

SASNET

Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Minutes from the Board meeting 15 February, 2005, 13.00-17.00

Venue: Conference room, Centre for East- and South-East Asian Studies,
House Alfa 1, Scheelevägen 15 D, Ideon, Lund

Members present: Boel Billgren, Jan.Magnusson, Pamela Price, Rajni Hatti Kaul,
Bo Lindblad, Kjell Härenstam, Camilla Orjuela, Jan Essner, and Birgitta Göranson.

Others: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

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

Decision: Rajni Hatti Kaul was elected to chair the meeting, Lars Eklund to be the secretary, and Boel Billgren to verify the minutes.

2. Agenda for the meeting, additional points

Bo Lindblad announced that he wanted to discuss the proposed fees for foreign students to Swedish universities during point 11 (any other business), and Staffan Lindberg that the issue of deciding about the next board meeting should also be taken up during the same point. The agenda was otherwise agreed upon without any changes.

3. SASNET work report: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

Minutes from the previous board meeting in August 2004:

<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/board0402.pdf>

Overall report, work during fall 2004

- a. Internet gateway, Lars Eklund presented a report, not previously sent out to the board. <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/gatewayreport2005.pdf>
- b. Six more Newsletters produced during the period August 2004- January 2005: see, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnet.html#newsletters>
- c. Full Report from the 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, 6-9 July 2004, available on the Conference home page: <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/EASAS18.html>

Staffan Lindberg reported about the next ECMSAS conference to be held in

Leiden in 2006. Lars Eklund is a member of the Academic Advisory Committee in order to share experiences from the Lund conference. Staffan Lindberg visited Leiden in October 2004 and discussed with the new conference organisers.

- d. Evaluation of SASNET 2005. **Enclosure 1**, Progress report. Staffan Lindberg added that the members of the external evaluation group were also approved by Sida, namely Lennart Wohlgemut, Director, Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala; Gyanshyam Shah, Professor of Political science, Ahmedabad, India; and Carla Risseuw, Professor of Intercultural Gender Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Leiden, The Netherlands.
- e. Other activities were presented:
 - NIAS, New Centenary Research School and a special Mari Curie Programme for South Asia. **Enclosure 2**: SARTrain Application
Pamela Price reported on the plans to strengthen South Asian studies on PhD level in the Scandinavian countries through SARTrain, with support from the reorganised Nordic Institute for Asian Studies in Copenhagen. The programme that has a fairly good chance of securing funding from the European Commission, includes funding of 12 PhD candidates at different universities in Scandinavia. SASNET's Director Staffan Lindberg is a member of the working group behind the research school application.
 - PhD programme for students from Pakistan, oral progress report by Bo Lindblad. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 1 November 2004 between the Pakistani Higher Education Commission and the Swedish Institute (SI). The agreement means that Pakistan will send about 200 students annually to Sweden for Masters and PhD studies, financed by the Pakistan government. SASNET has been involved in the preparations for launching this programme, but it is now a matter for SI to finalise the scholarship programme procedures, but so far no progress has been made. Bo Lindblad, Rajni Hatti Kaul, Malin Åkerblom and Staffan Lindberg are members of an advisory group.
 - ÖRNAST – an official inauguration of the network took place on 14 September at Copenhagen University, and the work is now followed up, see <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 programmes at Uppsala and Lund. An oral report on the Lund Masters programme in Asian studies was given by Jan Magnusson, but as Gunnel Cederlöf could not come to the meeting no similar report was given on the Uppsala programme.
 - NASA under revival – Staffan Lindberg informed about the conference to be arranged 3-5 June 2005 in Aarhus. <http://www.hum.au.dk/etno/nasa05.htm>
 - Other things. Jan Essner presented Sida's coming new India programme that probably will be approved by the Swedish government in the end of February. He explained that in the future Sida's role will diminish, and the role of its partners will increase. Research is an area of priority in the programme, especially areas such as innovation, biotechnology, IT and health (HIV/aids).

