

MINUTES FROM NACS BOARD MEETING, COPENHAGEN, 4 MARCH 2000

Present: Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard (chairman), Torstein Hjellum, Taru Salmenkari, Marina Thorborg, Bent Nielsen (observer), Raisa Asikainen (observer), Jørund Buen (reporter).

Absent: Björn Kjellgren, Outi Luova, Pertti Nikkilä, Stig Thøgersen.

1. Approval of agenda

The following topics were added to the agenda:

1b) Approval of minutes from last Board Meeting

For a number of reasons, an old version of the minutes from the November 1999 Board Meeting was published in the last NACS newsletter. The Board agreed that the minutes from coming meetings would be regarded as final if the secretary has received no comments to the draft version within three weeks after the minutes have been distributed for comments.

1c) Approval of new preliminary board member

The Board needs to clarify whether Mr. Pertti Nikkilä and his deputy, Ms. Kirsi Leskinen, wish to/are able to continue as members of the NACS Board or not. In the meantime, Ms. Taru Salmenkari, since 1998 Assistant of East Asian Studies in the Institute for Asian and African Studies at the University of Helsinki, will act as a preliminary representative from Finland. If neither Nikkilä nor Leskinen wish to continue as Board Members, Salmenkari's permanent position in the Board must be formally accepted by the NACS General Assembly in mid-2001. In that case, Salmenkari will examine possible deputies.

2. Economy – status and possibilities

While absent, treasurer Björn Kjellgren informed via e-mail that the costs of the November 1999 Board meeting were relatively high – SEK 16.189,-. The costs for the latest newsletter (exclusive the payment to the editor) were SEK 1.765,-, and expenses for the NACS bank account were SEK 400,-. An income of SEK 2.392,- in membership fees has been registered. This indicates that the NACS economy is still healthy, with around SEK 60.924,76 on two bank accounts.

3. Member list and recruitment: status for recruitment efforts, including effort to include representatives from more universities in the NACS Board

Based on lists of potential members and when they paid their membership fee the last time, distributed by the treasurer, Members of the Board and their deputies have taken an initiative to recruit new members in their respective countries. In this way, many updated regular and e-mail addresses have also been obtained. Although the initiative has elicited some response, much work remains to be done to raise the number of NACS members. The Board agreed on the following additional measures in this regard:

- Make a short NACS pamphlet including some graphics. The pamphlet

should provide arguments for becoming a NACS member, and describe how to pay membership fee. In addition to a section on what NACS currently does, and why it is important to support these activities, the pamphlet should list what NACS has achieved so far, and its future plans. It should also include a section on the special Nordic attitude and its role as a development model for China (social democracy, environmental commitment, non-partisan etc.).

- Organize lectures in years when there are no NACS conferences.
- Extend the possibilities of paying the membership fee. The Board would like to open for paying fees by credit cards over the Internet. All similar membership organizations currently have this arrangement. Today, it costs almost as much to pay the membership fee as the fee itself, due to the high fees for international money transfer.

It would be important to include Lund University in the further work of NACS.

4. Newsletter – how to keep it updated, and to secure that more information that is relevant is posted to the editor or Board from our members?

It was suggested that the web site should be updated frequently, that the members will be notified by e-mail whenever important additions to the web site are made, and that the members will get regular mail only about NACS conferences and general assemblies. For that, the e-mail list needs to be further updated and enlarged. However, the newsletter is a tangible evidence of NACS' existence, and many members are still not familiar with using e-mail and the Internet. Thus, a paper version of the newsletter should still be produced. Making the paper version of the newsletter takes time, because it involves several people in different places. Thus, the information provided will not always be up-to-date. The editor needs information that is to be included in the newsletter at least one month before the newsletter is to be published. The next newsletter deadline is 15 April 2000, and it will be coming out in April/May. The Board agreed that including essays in the newsletter would make it more interesting for members. The coming edition should include articles on Sino-Nordic relations. We also hope that the newsletter could be included among the information to be distributed in relation to the celebrations of diplomatic relations later this year. The *raison d' être* of the newsletter is to inform on new programmes and conferences in the Nordic countries specifically on China (and not Asia, as NIAS).

Distribution: In order to reduce costs and ease publishing, the Board agreed that future newsletters be published on the NACS web site. Recipients will be notified of new editions by e-mail. Recipients indicate if they still want a paper copy by regular mail.

5. Home page – update on efforts to add functions

The newsletter editor, Raisa Asikainen, informed that she is waiting for permission to edit the web pages from her university, University of Helsinki, as the web pages are not located at one of that university's servers. Thus,

she has to travel to Turku to update the web site, which naturally means that until this is in order the web page cannot be updated as often as hoped. The most important is a member list that is searchable according to research topic as well as country, and level of research. The editor does not yet have such information about the members. In order to publish a member list on the web site, the information should be submitted to her. The list of members' publications should also be updated. However, this hinges upon the active support from the members. Members should also be invited to post ideas for Nordic research collaboration, e.g. collaborative projects for EU funding. Links for more of the Nordic universities and institutions having activities in China should be added. The list of grants should be updated, especially the section on NIAS. Articles on China research in the Nordic countries from Torbjörn Loden and Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, respectively, should also be published on the web pages if the authors agree to submit their articles. Information on Norwegian and Danish institutions for research and/or education on China is missing.

