

Geographical Association Annual Conference 2011

Physical geography in four diagrams

In this well-attended lecture Bob Allison explained how fundamental concepts underpinning physical geography could be made accessible and applicable to different situations by four 'state' diagrams, which act as visual devices for viewing and grasping key drivers, variables and relationships at a glance. Each was illustrated with a recent example to show their utility in solving real world problems when used with careful measurement of the geographical conditions.

Diagram 1 plotted relationships between process, form and materials to clarify required aspects of focus. Diagram 2 illustrated the use of regression lines to identify 'tipping points' within systems - illustrated through slope stability prediction. Diagram 3 mapped scale, occurrence and frequency to plot natural variability - used in a legal case over the cause of coastal cliff retreat. Diagram 4 charted the effect of material strength versus plasticity in subsurface features - applied to pile-driving vibrations this has revolutionised the preservation of urban archaeological remains.

Inspiring stuff!

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