Comprehensive Examination Questions for Supaporn Phokaew
2 February, 2009

Prepare a short essay answer for 2 questions in each set below (total 4 questions). Each exam answer should be approximately 2,500-3,000 words in length.

Breadth Questions

1   You indicate there is considerable agreement in most approaches to disaster and risk. Now explore the disagreements and the sources of these disagreements about 1) specific practices; 2) planning and processes; 3) concepts useful in your field. What do these disagreements reveal to us?

2   Last week the person in charge of fire and risk for the coming Olympics said (privately, to me B.A.) that there is not yet integration of the key agencies and actors responsible in British Columbia, and the games are only thirteen months away. There appears to be a culture of 'unpreparedness' or 'culture of avoidance' when it comes to major events (even in risks related to planned events like the Olympics). Such cultures seem to be established in places as different as British Columbia and Thailand.

    Did Thailand have a 'culture of unpreparedness' in December 2004 before the tsunami? What changes in the system occurred after the tsunami in Thailand? Are these changes still under way? Does the concept and practice of 'network' offer an opportunity to transcend the culture of unpreparedness in Thailand? If so, precisely how could networks change the culture of avoidance?

3   You indicate there is greater attention among planners and actors to mitigation and less attention to adaptation to disaster risk – if adaptation is so logical, why is there less attention and effort around adaptation? Why is mitigation attracting so much attention?

Depth Questions

4   Your analysis indicates that in contemporary, developing early warning systems, the subsystem of warning dissemination networks, that is the 'last mile' segment, remains the most underdeveloped, despite its paramount importance for public safety, and that at-risk communities especially need to be involved in the design, development and operation of this part of the warning system.

    Discuss key historical and contemporary factors (social, institutional, jurisdictional, cultural and/or other) that have contributed to this lack of community focus on warning or that have worked against community inclusion, including tensions and conflicts between external interventionist and internal self-determinist forces affecting local development and risk reduction practices.

5   Given that so many different disciplines and jurisdictions are present in the design, control and operation of end-to-end warning systems (especially multi-hazard warning systems), including examples in your analysis, discuss the complexities, challenges and prospects of integrating these elements into reliable and coherent systems, and implications for last-mile public warning.

6   Citing Kanayama's Japanese study, you indicate that community radio can play a very active role in emergency communication and community development. Discuss what are apparent strengths and weaknesses of community based media approaches relative to conventional state and private media, and where they should be placed within the wider and deeper processes of public warning and disaster risk reduction.