

The Rural Movement of Denmark

The Danish Village Association
Landsforeningen af Landsbysamfund



The Council of Rural Districts
Landdistrikternes Fællesråd



Landdistrikternes Fællesråd

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THE RURAL MOVEMENT OF DENMARK

Introduction

This report on the Rural Movement in Denmark comprises one of four national case studies. The case studies are part of a wider report on the Rural Movements of Europe. The case study of Denmark was compiled from a study visit, which took place in November 2003. It documents the situation at this time, and much has taken place since then. It does, however, provide a useful insight into the origins, development, structure and activities of the movement. The report was produced, not as an academic analysis, but to provide useful information to those who have a practical interest in the process of rural development and the role and structure of the European rural movements. It is hoped that the report will provide useful information, inspiration and connections.

The report comprises two sections:

The National Context – provides essential information to set the rural movement within the context of the structure and administration of Denmark and its rural areas.

The Rural Movement of Denmark – gives a detailed account of the main features of the movement, comprising a factual account of its history, structure, activities, achievements and problems, and a full commentary providing an insight into the character of the movement and the issues raised by it.

The itinerary for the research visit can be found at the end of the report.

Acknowledgements

Denmark was the last of the countries visited, and I was immensely grateful for the warm welcome given to a slightly travel-weary researcher. It was interesting to compare the work of the long-standing Danish rural movement to that of the other countries visited, but in many ways it was a more complex situation to understand. My great thanks go to the following people for the help they gave me in this task:

- Jytte Aa. Moller, President of the Danish Village Association (LAL) and Vice-President of The Council for Rural Districts (LDF), for her informed and thoughtful commentary on the development of the Danish rural movement and the workings of the different organisations involved.
- Barbara Diklev, Editor and long-term organiser of the Danish Village Association (LAL), for her hospitality and for sharing her immense knowledge of rural affairs and the village movement in Denmark.
- Anne Marie Kruse, Manager, and the staff of The Council of Rural Districts (LDF), for their introduction to the work of the Council.
- Hanne Tanvig, Director, and the staff of the Danish Centre for Rural Research and Development (CFUL), who provided a sound introduction to the rural development context in Denmark, and an introduction to the Ministries.
- The staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the Ministry of the Interior and the National Agency of Danish Counties, for providing information on the policies applying to the rural areas.
- The representatives from the local authorities who explained the role and functions of local government in the rural areas.
- The many representatives from village associations who introduced their work, and explained the position of the villages in the Danish system.

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Comment

Ten years ago the cooperation among the local development movements in the Nordic countries started. Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. Hele Norden Skal Leve (HNSL) became the name. The movements are organised in different ways, and on the one hand we needed to learn from each other, on the other hand we wanted to support the creation of local development associations in other Nordic countries, which were not yet organised nationally.

Iceland reached that point three years ago, Estonia continues the construction on top of its 4H movement, the Faeroe Isles have their movement for the small islands, and all of these were represented at the Nordic Democracy Seminar for Children and the Young in March 2003. Greenland, Latvia and Lithuania were also represented. But what about Scotland?

Barbara Diklev¹ has visited Scotland several times. Outside of the HNSL context Scotland has participated in Nordic and European conferences for local/rural development. We therefore received with joy the news about Vanessa Halhead's funding for a research project in which she would be travelling to the Nordic countries to investigate the local/rural development movements in order to create a basis for a country-wide organisation in Scotland. The first time I talked to Vanessa Halhead was in August 2003 in Estonia. Two months later she was in Denmark for two weeks, studying Danish conditions for rural development.

In my opinion Vanessa Halhead's method for studying is very commendable. Not only does it comprise sheer scientific research but it is also built on the very personal impressions she gets partly by carrying out the interviews, partly by staying with central actors, participating in their everyday lives for a brief period. In doing so, Vanessa Halhead obtains a wide insight into the culture of her hosts and the language barriers are overcome more easily when subject can be raised several times to be addressed from several perspectives. Conditions about which the actors themselves may have wondered may be discussed in depth and be put into context.

I was anxious to see Vanessa Halhead's first version of her report and I was not disappointed. On the contrary. Vanessa Halhead's "National Context" is a valuable paper because she tells about Denmark on the background of her interest for the development of the rural conditions in Scotland. Her perspective is that of the outsider which means that both authorities and actors in the rural areas must refer their own view of historic events to her perspective.

Furthermore I am very satisfied with the fact that I have now twice had the opportunity to read through Vanessa Halhead's draft paper, "The Rural Movement of Denmark". Her division of the paper in two parts, description and her own comments makes it very instructive. I am now looking forward to receiving all of the finished reports which will make it easier even for HNSL to understand similarities and differences internally and in comparison with other local/rural development movements.

Also, I look forward to Vanessa Halhead's report being used very much as documentation and inspiration in Scotland as well as in the other countries involved. In my opinion it is of conclusive significance for each country that we all continue to cooperate with a rural development which is sustainable in relation to both nature and culture.

Power is mainly congregated in towns and it is not always easy for townspeople to understand how real cooperation with the rural population increases the resources and possibilities for the entire society.

Jytte Aa. Møller, president of Landsforeningen af Landsbysamfund, Danish Village Association. Naesby 18.04.04.

¹ Editor for The Danish Village Association (LAL)

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DENMARK National Context

History

Denmark lies at the ancient heart of Scandinavia, and its history has been closely intertwined with that of the other Scandinavian countries. A long established independent nation, the Danish monarchy is the oldest in Europe, dating back to the 10th century. In the Viking period, Denmark conquered much of England and the Baltic region, there were also many border disputes and occupations amongst the Scandinavian countries and Norway remained under Danish rule until 1814. A union between Denmark, Sweden and Norway in the 14th and 15th centuries countered the influence of the Hanseatic league, which dominated many other parts of central and eastern Europe. The Danish Lutheran Church, headed by the monarchy, was established following the ousting of the Catholic Church in 1536.

In the mid 19th century, a flourishing movement of ideas and populist culture, coupled with the revolutions taking place in other parts of Europe, lead to the development of a strong democratic movement. The Danish constitution was adopted in 1849, as a result of this. The birth of the Danish value system, civil society and the welfare state can be traced back to this period. During this period of the Danish 'enlightenment', the writings and teachings of N.F.S Grundtvig were a moving force in the popular consciousness of the Danish people. This helped to establish the very particular Danish culture and political orientation, which still holds immense power today, and explains much about current Danish life. The Danes are fiercely proud of their liberal approach to social issues.

The political influence of the large landowners was reduced by the beginning of the 20th century, to be replaced by the development of farmer's co-operatives. The political orientation of the country also shifted from conservative to liberal/ socialist, lead by the Farmers Party, now the Liberal Party.

During the post-war period, the welfare state was established, and is still one of the most comprehensive in Europe. This is based on high taxation levels, which have remained a strong political priority until recently.

The Danes joined the European Community in 1973 but remain outside the Euro-zone.

Structure

The land area of Denmark is 43,094 km² (excluding the Faeroes and Greenland). The population is 5.3 mill. a density of 121/km². A fertile country, the majority of the land, outwith urban areas, is under cultivation. Cultivated areas account for 62% of the total land area, and forest 12%.

The Danish economy is strong. Danish GDP² is 144 bill Euro³. The total working population is 2.6 mill. employed in: agriculture (5%), manufacturing (25%), services (70%). Unemployment stands at 4.8%, while the rate is rising, it is only half the EU average.

Administration

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy. Government is organised through elected politicians on three levels: national, County and Municipal. Denmark has a long tradition of local government autonomy and is one of the most highly decentralised systems in Europe. The current Government is a majority Liberal Party Government.

Queen	Margrethe II
Parliament	179 seats including 2 for the Faeroes and 2 for Greenland
Ministries	17 – with related Directorates and Agencies
State Regional Government	14 State Counties
Regional local Government	13 County Councils (<i>Amt</i>) and 1 Regional Council
Local Government	271 Municipalities (<i>Commune</i>)
Home rule	The Faeroes and Greenland each have their own home-rule arrangements, including local government legislation.

² Worldbank 2002 figures

³ At the time of writing 1 Euro = 7.4 Danish Kroner (DKK)

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The Danish system is based on subsidiarity. Most regional and local level responsibilities are devolved to regional and local government, each having their own areas of competence. There are no significant State regional authorities. As a consequence, local government in Denmark is a very stronger player, with 57% of all public expenditure channelled through the County Councils and Municipalities.

The Government is however, currently undertaking a review of local government, which is likely to lead to a reduction in the number of Counties and Municipalities, and a possible alteration in the structures at regional level. This will also reduce the number of elected politicians overall.

The 1970 administrative reform, reduced the number of Counties from 25 to 14 and the number of Municipalities from 1388 to 275 (reduced to 271 in 2003)⁴. This changed a system that had existed for many centuries, based on parishes, boroughs and the old counties, related to the church structure. It also laid the foundation for the transfer of responsibilities from the State to regional and local levels.

⁴ Copenhagen and Frederiksberg are both regional and local authorities

Regional Government

State Regional Authorities

There are 14 State regional authorities, each with an office and Prefect, appointed by the Government. These have limited functions and are responsible for certain judicial, legal and supervisory functions.

County Councils

See Case Study – Regional Government

There are 14 locally elected County Councils. Counties range in population from 44,000-637,000. The County Council, or *Amt*, goes back to 1662 as an administrative unit. Until the 1970 reforms, the medieval distinction between town and country was preserved by the 86 boroughs, which lay outwith County Council jurisdiction.

The County Council members are elected every 4 years, together with the Municipalities. Responsibilities relate to regional level policy and planning and service delivery related to major land uses, secondary education, hospitals, social welfare, environmental quality and protection, major roads and transport and infrastructure. All County Councils are instructed by Government to develop a Rural Districts Policy, and to produce regional and rural development strategies for the EU funds, for which they are the main administrators. Some County Councils also establish strategic partnerships for regional development.

