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A critical review of a managerial approach to ‘green’ community planning in the rural USA and the Netherlands

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Does the contemporary managerial approach in policy support ‘green’ community planning in rural areas? This question is addressed using the Policy Arrangements Approach (PAA). When PAA was applied to rural policy in the USA and the Netherlands, we observed an increasing effect of a managerial approach in both countries over the last 10–15 years, including the use of performance contracts and evaluation tools and the promotion of self-sufficiency and public entrepreneurship at the community level. In this paper we discuss how this managerial approach affected green community planning in rural areas in the USA and the Netherlands. Community planning is analysed using four dimensions: discourse; actor coalitions; resources and power; and rules of the game. Our analysis demonstrates that the managerial approach reinforces state power and puts efforts to address the higher-order ‘green’ needs of a community at risk. Different approaches for creating opportunities which encourage the emergence of public leadership, as well as new institutional designs, are required.

Keywords: rural policy; environmental planning; public management; institutional change; leadership

1. Introduction

Almost 20 years ago, the journalist David Osborne and the former city manager Ted Gaebler published *Reinventing government* (1992). They suggested that a revolutionary restructuring of the public sector was under way, an American Perestroika:

To melt the fat, we must change the basic incentives that drive our governments. We must turn bureaucratic institutions into entrepreneurial institutions, ready to kill of obsolete initiatives, ready to do more with less, eager to absorb new ideas. . . . We do not need more government or less government, we need better government. To be more precise, we need better governance. Governance is the process by which we collectively solve our problems and meet our society’s needs. Government is the instrument we use. That instrument is outdated, and the process of reinvention has begun. (Osborne and Gaebler 1992, pp. 23–24; original italics)

Using success stories from around the country, meetings with consultants and public managers, and occasionally active participation, they suggested by using 10

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principles, entrepreneurial governments have many advantages over conventional ones. Entrepreneurial governments were described as: competitive; community-owned; result oriented; mission driven; customer driven; anticipatory; enterprising; decentralised; market oriented; and catalytic. The authors insisted they were not offering original ideas, but rather articulating the many ideas and experiences of innovative practitioners and activists across the country. Since its publication, the book has inspired thousands of public managers, management consultants and politicians across the world.

The reinvention movement forms a part of the more global New Public Management movement that emerged in the 1980s to cope with the financial crises facing most OECD (Organisation for Economic co-operation and Development) countries, and in response to the neoliberal agenda of the political right of reducing the role of central government and give more space to so-called 'free' markets (Saint-Martin 2000). One only has to think of the Reagan administration in the USA (1981–1989), the era of Prime Minister Mrs Thatcher in the UK (1979–1990) and, in the Netherlands, of the first two 'no-nonsense' Lubbers governments (1982–1989) to recall a period of financial pressures, a revaluation of economic interests, privatisation and bureaucratic efficiency operations. The New Public Management has transplanted these neoliberal ideas into the public sector, which led to a myriad public sector reforms since then (OECD 1995, Boivard and Löffler 2003, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). Initially, reformers accentuated market-orientation and cost reduction in the public sector. Many practitioners and scholars gradually accepted and articulated this approach and, as a result, made it appear more or less coherent, necessary, and the only feasible way of modernising public administration (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). Examples of the reforms include the introduction of new markets for public services; large-scale out-sourcing; performance pay for civil servants; devolution of authority to sub-national levels; output financing; new forms of participation; and performance management.

Here, we critically assess how this managerial approach has been appropriated in rural policy in the US and the Netherlands and how it has affected green community planning in practice. We use 'managerial approach' as a shorthand for the New Public Management approach as briefly introduced above. By green community planning we mean the establishment of goals, policies and procedures for the natural environment of a specific set of communities (see also Padt 2007). For the assessment we use the Policy Arrangements Approach (PAA; Arts and Leroy 2006). PAA is a theoretically informed approach for analysing policy developments within a broader political and societal context. Following PAA, we employ a discursive and organisational planning dimension. PAA assumes political modernisation processes guide formation of new policies. Political modernisation generally refers to shifting relationships between the state, market and civil society within the larger society's political domain, referring also to the (alleged) shift from government to governance. We view the managerial approach in rural policy as a political modernisation process.¹

PAA is applied to green community planning in the rural USA and the Netherlands. Although different in scale, both nations experienced an increased use of a managerial approach over the last 10–15 years (Padt 2007, Padt and Luloff 2009). In this paper we elaborate on similarities and differences between the two countries. We describe managerial approaches (political modernisation) and green community planning along the two dimensions in the following two sections. Next, we discuss how managerial approaches are likely to change green community

planning in practice. In the final section we discuss community leadership as an alternative to one-sided managerial approaches.

