

**President's Report**  
**Swedish Association for American Studies (SAAS)**  
**2020 General Meeting, September 28, 2020**

The present Board of SAAS was elected at the General Meeting in Stockholm on September 30, 2018. During the term, the board has consisted of Adam Hjorthén (President), Chloé Avril (Vice-President), Eva Zetterman (Treasurer), Maria Holmgren Troy (Secretary), Jenny Bonnevier, Bo G. Ekelund, Oskar Nordell, Joel Frykholm (Deputy Board Member), and Markus Heide (Deputy Board Member). A Nomination Committee was also elected consisting of Iulian Cananau, Anna Linzie, and Adnan Mahmutovic.

The Board has had nine meetings, of which seven have been digital/online-meetings: in December 2018 (Stockholm), March 2019 (Uppsala), May 2019 (online), August/September 2019 (online), December 2019 (online), February 2020 (online), May 2020 (online), June 2020 (online), August 2020 (online). The high number of online meetings has partly been because the president has been working in Germany for most of the term, and partly due to the corona virus pandemic.

Activities During the Term

The SAAS board has continued to work along the lines established during the 2016–2018 term. Most of our online meetings have been held via Google Docs, but as everyone got used to Zoom during the pandemic spring of 2020, that has proven to be a very good replacement for the Google Docs meetings. The SAAS website was a source of some concern in early 2019. As the ownership of our web domain saasinfo.se was transferred from one company to another (from SE Direkt to Loopia), the website subsequently crashed. After some efforts by the Board, the website was reinstalled and updated and has since worked as planned. We have during the term also continued to maintain an online archive of minutes and other records on Google Drive.

The main activities of SAAS during the 2018–2020 term has focused on three areas of activity: 1) the organizing of and participation in academic events, 2) efforts at surveying the field of American Studies in Sweden, and 3) the work of the Nordic Association for American Studies (NAAS).

- 1) The core activity of SAAS has always been the biannual conferences. Following the Stockholm conference in 2018, the next conference would ordinarily have taken place in the fall of 2020. However, since Sweden was next in turn to host the 2021 NAAS conference, which would have required significant work during the span of just one academic year, the Board decided to postpone and thus merge the SAAS conference with the NAAS conference. It was decided that the NAAS conference be held at Uppsala University, and planned in cooperation with the Swedish Institute for North American Studies (SINAS). In lieu of a fall 2020 conference, the SAAS Board initiated plans for a two-day lunch-to-lunch symposium in Karlstad. The symposium would have featured a plenary lecture, as well as workshops for the discussion of PhD student papers and drafts of research applications. This symposium was to be held in late September, at the same time as the General Meeting. As the corona virus pandemic spread during the spring of 2020, the Board decided to postpone these plans. Similarly, the plans for the NAAS/SAAS conference progressed during 2019 and 2020 but, in early September 2020, the conference committee (Dag Blanck, Jenny Bonnevier, and Markus Heide) together with the SAAS and NAAS boards, took the decision to cancel the conference. The next on-site NAAS conference is now scheduled to be held in Uppsala in 2023 (followed by Finland in 2025, according to the traditional national rotation scheme). The NAAS 2021 conference will be replaced with a one-day online symposium.

During ordinary, non-pandemic times, SAAS is an academic network structured around biannual conferences. The ambition of the Board has been for SAAS to be able to offer members some activities also during non-conference years. This ambition has dovetailed with the effort of getting more young scholars involved in the association. For these reasons, the Board, in cooperation with SINAS, organized a Graduate Student Workshop at Stockholm University in October 2019. The workshop was coordinated by Adam Hjorthén and Maria Holmgren-Troy. Since two grant applications did not receive funding, the costs of the event were shared by SAAS and SINAS. Except for the organizers, the workshop featured three senior scholars (Dag Blanck, Jenny Bonnevier, and Jayson Sae-Saue) and seven PhD students (Marie Bennedahl, Linné.; Karen Ann Blom, Jönköping; David Bowling, Lund, Nuno Marques, Umeå; Andreas Nyström, Karlstad; Fredrik Svensson, Karlstad; Maria Trejling, Stockholm). The workshop was a positive experience for everyone involved, and it is hopefully a form of event that can continue to be arranged in the future.

On April 25–27, 2019, the 26<sup>th</sup> biennial NAAS conference was organized in Bergen, Norway, on the theme “Monuments.” The SAAS plenary lecture was presented by Adam Hjorthén, titled “Transatlantic Monuments: On Memories and Ethics of Settler Histories.” The conference had approximately 90 participants, with a relatively high proportion coming from non-Nordic countries. It is notable that only two participants were from Sweden.

