

# CultureBlocks: Bringing Arts & Culture into the Urban Policy Mix

---

Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP)

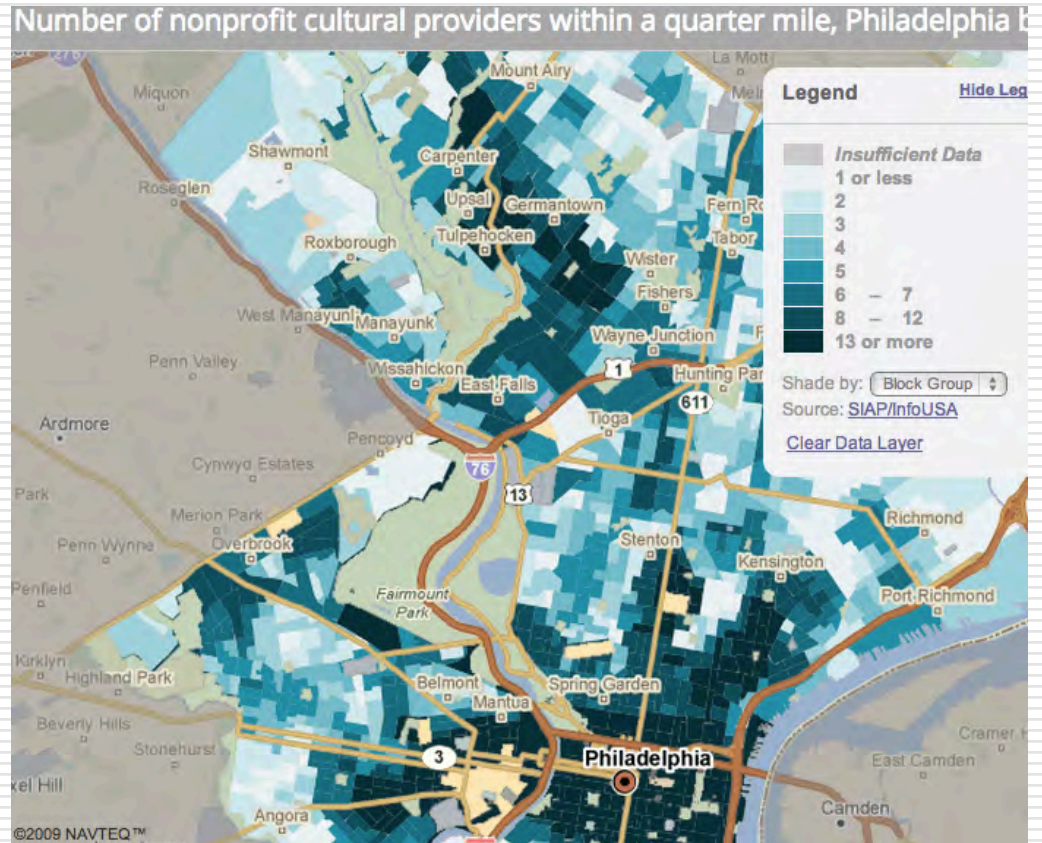
October 2013



# Connecting the arts to urban public policy

- Data: detailed evidence & change over time
- Placing the arts in space & place
- How does the urban context influence the arts & culture
- How do the arts & culture influence other dimensions of urban life

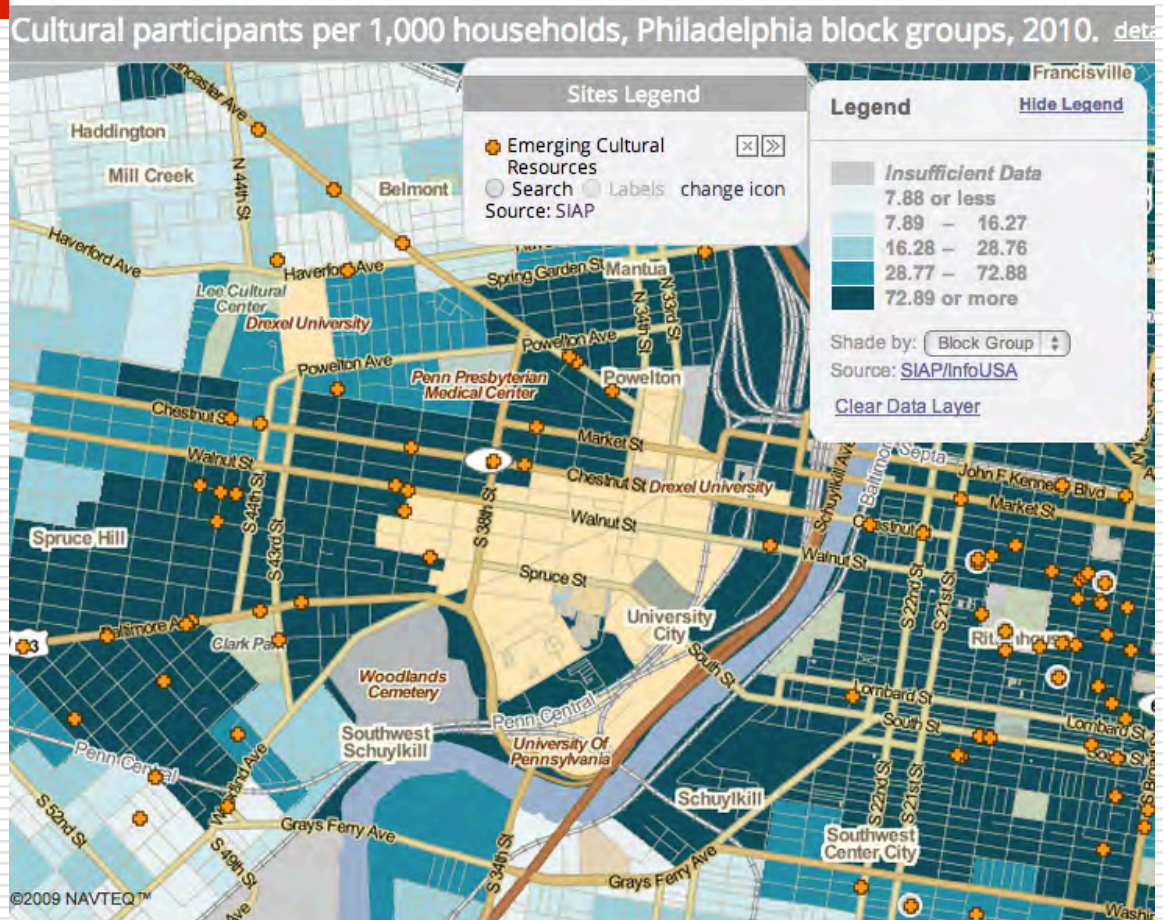
CultureBlocks widens the circle of individuals & organizations who can address these issues.



