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**A Critical Review of Managerial Approach
to Community and Resource Development
in the USA and the Netherlands**



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A Critical Review of a Managerial Approach to Community and Resource Development in the USA and the Netherlands.

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Abstract

Does the contemporary managerial approach in policy support rural community and resource development? This question is addressed using the Policy Arrangements Approach (PAA; Arts and Leroy, 2006). When the PAA was applied to rural policy in the Netherlands and USA, we observed an increasing affect of a managerial approach in both countries over the last 10-15 years. Central government found new ways for guiding decision making through the use of managerial techniques, including performance contracts and evaluation tools. Concomitantly, managerial values – like local empowerment and public entrepreneurship – were promoted at lower governance levels. How this managerial approach affected green rural planning in the Netherlands and rural community development in the USA and the policy arrangements that resulted from it are discussed. Policy arrangements are described along four dimensions: discourse; actor coalitions; resources and power; and rules of the game. Doing this demonstrates that the managerial approach has not led to ‘deep’ institutional changes in rural policy. Power structures remain unaltered, and democratic and public values have been put at risk. Different approaches that create opportunities for the emergence of public leadership as well as new institutional designs are required.

1. Introduction

A managerial approach to community and resource development is becoming quite common in contemporary rural policies throughout many OECD countries. Central governments are finding new ways for guiding decision making through the use of managerial techniques, including performance systems and evaluation tools. Concomitantly, managerial values – including local empowerment and public entrepreneurship – are being promoted at lower governance levels. This paper addresses whether a managerial approach in policy supports rural area community and resource development.

We use the Policy Arrangements Approach (PAA; Arts and Leroy, 2006) to analyse community and resource development as the object of a policy arrangement. A policy arrangement is a temporary institutionalisation of a policy domain, in this case rural policy. Following PAA, we employ four dimensions to analyse community and resource development: discourse; actor coalitions; power and resources; and the rules of the game. When studying policy arrangements, all four dimensions need to be considered, both strategically and institutionally. Further, PAA assumes political modernisation processes guide formation of new policy arrangements. Political modernisation generally refers to shifting relationships between the state, market, and civil society within the larger society’s political domain. We view the managerial approach in policy as a political modernisation process.

PAA is applied to rural policy in the USA and the Netherlands. Although different in scale, both nations have experienced an increasing use of a managerial approach over the last 10-15 years (Padt, 2007; Padt and Luloff, 2007). We elaborate on similarities and differences between countries in this paper. We describe managerial approaches (Section 2) and rural community and

resource development along the four policy dimensions (Section 3). In Section 4 we discuss how managerial approaches are likely to change rural policy arrangements and in Section 5 we discuss community leadership.

2. Managerial Approaches to Rural Development

During the 1980s and 1990s major public sector reforms occurred in many OECD countries. The New Public Management movement is generally considered the driving force behind these reforms. This movement expressed its ideas during the 1980s in response to financial crises in most OECD nations (Boivard and Löffler, 2003) and in response to the replacement of Keynesian economic politics by monetarism (Saint-Martin, 2000). Reformers initially accentuated the need for cost reduction in public policy. Practitioners and scholars gradually articulated this approach and made it appear more or less coherent, necessary, and the only feasible way of modernising public administration (Pollit and Bouckaert, 2004).

Management reform ideas take different shapes in different countries. Pollit and Bouckaert (2004) conducted a comparative analysis of public management reform in twelve OECD-nations. Two types of countries emerged. The first and best-known is that of the New Public Management Marketizers consisting of Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and, “in words if not always in deeds” the USA. These countries seek to make fundamental reforms by introducing more public sector competition and management techniques. They favour quasi-markets, large-scale contracting out, market testing, and performance pay for civil servants.

The second group is the Continental European modernisers. They believe the state has a major role but acknowledge the need for administrative changes. This group has two subgroups. The northern countries (Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden) tend 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 includes the central Europeans (Belgium, France, and Italy) and it tends towards managerial modernisation, i.e., concentrating on management systems, tools, and techniques. Pollit and Bouckaert (2004) drew no definitive conclusions for Germany at the national level. They suggested that at a sub-national level, Germany was most similar to the northern group.