Physical planning operates at 3 levels:

- The National Government passes the Planning Laws and develops a 'National Plan'. These set the planning framework, within which the County Councils and Municipalities must work.
- The County Councils are required to produce a County Plan, taking account of the National Plan and legislation, and identifying the main zoning for development and industry.
- The Municipality must produce a Municipal Plan, taking account of the County Plan, and including building control, local services, local land zoning, location of facilities etc. The Municipality also has the responsibility for development control.

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In Denmark, taxation takes place at 3 levels: national, county and municipal. County expenditure is financed through county income tax, property tax, property value tax, Government grants and interest. In 2001, income tax accounted for 80.5% of County Council income, Government grants 9% and property taxes 10%. There is a system for equalisation between the different Counties and Municipalities.

Danish Association of County Councils

The County Councils are linked and supported through the Danish Association of County Councils. The Association acts as a go-between for the Government and the County Councils, negotiating on their behalf and undertaking bargaining with and on behalf of the 160,000 Council employees.

Local Government

Municipalities

The Municipalities are very important in the Danish system. The current Municipalities were formed in 1970. Municipalities as a whole employ more than 50% of the public sector workforce and together with the Counties, 70%. There are currently 271⁵ Municipalities, although in the 2004 reform it is anticipated that this number may be substantially reduced.

The size of the Municipalities varies widely. In 2001 they ranged from 2,266 - 499,148 inhabitants, an average of 19,452.⁶ Rural Municipalities average 10,000. During recent years, some Municipalities have started to co-operate on certain issues, and the issue of merging Municipalities has resurfaced.

Municipalities are the most local level of decision-making. Their duties include local land use planning and service delivery: primary schools, child & elderly care, housing, public facilities, public utilities, roads and transport, emergency services,

⁵ In 2003, the 5 Municipalities on the Island of Bornholm decided to amalgamate, reducing the number of Municipalities from 275 to 271.

⁶ 'Municipalities and Counties in Denmark' – Ministry of Health and Interior, 2002

environmental measures, some aspects of social welfare and unemployment schemes. As well as the County Councils, they are asked, on a voluntary basis, to set up a Rural Districts Policy. Some Municipalities form Village Councils (*see Case Study*), to enable closer working links with the villages, and to assist them in implementing the Rural Districts Policy.

Municipalities are funded through direct and indirect taxes, investment income, grants and loans. The main source of income (56%) is through taxation. This represents a share of income tax, along with the County and State shares. Normally both Municipalities and Counties are free to set their own tax rate, and this is decided on an annual basis. But the Government has recently capped taxation, causing problems for the local authorities. Municipalities can also raise land tax (set at 1%), property tax, company tax, church tax etc.

Financing

Denmark has the highest rates of tax in the world and a traditionally strong welfare State. However, it is said that taxation has never been an important political issue in Denmark. People accept the values of the welfare state and the benefits this provides. Only very recently, is there a sign that political thinking is moving towards a more market-oriented ideology. This view is not however reflected in the local authorities, nor in much of the population.

The public sector in Denmark spends approximately 55% of GNP. Of this nearly 70% of the operational and capital investment costs are defrayed by the local authorities. Public spending is financed by means of taxes and duties, of which the State in total collects about 70% and the local authorities the rest. A proportion of the State share is relayed as payments to local authorities.

The basic rate of income tax is 40%, and a normal professional rate is 65%. On average:

- 30% goes to the State
- 23.3% goes to the County
- 46.7% goes to the Municipality

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CASE STUDY – Regional Government

Ringkjoebing County Council

Information from the Rural Development Officer in the regional development department.

Ringkjoebing County is situated in West Jutland, and is the largest County in Denmark. It has a land area of 4,854 km² (11.3% of Denmark), and a population of 275,000.

The responsibilities of the County Council are set at a regional rather than local level. These include health, education, transport, infrastructure, social welfare, environment etc. The County Council also has the regional planning function. The County Plan covers land use and development, infrastructure and economic development and provides the framework for the Municipal Plans.

The Regional Development Department focuses on both rural and regional development. The Council's policy is to support citizens to make things happen, their ideal being that development should be bottom up. Their focus is mostly on well-being, rather than business development, and improving the conditions for rural living

The Rural Development officer deals with the villages directly to gain a true impression of their issues. Advice is provided, on request, to both villages and Municipalities on fund-raising, community involvement and project planning. The Council cannot intervene in the duties for which the Municipalities are responsible, but they provide guidance on request.

The Council is trying to network the local activists 'fire-spirits' to help them to share best-practice, identify their competency needs and provide a basis for co-operation.

The County Council can only support projects with funding if they have a regional perspective. They have no funds to put into local projects. Also no Council funding is targeted specifically at rural projects. In terms of business development funding, the Council targets 0.5 mill DKK (67,200 Euro) to rural development, but half of this is spent on the LEADER and Objective 2 managers. The County Council does not provide funding to NGOs. There are few sources of funding for NGOs so most work on a voluntary basis, locally and nationally.



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Rural Areas



History

Denmark has, throughout history, been an essentially rural country. In recent years this has changed with the decline of agriculture as an employer and the trends of rural-urban migration that have affected most other European countries. However, Denmark has its own particular differences in this pattern of rural change.

Farmers have been more important for the development of the nation than in many other EU countries. This was the 'farmer's country'. Nearly all people have close connections to the countryside. The Farmers Party, now the Liberal Party has been one of the most powerful in Danish politics. This is the reason for the synonymous relationship between rural and agricultural in the minds of most Danes.

In the mid-19th century, the demise of the large landowners and the growth of the agricultural co-operative movement began. Farms were still in private ownership, but co-operated on many aspects of production, including secondary processing (eg. dairies). These co-operatives are still in existence, though many have been partly taken over by multi-national shareholders. The farmers also started the first wave of industrialisation, based on the processing of agricultural produce. Through the farmers production co-operatives, these developed into quite large industries. Farmers were quite well off.

In the 1960-70s, farm amalgamation led to a decrease in agricultural employment. At this time, in contrast to other EU countries, the unemployed farmers and farm related

workforce, did not move to the cities, but stayed in their villages. The reason they were able to do this was because of the strength of the welfare state provision. The success of the welfare state is therefore another reason why rural issues have remained somewhat 'invisible'.

This then produced an interesting trend in which industries, located in the cities, moved production units out to the rural areas, in order to take advantage of the availability of cheap labour in the villages. The Government also provided incentives for them to do this. The rural people proved to be a good, skilled and reliable work force. This has meant that there was virtually no rural unemployment and rural areas have continued to retain economic viability until recently. Since the end of the 1980s, many of these rural industrial units have closed down as the companies out-sourced labour in cheaper parts of the world. For the first time, there was unemployment in rural areas (around 7%) and people started leaving for the towns, or commuting.

Farming and forestry dominate land use in the rural areas. Cultivated areas account for 62% of the total land area of Denmark, forest is 12% and less favoured areas 4%. Agricultural production is characterised by increasing specialisation and ever-larger units. From 1975 to 1998 the number of holdings fell from 134,245 to 59,761, a reduction of 55%. 57% of these are part-time units. The average size of holding is 42.5 ha. (73.5ha. for full time and 18.6ha. for part time). Whilst agriculture is still very important for Denmark, the value of agricultural exports is 20% of all Danish exports, as an employer it is relatively unimportant.⁷

In addition to the decline in agriculture and rural industry, taxation and the welfare state is being reduced. This is likely to produce increased stress on the rural population and their services. The transition to the knowledge-based economy in rural areas has also proved difficult.

Farm amalgamation has been extensive, resulting in buildings being used for other purposes, and attracting many non-

⁷ Rural Development Plan for Denmark 2000

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agricultural people to the rural areas. Approximately 25% of people living in rural areas are involved with agriculture and agricultural related jobs. Commuting is extensive, especially in the parts of Denmark with larger urban areas, leading to an increasing trend of 'suburbanisation' of many rural areas.

The 1970 reform of local government was also very influential in the evolution of the rural areas. At this time, the historical traditions of the rural areas were broken. As 1388 parish-based Municipalities gave way to 275 much larger units, so the local rural communities lost much of their power and autonomy, and the geographical identity that had been central to their lives for several centuries. The Parish Council had existed, since the Viking age, as the local level of government, and is still the area with which local people feel the strongest bond. However the current Municipalities are very strong.

The problems of rural areas are identified by the Government as: loss of young people, high average age, lack of tertiary education facilities, necessity to commute to work, fewer primary sector jobs, high costs of farm establishment.⁸

Until recently, there was a strongly held view that there were no peripheral areas in Denmark, which was seen as a country with a high standard of living and little unemployment. It was politically unacceptable to say that any areas were suffering. However, for the first time in 2003, various Government reports identified areas that are lagging and showing signs of marginalisation. This is a significant finding, as it opens the door to addressing rural development issues.

Classification

The first problem is in defining what is meant by a 'rural area' in Denmark. There is no standard definition and different criteria are used for different purposes:⁹

1. Statistically, there is no definition of rural, except in relation to the definition of urban - a population in excess of 200, with less

than 200m. between dwellings. This definition has no direct policy implications.

2. The Danish EU Article 33 Rural Development Programme has defined rural as 'outwith towns of over 3000'.
3. Under LEADER, Municipalities with towns of not more than 10,000 are considered rural.
4. The Ministry of Interior has several levels of definition for rural commuter areas in respect of the levels refund available on the costs of commuting.

According to the Danish Centre for Rural Research¹⁰ there are 3 types of rural areas:

1. Rural areas close to major cities – economically dependent on the city.
2. Commuter / suburbanised rural areas – where many people depend on the urban areas for their income. These areas are not economically deprived, and have high income levels, but may have problems in retaining local schools, shops etc. and fight for good transport routes. Commuters tend to resist change and want to retain a good natural environment with no industrial farming or development.
3. Truly rural areas, too far from the cities to commute. These are the areas that are suffering from disparities. They are also areas that are losing their able people and are often the focus for in-migration of disadvantaged families because of the cheaper housing.

