ubiquitous as academic expertise. Experience-based claims are therefore, *in theory,* just as precious, sought-after and hard-to-come-by, and thus certainly as useful for others who seek advice. What is more, experience-based expertise is certainly not generally less relevant, maybe sometimes even more relevant than scientific knowledge, because of its applicability and its close link to people's 'real problems.' Finally, individuals who draw on experience do not necessarily advocate their own private interests, but often knowledge gathered through encounters with many (Alm Andreassen et al., 2014).

What needs to be discussed in more depth is the independence criterion of reliable expertise. It is one of the key sources of authority that researchers providing advice draw on; On the strengths of their organisational affiliations with publicly funded research institutions, they tend to be relatively independent in financial and political regard, and can claim to be objective or impartial more easily.

Experience-based, lay experts will not be regarded as independent in the same way. They are, by definition, affected by the issues they know a lot about and potentially provide useful expertise on. On an *individual* level, we should therefore probably not expect detachment and impartiality from non-credentialed, citizen experts. However, it can be argued that the impartiality (or objectivity) of such stakeholder expertise can be approximated on a *collective* level, by way of involving a diversity of experts and balancing their viewpoints. or by ensuring that individuals make their claims based on multiple insights. *Multiperspectivity* and *balance* may not provide the same kind of impartiality that researchers can claim. However, one can indeed argue that a certain disinterestedness and generalizability of claims come with integrating the plurality of affected interests, because it evens out biases. This kind of objectivity has been called 'social objectivity' in epistemological studies (Büter, 2010; see also Longino, 1990).

Proxies and pragmatic indicators of epistemic quality

Yet, even if we agree on the quality criteria discussed above and accept that practical, experience-based expertise is not generally less epistemically valuable than more credentialed and widely acknowledged forms of expertise, it is notoriously difficult to *judge* the epistemic quality of experts' claims *directly*, regardless of the kind of expertise. Expert trustworthiness emanates from expert proficiency and competence, independence and integrity, but this is often very hard to evaluate from the outside. The difficulty of knowing the quality of expertise has concerned thinkers for centuries. One of the difficulties has to do with the 'novice-expert problem' (Goldmann, 2001): Because we typically lack expertise on issues that we seek advice on, a non-expert cannot judge the 'truth degree' of an expert's statements. Besides, it takes a lot of effort to evaluate how independent an individual expert is of conflicts of interest—and it is nearly impossible to assess the rigour of the analytical procedure used to generate knowledge in individual cases.

Instead of conducting in-depth investigations of potential experts giving testimony, or becoming experts ourselves, we therefore use *truth proxies* and *pragmatic indicators of epistemic authority*. Helpful markers are the organisational affiliation and position of a potential expert, his or her track record of work output and the certificates received for professional training. Depending on the profession, the variety and intensity of tasks performed, the teaching and onboarding record, the level of seniority and responsibility achieved, the reputation of the employer and the status of training institutes all indicate a professional's proficiency and probity. In the most advanced professions, formal accreditations are another sign of authority and proficiency.

These track record-based criteria also apply to academia where the output record is about publications and acquired funding, where academic degrees and honours are the key certificates, and affiliation has to be with a research institution. As modern society's number one knowledge production system, the sciences have developed a particularly sophisticated and highly formalised internal quality assurance system that sets it apart from other professions (Jasanoff, 1987; Weingart, 2001): Entry hurdles to academia are very high, competition is fierce, job security is low and especially permanent positions are few and hard to acquire in most countries. Holding a permanent senior academic position (i.e. often bestowed by the title of professor) at one of the higher-ranking research institutions, therefore, sends a signal of exceptional proficiency and authority. Certificates such as the PhD or the 'Habilitation' (that is still the common next step in many university systems) are intellectually demanding, take many years of strain to complete and represent only the minimal requirement for system entry (or continuance in a position). Finally, work output in terms of publications and research grants undergoes strict, formalised and anonymous reviews by peers, and is generally highly competitive—especially before the 'Matthew effect' of receiving one grant on top of the other unfolds. Despite all its flaws and injustices, especially regarding plurality and accountability, the academic quality assurance system potentially ensures a high quality of research, and many within and outside academia use it as a tool to evaluate the trustworthiness of academic experts' claims by proxy.

