Reviewer's report

Title: Access to primary health care in Belgium: an evaluation of policies awarding financial assistance in shortage areas

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Reviewer: Fahui Wang

Reviewer's report:

It is a nice paper reporting a well-executed research project. I only have some minor comments for the authors to consider:

1. The 1st interesting result is on the comparison of various accessibility measures. Based on Table 1, could the authors further advance the understanding by an attempt to group these methods? One may even try if Factor Analysis could help. In other words, we may learn what methods tend to capture what elements of accessibility.

2. On the discussion related to the family of FCA methods, a recent review paper (Wang, 2012, Annals of the Association of American Geographers 102: 1104-1112) integrates them in one framework and points out that they all essentially capture the PPR. The difference could be some spatial smoothing effect in the FCA methods. Does this shed light on the comparison of PPR versus FCA? [also on Page 8 when referring to Reference 28, it should be Luo and Wang (not just "Luo")]

3. The 2nd major result is the policy scenarios for shortage area designations. Indeed, the focus needs to be on the discrepancies in underserved areas identified by PPR versus E2SFCA. My question is whether it is possible to further advance the discussion on these nearly-missed areas not just along the rural-urban division but also linking to other socio-demographic structure (deprived communities?).

4. The maps use different color schemas. It makes sense to use one for consistency (except for Figure 8).

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

No conflict of interests.