The majority of the Danish rural areas fall under category 2.

A further definition was provided by the Danish Village Association:¹¹

- Close to big towns
- Close to services and facilities
- Close to jobs
- Distant from jobs
- Distant from services

The Village

The Danish village has its roots in the old feudal village system (up to 1800) and the rural co-operative movement of the late 19th to early 20th century. The village in Denmark

⁸ LEADER+ Programme for Denmark – 2000-2006

⁹ Association of County Councils

¹⁰ Hanna Tanvig, Head of the Danish Centre for Rural Research (pers. com.)

¹¹ Barbara Diklev, Editor for the Danish Village Association (pers. com.)

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is not a formal unit, but is the local focus for the community and its activities. Danish villages have a long tradition for organising themselves in associations, which mainly work on a voluntary basis. Under the pre-1970 administrative system, the parish was the most local level of government, giving considerable delegated powers to local people. Since 1970, the villages have had to learn to work with the more distant Municipalities.

Danish villages are facing most of the problems apparent across much of rural Europe. These relate to the disappearance of jobs and local facilities. Two issues of current importance are shop and primary school closures, which are being fought by local people and the village movement.

Co-operation between the village and the Municipality is vital to the health of the rural communities. In a study undertaken by the Danish Village Association in 2001-2¹², the forms of relationship between villages and Municipalities were identified as:

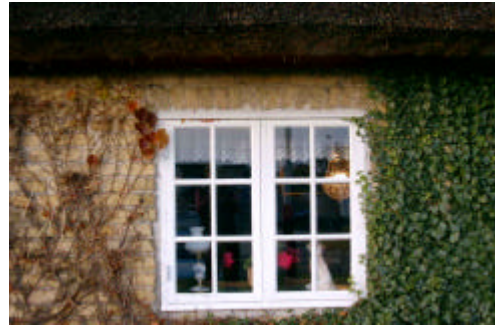
1. Villages working alone
2. Villages co-operating with each other
3. Villages co-operating with Municipalities alone
4. Villages co-operating with Municipalities as a group

The study found that not all Municipalities are co-operating with their villages, but identified an increasing interest in co-operation. There is a wide range of levels at which this takes place, and this is evolving differently in Municipalities as they come to understand the benefits. The different levels of Municipality co-operation and support were identified as:

1. Municipality contact person only (with each village/ with united villages)
2. Funding support
3. Co-operation through consultation and hearings
4. Co-operation on solving problems

The Association of County Councils commented that there is no framework at regional and municipal level to help the many small community voices to gain strength. There is also a lack of organisation between

the many groups and a lack of commitment to do something for those groups on the part of many local authorities. There is often disparity between consultation and implementation. Some local authorities are beginning to give responsibilities to village associations, or to set up village councils, but the picture is quite variable across Denmark.



Civil Society

In understanding how Denmark works, it is essential to understand the thinking inherited from the Danish 'enlightenment' and N.F.S Grundtvig. This has been an essential influence on the Danish approach, and marks it out from other countries. The thinking of Grundtvig is woven into much of the current system and many of the civil organisations, which are still strong in Denmark today. Some of the key foundation stones to have arisen from this include:

- The values of the educational system
- The folk high schools and study circles
- The co-operative movement
- The formation of many civil associations

The education system

Danish educational philosophy is based on the concept of self-motivated learning rather than didactic teaching. The importance of qualifications is less important than the act of learning itself and the motivation to do so. This is a model of which Danes are proud.

The Folk High Schools

Started in the mid-19th century by Grundtvig, to educate people about democracy, the Folk High Schools have been the foundation for Danish civil society. They are based on a clearly articulated philosophy of local association: *"We have learned that if we want to do something, we have to come together"*. The Folk High Schools are an internationally famous model of popular education. They

¹² 'Lokalrad / landsbyrad' – Landsforeningen af Landsbysamfund, 2003

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have no relationship to the formal educational system, but provide the opportunity for people of any age to come together to learn and discuss any issue of their choice. They also act as meeting places where politicians can talk to a wider forum. Folk High Schools exist in most rural areas and are funded by the Municipalities. There is no standard format and each school is different. This model was exported to other Scandinavian countries, and has been noted as important in the development of the Swedish Village Movement. In recent years, however, the position of the Folk High Schools has been weakened, and they have had to become more commercial to survive.

Free schools

When the local school closes, communities often set up their own 'free school'. The right to establish free schools was established in Denmark many years ago. This relate to the right of free congregation, which has played a big role in Danish democratic thinking. This was initially focused on catering for minority interests, ethnic and religious groups, however it is possible to set up a free school for any purpose. If this happens, the Municipality is obliged to fund the school. The school also has to raise some of the funds. from the parents and local businesses, often through the donation of materials and labour.

*"On one point all Danish Governments have upheld a Grundtvigian tradition by respecting spiritual freedom in cultural as well as religious matters. The prevailing view has been to respect every minority, and to support it financially in cultural matters. Schools of all types are given State grants, and the Folk High Schools have been strongly supported."*¹³

Study circles

Study Circles have been an equally important foundation of civil society, and especially of the rural villages. They started in the 19th Century through 'enlightenment associations' which promoted groups to come together to discuss and study any topic they wished. Study Circles are used to both learn about different topics and to discuss topical issues. In this way they have been the sparks for the formation of new groups and organisations to

tackle issues in the community. Government funding was available for classes or facilitators, but has recently been stopped. Study Circles have been credited as being influential in some major decision taken by the Government, especially during the 1970s, (eg. renewable energy). This is based on the role of the study circles in raising awareness and creating a political lobby.

Local Associations

There is a long tradition of very local civil associations within the villages, also inspired by the work of Grundtvig, which turned villages into centres of cultural activity and learning. There are on average 5-10 associations in every village. These include: sports, youth, adult education, scouts, hunting, local history, local energy associations, free schools, co-op shop association, nursery board, school board etc.

Village Associations (See Case Study – Village Associations)

Some villages bring these many groups together in a Village or Citizens Association (Borgerforening). These are non-party political and have a wide range of functions. They are established to take care of the external relations with the authorities, and are also involved in stimulating local activities.

Village Councils (See Case Study – Village Councils)

In many Municipalities 'Village Councils/Committees' have been established, either by the villages themselves or by the Municipality, to enable their mutual links. These typically consist of 2 representatives from each village in the Municipality. This is a growing trend helping the villages to link to the Municipality and also to co-operate and gain strength.

Volunteering

There has traditionally been a Danish system of volunteering, as in the other Nordic countries. The saying is *"if you really want something to happen in the village, you have to do it yourself"*. People will turn out to do village tasks and also to build buildings. The Municipality will often match labour with funding. If the Municipality sees active village involvement they will usually try to give some funding, though the budget for this is small.

¹³ 'N.F.S. Grundtvig', Kaj Thaning, 1972

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CASE STUDY – Village Councils

Aars Commune (Municipality)¹⁴

Aars Commune is located in north-east Jutland. It has a land area of 223 km² and a population of 13,300 - 60/ km². 72% live in the 'towns', which are classified as settlements of over 200 people. There are 9 villages, 8 have over 200 inhabitants. The Commune has 19 elected members.

The Village Council was started by the Commune Planning Officer in 1994. It is composed of 4 elected politicians and 9 village representatives, who meet to identify local issues and the role of the Commune in assisting with these. The Planning Officer has the function of secretariat and support. At the start a survey and report of issues in villages was produced to set the agenda.

The activities of the Village Council include:

- Meeting 3-4 times a year
- Talks on rural development by experts
- Village visits
- Assisting development of a Rural Areas Policy

The Rural Areas Policy has a formal status in the Municipality and links to the normal planning system. The role of the Village Council in this process includes holding a visioning workshop with 9 villages.

The Village Council is linked to a special community grant scheme, run by the Commune. The Commune has 300,000 DKK (40,300 Euro) pa available for grants. 100,000 DKK (13,500 Euro) of this is allocated to the 9 villages (8000 DKK + 10 DKK per inhabitant is available for each village). This funding does not have to be applied for and can be used as co-financing. The Village Council has to decide how to spend the other 200,000 DKK. To date this has gone to a range of village projects eg: water tower renovations, playground, sports area, restoring and furnishing village halls, flag poles and village signposts.

Local politicians have been supportive of the Village Council, though in the case of major political decisions (eg. schools) there is doubt that the Village Council would be listened to any more than the village itself.

Municipalities are not required to set up Village Councils, however, in a recent study, 90 out of 240 rural Municipalities had village committees, or were planning them¹⁵.

¹⁴ Information from the Municipal Planning Officer and Secretary of the Village Council

¹⁵ 'Lokalrad / landsbyrad' – Landsforeningen af Landsbysamfund, 2003

CASE STUDY – Village Association

Soendbjerg Village Association

The Village Association started in the 1990s. It is one of the most successful in terms of the projects accomplished. A working group in 1994 decided on 17 points that they wanted to improve in the village. The Association and community company have been working to address these since.

A major achievement has been the installation and management of a community combined heat and power plant. This was started in 1997, and is the smallest district heating plant in Denmark. It is run through a shareholder company. The company has 5 board members and 1 observer from the Municipality. The Municipality also guarantees the plant. The plant is run by 2 paid part-time local people.

The plant is fuelled by processed seed husks and wood chips and produces 1.8 mill kw/ pa. The current challenge is to get more customers to make the plant really viable. There are 37 households in the village, a YMCA, which is equivalent to 15 households in use of energy and a school, which has similar usage. 32 households are currently on the scheme and the other 5 are being encouraged to join to make it viable. The Municipal Plan now insists that each new house built must be part of the heating scheme. The company has also renovated local houses and put them onto the heating scheme.

The Village Association is also renovating houses and has, on occasion, bought empty properties to stop them being sold as holiday homes, then sold them onto a housing company to develop for local housing.



