Viewing the world from a geographer’s perspective.

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What is a geographical phenomenon?

A geographical phenomenon has:

- **A temporal component** – it implies that geographical phenomena are not static – it changes over time. What is the implication when gathering data or comparing different sets of data about a phenomenon?

- **A spatial component**. All elements of the phenomenon can be linked to a specific location (it can be a point, a line or an area) on the Earth’s surface. Location can be defined in absolute (the geographical coordinate system) or relative terms (± 24 km northeast from the road and rail crossing). By the way, a line is actually a string of points.

- **A thematic component**: The thematic component refers to the measurable characteristics or properties of the phenomenon. Examples: What is its name, How big is it? How long is it? When was it erected? How old is it? What colour is it? What is the function of it? How important is it?
## Listing of examples of geographical phenomena.

### Can you think of examples that meets these criteria?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>These are not geographical phenomena</th>
<th>These are geographical phenomena</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A crime scene</td>
<td>Crimes scenes in a city over the last five years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Places exhibiting art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rugby teams participating in the Curry Cup competition.</td>
<td>The home towns and schools of rugby players participating in the Curry Cup competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowers of Namaqualand</td>
<td>Spatial distribution of and spatial variation in the flowers of Namaqualand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Share more examples with fellow students and your e-tutor
The geographical perspective.

Questions geographers ask (re Spatial distribution of and spatial variation in the flowers of Namaqualand) or are interested in.

Important: In the exam you will definitely be required to explain spatial concepts with reference to a given geographical phenomenon.

- **Where is it?** (spatial location): This refers to the absolute location of individual elements of the phenomenon.

- **How is it distributed?** (spatial distribution and pattern): This refers to all elements of the phenomenon? Such questions can be answered be using terms such as random, regular, clustered, linear, star-shaped, etceteta.

- **How does it vary spatially?** (spatial variation): This is where the thematic components comes in. Remember that the thematic components refers to measurable attributes of the phenomenon. Think about the following: The flowers close to town X flower 10 days earlier than the flowers around town B or the flowers around town B is much more than the flowers near place A.
The geographical perspective - continued.

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- **Spatial covariation.** When looking at spatial co-variation we look at other phenomena that might have played a role in producing, the spatial distribution and spatial variation we have observed. In this case the variation in rainfall, or soil type might explain why we find certain species of wild flowers only in certain areas or why a specific specie flower at different times in different locations? This is also where the holistic approach of geographers and their view that the earth is a system of interacting parts, comes into play. Can you detect spatial co-variation by comparing one or more different thematic maps of the same area?

- **Spatial processes.** Can we associate a spatial process with the wild flowers of Namaqualand? Definitely!! Huge numbers of plant lovers from South Africa and in fact the world, visit Namaqualand annually during spring time. Surely the local communities have responded over the years by opening bed and breakfast and launching marketing campaigns to attract visitors (with money to spend) to boost the local economies of Namaqualand.