- 2) Being the national association for scholars and students in American Studies in Sweden, the Board in 2019 took the initiative to do a survey of the national state of the field. The first survey was initiated in January 2019 through the help of SAAS members who filled out a questionnaire distributed by the SAAS Board, as well as by the efforts of the board members themselves. The results of the survey were published in the SAAS Newsletter the following April the same year. The survey was replicated in 2020, and the second newsletter was distributed in April 2020. Both newsletters can be found on the SAAS website. It is the hope of the Board that the annual survey and newsletter can become a recurring feature of SAAS. Although the core of the survey has been based on a number of submissions from association members (13 submissions in 2019, and 12 in 2020), the newsletters have still required considerable work on behalf of the Board. To be able to sustain the newsletter in the long run, the work will require continued – and if possible increased – support from SAAS members. Ideally, it would also be good to develop a system for submitting information not only on our own individual activities but also, somehow, on activities of non-SAAS colleagues at our respective departments.
- 3) Sweden has been represented on the NAAS Executive Board through the SAAS President. The NAAS Board has had three meetings during the term: in April 2019 (in Bergen); May 2019 (email), and April/May 2020 (email). As in previous years, much of its work has focused on the financial situation of our journal *American Studies in Scandinavia* (ASIS).

At the General Meeting in Bergen on April 26, 2019, several new officers were elected. Mikku Saikku stepped down as NAAS President and was replaced by Alf Tomas Tønnessen. A nomination committee was also appointed consisting of David Mauk, Dag Blanck, Ari Helo, and Jørn Brøndal. Partly due to the turbulent situation of ASIS, and partly because there was no one willing to take over the full responsibility as journal

editor at the moment, the GM elected a committee of editors: Niels Bjerre Poulsen served as the interim editor for 2019, after which Anders Bo Rasmussen took over as editor. Anders Bo Rasmussen served as the interim book review editor during the transition period, and was then replaced by Marianne Kongerslev (Aalborg University) and Anne Mørk (independent scholar; former DAAS President). In the summer of 2020, Anders Bo Rasmussen (a historian by training) asked the NAAS Board to add a co-editor focusing on literary scholarship. The Board followed the editor's suggestion to appoint Henry King (Malmö University) as co-editor of ASIS.

Something to monitor in the coming years is the question of gender balance of the elected NAAS officers. Currently, all elected officers of NAAS are men (the President, the editor of ASIS, and all members of the Nomination Committee). There have historically been very few women officers on the NAAS Board, and during the entire history of NAAS only two women Presidents. The editors of ASIS have also all been men (often with women as review editors, which is the case right now). Steps should be taken during upcoming NAAS General Meetings to address this imbalance.

The main topic of discussion during the term has been the funding, and thus the future, of ASIS. Traditionally, the funding for ASIS has primarily come from NOS-HS. The administration of NOS-HS circulates among the Nordic countries. In 2018, the then administrator of the grants, the Swedish Research Council (VR), came to the decision that NAAS did not meet the formal requirements as an organization eligible to receive grants from NOS-HS. VR came to this decision despite the fact that NAAS has received such grants for many years. In 2019, the administration of NOS-HS was passed on to the Academy of Finland, which came to a very conclusion, namely that NAAS indeed was an eligible organization, when Janne Lahti, the then editor of ASIS, sent in a new application for NOS-HS funding. In December 2019, that application was granted funding for two years, ensuring that ASIS will continue to be published in the coming years.

In addition to the question of eligibility, however, VR had also indicated that it was a long-term problem that ASIS currently is not a gold open access journal. The question of open access has been discussed within the NAAS Board since 2017 (see the President's Report from the 2018 SAAS General Meeting), and the SAAS Board has ever since continued to be very active in these discussions. Together with the former NAAS

president, Mikko Saikku, and the former editor, Janne Lahti, the SAAS Board produced a couple of open access options for consideration by the NAAS Board. These options (Stockholm University Press and Ubiquity Press, together with two other options of Helsinki University Press and Scandinavian University Press) were discussed by the SAAS Board. In April 2019, the Board presented a preferred ranking of these options to the NAAS Board. However, since the application from NOS-HS finally received funding in December 2019, the work of pursuing open access options has come to a halt. ASIS currently continues to be published by University of Southern Denmark Press, and is also made available upon publication through the online repository of the Copenhagen Business School (which officially does not count as an open access publishing strategy). Although supported by SAAS, ASANOR, and DAAS, the question of gold open access has not been pursued by the NAAS President, FASA, nor the editors of ASIS. It has been the position of the SAAS Board that gold open access is an inevitable step for ASIS – for reasons of funding, but also to attract authors (especially since many major foundations today require open access output). It is a question that should remain on the agenda of the NAAS Board.

Adam Hjorthén

President of SAAS

Stockholm, September 21, 2020