

**Evaluation report for  
Center for Landdistriktsforskning(CLF)  
Danish Centre of Rural Research (former IFUL)  
University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg**

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*The Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose published in 1933 his novel “En flygtning krydser sitt spor”. Here he first mentioned his “Law of Jante”; or “the general small town mentality”, in 10 paragraphs:*

1. *Du skal ikke tro at du er noe.*
2. *Du skal ikke tro at du er like så meget som oss.*
3. *Du skal ikke tro du er klokere enn oss.*
4. *Du skal ikke innbille deg du er bedre enn oss.*
5. *Du skal ikke tro du vet mere enn oss.*
6. *Du skal ikke tro du er mere enn oss.*
7. *Du skal ikke tro at du duger til noe.*
8. *Du skal ikke le av oss.*
9. *Du skal ikke tro at noen bryr seg om deg.*
10. *Du skal ikke tro at du kan lære oss noe.*

*To turn this law upside down, is what research leadership is about.*

## **Foreword**

The work of this evaluation report has been conducted from December 2009 and through February 2010. According to a letter from University of Southern Denmark of November 27<sup>th</sup> 2009, we were asked to assist Danish Centre of Rural Research in their strategic self-evaluation process. On the basis of a self-evaluation report written by director Flemming Just and interviews with 8 staff members and meeting with representatives of the board, in addition to web and written material studies, we present this report to the staff, to the board and to the University of Southern Denmark.

We thank you for the very interesting opportunity to perform this task, and wish the University of Southern Denmark good luck with the process of building a strong and viable rural research unit at the Esbjerg campus.

Trondheim/Helsinki March 9, 2010

Reidar Almås  
Hilkka Vihinen

## Summary

The purpose of this evaluation report is to validate and supplement the self evaluation report written by head of Danish Centre of Rural Research, Dr. Flemming Just. We have split this purpose in two problems to be addressed: How has IFUL performed so far, and how can CLF leadership and staff improve their relevance and research quality in the future?

The external expert group has had one two day visit to CLF, and met staff and board members. Interviews and discussions were held on the organisation and work environment of the institute, its facilities, the output and the research activities. In addition to this visit and the self-evaluation report from the institute, we have used contextual background information from research cooperation, scientific congresses as well as text from journals, books and internet.

CLF organisation and staff *have* a strong leadership with current head Flemming Just as a profiled internal and external leader. The work environment is pleasant and the organisation is functioning smoothly. The researchers are competent and dedicated to their mission. CLF has a remarkable strong track record of international referee publications, as well as a history of deliverables to users. It seems that the leadership and staff are very updated and active when it comes to upcoming rural issues. The former IFUL has had a high standing as partner in European research cooperation. CLF's work is also crucial for the development of Danish rural and peripheral areas.

When it comes to weak points, the experts want to direct attention to the vulnerability of CLF organisation because of a small staff and high dependence on key staff members. The research activities may seem rather dispersed and not always coherent. Intellectual performance could be improved by sticking to a grounded joint strategy in a more consistent way. As to the management practices, results agreements have been finalised only during the first quarter of the year, when the agreement period has already been running. This, together with the university accounting systems that are not able to explicate rapidly especially the external funding status, lead to a situation where it is difficult to get an up-to-date overview of the financial status of the institute.

However, there are big opportunities ahead for Danish Centre for Rural Research in being a part of a larger institute, which means that CLF will be a more robust and open organisation with access to students. CLF should still be a preferred partner in EU rural development research, which will increase in the future. When it comes to organising new teaching programme, it is important to attract good students and enough students the first year. To keep focusing on rural topics and issues in the cultural studies curriculum is both a challenge and an opportunity. It is also a big challenge that Flemming Just moves upwards to be head of the new Department of Environmental and Business Economics. A new head of CLF must be found quickly.

Our recommendation is that CLF may expand as much as 50 percent in the next 3-5 years. Furthermore, our advice is that key senior staff members must take more responsibility to address media and networking on a broader front to attract research funding. As more time and human resources are spent on education, there must be taken

steps to spread the responsibility for publishing in referee journals. We recommend that economical and intellectual resources are used to mobilise enough student applications. CLF should not abstain totally from consultancy work, as long as this work falls within CLF topical focus.

If CLF should try to be internationally excellent in one or two fields, we think that research on social capital and regional economics should be chosen. We think that CLF have the potential to be a “port to Europe” in Nordic rural studies, and those two fields of research are now open to demonstrate one’s perfection.

## **Introduction: background and mission**

IFUL was established July 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 as a university institute. Prior to that *Center for Forskning og Udvikling i Landdistrikter/Centre for Rural Research and Development (CFUL)* had existed for 5½ years as an independent institution partly financed by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. The overall contextual picture has been a strong local political will to construct research and education institutions as a basis of regional development, dating back to the establishment of Sydjysk Universitetscenter/ South Jutland University Centre (SUC) as a research centre in 1972. In 1992 SUC moved to the present CLF office building at the Esbjerg education and science park, and in 1998 SUC joined the University of Southern Denmark fusion together with Odense University and the Southern Denmark School of Business and Engineering.

From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2010, three social science departments at Esbjerg campus, including IFUL, were merged, and IFUL was named Center for Landdistriktsforskning (CLF)/ Centre for Rural Research.

In a letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> November 2010, professor Hilikka Vihinen, MTT, Helsinki, Finland, and professor Reidar Almås, Centre for Rural Research, Trondheim, Norway were named by Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Southern Denmark to take part in the self-evaluation process as external research experts.

As we understand the mission, the main purpose is to validate and supplement the self evaluation report. This purpose may be split in two problems to be addressed:

1. How has IFUL performed so far?
2. How can CLF leadership and staff improve their relevance and research quality in the future?

We are well aware that these two problems must be dealt with under the fact that financial resources and competence are limited, while research topics and rural problems are infinite. Under these limitations, we will consider if the scope of the CLF research areas is suitable and if the size and quality of the staff is convenient. The recent structural changes at the Esbjerg campus of the University of Southern Denmark open a window of opportunity for such considerations.

## **Methods: Approach to the basis of assessment**

In late December, we received the Self-evaluation report prepared by head of IFUL, Professor Flemming Just (see Annex 2). This gave a valuable insight into the IFUL history and strategy, its scientific performance, the present reorganisation and future plans. Together with other written material presented to us, included two position papers written by Gunnar Lind Haase Svendsen and Villy Søgaaard, these texts gave a good overview of the IFUL activities and future plans.

The external expert group has had one two day visit to CLF, on January 21-22, 2010. 8 staff members, both researchers and leading personnel, were interviewed according to a prepared interview guide, and interviews were tape-recorded. In addition we had a meeting with 5 representatives from the board, included the chairman, Professor Torben Greve, Copenhagen University. Discussions were held on the organisation and work environment of the institute, its facilities, the output and the research activities.

