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SASNET Self-evaluation

2000 - 2004

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Executive summary

A major aim of SASNET is to initiate and promote South Asia related research and higher education in Sweden. This should be done in co-operation with scholars in South Asia and world-wide. All faculties and disciplines should be involved and inter-disciplinary studies should be encouraged.

The SASNET model is an alternative to the practice of a centre formation, where a few scholars from various disciplines come together to create an institution, more or less open and sensitive to changing academic trends. SASNET draws on contemporary modes of scientific production, interaction and advances in information technology. SASNET supports:

- a network and a community of scholars
- an Internet Gateway to South Asian studies
- planning of new research and education projects
- a number of joint programmes and projects involving Swedish, South Asian and other scholars

The ultimate aim is a broad and multi-polar network in which any node may take the initiative and where the root node is interacting with all other nodes on a reciprocal basis and mobilises organisational and financial resources for new programmes and projects.

SASNET's main thrust is to **build a durable network** of South Asian studies scholars in Sweden and in South Asia, the Nordic countries, and the rest of the world. Currently 148 Swedish departments and institutes are nodes in the network (see www.sasnet.lu.se under *Research*). The network is maintained by personal meetings, visits to different research and education environments, including two contact journeys to South Asia, participation in seminars, workshops, and conferences, and through seminars and conferences organised directly by SASNET's root node.

Besides the personal meetings, **SASNET's Internet Gateway** is the most important aspect of networking, facilitating information sharing and communication. It is now visited by at an average of about 40 persons every working day, and is considered one of the best websites for information about South Asian Studies in the world today. It is continuously being improved, expanded, and updated.

The combined effect of SASNET's networking and 'internetting' is its contribution to **community building** in South Asian studies in Sweden, the Nordic countries and globally. A number of joint projects were launched among our partners and more projects are in the planning stage.

SASNET's **planning and networking grants** helped to initiate and stimulate new research and education projects in South Asian studies all over Sweden. Up to 15 February 2005, SASNET distributed a total of 56 grants at a cost of SEK 3 946 000, which is 38 % of SASNET's total budget. The following report lists the outcome of those projects that received grants up to August 2003. It shows a remarkable success rate. Most of the project plans developed into full-fledged projects with institutional funding from various sources.

Concrete examples of our activities include:

At the European level, SASNET contributed to the vitalisation of the European Association of South Asian Studies (EASAS) by hosting the **18th European Conference on Modern South**

Asian Studies in Lund 2004. The conference attracted more than 350 participants from all over the world, with 38 % of the participants from South Asia. At the Nordic level, SASNET contributed to the establishment of the **Nordic Centre in India (NCI)**. NCI now offers assistance to students and researchers wishing to study in India, arranges courses in India and accommodation in New Delhi, and is about to expand its activities. SASNET participated in the consultations on how to carry on the work at the **Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS)** at Copenhagen after its reconstruction in 2004. SASNET took a very active part in planning and promoting a **Nordic Graduate School in South Asian Studies** in co-operation with NIAS and various Nordic partners. SASNET also participated in the revitalisation of NASA, the **Nordic Association of South Asians Studies**, which will hold its next conference in Aarhus in June 2005.

As a result of networking between SASNET's and its partners new education and research programmes related to South Asia were started all over Sweden. There is a **Masters programme in South Asian studies at Uppsala**, a **new undergraduate course programme at Göteborg**, a broadened **South Asia Studies programme at Karlstad** and three **new masters programmes in technology at Luleå Technical University** planned to be started in August 2005.

At Lund University SASNET built a local and regional network in South Asian studies. It started the **Öresund Network of Asian Studies (ÖRNAST)**, that, so far, consists of coordination and presentation of Asia related courses within the ÖRESUND University Consortium of 14 universities. SASNET planned and started a **Masters Programme in South Asian Studies** at Lund, which is now running for the second year. SASNET actively worked to establish a **chair in Indic religions again at Lund University**, which may be soon appointed. Finally, SASNET started an **undergraduate one-year programme in Indian/South Asian Studies** at Österlen's folk high school, which is now running in its fourth year.

Besides conducting its own projects, the root node serves as an information and consultation agency for students, teachers, researchers, journalists, administrators, and businessmen. SASNET participates in various events related to this and the staff lectures at various institutions. Every week SASNET handles questions of various types.

An important aspect of the work and process so far is that SASNET has not been able to use 50 % of the budget for planning and networking grants. The actual proportion is 38 % of the total expenses for the period 2001-2005. The reason is simply that 50% of the current funding has not been enough to cover the root node's work.

Given the ambitious aims of SASNET and the budget allotted (currently SEK 2.2 mil annually) we believe that we have come some way in fulfilling these aims during the initial four-year period. The process is not smooth and linear. There have been high expectations on SASNET and quite a few disappointments. Social scientists and humanists are only too happy to come together to discuss politics, theory, methods and abstract philosophy, while natural science, medical and technological scholars have been more interested in focussed problem solving. The former figure more frequently in SASNET's joint activities, the latter more frequently as recipients of the planning and networking grants. The real challenge is to bring all of them together, since we believe that this is the way forward in strengthening science and its role in society.

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1. Introduction

After an initiative taken by the Swedish Foreign Ministry in 1998, Sida SAREC invited suggestions from Uppsala, Göteborg and Lund universities on how to set up a Swedish centre/network for South Asian studies. In May 2000, Lund University was selected for the task, with a planning period lasting for the remaining part of that year, and funding for 2001-2002 (see A1-3).¹ A working group was formed and a network root node was set up at Lund University's International Office (see A4; C1-2).

An advisory conference was organised in Lund in October 2000. The participants were Swedish senior researchers and there was a fair representation of PhD candidates and concerned government officials. The conference was followed up by a workshop on global networking in South Asian studies in August 2001.

SASNET was formally started in January 2001, with directions issued by the Vice-Chancellor of Lund University in June 2001, and with its first board meeting in August 2001 (F1 and B1). The funding for the period has been an annual budget of SEK 2 million during 2001-2002 (75 % from Sida and 25 % from Lund University), and after a new application in 2002 (see A4-5), SEK 2.2 million in the period 2003 – 2005 with the same proportion of funding between Sida and Lund.