# Data: detailed evidence & change over time

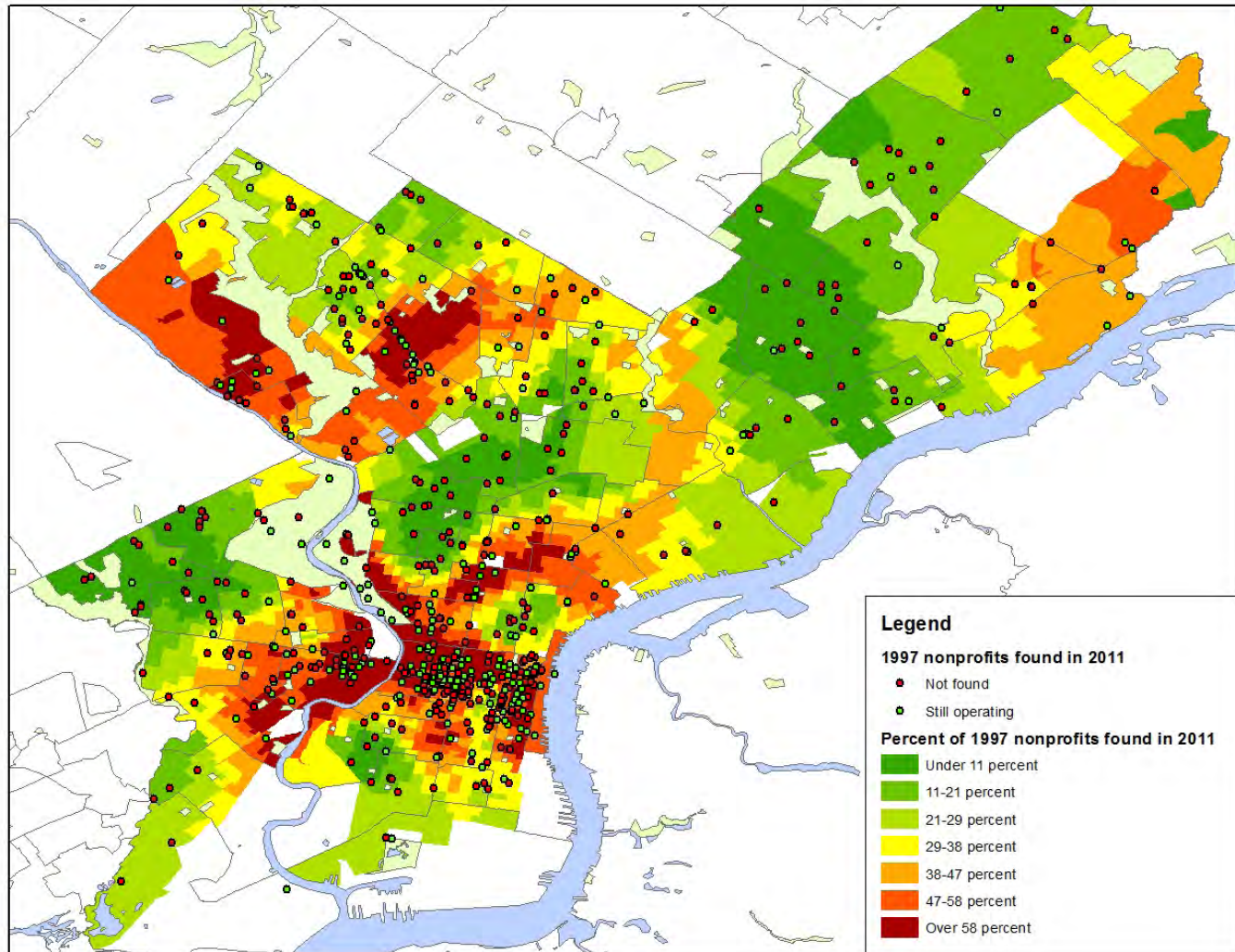
CultureBlocks is driven by a set of databases that SIAP has developed over the past two decades

- Nonprofit, including informal & emerging groups
- Commercial cultural firms
- Resident artists
- Cultural participants



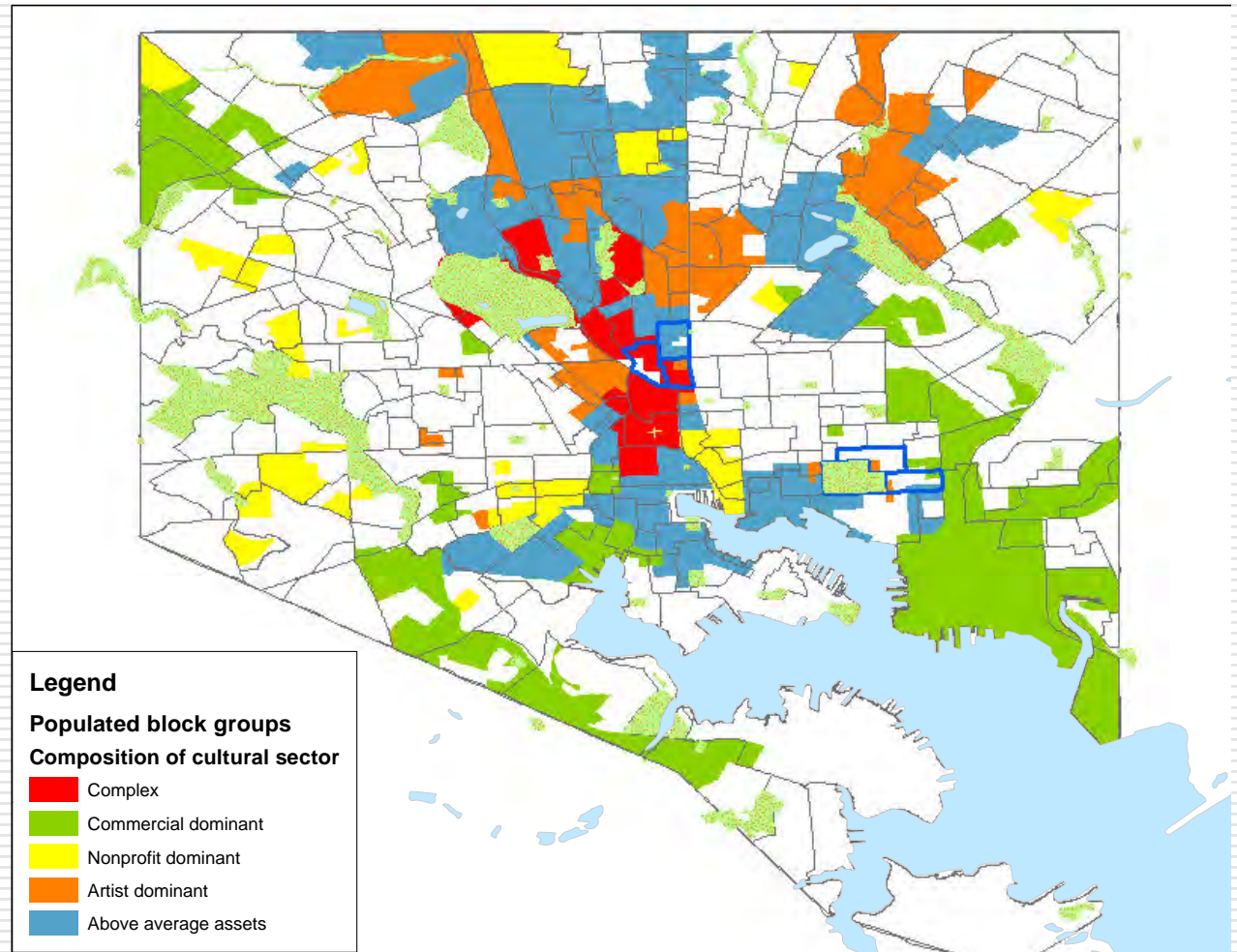
# Measuring change over time in the cultural ecosystem

SIAP was able to link arts organizations between 1997 and 2011 to calculate a “mortality” rate. Cultural nonprofits disappeared at much higher rates in parts of West and North Philadelphia than in neighborhoods around Center City.

