

Minutes from the SASNET Board meeting August 26, 2003, 13.00-17.00

Venue: Conference Room 1, third floor, Department of Sociology, Paradisgatan 5

Members present: Boel Billgren, Birgitta Göranson, Rajni Hatti Kaul (from Point 7), Bo S Lindblad, and Olle Qvarnström.

Others: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

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

Björn Hettne had been suggested to chair the meeting, but could not reach the meeting as his train from Göteborg was cancelled at the last minute.

Decision: Boel Billgren was elected to chair the meeting, Lars Eklund to be its secretary, and Olle Qvarnström to verify the minutes.

2. Agreement on the agenda. Any other business to be added to the agenda

The agenda was agreed upon after a request by Bo Lindblad was granted to discuss the quality of SASNET planning grants applications under Point 5, and Birgitta Göransson to present the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India, in January 2004, under Point 13.

Bo Lindblad also asked whether the issue of choosing members for the new SASNET board for the period 2004–2006 would be discussed at the meeting. Staffan Lindberg informed that an election committee, chosen at the board meeting in January 2003, is working and will suggest candidates to be appointed by the vice-chancellor of Lund University. The present board has no right to interfere in the election committee's work, but it is perfectly all right to suggest names to the election committee.

3. SASNET work report for spring – summer 2003. Staffan Lindberg, director/coordinator, and Lars Eklund, deputy director/webmaster

- 1) **Overall report** including a report on the activities and success of some of the Planning Grants given.
- 2) **Financial situation of SASNET: Definite financial result 31/12 2002**
The definite financial result should have been sent out to the board before the meeting, but as it still has not been presented in paper, Staffan Lindberg made a short presentation on the verified surplus from 2003 (sent out to the board as an e-mail on 25 August – Enclosure 1). The surplus turns out to be

80 000 SEK, against an expected sum of 30 500. This means that there is enough money in the budget to finance the contact journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan in November 2003, as decided by the previous board meeting in January.

3) The status of the Internet gateway

Lars Eklund reported on the development of new features regarding contents and technology, upgrading work, etc. Enclosure 2

4) Presentation of core Research fields at the Gateway

Staffan Lindberg presented the "Core presentation" introduced in the Gateway (<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/corefields.html>) and asked the board whether this is a good idea to pick out the research fields at Swedish universities with a high proportion of South Asia related research.

5) Work with the Conference on Swedish Development Studies research,

The conference named "*Fattiga och rika. Aktuell utvecklingsforskning och dess villkor i Sverige*" was organised by Sida/SAREC and Lund University on 9–11 January 2003. Several of the projects were related to South Asia (presented by SASNET on <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/ukonfpaper.html>). Staffan Lindberg reported that he prepared a summary of the conference's discussion on organisation and finance, to be found at <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/lundconfpanel2.pdf>.

6) SASNET at the India Seminar at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs

on 12 February 2003.

Staffan Lindberg participated (See, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/forumasia.html>)

7) SASNET at Indo-Swedish Joint Commission at New Delhi, 1 – 2 April 2003

Jan Magnusson participated as representative of SASNET (See, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/delhireport.html>)

8) Masters programmes at Lund (See, <http://www.ace.lu.se>) and Uppsala

(See, <http://www.afro.uu.se/southasia/index.htm>)

9) Cooperation with Centre for East and South East Asia Studies (ACE), Lund

Besides running the masters programme jointly between SASNET and ACE a new India-China Research Programme is also developed at ACE with active assistance from SASNET.

10) Nordic Centre in India Consortium

Dr. Neelambar Hatti, Lund University, active in the SASNET network, was elected new chairman of the NCI board in May 2003. Staffan Lindberg informed about the present situation for the consortium, and about new efforts to get the Centre sanctioned by the HRD Ministry in New Delhi (Enclosures 5a and 5b)

Discussion: Bo Lindblad commented positively on a remark made by Björn Hettne in the NCI report, that the Centre should move to some other South Asian country, e.g. Bangladesh, if no sanction is given in India. Lindblad also said that it might be easier to deal with private universities than government run institutions.