2. The managerial turn in rural policy

Management reform ideas take different shapes in different countries. Pollitt and Boukaert (2004) conducted a comparative analysis of public management reform in 12 OECD-nations. Two types of country emerged. The first and best known was the New Public Management marketisers consisting of Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and, 'in words if not always in deeds', the USA. These countries sought to make fundamental reforms by introducing more public sector competition and management techniques. They favour quasi-markets, large-scale out-sourcing, market testing and performance pay for civil servants.

The second group consisted of the Continental European modernisers. They believed the state had a major role but acknowledged the need for administrative changes. This group had two subgroups. The northern countries (Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden) tended towards participatory modernisation, i.e. promoting devolution of authority to sub-national levels and to developing user-responsive, high-quality services and public participation. The second group included the central Europeans (Belgium, France and Italy), which tended towards managerial modernisation, i.e. concentrating on management systems, tools and techniques. Pollitt and Boukaert (2004) drew no definite conclusions for Germany at the national level. They suggested at a sub-national level, Germany was most similar to the northern group.

When New Public Management is reviewed for rural policy we indeed observe different approaches in the USA and the Netherlands. In the USA, the 2007 Farm Bill Theme Papers (USDA 2006a, 2006b) indicated market-based development (incentives) would increasingly be encouraged relative to socially-based development (grants). In practice this meant communities could receive federal support if they could provide evidence of need and if such support was directed at the 'most important' needs in rural America. Moreover, rural entrepreneurship was encouraged as a means of triggering private rural investments. A market approach would also be introduced in extant USDA conservation programmes by using: (1) payments for ecosystems services to provide income support; (2) environmental rights that provided environmental goods and services to private sector markets; and (3) cross compliance as a means of strengthening the link between price and income support and conservation (USDA 2006b). Together, the new rural policy proposals in the USA reflected a market-based approach observed by Pollitt and Boukaert (2004).

A managerial approach was also applied in the Netherlands, albeit quite differently. Central government and provinces agreed upon a performance contract for rural development. This contract was a response to the problems local actors encountered with generic policies, multiple grant schemes and complex rules originating from the central government on the one hand, and the need for resolving actual problems at the local level on the other. The contract illustrated devolution of authority from higher to lower echelons of government as observed by Pollitt and Boukaert (2004). Designers of the contract approach defended it in several ways. First, they acknowledged limitations of the national government when tackling regional problems. Second, they believed the national government was not the

appropriate administrative level for the integration of rural development goals due to its high degree of policy compartmentalisation. Instead, they considered a regional level optimal for policy integration. Third, they claimed rural policy rules were too numerous, complex and detailed. The latter issue, when coupled with devolution and integration, shaped the basic framework for the performance contract. This contract stated that the national government and provinces agreed on a variety of targets and resources for a period of several years, and each province could decide on the distribution of resources as long as it realises its targets. The first contracts for two years were realised in 2005. A new series of contracts is being realised for the period 2007–2013.

Current approaches to rural development in the USA and the Netherlands nicely reflect New Public Management. How New Public Management is likely to affect green community planning is the subject of the following sections.

3. Green community planning

Following PAA, we use a discursive and an organisational dimension to analyse ‘green’ community planning. The first dimension refers to a shared, structured way of speaking, thinking, interpreting and representing things in the world. Discourses, on the one hand, are ‘inscribed’ in institutional structures (Jessop 2007). They represent an institutional way of thinking, taken for granted by many. Much rhetoric about community empowerment, rural entrepreneurship, devolution and self-sufficiency in rural policies illustrate the political nature of such discourses (Midgley and Livermore 2005). On the other hand, people may give new interpretations to discourses in their day-to-day communication and actions and gradually transform them. According to the second view, discourse is a “collective, emotional and rhetoric support for local communal structures that eventually become recognised as ‘community’ ” (Procter 2005, p. 12; see also König 1968, Luloff and Swanson 1990, Wilkinson 1991, Luloff 1998). Both the institutional and communicative aspects of discourse reflect the perception of community as a social construction that is socially constitutive.