In connection with the 2002 grant from Sida, it was decided that SASNET should be evaluated in 2004/2005. The purpose of the evaluation is 'to improve the performance of the SASNET network and to provide information to the Lund University and Sida SAREC about its organisation, work process, effects and consequences as well as an overall analysis of the working of the network.' (F1: 2)

'The evaluation should result in an overall assessment of SASNET in relation to the aim of the network and the various tasks carried out. It should also result in an assessment of the priorities followed and analyse the time and economic resources spent in various activities and the outcome of this. Alternative ways of organising, prioritising and use of economic resources should also be discussed.' (F1: 4)

The evaluation process is divided into two stages:

- 1) Self-evaluation by SASNET's root node and main nodes
- 2) External evaluation based on the self-evaluation, relevant documents and interviews with relevant stakeholders (see F1: 5).

Due to difficulties in finding available external evaluators, the evaluation is taking place during the spring of 2005 and is expected to be concluded before the end of June this year.

The self-evaluation has proceeded in the following way:

¹ A simple reference system is adopted: A1 refers to Appendix A1, which can be located in the Appendices section, where we list all important documents in the self-evaluation. All the appendices have been sent to the external evaluators. Page reference has been made as, for example: A1: 5, and refers to the continuous page numbering at the bottom of the document.

- Desk studies of the results of the planning grants, the construction of the Internet Gateway, and the budgets and financial results (F2, 3, and 5)
- Questionnaire sent out to present and former board members. For results see F4. The result was discussed at a Board meeting on 15 February 2005 (B8: 63-64)
- Documentation and printing of all relevant material (Appendices A – E)
- Meetings and interviews with various researchers and other stakeholders within the network

The result of this work is hereby presented to the external evaluators and partners.

2. Aims and activities of SASNET

SASNET is a national network for research, education, and information about South Asia. The aim is to encourage and promote an open and dynamic networking process, in which Swedish researchers co-operate with researchers in South Asia and globally. The network is open to all sciences. Priority is given to co-operation between disciplines and across faculties, as well as institutions in the Nordic countries and in South Asia. The basic idea is that South Asian studies will be most fruitfully pursued in co-operation between researchers, working in different institutions with a solid base in their mother disciplines (from the Directions, see F1: 1).

More specifically, the network attempts to

- initiate, stimulate, and **support research co-operation** via planning grants for networking between researchers, educators, and institutions
- offer grants for networking to develop **undergraduate and graduate courses** in Sweden if possible in partnership with universities in South Asia
- **encourage PhD studies** specialising on South Asia, including networking among individual research students in institutions that do not specialise on South Asia
- promote **student and researcher exchange** between Sweden and South Asia
- **build an information system for South Asian studies** in partnership with academic and public institutions, media, business communities, and NGOs
- contribute to **co-ordination of consultations** between researchers and different public institutions, business organisations, and NGOs

Thus, the **main activities** are:

- Distribution of Planning grants for networking to start new research and education projects
- Building and maintaining an Internet Gateway for South Asian studies

- Arranging personal meetings in order to the start new strong projects and programmes, and support community building
- Developing focussed activities like workshops, new courses, seminars, guest lectures, etc.

The **overall strategy** is to:

- work together in the various universities to change priorities so that more of South Asia related research and education is carried out (positions, programmes, courses, etc.)
- strengthen research co-operation and the quality of applications by giving planning grants in order to support full proposals for projects and programmes to research councils, departments and faculties

For a presentation of these ideas in full, see A: 46 – 52 (October 2000 plan) and C: 15-17 (The idea of SASNET).

The wonder that is South Asia

Networking in and around South Asia is a creative challenge and adventure. From a geographical point of view, South Asia is perhaps the most well delineated and sheltered region of the world. Surrounded by mountains, deserts and oceans, South Asia has for ages lived its 'own life' compared to the rest of the world. Waves of immigrants, conquerors and settlers, have brought new features to South Asia, but these features were always mediated by strong regional cultures to make them genuinely 'Indian'.

Even after Independence, South Asia seemed more or less bent on a course of its own, with variations of course. Self-reliance was the leading motto and visitors felt the difference to the rest of the world. But not so today. Communication, migration of both manual and white collar workers, business ventures, especially in IT and the production of software, open up South Asia to the world as never before, and the world opens up to South Asian impulses. After China, India is emerging as one of the strong centres of the world economy.

The new situation has a dramatic impact on South Asia and the world around it. The economy is diversifying and most rural people today straddle between agricultural, industrial and service jobs. Families are fragmented with members working in different and very often far away places inside and outside of South Asia. Remittances account for large shares of national income, so does the production and export of software. Consumption patterns are increasingly westernised and so is media use. Caste relations and marriage arrangements are changing, divorces increase. A multitude of social groups are engaged in emancipatory movements of various kinds. But the development is very uneven, and side by side with the growing middle class cultures one finds huge segments, millions in poverty and 'frozen traditional cultures'. At the same time, dislocation and the contingencies of modernity make for reactions and growth of religious, ethnic, and nationalist fundamentalisms. The environment is under severe strain with especially the water problems taking on alarming proportions.

The events of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent developments imply an historical period of global terrorism, increasing conflicts and risks of destabilising wars. It has led to a new interest in South Asia, for example in the deadly conflict between India and Pakistan, while at the same time students seem to be more hesitant to study in South Asia.

Another big event during the short lifetime of SASNET was the Tsunami disaster. Unlike 9/11 it carries a potential to increase the interest in the West for environmental and development issues in Asia and in the developing world at large. The long-term rehabilitation planning and work offers many opportunities for inter-disciplinary co-operation.

It is into this bewildering mosaic and multifaceted social transformation that SASNET enters.

