DOES RISK OF SERVICE DECLINE INCREASE POLITICAL SUPPORT TOWARDS COPRODUCTION? RESULTS OF A FACTORIAL SURVEY EXPERIMENT

INTRODUCTION

Citizens are increasingly involved in public sector initiatives that targets greater citizen inputs towards the delivery of public services – also often referred to as coproduction (Alford, 2009; Bovaird, 2007; Ostrom, 1996). In recent years, public sector driven initiatives involving citizens as coproducers of public services has been shown extensive interest from both political decision makers, political interest organizations, public managers and researchers (Alford & Freijser, 2018; Howlett et al., 2017; Sorrentino et al., 2018). For instance, coproduction could take the form of relatives to service-users involved in solving day-to-day tasks at the at the local nursing home as part of a public sector initiative (Jensen & Thomsen, 2022; Thomsen & Jensen, 2019)

For years, a substantial body of literature has been devoted to understanding coproduction from the perspective of citizens such as by studying their motivation to engage in coproduction initiatives and how to increase citizen willingness to coproduce public services (Andersen et al., 2020; Jakobsen, 2012; Jakobsen & Thomsen, 2015; Thomsen & Jakobsen, 2015). Recently, research has also been devoted to understanding coproduction from the perspective of frontline staff such as their experiences with involving citizens in public service delivery (Thomsen & Jensen, 2019), potential frontline stereotypes towards citizens as coproducers (Jensen & Thomsen, 2022) and the role perception of frontline staff in coproduction (Steen & Tuurnas, 2018; Tuurnas, 2015, 2016). While both citizen and frontline input is highly important to the success of coproduction initiatives, research has also shown how the success of coproduction initiatives is deeply dependent on political support (Howlett, 2019; Howlett et al., 2017; Sorrentino et al., 2018). This only speaks more to current debates in coproduction literature on

increasing political saliency of coproduction initiatives (Alford & O'Flynn, 2012; Howlett et al., 2017; Loeffler, 2020; Sorrentino et al., 2018; Verschuere et al., 2012). Hence, we argue how a greater understanding of what stimulates political support for coproduction initiatives to be of immense importance to public administration research.

For decades, researchers have emphasized coproduction initiatives as a public sector strategy to uphold service quality in times of potential service decline due to fiscal pressure and resource scarcity in the public sector (Brudney, 1984; Brudney & England, 1983; Parks et al., 1981). Today, scholars argue the link between coproduction initiatives and service decline to be of only increasing importance as many western welfare states face resource pressure due to changing demographics and future prospects of modest economic growth (Damgaard et al., 2023). However, in recurring discussions of coproduction as public sector strategy to uphold service quality in times of potential service decline lies a central assumption that risk of service decline stimulates support of public sector decision makers towards coproduction. To this day, scarce empirical evidence is available testing this assumption.

In this study, we test the central assumption in coproduction literature that risk of service decline matters to decision maker support towards coproduction initiatives by using a preregistered two-by-two factorial survey experiment on Danish local council members. Following recurring discussions of coproduction scholars, we stipulate how service decline will generally increase political support towards coproduction initiatives. However, a common argument in coproduction literature is the importance of distinguishing between different types of coproduction initiatives. A common distinction is made in coproduction literature as to whether citizens coproduce tasks that are directly related to the core service of the organization or whether citizens coproduce tasks that are complementary to the core service of the organization (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016). In this study, we stipulate how policy makers will

be keener towards supporting coproduction of complementary service tasks than of core tasks as the risk of political conflict is lower.

In this study, we contribute to coproduction literature in several ways. First, we contribute to coproduction literature by shedding light on coproduction initiatives from the perspective of political decision makers. Though the important role of political decision makers as initiators of coproduction initiatives has often been discussed in coproduction literature and how the presence of political support matters deeply to the success of coproduction initiatives, scarce empirical evidence is available investigating coproduction from a political perspective. Second, we contribute to coproduction literature by testing a central assumption deeply centered in coproduction literature of how coproduction initiatives are an often-used strategy to uphold service quality in times of service decline and thus assumes that political support is stimulated by the potential risk of declining levels of service.

