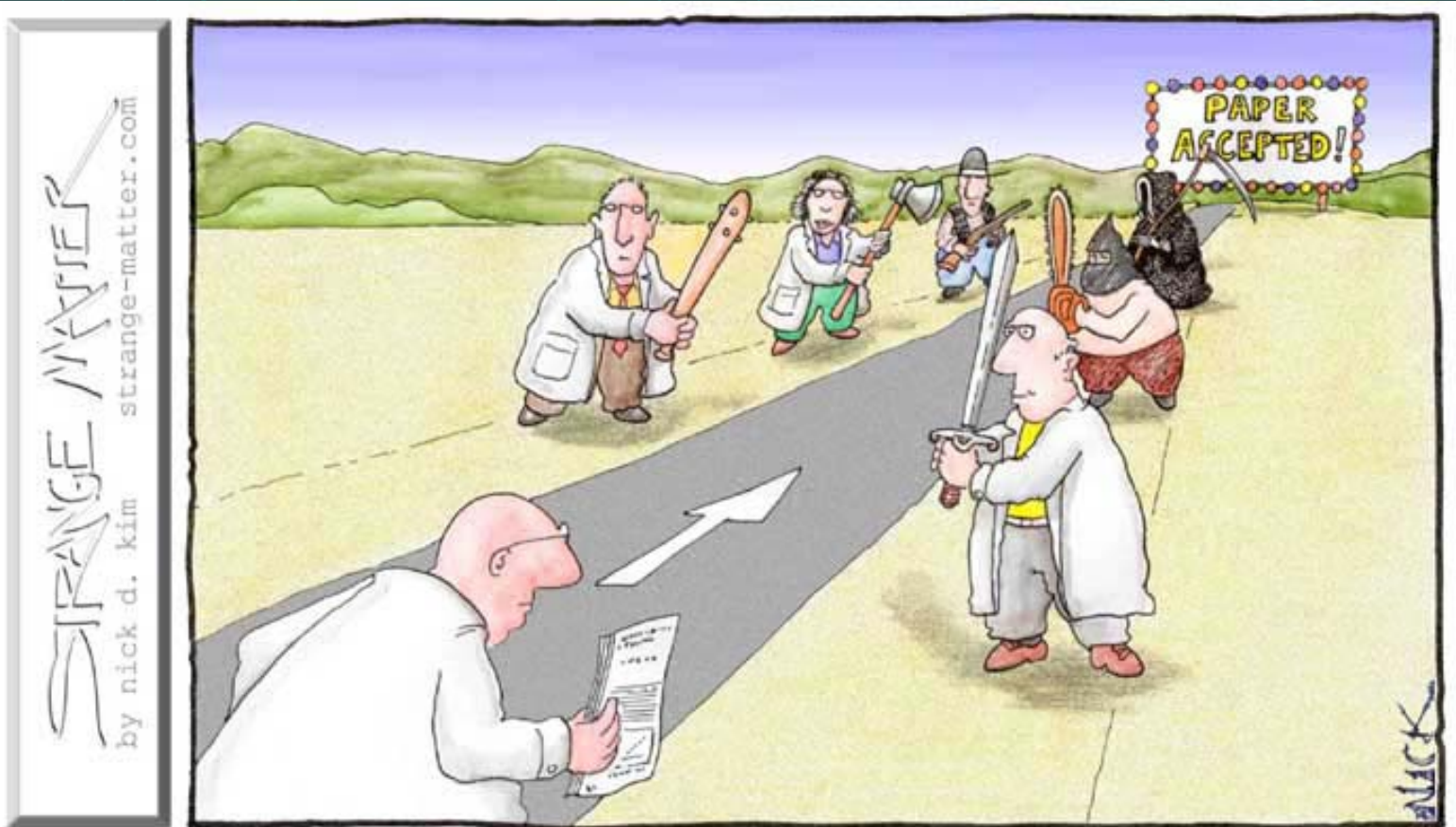


# **INVENTORY AND LINKAGE OF DATABASES FOR STUDYING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PLACES AND HEALTH IN URBAN SETTINGS (Montréal Site)**

- Louise Potvin
- Katherine Frohlich
- Pierre Hamel
- Marie-France Raynault
- Slim Haddad
- Maria Victoria Zunzunegui

- Lise Gauvin
- Clément Dassa
- Éric Robitaille
- Sébastien Giroux
- Robert Choinière
- Nancy Ross

# Why are we concerned with small areas?



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

# Why are we concerned with small areas?

- There is a debate regarding the most appropriate unit of analysis for exploring the role of social, cultural, and economic disparities on health.



