

DOWNWARD COUNTERFACTUALS

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A downward counterfactual is a thought about the past where things turned for the worse. This concept originates from psychology, in the way people think about the past. But it is insightful for exploring extreme scenarios for natural hazards, especially relating to climate change. This talk will explain downward counterfactuals, and provide illustrations from recent historical events. The use of downward counterfactuals for risk assessment will be discussed.

Brief bio

Dr. Gordon Woo is a visiting professor at University College London, in the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction. For the past decade, he has been researching on counterfactual risk analysis. Outside psychology, he pioneered the use of downward counterfactuals for risk applications, and has published widely on topics ranging from weather risks to earthquake and volcano risks. He trained at Cambridge University, MIT and Harvard, and is the author of the book: *Calculating Catastrophe*, translated as *Scienza e Coscienza della Catastrofi*.