DEFINING COPRODUCTION

The concept of coproduction has been well known to scholars since the 1970s (Brudney & England, 1983; Parks et al., 1981; Whitaker, 1980). Still, the definition of the coproduction concept is often highly complex and thus requires careful consideration of the questions "for whom", "by whom?" and "of what?" (Alford, 2009; Bovaird, 2007; Nabatchi et al., 2017). In the initial stages of coproduction literature, Parks et al. (1981) defined the concept as the mixing of input from both consumer producers (e.g. service-users) and regular producers (e.g. public employees). Following this definition, scholars have argued other non-state actors to also be potential co-producers of public services such as relatives, volunteers, or community groups (Bovaird, 2007; Brudney & England, 1983).

In this study, we rely on a more recent conceptualization of the coproduction concept often used in coproduction literature (Damgaard et al., 2023; Loeffler, 2015; Nabatchi et al., 2017;

Sorrentino et al., 2018; Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). In their conceptualization of the coproduction concept, Bovaird et al. (2015) distinguishes between different types of coproduction based on two parameters. First, they distinguish based on the input provided. Input can be provided by non-state actors either individually or collectively. Second, they also distinguish based on the actor in which it benefits. Those benefitting from coproduction can be either a service-user coproducing a service in which they receive themselves or a relative (private coproduction), or someone not directly involved in the coproduction process (philanthropic coproduction). Thus, scholars have pointed to relatives assisting with day-to-day practical tasks in a nursing home as an example of private individual coproduction (Damgaard et al., 2023; Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). In this study, we focus on private individual coproduction.

WHY STUDY COPRODUCTION FROM A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

A substantial body of literature has been concerned with shedding light upon the important perspectives of citizens in coproduction processes such as how to motivate citizens to engage in coproduction initiatives (Hattke & Kalucza, 2019; Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013; Thomsen & Jakobsen, 2015), the importance of citizen self-efficacy in coproduction settings (Thomsen, 2017), how to increase meaningfulness for citizen coproducers (Van Eijk & Steen, 2016) and increased the awareness of psychological costs for citizens when engaging in coproduction of public services (Thomsen et al., 2020). Recent research has also been devoted to understanding coproduction from the perspective of frontline staff such as their role perceptions in coproduction processes (Steen & Tuurnas, 2018) and frontline experiences with volunteers (Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). In this article, we develop the argument how political perspectives to coproduction are yet to be explored as we argue how unfolding the political dimensions to coproduction is of great importance to public administration research.

First, we argue how a political perspective is important to understand the occurrence and potential success of coproduction initiatives due to the setting in which coproduction takes place. As often pointed out by scholars in coproduction literature, the involvement of citizens as coproducers of public services most often takes place in classic public service organizations such as primary schools or nursing homes (Alford, 2009; Bovaird, 2007; Honingh et al., 2020). While the actors directly involved in coproduction processes are most often citizens and frontline staff - and thus provide important perspectives to the study of coproduction - many public service organizations are at the same time often highly influenced by political decision making and are thus also often characterized by hierarchical organizational structures specific to organizations having to navigate within a political spectrum (Andersen & Jakobsen, 2018). Because public service organizations are often highly influenced by political decision making, scholars have stressed how both the occurrence and success of coproduction initiatives is deeply dependent on political support (Howlett, 2019; Howlett et al., 2017; Kekez et al., 2018; Sorrentino et al., 2018) Thus, we perceive a political perspective to coproduction as one of several key factors to achieve a greater understand of the extent to which coproduction initiatives occur, succeed, or fail not only within specific public service organizations, but also in the implementation of similar coproduction initiatives across public service organizations.

