

# Minutes from the SASNET Board meeting

## August 24, 2004, 13.00-17.00

**Venue:** Hanlin Hall, House Alfa 1, Scheelevägen 15B, Ideon, Lund

**Members present:** Björn Hettne, Camilla Orjuela, Gunnel Cederlöf, Jan Essner, Pamela Price, Neil Webster, Boel Billgren, Jan Magnusson and Rajni Hatti Kaul  
Others: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

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

*Decision:* Björn Hettne was elected to chair the meeting, Lars Eklund to be its secretary, and Jan Magnusson to verify the minutes.

### 2. Agenda for the meeting, additional points

Pamela Price announced that she wanted to discuss NOFSA-Net during point 13 (any other business). The agenda was otherwise agreed upon without any changes.

### 3. SASNET work report: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

Work report for 2003, sent out during March 2004. *Enclosure 1.*  
Minutes from the previous board meeting in February 2004:  
<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/board0401.pdf>

#### Overall report, work during spring and summer 2004

- a. Internet gateway, oral report by Lars Eklund
- b. Six more Newsletters: see, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnet.html#newsletters>
- c. Report from the Contact journey to Pakistan and Kabul. See:  
<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/journeytwo.html>
- d. Report from the 18<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, 6-9 July 2004. See:  
Conference home page: <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/EASAS18.html>  
Daily reporting: <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/EASAS18report1.html> and ensuing reports  
Diary written by William Radice: <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/conferencediary.pdf>  
'Much ado', but about something: Notes by Staffan Lindberg, in Swedish. See *Enclosure 2 and Enclosure 3*  
Thankful conference participants, *Enclosure 4*
- e. Other activities
  - New Swedish Policy in relation to India (see below under point 7 and 8 below)
  - PhD programme for students from Pakistan, progress report by Bo Lindblad

- ÖRSA – an agreement has been reached and the official inauguration of the network will take place on 14 September at Copenhagen University, see *Enclosure 5*, see also <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/ornast.html>
- India/South Asia undergraduate 1-year course at Österlen's folk high school, oral report by Staffan Lindberg
- Masters courses at Uppsala and Lund, oral reports by Gunnel Cederlöf and Jan Magnusson on the situation just before the start of the second year.
- NASA under revival – a conference will be arranged in 2005 in Aarhus by Lars Kjaerholm (<http://www.hindu.dk> ). Information by Staffan Lindberg.
- Other things

*Discussion:* The board commended through its chairman Björn Hettne the work that SASNET has carried out during the past year, and especially the successful realization of the 18<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies in Lund. The conference organisers were thanked for their achievements that put Lund and Sweden on the World map of South Asian studies. Pamela Price added that she feels proud being associated with SASNET.

After presentations by Gunnel Cederlöf and Jan Magnusson about the Masters courses in Uppsala and Lund Camilla Orjuela gave complimentary information about the status of South Asian studies at Göteborg University (GU). The Centre for Asian Studies is active and will start a 10 credits course on "Contemporary South Asia" in the Spring 2005. Contacts are planned to be made with Ljungskile folk high school, to find out whether they would be interested in a similar collaboration with GU as Lund University has with Österlen folk high school. As Ljungskile already runs successful courses related to India the interest for the GU proposal might be limited. Staffan Lindberg advised that contacts should be made with other folk high school in the region as well.

SASNET's involvement in courses led to a discussion about the controversial debate whether Swedish universities should introduce tuition fees for foreign students. Several universities have raised the issue and a shift in the official policy is to be expected. Neil Webster informed about the situation in the United Kingdom since the British government introduced a fee system in the 1980's.

Björn Hettne and Boel Billgren urged the SASNET board to initiate a serious discussion on the issue, to prepare a strategy and let be publicly known.

*Decision:* The board decided that SASNET should explore the issue whether foreign students should be charged a fee or not at Swedish universities. This should best be done in collaboration with the International Office at Lund University.

#### **4. Revised budget for 2004, including the budget for the 18<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, 6-9 July 2004**

*Suggestion:* The conference was more expensive than we originally thought, see *Enclosure 6*: Reasons for the higher costs: Advanced technical equipment, rent of venues, and travel costs. We have received generous funding from Sida, Riksbanken, Crafoord, Norges Forskningsråd and Lund University, but still need to supplement that funding. It is suggested that we cover the missing amount by reducing the amount to be distributed as travel grants this year. The amount available

for Planning grants will then be 580 000 as compared to the 841 000 budgeted in February 2004. For the previous decision to allow this transfer see point 5 in the Minutes of the February 3 Board meeting. For the new overall budget, see *Enclosure 7*.