- 11) **Øresund Network of Asian Studies, ØRNAST**
(See, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/orsa.html>)
- 12) **Undergraduate course at Österlen's folk high school**
The second year students have finished and a third round is on its way (See, <http://www.osterlen.fhsk.se/sydasiens/index.htm>)
- 13) **Seminars in Stockholm and Uppsala in May**
(for reports see, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sthseminar03.pdf> and <http://www.kus.uu.se/aktiv-dev-text.html#ev18>)
- 14) **Work with NorfAsia graduate school,**
organised by Björn Hettne, Padrigu, and NIAS, Copenhagen (See, Enclosure 3 and Enclosure 3a). Staffan Lindberg has been strongly involved in the application process. If the NorfAsia graduate school gets accepted, a decision is expected in September 2003, and the ambition is to start courses in 2004. An exchange programme with researchers in the Netherlands is also planned.
- 15) **Roskilde seminar on Religious Mobilisation and Organised Violence in Contemporary South Asia", 3-4 April 2003**
SASNET took an active part in the seminar and its presentation on the web afterwards (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/conferences.html#reports>)
- 16) **Work with suggesting a new board for SASNET**
Staffan Lindberg, himself a member of the election committee along with Eva Hellman and Malin Åkerblom, both at Uppsala University, reported on the ongoing process and welcomed suggestions for names from anybody. Bo Lindblad, who raised a question on the formal election procedure already at the beginning of the board meeting, wondered if business interests should not be represented in the board. Staffan Lindberg commented that business representatives would most probably demand remuneration for participating in the board, and SASNET's tight budget does not permit that at present.
Bo Lindblad furthermore put forward the issue of making the board representative in a better way than today of all the eight nations of South Asia. The board agreed that this is an important consideration.

17) Guest lectures and cultural events at Lund

(See, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/lundactiv.html>)

18) Publication of Newsletters No. 23 – 29.

Lars Eklund publishes highly appreciated e-mail and web based newsletters once a month (See, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnetf.html#newsletters>)

Discussion: The reports and the work done were greatly appreciated by the board.

4. EASAS Conference 2004 at Lund

Staffan Lindberg reported about the activities so far (See also <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/EASAS18.html>). Panels suggested, and panels selected by the Conference Planning Committee are found at <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/panels04.html>.

Other details: As Key note speaker Prof. Dipankar Gupta, JNU, New Delhi, will appear, and he will talk on “Cultural Politics in South Asia – Processes, Causes, and Futures”

Finances: Staffan reported on the bad luck so far: Applications to Crafoord Foundation and to the Asia-Europe Foundation have been given, but received a negative reply. We have also applied for SEK 100 000 to Sida under the category ‘forskarmöten’, but have so far not received any answer. We are continuing our efforts with applying to the Nordic Research Councils, to Lund University, other European sources, etc.

Suggestion: SASNET should continue to apply for funds. The Director’s work during the year 2003 with the conference, estimated at 1 month and Jan Magnusson’s work, estimated at 1 month, to be financed either from an expected surplus from 2002 or (if not enough) by money from the SASNET Planning Grant fund for the fall of 2003, which would mean that we can distribute about 400 000 instead of 500 000 SEK. Whichever alternative will be clear at the time of the board meeting. Also suggested that if we do not get enough funding from outside, another 200 000 SEK from the Planning Grant Fund for 2004 should be reserved for the conference, and that we increase the participation fee to 150 Euro (for non-members) and to 90 Euro for members and research students.

Discussion: A vivid discussion took place with several suggestions given on how to secure funding for the conference. Bo Lindblad mentioned the Bill & Melissa Gates Foundation which has already shown its inclination towards funding South Asia related projects. Boel Billgren added that efforts should be made to convince Sida, Svenska Institutet and STINT that they should fund the individual scholarships that the conference offers to participants from South Asia and Eastern Europe. Staffan Lindberg was requested to discuss with Sida on this matter and ask them to put aside funds for the conference.

Decisions: The board approved the planning process for the conference and the suggestions given for securing funds. A decision was taken to set aside SEK 250 000 from the 2004 budget for Planning grants to be used for the conference planning instead. As a consequence the board also decided to cancel the coming round of SASNET planning grants (the Fall 2003 round) so that there will be only one distribution of planning grants money in 2004.

The board also approved to increase the participation fees as suggested.

5. Distribution of Planning Grants, Spring 2003

Suggestion: The reference group, consisting of Knut Jacobsen, Neil Webster and Malin Åkerblom, had met the same morning and its decisions were presented at the meeting. The reference group had selected nine projects/programmes out of the 26 applications to get SASNET planning grants.

Discussion: Bo Lindblad asked about the quality of the applications, and he asked for more instructions to be given to people intending to apply for planning grants how they should write the applications.