# Why are we concerned with small areas?

- There is a need to theorize about health and place.



## ● The most appropriate unit of analysis might be neighbourhoods of residence because ...

- ... the neighbourhood environment is closer to the everyday pursuits and experiences of people and therefore is very likely to exert direct causal influences;
- locale wherein persons find and use resources to accomplish the aspirations they deem subjectively meaningful ;
- people with similar values and lifestyles often aggregate to the same geographical locales ;
- evidence that neighbourhood environments influence a variety of health outcomes including health behaviours .

What are some of the problems we have encountered?



# Some of the challenges ...

- Different conceptual definitions of neighbourhoods as a function of:

- Disciplines
- Convenience
- Availability



# What is a neighbourhood?

- ... “place with physical and symbolic boundaries” ... (Keller, 1968. p: 89.)
- ... “place and people, with the common sense of limit as the area one can easily walk over” ... (Morris & Hess, 1975 p: 6.)
- ... “a physical or geographical entity with specific (subjective) boundaries” ... (Golab, 1982, p: 72)



# What is a neighbourhood?

- ... "a limited territory within a larger urban area, where people inhabit dwellings and interact socially" ... (Hallman's, 1984 p :13)
- ... "a social organization of a population residing in a geographically proximate locale" ... (Warren, 1981, p: 62)
- ... "Geographic units within which certain social relationships exist" ... (Downs, 1981, p: 15)
- ... "common named boundaries, more than one institution identified with area, and more than one tie of shared public space or social network" ... (Schoenberg, 1979, p: 69)



How can we best define neighbourhoods, conceptually ?

# Some more challenges ...

- Most databases dealing with health were not conceived with spatialization in mind rendering analyses “post hoc”

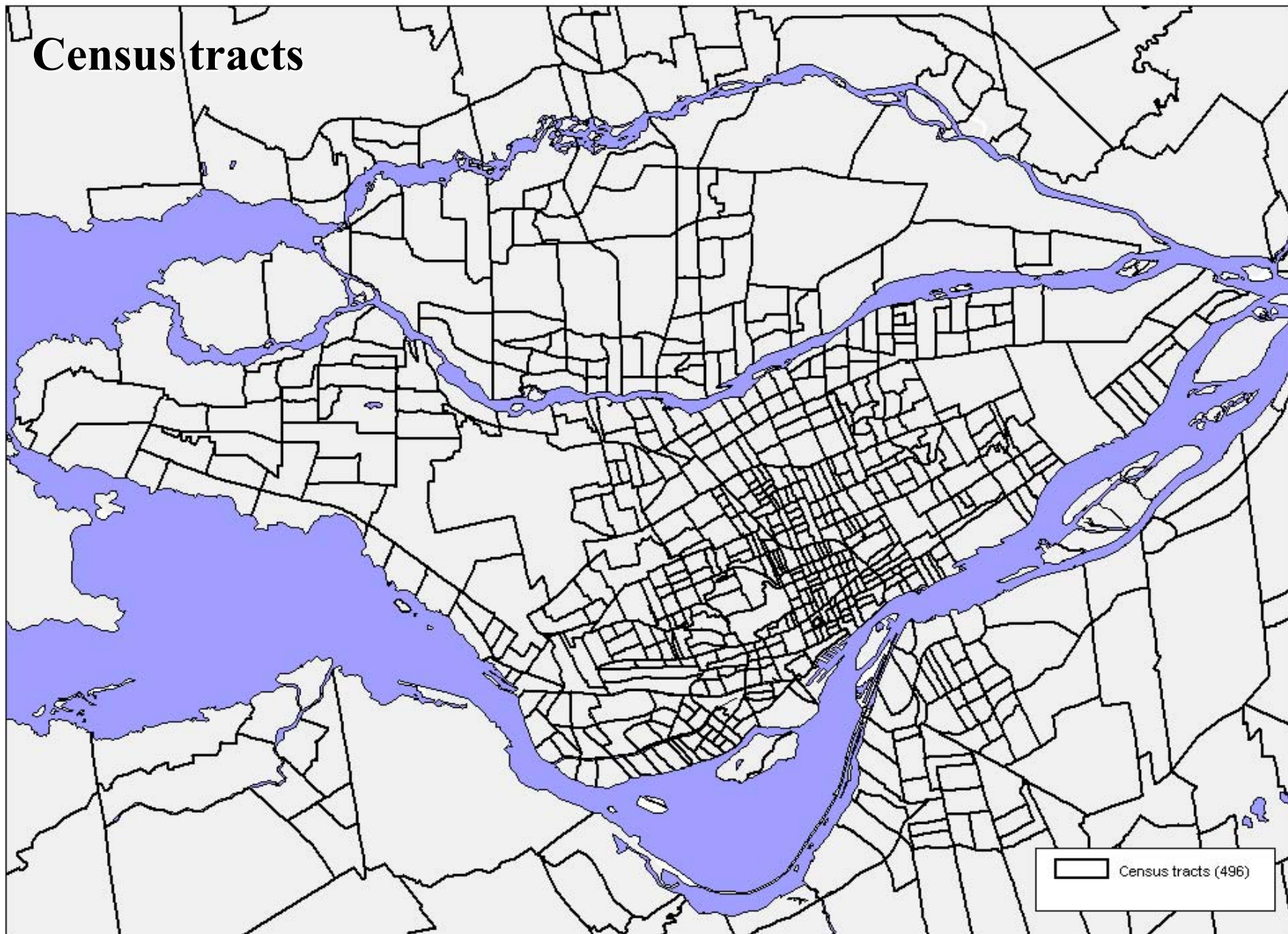
- 
- The most frequently used criterion for dividing territories into neighbourhoods is HOMOGENEITY