*Decision:* The board approved to supplement the conference budget as suggested

## 5. Distribution of Planning Grants

*Suggestion:* See *Enclosure 8*: List of applicants. Evaluation made by the Reference group became available at the meeting.

*Discussion:* The reference group, consisting of Pamela Price, Neil Webster and Malin Åkerblom, met the same morning and its decisions were presented at the board meeting. The reference group selected ten projects/programmes out of the 24 applications.

Björn Hettne stressed the importance of following up of the projects that have received planning grants since 2001. Staffan Lindberg said that such a follow up is presently carried out, and that out of the 40 projects that have been approved so far a large number have resulted in full-fledged projects.

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

### **Planning grants for continued research networking programmes**

- **Baboo Nair**, Department of Applied Nutrition and Food Chemistry, Lund Institute of Technology, Lund University: "Networking grant for further development and strengthening of the SASNETWORK on fermented foods, public health and social well-being formed in Nov-2003 to increase its sustainability." The committee decided to fund the project with 70 000 SEK
- **Lars Åke Persson**, 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 30 000 SEK

### **Planning grants for research programmes/projects:**

- **Joyanto Routh**, Department of Geology and Geochemistry, Stockholm University: "Environmental and long-term pitfalls of human induced changes in lake ecosystems: A case study of the Kumaun Lakes in NE India." The committee decided to fund the project with 65 000 SEK
- **Aida Aragão-Lagergren**, Department of Social and Economic Geography, Uppsala University: "Children 'left behind'. A study on children of migrant women in Sri Lanka." The committee decided to fund the project with 75 000 SEK
- **Mirja Juntunen**, Department of Oriental Languages, Stockholm University: "The Buddhist-Modernist Thinker Rahul Sankrtyayan and his Influence on Contemporary Indian Writing." The committee decided to fund the project with 65 000 SEK

- **Amir Mansory**, Institute of International Education, Stockholm University: Opportunities and Obstacles for Girls' Education in Rural Afghanistan a project including capacity development of Afghan Educators." The committee decided to fund the project with 63 000 SEK

#### **Planning grants for educational projects:**

- **Gunnel Cederlöf**, Department of History and Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University: "Environmental History as an Emerging Field of Education and Research." The committee decided to fund the project with 75 000 SEK
- **Stellan Vinthagen**, Department of Peace and Development Research- Padrigu, Göteborg University: "Padrigu – Madras University collaborative education project to develop 'Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies' in India." The committee decided to fund the project with 75 000 SEK
- **Nils-Axel Mörner**, Paleogeophysics & Geodynamics, Stockholm University: "Research and Education in the Maldives regarding sea level changes, island evolution and reef ecology." The committee decided to fund the project with 25 000 SEK
- **Peter Schalk**, Department of History of Religions, Uppsala University: "Introduction of Modern Research Methods and Theories within the field of humanities in the University of Yalppanam." The committee decided to fund the project with 50 000 SEK

*Remark:* Gunnel Cederlöf did not participate in the decision regarding planning grants.

## **6. The future of SASNET and building a centre for South Asian Studies in Sweden and the Nordic countries**

*Background:* In its Research Policy Proposal to the Swedish Government in the Fall 2004, the Foreign Ministry suggested under the heading 'Asienforskning': 'Utöver ett generellt stärkande av Asienforskningen kan i dagsläget tre områden identifieras där behov föreligger för ytterligare utbyggda forskningsinsatser: 1) det finns idag inte något svenskt centrum för forskning om Sydasien – ett sådant skulle kunna utvecklas med utgångspunkt i det virtuella nätverket SASNET (Swedish South Asian Studies Network) och kopplas till ett existerande centrum för Öst- och Sydostasien.' (The other two points concern co-operation with Chinese researchers and increased co-operation with Muslim universities in Asia.) For the full text, see *Enclosure 9* (the proposal will be distributed during the board meeting). The proposal has now been sent to the Ministry of Education for further elaboration and decision.

NIAS in Copenhagen is under reconstruction. A consortium consisting of Copenhagen University (50 %), Copenhagen Business School (25 %) and Lund University (25 %) is taking over the institute, which has continued basic funding from the Nordic Council until 2007. Other universities in the Nordic countries have been invited to become members of the consortium. NIAS will broaden its scope of activities to include higher education and one plan is to go ahead with a Nordic

Research School in Asian Studies. South Asia is to be included in the activities, but the main focus is still on East and SouthEast Asia. At a big meeting on the future of NIAS in June this year, there was hardly anyone with research interests in South Asia present.