Discussion: The board was very interested in discussing and commenting the various activities and projects presented.

Rajni Hatti Kaul wanted representation from the natural sciences or medicine in the external evaluation group to evaluate SASNET. Staffan Lindberg explained that it had not been possible to find such a person.

Regarding the Pakistani PhD scholarship programme Boel Billgren asked whether it will be possible to issue double degrees, both from a Swedish university and the Pakistani home university. Bo Lindblad replied that Aga Khan University and Karolinska Institutet already practise this system, but it is all up to the individual universities to decide.

Jan Magnusson described the problem regarding applications for the Masters programme in Asian studies, that many of those accepted for the programme never turns up. Last year 120 students were admitted, but only 50 actually started the courses in September 2004.

Kjell Härenstam took an opportunity to present the Masters programme in Comparative Religion and Cultural Geography that Karlstad University is launching. The programme includes three months stay at Karlstad University's Study Center in Varanasi.

Jan Essners's presentation of the new India programme was followed by many positive remarks. Bo Lindblad said it was heartening to read that more money should be spent on research on health issues, and he wished that Sweden should not only focus on India but widen the focus to the entire region of South Asia. Jan Essner commented that Sida is very much keen to see more research collaboration with South Asia, and that lay behind the decision the Swedish government's initiative to set up SASNET. Now India has become a major centre of interest, but SASNET may very well keep on promoting interest for the entire region.

Several members of the board voiced ideas on how to further promote collaboration within research and education between Sweden and South Asia, and how to make SASNET known.

Kjell Härenstam referred to the initiatives taken by Karlstad University since 1987; 300–400 students have done field studies in Varanasi, and the collaboration has resulted in two PhD theses.

Rajni Hatti Kaul stressed the importance that South Asian students must see benefits in Scandinavia, otherwise they will choose other destinations. We must make it attractive to study at our institutions.

Pamela Price said that the contact journeys to South Asia that Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund made in 2002 and 2003 had been a way of bringing together researchers, and spreading information that SASNET exists.

4. Budget for 2005

Suggestion: The suggested budget is found in **Enclosure 3**, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/budget05.pdf>.

Financial report for 2004 is found in **Enclosure 4**. <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/utfall04.pdf>

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg presented the financial report for 2004 that was amazingly close to the budget set up for the year, including incomes and costs for the ECMSAS conference. The net result was a surplus of SEK 50 000, to be put into the budget for 2005.

He then presented the new budget with a turnover of SEK 2 350 000, out of which 40 p.c. was reserved for SASNET Planning grants. The budget also included SEK 75 000 for a contact journey to Nepal, Bhutan and India; and a contribution of SEK 25 000 to the NASA conference in Aarhus.

Bo Lindblad reacted against the idea of only setting aside 40 p.c. of the budget for planning grants, instead of the 50 p.c. it should be in his opinion. Other board members agreed that money for planning grants should be prioritized.

Staffan Lindberg explained that the only solution to realise this would be by cutting other expenses –skipping the support for the NASA conference, making the contact journey to South Asia cheaper or decreasing his work time as SASNET Director (and thereby reducing wage costs).

Arguments were raised that the proposed contact journey should be postponed, not only because of economic reasons but also due to the tense political situation at the moment in Nepal. Bo Lindblad suggested that the journey should be made in 2006 instead, and then also include a visit to Bangladesh.

Rajni Hatti Kaul gave another suggestion that money for the contact journey should be applied for as a planning grant from SASNET itself.

No consensus could be reached on how to fulfil the ambition to increase means for planning grants through budgetary reallocation. Jan Essner therefore suggested that the board should only decide that SEK 1 Million should be allocated for planning grants, and then let Staffan Lindberg adjust other posts in the budget accordingly.

Decision: SASNET should reserve half of its budget for distribution of planning grants. The planned contact journey to South Asia should be accommodated within a revised budget.