Shortcuts to assessing the quality of alternative, lay forms of expertise

The problem with experience-based, lay expertise is that such credentials-based indicators cannot simply be copied. This is because of some fundamental differences between professional and scientific knowledge on the one hand and citizens' expertise on the other: First, citizens' expertise is non-certified by nature. Second, and relatedly, there will usually be no track record of work success or past provisions of expertise publicly available to judge from. Third, lay experts will not be employed by a knowledge-producing institution, nor will their jobs usually indicate their domain of experience-based expertise. The state of their knowledge is therefore elusive, slippery, informal, non-credentialed, as well as 'situated' (i.e. context- and perspective-dependent), and its quality is very hard to evaluate for others. Of course, the fact that something is difficult to evaluate does not diminish its quality per se.

The question that warrants more attention against this background is: How can we then judge the epistemic quality of experiential expertise indirectly? What indicates the epistemic credentials of lay experts? Are there shortcuts we can use for orientation, as in the case of professional and scientific knowledge? These questions, of course, become particularly salient if we think of societal and political issues—under which conditions do we accept being guided by such knowledge claims when regulating our public affairs and taking collective decisions?

One idea would be to introduce certificates for lay experts, issued, for instance, upon completion of a training course. Such a certificate would confirm the experience and proficiency of alternative holders of expertise and make it easier to consult or hire such experts. What may at first sound odd or unlikely, impractical or even harmful to the nature and status of this kind of expertise, is in fact already becoming established in some fields where the practice of user involvement is more advanced. In the health sector in many countries, certified experiential experts, or 'peer support workers,' are increasingly involved in the system to support peers, building bridges between patients and health personnel, informing about user perspectives and advising on system changes.[2] While a completed training course and certificate are not always mandatory to be employed in a position of expert-by-experience, it certainly helps. In Norway, three training programs exist by now in the biggest cities, Trondheim, Bergen and Oslo, with slightly different curricula. In Germany, the 'EX-IN'-program, which goes back to the EU-project 'experienced involvement' (hence EX-IN), offers courses for experts-by-experience all over the country (EX-IN, 2025).[3]

It is probably no coincidence that attempts at professionalising lay, experience-based forms of knowledge in this way are most advanced in the field of *mental* health. One reason may be that for 'less biological' health problems, other responses and forms of knowledge are needed than what the medical profession can provide. Another reason is that patients with these experiences were not taken seriously, but stigmatised and discriminated against for a long time within the hierarchy of illnesses, which called for affirmative action and an elevation of these kinds of perspectives. Yet, despite the good reasons for professionalising peer support and validating lay knowledge claims by ensuring they transcend individual experiences and incorporate multiple viewpoints, such courses have also been criticised for 'muddying the authenticity' of lay claims and streamlining individual experiences (Meriluoto, 2017; Noohrani, 2013). To be sure, such approaches subject experience-based knowledge to some extent to the standards of professional knowledge, changing the nature of this knowledge on the way. Yet, there is also a lot of merit in professionalising the production and dissemination of experience-based knowledge, because the pooling and processing of individual perspectives adds to the generalizability or 'objectivity' of such claims, thus potentially boosting their validity and reliability.

Another response to the difficulty of judging the reliability of lay claims to expertise directly is to turn to organisations representing certain groups of the affected. Examples would be

[2] Experts-by-experience in the health sector go under many different names. On top of the already mentioned 'experts-by-experience' and 'peer support worker', common titles are, for instance, 'lived experience practitioner', 'peer-provider', 'peer counsellors', recovery tutors (the German 'Genesungsbegleiter') or 'experience counsellor' (the Norwegian 'Erfaringskonsulenter').

[3] The term EX-IN is in this context also used for a person with a psychiatric diagnosis that has completed and EX IN-course successfully and can be considered a certified expert-by-experience, ready to support and accompany persons with mental health problems.

cancer associations or neighbourhood community groups who can bring in specialised experiences of cancer patients and caretakers, or residents and shop owners in a certain local community, respectively. This may sound risky at first from an epistemological perspective because interest organisations will, by their very nature, be partial, and their expertise biased towards the interests of those they represent. Yet, as argued above, neither are free-floating, individual experts-by-experience disinterested, and even scientists are never neutral (Douglas, 2009); Besides, the neutrality criterion of reliable expertise does not have to be fulfilled by every single expert (representative) individually, but can be approximated by way of the 'social objectivity' that comes with involving and balancing a diversity of different viewpoints. Of course, this also applies to scientific knowledge whose quality rises with the multiplicity of voices and disciplines involved.