Indeed, when New Public Management is applied to rural policy we observe different approaches in the USA and the Netherlands. In the USA, the 2007 Farm Bill Theme Papers (USDA, 2006a, b) state that market-based development (incentives) will be increasingly encouraged relative to socially-based development (grants). This emerging, market-based rural development discourse is based on targeting rural entrepreneurship and regional development (USDA, 2006a). Such

targeting would be directed at the 'most important' needs in rural America and where circumstances made such involvement necessary.

Rural entrepreneurship is one strategy for new business formation when coupled to private rural investment (thus creating a public-private partnership). The other is regional development, seen as a means of helping communities provide for themselves. According to the latter strategy, assistance is provided for projects included in the strategic plans of regional development organisations. Further, extant USDA conservation programs would reflect: (1) a more economic approach in their use of green payments to provide income support; (2) environmental rights that provide 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).

A managerial approach is applied in the Netherlands as well, albeit differently. Central government and provinces have agreed upon a performance contract for rural development. This contract is a response to the problems that local actors encountered with generic policies, multiple grant schemes, and complex rules on the one hand, and the need for resolving actual problems on the other.

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 is not the appropriate administrative level for the integration of rural development goals due to its high degree of policy compartmentalisation. They considered a regional level optimal for policy integration. Third, they claimed rural policy rules are too numerous, complex, and detailed. The latter issue, when coupled with decentralisation and integration, shaped the basic framework for the performance contract. This contract states that the national government and provinces agree on targets and resources for a period of several years, and that each province can 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 will be realised for the period 2007-2013.

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

3. Community and Resource Development

A rural community is not a static concept. Its discourse, actor coalitions, resource distribution, and rules of the game are reproduced and transformed in practices over time. Given long periods of time, local policy arrangements may become institutionalised by the community. Below we briefly address the four basic dimensions of this process from an institutional and strategic perspective.

Starting with the discursive dimension, a community can be perceived as a social construction. To properly study community we need to understand how actors produce, reproduce, and transform discourse in practice (Bridger, 1994). Hajer (1995: 4) described discourse as:

a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.

Discourse expresses both societal order and communication between actors. The former is reflected in political economic power (cf., Harvey, 1996). This perspective does not view the community as having the innate capacity to make choices but rather as a reflection of their relationship with the state which both empowers and disciplines them (Clarke and Newman, 1997). 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: 12; see also Konig, 1968; Luloff and Swanson, 1990; Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff, 1998).

Hajer’s (1995) double concept of story lines and discourse coalitions are useful for understanding coalition building, the second dimension of community development. He described a discourse coalition as:

the ensemble of (1) a set of story-lines; (2) the actors who utter these story-lines; and (3) the practices in which this discursive activity is based (1995: 65).

The more actors believe such story lines, the more powerful the discourse coalition becomes. Effective story lines create coalitions and help build community. Coalitions including actors from the centers of political power are likely to be more effective than those confined to the general community.

Discourse coalitions may develop around a range of local issues including specific economic development or environmental protection policies. We follow Wilkinson (1991; see also Luloff and Bridger, 2003; Luloff and Swanson, 1995; Flint and Luloff, 2007; Padt and Luloff, 2007) in

emphasising that 'real' community coalitions should develop around the higher-order needs of a community which are essential to its citizens' overall well being.

Resource distribution, the third dimension within the rural policy field, reflects both structures of domination and power exercised by actors. An actor will try to change the distribution of resources according to her/his own preferences. The challenge for rural communities is to redistribute resources so they can best meet local demands. This capacity for action is called community agency (Luloff and Bridger, 2003). Community agency is needed for a community to meet its own demands. It reflects how well the community can play the power game with other institutions when access to resources is the issue.

The fourth dimension of community development relates to rules. A community has both formal and informal rules. Formal rules typically include the rules of law and/or funding. Informal rules describe the framework for community action. Community actions are by definition collective and occur when a common interest in place-related matters is aroused (Wilkinson, 1991: 37). Actions can be directed at social inequalities within the community or to legislation that provides rights and protections. It can also be aimed at electing a person to public office to pursue change (Mondros, 2005).

Scale is an important factor for community action since 'local' problems may often be local manifestations of problems whose sources lay farther upstream. Community action must, therefore, go beyond the grassroots level (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Peterman, 2000).

Discourse building, coalition building, community agency, and community action are useful indicators for describing community development. Both institutional structures and forces and actors' strategic considerations and behaviour play a role in the community development process. Moreover, one may expect New Public Management to be a driving force for this process as it continues to affect rural policy and policy practices. In the next section, we will elaborate on this proposition.