*Suggestion:* It is suggested that the root node, board members and SASNET partners try to get involved in the process as much as possible. A high priority should be given to the continuation of the SASNET principles of networking and community building. We believe that an enlightened interest in South Asia research is best served by a flexible process of funding and organisation. We should aim at building and financing strong and focussed research programmes and environments in many of our universities. For this entrepreneurship and networking in the form of information sharing and community building are key factors.

*Discussion:* A lively discussion took place about the future for SASNET. Pamela Price pointed out the difficulty in developing a network that keeps on being inclusive without creating factions. Björn Hettne emphasized the advantages of a network in relation to a Centre that automatically favours one place with resources. Neil Webster commended the way SASNET has worked, being truly inclusive and able to embrace many different organisations. Regarding the future organisation of SASNET Gunnel Cederlöf stressed the need of formulating alternatives to a centre. Björn Hettne focused on the necessity to secure long-term funding for SASNET, for a period of at least 10 years ahead. Boel Billgren added that networks like SASNET is a phenomenon belonging to the spirit of the time. EU favours networks, and the Swedish government will probably do the same.

The board went over to a discussion about the future of NIAS. There were different opinions about the role NIAS could play in South Asia research. Pamela Price pointed out that NIAS and the possibilities it offers is important for researchers in Norway and Finland. Neil Webster said it would be a shame if NIAS continues to stick to South-East and East Asia only, as NIAS in itself is a potentially good resource base. Staffan Lindberg asked the board whether SASNET should make an effort to convince NIAS to include South Asia. The board was positive towards this.

*Decisions:* The board decided that the principles behind SASNET should be stressed in both cases; that SASNET shall continue as a network; and that NIAS should be persuaded to include South Asia.

## **7. A new Swedish co-operation policy for India – involving SASNET partners in this work**

Background: there has been a series of meetings during the spring of 2004. For reports see: <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/indobuss04.html> and <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/indiameet0404.html>  
Sida is now working out a new policy for co-operation with India.

*Suggestion:* SASNET is actively taking part in the Reference group and interacting with the concerned persons at the Foreign Ministry and Sida. We will continue this work and try to contribute to a good policy.

*Discussion:* Jan Essner presented the history behind the new cooperation policy. For many years there was a lack of interaction between different partners, but now the Swedish government is working on a new strategy in which Sida is actively involved. New things are developing regarding Indo-Swedish relations that include a broader cooperation with the private sector, and with NGO's. A dialogue is going on with Swedish researchers, and SASNET has an important role to play.

*Decisions:* The board approved continued interacting with concerned persons at the Foreign Ministry and Sida, in order to contribute to a good policy.

## **8. Going with state secretary Sven-Eric Söder to India in the last week of October 2004**

*Suggestion:* the purpose of the visit is to visit Delhi for general talks, Mumbai to promote co-operation between Bollywood and Trollywood, and Bangalore for co-operation in the fields of corporate security/e-government and sustainable cities. In Delhi one of the important topics will be research co-operation and student exchange.

It is suggested that SASNET participates in the journey and interacts with the Ministry of Human Resource Development as well as relevant research councils and academies. If possible this could also serve the interest of the Nordic Centre. For a background, see:

<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/delhireport.html>

The Foreign Ministry has approved of this participation.

*Discussion:* Staffan Lindberg informed that he will take part in the journey to Delhi. He also told the board about the initiative taken by KTH in Stockholm to establish an Indian Centre. Hopefully this could also include other Swedish schools of Technology.

*Decisions:* The board approved SASNET's participation in the journey.

## **9. Terms of References for the evaluation of SASNET during the fall of 2004**

*Suggestion:* See *Enclosure 10*: Terms of Reference for evaluation of SASNET. After the board has decided on this, it will be sent to Sida/SAREC and Lund University for a final decision and the process will start in September 2004.

*Discussion:* The discussion of the board mainly focused on the names suggested to be included in the evaluation group. Critical voices were raised against those suggested, and new names came up. Gunnel Cederlöf suggested Barbara Harriss-White from Oxford. Camilla Orjuela added that an important aspect is that those chosen should be able to work as a team. Jan Magnusson commented that two of the persons suggested were from India and that would make us vulnerable to criticism that SASNET has an India bias. Björn Hettne immediately suggested Naila

Kabeer from Bangladesh, now at Padrigu. Rajni Hatti Kaul finally said it is important that we pick researchers who have actually used the network.