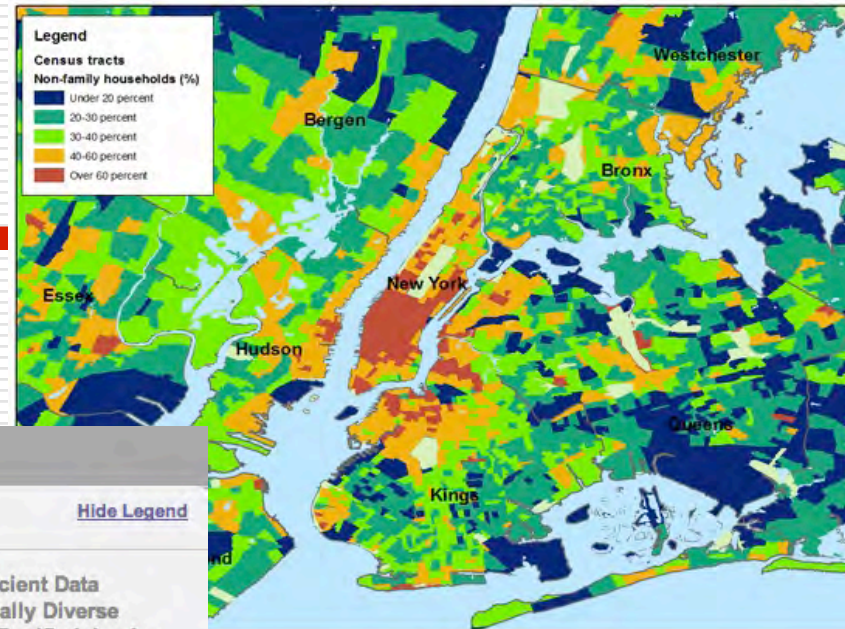


# Placing the arts in space & place

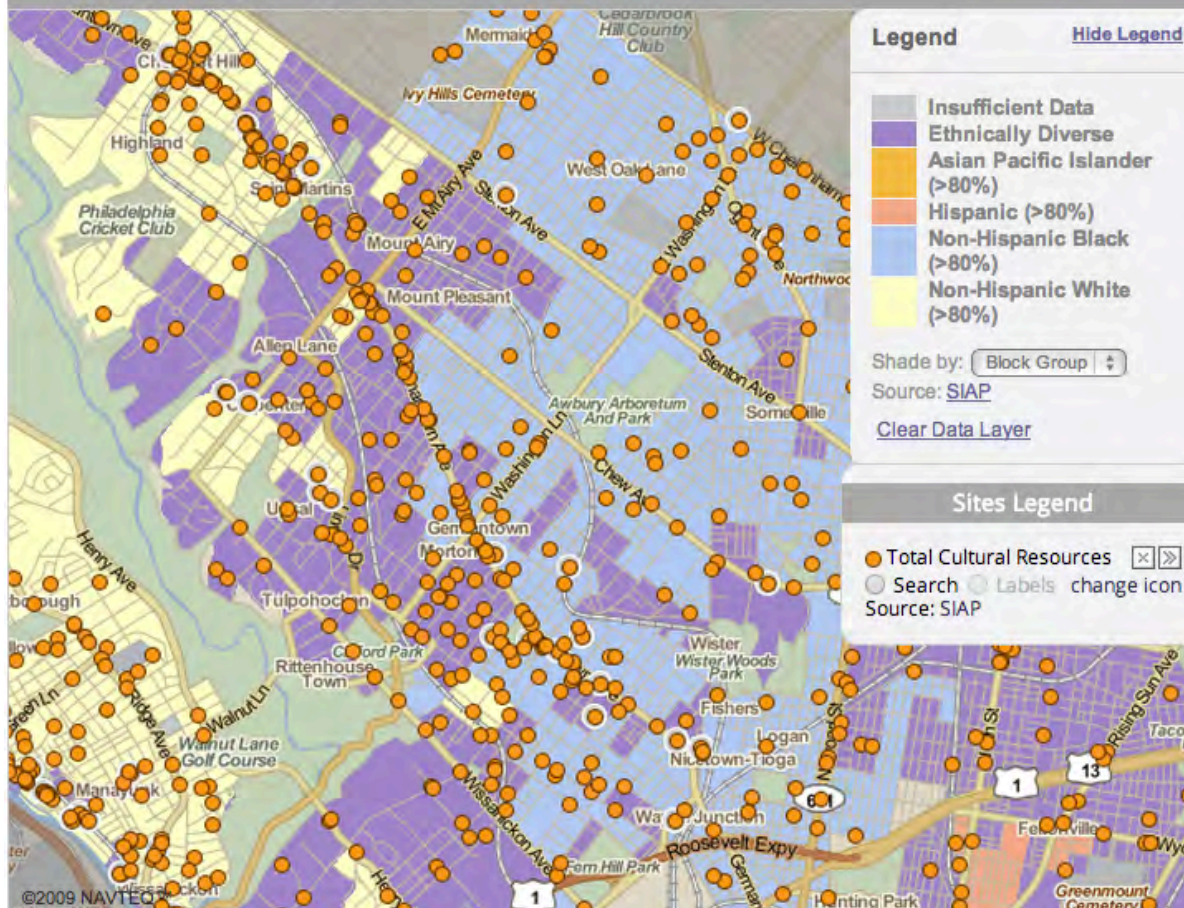
The cultural sector is not just individuals & organizations. The clustering of cultural resources—what we call its **cultural ecology**—has a strong influence on the internal structure of art worlds & their impact on neighborhoods & regions. **“Natural” cultural districts** are critical to the arts’ social impact.



# Urban context influences the arts & culture:



Ethnic diversity status as of 2010. details



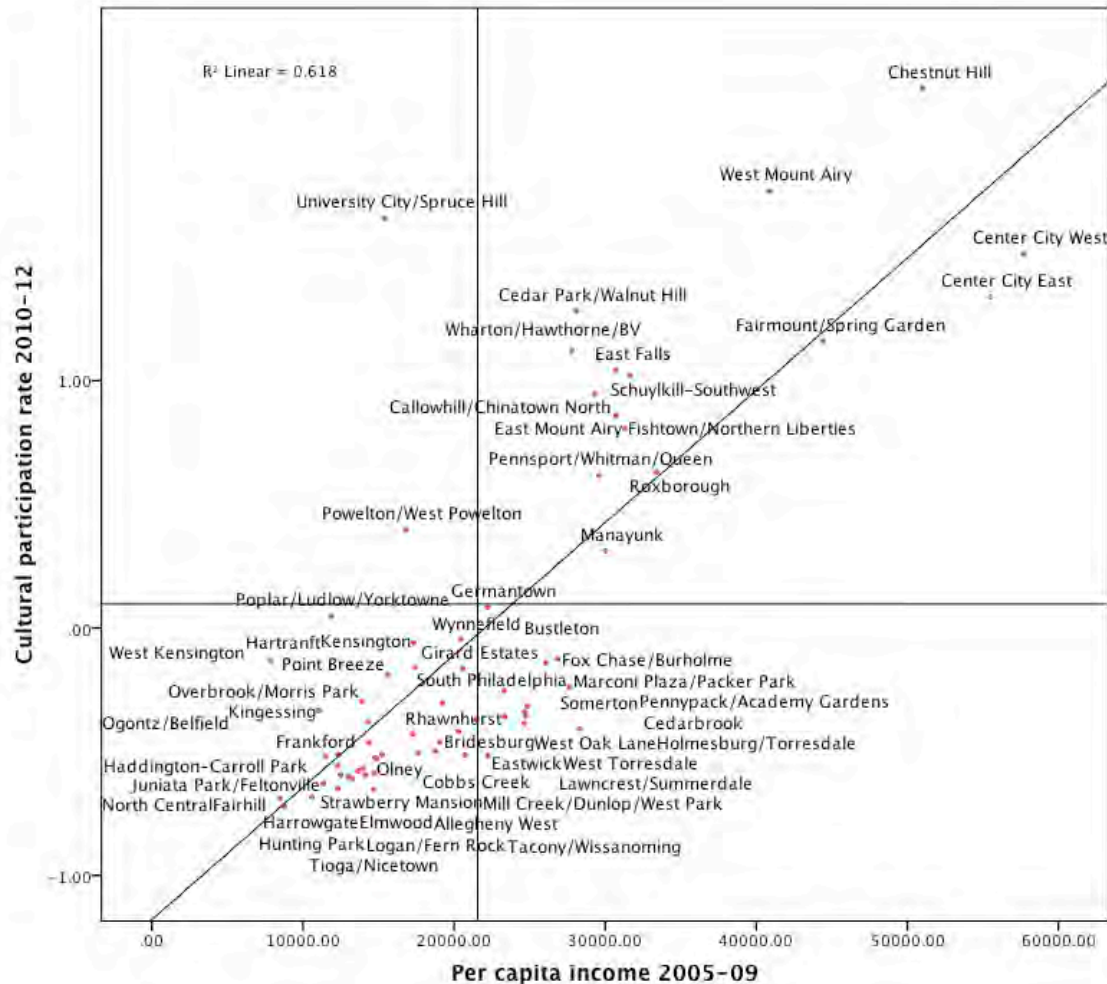
Social diversity provides fertile soil in which the arts & culture can flourish.