- Is this the right criterion? The best criterion?
- What other criteria are there ?

A sampler of what we did ...

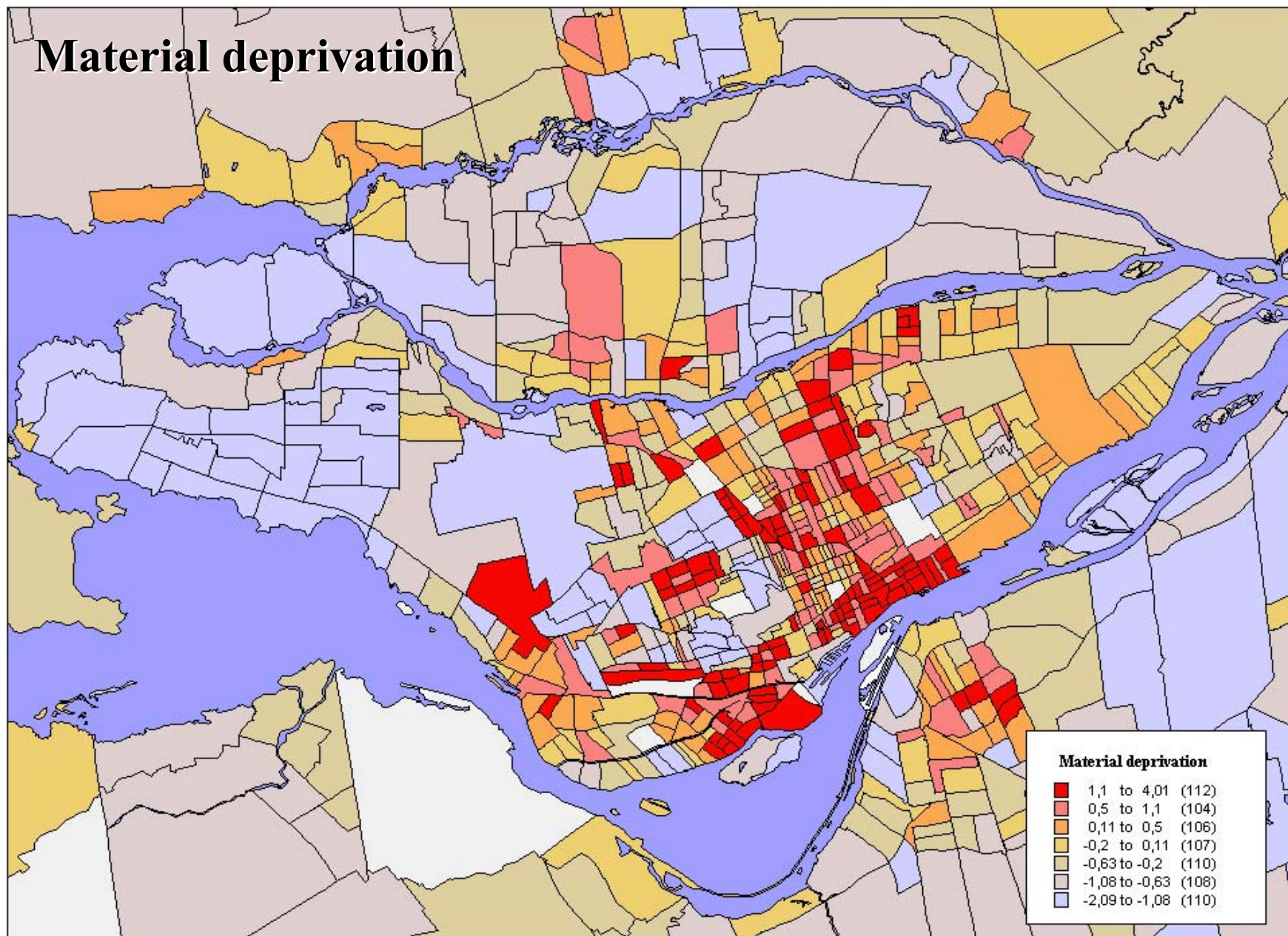