3. Constructing an Internet Gateway²

The construction of an Internet Gateway for South Asian Studies was considered to be one of the main working tools of SASNET from the beginning. The editor of the magazine *Sydasién*, Lars Eklund, was employed from the end of January 2001 to do this work during a period of six months on a part time basis. The ambition behind the gateway was to start from Swedish and Nordic experiences of South Asian Studies (researchers, research projects and programmes, institutions, courses and institutions involved in that, NGOs, foreign policy, Sida, etc.), and further on extend into South Asia and globally. The gateway was seen as a means of complementing the variety of already existing websites on South Asia. In connection with this work Jan Magnusson, who had made the preparatory work for the establishment of the gateway during the fall 2000, suggested a number of principles for SASNET's so-called 'Third task' – to reach out to the public sphere. These principles were later on discussed and accepted by the SASNET Working Group at their meeting on 9 February 2001 (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/thirdtask.html>).

During the planning process Jan Magnusson came across a sketch made by the artist Paul Klee in 1922 as a preliminary plan for the famous Bauhaus school of design and architecture in Germany. Jan realized that this painting possibly inspired by South Asia, was a perfect interface for a new Internet Gateway to Swedish South Asian Studies. With technical assistance from graphic artist Bengt Serenander in Stockholm the idea was visualised as an entrance page for the gateway. Numerous suggestions and support was provided by the working group behind SASNET, including many other researchers and Ph D students in Sweden and Scandinavia who were consulted to give their views on the content.

14 sub-pages

The entrance page leads to 14 sub-pages represented by the fields in Klee's sketch: SASNET; Research; Education; ØRNASST network; Information/News; Library service; Links; India; Pakistan; Sri Lanka; Bangladesh; Nepal; Bhutan; and Maldives.

A search function, provided by Lund University's Net Lab is in use since the summer 2002. Another important function is the daily scan of links performed by SEVENTwentyfour, which identifies broken links and helps us to keep the Gateway constantly updated.

² This is an abridged version of the report given in Appendix F5. There is also a short report on how the website was built on <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/thanks.html>.

The gateway was formally launched in August 2001. Since then it has grown steadily. In December 2001 it consisted of 193 pages, a year later, in November 2002, there were 340 pages. In November 2003 the gateway has grown into 485 pages, and in February 2005 there were 605 sub-pages. Two additional sub-pages accessed directly from the entrance page were later added: Afghanistan and Culture.

One of the most important of all sub-pages are those that list the departments at Swedish universities where one or more researchers and teachers are involved in research and education about South Asia related issues. From this sub-page are links to other sub-pages that give detailed information about each research environment. From the beginning about 30–40 departments were listed, but the number is growing all the time, and in February 2005 nearly 150 Swedish university departments have been chartered, and their South Asia oriented researchers and their projects presented. The strongest of these environments are:

- South Asia Studies, Karlstad University
- History of Religions, Lund University
- Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University (Padrigu)
- Social anthropology, Stockholm University
- Biotechnology, Lund University
- Public Health, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm
- International Maternal and Child Health, Uppsala University
- Land and Water Resources Engineering at Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm
- South Asia Programme, Uppsala University (languages, political science, cultural anthropology, economics, peace and conflict studies)
- South Asia Social Sciences and Humanities, Lund University (Asian studies, history of religions, sociology, economics, economic history, political science, human ecology)

SASNET's Internet Gateway is now established as a reliable and thorough source of information for students, researchers and others interested in South Asian studies. It has received worldwide attention and recognition for its wealth of useful information. New information is added on a daily basis, and the work is carried out in a journalistic manner, and with the ambition to keep up two functions: On the one hand to disseminate as much information as possible on South Asia related research and education at Swedish universities, and on the other hand to be the researcher's instrument for finding useful information. A monthly newsletter is sent to almost 1 000 subscribers.

Statistics

A statistics service was introduced with the launch of the new internet gateway on 5 August 2001. Anyone can approach the detailed statistical information by simply clicking on the NedStatbasics symbol down to the left on the entrance page. It provides information about the number of daily visits, and from which countries they have logged on, as well as many other technical data. In the beginning of March 2004 the gateway had been visited more than 24 000 times since the official launch, and on 8 April 2005 it had been visited by more than 37 500 visitors.

4. Planning and Networking Grants

The work has been organised in the following way. Applications can be made twice a year: 15 June and 15 November. The aim is to support the **planning of inter- or intra-disciplinary research and/or education programmes** in South Asian studies, that can serve as basis for the application for full grants from various research and/or education funding agencies, and for which SASNET later on can provide **continued networking funding**. The programme should be based on a carefully prepared theme, the capacity of participant researchers and their networks in South Asia. SASNET especially wants to encourage research and/or education programmes/projects addressing problems that calls for a multi-disciplinary approach and that, if relevant, include a gender perspective.

For this kind of activity the grant can be used to:

- Arrange meetings with Swedish researchers who can be involved in a network around the programme or project (travel and lodging expenses),
- In a programme: Employ a programme co-ordinator for one month, full time; In a project: One month's salary to plan a research project,
- Invite a guest, for instance an internationally renowned scholar in the relevant field,
- A trip to South Asia by the programme co-ordinator or project leader in connection with the planning.

(For further information about the programme, see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/grantsinvite.html>)

The applications are evaluated and ranked by a reference group consisting of: Prof Pamela Price, Dept. of History, University of Oslo, Norway, Dr Neil Webster from the Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, Denmark, and Dr Malin Åkerblom from the International Science Programme, Uppsala University. The decision about funding is taken by the board.

Based on the enclosed documentation (F2) it is possible to make an assessment of the character and significance of the Planning Grants that we have given so far.

From 2001 to February, 2005 56 grants have been distributed in the following way:

	Applications	Granted	Per cent of total grants
Technology, Natural Sciences	36 (27 %)	15	27 %
Medicine	23 (17 %)	9	16 %
Social Sciences	56 (42 %)	20	36 %
Humanities	15 (11 %)	10	18 %
Nordic Centre	2 (2 %)	2	4 %
Total	132 (100 %)	56	100 %

There is a fair balance in number of applications and number of grants among the faculties, with humanities being most successful with its applications. 42 per cent of the applications were met with success, which is a much higher proportion than with the Research Councils (maybe around 10 %).

The most important question is to what extent a planning grant has led to a full project or a programme. We have asked the grant recipients to give a report one and a half year after

receiving the grant. The result is presented in the document 'Follow-up of SASNET Planning grants 2001-2004', where we have included grants distributed up until 24 August 2004 (see F2). Since the follow-up took place during the fall of 2004, one can hardly expect results from this last round to have materialised.