The organisational dimension of community planning includes actors’ access to the decision-making process and their formal and informal coalitions; the division of resources, power and influence among these actors; and the formal and informal rules for interaction. Community coalitions may develop around a range of local issues including specific economic development or environmental protection. We follow Wilkinson (1991) (see also Luloff and Swanson 1995, Luloff and Bridger 2003, Flint and Luloff 2007) in emphasising ‘real’ community coalitions develop around higher-order needs of a community which are essential to citizens’ overall social and environmental well-being. Social and environmental well-being are closely related:

... social well-being encourages actions that also protect ecological well-being ... well-being is a quality of the ecosphere as a whole and not a quality that can be raised in any one part of the whole at the expense of the well-being of the other parts. (Wilkinson 1991, p. 72)

This premise encourages ‘green’ coalitions, with representatives from the state, market and civil society, as essential for successful green community planning.

Resource distribution within a community reflects both structures of domination and power exercised by actors. Actors try to change the distribution of resources according to their preferences. The challenge for rural communities is to redistribute resources so they can best meet local demands (Luloff and Bridger 2003). Finally, rules within a community are both formal and informal. Formal rules typically include rules of law and/or funding. Informal rules typically describe the room to manoeuvre in decision making and to take action. Actions, for example, can be directed at social inequalities within the community or to legislation providing rights and protections. They can also be aimed at electing a person to public office to pursue change (Mondros 2005).

Policy discourse and organisation are interrelated. Changes in policy discourse lead to changes in actor coalitions, power relationships and rules. Vice versa, changes in policy organisation lead to new policy discourses. Moreover, one may expect New Public Management to be a driving force for this process as it continues to affect rural policy and actual community planning practices. Next, we elaborate on this proposition.

4. Managerial approaches to green community planning

To assess how New Public Management affects green community planning in practice, we use two case studies in the US and the Netherlands. These two countries were selected because they differ in their appropriation of the New Public Management (see section 2). By doing comparative case study research we expect to learn more about these differences. The case study areas are situated in the Southern Alleghenies in Pennsylvania and in the Brabant Peel area in the south-eastern Netherlands. These case studies were studied earlier (Padt 2007, Padt and Luloff 2009) but not yet in a comparative perspective.

4.1. Southern Alleghenies (USA)

The Southern Alleghenies is a 12,051 square kilometre area in south-central Pennsylvania, which includes six counties and 58 municipalities. Approximately 66% of this area is forested, 17% is cultivated and about 2% is in pasture. Examples of problems in this area include abandoned mine drainage, illegal dumps, sediment and nutrient runoff, sewage disposal, loss of forested and wetland areas, destruction of historic locations, storm water runoff and public water supply.

The Southern Alleghenies was recognised as a Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) area in 1990. RC&D is a USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) programme administered by the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The purpose of RC&D is to accelerate conservation, development and utilisation of natural resources; to improve the general level of economic activity; and to enhance the environment and standard of living in designated RC&D areas. In addition, the programme works to improve the capacity of local citizens to plan and implement programmes and projects addressing natural resource and community development issues within and across communities of a geographic region. Programme objectives address: improvements to the quality of life, including social, economic and environmental concerns; continuing prudent use of natural resources; and strengthening local citizens' ability to utilise available sources of assistance through USDA and other federal agency partnerships (USDA 2006b, p. 23).

Nationally, the RC&D Programme takes a regional approach and on average covers seven counties. The programme was launched in 1962 and received permanent authorisation as part of the 2002 Farm Bill. In 2006, there were 375 RC&D areas. Each had a RC&D Council consisting of local governmental officials, farmers, ranchers, civic leaders and business leaders. This council is required by law to prepare and implement an area plan. The Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council was established in 1988 and formally authorised by the US Secretary of Agriculture in 1990. Its first area plan was adopted in 1992 and was revised in 2003.