6. Research course – status

Michael Schoenhals has been contacted with regard to a possible research course on Methodology in China Research in Autumn 2000, but was not able to commit himself to such an initiative. As a NEWAS course on "Field Work in Contemporary Chinese Society" is to be held at Oxford University Autumn 2000, the Board agreed that it made no sense for NACS to launch a very similar course in the same period.

The secretary suggested that in the future, NACS could organise Nordic workshops to prepare applications for EU funding, or even workshops financed by the European Science Foundation (these need to include representatives from +7 countries).

7. Next NACS conference/general assembly - discussion on previously distributed outline of the organisation and thematic focus

Board members Marina Thorborg and Torstein Hjellum presented an outline of the thematic focus of the next NACS conference, to be held in Denmark in Summer 2001. Keynote speakers should primarily be from the Nordic countries. The discussion of the outline circled around a number of points:

- should the conference concentrate on ideology, or its concrete results, or both? Is the distinction between the two relevant at all? Some wished to focus on the relations between the self-legitimizing beliefs of the elite and the beliefs in the population about elite legitimacy. Others claimed that the Chinese start out with concrete problems, and then proceed to discuss ideology – and not the other way around. It was agreed to rephrase the title of the conference to "What are the ideological currents...", in order to open for different views on this point. It was also suggested that the coupling of ideological currents with concrete issues discussed by the Chinese should be encouraged (e.g. what underlying ideological currents can be found in the

anti-American discourse: other issues could be globalisation, WTO, social justice and inequality, state-owned enterprise reform, environmental problems, the reduced role of the state, and post-modernism).

- should political as well as ideological currents be touched upon at the conference?

The Board agreed to continue the discussion electronically, and to involve deputies in the discussion as well. It was also proposed to invite the deputies to a meeting in late Autumn 2000 to discuss the conference in more detail (and to integrate the deputies more in NACS' work).

The secretary was asked to provide information on deadlines for applications to NORFA for funding of the conference.

It would not be expensive or difficult to print a separate publication after the conference; if every participant agrees that his/her article can be published in the form s/he submits it without further editing. Applications for financing the conference should have a publication in mind, and money for a publication can be applied for through many other organs than NORFA.

Torstein and Marina agreed to prepare a second draft for the conference theme and organisation by 15 April 2000.

8. Status for discussions with ECAN on co-operation

The Chairman informed about the activities of EU-China Academic Network (ECAN). It provides a framework in which European specialists on contemporary China can share their knowledge, discuss on-going research, initiate collaborative activities, and exchange views with policy-makers and business representatives as well as other professional bodies. It was initiated 1997, and is financed by the EU Commission. It holds two small-scale Policy Workshops each year, and one annual conference. The last annual conference was held in Copenhagen in February 2000, its theme being China's place in post-Kosovo geopolitics. ECAN is headed by an executive committee with representatives from eight so-called "node institutions", including Denmark (Asien-instituttet, Copenhagen University) and Sweden (Centre for Pacific Asia Studies, Stockholm University). Helsinki University has obtained a so-called "institutional membership" in ECAN, while no Norwegian institutions have asked for membership yet. ECAN also offers a EU-China Research Fellowship Fund (ECRFF), financing fieldwork for Ph.D. students in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

In about one year from now, the current chairman Robert Ash from SOAS, U.K., will retire, and the NACS chairman Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard will replace him. This is an opportunity to extend cooperation between ECAN and NACS.

9. Status for dialogue with NIAS on possibilities for cooperation

This topic was postponed, as the Board had not yet received feedback from NIAS regarding the status of NIAS' negotiations in China and NACS' role in this regard.

10. Status for initiatives for cooperation with Taiwanese universities and research institutions

Cooperation on education, student exchange and stipends between Nordic and Taiwanese research institutions is currently scarce, if not lacking. The idea was that the NACS Board – being non-political – could suggest candidates for stipends to Taiwan, and in return provide information about Nordic universities for Taiwanese students.

The issue was explored, without yielding any concrete results so far.

11. Activities in the Nordic countries to celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations with the P.R. of China.

The Board agreed to celebrate 50 years of Sino-Nordic relations through newsletter articles about diplomatic relations of each country and China. The newsletter can inform about other activities held in the Nordic countries in this regard as well.

12. Next Board Meeting

The next Board Meeting will be held in Oslo, 23-24 September 2000. The 2001 conference will be the most important topic on the agenda.

13. Other issues

- The chairman informed that the Journal of Asian Studies, currently being published by the Department of Asian Studies, Copenhagen University, is seeking ways of cooperation with other institutions in publishing the journal.

- Stig Thøgersen informed by e-mail about the "Postgraduate Workshop on Fieldwork Research Methods in Contemporary Chinese society", Oxford, 18-21 September 2000.

- The Board agreed to prepare a letter to the Nordic Centre in Fudan, arguing that NACS should be more closely involved in the Centre's work. Just as the Fudan Centre, NACS is a Nordic association, which includes all universities and institutions participating in the Fudan Centre, and other institutions as well. A closer cooperation will ensure that university administrators, students and researchers in the Nordic countries become more familiar with the Centre and its activities. Torstein Hjellum will prepare a draft letter. It was also suggested that NACS could also start cooperation with institutions in China's Western and interior areas, e.g. through summer schools. In this way, NACS would be regarded a pacesetter and Sino-Nordic co-operation would be strengthened.

- The secretary informed by e-mail that the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently evaluating its Asia strategy – somewhat inspired by the earlier Swedish effort — although on a more low-key, country-by-country basis.