Further, we argue how unfolding the political perspective of coproduction also holds great potential for a deeper understanding of implementation processes of coproduction. In coproduction literature, a recurring discussion is how future research should be devoted to a greater understanding of the barriers and drivers of implementation processes of coproduction (Kang & Van Ryzin, 2019; Loeffler, 2020; Nabatchi et al., 2011; Verschuere et al., 2012). Still, a central argument in public policy and public administration literature is how studying the initial phases of policies is vital to understanding later stages of implementation and thus also why policies succeed or fail (Matland, 1995; May & Winter, 2007; Nakamura & Smallwood,

1980; Winter, 1985). Hence, by studying the initial political phases of coproduction initiatives, important steps can be made towards a greater understanding of the barriers and successes to later implementation stages of coproduction.

COPRODUCTION AS POLICY STRATEGY IN TIMES OF SERVICE DECLINE

Through the years, coproduction scholars have discussed potential motivations for policy makers to engage citizens as coproducers of public services (Kiser & Percy, 1980; Levine & Fisher, 1984; Parks et al., 1981; Whitaker, 1980). One often recurring argument in coproduction literature is how this motivation often stems from inability to uphold current service levels due to fiscal pressure (Brudney, 1984; Brudney & England, 1983; Levine & Fisher, 1984; Ostrom & Ostrom, 1979; Parks et al., 1981; Sharp, 1980).

In their seminal work, Parks et al. (1981) speak to the potential of engaging consumer producers (citizens) with regular producers (public employees) in the delivery of public services due to the potential of citizen input to uphold service quality when current service levels are unable to continue. Based on this potential, Parks et al. (1981) argue how attention from policy makers towards coproduction is expected to rise as service demands will be increasingly challenging to uphold due to fiscal pressure. In following years, several scholars (Brudney, 1984; Brudney & England, 1983; Levine & Fisher, 1984) discuss the potential of coproduction as policy strategy by asking citizens to 'pitch in' when available resources are reduced, but demands for services increase. It is argued how coproduction is used as policy alternative to more classical (and maybe more drastic) types of retrenchment as coproduction holds the potential to foster greater legitimacy and sense of community (Brudney & England, 1983; Levine & Fisher, 1984). Thus, coproduction becomes a means of asking 'what citizens in the near future can do for their cities that citizens otherwise have come to expect their cities to do for them' (Brudney & England, 1983).

However, in these arguments one central assumption stands out. When Parks et al. (1981) argues how policy maker attention towards coproduction is expected to rise when current service levels are challenged due to fiscal pressure, a central assumption is how the presence of a pressure to uphold current service levels positively stimulates policy maker attention towards coproduction. In the same way, a similar assumption can be found in the argument of coproduction as a potential policy strategy when available resources are reduced, and service demands increase. Thus, if the presence of pressure to uphold current service levels positively stimulates policy maker attention towards coproduction, this would lead to the expectation that when confronted with a risk of declining service levels, policy maker support towards coproduction will increase. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: Risk of service decline will increase policy maker support towards co-production initiatives

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF COPRODUCTION INITIATIVES: CORE VS. COMPLEMENTARY SERVICE TASKS

While we generally expect risk of service decline to increase policy maker support towards coproduction initiatives based on common arguments in coproduction literature, we argue there to be a greater level of complexity to this question. Though economic risks or risks of declining service levels are often assumed as the main motivation for policy makers to implement coproduction initiatives, showing political support for coproduction initiatives could also introduce additional political risks depending on the type of service task being coproduced. In the next section, we first distinguish between different types of service tasks and argue how this distinction will be expected to affect differently the willingness of policy makers to express political support towards coproduction. Finally, we discuss how the effect of coproduction type on willingness to support coproduction might be stronger or weaker depending on whether policy makers are facing a risk of declining service levels or not.

In coproduction literature, a common distinction is made as to whether the input provided by citizens is to be interdependent with or in substitution of public input (Ostrom, 1996; Parks et al., 1981). Following the logic of interdependence vs. substitution of public input, recent studies such as Brandsen and Honingh (2016) suggest distinguishing citizen input based on the type of task citizens are to perform and whether it being in close proximity to the core service of the organization or not. In this sense, tasks can be either categorized as core or complementary tasks. Core tasks can be defined as tasks directly related to the core services of the organization such assisting with teaching tasks at primary schools (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016) or taking on personal care tasks at a nursing home (Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). As core tasks often require both knowledge and skills related to a specific profession or organizational structure, performing this type of task could be considered as substitutionary of public input. Complementary tasks on the other hand, can be defined as tasks not directly related to the core services of the organization such as taking part in social events at a nursing home (Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). Typically, this type of task does not require specific knowledge or skills in the same way as core tasks and could thus be considered as complementing – or being interdependent with – public sector input.