Evaluations reveal programme participants were positive about it (NCRS 2006). They appreciated its flexibility for addressing local issues, establishing projects and meeting local community needs. At the same time, federal agencies were dissatisfied with their ability to control RC&D programme results. For example, only 23% of the councils identified clear area goals and timeframes for achieving them. Moreover, two-third of total funds (federal and non-federal) appeared to go towards community development activities with the remaining spent on land conservation, water management and land management. Finally, the White House Office of Management and Budget claimed there were shortfalls in strategic planning, proper measurement of programme results, and accountability (NCRS 2006). Following this evaluation, the Administration recommended continuing federal support for the RC&D Programme, but at a reduced level. Moreover, a review of the performance of each RC&D area to determine the appropriate level of support was recommended. To accomplish the latter, long-term performance goals and measures were needed, as well as a new performance reporting system supporting the White House management system. These two sets of recommendations can be viewed as a compromise between the positive findings related to community support and the negative findings about accountability. This compromise clearly reflected – and inspired – the managerial turn in rural development described above.

How has this managerial approach affected green community planning in the region? Experiences from the Southern Alleghenies indicated the federal government increasingly exercised managerial control along both the discursive and organisational dimension. First, it controlled discourse building by mandating compliance with specific RC&D programme requirements and the NRCS Strategic Plans 2005–2010. The programme requirements are summarised in Table 1; each needs to be included in RC&D area plans. The strategic plan defined the following priorities: air quality, energy conservation, renewable energy and biofuels, and ‘connected landscapes’, meaning the prevention of urban sprawl and fragmentation of the landscape. The federal government also controlled coalitions. It accomplished this by encouraging collaborations between and among regional partners by giving higher credits (higher rankings) when multiple organisations applied for a grant. Third, resource allocation control was exercised by establishing a nationwide information and management system (POINTS) containing specific project information. POINTS was developed to allocate budgets to RC&D areas on the basis of performance. Doing this required additional paperwork, which acted as a disincentive for smaller projects. Moreover, a performance-based approach led to additional losses of federal funding for RC&D areas. For example, the federal government used to fund four positions for various projects in the Southern Alleghenies. Later, they provided funds for only one co-ordinator. Similarly, the programme used to have its own resources, but they were removed to become an entirely grant-driven process. Finally, the federal government controlled the rules.

Table 1. Required elements of a RC&D area plan.

RC&D Programme Elements	Purpose
Land conservation	Erosion and sedimentation control
Water management	Conservation, use and quality of water, including irrigation and rural water supplies Mitigation of floods and high water tables Repair and improvement of reservoirs Improvement of agricultural water management Improvement of water quality
Community development	Development of resources-based industries Protection of rural industries from natural resource hazards Development of adequate rural water and waste disposal systems Improvement of recreation facilities Improvement in the quality of rural housing Provision of adequate health and education facilities Satisfaction of essential transportation and communication needs Promotion of food security, economic development, and education
Land management	Energy conservation, including the production of energy crops Protection of agricultural land, as appropriate, from conversion to other uses Farmland protection Protection of fish and wildlife habitats

Source: NRCS (2006, p. 15).

Because of its expertise and decentralised organisational structure, it increasingly considered RC&D an implementation 'tool'. This led to the federal government's common practice of establishing constraints and parameters local communities could not change, i.e. it foisted unfunded mandates upon them.

Federal control of community development is not a problem *per se*. However, a one-sided managerial emphasis on cost-efficiency and performance could hinder communities from following a comprehensive approach and building effective coalitions capable of mobilising resources and engaging community action to improve their environment and local well being. However, the Southern Alleghenies' experience indicated other practices were also applied which prevented this from happening. For example, the Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council tried to establish new comprehensive green planning initiatives, including developing a bioenergy project. The latter project attempted to educate landowners about growing crops useful for making energy. Because it combined economic, social and environmental goals, this effort could reinvigorate rural development for local communities.

Another example was the Council's continued efforts at fostering local collaboration on community issues. The RC&D Council has worked with community groups, individual local governments, businesses and industry, and has more than 50 partners and sponsors for projects throughout its region. Doing this contributed to its success in mobilising resources. Moreover, the Council has an active lobbying presence through the Pennsylvania and the National Association of RC&D Areas. Finally, the RC&D Council accomplished things many thought impossible by being flexible with rules. These successes included abandoned mine

reclamation, agricultural land preservation, erosion and sedimentation pollution control, nutrient management, storm water management and watershed protection. This range of efforts demonstrated the leadership capacity of this RC&D in addressing issues related to green community development. The Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council empowered its local communities and engaged them in local entrepreneurship.