For the grants distributed up until the 26 August 2003, we have the following results:

Total number of grants: 37 grants to 33 projects

Results:

Funding: 15 research planning projects have resulted in ongoing research projects with long-term funding.

Ongoing project: In 9 cases, mostly education projects with further financing from the universities themselves, the funding has led to the intended results (planning of education, workshop, etc.) and continued projects with long term funding.

Finished time limited project: In one case a travel grant for participation in a conference and no further activity. The person invited is now actively engaged with a Swedish research network.

No funding so far: In 8 cases the funding is unclear and not certain at the time of reporting. Some of them may still get funding, which will then improve the success rate later on.

From this we claim a success rate of at least 25 out of 33 projects getting continued support in various forms, that is, 76 %. A very conservative estimate is that the planning projects have generated more than SEK 15 million for South Asia related research and education projects during the period 2003 – 2005.

Co-operation between disciplines and across faculties?

One critical aspect of the planning projects is to what extent they are inter-disciplinary in character. Within the social sciences co-operation is increasing across disciplines and also with history. In the early rounds of applications we saw quite a few attempts in medical and technology projects to include the social sciences in the planning. However, as far as our follow-up studies and other experiences show, they rarely resulted in serious interaction in actual research projects. It is not easy to achieve this matching of the 'hard' and 'soft' sciences due to the way disciplines and universities are organised.

The need for integrated perspectives is felt particularly strongly today, for example, with the hot political and cultural issues involved in genetic research of various kinds. The challenge of HIV/Aids, to take another example, needs the coming together of specialist on culture, social interaction, politics, epidemiology, and various other specialities. We believe that a more focussed networking is necessary to achieve this.

The Marstrand PhD Symposium as well as the 18th European Conference were modest attempts in this direction. Over the past two years, SASNET has actively been engaged in the development of Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS, see

<http://www.miclu.lu.se>), and of the Arena for Global Sustainability Issues (AGESI), which is now about to take off. We are currently supporting a panel on 'Health, Globalization and Marginalization in South Asia' at the NASA conference in Aarhus 3-5 June 2005. We would like to continue our efforts in this direction.

We think that in the future SASNET needs earmarked funding for this work so that focussed activities, seminars and workshops can be arranged to inspire young students and researchers in various fields.

5. Networking in South Asian studies

a. Research and Education

Over the years we have offered lots of advice to researchers about contacts in Sweden, funding, conferences, etc. We have offered advice to students about studies in South Asia and in Sweden. We have made several visits and arranged seminars and workshops from Luleå in the north to Lund in the south (see C1-5 and the various reports on our Internet Gateway).

Focussed activities:

The October 2000 conference

Based on the plan introduced in our applications to Sida SAREC in 1999, we organised an advisory conference in Lund in October 2000, with the participation of about 70 Swedish senior researchers and a fair representation of PhD candidates and concerned government officials. The purpose was to inform, discuss and create legitimacy for the programme. The program and the reports are published at SASNET's gateway (see E1, or <http://www.soc.lu.se/sasnet/con/index.html>). We tried to start post-conference on-line discussion groups in connection with this, but without much success. A revised plan of action was brought out (October 2000 Plan; A4: 46-52). In connection with this we also published Principles for the Third Task, that is, the diffusion of information about South Asia in Sweden (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/thirdtask.html>).

Workshop on Global networking in South Asian studies 2001

The idea behind the workshop was to place SASNET's work in a broader discussion about patterns and mechanisms in the current global changes brought about by information technology, the growth of global network societies and the implications of this for researchers and teachers networking between the West (including Sweden) and South Asia globally. What positive contribution can a network like SASNET make in this context given these conditions for its work? (E2)

There were 39 participants in the workshop, among them Zulfiqar Bhutta, Agha Khan University in Karachi, Rita Afsar, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Graham Chapman, Lancaster University, Ronald Herring, Cornell University, Rana P.B. Singh, Banaras Hindu University, Mats Benner and Jan Hjärpe, Lund University, Walter Andersson,

John Hopkins University, Piet Terhal, Erasmus University, and members of SASNET's Board.

The workshop offered several examples of networking in various fields of studies and provided a lot of creative input into SASNET's further networking.

The Marstrand Symposium for PhD candidates

25–27 October, 2002 SASNET arranged a symposium for Swedish PhD students and post-docs involved in research related to South Asia, at Marstrands Varmbadhus, north of Göteborg (see E4). The main purpose of the symposium was to discuss the situation of PhD students in South Asian Studies or South Asia relevant studies. 33 PhD candidates attended the symposium (including 5 Nordic students), 5 post-docs, and 9 senior resource persons (professors, etc.). Some experienced supervisors and PhD students presented their views. Important topics discussed were recruitment; finance; coursework; languages, the need for summer and winter schools; seminars, workshops, conferences; need for and room for interdisciplinary co-operation in PhD research; supervision; publishing; and post-doc positions and possibilities.

The symposium received positive feedback from the participants and laid a foundation for networking among students in Sweden and the Nordic countries. Follow-up meetings were later held in 2003 in Uppsala, Stockholm, Göteborg and Karlstad.

Contact journey to the Maldives, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh in 2002

Between 25 February and 23 March 2002 we made a journey to visit South Asian academic institutions in the Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh (see E5). The purpose of the journey was to network with researchers and institutions, and get to know under which conditions and with what expectations they function.

Starting with existing networks between Swedish and South Asian researchers we found our way to various research environments and individual researchers. What difference could contacts and co-operation with Swedish researchers mean to them? Who could be possible partners in future projects and ventures?

Most people we met were social scientists, but often with contacts in other disciplines. However, in the Maldives and Sri Lanka we met with many humanists and natural scientists.

Altogether this journey gave us a broad network that we now draw on for further interaction in various fields. For instance, through our visit and contacts with Peradeniya University in Sri Lanka, a PhD programme for 8 students (6 from Peradeniya University and 2 from Jaffna University) has been started at the Department of Peace and Development Studies at Göteborg University (See Appendix D: 39, under Research, Göteborg University).

