SASNET

Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Minutes from SASNET board meeting August 29, 2001

Venue: Conference Room 1, third floor, Department of Sociology, Lund University

Members present: Björn Hettne, Boel Billgren, Rajni Hatti Kaul, Alia Ahmad, Olle Qvarnström, Bo Lindblad, Eva Hellman, Gunnar Jacks, Kjell Härenstam, Pamela Price, Christer Norström, Martin Gansten, Tomas Kjellquist, Jan Essner and Birgitta Göransson.
Others: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

1. Election of chairperson, secretary and person to verify the minutes

Decision: Björn Hettne will chair the meeting, Lars Eklund will be the secretary, and Olle Quarnström will verify the minutes.

2. Round of presentation if needed. Agreement on the agenda. Any other business to be added to the agenda? (see last point)

A round of presentations was undertaken and the agenda was agreed upon. No other business was added to the agenda.

3. Constitution of the board, election of deputy chairperson

Decision: Rajni Hatti Kaul was elected Vice Chairperson of the board.

4. SASNET work report. Staffan Lindberg, acting co-ordinator and chairman of the SASNET Working Group:

a. **Overall report**, work during spring and summer 2001 (*Enclosure 3: "WorkreportSASNET1.rtf sent out in advance*)
b. **Internet gateway**, Lars Eklund (*Enclosure 4: "GatewayPlan.doc" attached, Enclosure 5: "GatewayReport.doc" attached*). Designing the Gateway (see http://www.sasnet.lu.se/planf.html: go to "We were inspired"), Gathering information about research and higher educational institutions (Lars Eklund) and about individual scholars (Lisbeth Andersson)

c. **Planning Grants** (*Enclosure 6: "PlGrDecision270401.doc" attached*)

d. **Directions from the vice-chancellor** and her decision about the composition of the board (*Enclosure 7: "Foreskrifter.doc" attached*)

e. **Announcing positions at SASNET's root node** (see points 14 and 15 below)

f. **Workshop** on global networking, 27-28 August 2001. Short evaluation – implications for our work?

g. **Other activities** such as the work with Oresund Network for South Asian Studies (see http://www.sasnet.lu.se/orsaplan.html), developing a new undergraduate course on India/South Asia at Tomelilla/Lund University (see http://www.osterlen.fhsk.se/sydasien/index.htm), etc.

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg gave a short overview of SASNET activities during the Spring and Summer 2001 and thought that there already had been a certain multiplication effect from the SASNET initiative. A masters course has been started at Uppsala University during the fall of 2001, an under-graduate course has been started by Lund University at Österlen´s Folk High School, also during the fall of 2001, and the opening of a section for Indic religions at the Dept of History of Religions at Lund is being planned for the Spring 2002, to mention a few examples. Lars Eklund then reported on the work on the Gateway. Since board members had already received substantial written documentation, the rest of the time was spent discussing certain issues.

The members expressed satisfaction with the workshop on Global Networking in South Asian studies. The papers will be revised and the discussions summarised, and presented on the Internet.

It was emphasised that the work with the Internet Gateway should go hand in hand with active networking within SASNET.

Björn Hettne raised the issue of political relations to various actors in South Asia, and the need for ethical principles to deal with these. The board engaged in a broad discussion on this topic. The main principles must be intellectual openness and integrity of scientific work. Since many of the research networks within SASNET are bound to get into conflict with one or more actors, the task of SASNET´s board and Secretariat must be to protect the integrity of these networks, and to promote and encourage them. SASNET should be cautious with political statements that may endanger the whole network or individual programmes, but should on the other hand be very clear about the role of science in furthering social and material development in society. It should be ready to promote open debates over burning issues like e g poverty and public health.

5. General discussion about SASNET activities during 2001-2003

(See *Enclosure 8: The Plan made up after October meeting in 2000*: go to www.sasnet.lu.se to "SASNET" and **to Principles for SASNET**; *For those interested in the original SASNET plan, see Enclosure 9: "OriginalPlan.doc" which is attached*).

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg opened the discussion by referring to the overall SASNET plan, formulated after the October Conference, 2000. He stressed the need for priorities for the work within the network during the period 2001–2002. This was followed by a very open and informal discussion.