A second visit was organised on March 3. Draft conclusions and recommendations were presented to staff members and the leadership. Comments and reactions to those conclusions and recommendations, made in the meeting, were taken into account in the final version of the report.

In addition to this empirical work, we both have a contextual background impression from European rural research over the last decades, where we have observed the publishing activity and participation in comparative research project by IFUL staff members. Their leading members have also been watched participating actively in organisational matters at Nordic and European level.

## Description of the object of evaluation

IFUL was established 1 July 2006 as a university institute. Prior to that *Center for Forskning og Udvikling i Landdistrikter/Centre for Rural Research and Development (CFUL)* had existed for 5½ years as an independent institution partly financed by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. After an evaluation in 2005 the two ministries and University of Southern Denmark went into an agreement on incorporating the centre as a proper university department. At the same time the university extended its economic support from around 900,000 DKK to 1,500,000 DKK, and Professor Flemming Just was appointed head of institute.

Danish Centre for Rural Research (CLF) is the only research institute in Denmark, which is devoted to rural studies. The objective of CLF is to contribute to the development of sustainable rural areas specially focusing on business development and the population's life condition. This work should take place in a close exchange of ideas and experience with interested parties and through collaboration with external research and development environments. State contributors are the Ministry of Interior and Health, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries and University of Southern Denmark. External earnings will form part of the budget, which at present varies around 60 percent of the budget.

According to the present strategy, CLF is based in social science, but will also work in other scientific areas as disciplines within nature, agriculture, landscape planning, food, tourism, innovation, social research and administration. The institute's work comprises of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. CLF may undertake accounts, development and evaluations tasks, but research must deliver the output that gives value to dissemination.

The profile of CLF is focused in the strategy plan. For the period 2007-2010 research should be conducted within four main themes, understood in a rural-regional perspective:

- a. Business and innovation
- b. Living conditions and settlement
- c. Policies, economics and administration
- d. Development of theories and methods

Seen in relation to comparable research centres and institutes at the Nordic countries and elsewhere in Europe, these thematic demarcations are typical and rather mainstream.



## **Analysis: strong and weak points of CLF**

The mission of the institute is formulated in the self-evaluation report as:

*“As a leading national institute and an internationally recognised institute for research in business and living conditions in rural areas, the mission for IFUL is to contribute to create development and good living conditions in rural and remote areas, and to create an extended knowledge of conditions in rural areas.”*

To be a leading national institute in this field is not a difficult task, given that most European countries have just one institution with such a mission. Being internationally recognised however, is more challenging. According to our impression, CLF is well underway in a process to gain such recognition at European level. To extend and disseminate knowledge on the social conditions in rural areas is also well undertaken. However, when it comes to the next step, it will be far beyond our task to consider the contribution of this knowledge to create development and good living conditions in rural Denmark.

### **Strong points**

According to our impression, the CLF organisation and staff has the following strong points:

#### *Leadership*

It is our impression that current chair Flemming Justs has been an ideal research team leader, giving researchers challenges and freedom to develop at the same time. Just has had an impressive political ability to disseminate research and address burning rural issues of this time. On the one side he is able to motivate politicians at high level as well as top members of Danish and EU administration to follow his ideas of what should be dealt with research-wise. On the other side he seems to have a strong intellectual integrity which provides his public statements with a high degree of legitimacy. In this way he is able to go in dialogue both with the Danish and EU elites as well as Danish civic sector representatives and rural people in general. This rare combination has been a valuable asset to IFUL. It is our firm impression that IFUL is a visible research unit in Danish society, and that key researchers are listened to in current rural issues

#### *Human resources*

According to our impression, the work environment is pleasant and the organisation is functioning smoothly at present. The researchers are dedicated to their mission, and many of them have a strong publication track record. Flemming Just and his leadership team have been very successful in recruiting and maintaining new staff. Flemming Just has made great efforts to upgrade former CFUL researchers so that they may qualify as assistant and even associated professors in IFUL. Furthermore carrier plans have been made for each employee, which make it attractive, for shorter or longer periods, to be IFUL/CLF employees. In comparison to the size of the institute, in-house training capacity is very good, e.g. internal seminars where work in progress is presented for peer-feedback, are organised regularly.

### *Quality of research*

The institute conducts basic research, applied research, *results agreement* work, accounts for external stakeholders, and consultancy. Although many tasks have been performed in close contact with customers and contractors, CLF has a remarkable track record of international referee publications. This is a rare but necessary combination of tasks; deliverables to users and high quality publications in scientific books and international referee journals

### *Relevance of research*

The four themes set in the strategy plan are current and appropriate. It seems that the leadership is very updated and active when it comes to catch new issues in the wind. Through close contact with Danish and European discourse on rural issues, CLF has been able to be at the forefront of problem formulation and project initiation. In this respect the board member seat is an important post to signal what is up at rural grassroots and in political circles.

### *Internationalisation*

IFUL has had a high standing as partner in European research cooperation. Several joint projects are performed with European partners and new ones are underway. A certain exchange of personnel with foreign institutions has happened, although it has not been easy to attract and finance excellent foreign researchers. The networks created under the umbrella of European Society for Rural Sociological Association (ESRS), like the ESRS Summer School, their journal *Sociologia Ruralis*, and their biannual congresses, seems well exploited.

## **Weak Points**

When it comes to weak aspects with the present CLF institute, we want to direct the attention to the following points:

### *Professional vulnerability*

The present CLF organisation may seem vulnerable because of a small staff and dependence on key staff members. Because IFUL/CLF has had a few very visible and outstanding researchers, the number of activities and visibility compared to budget has been quite large. However, if those key members of the staff move, or if their competence is worn down because of hard work and scattered activities, the downside will be dominating.

### *Topical dispersion*

From the outside, the research activities seem rather dispersed and not always coherent. There may be many reasons; market dependence, path-dependency and recruitment difficulties are a couple of obvious causes. It is always difficult for a head of institute to say no to offered contracts, and the attractiveness of a small academic campus in Esbjerg is not and will not be the highest. This proliferation has both an upside and a downside. One upside is that CLF has been able to cover a wide range of burning “rural issues” of the time. One obvious downside is that researchers’ competence is worn down through overuse and misuse. Intellectual performance could be improved by sticking to a grounded joint strategy in a more consistent way.

### *Financial management*

On the average, the total budget has been around 7,5 mio. About one third has come from the two ministries, about 2,5 mio from external projects, and about 2,5 mio from the university. At the new department the distribution for all staff with research will be 50 % for teaching / results agreement, 10 % for administration, and 40 % for own research. Depending on more than 40 % of the budget on competed external funding would make the running of the institute very vulnerable, thus it is essential to guarantee at least 60 % of basic funding. As to the management practices, results agreements have been finalised only during the first quarter of the year, when the agreement period has already been running. This, together with the university accounting systems that are not able to explicate rapidly especially the external funding status, lead to a situation where it is difficult to get an up-to-date overview of the financial status of the institute.