Contact journey to Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2003

After the 2002 journey to the Maldives, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh, it was quite natural that we now continued our efforts to create ties between researchers and academic institutions in Sweden and South Asia through another journey, this time to Pakistan and Afghanistan. The journey is fully documented in Appendix E6.

One very concrete result: As a result our visit to Pakistan in November-December 2003, there is now a Memorandum of Understanding between Pakistan and the Swedish Institute, Stockholm, about sending 200 Masters students to Sweden annually at the expense of the Ministry of Education in Pakistan (see Appendix E9: 139-147). Another direct result was the organisation of Panel no. 49 'Politics, Power and Islam in South Asia' at the 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies at Lund 2004.

The 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, 6-9 July 2004

SASNET's biggest organisational effort so far was the organisation of the 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies at Lund University, 6-9 July. For a detailed report, see E7 or <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/EASAS18.html>.

The conference cost was SEK 1 552 000 and was sponsored by Lund University, Sida SAREC, Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, Crafoord Foundation and the Norwegian Research Council. Due to the generous funding we could finance travel grants for 47 persons, including 23 young researchers from South Asia, who were selected by a committee at Lund University.

There were 356 registered participants and 385 papers in 44 different panels. More than 100 of the papers are published on the home page of the conference. There were also many unregistered visitors who came to one or more of the seminars and plenary sessions. This was the biggest European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies so far and the first where all material was published on the Internet.

Return to modernism

The conference was also a conscious effort to promote utilitarian goals in research and interdisciplinary co-operation especially in medicine, technology and natural sciences. One panel was on health and social development and was led by Prof. Zulfiqar Bhutta from Aga Khan Medical University, Karachi. Another panel dealt with technology and environmental problems and was led by Prof. Gunnar Jacks from the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm.

Ethnic and cultural relations

The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Dipankar Gupta, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi who spoke on the topic 'Democratic Potentials in Cultural Politics: Caste Based Reservations and the Issue of Citizenship.' The lecture gave rise to a lively debate.

Poverty and social development

One of the sub-themes for the conference was 'Poverty and Human Development – Challenges before the state, market and civil society in the era of post-modernism.' A plenary session with the following speakers was led by Dr. Alia Ahmad, Lund University:

Prof. Ghanshyam Shah, Ahmedabad
'Growth, Poverty and Human Development in India'

Prof. Zulfiqar Bhutta, Aga Khan University, Karachi
'Poverty and Ill-Health. Challenges, Initiatives and Issues in Pakistan' (prepared together with Inayat Thaver, Dept. for International Development, UK)

Dr. Meera Nanda, Hartford, Connecticut
'Manu's Children: Vedic Science, Hindutva and Postmodernism'

These lectures gave rise to a lively debate, and are published at SASNET's internet gateway.

Work with a Nordic graduate school

NorfAsia was planned in 2003 as a Nordic graduate school in Asian Studies with funding from NorFA in Oslo (see E10). The school aimed at strengthening the education and training of Ph D candidates within the social sciences and the humanities. *NorfAsia* would provide advanced training in understanding and analysing contemporary Asia with special reference to political, social, economic and cultural dynamics and contexts. Through its initiatives and co-ordination, *NorfAsia* would contribute to developing a human resource base for future Nordic Asia research which is also relevant to public institutions, the business sector and the broader society. SASNET's director took an active part in this planning. In the end NorFA did not approve the grant proposal (we ended up in 6th position, and only five proposals were approved). The planning should not go to waste, but be used to develop programmes and courses locally at the universities that were involved in the application.

In 2004, the director participated actively in the planning of a new graduate school in South Asian studies, called SARTrain – South Asia Research Training, which is a co-operation between 8 universities including the South Asia Institute at Heidelberg University, and led by NIAS in Copenhagen (see E11). In December we submitted an application for a Marie Curie Programme to the European Commission, which in early 2005 was selected for a second round of applications due on 26 April 2005. The school will finance 13 PhD candidates for three years with scholarships and travel money, and also organise a number of doctoral courses, seminars, summer schools, and thesis workshops.

Masters programme at Lund University

The new Masters Programme in Asian Studies at Lund University began in September 2003 (see E12). It focuses on the rapid development of modern Asian societies, and looks specifically at major contemporary issues confronting the region, its governments and its peoples. The programme is multi-disciplinary and addresses a broad range of topics such as economic development, social change, the dynamic tension between tradition and transformation, and the problems of migration and urbanisation, among others, both from chronological and thematic perspectives.

The student follows one of two streams within the framework of the programme: East and South-East Asian studies or South Asian studies. In 2003, there were 16 students registered in the South Asian studies stream (more than 60 were admitted, but only 16 showed up for

registration). In September 2004 15 South Asian studies students were registered in the programme.

The programme comprises 3 terms of study, or 60 points (90 ECTS), of which 10 points is achieved through fieldwork and a further 10 points is awarded for the thesis. Considerable emphasis is placed on fieldwork, and all students will have the opportunity to attend a special course at a major university in China, India, Japan or Malaysia depending upon which region they are interested in. In South Asia the programme is cooperating with Delhi University, Peradeniya University, Agha Khan University, and the Institute of Social and Economic Change in Bangalore (ISEC).

South Asia programme at Österlen's Folk High School

The India/South Asia programme is a one year programme, including three months of fieldwork in South Asia (see E13 - in Swedish). Teachers come from sociology and human ecology at Lund University. The programme gives the student credits, which can be used when applying to university courses. Alongside the academic course, there is also a folk high school teacher carrying out various educational activities with the students. The programme is now running for the fourth time. An average of about 20 students have been enrolled each year. Evaluations given by students have been positive.

ÖRNAS – Öresund Network of Asian Studies

Since the fall of 2000 we have networked with Copenhagen University to co-operate in Asian studies. For a full report of these activities, see E14. In the beginning we imagined that we could start a joint Masters programme eventually involving also Amsterdam University. Differences between the universities in terms of curriculum, credit system, etc, made us go for a less ambitious programme, in which we would see all the Öresund universities involved in Asian studies as one big unit. Co-operation would entail economizing with positions in for example language teaching as well as allowing students to take courses on both sides of Öresund and have the right to include them in their exams. The programme was officially launched on 14 September 2004.