Despite these successes, we also need to recognise local communities were doing things they were expected to by both the federal and state government. Their actions legitimised a reduced role for extra-local government that was already decreasing for managerial reasons (see above). A downside of this reduction was government's absence when needed for help in solving the complex problems in the region. In the final section of this paper we elaborate on this paradox.

4.2. *The Brabant Peel (Netherlands)*

The Brabant Peel is part of a vast reclamation area in the south-eastern Netherlands. The area has faced extreme pollution of ground and surface water and air from agricultural sources for more than two decades. Besides these environmental problems, the expansion of agriculture also impacted the region's traditional rural landscape and the resilience of local livestock.

The Peel area was recognised as a 'reconstruction area' in 1998. Reconstruction areas include sandy areas in the south and east of the Netherlands, which host large concentrations of livestock farming and which are vulnerable to environmental pollution. The reconstruction project was formalised by law. The Pig Farmers Restructuring Bill (1998) enforced a generic 10% cut in the size of the livestock herd and the Reconstruction Bill (2002) legitimised spatial zoning of a region into development zones, intermediate zones and extensification zones. In doing this, it made possible a relocation of intensive livestock farming from the extensification to the development zones. To decide on this type of zoning, an integrated approach was applied, including agriculture, environmental protection, water management, nature conservation, landscape conservation and social-economic development facets. As with RC&Ds, a reconstruction area has a Reconstruction Council consisting of local governmental officials, farmers, ranchers, civic leaders and business leaders. Similarly, this council is required by law to prepare and implement an area plan. The area plan for the Brabant Peel was published in 2005 after six years of preparation (Padt 2006).

Parallel to the reconstruction project, the central government and provinces prepared the performance contract as described previously. Reconstruction goals and budgets were included in this contract, which thereby made reconstruction the subject of a managerial approach. We ask the same question as for the Southern Alleghenies: how has this managerial approach affected green community planning in the region? To address this question, we focus on the municipality of Gemert-Bakel on the northern side of the Brabant Peel. This municipality is 124 square kilometres, with about 16% of the area agricultural, 35% woodland and nature areas, and 5% built-upon. Gemert-Bakel was an early participant in the reconstruction project of the Peel area and hence is a good case study site within the larger Peel area.

Like RC&D, Dutch central government increasingly exercised managerial control of green community planning along the same four dimensions. Unlike RC&D, however, a performance contract was central. This contract controlled

discourse by asking compliance with its goals. These goals followed from national strategic plans and were difficult to change. The contract defines 26 goals for various themes including nature, agriculture, recreation, agriculture, soil management, and water management (LNV 2006). Scientific interpretations made by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency make public debate nearly impossible. Moreover, Parliament is essentially unable to discuss the goals, since they are contractually agreed upon until 2013 and cannot be changed until then. Taken together, this indicated a depoliticisation of rural policy: the contract acts to limit discursive space at the community level.

This contract also controlled coalitions. Tight coalitions between contract partners, i.e. the central government and provinces dominated local coalitions at the community level. It was difficult for local, non-participating groups to become part of these larger coalitions in an effort at achieving their objectives. By definition, control of resources was exercised through the contract, which is all about money. Budgets were and are being allocated on the basis of provincial goal attainment. Doing this makes it easy for the central government to stop money flow without considering local circumstances. Finally, and most important, were the rules. The performance contract, together with supportive legislative acts, provided central government a powerful tool to control community development in rural areas. Traditionally, central law in the Netherlands is decisive for almost all rural issues. In addition, now a new set of managerial rules – the contract – decide what will happen in rural areas in the future.