## **Future prospects: opportunities and challenges**

The overall picture of need for rural research and development in Europe is promising. Because of the economical problems in agriculture, the depopulation of rural areas and the enlargement of the European Union, rural issues are high up on the political agenda. On the other side, “rural power” in terms of the strength of agricultural organisations as well as the influence of rural institutions is weak. There are also doubts about to what extent rural social and economic problems may be solved by more social science research. In the same manner as knowledge from agricultural economy has not solved the “agrarian problem” of Europe, there may be a chance that sociological and other social science knowledge will not solve the whole range of rural problems as such. However, scientific knowledge has a value in itself, and science based policy formulation is better than “black box politics”.<sup>1</sup>

Major challenges facing rural economy and welfare cut across disciplinary boundaries. In this respect, interdisciplinarity will be increasingly required in order to gain integrated perspectives on problems and to understand the complex processes and issues involved in achieving rural development. Knowledge transfer is also a dimension which will grow in importance. The way how societies evolve requires that the impact of research on rural policy and practice has to be enhanced, so that it will help identify and clarify choices for policy makers. Emphasis has to be placed on the engagement of stakeholders and potential end-users e.g. throughout all stages of research process, from the identification of research issues and questions, the conduct of the research, through to the communication and dissemination of research outcomes. These are the challenges that all rural research faces contemporarily.

### **Opportunities**

One big opportunity for Danish Centre for Rural Research lies in being a part of a larger institute at the University of Southern Denmark. This means that CLF will be a more robust and open organisation in the future. Contact with students and other university staff will be improved, which means a more varied work environment and more access to human resources for recruitment.

CLF should still be a preferred partner in EU rural development research, which will increase in the future. Even more Nordic collaboration with is feasible, as sister institutions in the other Nordic countries are gaining strength. There may be a possibility to exchange staff, start joint efforts in the education and training of researchers and PhD students, as well as exchange of students at master level.

The problems in rural areas and rural development itself are, by nature, complicated and impossible to capture with a single approach or even with one discipline. For example, rural welfare has to be dealt with both quantitative and qualitative terms. It is crucial to balance hard and soft sciences, and, if possible, to combine the understanding provided by different approaches, since rural research is essentially multidisciplinary. As the

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<sup>1</sup> By “black box politics” we mean policy means developed just because “something must be done”, without knowledge of the field, and implemented just to see what happens

scientific competence in the two main disciplines (sociology and regional studies) represented in CLF has been strengthened and strengthens further in the future, it offers more ground for integration with the other disciplines. To capture the multifaceted rural development drivers on many levels, a series of perspectives, disciplinary fields and methods need to be addressed. This can be done by encouraging internal cooperation across the research groups, as well as through cooperation with other research groups in Denmark and elsewhere inside and outside Europe.

## **Challenges**

The merging of the three social science departments at Esbjerg Campus means both opportunities and risks. Even if the staff at IFUL has taken the merger rather quietly, there may be a risk that IFUL will lose some of its identity. To work hard to maintain a high and independent profile, as well as being constructive and supportive towards the new university organisation, is a challenge.

In addition to that, organising new teaching programmes as well as giving lectures is in itself challenging, especially this first year and a half. It is extremely important to attract good students and enough students the first fall, which may mean life or death for the new courses. To keep focusing on rural topics and issues in the cultural studies curriculum is both a challenge and an opportunity.

To get certification for more university courses (“Rural and regional development”) should not be followed up before experiences with the first student groups are evaluated. It may be tempting to go for more courses at once, which will generate incomes and opportunities for the existing staff and even open windows to recruit new staff members. However, it is important to gain experiences on student attractivity, use of resources, effects on the conduction of research etc, before moving too fast into the future.

It is also a big challenge that Flemming Just moves upwards to be head of the new Department of Environmental and Business Economics. It is just wishful thinking that he will be able to do all the project development, networking and dissemination of research that he has done in the past. Some of the key researchers will also be quite occupied with developing the courses and with teaching the first years, which means that their time and energy left for research will be limited. How to meet this new situation must be dealt with in an open and honest way, not putting any effects away because they are inconvenient.

## Conclusions and recommendations

CLF has reached a high standard of research publishing, which should be preserved. At this point, several key researchers have a good track record. On this background, and considering the prospects on European rural studies mentioned above, we think that there may be room for as much as 50 percent expansion in 3-5 years time. This may be realistic also because the staff in general will reach a level of maturity with several of the researchers being able to attract more research contracts worth more than they can “digest” themselves. In this way younger colleagues may profit from being a part research nucleus around experienced researchers.

When more time and human resources are spent on education, there must be taken steps to spread the responsibility for publishing in referee journal among more staff members. Publication training courses must be held by experienced researchers with a good referee publication track record. Financial rewards must be considered to those who succeed.

We think that CLF should not abstain totally from consultancy work, as long as this work falls within CLF topical focus. In this way, it is possible to make “short money long”, when research and consultancy money is put under one topical umbrella. The steering and funding of former IFUL appeared to function fairly smoothly. However, the planning, negotiations and signing under of the results agreement with ministries should take place earlier, preferably in November/early December of the previous year. The usefulness of CLF’s work depends partly on the ‘funding ability’ of the Ministries, and of successful dissemination that leads to a proper dialogue among researchers and the rural development stakeholders. In addition, pressure should be put on the university administration to improve its capacity to provide the daily management of the institute with up-to-date financial data, as well as to managing external (especially EU funding), which deserves its own professionals.

In order to avoid the image of topical dispersion, one possibility is to combine projects under a thematic, preferably problem-oriented themes or research programmes, under which they can be communicated to the broader public. For the wide public, messages that are framed as solutions to problems are more interesting than discipline-wise results. It is also a way of focusing Institute’s own work. These thematic programmes can be combined with limited calls from e.g. the Academy of Sciences to study certain topics – these take place at least in Norway and Finland, but may need lobbying in order to be launched. Similar pattern can also be included in results agreements, so that major part of the basic funding will be connected to multi-year results themes or programmes. This gives the researchers a longer perspective in their work. If thematic research programmes will be adopted, they have to be planned jointly with the personnel, connected to the strategy of CLF, and up-dated regularly, so that they guarantee also flexibility and that the researchers feel committed.

The new bachelor course in Sociology and Cultural Analysis from September 2010 and the master course in Cultural Sociology from 2013 is a considerable innovation which is a big achievement for this small institute. However, it puts CLF in a vulnerable situation because key staff members are employed preparing the courses and their teaching. What

if too few students turn up than those 30 new students which are supposed to come? Or if the quality of those who come is under expectation? To avoid this situation, there must be spent time and resources to market the new studies, also in order to safeguard the back payment for student credits earned. We recommend that economical and intellectual resources are used from now and up to the fall, in order to mobilise enough and good student applications. Considering the hard work which is put down and the economic risk lack of students will represent, the CLF leadership must pay high attention to this issue in the months to come.