What needs to be let go of, however, are romantic ideas of lay, detached, non-organised citizens being more authentic, neutral and trustworthy than organised citizens (see also Barnes, 1999; Martin, 2008). When experience-based expertise is sought from civic organisations, expert trustworthiness is not so much about individual accomplishments, but about an organisation's credentials. These will be much more visible and thus easier to identify and scrutinise, given the need for such organisations to flag their activities publicly. When civic organisations are democratically organised, they will furthermore have established procedures of pooling and processing their members' views. Spokespersons can, on these grounds, make generalizable claims on behalf of their constituency, which adds to the epistemic quality of such claims. To be sure, a spokesperson of such an organisation will not be as epistemically authoritative as a professional or a scientist, whose identity builds very much on their specialised knowledge, and they might not see themselves first and foremost as experts, but as advocates. Nonetheless, many civic organisations actually make knowledge transfer one of their goals, and many use 'information' as an 'access good' to the policy realm (Bouwen, 2002; Gornitzka & Krick, 2018). Some civic organisations stand out in collecting, systematising and transferring knowledge based on user experiences. Intriguing examples are the hybrids of knowledge broker and advocacy group active in the mental health field in Norway that call themselves 'National center for experience-based knowledge,' 'Competence center for lived experience and service development' or 'Norwegian resource center for community mental health.'

Conclusion

The advent of lay expertise in some societal sectors has the potential to stir up the relationship between professionals, experts, citizens and the state. It challenges the classic hierarchy between different forms of knowledge, with science (especially the natural sciences' rigorous methods and numerical evidence) ranking particularly high, while 'user knowledge' ranks lowest, and it blurs the traditional boundary between professionals and citizens in a relationship where the first solves the problems of the latter with the help of professional knowledge (Harrits & Larsen, 2016). Yet, it is important to note that there is actually no clear demarcation

between professionals and experts-by-experience when it comes to their knowledge base: Professional knowledge is a mix of training-, analysis- and research-based knowledge on the one hand and experience-based knowledge on the other hand anyway. Thus, professional knowledge integrates practical and theoretical knowledge quite naturally, and one could even argue that the rise of the experience-based knowledge of lay citizens could enhance the status of the experience-based part of professional knowledge.

One might, of course, wonder whether a widened understanding of expertise (that embraces lay knowledge) waters down societal knowledge standards or undermines conventional forms of expertise. Indeed, we should be careful not to elevate any claim to the status of knowledge, or any knowledge to the status of expertise, because these are honorary titles that need to be earned. This has always been both true and important, but is has become even more crucial in times where universities and academic freedom have come under attack even in some of the longer established democracies, and where populist and authoritarian voices deny truths and facts, support public 'bullshitting' and validate 'gut-feeling' as a reliable source of knowledge on the grounds of anti-intellectualism, elite scepticism and a disdain for science. Besides, in some parts of civil society that fight for better acknowledgement of the lesser heard voices, there is a certain danger of romanticising the experience-based, often narratively conveyed knowledge claims of 'alternative,' 'indigenous' and 'local' communities, depicting them, more or less explicitly, as somehow superior, purer and more authentic. While the intention here is unlikely to be a devaluation of science, uncritically embracing any claim—including claims of preference and opinion—as knowledge claims can undermine public sense-making severely. Given the ideological risk of elevating narrative accounts to incontestable truths—and thereby shielding them from critique—we should be cautious not to idealise narrative knowledge more than other forms. "Far from being an unqualified source of knowledge**,** experience must be treated with the same kind of scepticism and suspicion with which we approach all other sources of authoritative knowledge" (Gabriel, 2004, p.183). It is important to note that this may present a challenge, especially when confronted with tales of suffering and vicitimisation that have the "to inoculate themselves against criticism, precisely by emerging as the voice of authentic experience, an experience that cannot be denied, without violating the integrity of the narrator" (Gabriel, 2004, p.173). An important response to these challenges is to subject experience-based types of knowledge to the same quality standards as any other kind of knowledge, while allowing for different paths to fulfilling them.

This study argued that claims to expertise need to be relevant and non-ubiquitous, as well as provided by specialised and impartial experts to qualify as useful and reliable—irrespective of the kind of knowledge, the type of speaker and the knowledge production process. Applying these generalised epistemic quality criteria is, however, a much bigger challenge when it comes to practical experience-based knowledge that is usually non-formalised and uncredentialed, leaving us without the usual proxies and shortcuts we use for evaluating the reliability of expertise claims. The responses to this challenge that this study discusses both follow the

path of professionalising lay knowledge practices in different ways, thereby changing the nature of this knowledge to some extent. Whether we take to professional stakeholders as providers of processed, experience-based expertise or certify this kind of knowledge through formalised training, both approaches likely add to the status of experience-based claims. Still, they may come at the price of mainstreaming individual experiences and excluding some viewpoints.

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