Soendbjerg heat and power plant

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Funding sources for rural areas

It is noticeably difficult for NGOs and local groups to obtain public funding for their activities. As a result, many function on volunteer labour and without core funding, both at local and national levels. It was noted that under the current Government, many previous sources of funding have been removed, causing very real problems within rural communities. The following are some of the main funding sources open to the rural communities and NGOs.

Rural Areas Fund

Established in 1994, and run by the Ministry of Interior, this is most accessible source of money for rural communities. The purpose of the fund is to stimulate village activity. It provides small grants for rural activities. The Fund has 20mill DKK (2.6 mill. Euro) annually. This is used for small/ medium projects, which are locally initiated, and is open to NGO's, public and private applicants. It has supported a broad range of projects – culture, leisure, attracting incomers, local branding, business start up etc.

Regional Growth Strategy

The Government noticed a recent trend towards regionally divergent development, and has set up a new 3-year programme targeting development in 15 small areas. 60 mill. DKK (8 mill. Euro) has been allocated to this programme.

County Councils

The County Councils support projects with a regional rather than local perspective, funding is normally limited and is not targeted specifically at rural projects. Some Counties use rural development funding to finance the administration of Article 33, LEADER and Objective 2. County Councils do not generally provide funding to NGOs. Neither County Councils nor Municipalities are allowed to finance businesses. For this reason most local projects co-funded by these bodies do not focus on business or employment, despite the need for this. State funding is available for rural business development, but has been recently cut back.

Municipalities

Most Municipalities provide some funding for the activities of local groups, but this is very limited. One Municipality quoted 1000 DKK (135 Euro) available to local associations for their activities.

Rural Development Pilot Programme

This 1-year pilot was organised by the Ministry for Urban Development in 2001, as a contribution to rural development. The programme comprised a sustainable village programme and a small towns programme. The total fund was 5 mill DKK (672,000 Euro). The pilot is currently being evaluated.

National Lottery

The national Lotto is a Government scheme. As a funding source, it is mostly used for large, high status, national projects. Funding is available for community buildings, but is aimed at more expensive, prestigious projects, hence is not very useful to most communities. National NGOs can apply to Lotto for money, but only if they are active in more than 8 counties.

EU Funds

The two main programmes supporting rural development are the EAGGF Rural Development Programme, Article 33 and the LEADER+ Programme. Other programmes, including the Structural and Community Funds, are utilised in rural areas. The Structural Funds are not very important in Denmark, there are no Objective 1 areas, Objective 2 covers some areas in Jutland and the islands, there are also some Objective 3 areas.

There is a current lack of public co-financing for EU programmes, national co-funding is not generally available outwith the normal responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture. As a result, these programmes are not being fully utilised. This situation is in part considered to be the result of the lack of Government focus on rural areas.

Rural Development Programme

Article 33 is the only measure that relates to rural development rather than agriculture. This has a total budget for 2000-6 of 101 mill. Euro. Just over 10% of the total Rural Development Plan. The main purpose of the

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Article 33 measures is to limit migration from the rural districts through the creation of alternative/ supplementary jobs, and of an attractive environment for business and living. The sub-measures are:

- Improvement of basic service facilities for the rural economy and population
- Renewal, reorganisation and development of villages and the protection and preservation of cultural assets in rural areas
- Diversification of activities in the agricultural sphere and closely related areas to create alternative employment and income opportunities
- Development and improvement of infrastructure linked to the development of agriculture
- Promotion of activities within tourism and handicrafts.

Each County Council makes its own annual plan for the measure, and plays the lead co-ordinating role in its delivery. The Counties are free to choose which projects to support.

The difficulty of obtaining the national co-funding for Article 33 is seriously limiting its application. The following scenario was presented: Central Government will not contribute funding to Article 33, The Ministry of Agriculture will only fund agricultural projects, The Ministry of Interior has some funding, but this is hard to get and usually only for small projects, County Councils will only contribute to regional projects. Municipalities can provide co-funding for local projects, but the project must fall outwith their normal responsibilities, and they only have funds for their normal responsibilities. Communities cannot raise their own funds or contribute their own labour. It is only possible to use private financial contributions from farmers. Lotto funding could be used for certain projects, but is very hard to get. It was also noted by the Danish Village Association that the focus of Article 33 had been mostly on agricultural projects.

Danish LEADER Programme

The Danish LEADER+ programme has been referred to as an 'appendix' to the Structural Funds and is a very small programme with 12 areas, covering 12% of the rural population, and focused on the northern and southern fringes of the country. It is not therefore

considered to make a significant contribution to rural development. LEADER 1 and II were also very small programmes.

It also lacks public co-financing sources. The LEADER Network Unit and the regional administrative units are funded by the EC and Government, but all project funding is local. A small amount of Government funding is available for projects that cannot be co-funded by local government (eg. business related). The original intention had been that 16 mill Euro from the EC would be matched by Danish Government funds. However, following the change of Government, this was reduced and co-financing must come from local or regional level. At the same time, local authorities had restrictions placed on their spending and tax raising powers. This has caused problems for the implementation of the Programme. It was commented by the Ministry of Agriculture that "without the Municipalities we would have had no Leader programme in Denmark". However, this also limits the type of projects to those that local authorities can co-finance, mostly social and cultural.

When establishing the LEADER Programme, the Ministry of Agriculture had to develop their own definition of rural areas. They selected the Municipalities which were more peripheral according to factors of employment, tax income and other factors. These Municipalities were invited to form LAGs at sub-regional level. Each LAG is composed of several Municipalities, within the same County. The organisation of the LAGs is a very varied. They have between 6-31 members, comprising private/ NGO/ public sectors (max.50%). The programme is built on creating networks and tends to be very business related, so has not been found to be very useful for village projects.

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Rural Policy

“There is no rural development policy as such in Denmark, the EU programmes constitute the main rural development policy, without which rural development issues would not have been put into focus.”¹⁶

The position of Denmark was contrasted to that of the other Nordic countries, which are much more committed to rural development and invest more in it, and into the EU programmes. The lack of focus on rural policy in Denmark is a result of the greater population density, lack of peripheral areas, the welfare state and the resistance to seeing one part of the country as different from the rest, or acknowledging any special problems in the rural areas. This also explains the low level of LEADER Programme activity and lack of Objective 1 areas. However, a recent report on regional growth has identified, for the first time, that there are problems of peripherality in Denmark. It is generally felt that a more strategic way of organising rural and regional development policy is needed.

There is a lack of coherence between the responsibilities of the different Ministries regarding rural areas. For instance, the Ministry of Interior has the competence for rural development, but the Ministry of Agriculture has the majority of the funds. Other Ministries also play a crucial role in rural development. The Ministries involved with the rural sector in Denmark, and their responsibilities are:

Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries:

- EU funded rural policy - CAP Article 33
- Involvement in developing LEADER+
- Innovation programme

Ministry of the Interior and Health:

- Competence for rural development
- Danish Community Areas Fund
- Advisory committee on rural policy
- Reporting on rural matters

Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs:

- Regional development
- Regional growth strategy
- Objective 2

Ministry of Environment:

- National spatial planning
- Environmental regulations and protected areas.

The Ministry of Interior has had responsibility for co-ordinating rural development for 10 years. This resulted from a debate in early 1990s, which identified the need for a Ministry with a broad remit to take on this function. Very little emphasis is given to this role, with only two people working on rural development in the Ministry. The Ministry is responsible for reporting on rural matters and produces yearly reports to Parliament. These collate the work of all the Ministries in relation to rural development, and present policy initiatives. The report starts a discussion in the Parliament, leading to a decision on broad issues to be taken forward.¹⁷

An Advisory Committee on Rural Policy was established by the Ministry of Interior in the 1990s. The membership comprises the three rural associations: LAL/ LDF/ LID¹⁸ and six representatives from the main political parties, appointed by the Ministry for having shown interest in rural issues.

A new cross-Ministry committee on rural development has also just been formed, chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture. This is primarily focussed on the use of the EU agricultural funds. It was felt by some that this had the potential to become a future rural policy committee, as in Finland.

The other key players in rural policy are:

Danish Association of County Councils:

- Regional policy
- Regional government co-ordination

Danish Association of Municipalities:

- Local government policy
- Local government co-ordination

National Park Boards:

- Piloting sustainable rural development

¹⁷ Information from the Ministry of Interior and Health – pers. com.

¹⁸ See the Danish Rural Movements section of this report

¹⁶ Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

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County Councils:

- Regional and rural policy
- Regional planning
- Administration of rural development programmes

Municipalities:

- Local and rural policy
- Local planning and land use

12 LEADER LAGs:

- Focussed on rural development

Danish Centre for Rural Research and Development:

- Established in 2000 as a 5 year pilot to provide a data and research focus for rural issues

The Danish Farmers Unions:

- 4 Unions¹⁹ with strong national power

3 national rural and village associations:

- LAL, LID, LDF
- Support and advocacy for rural civil society

Village associations:

- Very many local groups organised by issue and area
- Increasing co-operation between groups

Government policy is for 'a balanced Denmark' in which all areas are involved, though there is a current lack of resources and political will to implement this. There is a broad political agreement that the population should not be concentrated in urban areas, and that there should be a sustainable economic environment in rural areas. The discussion on equalisation of Municipalities is based in this principle. It is also felt that rural development should be anchored locally or in the regions, and not a matter of central policy.

County Councils and Municipalities are requested by the Ministry of Interior to produce a Rural Districts Policy. These vary

¹⁹ The Danish Farmers Association
The Family Agricultural Association - set up to represent small farmers and incorporating:
▪ Women's Agricultural Association
▪ Children's Agricultural Association
The Free Farmers Association
The Estate Owners Association

greatly in size and quality. All counties have an indicative framework for activity under Article 33, and must also produce a strategy for this to receive funding. Some integrate these with their physical planning policy, which must be renewed every 4 years. The Ministry has no current figures on how many local authorities have undertaken such rural plans. During the 1999 evaluation, it emerged that Municipalities with a larger town had responded positively, whereas rural Municipalities saw themselves as all rural and did not perceive the need. It was also commented that because there is no clear definition of rural policy at national level, there is lack of focus and emphasis at regional level. Approximately half of the Counties also appoint rural development officers to help implement their policy.

