

SASNET

Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Minutes from Board meeting 29 January 2007, 13.15-17.00

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

Members participant: Gunnel Cederlöf, Pernille Gooch, Catarina Kinnvall, Jan Magnusson, Staffan Lindberg, Kristina Myrvold, Cecilia Stålsby Lundborg, Per Hilding, Neil Webster, Arild Engelsen Ruud, and Eva Hägerstrand.

Others: Lars Eklund

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

Gunnel Cederlöf was elected to chair the meeting, and Lars Eklund to be the secretary. Jan Magnusson was elected to verify the minutes.

2. Round of presentation, old and new members

As this was the first meeting of the new board, appointed for the period 2007–09, the members made a short presentation of themselves. (See also **Enclosure 1**)

3. Agenda for the meeting, additional points

No additional points were added to the agenda.

4. Election of Deputy Chairperson for SASNET for the period 2007 – 2009.

Suggestion: Cecilia Stålsby Lundborg was suggested.

Discussion: Gunnel Cederlöf pointed out that the Deputy Chairperson ought to come from a different university than Uppsala or Lund, since they are the home universities of the Chairperson and the Director respectively.

Decision: Cecilia Stålsby Lundborg from Karolinska Institutet was elected as Deputy Chairman of the board.

5. Report from the strategy group

Jan Magnusson and Gunnel Cederlöf reported from the Strategy group's work.

Suggestion:

See the Preliminary report from SASNET's strategy group, written by Jan Magnusson, Gunnel Cederlöf, Bo Lindblad, Rajni Hatti Kaul and Camilla Orjuela (**Enclosure 2**).

A main concern must be to secure funding for future networking when government and research council funding is increasingly given to highly specialised and successful research groups (including Masters and PhD programmes). We also need to discuss our relation to Sida SAREC and other government agencies, to the various partner universities, and to the Nordic Centre in India, NIAS, etc.

Discussion: **Jan Magnusson**, the coordinator of the strategy group, presented ideas and suggestions from the report about the possibilities for SASNET to have a future after 2009, when the current funding period ends. The uncertainty of whether Sida and Lund University will continue to give financial support after 2009 makes it necessary to adapt a sustainable long-term funding strategy. An aim of the strategy group is to convey a visionary concept of SASNET's future to the new Director, who will begin her work in July 2007.

Some of the issues Jan put forward were: How to make SASNET relevant to the government departments and Swedish universities; how to improve the multi-disciplinarity that is still lacking; and what to do with the private sector: should the ambitions be kept or should they be dropped?

Jan also talked about different aspects of SASNET priorities. Whereas the Internet Gateway is so well established even globally that it could possibly continue to operate even if SASNET is terminated, the role of the planning grants needs to be discussed. The success rate has been very high. Until recently SASNET followed the principle that the planning grants should be half of SASNET's budget. A new funding balance might be necessary now. Finally, Jan discussed whether it is necessary to have different strategies for different countries in South Asia. In recent years there has been a marked shift of interest from South Asia to India, and from development issues to business and hi-tech issues.

Gunnel Cederlöf presented a paper summing up thoughts presented in the strategy group's report, about SASNET's future regarding content and aims, funding, and networking in Sweden.

She stressed the need to continue networking, especially within Sweden. This might have an impact on SASNET's priority of travelling to South Asia vs. travelling in Sweden.

Gunnel also suggested more coordination with the Nordic Centre in India (NCI) consortium, to gain from each other's experiences.

Staffan Lindberg commented that besides NCI there are other Nordic initiatives, like NIAS in Copenhagen and NoFSA-Net in Norway, with which SASNET collaborates, but SASNET is still unique in its construction, being a multidisciplinary network connecting hard and soft sciences.

Staffan also pointed out that the discussion should not focus only on the future after 2009, since no concrete information has been given that the funding from Sida will actually come to an end. There is a chance that SASNET may get renewed funding.

Gunnel Cederlöf agreed to this, and said that there is a risk to lose vision if you only talk about funding. Instead SASNET should concentrate on why it is doing what it is doing, and find arguments for why SASNET is useful to Swedish universities.

Arild Engelsen Ruud argued that SASNET must make a choice, whether to make more attempts to become relevant to authorities and business or refocus the ambitions. Especially since the decision-makers seems to care only for India, whereas academic researchers have an interest in the entire South Asia. "If they do not think we are relevant, then we should focus on what we are really good at, namely academic research, to build our strength. In the end it will give good results."

Cecilia Stålsby Lundborg agreed that the focus should be put more on research. One field that SASNET could work on is to develop collaborative research projects with researchers from different fields, e.g between medical researchers and social scientists.