Contacts in Europe

Since the formation of SASNET, we have participated in the European Conferences of Modern South Asian Studies, held at Edinburgh in 2000 and at Heidelberg in 2002 (Subrata Mitra). At these conferences we were able to hold information meetings about SASNET. We have participated in the EU–India Think Tank Seminar, which took place in Brussels, Belgium 15-16 October 2001, with representatives from a large number of Universities and Research institutions in Europe and India. On 13 – 15 October 2004, SASNET's Director visited the International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden and Amsterdam University and discussed possible co-operation in the future and the organisation of the 19th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies at Leiden in 2006. In 30 March – 1 April 2005 the Director was invited to the British Association for South Asian Studies (BASAS) annual meeting at Leeds, to give the SASNET view on a strategy for South Asian Research. Contact

persons are Prof. Graham Chapman at Lancaster and Professors Roger and Patricia Jeffery at Edinburgh.

We have also made special efforts to network with our colleagues in the Nordic countries. Prof. Pamela Price, University of Oslo and Dr. Neil Webster, Danish Institute of International Studies, Copenhagen, have both been crucial to this networking by serving as members of our reference group for Planning and Networking grants, and as members of SASNET's Board. We have interacted closely with the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen (NIAS, Jørgen Delman). Trying to build the NorfAsia graduate school in 2003, we interacted closely with colleagues from Finland, Norway and Denmark. This co-operation is now continued in the planning of SARTrain graduate school (see above). We already have long-standing relations with Roskilde University, Development Studies (Laurids Lauridsen) and with the Asia Department at Copenhagen University (Ken Zysk) with whom we have developed the ÖRNAST programme (see above). We have supported and networked with the Nordic Centre in India, and with the Nordic Association of Asian Studies. We participated in its latest conference in Bergen on 20-22 September 2001.

b. Interaction with government, public sector, business, and NGOs

Over the years we have interacted closely with Sida (Asia division and SAREC), the Foreign Ministry, South Asia section, and with the International division of the Ministry of Education (See Appendix E8). We have been in more or less continuous contact with the Swedish Embassies in South Asia (especially in India and Bangladesh). We have also been in close contact with the South Asian Embassies and ambassadors in Sweden. We have had several contacts with the Swedish and Indian business communities during the creation of the Swedish Indian Business Council (SIBC, see Appendix E8). In 2003 SASNET's director was invited to the Foreign Ministry of Norway to discuss Norway's plans for a new India policy.

When it comes to contacts and interaction with NGOs and social movements, these are primarily via the publication of the magazine *Sydasiens* (South Asia) and the wide network of individuals and groups around this project. A recent example, is the arrangement of a guest lecture by Prof. Abul Barkat at the Green Library in Lund later on 15 March 2005 focusing on "*The Right to Development & Human Development*", jointly organised by SASNET and the Swallows India-Bangladesh section in Lund.

We are also regularly invited to various associations and schools for lectures about South Asia. Most often, however, we help various groups to find suitable speakers within SASNET's network.

c. 'Third task' – relation to media, etc.

SASNET receives a number of questions from media people about sources of information and publications related to South Asia. For example, in the spring of 2003 we interacted with the Swedish Radio programme called 'Människor och Tro' (Sören Wibeck) in connection with the seminar on Religion and Violence at Roskilde University, in which SASNET was actively engaged (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/roskildereport.pdf>). In December 2004 and January 2005 we interacted with many newspapers and radio programmes about the Tsunami disaster, etc.

d. Other focussed activities

We have also networked with a number of non-South Asia engaged researchers and institutions in activities of value to the SASNET project. For example:

- In September 2001 we organised a workshop at Lund University on *Managing Common Resources – What is the solution?* in co-operation with local scholars (E3)
- In January 2003 we played a central role in the organisation of a conference on Swedish Development Studies research, called *Fattiga och rika. Aktuell utvecklingsforskning och dess villkor i Sverige* sponsored by Sida/SAREC and Lund University. Many SASNET researchers participated with papers in the conference (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/ukonfpaper.html> and a report from one of the sessions <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/lundconfpanel2.pdf> in Swedish only).
- On 11 April 2005, we organised a seminar on *Beyond Control. Risk and Learning after the Tsunami* together with the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies and AGESI at Lund University (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/tsunamisem.html> in Swedish).
- In the spring of 2005 we assisted the Lund University's Vice-Chancellor in organising a whole day seminar on *Globalisation and Development in Africa* due on 9 May which, among other things, take up comparisons between Asia and Africa.

e. Snowball effects?

The Foreign Ministry's and Sida's initiative to support South Asian studies in Sweden and the establishment of SASNET has, we believe, already had a snowball effect on activities at Swedish universities. The force of this commitment, the communication network, and the funds made available through SASNET help teachers/researchers and students to form effective interest groups at universities that can work for new priorities in the allocation of resources to South Asian studies at various departments and faculties. Other activities are triggered by the will to show ones competence and the competition to attract various funding opportunities.

For example, at Uppsala University, a masters programme which can also be seen as a response to the increasing interest in South Asian Studies was started in September 2001 (see <http://www.afro.uu.se/Southasiaplan.html>). Uppsala University has now taken over the function to coordinate the Nordic Centre during 2005 – 2008 and will fund half of the salary of its new director. The Centre of Asian Studies at Göteborg University is now including South Asia in its curriculum for undergraduate courses on Asia (see <http://www.sasnet.lu.se/asstudgbg.html>). During the spring of 2005 Göteborg University made several agreements about co-operation with universities in Sri Lanka and India. The Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm is planning to build an Indian-Swedish Collaboration on Technical Research and Education (INSTECH) in New Delhi, and a team is currently visiting Pakistan to discuss the setting up of a Swedish assisted Technical University there. The Public Health department at Karolinska Institutet at Stockholm has become very active in setting up a research and education programmes in reproductive health, with nodes in Pakistan and India. The Luleå Technical University is setting up three Masters programmes targeting South Asia. Researchers at the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University have a very active programme called SARI – Stockholm Anthropological Research

on India. Researchers and students at Lund department of History of Religions have set up a programme called Indic Religions with special courses on undergraduate and graduate levels.