Boel Billgren commented that the projects that SASNET have supported keep high quality, and that in relation to project applications it is sad that the funds are so limited. She suggested that Sida/SAREC should be contacted, with the list of projects and researchers supported by SASNET, as well as the ones which qualified for support but did not receive such due to limited resources.

Decision: The board thanked the reference group for its work, and approved its decisions, as follows:

I. Research Planning Grants

- **Kumar, Ashok**, Department of Biotechnology, Lund University. "Low-cost Protein Bioseparation Technology- A Realistic Option for the Bioindustry of Developing Countries." The committee decided to fund the project with 40 000 SEK
- **Magnusson, Jan**, Centre for East and South East Asian Studies, Lund University. "The Baltistan Movemnet in the Northern Areas, Pakistan." The committee decided to fund the project with 70 000 SEK
- **Lindblad, Bo**, Department of Public Health, Division of International Health, Karolinska Institutet Medical University. "Pregnancy and Infancy in South Asia (PISA)." The committee decided to fund the programme with 90 000 SEK
- **Ahmad, Alia**, Department of Economics, Lund University: "Institutional Reforms in the Health Sector of Bangladesh and India." The committee decided to fund the project with 45 000 SEK
- **Olsson, Olof**, Department of Cell and Molecular Biology, Göteborg University. "Development of Stress tolerant Rice Cultivars for Nepal." The committee decided to fund the project with 70 000 SEK

- **Persson, Lars Åke**, International Maternal and Child Health (IMCH), Department of Women's and Children's Health, Uppsala University. "Network for Interventions against Maternal-Child Malnutrition in South Asia." The committee decided to fund the project with 25 000 SEK
- **Singh, Ravinder Pal**, Centre for Pacific Asia Studies (CPAS), Stockholm University. "Security Sector Governance in Southern Asia: a case study of Indian Parliamentary Oversight of Security Sector." The committee decided to fund the project with 40 000 SEK

II. Education Planning Grant

- **Hatti, Neelambar**, Department of Economic History, Lund University. "The Masters Program in Asian Studies in Lund: Networking for alternative options to ISEC." The committee decided to fund the project with 25 000 SEK
- **Nilsson, Kjell**, Department of Sociology, Lund University. "Globalisation and Transformation in a Comparative Perspective – a Masters Course on the Internet." The committee decided to fund the project with 50 000 SEK

Remark: Bo Lindblad did not participate in the decision approval regarding planning grants.

6. Contact journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan in November 2003.

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund informed about the planning for the tour, people and places they are going to visit; how the tour is financed, etc. Bo Lindblad who pushed for this journey for a long time now expressed his happiness and offered to give more useful contacts in Pakistan.

Decision: With the funds needed for the tour secured (see Point 3:2) the board approved the planning of the contact journey.

7. Work Report Series:

Suggestion: A project encouraged by several persons in our South Asia Reference group. Our suggestion is that we start simple Electronic Work Report Series for South Asian Studies, one for Medicine, Technology and Natural Sciences and one for the Humanities and the Social Sciences. A pool of senior researchers will be used as referees (only one for each article). The practical work will be handled by the SASNET webmaster.

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg presented the idea, and the board found it interesting as a means of stimulating research and channel it out to the people in the field. Lars Eklund however expressed hesitation in going ahead with the project because a) many universities/faculties/departments already have developed their own electronic publication series, and b) it will be a very time-consuming work which

would take too a lot of time from the webmaster's work, in reality it is a full-time librarian's work. Boel Billgren commented that Lund University Library is involved in projects regarding electronic publication, and it is necessary to investigate the needs both inside and outside Sweden for a SASNET publication series before continuing.

Decision: The board decided to proceed slowly with the project, and to do more "homework" on the feasibility of a SASNET Work Report Series.

8. Discussions with Lund University about cooperation between SASNET and the Centre for East and South East Asian Studies, ACE, at Lund University

Suggestion: We have already started to cooperate with ACE around the Masters Course in South Asian Studies. We have also helped ACE build a comparative research programme on India and China. We now want to convince ACE and LU to broaden the scope of ACE to include South Asia in all its activities. SASNET as the national network will remain autonomous of ACE, but develop cooperation wherever feasible. One possibility is also that SASNET root-node moves into the premises of ACE, which would facilitate co-operation.