Our cities are becoming more economically, ethnically, & household diverse

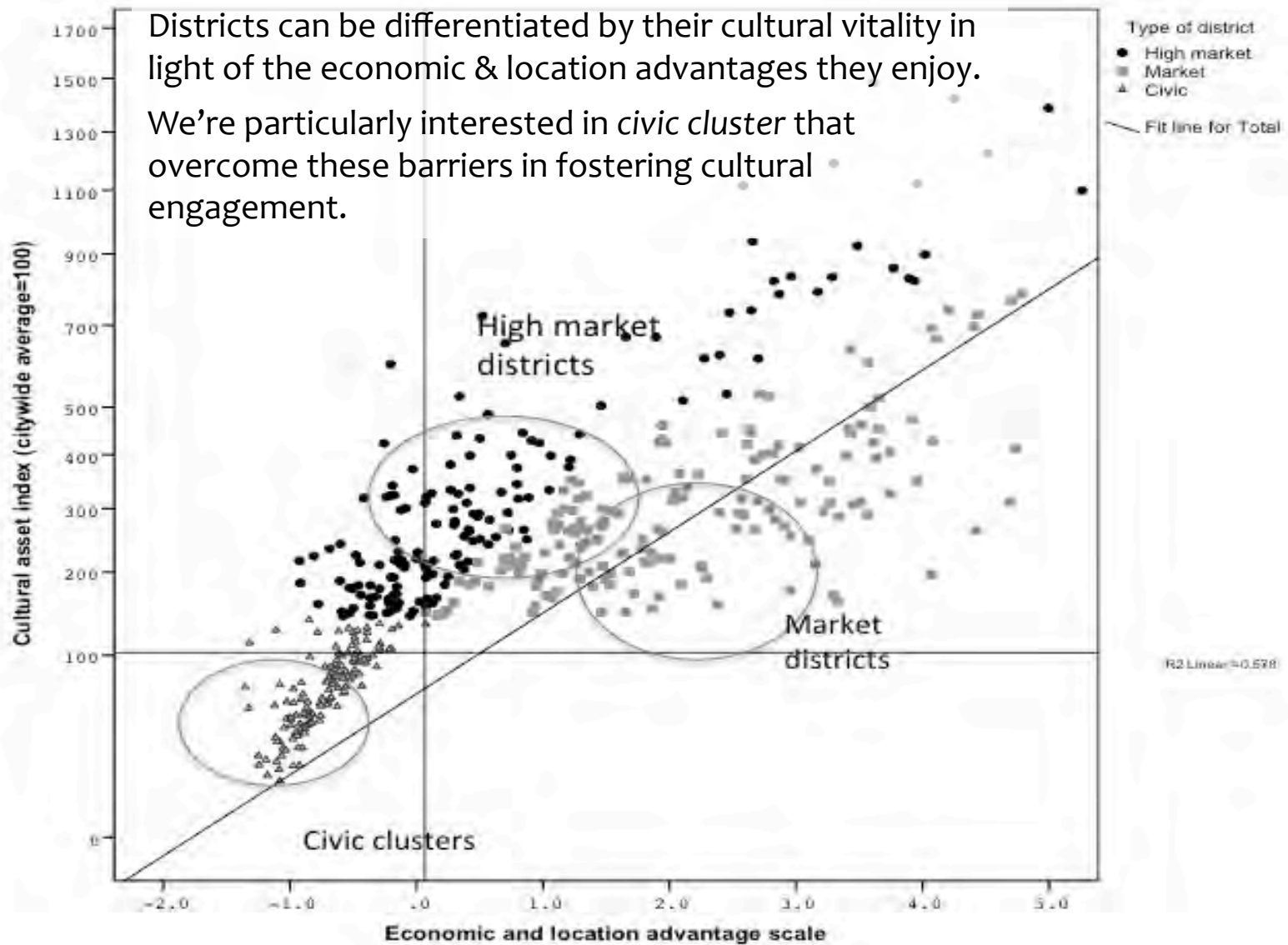
# Urban context influences the arts & culture

The explosion of economic inequality is reinforcing the image of the arts as an *elite sector*.

Socio-economic status' correlation with cultural indicators nearly doubled between 1997 & 2011