5. Distribution of Planning Grants

*Suggestion; **Enclosure 5:*** List of applicants. Evaluation made by the Reference group, consisting of Pamela Price, Neil Webster and Malin Åkerblom, were available at the meeting.

Discussion: The reference group had met the same morning, except Neil Webster who was absent. Its decisions were presented at the board meeting. The reference group had selected eight projects/programmes out of the 22 applications.

Rajni Hatti Kaul, Staffan Lindberg and Jan Magnusson had to go out during the discussion, as they were either related to one of the applicants or involved in some of the projects seeking funding. Pamela Price took over as chairman of the meeting during this point.

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

Planning grants for continued research programmes

- Christer Norström, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University: "Livelihood strategies among forest-related tribals in South India: contextual analysis of local livelihood strategies; a coming book from South India." The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 65 000

Planning grants for research programmes/projects:

- Styrbjörn Alström, Department of Linguistics and Philology, Uppsala University: "The 20th Century Indian agriculture as perceived in the oral literary tradition of a drought-prone semi-desert region with a unique ancient folklore culture – an interdisciplinary approach."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 50 000

- Göran Djurfeldt and Staffan Lindberg, Department of Sociology, Lund University: "Networking with South Asian Sociologists." The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 78 000

- Anders Gustafsson and Farzeen Tanwir, Department of Periodontology, Institute of Odontology, Karolinska Institutet Medical University, Stockholm: "Oral health and treatment needs in an adult population of an underprivileged community in Karachi, Pakistan." The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 27 000

- Baboo Nair, Department of Applied Nutrition and Food Chemistry, Lund Institute of Technology, Lund University: "Planning grant for organising a workshop on sustainable utilisation of tropical plant biomass as a raw material in an integrated agro-food process industry."

The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 50 000

- Torkel Wadström, Division of Bacteriology, Department of Medical Microbiology, Dermatology and Infection, Lund University: "Effects of environmental stress on the production of cell surface proteins and of regulatory and virulence genes by gastrointestinal pathogens (*Helicobacter* species) and by Lactic Acid Bacteria with relevance for the pathogenesis of chronic infections as well as for applications in the food industry." The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 60 000

Planning grants for educational programmes/projects

- Rupesh Kumar, Division of Industrial Design, Department of Human Work Sciences, Luleå University of Technology: "To establish Master Program in Ergonomics at Fatima Jinnah Women University in Islamabad, Pakistan and Developing Ergonomics Network for the reduction of the occupational injuries in Pakistan." The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 50 000

- Jan Magnusson, Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University: "Haellquist Book Donation Project." The committee decided to fund the project with SEK 70 000

6. Self evaluation of SASNET

Suggestion: In January 2005 a questionnaire was sent out to the members of the board, present as well as old ones, and also to the members of the South Asian reference group. Staffan Lindberg then made a summary of the answers given. This summary was sent out to the board before the meeting. **Enclosure 6.**

A follow up report of results from the Planning Grants distributed since August 2001, had also been prepared, by Lars Eklund:

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

Discussion: Most of the board members had delivered extensive comments in their written answers to the questionnaire, and referred to these. Staffan Lindberg asked the board to come up with additional thoughts at the meeting. He will summarize these and compile a report for the evaluation team in May.

The general mood was by and large positive towards the achievements of SASNET, both regarding networking/community building, and supporting new research and educational projects through planning grants. Everybody also praised the Internet Gateway.

Jan Essner added that from Sida's point of view SASNET plays an important role in promoting collaboration between Sweden and South Asia.

Camilla Orjeula commented on the contact journeys made to South Asia, that Staffan's and Lars' visit to Sri Lanka in 2002 led to positive spin-off effects as her department in Göteborg came into contact with researchers at Peradeniya University. It later resulted into a sandwich PhD programme.

Birgitta Göransson, representing the NGO sector, called the web site a phenomenal tool to find people and resources on South Asian studies.

Boel Billgren from Lund University's International Office focused on the efficiency and transparency characterizing SASNET's work.