One County Council interviewed saw the need for the Rural Districts Policy to take a more bottom-up perspective, and to look at how to organise the area on an integrated basis. They saw the Rural Policy as more holistic and visionary than the normal spatial plans, more of an integrated development plan.²⁰

There is a general feeling that changes in EU policy, especially the CAP, will make a difference to the present picture in Denmark. There are already signs of changing perspectives. "*Something exciting is about to happen in Denmark*".²¹

The Danish farmers unions are traditionally very powerful 'a State within a State'. There is a Danish saying that 'what is decided in Axelborg (farmers unions HQ), Christiansborg (the seat of Government) have to do'.

For the first time in 2003, the unions have united. It has also been noticed that the attitude of the farmers to rural development is changing due to the perceived shift in the focus of the CAP. In 2003, public funding was put into the Agricultural Advisory Centres (part of unions) to provide support for rural development and to help develop the Rural Districts Policy.

²⁰ Ringkøbing County Council

²¹ Jytta Aa. Moeller, Chair of the Danish Village Association and Vice-Chair of the Council of Rural Districts – pers. com.

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The Danish Village Association and The Council of Rural Districts have identified the main issues to be tackled in rural development as:

- horizontal integration – how to bring sectoral policy together?
- vertical integration – at what level should decisions be taken?

They have also agreed that there should be a special Ministry of rural development, to address the issues in an integrated way, and a State rural policy, with clearly defined goals spanning all rural issues and involving all Ministries. The Council of Rural Districts is working to develop a basis for such a policy. This is supported by the agricultural members of the Council, to help address the perceived needs of rural areas, namely: the changes in emphasis of the CAP, the isolation of farmers in rural districts and the proposed reform of local government leading to greater centralisation.

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The Rural Movement of Denmark

The rural movement of Denmark comprises 3 organisations:

LAL The Danish Village Association – *Landsforeningen af Landsbysamfund*
LID The Villages in Denmark Association – *Landsbyer i Danmark*
LDF The Council of Rural Districts – *Landdistrikternes Feallesraad*

This report documents the work of LAL and LDF.

History

In the 1970s, a tide of urban settlers in the countryside sought to re-establish the rural way of life and traditional values. This was said to be part of the 'socialist environmental movement'. They undertook the task of mobilising the rural communities and helping to articulate their needs and values. They were reacting against urban values, rural decline, agricultural policy, industrialisation and administrative centralisation, and were promoting the goals of well-being, quality of life and community values.

There was recognition that agriculture would not sustain rural life and that there was a need to accommodate a new development model, relevant to the post-industrial age, at the same time respecting the values, culture, advantages and scale of rural areas. This movement was linked to environmentalism, combining scientific rationalisation of the need to protect the environment with local links to environmental values.

This new network of urban incomers, promoting the values of a rural lifestyle, began to fill the vacuum left by rationalised agricultural co-operatives. It was out of this group that the village movement was started.

The Danish Village Association (LAL) was established in Dec 1976 to "support the work being done to re-establish, preserve and further develop village communities and the

environment and culture they represent" and "to support the efforts to provide the citizens with local influence, local responsibility and local possibilities of co-operation".

This was one of the first village movements to be set up in Europe. It paralleled the development of the movement in Finland, but was independent from it.

The movement began with a small group of people who were motivated to do something for the rural areas. The driving force was a man called Carsten Abild, who travelled around Denmark talking to rural people. On the basis of this, he decided that any movement must come from the rural communities, because of the understanding of local people about rural society and how to work with it.

The 1970 amalgamation of the Municipalities, from 1300 to 273, led to many local 'protest' associations being formed. LAL became an important co-ordinator for this new movement. The mission was 'new life to the villages'.

Feb 1978 was the first general assembly of LAL. Two weeks before this, the founder told the press that the organisation had reached their goal as the Government had set up a committee to investigate rural issues. This prompted a rebellion in LAL, which finally led to a split in the movement. This was the start of *The Villages in Denmark Association (LID)*. LID, under the leadership of Carsten Abild, has worked ever since with the same goals as LAL, but with a much smaller group.

The members of both LAL and LID were mostly urban immigrants into the countryside rather than farmers. In 1982-3, LAL and LID approached the agricultural organisations to see what could be done about this. This led to the setting up of KLL, the Committee for Villages and Rural Districts, comprising the agricultural organisations and other interested parties, enabling different interest groups to talk to each other.

In 1994, the Ministry of Interior set up a Rural Districts Group, in which LAL and LID were represented, along with five politicians. At the same time the Ministry also gave funding to develop projects in rural areas – the Rural Areas Fund. The Rural Districts Group was

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involved in the decisions on the allocation of funds. The Group met three times a year, plus one conference, to which people from all of the projects were invited to discuss rural issues.

In 1995, the President of LAL asked the Ministry for funding, as it was difficult to run the organisation without paid staff. The Ministry responded that they could not fund LAL, as it was too small, but if they gathered others together they would consider funding a wider group. This led to the formation, in 1997, of a new structure – ***The Council of Rural Districts (LDF)*** – composed of the President of KLL, The Committee for Villages and Rural Districts, the Presidents of LAL and LID plus 7 other organisations, and mainly funded by the Ministry of the Interior.

In this way it came about that three separate, but closely inter-linked, and sometimes competing, organisations are involved in the Danish rural movement.

In 2001 the ***Danish Centre for Rural Research and Development (CFUL)*** was established, for a 5-year pilot period with Government funding, to undertake research and dissemination of data on rural development. The President of LDF chairs the board of CFUL, politically appointed by the Ministries involved.



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The Danish Village Association Landsforeningen af Landsbysamfund (LAL)

“The objective of the Danish Village Association is popular enlightenment for the benefit of the local communities, the villages and the rural areas, and guarding their interests to maintain and develop the environment and the culture they represent, and to support others working towards the same goal.”



Structure

LAL is a national association of village organisations, with no regional branch structure.

Membership	500 voting members 116 non-voting members
Board	7 elected members including the President 2 substitute board members Treasurer and accountant
Staff	No paid staff – 1 voluntary editor

Membership

Membership includes village associations and individual members, both groups have votes at the general assembly. Municipalities and businesses are non-voting members.

Voting members:	
Village associations	400
Individuals	100

Non-voting members:	
Municipalities	16
Businesses	3
Magazine subscribers	100

Board

The board comprises 7 elected members including the President. In addition, there are 2 substitute board members a treasurer and accountant. The board is elected on a 2 year rolling cycle with substitute members elected every year. Each member organisation has 3

votes, individuals have 1 vote. The board elects the President and office bearers. 27 members were present at the 2003 AGM, the majority representing village associations.

Staff

The organisation employs no paid staff, but has one appointed 'editor'. All work is done on a voluntary basis, except in relation to particular funded projects, or commissioned consultancy services. The work that can be undertaken therefore depends on the available time, people and skills. The majority of day-to-day work is undertaken by the Editor and President. Some specific project work is undertaken by individual Board members. This level of focused project involvement appears to be unusual however.



Jytte Aa. Møller, President of LAL

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Funding

The annual expenditure is approximately 200.000DKK (27,000 Euro), excluding special projects. This is raised through membership fees and the national lottery. The lottery funding is an annual payment, awarded to LAL as a national organisation for common wellbeing, active in more than 8 counties (the basic requirement for lottery funding). Project funding is raised to implement specific aspects of the work programme.

Membership fees are deemed to be very important, both for independence of funding and for the ownership of the members. LAL regard this as a fundamental issue in the autonomy of the organisation. Membership fees are currently set at:

- Village associations 525 DKK (70.5 Euro)
- Individuals 200 DKK (27 Euro)
- Newsletter 150 DKK (20 Euro)
- Municipalities - contributions vary

Project funds are currently raised for the following projects:

- Village week
- Nordic seminar on youth democracy for children and young people
- Water supply in the countryside
- Short story book
- Exclusion and health in rural areas
- Revolving housing fund

The Ministry of Interior is usually supportive of projects, other Ministries less so.

Activities

The work programme of LAL is prioritised accordingly:

1. Supporting members local needs for help: schools, shops, water, traffic, transport etc.
2. Information service: newsletter, website, response to questions, e-mail service etc.
3. Response to political issues at national level: advocacy, publicity, consultation, committees.
4. Participation as Vice President of LDF since its establishment.
5. International co-operation: Nordic and EU.

Within these priorities, the current work programme of the Association comprises:

Supporting members' local needs

Identifying issues

LAL is reactive to issues raised by villages. However, there is no formalised, strategic process of village planning, as in Estonia, Sweden and Finland. Members and other rural communities are able to raise issues directly with the Association, through individual contacts, the newsletter, the annual conference, village week etc. LAL also offers a facilitated process, in the form of regional meetings, through which communities can debate and raise local issues. LAL personnel contact villages periodically to sound out local needs and offer a regional meeting. LAL will attend, facilitate and present information to the meetings, if the local group set it up and invite a wide range of local people and organisations, including public bodies and local politicians within a 30km range. LAL also offers facilitated visioning workshops to assist with local planning.

Working groups

In response to the key issues raised through these processes, LAL organises thematic working groups. Each working group has a contact person, who may be a board member. Their task is to keep informed and to disseminate information if needed. If information comes in on any theme this is channelled to the contact person. Working groups are free to set their own priorities and develop their own actions, but consult the board when making decisions on behalf of LAL.

There are currently 21 working groups based on the following topics: Local Agenda 21/ housing/ shops/ decentralisation/ democracy/ energy/ employment/ fundraising/ IT/ church/ art and culture/ Municipalities/ environment/ Nordic and International/ postal services/ schools/ health/ water/ roads & traffic/ land management legislation/ elderly.

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Rural week

"On our own we have nothing, together we have plenty."

