Accounting for complex environmental exposure situations: a classification approach
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Background

- Everyone is constantly exposed to several environmental exposures with positive or negative health effects.
- Studies which consider this complex environmental setting are rare.
- There is a scientific and political call for a realistic and “holistic” approach of cumulative exposure.
- There is a need for methods able to handle cumulative exposures.

Study design and data

- Lyon metropolitan area (1.2 million inhabitants, 527 km²), France
- French census blocks (2000 inhabitants on average)
- Environmental exposures groups:
  - NO₂ annual concentration (2 variables)
  - Noise levels (3 variables)
  - Traffic exposition (2 variables)
  - Industrial proximity (4 variables)
  - Green spaces (2 variables)

Results (MFA)

- The four first components explain respectively 30%, 15%, 13% and 11% of the total variance.
- Major components interpretation:
  1st: air pollution and traffic proximity
  2nd: industrial proximity
  3rd: noise and green spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air Pollution</td>
<td>31.98</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>15.97</td>
<td>13.23</td>
<td>68.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial Proximity</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>78.34</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Proximity</td>
<td>32.22</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green Spaces</td>
<td>19.71</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>24.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Contribution of each groups to the three first components (in %)

Methods

- Data mining techniques, highlight underlying structures in data
- Multiple Factor Analysis (MFA); analyze variables by groups, give the same weight for each group and can include both quantitative and qualitative variables.
- Hierarchical Clustering (HC): minimizing the within-category inertia and maximizing the between-categories inertia.

Results (HC)

- HC applied on the 10 first components of the MFA
- 5 cumulative exposure categories have been created using HC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>≈</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>++</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industries</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green spaces</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Categories’ characteristics (from ++ extremely higher than average to --- extremely lower than average, = near the average value)

Conclusion and perspectives

- Data analysis technics can help to obtain insight about the different exposure profiles in an area with easily performed and interpreted tools.
- This approach can help stakeholders to identify areas of higher “environmental burden”.
- As a perspective, extend to other areas and indicators of living environment (public transport accessibility, health professionals density, primary good store availability …)