Furthermore, our advice is to start a process of de-Flemmingization, by which we mean that especially key senior staff members must take more responsibility to build and maintain CLF network, to address media and working on a broader front to attract research funding, nationally and internationally. This will be a long process, which at best may be supported and lead by Flemming Just himself, making himself superfluous in the day-to-day business of CLF. To find a new head of CLF must be given priority. Such a competence at that level is rare, and the search process must be thorough.

If CLF should try to be internationally excellent in one or two fields, we think that research on social capital and regional economics should be chosen, provided that the University of Southern Denmark supported such a strategy. We think that CLF have the potential to be a “port to Europe” in Nordic rural studies, and those two fields of research are quite open to demonstrate one’s perfection at present.

## Annex 1

### Staff at IFUL in 2006 and CLF per 1. January 2010

*Table 1. Staff as of July 2006*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Researchers</b>		
Gunnar L.H. Svendsen	Researcher	
Klaus Lindegaard	Senior lecturer	Stopped 1/2 2007
Pia Heike Johansen	PhD Student	PhD degree June 2007
Annette Aa. Thuesen	Research assistant	PhD student 15 October 2006
Monica Stoye	Research assistant	PhD student 1 October 2006
Jens F.L. Sørensen	Research assistant	
Mette Zippora	Research assistant	Stopped 1 June 2007 ???
Birgitte Eckhardt	Research assistant	Stopped end of 2006
Lise Thomsen	Research assistant	Stopped 1 December 2006
<b>Administrative staff</b>		
Arne Bengt Thomsen	Leader coordinator	Stopped end of 2007
Dorte Brande Teichert	Information officer	½ time employed, stopped October 2007
Bente Nielsen	Secretary	
Flemming Just	Head of institute, professor	



*Table 2. Staff as of 1 January, 2010*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Academic background</b>	<b>Employment</b>
<i>Researchers</i>			
Gunnar L.H. Svendsen	Professor	Social anthropology	1/1 2010
Klaus Lindegaard	Senior lecturer	Economics	1/2 2008 – 1/2 2011
Villy Søgaard	Senior lecturer	Geography/Business economics	1/1 2007
Peter Sandholt Jensen	Senior lecturer	Economics	1/4 2009
Pia Heike Johansen	Lecturer	Sociology	1/1 2008
Niels Chr. Nielsen	Post doc.	Geography	20 % employed until 31/1 2010
Annette Aa. Thuesen	PhD student	Social science	Finalises 1/2 2010
Jens F.L. Sørensen	PhD student	Economy	Finalises 1/10 2010
Tove Brink	PhD student	Business economics	Finalises 31/1 2011
Inge Lise J. Sørensen	Industrial Phd student	Communication	1/5 2007 – 1/5 2010
Malene Brandt Winther	PhD student	Social anthropology/Political science	1/10 2010 – 1/10 2013
<i>Administrative staff</i>			
Bente Nielsen	Secretary	BA language	1/7 2006
Karsten Eskildsen	Academic secretary	MA	1/10 2007
Flemming Just	Head of institute, professor	Contemporary history	1/7 2006
Michael Langberg	Academic consultant	Business economics	1/8 – 1/2 2010
Sanne	Student worker	Business economics	
Sarah Johansen	Student worker	Business economics	

**Self-evaluation report for**  
**Institut for Forskning og Udvikling i Landdistrikter/  
Danish Institute for Rural Research (IFUL)  
University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg**

**Background**

IFUL was established 1 July 2006 as a university institute. Prior to that *Center for Forskning og Udvikling i Landdistrikter/Centre for Rural Research and Development (CFUL)* had existed for 5½ years as an independent institution partly financed by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. After an evaluation in 2005 the two ministries and University of Southern Denmark went into an agreement on incorporating the centre as a proper university department. At the same time the university extended its economic support from around 900,000 DKK to 1,500,000 DKK, and Professor Flemming Just was appointed head of institute.

Following the evaluation the new agreement stressed the need for a strengthening of the research profile and a downsizing of involvement in concrete development projects.

The establishing of the institute was followed by formation of a new and smaller board of directors, see later.

The following sections describe and analyse the development of the institute since July 2006. The last section tries to give a view to the future. It should already here be mentioned that SDU's Board of Directors has decided on recommendation from the dean and rector to merge the three social science departments at Esbjerg campus, including IFUL. As of 1 January 2010 IFUL will be named Center for Landdistriktsforskning/Centre for Rural Research (CLF). Even though it will be part of a bigger department, it is emphasised by the dean that the centre shall maintain its specific profile.

**Framework**

**Strategy and research plan 2007-2010**

In 2006 one of the first important tasks for the new board was to decide on a strategy and research plan for the period 2007-2010. This plan has been a guiding line for the work of the institute for the first period. The mission of the institute is formulated in this way:

“As a leading national institute and an internationally recognised institute for research in business and living conditions in rural areas, the mission for IFUL is to contribute to create development and good living conditions in rural and remote areas, and to create an extended knowledge of conditions in rural areas.”

In prolongation of the mission, the purpose of the institute is furthermore stated to “elucidate the framework conditions for rural and peripheral areas. IFUL shall also contribute to develop theories and methods within the field of the institute. The purpose is fulfilled through research, reports, evaluation, compilation of knowledge, documentation, development of concepts, teaching and dissemination in general. The goal must furthermore be fulfilled in a close exchange of ideas and experiences with stakeholders and through cooperation on research and development with relevant external research and development milieus.

*These overall guiding lines and their fulfillment are also the ones the institute should be evaluated against together with the more detailed goals described more in detail in the strategy paper (see below):*

”The institute has a interdisciplinary profile and will through basic research and more applied research generate knowledge about societal, social, cultural, political and business conditions in rural and peripheral areas. The production of the department should be used broadly by national and international researchers and by rural stakeholders, organisations and decision-makers. The department may undertake development and evaluation tasks from external contributors.

IFUL shall have an independent profile, which reflects an orientation towards the outside world. The institute should be visible in all relevant rural contexts. Dissemination is therefore an important part of the work of the institute.

The following goals can be listed for IFUL’s production and organisation:

- IFUL should be a recognised research institute, both nationally and internationally in matters of importance for rural and peripheral areas, and should at the same time contribute to development of theories and methods within the subject matter.
- IFUL should to a moderate degree conduct exposition and evaluation work.
- IFUL should participate in teaching in relevant subjects at SDU or in collaboration with other institutions.
- IFUL should be known as the primary source of knowledge in matters concerning rural and peripheral areas.
- IFUL should establish collaboration with other institutions and create a national and international network of relevant partners.