Rural Week is a national programme, providing a market place for Danish village life and issues. It undertakes a similar function to the market place at the 'Rural Parliaments' in Sweden and Estonia, but instead of bringing the villages together, they take people to the villages. It has been one of the most important activities of LAL over the last 5 years. It is a combined national effort, undertaken in different communities across Denmark. Villages run their own activities in a co-ordinated programme, during the period of a week, opening up different aspects of village life and activities: Housing/ Energy/ Culture / open air activities/ activities for the young/ IT/ Church/ Museum etc.

The event is aimed at the local community, the press, visitors, potential immigrants etc. and the authorities. A key part of the process is to create extensive press coverage and many press releases are issued at local and national levels. LAL also produces a special newsletter to go with this week. The impact is greater because it is a national effort. The event is used to inform and impress the authorities about the realities of village life, and to provide encouragement for local action. Villages are encouraged to visit each other during this week to find out what others are doing, some villages have also made a video for distribution. Many villages have been revived by the process and inspired to do more.

LAL applies, with the participating village groups, to the Ministry of Interior for funding. At first this raised 300,000 DKK (40,300 Euro), but this was reduced year by year to 75,000 DKK (10,000 Euro) in 2003, and in 2004 nothing can be applied for from this source. The Ministry of Culture and a national fund for outdoor life have also refused funding. Additional funding must be raised locally. LAL calculates how much money each village needs, according to what they are proposing. LAL staff time was also funded for co-ordinating this activity.

Village fool of the year

The 'village fool of the year' competition has been running for 22 years. Nominations are submitted from all over the country, even

politicians can qualify. The main criteria is that the person is contributing more than would normally be expected. Applications are judged by the LAL board. In 2003, three village fools were chosen, all chairs of village associations who were active on a wide range of activities. The event gives good press coverage for LAL and for village action. A similar event is also held in Finland.



Village Fool of the Year winners - 2003

Two examples of projects that have emerged from locally raised issues are:

Rotating housing fund

The aim of this future project is to bring empty housing in peripheral areas back into the housing stock. The process involves villages in identifying an empty house, assessing its value, restoring and equipping it as a holiday home and employing a local person to look after the house. Once the house is well established, the village then sell it and buy a new house with the money. The project is partly inspired by the Ballyhoura experience in Northern Ireland.

Youth democracy

A current priority issue for LAL is how to get the young involved in local democracy and convince adults that they have something to contribute. LAL has organised one trans-national seminar in Sweden, during 2003, "Young people and democracy". Over 50 young people (13-23yrs) from 10 countries attended, over a long weekend. This was very successful in raising awareness of the issues and increasing the confidence of those who participated. Further work will follow to take forward the findings of the seminar. Participating in the seminar was a Norwegian

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initiative, in which one Municipality, Porsgrunn, successfully attracted young people into its Youth Council, and later 5 young people into its main Council, with dramatic, positive results for the local economy. 40-50 Norwegian Municipalities have since followed suit.

Information services

As LAL lacks a central office with staff, its information systems are critical to the running of the organisation, and to maintaining the network of local members and villages. This work therefore receives a high priority. The main elements are:

The newsletter – “*Village News*”

Since 1991, six to eight editions are produced per year, and designed and printed in the villages.

Websites

LAL runs two websites, the Association website: www.lal.dk, carries information about the organisation, email service and press-releases. The other, the Village Net: www.landsbynett.dk contains the database of reports, articles and questions produced throughout the life of Village News.

E-mail service

This started in January 2001, and provides information on rural development topics of importance to anyone who gives their e-mail address. Items covered include: letters to the Parliament, Rural Week activities, survey results and reports, proposals for the national land use plan, consultation responses – eg. on the reform of local government, new legislative proposals eg. postal services in rural areas, report of the Ministry of Interior Rural Districts conference, etc.

Press releases

This is a constant activity at national and local levels, documenting most activities of LAL, village issues and responses to national issues, communications with the Government etc. The Village Week is a major focus for press attention, especially at local level.

IT Baton

This started 2000, and 22 have been sent out to date. The idea is an open door service, in which villages are asked to identify and

publicise a good example of a village website, that village is then asked to find the next one, etc. This is a way of both publicising village action, creating a network and finding new village members. As a reward, each village chosen gets one year of *Village News* and a press-release.

Help desk

People are encouraged to call in to the Editor with questions, by phone/ e-mail/ letter. Approximately 10 per week are received, including a high number of journalists. Important communications are reported on in the newsletter.

Information meetings and seminars

LAL both organises and attends a wide range of meetings and events. In particular, it offers to send speakers to locally organised meetings. Regional meetings (as described above) are free of charge, for other meetings LAL may request fees, and always travel costs. It also supports panel debates on key issues, organised by local associations.

Publications

Several publications have been produced in association with the work of LAL, including research reports. The most recent publication is a collection of village stories, the winners of a competition organised by LAL in 2001 for their 25 year Jubilee celebrations.

Responses to political issues at national level

Although LAL is nationally known as the local village organisation, it still places a strong emphasis on participation in national affairs. This includes, research, consultation, advocacy and involvement in national committees.

Research

LAL undertakes periodic research on issues of importance to the villages. This research is used to highlight and publicise the situation and needs of the villages at a national level. Two recent studies:

- “Local council – village council” – a study of community networks within Municipalities, and the response of Municipalities to the participation of their

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villages. Funded by the Ministry of Interior.

- “How to teach participative democracy to the young” – a publication on the key principles and processes for involving youth. This was undertaken personally by the LAL Editor, but is closely related to the work of LAL.

Consultation responses

LAL responds on a regular basis to Government consultations. In 2003 these included:

- The Structural Commission consultation on local government reform
- The National Land Management Plan

Advocacy and Lobbying

Advocacy relates to key issues identified by the villages. This is undertaken at national and local levels. Current issues include the reform of local government and the closure of village schools.

Representation on committees

LAL try to have a seat on committees that are of relevance to the future of the rural areas. Since the setting up of LDF however, this role has tended to be taken forward through LDF. The President of LAL is also Vice-President of LDF and sits on many committees on behalf of LDF.

Members represent LAL on local committees, for example:

- County Council rural development working groups
- National Park committees
- LEADER LAGs

LAL is represented on national committees:

- Ministry of Interior Rural District Group
- Council of Rural Districts (LDF)
- Danish Public Enlightenment Common Council (adult education)
- LAL plays a major role in LDF, from which comes a several representative duties on the national level.

International co-operation

LAL has been active internationally for many years. This includes, forging trans-national rural links, attending international events, undertaking trans-national projects and co-operating with European rural networks.

Recent examples of trans-national project work include:

- Co-ordination of the Nordic rural movements network: *Hela Norden ska Leva!* (HNSL) The Whole North Shall Live! www.bygde.net
- Health and the socially excluded in rural areas
- Youth democracy project, involving 10 nationalities, and funded within the Nordic countries

International co-operation at European level has been taking place since 1992, and has been particularly intensive with Nordic countries since 1994. This includes:

- Secretariat for the Nordic rural movements network: *Hela Norden ska Leva* (HNSL)
- Participation in the European Rural University
- Participation in the Trans European Rural Network (TERN), now no longer in existence.

Achievements

- Operating since 1976 – one of the first rural movements of its kind in Europe
- Operating without core funding and with a huge amount of voluntary effort
- Implementation of many projects
- Successful international networking
- Strong local profile
- Strong profile with the Government Ministries

Problems

- Lack of core funding and requirement for large amounts of voluntary work
- Over-reliance on a few key individuals and lack of delegation
- Personality clashes with some of the key people in the different rural organisations
- Lack of diversity / extent of membership
- Concentrated effort to recruit board members
- Lack of a local branch structure making it hard to cover the country effectively
- Reputation as the organisation of 1970s ‘good-life’ people

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The Council of Rural Districts *Landdistrikternes Faellesrad (LDF)*



Landdistrikternes Faellesråd

“The Council endeavours to promote the best possible conditions, covering all rural districts of Denmark, in connection with Establishment (services and infrastructure), Industry, Environment (natural and cultural heritage and human welfare)”

Structure

The Council of Rural Districts is a politically independent association formed in 1997. It is referred to as the ‘umbrella organisation’, and grew from an earlier Committee of Rural Districts, set up in the 1980s. It covers all rural districts of Denmark.

Membership

As of October 2003, the Council comprised 13 national organisations, all of which contribute to its aims and objectives:

- The Danish Village Association
- The Villages in Denmark Association
- Danish Farmers Associations (3 independent associations)
- Women’s Agricultural Association
- Children’s Agricultural Association
- The Village Hall Association
- The Parish Council Association
- The ECO Community Association
- Organisation of Independent Craftsmen in Denmark
- Association of co-operative shops
- Association of local retail chains

Board

- 10 people, elected by the members
- Each member organisation has a right to a seat on the board.
- Only the office bearers – 1 President and 2 Vice-Presidents are elected

Staff

The Council employs 2 full-time staff: an administrator and projects officer. A journalist and book-keeper are contracted. The President and Vice-Presidents are also compensated for parts of their work.

Only national associations are allowed to be members. The Council does not have a regional branch structure, this is deemed to be the job of the member organisations, many of whom have regional or local membership/ structures.

Funding

As of October 2003, the overall annual budget of LDF is approximately 2 mill. DKK (270,000 Euro)

Funding for 2004 is acquired from the following sources:

- Funding from the Ministry of Interior 700,000 DKK (94,000 Euro)
- Members fees – 10,000-100,000 DKK pa. 250,000 DKK (33,500 Euro)
- Private donation (2000-2004) 300,000 DKK (40,300 Euro)
- Landlegatet (Rural Foundation) grant 200,000 DKK (26,900 Euro)
- Lottery funding 90,000 DKK (12,000 Euro)
- Earned income from projects/ consultancy

Activities

The activities of LDF are very much focussed at a national level. As an ‘umbrella’ organisation with a membership of national associations, it links the work of these associations and enable them to have a collective voice on the national stage. The main activities of LDF fall under the categories of networking, information collection and dissemination and advocacy.

