SASNET
Swedish South Asian Studies Network

Board Meeting, May 14, 2013, 13.30-17.00

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


1. Round of presentation

After running for two and a half years without a board, SASNET received a new board for the period 2013–2015. Eva Wiberg, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Lund University, appointed its members on Thursday 7th February 2013. Additionally, Lund University Social Science Students Union association may appoint three student representatives to the board to serve for a period of one academic year. However, only one student representative has been appointed for the period ending 30 June 2013.

Since this was the first meeting of the new board, members introduced themselves and their respective department, programme, or organisation.

– Dr. Anna Lindberg, SASNET Director (chairperson)
– Professor Helle Rydström, Centre for Gender Studies, Lund University (representative for the Faculty of Social Sciences, LU)
– Professor Olle Qvarnström, Department of History and Anthropology of Religion, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University (representative for the Faculty of Humanities and Theology, LU)
– Dr. Fredrik Tufvesson, Department of Electrical and Information Technology, Lund University (representative for the Faculty of Engineering, LU)
– Professor Stefan Jonsson, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University, and former Counsellor of Science and Technology, Embassy of Sweden in India
– Dr. Anders Fänge, former Site Manager, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
– Ms. Hawwa Lubna, 1st year student at Lund University’s BSc Programme in Development Studies (BIDS), also interim chairperson of the South Asian Students Association at Lund University (SASA)

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

Anna Lindberg was elected to chair the meeting, Lars Eklund to be the secretary, and Hawwa Lubna to verify the minutes.
3. SASNET Directives and Resources

On 13 December 2012 Lund University announced it would allocate resources amounting to SEK 2.74 m per year to support SASNET for the period 2013–2015. It also decided upon new SASNET Directives (föreskrifter – Enclosure 1). These decisions came as a relief after some years of uncertainty after SASNET’s annual subsidy from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) expired in December 2009 at the conclusion of a ten-year commitment by that agency. Anna Lindberg presented the SASNET Directives in detail and commented upon important points.

With regard to SASNET’s aim and mission, Stefan Jonsson stated that it was important that SASNET continue to be a national Swedish network. Anna Lindberg responded that it is clear from the Directives that although SASNET is now financed solely by Lund University and works more in tandem with other Lund University departments and divisions, it will continue its collaboration with other universities, institutes, and NGOs, and maintain databases for all Swedish researchers who wish to be part of its national network.

Helle Rydström commented on the fact that SASNET does not run any educational courses, and asked why interest in South Asian studies at Lund University is not stronger than it is. The Masters programme in Asian Studies organised by the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies initially had one branch focusing on South Asia, but interest gradually diminished and today only some minor courses on South Asia are offered in the general Asian Studies programme. Anna Lindberg compared the situation with Copenhagen University, which has approximately 40 Bachelors students in South Asian studies.

However, Anna stated that SASNET has now intensified its work among students in various departments at Lund University to increase interest in working on South Asia-related projects. SASNET also offers support in the form of advice and contacts to individual students wishing to do project work in South Asia.

Hawwa Lubna told about her experience as a Maldivian Bachelors student in Development Studies, a part of the Graduate School within the Faculty of Social Science. She knows several fellow students interested in South Asia, and thinks SASNET should support these ambitions, which have recently materialised in the formation of the South Asian Student Association (SASA) at Lund University.


Anna Lindberg presented the Administrative Work Report No. 13; the short-version Annual Report in Swedish language on SASNET activities during 2012; and the more detailed Activity Report in English. (Enclosure 2). She stressed the role SASNET’s well-maintained website plays, and the monthly newsletters produced by Lars Eklund. She also mentioned the impressive number of seminars and conferences that SASNET organised in 2012, and said that the same number will probably be held in 2013. The board commended what the staff had accomplished, and approved the Work Report.

5. SASNET Staff

Since September 2012, the SASNET staff has consisted of Anna Lindberg as director/coordinator on 100% (but partly reduced due to research work on external funding), Lars Eklund, deputy director/webmaster on 100%, and Jonathan Stoltz, assistant webmaster
on 50%. However, Jonathan Stoltz will relinquish his position on 30 June 2013, and Anna Lindberg is considering taking out a partial pension beginning 1 January 2014.

The possible reduction in working time for Anna Lindberg opens the possibility of employing a second deputy director to assist her. Anna proposed that the board appoint Dr. Olle Frödin of the Department of Sociology, Lund University, as a deputy director assigned to specific tasks on a part-time project basis, beginning December 2013. His main focus would be to assist Anna in reaching out to students, writing applications, and establishing more interdisciplinary research collaboration. Olle Frödin is willing to accept such an offer. Anna Lindberg suggested that he should begin working for SASNET on a 40% basis in fall 2013.