In recent years, scholars have pointed to a potential difference in attitude of citizens and frontline staff towards coproduction initiatives based on whether core service tasks or complementary service tasks are to be coproduced (Damgaard et al., 2023; Jensen & Thomsen, 2022, 2023; Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). In a study by Damgaard et al. (2023), findings suggest how citizens show a more positive attitude towards coproducing core service tasks than coproducing complementary service tasks when confronted with a potential decline in current service levels. Hence, it is discussed how this finding may speak to a broader debate of coproduction as policy strategy (Damgaard et al., 2023). At the same time, scholars have shown how frontline staff are found to be highly skeptical of involving citizens in coproduction of

core service tasks (Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). Thus, while some scholars argue how involving citizens in coproduction of core service tasks may be especially appealing from a policy maker perspective (Brandsen & Honingh, 2016), we argue how involving citizens as coproducers of core service tasks would introduce great political risks; more specifically an increased risk of conflict with frontline staff.

WHEN EXPRESSING SUPPORT INVOLVES AN INCREASED RISK OF CONFLICT: INTRODUCING THE PERSPECTIVE OF PROSPECT THEORY

Already in the early stages of coproduction literature, scholars have discussed how involving citizens in coproduction activities may lead to an increased risk of conflict and opposition from frontline staff (Parks et al., 1981; Sharp, 1980). More recently, scholars have shown the level of skepticism and resistance from frontline staff towards coproduction of core tasks to be significantly higher compared to complementary tasks (Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). Thus, it is argued how this reluctance to involve citizens in core service tasks is often caused by a fear of job insecurity, loss of autonomy and loss of service quality (Jensen & Thomsen, 2022; Thomsen & Jensen, 2019).

Previous research has shown how the attitude and behavior of frontline staff matters deeply to the success of implementing policy and achieving positive results (Matland, 1995; May & Winter, 2007; Winter, 1985). Thus, if frontline staff are found to be highly skeptical towards the involvement of citizens in core service tasks, expressing political support for core coproduction initiatives would be expected to hold a greater risk of conflict and opposition from frontline staff. As it is argued how the attitude and behavior of frontline staff is shown to matter deeply to the success implementing policy, policy makers are in this sense highly dependent on the attitude and behavior of frontline staff. Thus, we would expect policy makers to prefer decisions not leading to potential conflict and opposition from frontline staff and

therefore show less support towards coproduction initiatives involving core service tasks being performed by citizens. This leads to our second hypothesis:

H2: Policy makers will be more willing to support coproduction initiatives involving complementary service tasks being performed by citizens than coproduction initiatives involving core service tasks being performed by citizens.

While we generally expect policy makers to be more willing to support coproduction initiatives involving complementary service tasks being performed by citizens as this would potentially lead to less conflict with frontline staff, it raises a question of how policy makers respond when a decline in current service levels is also at risk. From the perspective of prospect theory, we would expect policy makers to respond to this dilemma based on an asymmetrical assessment of potential gains and losses (Novemsky & Kahneman, 2005; Tversky & Kahneman, 1991). In prospect theory, the decision-making process of an individual is often categorized into two distinct domains depending on whether a perceived threat is made to status quo; a *domain of gains* or a *domain of loss* (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). Generally, it is argued how individuals tend to prefer upholding status quo (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Schneider, 1992). In a domain of gains, no perceived threat is made to status quo resulting in individuals showing risk-aversive behavior, refraining from conflicts or risky decisions even though also potentially missing out on significant gains. In a domain of loss, a perceived threat is made to status quo resulting in risk-seeking behavior from individuals in order to avoid potential loss (Schneider, 1992).