Networking

LDF operates as an intermediary between different levels and players. It works with its members to identify problematic issues (eg. to do with the effects of legislation), discuss these with the key people and then circulate

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this information through the network. It also helps local people to understand issues and procedures.

Information

The LDF website: www.landdistrikterne.dk is a key tool for disseminating information. It includes the largest amount of rural information of any Danish website, including important documents from the Government and other sources. LDF also has an international rural districts website and is networking within the EU.

Advocacy

LDF works with Government Ministries, local authorities and citizens, and is represented in the following organisations:

- The Monitoring Committee for the EU Rural District Programme 2000-2006
- The Ministry of the Interior Rural District Group
- Ministry of Transport Support Group for public transport funds
- The Board of the Danish Centre for Rural Research and Development
- The Control Group for the bachelor degree in Rural District Development and Planning
- The Project Group for minor technologies in small communities
- The European Rural University

Achievements

- Core funding and staff
- Membership of key rural organisations
- Close links to the Government Ministries

Problems

- Initial staffing difficulties and lack of staff time to undertake the scale of work.
- Some lack of momentum and clear direction in the early years
- Some competition and lack of clarity about the relative roles of the member organisations

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The Danish Rural Movement

Commentary

Origins of the Movement

The main motivating forces behind the origins of the Danish rural movement were the:

- long established cultural traditions stemming from the 19th century 'Danish Enlightenment'
- decline in agricultural employment and the rural population
- 1970 re-organisation of local government and loss of local autonomy
- movement of many educated, urban people to the rural areas in the 1970s and their desire to revive the rural values and communities

Current motivating factors for the movement include the:

- continuing erosion of rural employment and agriculture and increasing sub-urbanisation of the rural areas
- centralisation of State jobs
- lack of a co-ordinated rural policy
- changes to the Danish system initiated by the current Government, including reduction in the availability of public funding, negative impacts on the welfare state, further amalgamation of local authorities and reduction in the former capacity of rural communities
- EU, its current over-emphasis on agricultural support and the developing focus on rural development.
- transnational links to the other Nordic rural movements

The Danish Enlightenment

The Danish rural movement has evolved over a period of almost 30 years. For most of this time, it was not connected to the development of the rural movements in Finland and Sweden, but took its own course. Hence it has developed quite different characteristics to the other movements. Because of its particular history, complexities have arisen which are not so obvious in the

other national movements, most notably the fact that there are three separate organisations occupying the role. Much of the particular character of the movement in Denmark derives from the wider national culture, and the rural context from which it grew.

The influence of Grundtvig and the period of Danish enlightenment cannot be underestimated in its impact on modern day Denmark. It has been said that "*You meet Grundtvig at the Danish border*". It is not his name that you meet, but the particular national orientation that was the outcome of his extensive work. This is evidenced in the whole Danish approach to learning and education, in the style of religion, in the respect for individual and minority interests and cultures, in the particular freedom of spirit (*sense of mutual freedom*) and in the extensive development of civil society, especially in the rural areas.

Grundtvig's activities were mostly focused on the farming population, which comprised the majority of 19th century Denmark. He worked to 'educate' the farmers and the rural people in ways that were unique to Denmark at the time. Central to this was the development of the Folk High Schools and the village meeting houses and study circles. This turned the parishes and village halls into centres of cultural activity and learning. In contrast to most other European countries at this time, the cultural centre of Denmark was in the rural, rather than the urban communities. A decisive factor in Danish agriculture was the co-operative movement, which to a great extent was one of the fruits of the high school movement.

"This movement, in connection with Grundtvig's liberal thinking and continual striving for freedom, became liberal in form both politically and culturally, in marked contrast to the conservative type of villages found in other countries".²² Grundtvig's view that every individual counts, has made the Danes more individualistic and, it is said, anarchistic. This can also be seen in the Danish rural movement. As can the fact that Grundtvig's view of women gave Danish women a more equal place with men from the middle of the 19th century.

²² 'N.F.S. Grundtvig', Kaj Thaning, 1972

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This is the cultural foundation upon which the Danish rural movement of the late 20th century was based. In many ways, what Grundtvig achieved in the 19th century, is what the modern movement is also striving for, but within the context of the current trends of rural-urban migration, centralisation and the EU.

If this is the cultural tradition that has shaped the rural communities of Denmark and the orientation of the movement, the practical circumstances which shaped it stem from the rapid decline of the rural communities during the second half of the 20th century. This took Denmark from being a rural country to being an urban or sub-urban one.

Agricultural change

The major changes in the agricultural structure of Denmark since the war have converted the Danish rural population from farmers to an industrial labour force, and increasingly to suburban commuters. The loss of the employment base forced the migration of many people out of rural areas and significantly altered the character of the rural communities. Although Denmark was more successful than most countries in introducing new industries into the countryside, this is not any longer sufficient to stem the flow to the towns. The famous Danish agricultural co-operatives also declined rapidly in the 1960s.



Local Government reorganisation

A further, and complimentary, catalyst came from the massive re-organisation of local administration in 1970. This broke the historical traditions of place by shifting the focus of decision making from the parish to the district level, and left the rural villages in a relatively weak position, for the first time. The same trend can be witnessed in Sweden at a similar time, and was also a catalyst for the formation of the Swedish village movement.

The issue of local identity with place was noted as a strong force in all of the countries. It is a force that administrative reforms often cut across, but in the culture and allegiance of the rural people, the historical units tend to persist. The 1970 administrative reforms imposed artificial Municipal boundaries on to the population, changing the tradition of 8 centuries. The Parish Council had existed since the Viking age as the local level of government. The Viking democracy was based on the long-boat with its chieftain – a very democratic system in which everyone was involved in decision making. The chieftain built the church, and the Parish elected the minister. The Parish has been the main democratic unit ever since. In 1970 the Government amalgamated several Parishes into one Municipality ‘*Commune*’. At the County level, the old Counties were also linked to the Parishes. The County or ‘*Stift*’, had a bishop, who had control over the Parish ministers. In 1970, these traditional Counties were also reorganised. *“You can’t just change the thinking of several centuries. The borders between parishes (often streams) were strong cultural borders – you must respect these as the Danes still think in Parish boundaries”.*²³

A new understanding of ‘rurality’

In the 1970s there was an influx of urban residents and returnees to the rural communities. This was in-part motivated by the desire to return to the traditional values and life-styles of the rural areas, and in-part by the availability of property and housing resulting from the decline in agriculture. This group of educated and articulate ‘incomers’ became a strong force in the rural debate.

²³ Researcher at the Danish Centre for Rural Research and Development

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One theory put forward is that this group of people represented *“The left-wing, environmentalist, political ideology that predominated in the public sphere during this decade.”*²⁴ Svendsen, who has studied the publications produced by LAL in its early days, also linked the thinking behind the village movement to Marxism and the 1960s farmers movement, and compared it in some ways to the trade union movement in industrial society. He suggested it was based on 3 key inter-related concepts of active citizenship, egalitarianism and victimisation of rural communities by centralist administrators and the urban population.

The rhetoric of LAL was seen to have a strong influence over rural people. The strong and emotive focus on the ‘local community’ was in tune with local feelings, and led to a growth in village groups and associations, and a belief in the ‘right’ of rural communities to development and public funding to protect the rural way of life. *“The dream of a new rural way of life was literally architect-designed by these young intellectuals, who verbalised their dream in an amazing number of publications.”*

Svendsen identifies the way in which this view of rurality became commonly accepted amongst many sectors of Danish society: *“This was a discourse of rurality that quickly was overtaken by members of the many local citizen’s associations in the villages, as well as by social scientists, State bureaucrats and local politicians. This led to non-agricultural formulations of rural identity and practice coming to dominate the rural political debate in the 1980-90s. Village community values were placed against urban materialist/individualist values. These values and concepts set the village movement apart from the post-war agricultural discourse – which was based on productivism/ structural change and vertical integration.”*

This view is strongly contested by the current leaders of LAL, who maintain the movement is driven by real village issues and people, not by theoretical or academic positions.

²⁴ ‘The right to development; construction of a non-agriculturalist discourse of rurality in Denmark’ Gunnar Svendsen, Journal of Rural Studies, 2003

However, the two positions are probably not totally incompatible in that the ability of the educated incomers to articulate and mobilise the movement was undoubtedly a strong factor in its original establishment. This is also witnessed in the other national rural movements. The breadth of views and aims held by the current members of the movement is not however as open to clear definition as those of the original instigators.

The Danish Village Association – *Landsforeningen af Landsbysamfund*

The Danish Village Association was established in 1976 to *“support the work being done to re-establish, preserve and further develop village communities and the environment and culture they represent”* and *“to support the efforts to provide the citizens with local influence, local responsibility and local possibilities of co-operation”*. This placed the focus strongly on expanding the opportunities for the involvement of rural dwellers in determining their future, and reversing some of the trends of the preceding 2 decades.

Two key figures were prominent in its initiation and early development, Carsten Abild, the chairman of LAL’s first board, and Ole Glahn, the vice-chairman. Carsten, a teacher, in particular played a strong role in leading and articulating the direction of LAL. There was a strong focus on the village as a ‘natural’ unit closely related to nature, rich in culture and co-operative in its activities. His philosophy was summed up in his article in the first issue of ‘Village News’: *“I see the creation of the Village Association as a form of popular movement which builds upon a knowledge that we are not satisfied just by living a materialistic way of life for ourselves. Instead we should focus more on togetherness with others and creating satisfactorily intelligible societies where the individual can thrive.”*²⁵

The Association has been through 27 years of development since this time however, and it is difficult to assess, without substantial research, how its character has evolved over

²⁵ ‘Landsbyen, 1977, no.1, p.3

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this time. The features of LAL today, that strike the visitor, are that it is an organisation with a long established, though not always clear, place in the Danish rural sector. It is strongly supportive of the 'bottom-up' village perspective, but is intent on making this voice heard at the highest level of Government. The movement lacks the highly structured nature of those in Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Slovakia. It is more organic and relaxed in its approach. This may be explained by the fact that LAL, as an organisation, is substantially older than any of the other organisations, and also the whole issue of village action and organisation has a long history dating back to Grundtvig. This was articulated by the Editor of LAL: *"In Denmark we have a long tradition of local organisation. We are not creating something new, we are fighting for what is already there"*.²⁶ The more 'individualistic and anarchistic' nature of Danish culture is also probably a factor.