# Census tracts



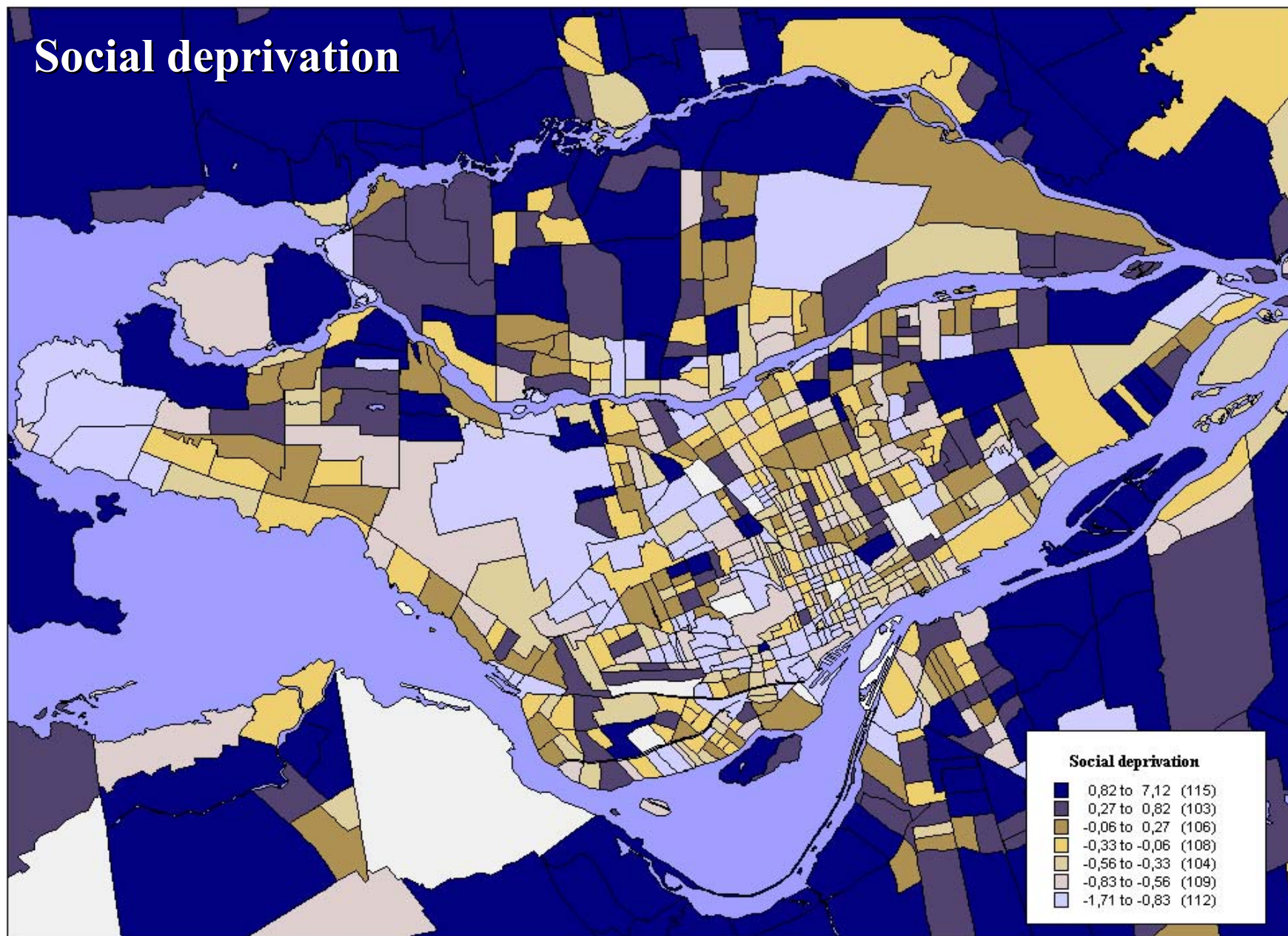


# Material deprivation





# Social deprivation



# Maximizing homogeneity





What are the most appropriate criteria?