From the perspective of policy makers, it can be argued how, when confronted with a risk of declining service levels, policy makers are placed in a domain of loss. As a risk of service decline could be argued to represent a perceived threat to status quo, we would expect a risk of service decline to result in policy makers showing more risk-seeing behavior. In this sense, policy makers are expected to pay less attention to potential conflicts with frontline staff, thus

weakening the positive relationship between complementary coproduction and political support for the initiative. This leads to our third hypothesis:

H3: Risk of service decline will weaken the positive relationship between complementary coproduction and political support for the initiative

RESEARCH DESIGN

Endogeneity issues are often cited as a common limitation in public management research (Blom-Hansen et al., 2015). Organizational changes are often made based on already existing problems that both civil servants and public managers are expected to solve. Therefore, it is difficult to study such changes in a causal setting, as various interests, priorities, etc. have already affected the process. It is therefore often advised to use experimental settings when examining organizational changes (Blom-Hansen et al., 2015). Thus, to test our theoretical argument and hypotheses, a survey experimental setting is used.

Another common difficulty in studying public sector decision makers such as elected officials or public managers is the issue of sample size. Given the demanding responsibilities of elected officials, it is common to experience a lower response rate compared to other respondent groups (Blom-Hansen et al., 2015). Thus, usually a response rate of 20-30% can be expected (Baekgaard et al., 2020; Nielsen & Jacobsen, 2018). Thus, in this study a preregistered[1] 2x2 factorial experimental design was used and respondents were randomly assigned into four experimental groups.

Experimental research is often argued to have low ecological validity as experiments do not capture the natural behavior of respondents. In this article, we argue the ecological validity of this study to be relatively high as respondents are elected officials in the form of council

[1] On January 17th, 2024 this study was preregistered prior to data collection at the Open Science Foundation registry (OSF): https://osf.io/2qr9m/?view_only=494a04d50e2645e9b1e28c643176d630

members. Hence, the design allows us to both make strong causal claims related to the effects of service decline and type of service task on policy maker attitude towards coproduction and thus allows us to study the mechanisms in a more natural setting.

Test case

To test our hypotheses, we need a test case that fulfills several requirements. First, as coproduction often occurs on local level in public service organizations such as nursing homes or primary schools (Andersen et al., 2017), we need a test case where policy makers are involved in political decision making on local level and therefore able to make an impact on these types of organizations. Second, we need a policy environment where current service levels are realistically challenged due to resource scarcity and therefore expected to create a realistic risk of declining service levels. Third, a test case is needed where different types of coproduction initiatives are used and where sufficient variation can be detected in the use of these initiatives. Finally, to perform our study in an experimental setting, a test case is needed where many policy makers are present to achieve sufficient statistical power. In the next section, we will discuss our choice of study population and test case policy area.