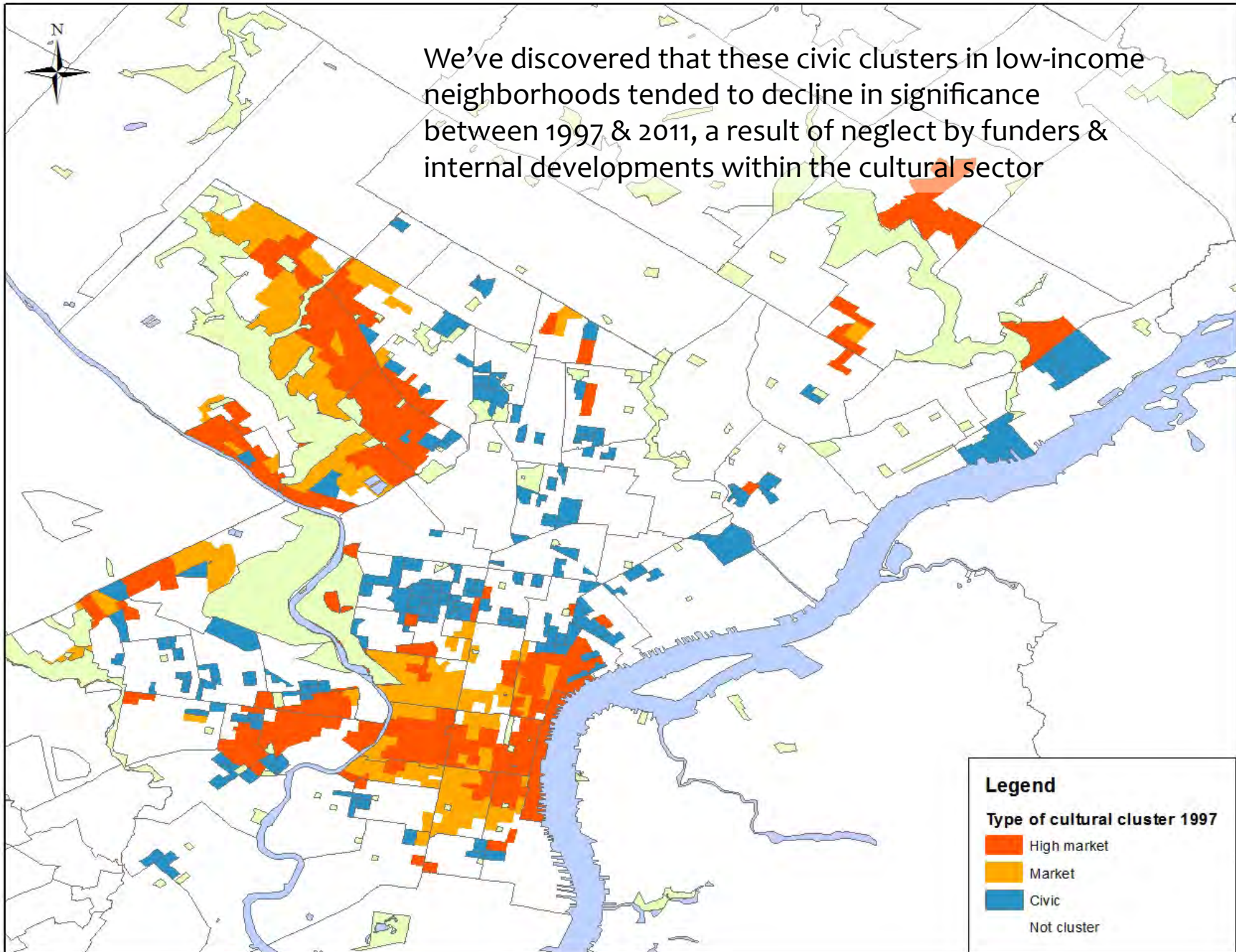


# Urban context & “natural” cultural districts





We've discovered that these civic clusters in low-income neighborhoods tended to decline in significance between 1997 & 2011, a result of neglect by funders & internal developments within the cultural sector



# Impacts: the capabilities approach

---

- Assumption: Well-being is the opportunity to live a life that one has reason to value
- Key: Wellbeing = freedom to choose how you live + the concrete opportunities to make choices.
- Can we measure this at the census tract level?

AMARTYA SEN  
THE IDEA OF JUSTICE



Creating Capabilities

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

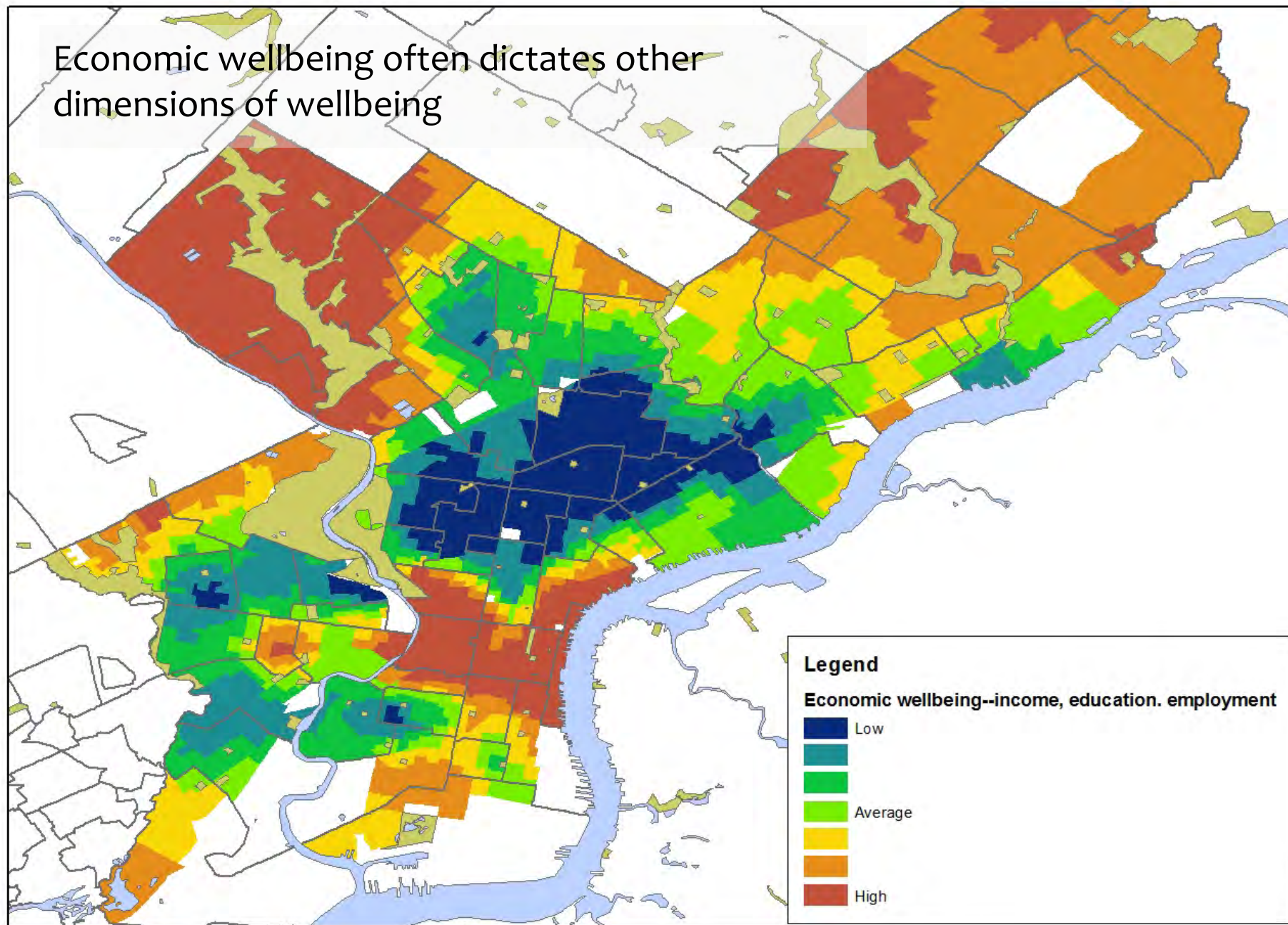
MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM

# Impacts: Dimensions of social wellbeing

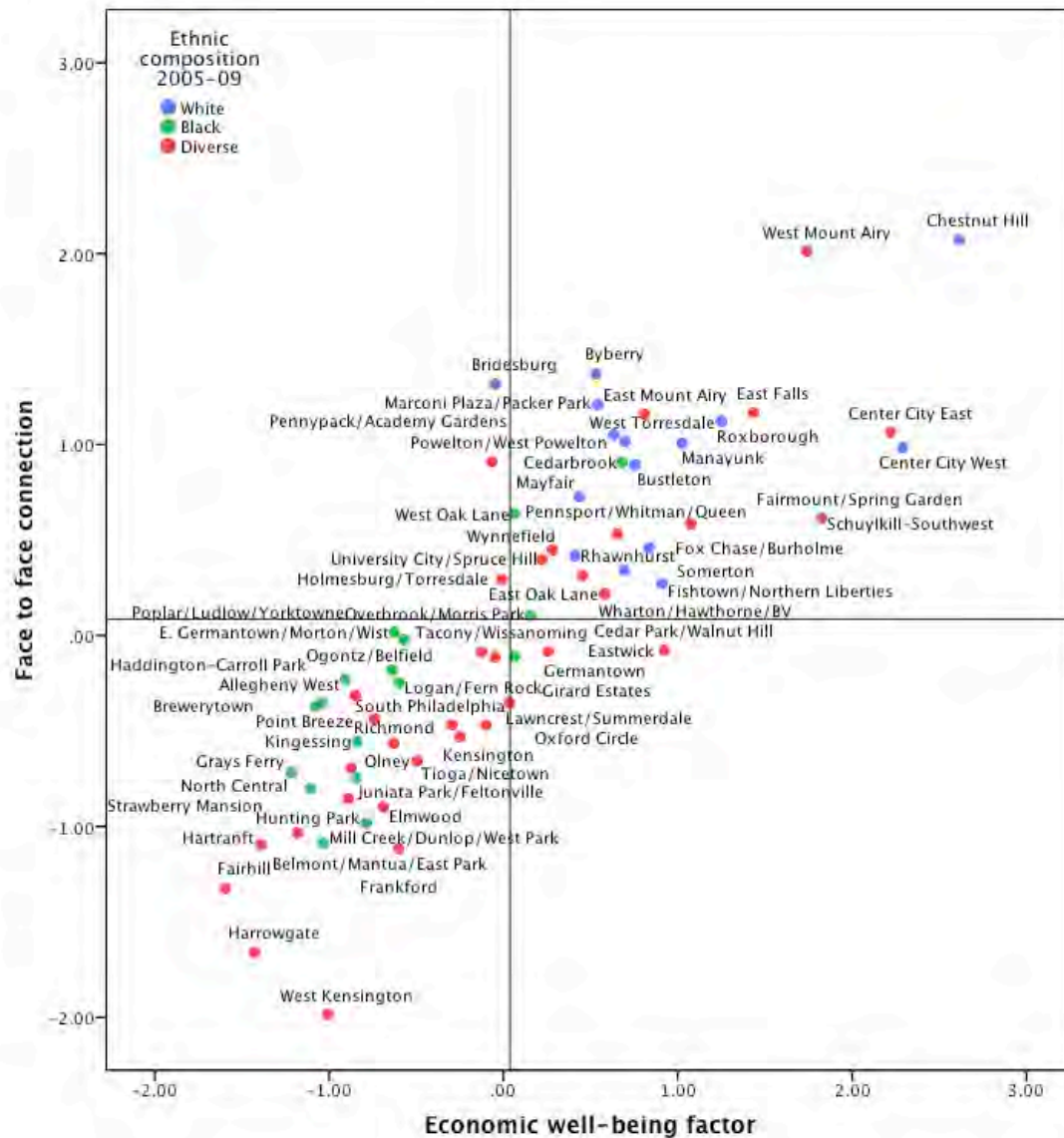
---

- **Economic wellbeing:** income, educational attainment, labor force engagement
- **Economic diversity:** income differences within tract
- **Institutional connection:** presence of nonprofits, community gardens
- **Face-to-face connection:** sense of belonging, trust, participation in neighborhood organizations
- **Housing:** housing cost burden, foreclosures, violations
- **Effective schools:** school performance measures
- **Security:** crime, ethnic & racial harassment
- **Environmental amenities:** parks, heat vulnerability
- **Morbidity:** chronic illness, hypertension, obesity
- **Health care access:** insurance, ER utilization
- **Birth outcomes/homicide:** prenatal care, low weight at birth, death by homicide, child welfare cases
- **Political voice:** voting

Economic wellbeing often dictates other dimensions of wellbeing



# Two dimensions of well-being: economic resources & social connection

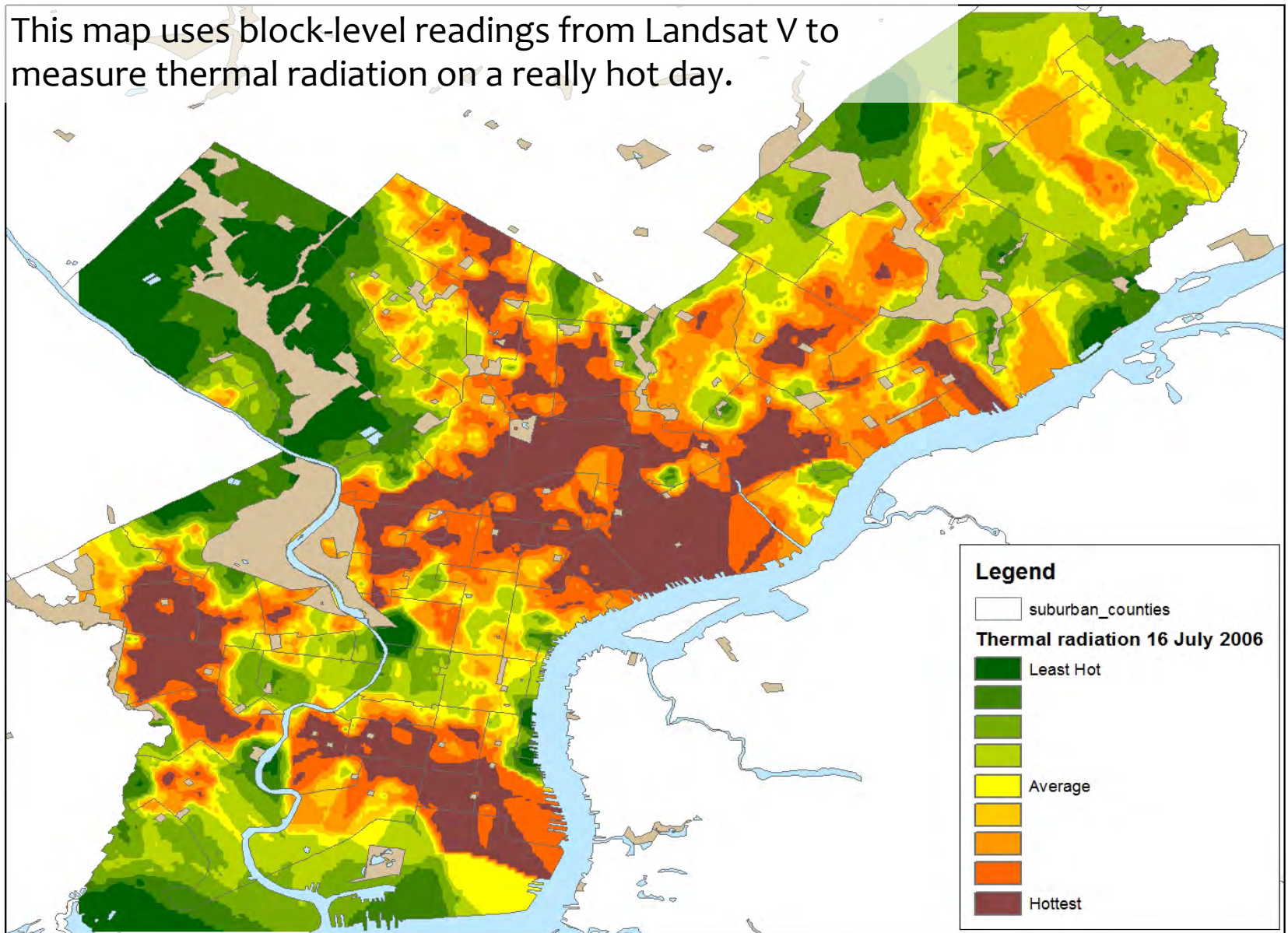


Social connections & culture can be seen as *mediating influences*, important resources in neighborhoods with high poverty & low income.