To many the negative impacts of the contract may seem exaggerated. Some say it empowers local communities and stimulates local entrepreneurship to get local things accomplished. After all, local communities decide how to reach goals during the years 2007–2013. Moreover, they are given much flexibility in deciding how to spend resources. Experiences in Gemert-Bakel indicate both opinions are true. On the one hand, many local coalitions were engaged in a wide range of projects. People were able to mobilise local and other resources and use them to their own end. Projects included efforts in sustainable agriculture, recreation, forest and nature protection, environment, water management, landscape, quality of the living environment, cultural history and the economy. A semi-autonomous local Development Office in Gemert-Bakel provided leadership for local activities and mediated between local parties and the local government in decision making. This approach was successful, despite the absence of sufficient personnel to successfully complete all projects. On the other hand, there was need for compliance with contract and other rules, which evoked many tensions. The following quote from an official of the Development Office is illustrative:

Everything we are doing has to proceed within legal frameworks. We come to joint ideas and we support partners to put these ideas into practice. When you come across restrictions and rules, which is often the case, you enter into conversation how to manage certain issues. Looking back you may observe that changes are going on, but it takes a long time and it hurts.

Gemert-Bakel nicely illustrates a community's capacity to provide leadership in an era of managerial control. As in the Southern Alleghenies, Gemert-Bakel empowered its community and engaged them in local entrepreneurship to integrate different sectoral policies and to develop partnerships. This is a typical characteristic of Dutch

rural policy (Derkzen *et al.* 2009). At the same time, it faced the same paradox of the Southern Alleghenies. Communities in both nations legitimised a reduced role for central government, despite the latter's central mission of solving hard-to-tackle issues.

5. Conclusion and discussion

The previous section observed a paradox in local practices legitimising a reduced role for central government, whereas a greater role may have been needed to solve complex problems in rural areas. As the word 'paradox' indicates, this was not a contradiction. First, the communities' efforts for local empowerment or entrepreneurship were perfectly aligned with the central government's quest for cost-efficiency and performance. All parties – local, regional and national – sought a managerial project that “works better, costs less, and gets results Americans [or the Dutch] care about” (paraphrasing Al Gore in 1993). This is the story of New Public Management. Second, New Public Management is not as apolitical as its advocates profess; its very nature is highly political. The promotion of managerial values, including empowerment and local entrepreneurship, serves to ensure rural policy delivery. At the same time, participating communities are subject to managerial techniques, including performance systems and evaluation tools. Seen this way, the managerial project for rural development did not represent a rolling back of the state, but rather a rolling out and reinforcement of state power.

In an earlier paper (Padt and Luloff 2009) we conducted an institutional analysis of rural policy in the United States and identified several of the institutional constraints imposed by the federal government. Here, we broaden our perspective by engaging a comparative study of rural development in two very different settings. Based on the study performed by Pollitt and Boukaert (2004) and our analysis of managerial approaches in the US and the Netherlands, we expected to find differences in managerial approaches to green community planning in the US (a market-based approach) and the Netherlands (a contract approach). However, we found some major similarities as well. For example, both the RC&D Council in the Southern Alleghenies and the Development Office in Gemert-Bakel can be viewed as 'local growth machines' in their implementation of managerial projects for rural development. This is comparable to what Logan and Molotch (1987) observed for real estate development in urban areas. The rural growth machine was driven by an elite with vested interests in the managerial project: politicians, local entrepreneurs, professionals, local media and environmental groups. Such an elite put efforts to address higher-order 'green' needs of a community at risk and, as a result, could easily trigger anti-community development (see also section 3).

We think new approaches for truly green community development are required. Our two case studies provided hints towards such approaches. We evidenced how the RC&D Council in the Southern Alleghenies and the Development Office in Gemert-Bakel appropriated the managerial project to their specific situation. They did not blindly follow central government, but gave their own interpretations to RC&D and the Reconstruction respectively. Newman (2005) called this the micro-politics of modernisation. This process refers to “small, everyday acts of generating meanings, appropriating and reworking governmental discourses and selectively coupling them to other frameworks of meaning” (p. 731). Such a process suggests that community

leaders must be viewed as active and creative subjects capable of building broad 'green' coalitions, mobilising resources and creatively responding to legal frameworks in order to address community needs. It is exactly through such leadership that the managerial project for rural policy can succeed, countervailing erosion of the community by the same project. Given this new and emerging environment, a community leader needs to be more than just a manager. The ability to address the higher-order needs of a community within the managerial project makes the difference. For this reason, we think new approaches which create opportunities for the emergence of public leadership as well as new institutional designs are required.

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Note

1. We do not consider a managerial approach as an explanatory concept or model in itself (like, for example, regime theory or relational state theory) but as an empirical set of ideas and practices that, we suppose, has driven public sector reforms since the late 1980s.

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