LAL is the main organisation working with the villages in Denmark. LID, the breakaway organisation, does not have such a high profile or extensive membership. LAL are reactive to issues raised by villages, however there is no formalised, strategic process of village planning as in Estonia, Sweden and Finland. *"We have not set up very formalised structures for decision making and planning"*. Instead LAL has developed a range of ways in which it has 'eyes and ears' into the rural communities. The decision making on priorities to be tackled seems to come more from the clues picked up by the active members, than by any clear process of evaluation. It is more intuitive.

²⁶ Barbara Diklev, Editor of LAL – pers. com.

Another characteristic of LAL, which also seems to apply to the other Danish rural organisations, is the extent to which a very small number of committed individuals dominate the activities of the organisation, and indeed of all of the organisations. This may in part be a result of the relative lack of formal structure and process, which has been put in place in the other national movements partly to prevent such a concentration of power. It may also be a function of the presence of very strong and motivated individuals, with a long involvement in the movement. It may also be connected to the culture of individualism in Denmark. What is particularly noticeable is that these people are mostly women, though this was not always the case.

The organisation has no paid staff, and as such relies on a huge amount of voluntary time from the key players at national level, the same applies at the village level. The most active individuals, on whom the organisation relies, said that it would not be possible to do this if they also had to earn an income. The difficult issue is how to cover the whole country without any employees. The board of LAL is the main group through which the work is co-ordinated and facilitated. It was said that *"the board is working for the whole society, in a democratic way, and with information. Each board member has a job to do. They try to assist the members to develop the culture they represent"*.²⁷

The organisation does not have as many members as the other national movements, if one includes the membership of their regional structures. LAL draws its membership directly from the village associations, which is the function of the regional structures in the other countries. It is possible that the lack of a regional structure inhibits LAL from gaining fuller participation from across the rural areas. The attendance at the annual conference is very small when compared to the Rural Parliaments. In 2003, only 27 voting members were present for the AGM. There is also some concern as to the difficulty of attracting board members and young people.

At the AGM, the President observed of the Editor, who has been a member of the board

²⁷ Jytte Moller – President of LAL – address to the 2003 annual conference of LAL

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for 13 years: *“Without her there would have been no LAL – she has provided the continuity, the grand old lady. Continuity is important - to have someone who knows everyone. Renewal is also important”*. This is a constant dilemma to both keep continuity and to renew the organisation.

The Council of Rural Districts - Landdistrikternes Faellesrad

The establishment of LDF in 1997 was promoted by the Ministry of the Interior and the former President of LAL. The pressure to establish this ‘umbrella organisation’ came from the fact that the Ministry was only prepared to provide funding for a united ‘rural forum’ comprising all of the main rural organisations. LDF was formed as an umbrella organisation for agricultural organisations and other actors from the Committee (KLL) as well as newcomers. It was seen as advantageous for LAL to retain its village focus, but to have a network organisation through which to gain information, learn of legislative initiatives, funding and political links.

LDF only has national associations as members and operates principally at the national level. The development of LDF has proved problematic in several ways. Firstly there has been a lack of clarity as to its essential role and its relationship with its member organisations, especially with LAL. Secondly, there were some early difficulties with staffing, which contributed to the initial lack of direction. The relationship and differences between the roles and contributions of paid staff and volunteers is also not always understood and is at times problematic. Thirdly LDF has experienced problems in the procedures for lobbying and advocacy, and has not always been as successful in this as it would wish, this is a learning process.

Each member organisation is encouraged to have a board member, and it was said that their board meetings are the only place in Denmark where you can find natural enemies talking to each other. Each organisation also pays a minimum of 10,000 DKK (1,350 Euro) p.a. for membership. This has placed high expectations on the organisation to provide a useful role that the members cannot provide for themselves. To date, some members

have experienced frustration as to the level of return they have received. The level of commitment of key individuals to carry out the work was seen as low, there were problems with the management of the budget and a lack of communication with the board members. As ever, personality issues appear to be at the heart of many of these problems. To address these issues, LDF has adopted ‘value-based leadership’ based on 3 core values: open, responsible and happy in work. The application of these values has made a significant improvement.

Relationships

Inter-relations

The most obvious difference to the other national movements is that Denmark lacks the coherence of a single organisational structure. The three organisations: LAL, LDF and LID are essentially undertaking most of the functions of SYTY in Finland or *Kodukant* in Estonia. LAL and LID are operating with the same basic agenda, ie. the ‘village action movement’, and have found it impossible to co-operate effectively over the years. LDF fulfils the role of the ‘rural forum’. At first LDF worked directly with local communities, this weakened the voice of the villages in the overall process, to the extent that LAL insisted on continuing to play a major advocacy role at national level, independently for LDF, in order to adequately represent their members.

The existence of these 3 inter-related organisations seems to cause some specific difficulties. There is competition and overlap between them, especially in relation to roles in the policy process. It is seen that there is a need for these organisations to agree upon a delegation of roles. Until recently, attempts to do this have been frustrated by each organisation insisting on its right to define its own role and a reluctance to trust the others with the critical role of political lobbying.

Local Relations

LAL historically has been the village organisation. Its membership and activities focus very much around the village organisations. It also works closely with the Municipalities, and with the inter-relations

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between villages and Municipalities. In this sense, it is the closest to the local communities. LDF was set up to work primarily at a national level, and to connect to the local level through the medium of their member organisations. However, in practice this is not proving to be so clear and LDF is also working with the villages, mainly electronically. LDF has however identified the most appropriate local level at which to work as being the Municipalities, as this is the level at which the formal planning process takes place. Their view is that it is not effective to work at Parish or village level, as decisions are taken at other levels. LDF is advocating the formation of topic-based focus groups from villages at the Municipal level. LDF plays an important role via its 2-weekly electronic newsletter and website.



Relations to Government

The Ministry of Agriculture observed that the rural movements appear to have more ears amongst politicians than they did 5 years ago, as 'hearing partners' and consultees on acts and Ministerial decrees. They recognise LDF as being the only lobby organisation for rural areas. They observed that generally the rural development lobby is not strong and there is very little movement from the Government in terms of funding for rural development. There is seen to be a lack of focus on economic activity in the rural development movements, which is different to the agriculture lobby. This is seen as a weakness of the rural development lobby in the eyes of the Government.

The Ministry of the Interior commented that LDF seems to be successful and that LAL are more visible than LID. They favour retaining

the different organisations to avoid one organisation from monopolising the debate. These organisations provide the Ministry with an input on which rural matters are important to discuss, and create an interest in rural affairs. They were considered to be quite good at lobbying and raising issues and their newsletters were seen as important vehicles for raising issues and debate. However, it was foreseen that there are now issues that will create tension between the Government and the rural associations – principally the reform of local government. The rural areas are very concerned that their voices are heard in this debate.

In general, there is a significant level of concern in the rural movements, and elsewhere, with the policies of the current Liberal Government. At national level the Liberal Party is said to have been taken over by the 'city lions'. But at County and Municipal levels the Liberal Party still stands for the old values. This has led to conflict between the national and local level politicians. Nationally, rural issues are not high on the agenda, *"The Government do not see it as a bad thing that rural areas are declining"*. The Government has just launched a new slogan – *'something for something'* – you have to work to receive. They have also launched a values debate focussed on the need to change the values from the historical social-democratic welfare tradition to more market oriented values.

LDF is now working to advocate for a rural development Ministry and a national rural policy with clearly defined goals, spanning all rural issues and involving all Ministries.

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Appendix – DENMARK - Itinerary

27.10.03	Hanne Tanvig, Director and staff of the Danish Centre for Rural Research and Development (CFUL)	Rural policy in Denmark Key players Work of CFUL Rural Development Pilot Programme
28.10.03	Head of the LEADER network unit Visit to LEADER+ in Western Denmark Torsminde	The Danish LEADER Programme LEADER Local Action Group and local projects
29.10.03	Bodil Andersen Lindeballe Community - Lises Butik	Community association and shop
	Anne Marie Kruse, Manager and staff of Landdistrikternes Faellesrad LDF, Jelling	The Council of Rural Districts LDF
30.10.03	Barbara Diklev, Editor for <i>Landsforeningen af Landsbysamfund</i> (LAL) The Danish Village Association	The Danish Village Association Rural development issues in Denmark Village meeting on school closures
31.10.03	Barbara Diklev Visit to renewable energy installations and energy planners	Rural development issues in Denmark Renewable energy development
1.11.03	Claudia Novac Project Co-ordinator of the Centre for Rural Assistance - Romania	Issues of rural development Visit to district heating scheme
3.11.03	Rural Development Officer Ringkjoebing County Council	Rural Districts Policy and support programmes
	Soendbjerg village action Meeting with village leader	Soendbjerg Village Association projects and District heating scheme
4.11.03	Birgitte Juhl – Aars Commune Municipal Planning Officer and Secretary of the Village Council	Village Councils Rural and village development
5.11.03	Jytte Aa. Moller President of the Danish Village Association (LAL) Vice-President of The Council for Rural Districts (LDF)	History, organisation and issues of the rural movements in Denmark
6.11.03	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Helsinki	Rural policy and the rural movement
7.11.03	Ministry of the Interior Helsinki	Rural policy and the rural movement
	Folkehojskolernes Forening (FFD) Danish Folk High School Association	The Danish Folk High Schools
	National Agency of Danish Counties	The work and organisation of the County Councils and Municipalities
7-8.11.03	Annual conference The Danish Village Association (LAL)	Annual general meeting of LAL Visit to local village industries Working groups Meeting of the Nordic network - HNSL