Interdisciplinary research and education was identified as one of the key areas of SASNET activities. The board had a wide discussion on how to promote this. By connecting researchers and teachers, identifying new research issues through meetings and workshops, and by supporting the establishment and reinforcement of research centres, SASNET can promote interdisciplinary research. It was also recognised that there is a great need to strengthen intra-disciplinary networks within many disciplines as well.

A second key area was identified to be the third task, namely how to reach out with information to the media and schools. It was argued that SASNET should connect journalists with researchers, and through the Gateway offer links to relevant information. The media are generally not interested in scientific networking as such, but very keen on getting swift information on important current issues. Various approaches on reaching out to schools were discussed, including short courses for teachers and providing useful material on the SASNET Gateway. The principles laid down for the third task (see enclosure 13) were approved. In this connection the board also discussed SASNET´s relationship to the world of business and the NGO sector. It was emphasised that partnership between public and private actors is important without losing the integrity of science. Courses could be developed for employees in business companies, e g at the Nordic Centre in New Delhi. In relation to the NGO sector, SASNET should act as a facilitator and link to research and education.

A third key area discussed was the important role of both undergraduate and PhD education. Interdisciplinary education was stressed, as well as the need to integrate economics in various courses. Several members stressed the difficult situation for post-doctoral researchers, and suggestions as to how SASNET could involve these in research networks and identify funding sources were made.

Finally Staffan Lindberg suggested that SASNET should organise a workshop/symposium every year to promote networking in South Asian studies. A symposium for PhD candidates is planned for the year 2002.

Decisions: SASNET should give priority to interdisciplinary networking; interaction with the media; and promoting education on South Asia, including PhD studies.

6. SASNET network support in 2002 and onwards

Suggestion:
- Three-year **programme grants** for research and education; timing, i.e., how much of the total money available for this purpose should be paid out in 2002? Maximum amount: 3 x 125 000. Applications twice a year, closing dates: 1 December and 1 June

- **planning grants** (as awarded in the spring of 2001). Maximum amount: 125 000. Applications twice a year, closing dates:1 December and 1 June

- workshops, seminars, conference grants?

- **minor travel grants** for networking awarded by the Root Node (in consultation with the chairman of the board), twice a year: spring and autumn? Total sum per year? Maximum amount per person?

- Other kinds of support? For example: Göteborg University plans a Rector's visit with workshops in South Asia in the spring of 2002 and wishes to apply to SASNET for support. How should they apply? Marc Katz from Karlstad has applied for support for a film he has already produced. Can we support such projects, and if so, also in retrospect? See separate point below.

Discussion: Several members expressed doubts about giving three-year programme grants, particularly given the limited funds available within SASNET at the time being. At present SASNET should concentrate on initiating programmes by supplying as many groups as possible with minor grants.

In order to avoid misunderstandings in the future, it was also stressed that the purpose for which the grants are given must be made very clear in the announcement, as should the criteria for evaluating the applications.

Jan Essner informed about the Asia Travel Programme at the Swedish Institute, sponsored by Sida. This means that minor travel grants need not come from SASNET´s root node, a task, which otherwise would have been very demanding for the small secretariat.

Finally it was discussed whether the root node should have the means of handing out minor grants for workshops etc, but the board rejected the idea.

Decisions: It was decided that during the year 2002, SASNET should provide grants for planning research and educational programmes, and for workshops. The maximum amount should be 125 000 SEK. The grants should be given for one year only, but the applicant may make a new networking application for a second year. Applications will be invited twice a year, closing dates are 15 April and 15 November. In the future, if funds permit, SASNET may provide support for three-year programmes.

7. Contracts and rules for grants provided by SASNET for research and education programmes

Suggestion: SASNET uses the same procedures as Sida-SAREC. The Lund University administration may modify these forms in a suitable way.

Decision: The board approved of using the same procedures as Sida-SAREC.

8. Decision about the reference group for evaluations of the applications this fall

Suggestion: It is suggested that we use the same reference group as previously, i.e. Pamela Price, Neil Webster, and Malin Åkerblom. They are prepared to do the work again. Remuneration is 5 000 SEK per person, which is more or less a honorary fee (as in most Swedish Research Councils' reference groups).

(*Enclosures 10 – 12: "PriceCV.doc", "WebsterCv.doc", and ÅkerblomCV.doc" are attached*)

Decision: The board decided to appoint Pamela Price, Neil Webster, and Malin Åkerblom as members of the reference group for the next round of applications.