- IFUL should – after agreement – contribute to consultancy and take care of research tasks within the realm of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Food.
- IFUL should be a working place with a stimulating and dynamic professional milieu.

The department is based in social science, but will also work in other scientific areas as disciplines within nature, agriculture, landscape planning, food, tourism, innovation, social research and administration. The institute shall work with both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The department may undertake accounts, development and evaluations tasks, but research must deliver the output that gives value to dissemination. Therefore, the aforementioned tasks should

- Either be in immediate continuation of the research at the department,
- And/or contribute to long term research by giving access to data and analyses of research relevance.”

The profile is further focused in the strategy plan. For the period 2007-2010 research should be conducted within four main themes, all understood in a rural-regional perspective:

- e. Business and innovation
- f. Living conditions and settlement
- g. Policies, economics and administration
- h. Development of theories and methods

## Staff

### **Staff situation (see Annex 1)**

From the outset the new department counted 13 persons, and now it counts c. 15 employees. However, the composition of the staff has changed radically. It has been an overall goal that all former CFUL-employees should take a PhD degree. At the end of 2010 it is expected that this goal will be almost reached (Pia Heike Johansen, Annette Thuesen, Jens F.L. Sørensen). One researcher quitted her scholarship after one and a half year. Instead three new PhD scholarships have started, two of partly externally funded (Tove Brink, Malene Brandt Winther) and one fully externally funded as an industrial PhD student (Inge Lise Jæger Sørensen).

It is a goal that on average one PhD student should start every year, and that one degree should be produced every year. This goal still seems realistic.

As concerns lecturers and senior lecturers it has been possible to employ three senior lecturers. One of them (Gunnar Svendsen) was recruited internally, whereas two (Villy

Søgaard and Peter Sandholdt Jensen) were recruited from outside. One PhD student (Pia Heike Johansen) has got a position as lecturer.

In general all lecturers will be given the possibility of applying for a position as senior lecturer. In the budget there will also be a possibility for existing PhD students to apply for a position as lecturer.

It has been important to develop and safeguard rural research as a recognized field of research. A professorship in rural sociology has been announced internationally. It was a pleasure for the institute that Gunnar Svendsen was well-qualified to win the competition, and he will take the chair from the beginning of 2010.

With the existing tasks and financial situation the actual number of employees (c. 15) is appropriate and gives a reasonable balance between basic and external funding. If the share of external funding exceeds c. 40 %, it is believed that the institute will be too vulnerable. In periods the share may be higher, but the tasks will then be covered by non-permanent staff.

It is expected that the number of staff will increase to around 18 in the future. One reason is that the institute will be involved in more teaching. Another reason is that after three and a half years of existence and the formation of more focused research groups (see later) and more involvement in international research through an increased knowledge of the competences at the institute, it is expected that it will be possible to attract more funding especially for PhD scholarships and research assistants.

The administrative staff – besides the Head of Institute – consists of an institute secretary (Bente Nielsen) and an academic secretary (Karsten Eskildsen). They share a joint office and have a flexible distribution of tasks. However, in general Bente Nielsen takes care of running business, whereas Karsten Nielsen takes care of overall financial management and project administration, newsletters, and to some degree also some of the work on external and result contracts.

### **Recruitment and maintenance of staff (see Annex 2)**

Until now it has been possible to recruit clever and engaged employees. However, as will be seen from *Annex 2*, the number of applicants for each position has been low. The reason may be that:

- Rural research is a relatively young and small research discipline in Denmark. Hence, the two new senior lecturers (Villy Søgaard and Peter Sandholdt) do not have a specific background in rural and regional research, but has more generally worked with business economics and socio-economics.
- Denmark has until the end of 2008 experienced a significant boom with almost no unemployment. Furthermore, the radical administrative reform as of 2006 with much bigger municipalities, few regions and fewer but bigger state administrations at local-regional level have drained the labour market for political scientists and economists. At the same time the private sector has started to recruit more business economists. In total these tendencies have made it very difficult to recruit scientific staff at universities, and not least outside

bigger towns. An example: for almost two years it was impossible to recruit a PhD student in political science. The slump will probably make it a bit easier to recruit, and the PhD position has now been filled.

- The location of the institute in Esbjerg may be an obstacle more for attracting applicants.

The institute has tried to ease the recruitment situation by announcing all positions internationally. Until now non-Danish applicants have not been able to outmatch national applicants. On the other hand, the institute has not been that active in attracting foreign employees. In the first building-up phase of the institute as a strong national point of rural research it has been important to have employees mastering the many contacts with Danish stakeholders and authorities.

From 2010 the first phase will end and a next consolidation phase start due to

- employment of 1 professor, 1 senior lecturer and 2-3 lecturers plus a head of centre (except for an externally funded lecturer, all other positions are substitutions for existing staff moving up in the academic hierarchy),
- start of new study programme in Sociology and Cultural Studies (see later),
- incorporation into a bigger department.

With this consolidation the institute will be better suited for having international employees in the staff. We have already employed a Dutch post doc. for some months in 2008, and from 2010 she will be employed for another period to work with an ongoing Interreg project. We had hoped to employ a Hungarian PhD student whom we learned to know as a bright student in her trainee stay at the institute, but unfortunately the needed external funding failed.

Recruitment is only one part of staff policy. It is even more important to keep clever and engaged existing researchers in the staff. In many cases there has been a considerable investment in PhDs with key competences. Continuation positions as lecturer and senior lecturer are therefore important in order to reap the fruits. The most important element, however, is to develop a dynamic, stimulating, encouraging and pleasant atmosphere, where the individual finds space for both an ambitious career, a stimulating academic milieu, pleasant working conditions with helpful colleagues and a high degree of possibility for influencing both own situation and institute development.

In general, these elements are part of daily life. The employees are ambitious in publishing, in participating in conferences, and in attracting external funding. As part of the 'maturation' of the institute, scientific discussions have been intensified within the last half year. Discussions in research groups (see below) are one example. Another one is a cross-campus study group initiated by an IFUL staff member (Pia). They meet regularly to discuss classical sociological writers and will end up with an open seminar with an external guest lecturer.

Even though research and incentive structures at universities seem to stimulate an individualisation, a collaborative spirit still exists at the institute. Examples are co-writing of applications, reports and articles, a lot of informal talks, and a helping hand with special tasks. Another part of good working conditions is flexibility in order to

make work fit with daily family life. As a research institute IFUL has a very high degree of such flexibility. Researchers are required to be at the institute at least three days a week and can work from home the other days. Employees are offered free mobile broadband.

## **Activities**

### **Organisation of research (see Annex 3 and 4)**

Until recently the institute has organised its research in one broad group. In the building up phase we have been dependent on whom we could attract. The research theme has bound us together across many different disciplines. In autumn 2008 we took initial discussions about formation of prospective research groups.

