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Who decides how a problem is to be understood?

LUND UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT (LUCRAM)

Three myths in our dealings with disasters, climate change and development

The theme of this lecture is how neo-liberalism has operated to reduce the ability in academia to research the causes of problems. It argues that the way that problems are framed has been distorted through power structures in which we are forced to conform, leading to the acceptance of fake concepts (such as 'community' and resilience) and avoidance of explanations that actually look at what is causing the problems we claim to address.

This presentation uses examples from the overlap between development, climate change and disaster preparedness, and these are discussed in relation to three myths. The first myth is that people share the same priority for prevention of severe natural hazards with outsider "disaster managers". Most people do not, because they have other priorities (of everyday life). Many people interpret risk through culture and religious beliefs, which are also ignored in disaster risk reduction organizations. The second is the myth of "community". Does it actually exist, or do we pretend it is there in order to enable us to do our work? From this I explore the problems that arise when we do

use the notion of community in what we do, or what others do. This is linked to the assumption that people are "rational" in the way we assume, and that evidence is collected and acted on. Instead, we need to take account of different rationalities (rather than irrationality) and the significance of emotions and experiences in determining behaviour in relation to "evidence". The last myth relates to whether governments actually care about their people. When we do research to provide evidence for policy ("policy uptake") we assume that there will be a rational, logical process that links our research to policy design and implementation. But what if the responsible organisations (national governments and international organisations) don't actually care, or are constrained by factors that make evidence-based policy irrelevant? In all this the missing element is any consideration of power relations as the major determinant of what does and does not happen.

TIME: 13:00–14:00, 15 SEPTEMBER 2017

**PLACE: ROOM 206, UNIVERSITY BUILDING/
UNIVERSITETSHUSET, PARADISGATAN 2**

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Terry Cannon has a background in development studies, and specialises on rural livelihoods, disaster risk reduction, vulnerability analysis and adaptation to climate change. He is Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the UK, and was senior lecturer at ISS from 1989 to 1991. He has also worked with International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), University of Greenwich (London) and the Natural Resources Institute (UK). He recently co-edited and co-authored the World Disasters Report 2014 focus on Culture and Risk, and is co-author of *At Risk: natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters* (with Wisner, Blaikie and Davis), which is one of the most widely cited and used works in disaster risk reduction. He is currently working on a project in Bangladesh on cyclone preparedness and how to protect livelihoods as well as lives.