f. Critical aspects

If we compare the activities carried out by SASNET and their results, with the original plan (see A4: 46-54), the most striking departure is that SASNET has not been able to devote 50 % of its budget to planning grants. The main reason for this is that we had to give higher priority to the Internet Gateway than we originally envisaged. As we took on the work to construct the Gateway and interacted with our partners we realised what a powerful networking instrument it was. But constructing and maintaining such an ambitious gateway, and administering the network required a full-time position. When we realised this we engaged Sida and Lund University in a dialogue about the problem but the funding was not increased. (See A4-5)

The resulting activities and financial priorities are, therefore, a compromise with our original ambition. We have tried to find extra money so as to be able to keep a full-time Webmaster and a half-time Director and still use 50 % of the budget for planning grants. The result is that the planning and networking grants have accounted for at an average 38 % of SASNET's overall expenses.

Other critical aspects compared to the original plan are that we have not been able to undertake certain activities:

- We have interacted closely with Swedish business representatives in their meetings to form the Swedish Indian Business Council (E8) but so far we have not been able to start any courses catering to this community. The main reason is that the business organisation is still in its infancy and it may take time for it to be able to initiate various activities. We think that the best node for co-operation with the business community is the Nordic Centre in India that can interact directly with Swedish companies working in India and South Asia.
- We have started a Masters programme in South Asian Studies, now running in its second year. But so far we have not been able to develop it as an on-line programme. On the other hand, we have supported a net-based Masters programme on globalisation and transformation in a comparative perspective offered by Lund University, and with nodes in China, India and various European universities.
- We have organised only one course for teachers (in October 2001) but had expected to be involved in more such activities. However, we think, individual researchers at the various Swedish universities may well have been engaged in such activities without our direct knowledge.

In October 2000, we also expected that SASNET would be involved in developing new research programmes and projects within a number of fields, like:

- Water, food technology, livelihood, and sustainable development;
- Industrial pollution and environmental management;
- Security, intra- and international relations and dynamics in South Asia;
- Reason and revelation: The confrontation between science and religion in South Asian history;
- Hindu-Muslim interaction in historical perspective;

- Nationalism and political development in South Asia;
- Decentralisation, popular participation and the role of the state in development;
- Gender and economic and political development;
- Basic education, especially for women;

Working with the planning and networking grants we soon found out that it was a better strategy to invite all researchers to apply for planning grants. The result was a release of energy and creativity and most of the applications that were funded happen to fall with the above list of topics. However, for some reason or other a central Swedish concern was forgotten in the above list, that is, public health and reproductive health. Quite a few of the funded projects have fallen within this very important research field. At the same time it is clear that Sweden lacks economists, geographers and historians interested in South Asia. In these and other fields, the need for interaction with our Nordic colleagues is important in order to create a critical mass.

Finally, in 2003 we started to think of developing a SASNET Working papers series published at the Internet Gateway, one for the social sciences and the humanities, and another one for medicine, technology and the natural sciences. However, when we started to plan for it, we found out that there simply was no time available to manage such a project. A later board decision, therefore, cancelled this activity. What SASNET can do is to make various working paper series at various departments known to the wider community.

Other critical aspects of the work will be taken up below as we analyse the network with the help of the questions asked in the Terms of Reference for this evaluation.

6. Issues to be considered

A number of questions were posed in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation of SASNET.³ The questions address important issues of SASNET's achievements, organisation, and ways to operate. The issues have been addressed both in relation to the aims and directions, as well as practice. We have worked with them in our vision since the start of the evaluation process in November 2004.

Our overall impression is that SASNET has had a positive impact on South Asian studies, and that the network met a long overdue need among Swedish South Asian studies researchers and educators. This is probably one of the foremost explanations for SASNET's rapid development into a major player in Swedish South Asian studies in such a short time. Today SASNET is also a relatively well-known actor in the Nordic countries, Europe and South Asia.

The start of SASNET meant rising expectations from researchers all over Sweden about new possibilities, funding opportunities, co-operation, etc. But gradually, when it became clear to everyone that SASNET's means and capacity were, after all, limited, we also got some negative reactions from our partners.

³ Among other things, we sent out a questionnaire to present and former board members (21 persons), the South Asia reference group (5), and the Reference group for evaluation of the planning grants (3), altogether 29 persons. We got 13 written answers and a number of oral messages in various communications. The result is presented in appendix F4.

For instance, researchers whose applications for planning and networking grants have not been approved may think that SASNET disfavours them. But we have tried to be transparent and to openly show what the available resources are and how the decisions are made.

Some research and education environments were already strong in South Asian studies and so far they have not been able to get much additional resources from SASNET, except being a node in the network, and being exposed in various ways through SASNET's activities.

Even though many of the activities presented in this report might have come about without the creation of SASNET, a lot of them have indeed materialised with SASNET's support. The Internet gateway and SASNET's regular newsletter has become an important information source, creating a sense of community between individual educators and researchers as well as institutions. Today the gateway is visited by users from all sectors of society. In 2001 we could never have imagined that SASNET would become one of the cohesive forces in South Asian studies in Sweden, the Nordic countries, and Europe, at least not in such a short time. But the success of the 18th European Conference in Modern South Asian Studies in Lund 2004 proved this to be a reality.

Given the resources at hand and a staff consisting of a half-time Director, and a full-time Deputy Director and Webmaster, and an annual budget of SEK 2.2 Million (with 38% invested in planning and networking grants, and 18% charged by Lund University for overhead costs) this is a considerable achievement.

One of the questions in the terms of reference was the issue of SASNET's work process. Is it participatory, gender sensitive, and ethnically and culturally balanced? With the root node staffed by two white men in their fifties criticism can easily be levied. At the same time the constitution of the board is better balanced. Another way to approach this issue, which was stated in one of the replies to the questionnaire to present and past board members, and members of the advisory group, is to say that "SASNET is inclusive in the sense that that information is widely shared and that the [webmaster] is very good at keeping track of/writing about a wide variety of persons and institutions (with various gender, ethnic and cultural backgrounds)".