In autumn 2009 a group in rural sociology was formed, headed by Gunnar Svendsen and with about five members. The group meets regularly every fortnight to discuss articles and conference papers. It is obligatory to participate. *Annex 3* contains a draft of the foundations of the group.

Another group is a cross-campus group of researchers in regional studies and regional economics and initiated by IFUL staff (Villy and Peter). Where rural sociology typically has an actor-approach and mostly make use of qualitative methods, regional researchers are first and foremost interested in a structural and quantitative approach. *Annex 4* contains a draft of the foundation of the proposed group.

At the moment discussions are taking place among the researchers at the new joint department as to which research groups should be maintained/established. Rural sociology will continue, whereas discussions about a possible group in regional analysis are going on. Such a group will comprise two traditions: i) a regional economics tradition with emphasis on modelling, analyses of labour markets, employment, education etc., ii) a regional studies tradition emanating from economic geography and business economics and with emphasis on regional innovation systems, and links between business and knowledge. In total at the new department there are about ten researchers involved in regional analysis, four of them from IFUL. Another possibility will be that these researchers join an existing very strong group in (environmental) economics and an upcoming group in business economics (to be defined).

It is expected that strong and focused research groups will contribute to create a more challenging academic milieu especially for PhD students and junior researchers. It is also expected that the groups will result in better and more articles and conference papers.

Whatever groups will be established, it is agreed that it is important to keep up existing activities at IFUL. In day-to-day practice there are not sharp divisions between the different disciplines, and there are many good examples of how coupling of different disciplines and approaches has created new insights in our work.

Every Monday all staff meets for a so-called 'institutforum' for one hour including lunch. Before that the Head of Institute has e-mailed a 'Monday-letter' to all staff with information about applications, new project possibilities, upcoming conferences, new

publications by staff members, fulfilment of result contracts etc. The high level of knowledge sharing and joint discussions and decisions means a broad ownership to activities and decisions.

Once a month, the institute arranges a seminar. Here the whole staff discusses ongoing or finalised project results and articles.

New research and account work is initiated in the following ways:

- By virtue of the result contracts some tasks are given on beforehand. The distribution of the tasks takes place in an open discussion at institutforum
- Danish and international organisations, authorities and research institutions are increasingly asking the institute to participate in joint research and projects.
- Gradually a number of employees have build up specialised competences, so that national and international actors are asking them to participate in projects. It is expected that well-marketed and well-researched research groups will contribute to improve the ability to obtain external funding,
- Staff at the institute initiates their own research projects, often alone or in collaboration with Danish and international partners.

Once a year, the institute goes for a two day seminar somewhere in the countryside. The seminars first of all has a strategic aim, but also gives room for discussions of research organisation and discussions of contributions to the fulfilment of result contracts.

### **Quality of research**

The institute conducts basic research, applied research, result contract work, accounts for external stakeholders, and consultancy. In the latter cases it is always considered if the task has a potential for delivering more than a report but also an article to an international journal. In 2009 the Head of Institute has in several cases said no to external projects as he could not see the scientific potential, and it has been more important to allocate time to publishing existing data.

It does not mean that the institute is not involved in practical projects. In 2007-08 IFUL was invited by an architect to participate in a project on urban renewal in peripheral areas. Both the Ministry of Interior and The Danish Enterprise and Construction Agency financed IFUL's participation. The task was to combine town renewal with local business development. Besides a report, papers have been presented twice at international conferences, and it is expected that at least one article will be published in 2010 about the new methods developed in the project.

The institute works targeted to conduct more basic research. Each PhD project is an expression of this. In 2009 three months have been allocated to Villy Søggaard to create a major project with a PhD student and a post doc. researcher for a project called *Organizing space – an evolutionary approach*. It has been send to the Danish Council for Independent Research, Social Science, as part of a strategic development of regional studies at the institute. Unfortunately the proposal was not considered for funding.

Quality of research is difficult to measure. For rural stakeholders quality will be production of data and results that may contribute to bring inspiration and improve the



situation for rural dwellers or perhaps bring rural problems on the political agenda. For public authorities quality is about delivering solid results, indisputable documentation and inspiration for policy-making. For the research community publication of articles in excellent journals and issuing anthologies and monographs at recognised publishing houses is a decisive quality stamp.

Since 2008 a comprehensive work on bibliometrics has taken place in Denmark inspired by Norway. Specific committees have been settled to decide on so-called authorised lists with the most important journals. The committees have also decided on the top 20 % with the best journals within each discipline. In order to take care of IFUL's cross – disciplinary research within rural and regional research, we succeeded in having Gunnar Svendsen as representative in the committee on sociology, and Flemming is member of the committee on geography and development studies.

In *Annex 5* it will be seen how IFUL performs in publishing compared with other social science departments. In general we find the figures satisfactory. It should be born in mind that most institutes have a teaching load equating half of their time. At IFUL it is partly corresponding to work on result contracts. IFUL is the second smallest of all departments at the faculty. In *Annex 7 and 8* there is a full list of publications covering 2007-08

The institute publishes two series: IFUL Reports and IFUL Working Papers, both edited by Gunnar Svendsen. All publications go through a very thorough process and are reviewed by both the editor and a colleague. The report series contain empirical results, while working papers more often bring theoretical, methodological and preliminary results. There is a clear understanding among staff that Reports and Working Papers in many cases are not the final publishing from a project, but must be seen as a step towards a place in an international journal. Hence we have also discussed if the level of ambition is too high in the two series, when the editor is asking for many additions on theoretical considerations and empirical analyses. It is an ongoing discussion as we also take pride in releasing reports and working papers of high quality.

#### **Result contracts (see Annex 6)**

Every year the institute enters into a result contract with both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Food as a condition for receiving respectively 2 mio. and c. 600,000 DKK.

The content of the contracts have predominantly been formulated by the ministries, but with a possibility for the institute to come up with proposals. In general we have been quite happy about the tasks given by the ministries. The tasks have been interesting and at the core of our activities.

In 2006 the first contracts were signed, but they were very loose as the department was newly established. In 2007 the first real contracts were signed. However, the managerial attention was too vague, so the institute did not deliver results before the end of the year. This resulted in an agreement on having a mid-term evaluation in May-June of progress in the result contract work. Besides it has been agreed that most results should be delivered by the 1<sup>st</sup> of November at the latest.

In 2008 and 09 this schedule has more or less been followed. Still we can improve our ability to deliver our reports in good time before deadline. So, from 2009 we have introduced an internal deadline saying 1<sup>st</sup> October for delivering a first draft. This gives a possibility to present preliminary results and conclusions for colleagues before placing the last dot.

After the agreement on procedures we feel that the work on result contracts is on track. If we have problems with for instance data collection, we try to have a close contact to the ministries by informing them on the problems we may have. We are always met by a very friendly and understanding staff.