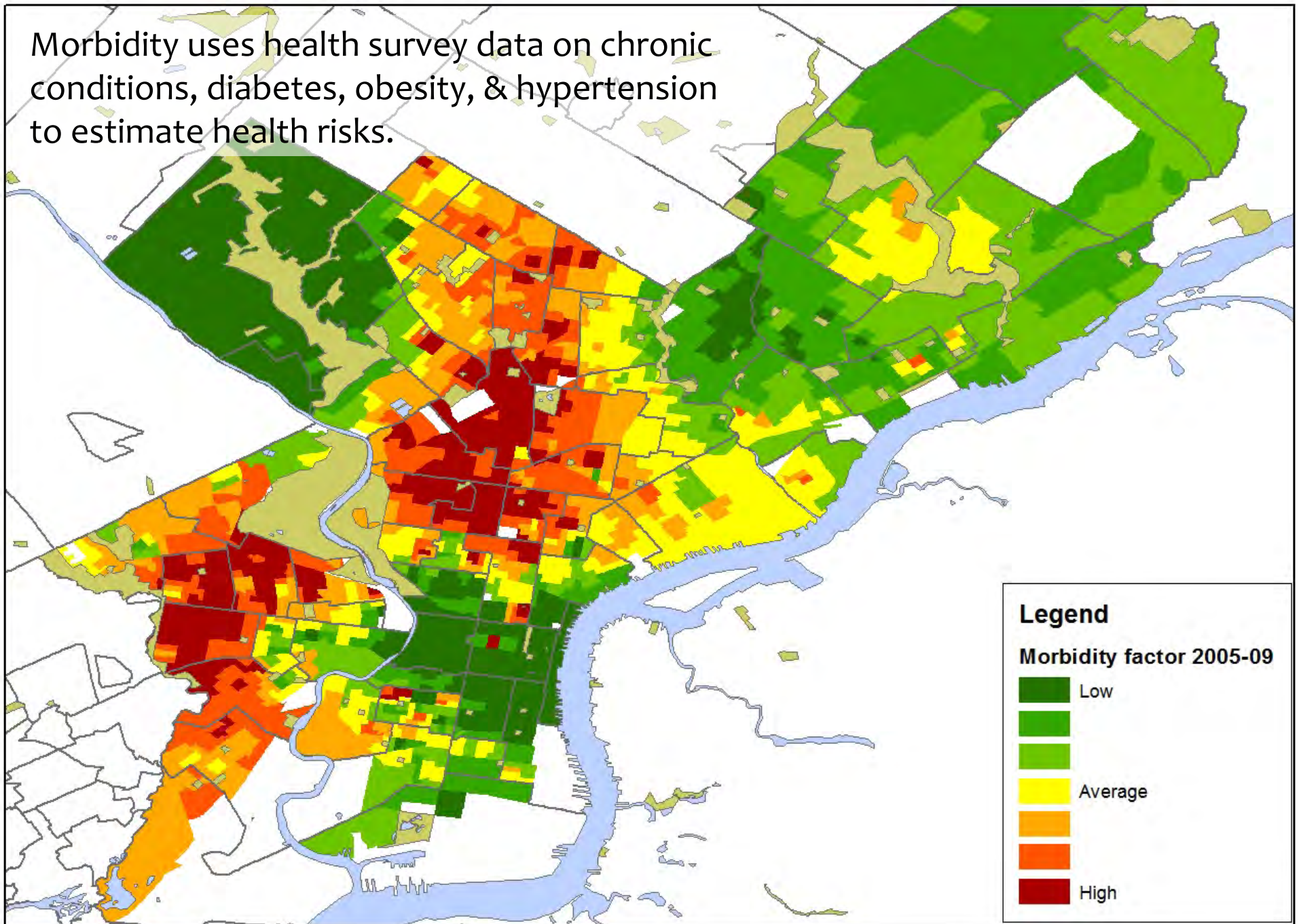
Yet, many African American & Latino neighborhoods in Philadelphia have *concentrated disadvantage* because they are weak on both dimensions.

# We're working on measuring "heat vulnerability" using socio-economic & satellite imagery

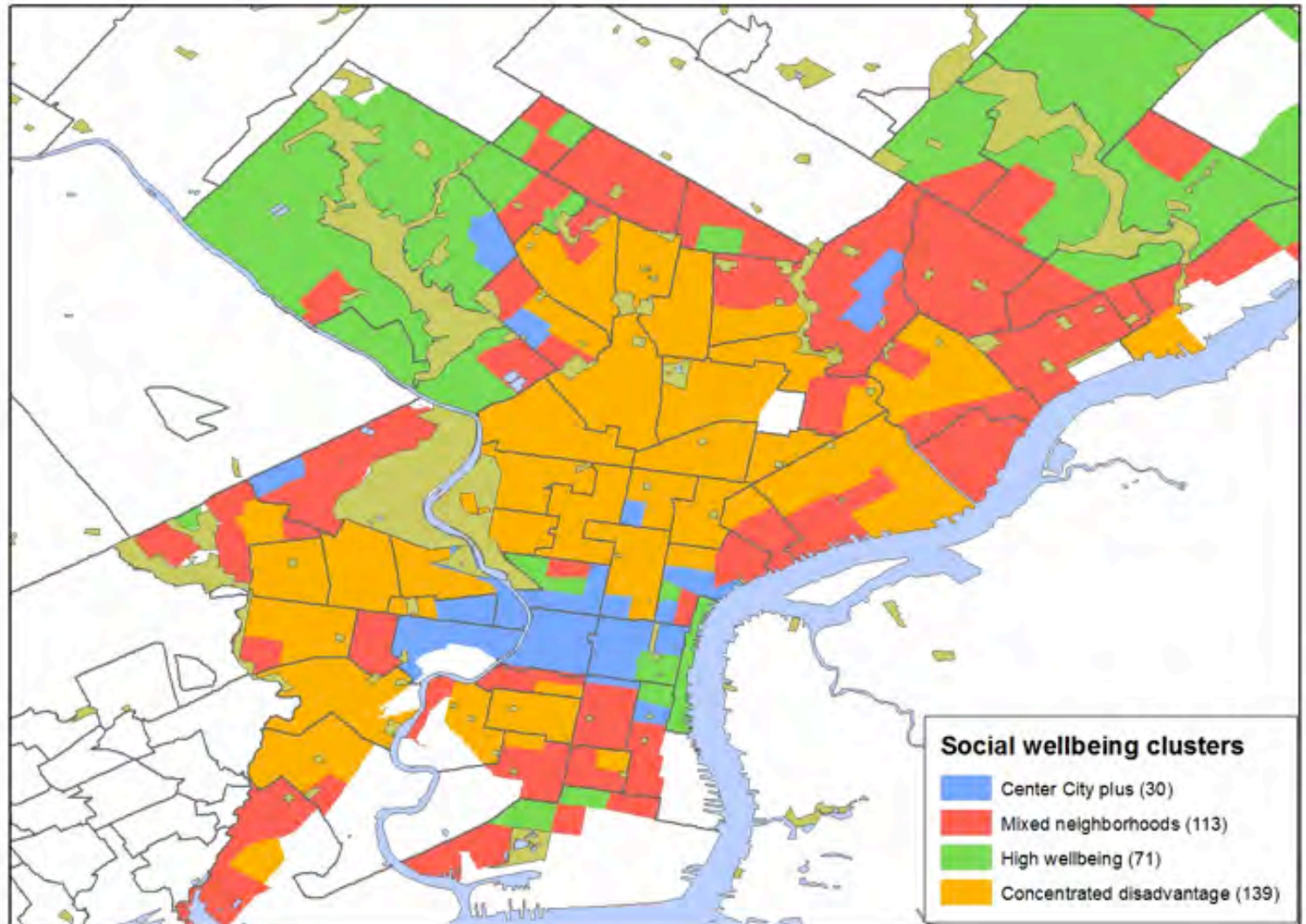
This map uses block-level readings from Landsat V to measure thermal radiation on a really hot day.



Morbidity uses health survey data on chronic conditions, diabetes, obesity, & hypertension to estimate health risks.