Jan Magnusson came with the only overall comment to the suggested Terms of Reference, wondering whether it might be too ambitious. Jan Essner commented that it is important to let SAREC have a look and give its recommendations as soon as possible.

Pamela Price specifically asked that those researchers who unsuccessfully have applied for SASNET planning grants during the past years should be questioned what they think of SASNET. Staffan Lindberg replied that this is one thing that will be considered.

*Decisions:* The board approved of the suggested terms of references for the evaluation, including the self-evaluation phase. It was decided to suggest that Barbara Harriss-White, Ghanshyam Shah and Lennart Wohlgemut should be members of the external evaluation team. Naila Kabeer to be kept in reserve. The suggested Terms of Reference should be sent to Sida/SAREC and Lund University for a final decision.

## **10. 2005 Application to Lund University and Sida SAREC for funds during 2006 – 2008**

*Suggestion:* Our plan is to ask for an additional one million SEK, 25 % from Lund University and 75 % from Sida/SAREC. The total budget for SASNET would then be 3.2 million SEK. This will suffice to keep the current activities going with 50 % devoted to Planning Grants and an annual workshop/conference.

*Discussion:* Staffan Lindberg said that is a difficult time to ask for more money from Lund University, as LU has just recently published news about a 300 Million SEK expected deficit this year, and downsizings are expected in many faculties. Pamela Price however stressed the need for a transition strategy.

*Decisions:* The board approved the plan to ask for additional funds from Lund University and Sida/SAREC for the period 2006-08.

## **11. Contact journey to Nepal, Bhutan and western India during 2005**

*Suggestion:* We plan to undertake a contact journey to Bhutan, Nepal, Ahmedabad-Mumbai and Bangalore during January-February 2005. The journey will be organised in the same way as the two previous contact journeys, meeting established partners and new partners at important centres for research and higher education.

*Discussion:* Several critical voices were raised against the plans. The extremely severe security situation in Nepal at the moment does not augur well for a contact journey there. Besides, the uncertainty regarding SASNET's economy for next year could, as Staffan Lindberg himself pointed out, mean that such a journey might cost

too much in relation to the budget to be presented, and the journey therefore might be cancelled or postponed.

Gunnel Cederlöf asked for a strategy for the choices of the specific destinations given in the plan, adding that the travel route seemed to be planned a bit ad hoc. Other members of the board agreed and argued that it is important that a contact journey is well planned and include visits to departments and institutions of many different kinds.

*Decision:* The board did not approve of a contact journey to Nepal/Bhutan/India in early 2005. Detailed plans for such a journey must be presented and get approval at the next board meeting.

## **12. Other root node activities during the rest of 2004 and 2005**

*Suggestion:* it is suggested that we concentrate on the evaluation of SASNET, the application for new funding, the contact journey, and that we continue the established process of distribution of planning grants, information sharing and community building.

Since we have no money for a separate workshop, it is suggested that we organise a SASNET workshop with senior researchers and PhD candidates at the NASA conference during the second half of 2005. The main theme could be increased co-operation between the social sciences and humanities on the one hand and medicine, technical and natural sciences.

*Discussion:* The board became enthusiastic over the suggested increased co-operation between the social sciences and humanities and medicine, technical and natural sciences, and the proposal for the 2005 workshop to be held in Århus in Denmark. Several names of persons to invite were presented.

*Decision:* The board decided to go ahead with the suggested workshop, and to establish more meeting points between the social sciences and humanities on the one hand and medicine, technical and natural sciences on the other.

## **13. Date for the next board meeting**

The next board meeting should be held on Tuesday 15 February 2005.

## **13. Any other business**

*Discussion:* Pamela Price raised the issue of NOFSA-Net that was turned from a Norwegian into a Nordic Forum for South Asian Studies last year. Unfortunately however, Pamela commented, the interest from people outside Norway has not been very big. She asked the members of the board to contribute more to the web-based network.



*Decision:* The board decided that an appeal should be sent out through SASNET about using NOFSA-Net.

Lund, 9 September 2004

*Lars Eklund*

Lars Eklund, secretary

*Björn Hettne*

Björn Hettne, chairman

Verified by:

*Jan Magnusson*

Jan Magnusson