Bo Lindblad reiterated that SASNET's focus should be on planning grants and intercurricular activities. He suggested that a workshop should be arranged, inviting all previous recipients of planning grants, including their South Asian collaborators. Other participants objected that such a workshop would be immensely expensive to hold, but Bo Lindblad then came up with the idea that it might as well be organised as a virtual workshop.

Rajni Hatti Kaul also focused on the importance that multidisciplinary should play, and cross boundary projects, for example in research on HIV/Aids or environmental issues. She raised the issue of what will happen to SASNET in the future. How to retain the activities, and where to get sufficient funding?

7. 2005 Application to Lund University and Sida/SAREC for funds during 2006 – 2008

*Suggestion: **Enclosure 7.*** 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 3.25 million SEK. This will suffice to keep the current activities going with 1 million devoted to Planning Grants and 150 000 to an annual workshop/conference, etc.

Discussion: Staffan Lindberg indicated that Lund University is willing to increase its funding for SASNET to SEK 800 000/year. Sida has so far had a policy of giving funds in relation to Lund University's share, and therefore we should apply for SEK 2,4 million from Sida.

The fact that planning grants, according to the proposed budget, would not get more than 43 p.c. of the total annual budget was taken up. Arguments were raised that the ambition to keep planning grants at a 50 p.c. level should be kept, and other points in

the budget should be cut. The proposal to introduce two new part-time (25 p.c.) positions as Editor and Study director, met with criticism.

Decision: Staffan Lindberg should work out a new budget and pass it on to the board members for an advisory round before submitting the final applications to Lund University and Sida/SAREC. Half the budget should be devoted to planning grants.

8. Contact journey to Nepal, Bhutan and India during 2005

Suggestion: We plan to undertake a contact journey to Bhutan, Nepal, Ahmedabad-Mumbai and Bangalore during the fall of 2005. **See Enclosure 8.** We would like to plan this journey during the spring.

Discussion: The issue had already been discussed under the budget discussion, point 4. Lars Eklund pleaded for the importance of making the journey.

Decisions: The board approved the journey on condition that it can be accommodated within a revised budget.

9. Other root node activities during 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 in Aarhus in June 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 on the other hand. Possibly with HIV/Aids as a rallying point.

Discussion: The issue had been thoroughly discussed already under point 3.

10. New members of SASNET's reference group

Suggestion: Dr. Bipin Adhikari has left Nepal for consultancy work and is no longer in direct touch with what is going on inside the country. We suggest that he should be replaced by Dr. Tek Nath Dhakal, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. Prof. R. Indira, University of Mysore has not kept in touch with us at all. We suggest that she is replaced by Prof. Brij Thanka, Dept. of History, Delhi University. CVs for both persons attached in **Enclosure 9.**

Discussion: A discussion was held regarding Prof. Thanka's area of research. Arguments were raised that a member of SASNET's South Asian reference group should be a person personally involved in studies on South Asia, and not China and

Japan as in the case of Prof. Thanka. Suggestions were given on other possible candidates at Indian universities.

Decision: Dr. Tek Nath Dhakal was accepted as a member of the reference group. Search for another person from India should go on.

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

Bo Lindblad had announced that he wanted to discuss the proposed fees for foreign students at Swedish universities.

He informed about the official enquiry that the Swedish government is currently undertaking, and that may result in a final report later this year. Probably it will include recommendations that Swedish universities should start charging fees from non-European students. Bo Lindblad fears that this might result in that only very rich people from the Third World will afford to send students here. The only way to alleviate this situation would be that Sida gets more money to fund stipend programmes. Bo Lindblad wondered whether SASNET should approach the person working on the official report, Mr Erland Ringborg. The board agreed to this idea.

As the issue of deciding about the next board meeting was not put on the agenda it had to be discussed under this point.

Decision: The next board meeting should be held on Tuesday 30 August 2005.

Lund, 24 March 2005

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Lars Eklund, secretary

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Björn Hettne, chairman

Verified by:

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Boel Billgren