4. Managerial Approaches to Community and Resource Development

We use two case studies to assess how New Public Management is likely to affect community and resource development in the USA and the Netherlands. The case study areas are situated in the Southern Alleghenies in Pennsylvania and in the Brabant Peel area in Southeastern Netherlands.

Southern Alleghenies (USA)

The Southern Alleghenies is a 4,653 square mile area in Southcentral Pennsylvania. It includes six counties and 58 municipalities (Figure 1). Approximately 66 percent of this area is forested, 17 percent cultivated, and about 2 percent 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.

Figure 1 Situation of the Southern Alleghenies in Southcentral Pennsylvania.



The Southern Alleghenies was recognised as a Resource & Community Development (RC&D) area in 1990. RC&D is a USDA program 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 program works to improve the capacity of local citizens to plan and implement programs and projects that address natural resource and community development issues within and across communities of a geographic region. Program 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: 23).

Nationally, the RC&D Program takes a regional approach and on average covers seven counties. The program was launched in 1962 and received permanent authorisation as part of the 2002 Farm Bill. In 2006, there were 375 RC&D areas. Each has an 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.

Recent evaluations revealed program participants were positive about it. They appreciated its flexibility for addressing local issues and establishing projects that meet local community needs. At the same time, federal agencies were dissatisfied with their ability to control RC&D program results. For example, only 23 percent of the councils had 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 activity with the remaining spent on land conservation, water management, and land management. Finally, the White House Office of Management and Budget, observed shortfalls in strategic planning, proper measurement of program results, and accountability (NCRS, 2006).

The Administration recommended continuing Federal support for the RC&D Program 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 that supported 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 in Section 2.

How is this managerial approach likely to affect rural community development? Experiences from the Southern Alleghenies indicate that the federal government increasingly exercises managerial control along all four dimensions. First, it controls discourse building by mandating compliance with specific RC&D program requirements and the NRCS Strategic Plans 2005-2010. The program 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.

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

1. Land conservation element:
 - 1.1. Erosion and sedimentation control
2. Water management:
 - 2.1. conservation, use, and quality of water, including irrigation and rural water supplies;
 - 2.2. mitigation of floods and high water tables;
 - 2.3. repair and improvement of reservoirs;
 - 2.4. improvement of agricultural water management;

- 2.5. improvement of water quality.
3. Community development:
 - 3.1. development of resources-based industries;
 - 3.2. protection of rural industries from natural resource hazards;
 - 3.3. development of adequate rural water and waste disposal systems;
 - 3.4. improvement of recreation facilities;
 - 3.5. improvement in the quality of rural housing;
 - 3.6. provision of adequate health and education facilities;
 - 3.7. satisfaction of essential transportation and communication needs;
 - 3.8. promotion of food security, economic development, and education.
4. Land management:
 - 4.1. energy conservation, including the production of energy crops;
 - 4.2. protection of agricultural land, as appropriate, from conversion to other uses;
 - 4.3. farmland protection;
 - 4.4. protection of fish and wildlife habitats.

Second, the federal government also controls coalitions. It accomplishes this by encouraging collaborations between and among regional partners by giving higher credits (higher rankings) when multiple organisations apply for a grant.

Third, resource allocation control is exercised by establishing a nationwide information and management system (POINTS) that contains specific project information. POINTS makes it possible to allocate budgets to RC&D areas on the basis of performance. Doing this requires additional paperwork which could act as a disincentive for smaller projects. Moreover, a performance-based approach could lead 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. Now, they provide funds for only one coordinator. Moreover, the program used to have its own resources, but these were removed. Now it is a grant-driven process.

Finally, the federal government controls the rules. Because of its expertise and decentralised organisational structure, it increasingly considers RC&D an implementation 'tool.' This leads to the federal government's common practice of establishing constraints and parameters local communities can not change, i.e. it foists unfunded mandates upon them.

Federal control of community development is not the problem per se. However, a one-sided managerial emphasis on cost-efficiency and performance hinders communities from building comprehensive discourses and effective coalitions capable of mobilising resources and engaging community action to improve local well being. However, the Southern Alleghenies experience show that other practices are also applied that prevent this from happening. For example, the Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council tries to establish new comprehensive efforts at rural development, including a bio-energy project. The latter project attempts to educate landowners about growing crops that could be used to make energy. Because it combines economic, social, and environmental goals, this effort can reinvigorate rural development for local communities.