She also suggested that SASNET could organise courses about South Asia for students in other fields.

Neil Webster characterised these ideas about SASNET involving in cross- and multidisciplinary research as a long-term vision for the future, even though he personally thinks that the best way to begin is via connecting researchers and policy implementors. To realise these ambitions SASNET needs continued funding, something that is not certain. Otherwise it is necessary to go back to networking. SASNET must find a role, make itself relevant and market itself in order to find other sources of funding.

Gunnel Cederlöf developed ideas about SASNET playing a key role in building a Swedish network. SASNET should become an *expert partner*, facilitating contacts and speaking out for individual researchers and universities.

Catarina Kinnvall, Per Hilding and Pernille Gooch also contributed to the discussion. Catarina suggested that SASNET should concentrate on collaboration with policy-oriented institutes such as SIPRI. Per told about experiences from Stockholm University and how he and some other researchers formed a local South Asia network a few years ago. Pernille argued that SASNET should concentrate even more on working with students.

The continued discussion focused on what objectives SASNET should concentrate on: To keep on being mainly committed to community building, or to promote South Asia related research and being a resource base for decision-makers. Another discussion theme was whether SASNET should continue to be a Swedish network, or expand its vision and become a Nordic resource, leading to other options for funding, etc.

Neil Webster presented two ideas about how SASNET can work in the coming years. A *resource mapping* should be carried out to identify resources that can be utilised by SASNET in the future. SASNET has to act in a proactive manner to find funding by presenting itself and its resources. The other thing is to create thematic sub-working groups that can facilitate the organisation of workshops etc.

Decision: The board decided to bring the two ideas regarding resource mapping and sub-working groups to the next point on the agenda.

6. Planning of activities during 2007

Suggestion:

It is suggested that the work is concentrated on the transfer of the Directorship. Staffan Lindberg will use part of his time during the second half of 2007 to introduce Anna to the work.

Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund will visit as many of SASNET's partners in Göteborg, Karlstad, Stockholm, Uppsala and other places as possible during the autumn. Besides getting to know the various environments and partners, the meetings can focus on problems in the various Masters programmes offered at the universities, and that recruit students from South Asia. Visits should also be made to Sida's Asia Division, Sida SAREC, the South Asia division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, etc.

Anna Lindberg and Lars Eklund should actively participate in the conference on the Global University, which is supposed to be arranged by the Nordic Centre in India in New Delhi in October 2007. In connection with this they can arrange a workshop with SASNET's South Asia Reference Group on the theme: How to network in South Asian Studies.

During this trip, Lindberg and Eklund can also make a two weeks visit to universities and research institutions in the Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore regions of India (not covered by previous contact journeys). See **Enclosure 6**.

The visits can be followed up during the spring of 2008 with networking in the Nordic Countries and with European partner institutions.

Besides this, the board suggests that the root node with partners become more active in publishing articles of general interest as well as news about new publications, etc. in the Gateway.

Suggested important additional tasks for 2008: Plan and partly finance an interdisciplinary workshop in June 2008 about **Environment in South Asia**, which is co-organised with Uppsala University (Gunnel Cederlöf).

Discussion: Lars presented the plans for a contact journey to South Asia, emphasising that the draft presented only mentions possible institutions and universities to visit. It is uncertain whether the NCI conference in Delhi will be held or not, but even if it is cancelled the plans for a contact journey and a meeting of SASNET's South Asian reference group remains. If the board agrees that the tour should be done, a more thorough planning will be carried out in collaboration with the members of the board.

Lars and Staffan presented the plans for contact journeys to universities in Sweden, starting with visits to Kalmar University and Blekinge Technical University in February-March. When Anna Lindberg joins SASNET an area of priority will also be for her to meet decision-makers in Stockholm.

Gunnel Cederlöf reiterated that priority should be put on consolidating the network within Sweden during 2007. The issues of resource mapping and creating sub-

working groups ought to be dealt with already in the spring, and presented at the next board meeting in August.

Neil Webster commented that working groups have to be driven from below. SASNET's role should not be to create these groups, but to facilitate the creation of them through planning grants (which is possible today). He also suggested that SASNET should institutionalise its research base, and maybe start to sell its knowledge instead of providing everything free through the web site. Regarding resource mapping a key element is to identify possible sources of funding. Some critical voices were raised regarding the usefulness of expensive contact journeys to South Asia, but other members advocated the great importance of personal contacts, especially for the new Director. Neil Webster asked how these trips could be better translated into SASNET research activities.

Jan Magnusson wound up the discussion by suggesting that an advisory working group should be set up in order to assist the Director with ideas. Gunnel Cederlöf and Neil Webster said that no formal decision is needed – if the Director wants to have some assistance he/she is free to ask board members to participate in such an advisory group.