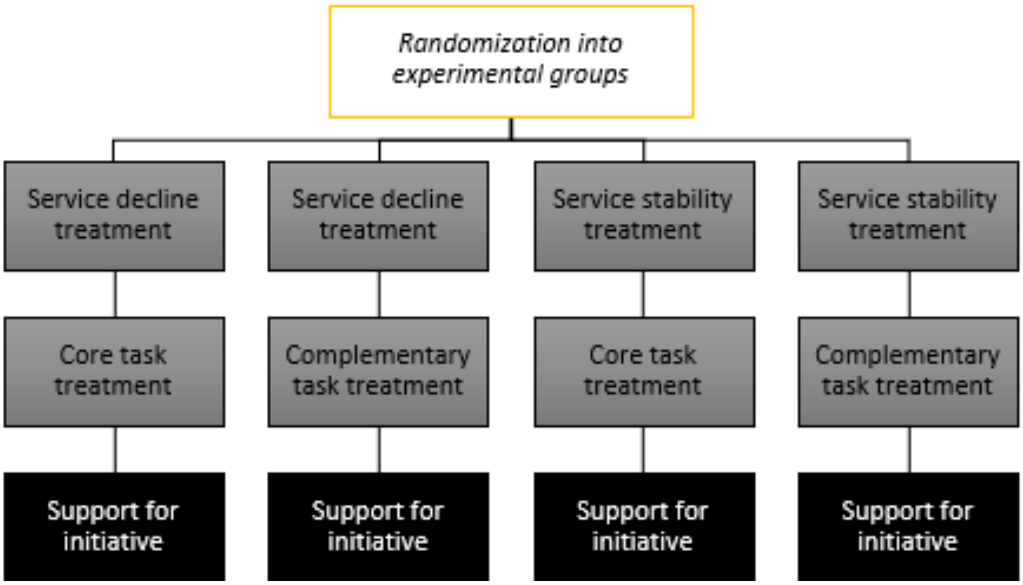
Based on these requirements, we chose council members of Danish municipalities as our study population. In 2021, 2.432 political officials were elected across 98 municipalities. Each municipality is governed by a council which usually consists of between nine and 50 politically elected members. The size of the council is determined by population size. In most municipalities, only the mayor is politically committed on a full-time basis (Bjørnholt et al., 2016). The most common structure of Danish municipalities is the committee form of government usually consisting of a compulsory finance committee with a series of standing committees each concerning specific policy areas such as public education, day care or elderly care (Baekgaard et al., 2020).

We consider Danish Council members useful for this study for several reasons. First, Danish council members act within the same national framework and on the same governmental level which provides us with sufficient statistical power to compare based on a sufficiently large sample of politicians. Second, in comparison to other countries Danish local governments have a substantially wide responsibility and discretion both in the interpretation and implementation of national laws. Danish local governments also have a high level of discretion in setting policy in many important policy areas such as public schools, daycare, and eldercare (Baekgaard et al., 2018; Baekgaard et al., 2020; Blom-Hansen & Heeager, 2010). Third, while the Danish welfare state is often characterized by universal and equal access to welfare, it is also a recurring public debate in Denmark how to uphold future service levels when numbers speak to future drastic demographic changes, only modest economic growth and regional effects (Velfærdsrådet, 2023).

For our test case policy area, we chose to focus on Danish nursing homes. In general, research has shown how nursing homes are a common place to observe the use of coproduction initiatives (Alford, 2009; Jensen & Thomsen, 2022). In recent years, an increasing number of Danish nursing homes have implemented different types of coproduction initiatives. One type of initiative which is increasingly implemented across Danish nursing homes, and that is also a highly politically salient topic, is the involvement of relatives to the residents in performing everyday tasks (Damgaard et al., 2023; Jensen & Thomsen, 2022; Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). While these tasks can be complementing the work of service professionals such as cleaning or organizing social activities for the residents, an increasing number of initiatives is also seen where relatives are involved in more professional tasks such as personal hygiene (Thomsen & Jensen, 2019). Thus, given the high level of political saliency towards this topic, we consider the increasing involvement of relatives to residents in Danish nursing homes a proper test case.

Experimental design

In this study, a 2x2 factorial experimental design was used inspired by the design used in Damgaard et al. (2023). Respondents in our study were assigned to one of four experimental groups based on simple randomization principles. The structure can be seen below:



First, respondents were exposed to a vignette showing either a service decline treatment or service stability treatment. The service decline treatment described a hypothetical scenario in which demographic changes in the municipality would be drastic and thus could potentially affect current service levels negatively. Respondents receiving the service stability treatment would receive a vignette describing a hypothetical scenario in which demographic changes in the municipality would be stable and thus would not affect current service levels. Following either the service stability treatment or service decline treatment, respondents were asked to name 2-3 key words from the text to active their understanding of the treatments similarly to the activation logic used in a recent study by Hattke and Kalucza (2019).