Another example is the Council's continued efforts fostering local collaboration on community issues. The RC&D Council works with community groups, individual local governments, businesses, and industry, and has more than 50 partners and sponsors for projects throughout its region. Doing this contributes to its success in mobilising resources. Moreover, the Council has an active lobbying presence through the Pennsylvania and National Association of RC&D Areas. Finally, the RC&D Council has accomplished things many thought impossible. These successes include abandoned mine reclamation, agricultural land preservation, erosion and sedimentation pollution control, nutrient management, storm water management, and watershed protection. This range of efforts demonstrates the leadership capacity of this RC&D in issues related to community and resource development. The Southern Alleghenies RC&D council empowers its local communities and engages them in local entrepreneurship.

Despite these successes, we also need to recognise that local communities are doing things they are expected to by both the federal and state government. Their actions legitimise a reduced role of extra-local government which is already decreasing for managerial reasons (see above). A downside of this reduction is government's absence when needed for help in solving complex, persistent, and wicked problems like social inequalities or environmental injustice. In the final section of this paper we elaborate on this paradox.

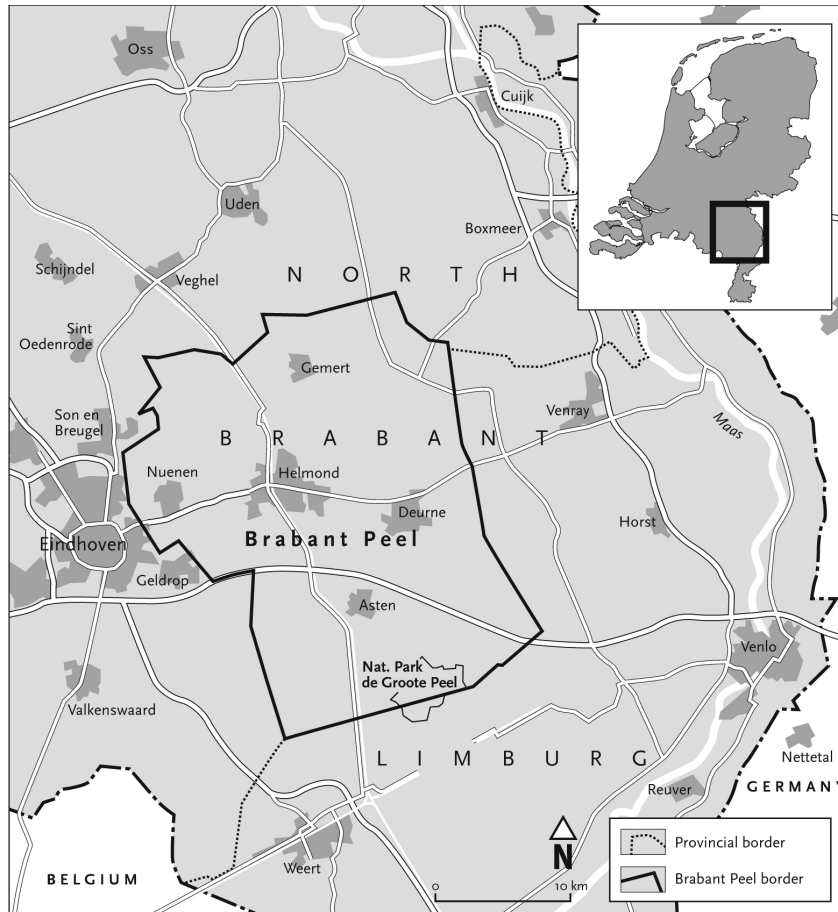
The Brabant Peel (Netherlands)

The Brabant Peel is part of a vast reclamation area in Southeastern Netherlands (Figure 2). The area has faced extreme pollution of ground water and surface water, and air from agricultural sources for more than two decades. Besides these environmental problems, the expansion of agriculture has 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 that host large concentrations of livestock farming, at the same time being vulnerable to environmental pollution. The reconstruction project was formalised by law. The Pig Farmers Reconstruction Bill (1998) enforced a generic 10 percent 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 kind of zoning, an integrated approach was applied, including farm, environment, water management, nature conservation, landscape, and social-economic development facets. As with RC&D's, a reconstruction area has a Reconstruction

Council consisting of local governmental officials, farmers, ranchers, civic leaders, and business leaders. Likewise, this council was 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.