The board welcomed Anna’s proposal, and after reviewing Olle Frödin’s CV they agreed that he is highly qualified for the job. However, Helle Rydström stressed the need to discuss priorities and determine how Olle Frödin should spend his time at SASNET most productively.

Anna Lindberg agreed to send the board information on the specific tasks Olle Frödin will work with prior to the board deciding on his appointment. Olle Frödin has received approval from the chair of his department to retain his position as lecturer in the Department of Sociology in fall 2013 while working part-time for SASNET. However, in order to continue working for SASNET beginning in January 2014, he must be appointed as deputy director. This matter will be taken up by the board at its next meeting in October 2013.

6. SASNET Activities 2013 and 2014

Anna Lindberg presented the main activities during the past and current year, and board members offered comments and suggestions.

– Internet Gateway and Newsletters
This has been SASNET’s core activity, managed by Lars Eklund and Jonathan Stoltz (and by Julia Velkova prior to September 2012). The board warmly praised the quality of their work.

– Seminars
SASNET organised almost 30 seminars during 2012, and anticipated about the same number in 2013. Most seminars are held in collaboration with other departments at Lund University, or with external partners. They include lunch seminars at Lunds konsthall (jointly with ABF) and others organised in collaboration with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, the Association of Foreign Affairs at Lund University, and others. Board members expressed their satisfaction with the seminar activities, but Hawwa Lubna criticized the almost exclusive focus on India, with only a few events dedicated to other South Asian countries. Lars Eklund responded that is a natural effect of the predominance of India-related research among Swedish academics working in the field of South Asia. However, SASNET has striven to keep a balance between events focusing on different parts of South Asia. The South Asia Symposium on 24th April 2013 was a demonstration of this effort. Anders Fänge noted that he misses seminars with a more regional focus, i.e., taking South Asia as a whole, India–China relations, or the India–Pakistan–Afghanistan connection. He suggested some seminars that might be of interest.
– European PhD workshop on South Asian Studies in Amsterdam, September 2013
Anna Lindberg reported on the workshop that SASNET co-organises together with a number of leading European centres of South Asian studies, such as Paris, Heidelberg, Ghent, and Edinburgh. In 2012 SASNET organised the workshop in Falsterbo, and this year two PhD candidates and one lecturer from Lund University will participate in Amsterdam. The principle is that each participating institute send two PhD candidates who are at an advanced stage in their thesis work. This occasioned some discussion among board members. Fredrik Tufvesson questioned this, arguing that the workshop should also be open to PhD candidates at an early stage in their work. Anna Lindberg explained that Lund University/SASNET was only accepted as a workshop partner last year, so we cannot set this principle, although we can of course propose it in the future.

– Student activities
Anna Lindberg declared student contacts to be a priority area for SASNET, in which she was strongly supported by Hawwa Lubna. With the assistance of Lars Eklund, Hawwa Lubna has been instrumental in establishing the South Asia Student Association at Lund University (SASA), which was formally launched on 24 April 2013. SASA works in close collaboration with SASNET and actively tries to create incentives for students to participate in SASNET activities. Its main focus, however, is to create a forum for South Asian students, as well as Swedish and other international students with an interest in South Asia, by organising events such as movie nights. Hawwa Lubna mentioned that SASA is planning a South Asia Day at Lund University during the fall. She also expressed an interest in forming a travel committee, modeled after the Association for Foreign Affairs (Utrikespolitiska föreningen), that could arrange organised tours to South Asia for SASA members. The board welcomed her idea, and Anna Lindberg promised to explore the possibility. Stefan Jonsson suggested that SASNET should extend its collaboration with Uppsala University and with CEMUS, a unique student-initiated and primarily student-run university center whose explicit goal is to contribute to a better world. Since the early 1990’s, CEMUS has promoted interdisciplinary higher education and been a creative meeting place for students, PhD Students, researchers, and teachers from Uppsala University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. CEMUS is affiliated with the Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development.

– Bangalore workshop, March 2013
Anna Lindberg told of the exploratory workshop on “Urbanization and Migration in Transnational India: Work and Family Life from a Welfare Perspective” that SASNET organised in Bangalore, India, 5–7 March 2013, in collaboration with the Nordic Centre in India (NCI), and the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC). SASNET was represented by Anna Lindberg, Lars Eklund, and Jonathan Stoltz. While in India, the SASNET team also visited a number of other universities and research institutions in Bangalore, Mangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai.