Afterwards, respondents would receive either a core service task treatment or complementary service task treatment. The core service task treatment would describe a public sector initiative where relatives to residents in a Danish nursing home were performing a service task directly

related to the core service of the nursing home. Thus, the task performed is substituting core tasks performed by service professionals. The complementary service task treatment would describe a public sector initiative where relatives to residents in a Danish nursing home were performing a service task not directly related to the core service of the nursing home. Thus, the task performed complements core tasks performed by service professionals**.** After receiving either the core service task treatment or the complementary service task treatment. A translated version of the vignettes can be seen below:

Service decline treatment	**Service stability treatment**
New report points to significant demographic change Imagine a situation where, at a local council meeting, you are presented with a new report on the future demographic development for all Danish municipalities. The report shows that your municipality will experience a significant increase in the number of elderly people over the age of 80 by 2030. *The report concludes that the significant demographic development will put the service level in your municipality under great pressure.*	**New report points to stable demographic development** Imagine a situation where, at a local council meeting, you are presented with a new report on the future demographic development for all Danish municipalities. The report shows that your municipality will experience a stable demographic development in the number of elderly people over the age of 80 until 2030. *The report concludes that the stable demographic development will not affect the service level in your municipality.*
Follow-up question	
Name three keywords you think best describe the scenario you just read. [OPEN TEXT FIELD]	
Core service task treatment	**Complementary task treatment**
Relatives are increasingly involved in professional tasks at Danish nursing homes In recent years, we have seen many new and innovative initiatives in the public sector in the hope of creating the best framework for welfare. Many nursing homes in Denmark are increasingly working actively with the involvement of relatives as a regular part of everyday life. *To give staff more time for other tasks, relatives are increasingly involved in professional tasks such as feeding or personal hygiene.*	**Relatives are increasingly involved in non-professional tasks at Danish nursing homes** In recent years, we have seen many new and innovative initiatives in the public sector in the hope of creating the best framework for welfare. For example, many nursing homes in Denmark are increasingly working actively to involve relatives as a regular part of everyday life. *To give staff more time for other tasks, relatives are increasingly involved in non-professional tasks such as outside walks or reading aloud.*

MEASURING POLITICAL SUPPORT

After receiving either the core service task treatment or the complementary service task treatment, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they would politically support a similar initiative in their municipality. As preregistered, political support was measured using four items on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = highly disagree and 5 = highly agree. All items

were developed specifically for the purpose of this study. To avoid potential order biases, the order of the items was randomized for each respondent. A translated version of the items can be seen below:

In the next part of the survey, we ask you to imagine yourself in a situation where a similar initiative was proposed in your municipality. There is general agreement in the council that the proposal is well researched and well written, but different perspectives on whether this reflects the preferred development within the municipality.

If such a proposal was put forward, I would...

- *Speak positively about the proposal at a local council meeting*
- *Vote for the proposal at a local council meeting*
- *Encourage other political colleagues to vote for the proposal*
- *Express my support for the proposal on social media*

Secondary analysis

In our hypotheses, we expect policy makers to be more willing to express political support for coproduction initiatives involving complementary tasks being performed by citizens compared to coproduction initiatives involving core tasks being performed by citizens. This expectation was based on the theoretical argument that expressing political support for core coproduction initiatives would imply a greater risk of conflict with frontline staff. Following this logic, we would expect core coproduction initiatives to also be considered as more politically sensitive compared to complementary coproduction initiatives. Thus, after answering the items measuring the extend to which they would intend to support a similar initiative, respondents were also asked to consider how politically sensitive they found the initiative.

While political sensitivity speaks to the theoretical foundation on which we based our hypotheses, the focus of this paper is to get a greater understanding of potential factors that could affect political support for coproduction initiatives. Therefore, the extend to which policy makers find coproduction initiatives politically sensitive is not part of our main analysis.

As preregistered, political sensitivity was measured based on four items based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = highly disagree and 5 = highly agree. All items were developed for this

project specifically and the order of the items was randomized. A translated version of the items can be seen below:

If such a proposal was put forward, I would think that supporting the initiative could...

- *Give rise to conflict*
- *Clash with professional considerations*
- *Have negative political consequences*
- *Create negative publicity*

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is currently ongoing from January 18th 2024 till February 22nd 2024 (5 weeks).

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