

**Analysis of social determinants of health and health inequities**  
**- a multi country event on approaches and policy**  
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**Abstracts of key-note lectures**

**Prof. SA REIJNEVELD**

**Area based analyses in health and deprivation**

***Socioeconomic (SE) differentials in health*** among human populations have been recognized since long, both at the individual and at the area level. At the individual level, SE differentials have been reported with regard to mortality and morbidity in various countries. At the area level, differences between areas of varying SE deprivation have been found in ecological studies on mortality at the level of urban areas, and of larger, urban and rural regions, as well as in ecological studies on poor health and on lifestyles.

Two explanations have been proposed for the higher prevalence of poor health and lifestyles in deprived areas. Firstly, individual SE health differences may explain this because of the at average lower socioeconomic status (SES) of residents of deprived areas. Secondly, the social and physical context of these areas may have a detrimental effect on the health and lifestyles of their residents, in addition to individual SES. Practically, such a contextual effect provides reasons for community-based interventions, like improving the availability of healthy food or reducing the number of tobacco selling-points, in deprived areas instead of measures which (only) aim at individuals and their behaviour.

In ***data analyses***, the adverse health effects of area deprivation, over and above the effect due to individual SES, can only be assessed properly if the hierarchical nature of the effects is accounted for. Characteristics of areas and communities have a potential impact on all residents, whereas the individual characteristics of residents which were included only affect those individuals. This implies that the individual responses cluster by area, i.e. their variability due to area characteristics may be smaller than their variability due to individual characteristics.

In ***this lecture***, the background of socioeconomic differences in health and health behaviour by area will be discussed, as well as the best analytic approaches to study them.