– Open Access (peer reviewed) Working Papers
Anna Lindberg asked for the board’s opinion on whether SASNET should engage in Open Access publishing of working papers, and if so, should they be restricted to Swedish researchers or open to any international scholar? The need for peer review and editing was also discussed. Fredrik Tufvesson and Stefan Jonsson questioned whether SASNET should launch an Open Access working paper series on its own, since a number of excellent open access sites for submitting manuscripts for publication already exist, both within the field of natural sciences/technology and the social sciences. Fredrik Tufvesson cited arXiv.org, an open e-print archive with over 100,000 articles in physics, 10,000 in mathematics, and 1,000 in computer science; and Stefan Jonsson told about the Social
Science Research Network (SSRN), a website devoted to the rapid dissemination of scholarly research in the social sciences and humanities. Rather than create a new service, both recommended that if SASNET wants to proceed with such a publishing venture, it should choose to start sub-groups under existing open access sites. They also advised against a peer review system. Helle Rydström referred to the Working Papers in Contemporary Asian Studies series that the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies at Lund University maintains, suggesting that this could be a possible model for SASNET.

– Falsterbo workshop with NCI and NIAS, June 2014

In 2009, 2010, and 2011, SASNET successfully organised Nordic Conferences on South Asian Studies for Young Scholars. In 2011, it was done in collaboration with the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen. No conference was held in 2012. Instead, SASNET organised the European workshop for PhD candidates cited earlier. Anna Lindberg and Kristina Myrvold had planned a new Falsterbo conference for September 2013. It was to be a Nordic workshop focusing on interdisciplinary research on South Asian culture, technology, and development. A grant was obtained from The Swedish Research Council, but for various reasons the workshop has been rescheduled to June 2014.

– ICCR Professorship at Lund University

Anna Lindberg outlined the ICCR professorship programme that SASNET administers. Its first Indian visiting professor at Lund University was Prof. Lipi Ghosh, University of Calcutta, during the academic year 2010/11, hosted by the Centre for Gender Studies; then came Prof. Gopal Karanth, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) in Bangalore during 2011/12, hosted by the Department of Sociology; and currently Prof. Surinder Jodhka, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi, holds the professorship for the academic year 2012/13, hosted by the Department of Political Science.

The fourth ICCR Professor has been appointed. He will be Prof. Arvind Agrawal, Central University of Himachal Pradesh in Dharamshala. He is expected to arrive at Lund University in early fall 2013 and be hosted by the Division of Sociology of Law. During the coming year negotiations will be conducted to discuss a renewed contract with ICCR, since the current contract expires after four years.

– Others

Hawwa Lubna suggested that SASNET should seek increased collaboration with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, whose secretariat is in Kathmandu. She will go to Kathmandu in June 2013 to attend a regional seminar on Gender Based Violence against Women in South Asia, organised by the World Bank. While there, Lubna offered to meet the current SAARC Director, who happens to be a Maldivian, and raise the issue of collaboration. The board enthusiastically agreed to her suggestion.

7. Remuneration of board members

Because Lund University’s regulations are unclear regarding the remuneration of board members, that is, which board members are eligible for remuneration and the amount they should receive, Anna Lindberg proposed that this point be postponed until the next board meeting in October 2012. The board agreed to do so.
8. Budget for 2013

The board studied the Budget for 2013, Enclosure No. 3. Since it is somewhat difficult to understand the figures, the board decided to invite a representative of Lund University’s accounting division (Ekonomikontoret) to the next board meeting to explain the details. Hawwa Lubna asked the board for financial support for the South Asia Student Association (SASA). The board decided to set aside SEK 20,000 from the budget for SASA activities.

9. Appointment of Acting Director

Lars Eklund was appointed Acting Director (Ställ företrädande föreståndare) for such times as the Director (Anna Lindberg) is absent.

10. Next meeting

The board discussed the frequency of board meetings and decided that SASNET should hold three board meetings a year, in February, May, and October. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 8 October 2013, 13.30–17.00.

11. Future of SASNET

Since it was almost 17.00 at which time the meeting was to conclude, the board decided to postpone this point once more until the next meeting in October.

12. Other issues

No other issues had been announced. The chairperson thanked the members for their participation and closed the meeting.

Lund, May 24, 2013  
Verified by:

Lars Eklund  
Hawwa Lubna

Lars Eklund, secretary  
Hawwa Lubna

Enclosures:
1. Administrative Work Report No. 13
2. SASNET Directives
3. Budget 2013