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg presented the background to the discussions with ACE. SASNET should not expect to receive financial support from Sida forever, but must plan for a life thereafter. A coming together of SASNET and ACE would also mean the creation of a truly Asian Studies centre in Lund. Lund University is positive towards such a merger, and a meeting will be held on 15 September. Boel Billgren pointed out that there are two aspects to this matter. On the one hand it relates to cooperation and bringing together research and courses on South East Asia and South Asia, on the other hand the actual merger of SASNET with ACE. Regarding the latter it should be emphasized that SASNET has a national mission covering all disciplines, it was created as part of the Swedish government's Asia Strategy, but also ACE has partly a national mission (for social sciences and humanities).

Rajni Hatti-Kaul wondered whether a merger would mean more money for research, and Staffan Lindberg replied to this affirmatively as SASNET would then become part of a strong Asia institute. Staffan however emphasized SASNET's unique features, which must remain and could even turn out to have a fruitful influence on ACE, e.g. our networking and multi-disciplinary approach including medicine and natural sciences,

Decision: The board expressed its support for the ongoing ambitions to draw SASNET and ACE closer, and make some long-term agreement, but still continue along the same lines as before. SASNET should remain a national Swedish network even if it should move away from the International Office, where it is now located, and become physically integrated with ACE,

9. Indo-European Think Tanks Networks on Research and Policy

Suggestion: We have made a suggestion to the Consultant Mr. Eric Tourrés (See, Enclosure 4)

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg informed about the document he had prepared after Mr Tourrés's visit to Lund in June, and that he had got no feed-back after that. Bo Lindblad urged for extreme caution, and warned that SASNET should avoid getting involved with politics, but instead fully concentrate on research and education programmes.

10. Need to update Director/Coordinator position to half time 2004 and onwards.

Suggestion: The experiment with having the Director/Coordinator work only 33 % during 2003 has not yielded goods results. The working time of the Director/Coordinator has been roughly 50 %, including work with planning the EASAS Conference in 2004. It is therefore recommended that the director's position be upgraded to 50 % from 2004 onwards. During 2004 this means an increased salary expense with ca 65 000, and in 2005 and 2006, double that amount.

Discussion: Everybody agreed upon the necessity of updating the co-ordinator's position to 50 %. To a question by Rajni Hatti-Kaul on whether the budget permits such an upgrading Staffan Lindberg explained that the principle followed so far has been that not more than half of SASNET's budget should go to the root node (including salaries) and the rest be used externally, distributed as planning grants. It was in order to follow this principle that the coordinator's position was reduced to a 33 % employment in 2003.

Bo Lindblad strongly objected to this argument and said it is extremely important to have the coordinator work at least 50 %. He pledged for a realistic approach, and if Staffan has doubts on this the board must decide for him, and decide about the 50/50 principle if necessary.

Decision: The board decided to upgrade the director/coordinator's position to 50 % from 2004.

11. Activities planned during August – December2003:

Suggestions:

1. Start of the new Masters course at Lund and new undergraduate course at Österlen's folk high school
2. Development of the website by bringing in more dynamic programming
3. Sida seminar on the future in South Asia, 28 August

4. Participate in the launching of a new book "Political Visions and Social Realities in Contemporary South India" edited by Lars Berge and Gunnel Cederlöf. Dalarna University, on 5 September
5. Start of Work Report Series
6. New board, suggestion to the Vice Chancellor of Lund University
7. Seminars in Karlstad and Göteborg, suggested dates 24 and 25 September
8. Contact journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan in November
9. Investigate if it is possible to start more undergraduate courses on South Asia at othe folk high schools, for example, Ljungskile, Biskops Arnö, Lidingö. If possible, find suitable academic partners for this
10. Continued work planning the EASAS Conference at Lund in July 2004

Decision: The board wished good luck to Staffan and Lars in all their planned activities, that the board approves of.

12. Date for the board meeting in January 2004

Decision: The next board meeting will take place on Tuesday 3 February 2004.

13. Any other business

Birgitta Göransson informed about the preparation for the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India, 16–21 January, 2004. More than 30 000 participants are expected, and a web page has been developed presenting the extensive programme at WSF, www.wsfindia.org.

14. A vote of thanks to all board members for their work in the board of SASNET during 2001 – 2003

Lund, 26 August 2003

...**Lars Eklund**.....
Lars Eklund, secretary

...**Boel Billgren**.....
Boel Billgren, chairman

Verified by:

...**Olle Qvarnström**
Olle Qvarnström