9. Root node activities during the rest of 2001 and 2002, including work on ORSA – Oresund Network for South Asian Studies

Suggestion: During 2001 and 2002 the root node will mainly:

- continue to build the **Internet gateway** (*Enclosure 13: "ThirdTask.rtf" is attached, see also Enclosures 4 and 5)*

- on that basis **continue networking** to initiate, stimulate and promote research and education programmes, including giving support to activities supported by SASNET grants

- plan for a **symposium with PhD candidates** specialising in South Asian studies during the late summer/fall of 2002. It can be held in connection with the SAREC conference for Swedish development researchers that may take place in Lund during that time. It can be located at a Folk High School nearby to bring down the costs. Perhaps we should also invite PhD candidates from the other Nordic countries.

- continue working on the Oresund Network for South Asian Studies, including planning a masters programme

- **intensify SASNET's networking in South Asia**. The discussion should, if possible, result in a concrete plan of action for this.

- when time permits, start working on other aspects of SASNET's plan, like the third task, etc.

Decision: The board approved of the working plan for the root node.
The budget for the symposium for PhD candidates was set at 200 000 SEK. Additional funds, if needed, could be applied for from different agencies, including Sida/SAREC.
Networking with researchers/teachers in South Asia should primarily be carried out through the sub-networks, i.e. the various programmes within SASNET.

10. Work load at the root node

Suggestion: An evaluation of the workload at the root node shows that the co-ordinator spends most of his time in administration, while the webmaster/secretary has been fully occupied with the Internet gateway. An additional part time secretary has been engaged to organise the workshop in August. In order for the root node to function properly in the future the co-ordinator must be free to spend more time on networking activities and support and the webmaster/secretary position needs to be extended to full time in order to manage the administrative work as well as web production, communication, and networking. Financing this extension will demand an additional 275 000 SEK for next year. Where can we get the money?

Discussion: The board emphasised the need to strengthen the capacity at the root node. Various suggestions to finance this were raised, including reallocation of the budget, bringing in membership fees or receiving additional funds from funding agencies including Lund University.

Decision: It was decided that if SASNET can secure additional funds for its activities, the strengthening of the root node has strong priority.

11. Relationship to the Nordic Centre in India (if there is time for this discussion)
(*Enclosure 14: "MinutesNordicCentre01.doc" is attached*)

Question: How actively involved in the Nordic Centre should SASNET be? The suggestion is that we support the activities in various ways, including dealing with applications for funding of activities and stimulating our network partners to use the centre in various ways.

Decision: The board approved of the suggestions made.

12. Budget for 2001 (confirmation)

Suggestion: See the budgets which was passed by the Working Group on 9 March 2001 and by the Interim Reference Group (*Enclosure 15: "RevisedBudget2001v4.doc" is attached*)

Decision: The budget was confirmed.

13. Budget for 2002, a preliminary discussion

Suggestion: See the budgets enclosed (*Enclosure 16: "TentBudget2002.doc" is attached*). It is suggested that the co-ordinator works out a more detailed budget based on the discussions and decisions at this meeting. A new budget will be presented at the board meeting in January 2002.

Discussion: The need for additional funds for the PhD candidates symposium was discussed, as was the scope of the conference, including the participation of South Asian and Nordic PhD D candidates, as well as senior researchers/supervisors from South Asia, the US etc. The planning of the symposium should be carried out in collaboration with doctoral students.

Decision: The principles for the budget was approved upon, with the addition that the cost for the symposium should be included (200 000 SEK). A more detailed budget will be presented at the board meeting in January 2002.

14. Appointment of a director/coordinator (part time) for the period 1 October 2001 to 31 December 2003 (*Enclosure 17: go to* http://www.sasnet.lu.se/director.html *and Staffan Lindbergs application*)

Decision: The board suggested unanimously that Staffan Lindberg should be appointed as director/coordinator) for the period 1 October 2001 to 31 December 2003.

15. Appointment of a webmaster/secretary for the period 1 January 2002 to 31 December 2003 (*Enclosure 18: go to* http://www.sasnet.lu.se/webmaster.html *and four applications*)

Discussion: The board discussed the qualifications of the four applicants. It was found that Lars Eklund was fully qualified for the position and superior in merits in relation to the other applicants.

Decision: The board suggested unanimously that Lars Eklund should be appointed as webmaster/secretary) for the period 1 January 2002 to 31 December 2003.