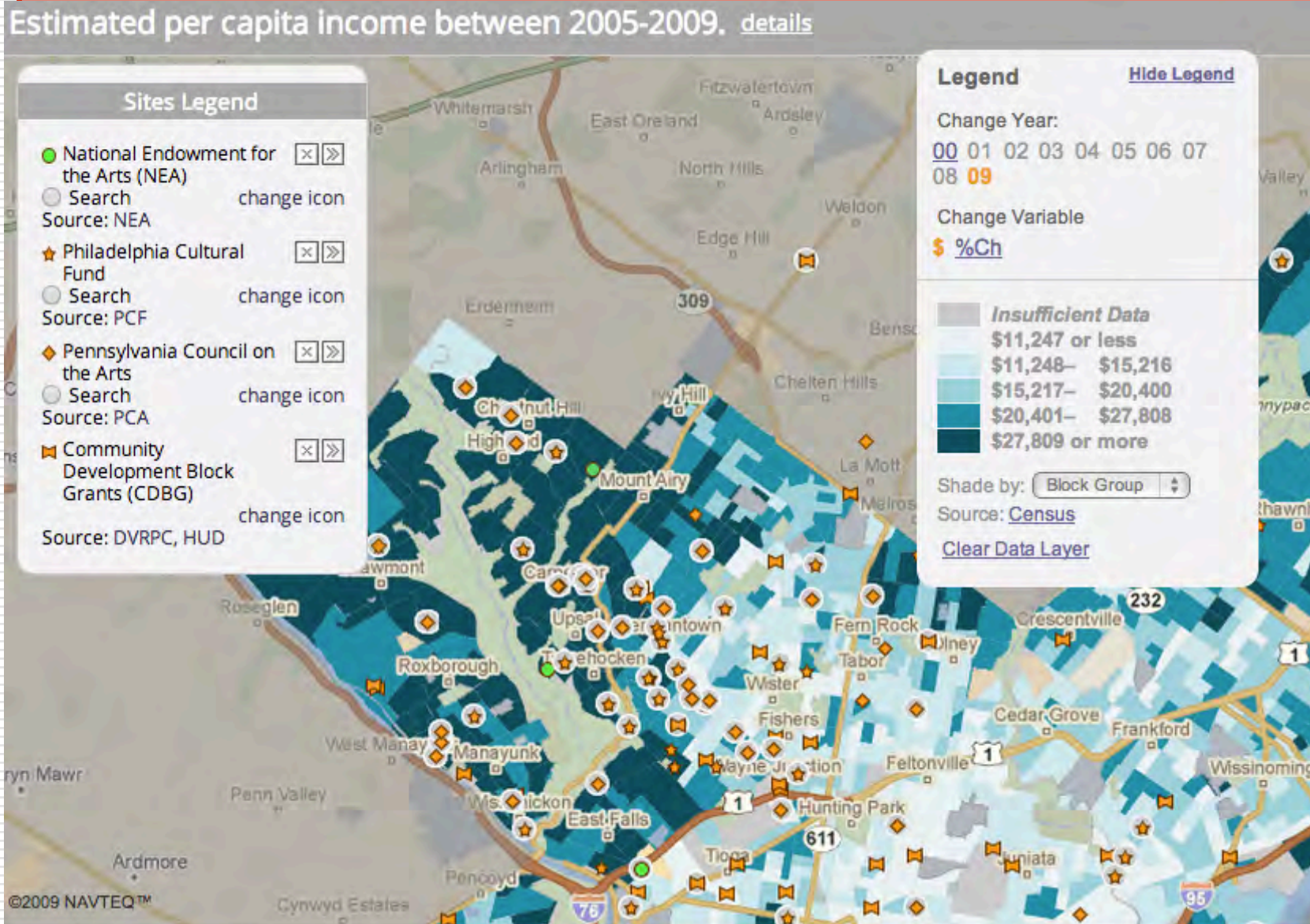
Using cluster analysis, we've identified concentrations of advantage & disadvantage, as well as sections of the city that have both strengths & weaknesses.





# Three lessons for policy:

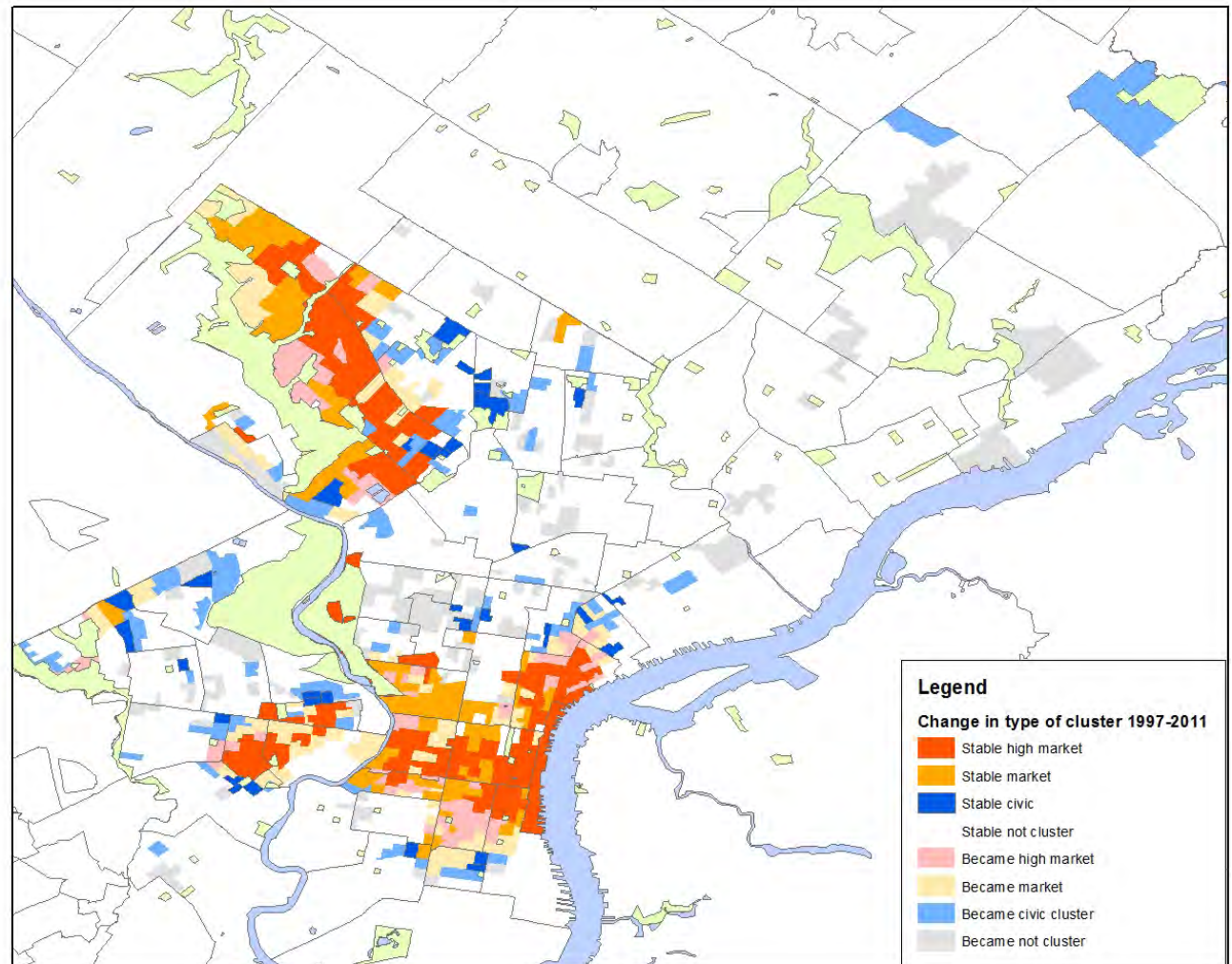
#1—Good data means policy can be guided by both values & evidence.



## #2. Take space & place into consideration in making funding decisions

The increasing *marketization* of nonprofits has led many funders to stress organizational strength & to ignore the significant hurdles that community arts programs must overcome.

As a result some civic clusters are being starved to death.



## #3—We are all policymakers

---

- Top-down models of policymaking no longer describe cities' realities.
- This is bad news to the extent that government no longer has the fiscal capacity to call the shots, but . . .
- This is good news in that it reduces the gap between policy & practice.
- Practitioners—artists, community activists, and funders—need to better understand how their decisions can influence how policy & funding decisions are implemented.