### **Teaching and education**

IFUL began as a research institute where the only educational ambition was to be part of the part-time master in rural development and landscape planning administered by Copenhagen University. The predecessor, CFUL, was involved in the master, but it was soon realised that IFUL could not be allowed to take over that responsibility.

IFUL took over responsibility for a so-called pilot teaching programme in rural development initiated by CFUL. It ran as a special course in 2007, but could not continue as it was dependent on a special funding from EU.

The institute has also on behalf of the Ministry of Food arranged two courses for LAG board members and coordinators in 2008. The evaluations were in general very positive, and the institute will be happy to repeat or create new courses for this target group, but at the moment it seems as if the LAGs have had enough courses.

Instead IFUL staff has increasingly been involved as teachers for other study programmes, e.g. in business economics, public health, political science, and environmental planning.

In order to have our own study programme and to reduce vulnerability, the institute has put a lot of work in developing a new study programme. It has just been accredited by ACE Denmark. It means that from September 2010 approximately 30 new students will attend a bachelor in Sociology and Cultural Analysis and from 2013 a full-time master in Cultural Sociology. A second full-time master in rural and regional development has also been developed but due to tactical considerations we choose not to send it for accreditation this year. We are convinced that it will have a huge potential for attracting foreign students, but we will not have our own students before the first bachelors finalise in 2013.

All programmes will be taught in collaboration with staff from other departments. A preliminary study board for sociological studies has been established with Gunnar Svendsen as head. He has already by now made agreements on teaching of courses for the first two years, and we started planning of marketing of the bachelor. It will be necessary to recruit a sociologist to cover basic sociological teaching.

Rural research and regional research are small scientific areas in Scandinavia. Therefore, we initiated a Nordic application together with a sister department on border region studies. We tried to get funding for meetings to organise joint Nordic PhD school

courses. Unfortunately, we did not succeed. In the meantime our Swedish sister institute in Uppsala at the Agricultural University in November 2009 has invited to a meeting in order to create something similar, as they have only a few PhD students, which make it too expensive for them. We did not have time to participate, but have responded positively that we are interested in being part of the initiative.

### **Dissemination (see Annex 7 and 8)**

Dissemination of results has been written into the strategy plan as an important part of the work of the institute. A considerable amount of time is spent on dissemination every year. We cannot say exactly how much, but the following list may give an impression of our efforts. *Annex 7 and 8* gives a full account of staff members' activities in 2007 and 2008:

- Our homepage [www.sdu.dk/iful](http://www.sdu.dk/iful) presents all new results, and reports and working papers are fully accessible and free to download
- Every month a Danish newsletter is mailed to almost 900 subscribers. It informs about new projects, results, staff etc. The response is very positive, and we can see that the newsletter is read by both stakeholders and journalists.
- Every three month we publish an English newsletter with the most relevant international news. It is send to around 100 subscribers.
- We give more than 50 popular lectures and introductions around the country every year. The audience maybe local action groups, parish associations, local and regional authorities, organisations and others.
- Journalists consider us as experts on rural and regional development. Staff members are therefore very often guests in radio and TV and interviewed in newspapers and magazines. Every year there are more than 100 citations.
- Many bachelor and master students from other universities and from the School of Journalism in Aarhus are contacting us as experts in connection with their thesis work.
- We have separate yearly meetings with the leadership of the Joint Rural Council in order to inform them about our activities.

### **Internationalisation (see Annex 9)**

For a research institution international collaboration should be of daily life through co-authoring of articles and through project collaboration. It is stated in the mission of IFUL that the institute should be internationally recognised. There is no fixed definition of what recognition means. In *Annex 9* we have listed different elements as giving conference presentations, being asked to participate in international projects, arranging international collaboration etc. Besides these activities publishing of articles, books and contributions to anthologies is of utmost importance. We can see a clear upward trend in the number of English-written articles and books, and we can see that many of the articles are also published in level 2 journals.

It takes time to be internationally recognised. After 3½ years we are still not there, but we feel that we are on our way.

## **Administration**

### **Action plans and allocation of time (see Annex 10)**

The above-mentioned work on research, result contracts, teaching, outreach and internationalisation all together constitutes our annual efforts. Each researcher makes a suggestion for his/her work for the coming year (research activities, work on result contracts, conference participation, planned publications, teaching etc.). The individual plans, requirements settled in the result contracts, known external projects, and institute plans are transformed into an annual action plan.

The action plans have been an important tool for the board of directors and the institute to get an overview of the total activities and the distribution among the four main themes. The plans of the individual researchers at the same time contribute to render visible each ones prioritizing of time for the coming year and deliver a background for the yearly staff development interview and career planning.

Until now the institute has not used the so called norm catalogue from the social science faculty. It stipulates a man-year's distribution between research, teaching, administration and other work for the department. It has been agreed that a detailed allocation of time was not necessary, whereas time budgeting as expressed by the individual plans has been considered to fit with the tasks of the institute. With the merging of departments and the involvement in much more teaching more precise agreements on time consumption will be needed from 2010. Thus, all staff will use the norm catalogue where work with result contracts and consultancy for the ministries will equate teaching. This will make it possible to safeguard free research and participation in externally funded research projects.

### **Economic situation**

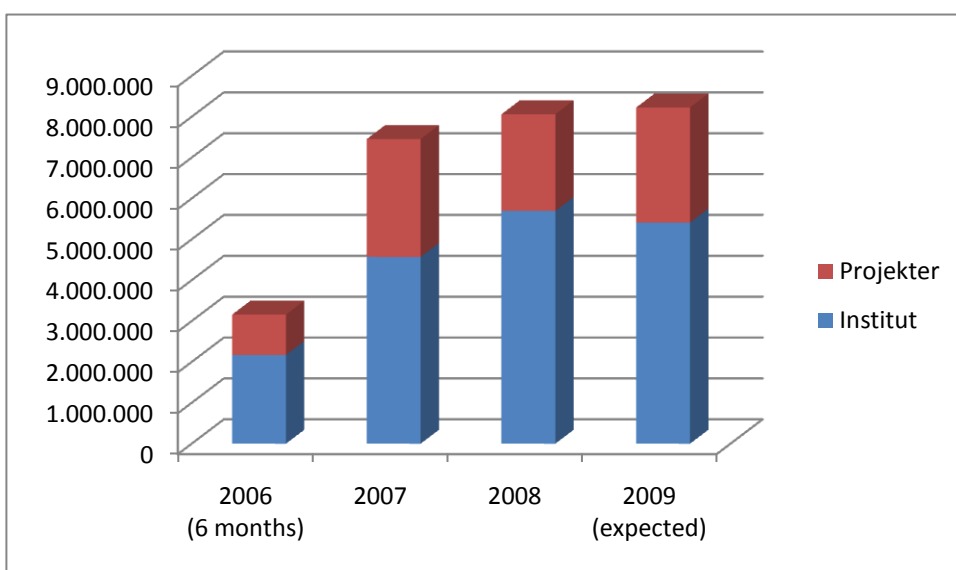
The figures below shows total IFUL accounts 2006-2009 (2009 budget) distributed between institute and projects.