16. Additional financing of research and education programmes, and for pursuing the third task

Questions: What institutions can we approach: Riksbanken, Swedish Research Council, STINT, Swedish Institute, etc.? Should we, among other things, aim at a South Asia Graduate Programme in line with the Graduate programme for East- and Southeast Asian studies, now financed by Stint and Riksbanken? Are there possible funds within the EU-system? Other funds? Concrete plan for this?

Discussion: Tomas Kjellqvist informed that Sida/SAREC grants institutional support for new research group programmes, including grants for guest researchers, maximum 200 000 SEK per year for a period of three years.
Staffan Lindberg informed about coming journeys to Stockholm and Brussels to explore the possibilities of additional funding of the network.

Decision: The board welcomed Staffan Lindberg´s initiative to seek additional funding.

17. Number of physical meetings of the board per year

Suggestion: The suggestion is two meetings a year, one in late January and one in late August. Two additional meetings can be conducted, if necessary, via the Internet or telephone. If need be, the co-ordinator can consult the board via E-mail.

Decision: The board decided to hold two physical meetings a year as suggested.

18. Appointment of a Reference Group of South Asian researchers (*See Directions, Enclosure 7: "Foreskrifter.doc"*)

Suggestion: We can discuss some names for the reference group, but should wait with a decision until we have networked more with researchers in South Asia.

Discussion and decision: Several names were suggested, but the board decided to await further networking before appointing the reference group.

19. Application from Dr. Marc Katz at Karlstad University for partial financing of a film called "Tulsidas and the Fire of the Veda." Total amount requested is 84 000 SEK.
(*Enclosure 19: Documents from Katz*)
This item has been prepared in the following way: a group of researchers from the Department of History of Religions at Lund University has seen the film together with Lars Eklund and Staffan Lindberg and discussed the character of the film and its value for teaching about Hinduism and for research.

Discussion: The film is already completed, although some additional work remains in order to make it fit for teaching and scientific analysis (subtitling and an elaborate commentary). Marc Katz applied for 84 000 SEK, which according to the budget is the amount missing for the costs incurred so far. SASNET, however, cannot provide grants for educational projects or programmes that have already been carried out, and which have not been applied for and evaluated by an expert reference group in advance of project commencement.

Decision: The board rejected the application. On the other hand, SASNET root node should advise Dr. Marc Katz on how to complete the project and put it to use in teaching and research work. One possibility could be to work along the lines of South Asia Center at Madison, Wisconsin, distributing South Asian film material.

20. Monitoring SASNET.

According to the Directions ("Foreskrifter.doc"), SASNET should be evaluated after the first three-year period, which we must start to organise during 2003 (but prepare for already now!). The board will have a monitoring function as will the Reference Group of South Asian Researchers when it is in place. Is there any other method, which we should use to monitor SASNET now or in the future? Is there a need for it?

Discussion: It was agreed upon that monitoring of networking is a difficult task. Several criteria may be used and should be combined in an evaluation, such as organisational and networking qualities of the work carried out at the root node – including the Gateway building; as well as quantity and quality of research and educational programmes, workshops and symposia initiated and/or promoted by SASNET. Regarding the latter, SASNET could e g make a baseline document about the status of research and education relating to South Asia during the fall of 2001, as reflected on the SASNET Gateway, and the individual register. An attempt to count the number of undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate students at present could also be carried out. The E-mail address list from the summer 2000 and an institutional overview of that time is also a possible baseline. However, some of these activities have already been influenced by the Sida invitation to set up a Centre for South Asian studies in the summer of 1999, and the organisation of SASNET from June, 2000.
SASNET could ask external experts, such as Prof. Ronald Herring, to evaluate the activities after the first period of three years.

Decision: The root node will make a plan to be presented at the next board meeting

21. Dates for board meetings in 2002

Decision: Preliminary date for next meeting: 22 January 2002.

22. Any other business (should be announced at the start of the meeting)

Tomas Kjellqvist informed briefly about plans for a research link programme which is presently being discussed at Sida/SAREC. In this programme, Swedish and South Asian researchers may receive financial support for co-operation activities such as travel, joint field work, workshops/seminars. It is assumed that both parties already have funding covering salaries and major research costs.

Lund 4 September 2001

Lars Eklund

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Lars Eklund, secretary

Verified by:

Olle Qvarnström

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Olle Qvarnström