Decision: The board decided that the priority keyword for 2007 should be consolidation to strengthen SASNET's network in Sweden.

The board also approved that a contact journey to India should be carried out in the Fall 2007. The main priority for the tour should be to meet people and make SASNET known, but it should also be a strategically planned journey, pointing to selected universities and core institutions in the region.

7. SASNET work report: Staffan Lindberg and Lars Eklund

Minutes from the previous board meeting 29 August 2006: see [• 29 August 2006](#). Minutes (pdf-file)

Overall report about our work during fall 2006

- a. Staffan reported from SASNET's workshop "The Role of South Asia in the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Sweden" at Karolinska Institutet 28 – 29 November 2006. It was the main activity organised by SASNET in 2006. See <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/workshop06.html>
- b. Four more Newsletters: see, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/sasnet.html#newsletters>
- c. Other activities
 - NIAS, New Centenary Research School, SARTrain, for South Asia, Staffan Lindberg (Doctoral courses in Lund and Uppsala, PhD candidate workshop in Amsterdam in September, etc.)
 - Masters course at Lund, oral report by Staffan Lindberg
 - India/South Asia undergraduate 1-year course at Österlen's folk high school, oral report by Staffan Lindberg
 - Staffan informed about his participation in the "Asian Studies at a Turning Point" conference held at the University of Turku, Finland, 6–7 November 2006, see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/turkuconf06.html>
 - Both Staffan and Lars participated in the 19th ECMSAS conference in Leiden in June 2006. Being the organisers of the previous ECMSAS

conference held in Lund in 2004, they were partly involved in the planning of the Leiden conference. See

<http://www.sasnet.lu.se/leidenconference2006.html>

- d. Financial result for 2006. See **Enclosure 3**: SASNET Utfall 2006. The board approved the well-balanced accounts and put them aside.

8. New Reference Group for the distribution of Planning, Workshop and Guest Lecture Programme Grants

Suggestion:

The old reference group (2001 – 2006) consisted of Pamela Price (Professor of South Asian History, University of Oslo), Neil Webster, (Head of Department of Development Research, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Copenhagen), and Malin Åkerblom (Associate Professor and former Head of the International Science Programme, Uppsala University). The criteria for their evaluating proposals have been the same as for the research council reference groups. Besides, SASNET has looked for involvement in South Asian studies and some distance to the Swedish researchers in SASNET's network. They were experienced senior researchers representing humanities (Norway), social sciences (Denmark), and natural sciences (Uppsala). According to the external evaluation in 2005 this group has been very skilled in predicting the successful outcome of projects.

At the last board meeting in August 2006, we asked each of them to recommend a person to take their place. Here is their suggestion:

Associate Professor **Arild Engelsen Ruud**, South Asian Studies, Institute for Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo (in the process of being promoted to full professor)

Professor **Ewa Wäckelgård**, Institutionen för teknikvetenskaper, International Science Programme (ISP), Uppsala University.

Associate Professor **Jytte Agergaard Larsen**, Department of Geography, University of Copenhagen.

The CVs for these persons had been sent out to the board (**Enclosure 4**).

In the previous board meeting we decided that planning grants should only be distributed once a year, that is, in August each year with a closing date for applications on 15 June. It was also decided that the remuneration should be SEK 7 500 for each of the three members of the reference group.

Decision: The board decided to appoint Arild Engelsen Ruud, Ewa Wäckelgård and Jytte Agergaard Larsen as members of the reference group for the evaluation of proposals for planning, workshop and guest lecture programme grants.

9. Budget for 2007

Suggestion: See **Enclosure 5** for the suggested budget.

Decision: The board approved the budget as it stands.

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

None

11. Date for next board meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Tuesday 28 August 2007.

Lund, 8 February 2007

Lars Eklund

Lars Eklund, secretary

Gunnel Cederlöf

Gunnel Cederlöf, chairman

Verified by:

Jan Magnusson

Jan Magnusson

Enclosures:

- 1 List of board members 2007 – 2009, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/styrelse2007.pdf>
- 2 Thoughts from the strategy group, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/stratreport07.pdf>
- 3 SASNET Utfall 2006 (Excel document), + Comments to SASNET financial outcome 2006 and suggested use of surplus, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/utfall06.pdf>
- 4 CVs for suggested new members of the Reference Groups for Planning grants, etc., <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/refgruppcv.pdf>
- 5 Suggested budget for 2007, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/budget07.pdf>
- 6 Plans for SASNET contact journey 2007, <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/contjour07.pdf>