We strongly feel that our various networking activities are participatory and that they are balanced from a gender and cultural point of view. This also seems to be the opinion of the vast majority of our partners.

We feel that there is a fair correspondence between principles, board decisions and the root node's work, and that the root node has good relationships to the members of the board. Some members are very active in joint network activities and give us strong support.

There are, however, two issues which have come up at times during board meetings and that deserves to be mentioned:

One is the amount of work that the SASNET root node carries out in Lund compared to the rest of the network. Since we have been active in starting the Masters Programme in Asian Studies, the ÖRNAST network, undergraduate courses, and organising guest lectures etc. it may appear as if Lund is receiving undue attention. However, this work is mainly carried out by other network members in Lund and in co-operation with the

departments of sociology, political science, economic history, history of religions, etc. SASNET's Director is only employed half-time by SASNET, and the work he does locally (teaching, supervising, organising lectures, ÖRNAST, etc.) is paid for by the Department of Sociology at Lund University. The Deputy Director does very little local work. One could even argue that in relation to the financial contribution by Lund University (25 % of the budget) we have in fact not done enough locally.

The other issue is the value and significance of the contact journeys that the Director and the Deputy Director wants to make to South Asia with regular intervals. They feel that it is an essential part of networking which gives many direct and indirect benefits to the network. At times there have been discussions over the value of these journeys compared to, for example, using the money for planning and networking grants (See B8: p. 64 and 67).

SASNET still has some distance to go when it comes to the promotion of interdisciplinary research (not counting multi-disciplinary research within social science), and contacts with the private sector. The reason is perhaps the root node's lack of time and that the board has not given this work priority. A weak spot is the interdisciplinary networking outside the humanities and the social sciences. Especially the task of bringing about close co-operation with the 'hard sciences' and the former is challenging. It actually requires committed actors who, with the help of available network information, bring this about in concrete research projects and programmes, as well as in teaching.

It is difficult to make a strict comparison between SASNET and other similar networks simply because there are none to compare with. Most existing networks are driven by researchers on a voluntary basis. A consequence is that networking often becomes weaker and erratic.

7. Looking ahead

SASNET is presently preparing for an application for a new grant from Sida for the period 2006-2008. The application will be made after the evaluation report has been published. The report will guide our planning of the next phase in the development of SASNET.

We think that the principles that guide SASNET are good and we would like to continue to work in the same manner as before. We have indicated that we want 50 % of the budget to be devoted to planning and networking grants since they have proved to be a success in the promotion of South Asia related research and education in the period 2001 – 2003. However, it may not be realistic to expect the same success rate in the future, given the experiences of the research councils. Another activity that we would like to include more regularly is focussed workshops to promote inter-disciplinary studies.

We have already had discussions with the Vice-Chancellor of Lund University and have asked for a grant for the period 2006-2008. Lund University has promised to increase its funding to 0.8 million annually. Based on this commitment, we will apply to Sida SAREC for an increased support from 1.65 to 2.4 million, that is an increase comparable to the one made by LU. We are optimistic and end this section with a tentative annual model budget for the period 2006-2008 (in thousand SEK):

Root node, all activities including overhead cost, 18 %	1 423	44 %
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Focussed networking to promote inter-disciplinary research in important fields	177	6 %
Planning and networking grants	1 600	50 %
Total	3 200	100 %

In the future SASNET should be granted permanent status and receive funding from the Ministry of Education. In its work with the new Swedish research policy, the Foreign Ministry suggested last year that a centre/network of the SASNET model should be given permanent status. But this was not mentioned in the new Swedish government research policy that was presented in the spring, 2005.

8. Conclusions

We have identified what we believe to be some of the most important strengths and weaknesses of SASNET. We think that the idea of SASNET, an open network driven by an enthusiastic root node, is an effective model for promoting science in desired directions. It should be seen as a programme that could continue for a much longer period without being cut up in three-year periods. Built in self-evaluation, monitoring, and external evaluation are natural parts of such a process. Financing would have to be increased so that at least half of the budget can be allocated to planning and networking grants, and to provide the necessary manpower for the root node.

We make modest claims about the outcome: The results so far have mainly been a strengthening of the resource base and the interaction among researchers and Ph.D. students, making them more self-confident, helping them to make better applications for research grants, etc. We feel that we are on the way towards a strong intellectual and social community of South Asia scholars. Most of the projects that we have supported through planning and networking grants have been successful in finding long term funding from research councils or from their respective universities in terms of new educational activities.

When it comes to changed priorities within the universities and university colleges, which is one of the main aims of the networking, we feel that positive things have taken place. New courses, programmes, and co-operation agreements have put South Asia on the Swedish academic map. We have also begun to recruit new students on the undergraduate and master's levels, which is a pre-condition for recruiting new Ph.D. students later on.

We feel that our efforts have created a growing network of partners in South Asia and the rest of the world. However, if our partners and others do not identify themselves with SASNET, it can be due to our shortcomings or the fact that they do not see the value of SASNET and its type of networking activities. But at the end of the day SASNET could not possibly satisfy everyone.

Appendices

General source of information for all activities mentioned in this report:

<http://www.sasnet.lu.se> Use the *Search* function (top right corner) in order to locate the thing you want to read.

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B. Minutes of SASNET Board meetings

- 29 August, 2001. Minutes (pdf-file)
- 24 January, 2002. Minutes (pdf-file)
- 27 August, 2002. Minutes (pdf-file)
- 28 January, 2003. Minutes (pdf-file)
- 26 August, 2003. Minutes (pdf-file)
- 4 February 2004. Minutes (pdf-file)
- 24 August 2004. Minutes (pdf-file)
- 15 February 2005. Minutes (pdf-file)

C. Work reports

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4. SASNET symposium for Swedish PhD students and post-docs, 25–27 October 2002, at Marstrand
5. SASNET contact journey to South Asia, in February–March 2002
6. SASNET contact journey to South Asia, in November–December 2003
7. Report from the 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies 2004
8. Reports from the interaction with the Swedish Government and the Swedish and Indian business communities in 2003 and 2004, including a document on the new Swedish development co-operation policy towards India (in Swedish)

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