The blue part, institute, primarily covers basic funding. As of 2008 the Ministry of Interior pays 2 mio. DKK (in 2007: 1.75 mio). Technically it is counted as part of basic funding. The rest derives from positions allocated by the dean and incomes from teaching.

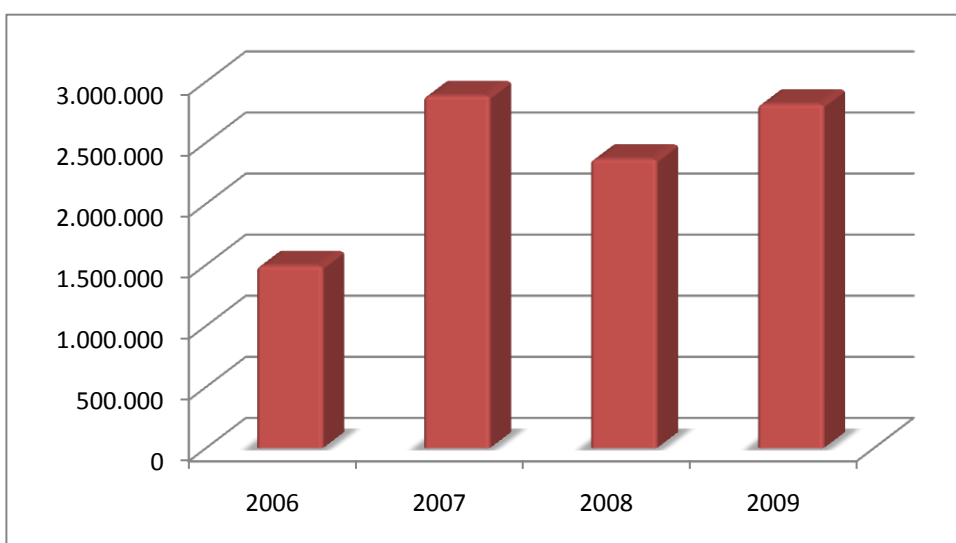
The red part, projects, covers external funding. The contribution from the Ministry of Food (588.000 DKK in 2009, 2007: 500.000 DKK) is technically counted as external funding as the grant is not part of the Government's Finance Bill.

Both ministries will in 2010 take a decision whether they will continue to support IFUL after the first 5 year period and at what level.

*IFUL accounts/budgets 2006-2009 allocated between institute and projects*



*External funding IFUL 2006-2009*



The institute applies for many projects and is invited to participate in many national and international projects, evaluations etc. Below is a list of successful applications since autumn 2006.

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Funding DKK</b>
The municipal tax fund	500.000
Anthology on rural research	125.000
Pilot teaching programme in Rural Development	367.500
Danish Research Agency	500.000
Partnership organization of rural development	170.000
Innovation in agriculture-related businesses	2.150.000
The multifunctional agricultural landscape	250.000
Study on the LAG boards and coordinators	340.000
Analysis and organization of local growth strategy of Højer	200.000
Growth in peripheral villages	95.000
Rural small scale production	300.000
Center for Integrated Safety Management	588.000
Business development and urban centres in peripheral areas	390.000
Broadband importance for regional development	196.903
Analysis European Capital of Culture	150.000
Strategic Research Council: MarBioShell	399.600
Interreg IVc: Vital Rural Area	500.000
Interreg IVc: SURF Suburban Fringes	300.000
European Contact Point – Screening Rural Development Programme	400.000
Developing Port of Rudkøbing	530.225
Food sector Innovation Network	250.000
Experience economy at the Wadden Sea	400.000
Book: War and Society	55.000
Business and residential development in peripheral areas	37.000
Library services in local areas	50.000
Ministry of Food, FERV – co-financing	2.262.500
Maximising the taste and health value of plant food products (MAXVEG)	1.470.240
Educational driven innovation in peripheral areas	750.000

### **Board of directors (Centerbestyrelsen)**

By the establishing of IFUL the ministries and SDU's rector agreed to establish a (consultative) board of directors. The university can only have one board of directors having responsibility for the overall development of the university. Thus, the board of directors for IFUL has been named the Centre Board. It has the right to recommend on budgets, accounts and appointment of Head of Institute. It decides on strategy plans, and the chairman of the board signs the annual result contracts together with the ministries and rector.

The board consists of:

- a chairman appointed by rector after consultation with the ministries. (Until his retirement by the end of 2009 the chairman has been pro-dean, professor Torben Greve, Copenhagen University)
- a representative from the Ministry of Interior (Department Head Niels Jørgen Mau Pedersen)
- a representative from the Ministry of Food (Commissioner Mogens Nagel Larsen)
- a representative from the Joint Rural Council/Landdistrikternes Fællesråd (Chairman Steffen Damsgaard)
- a representative from municipalities appointed by the Ministry of Interior (Vice-mayor Jytte Frijs, Municipality of Lolland)
- Dean Jesper Strandskov, SDU
- a representative from the IFUL employees (PhD student Annette Aagaard Thuesen)

Head of Institute Flemming Just and IFUL secretary Karsten Eskildsen participate in the meetings. The board meets three times a year. As the members live in many different parts of the country, two of the meetings take place in Odense in the middle of the country. The third meeting takes place in Esbjerg at the institute. This meeting gives an opportunity for presenting actual research from 2-3 employees.

Seen from the institute, the board of directors has played an important supportive role. The meetings take place in a friendly and professional atmosphere where the board members are critical-constructive. The chairman with his extensive experience from other boards and from university management has played an important role for the creation of this atmosphere.

For the Head of Institute it has been very important to create a basis, where the board of directors should not dig into too many details but be equipped with relatively short and comprehensible meeting materials making it possible to concentrate on strategy and overall management. It is a goal that all materials should be sent out at least one week before meetings. We have not always succeeded in that goal.

## **Future**

As written in the introduction, IFUL is about to move from a formative phase to a consolidation phase in 2010. The merging of the three social science departments at Esbjerg Campus is of course a major event. The staff at IFUL has taken the merger rather quietly. IFUL will continue as a Centre for Rural Research (CLF), and will maintain much of its independent profile. It can also take advantage of being part of a bigger unit with more colleagues (e.g. many more Phd students). A major challenge will be to implement the new study programme successfully. Turning into a 'normal' university department with both teaching and research will perhaps create a stronger feeling of change than the organisational changes.

However, neither merger nor teaching will remove the special dynamic, which we feel at the institute, namely a strong stakeholder orientation and an eagerness to disseminate results while at the same having a very open eye for new projects and new international activities.