Figure 2. The Brabant Peel in Southeastern Netherlands.



Parallel to the reconstruction project, the central government and provinces prepared the performance contract as described in Section 2. Reconstruction goals and budgets were included in this contract. Their relationship made reconstruction the subject of a managerial approach. We ask the same question as for the Southern Alleghenies: How is this managerial approach likely to affect rural community development? To answer this question, we focus on the municipality of Gemert-Bakel on the northern side of the Brabant Peel. This municipality is 48 square miles, with about 16 percent of the area rural, 35 percent woodland and nature areas, and 5 percent built-upon. Gemert-Bakel was an early participant in the reconstruction project of the Peel area and hence offers a good case study.

Like RC&D, Dutch central government increasingly exercises managerial control of community and resource development along the same four dimensions. Unlike RC&D, however, a

performance contract is central. The contract controls discourse by asking compliance with its goals. These goals follow from national strategic plans and are difficult to change. 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 through 2013 and cannot be changed until then. Taken together, this indicates a depoliticisation of rural policy and acts to limit discursive space at the community level.

This contract also controls coalitions. One can assume that tight coalitions between contract partners, i.e., the central government and provinces, are likely to dominate local coalitions at the community level. Often this reflects the investment of time, energy, and resources during contract preparation. It is difficult for local, non-participating groups to become part of these larger coalitions in hope of achieving their objectives.

By definition, control of resources is exercised through the contract which is all about money. Budgets are 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, are the rules. The performance contract, together with supportive legislative acts, provides central government a powerful tool to control community and resource development. Traditionally, central law in the Netherlands is decisive for almost all rural issues. Now, a new set of managerial rules – the contract – is likely to decide what would happen in rural areas in the future.

To many the negative impact 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 the 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, there are many local coalitions engaged in a wide range of projects. People are able to mobilise local and other resources and use them to their own end. Projects include 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 provides leadership for local activities and mediates 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 the need for compliance with contract and other rules which evokes many tensions. The following quote of 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 communities' capacity to provide leadership in an era of managerial control. As in the Southern Alleghenies, Gemert-Bakel empowers its community and engages in local entrepreneurship. At the same time, it faces the same paradox of the Southern Alleghenies. Communities in both nations legitimise a reduced role for government, despite the latter central mission of solving hard-to-tackle issues.

In term of policy arrangements we conclude that we cannot speak of one 'disciplinary' state-led policy arrangement or one 'responsive' community-led policy arrangement in rural areas. In practice we observe a complex unstable hybrid pattern of policy arrangements and a creative effort of the actors involved to make things work regardless. This brings us to the final issue this paper addresses: the need for local community leadership.

5. A Role for Community Leadership

In the previous section we observed a paradox in local practices that legitimised a reduced role for government whereas a greater role may be needed to solve wicked problems in rural areas. As with most paradoxes, this is not a contradiction. First, the communities' efforts for local empowerment or entrepreneurship are perfectly aligned with the central government's quest for cost-efficiency and performance. All parties, from local to national, seek a managerial project for rural development that "works better, costs less, and gets results Americans [or the Dutch, FP/AL] care about" (paraphrasing Al Gore in 1993). This is the story of New Public Management (see Section 2). 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, a managerial project does not represent a rolling back of the state, but rather a rolling out and reinforcement of state power. Governments in the USA and the Netherlands are governing at a distance, but maintaining and reinforcing extant local power structures.

A more critical point can be made. We have seen that governing at a distance makes it difficult for local communities to develop their own community and resources. By disciplining local

communities, community development reflects government wishes more than communities needs. At a local level this puts democratic and public values at risk.

We think the Southern Alleghenies and the Brabant Peel provide examples of a kind of leadership that countervails this risk. It is exactly through this kind of leadership that the managerial approach in rural policy may succeed, and may countervail a potential deficit of representative democracy and lack of open public involvement. Given this new and emerging environment, a community leader needs to be more than just a manager. The ability to make a managerial approach 'public' and 'democratic' makes the difference. For this reason we think that new approaches that create opportunities for the emergence of public leadership as well as new institutional designs are required.

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