# Another musing ...

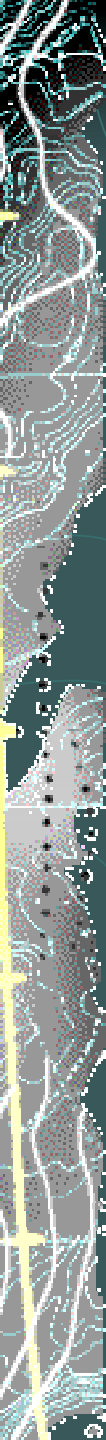
- ... the age and the history of a city matter ...



Are data from different cities comparable?

# Still another musing ...

- ... different populations have different degrees of freedom in spread out across neighbourhoods (some people are prisoners of their area of residence because of poverty, exclusion, ...) ...



How do we account for differential exposure to neighbourhoods ?



# Yet another musing ...

● ... time ...



How do we account for change across time ?



# Multiple levels of spatial analysis


- Enumeration Areas
- Census Tracts
- Police Districts
- “Arrondissements”
- City-defined neighbourhoods
- Community Divisions



What is the most appropriate scale ?

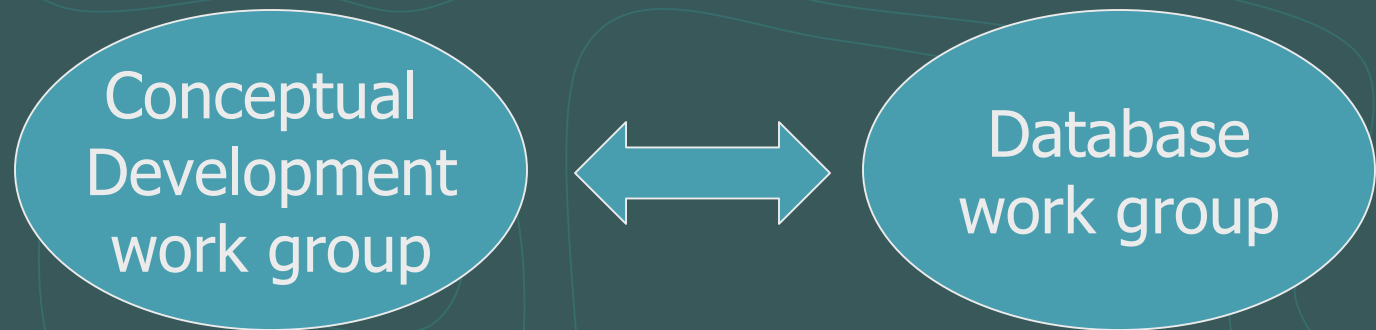
# More ideas ...

- Many researchers are using multilevel modeling to decompose variance from neighbourhood and individual levels:
  - In re-structuring data hierarchically, how are we affecting the representativeness of samples?
  - Are we appropriately teasing out compositional from contextual effects?



What is the most appropriate analysis strategy ?

# The Structuring of our Work



How to interface the conceptual and the empirical?



# Two parallel processes (1)

Attempts to develop a coding scheme of the literature on health and place

- Reading a variety of relevant paper
- Elaborating tree-like logic models for each paper
- Creation of a glossary and definitions of concepts encountered in papers

# Two parallel processes (2)

Attempts to develop an understanding of how places produce health

- Create a synthesis of papers concerned with spatialisation and food safety to be analysed from various theoretical perspectives
- Try to establish an understanding of what is meant by community and neighbourhood

# Questions

- Is the question of defining « perfect » geographic borders a trap
- Is the criteria of maximising within homogeneity and between heterogeneity
- Does the relationship with space change with: SES, the health issue



What is the best way to interface the conceptual and the empirical?

Where do we go from here?



# Closing thoughts ...



Current conceptualisations and operationalisations of neighbourhoods may still be far from optimal.