

Dynamics behind local variations in elderly care

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Abstract:

Inspired by neoliberal ideas most European countries have experienced a restructuring of national elderly care programs, which has widened the opportunities for outsourcing and contractualisation of parts of elderly care services.

The delivery of care services, however, is the prime responsibility of local governments, and local governments do not always act in accordance with the political signals and aspirations of national government. Local governments have some autonomy with regard to policy formation as well as the design and implementation of policies. In effect, huge local differences exist with regard to the provision of elderly care services. One measurable out-come of local autonomy is differences in local government spending in the area of elderly care. In Denmark, for instance, in 2007 the most 'expensive' local government did spend DKK 78,118 per elderly (+65) per year, while the 'cheapest' local government only did spend DKK 41.901 per elderly per year.

In this paper the aim is to give an account for the dynamics behind the huge differences in expenditures in local elderly care in Denmark by means of linear regression analysis. Independent variables are (1) political factors such as the colour of local government and voter preferences; (2) problem pressure factors such as the local demographic structure; (3) economic factors such as the financial resources of the municipalities, and (4) administrative factors such as productivity in the public elderly sector.