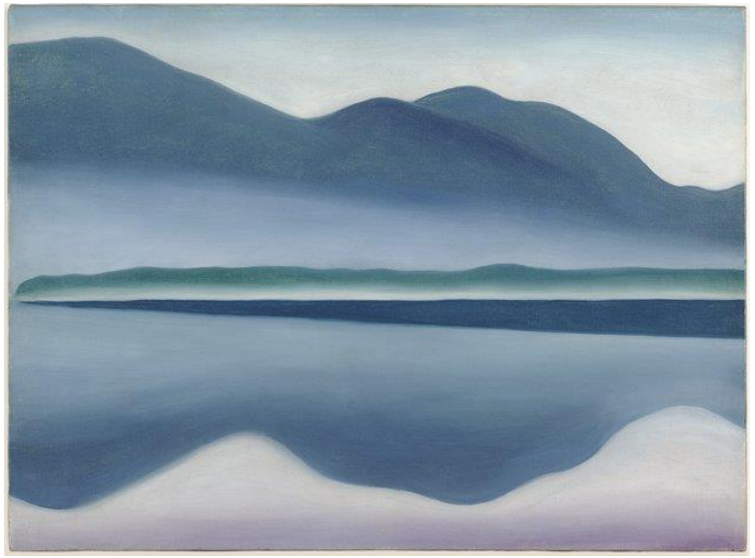
Generalisation

"the reduction of detail or simplification of reality"

Lawren Harris

"Nothing is less real than realism. Details are confusing. It is only by selection, by elimination, by emphasis that we get at the real meaning of things".

Georgia O'Keefe (1922)



Lake George, Georgia O'Keefe

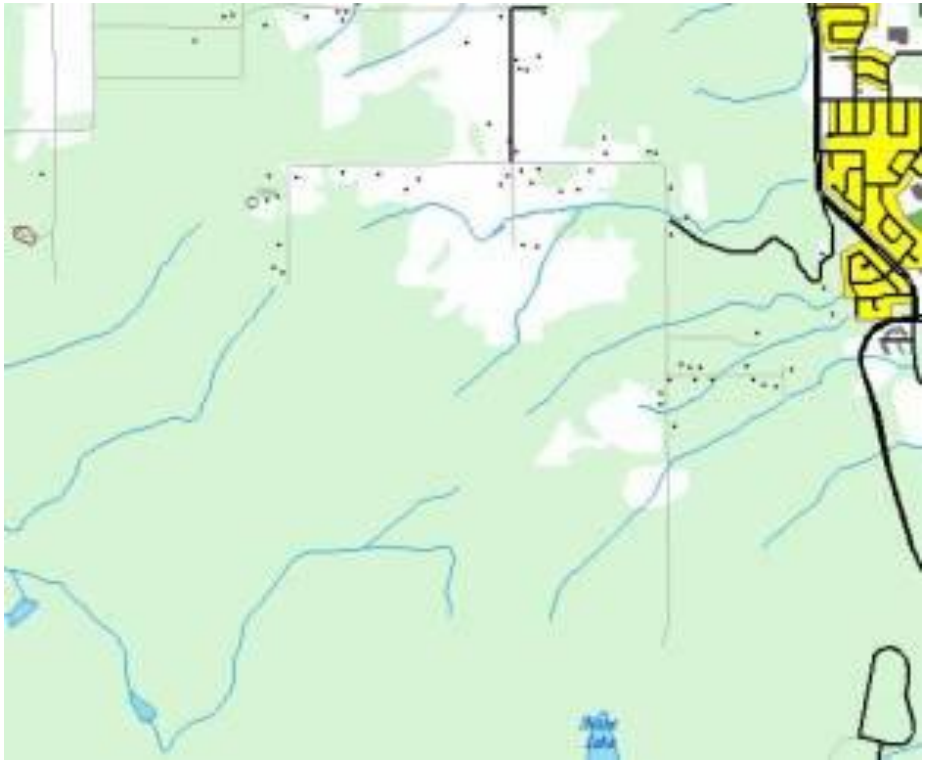
Generalisation

Watercolor map of Greater Vancouver rendered by Stamen Designs using OpenStreetMap data.
https://stamen.com/

"A map is a scaled, 2-D, generalized representation of a planetary surface"

Photos/images are not generalized: they need interpretation to be readable by users.

Air photo interpreted (= generalised) -> map



The process of **generalization** consists of these three steps:

1. simplification -> **2. selection** -> **3. classification** (4. -> symbolisation)

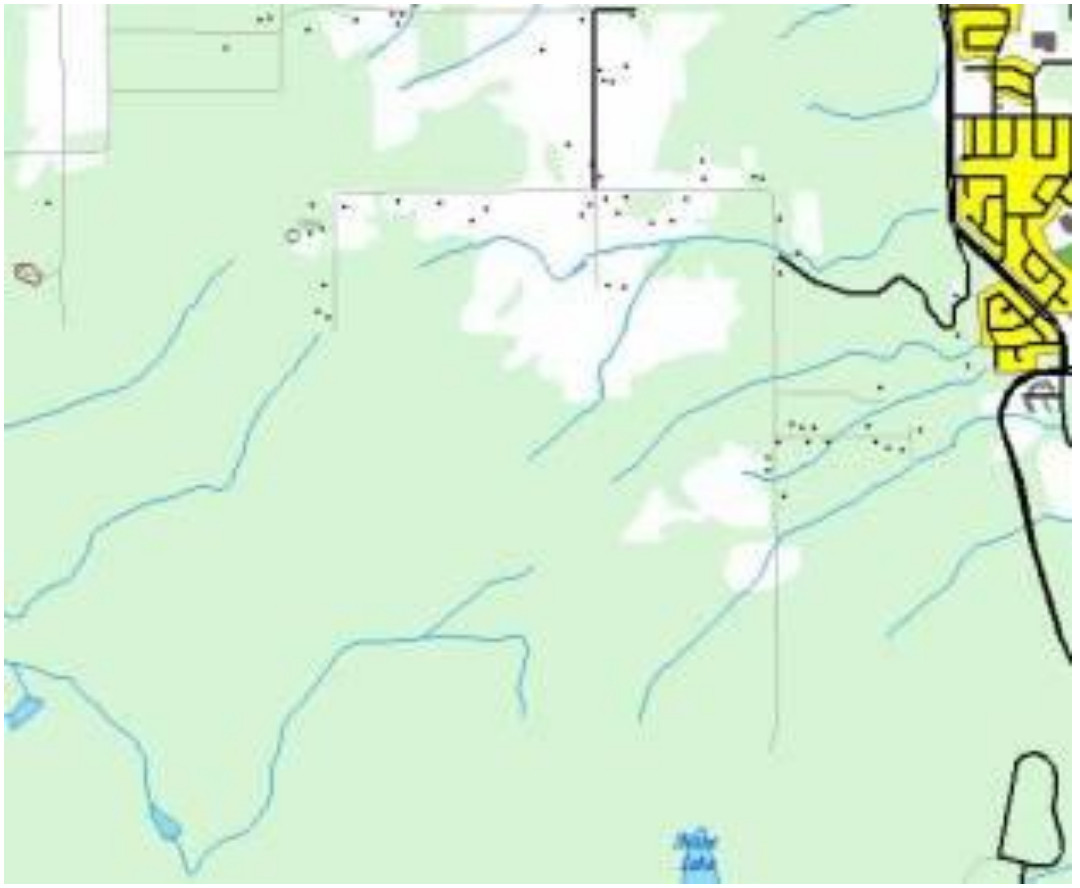
1. Simplification

All features have three dimensions: length, width and height

They lose the third dimension as map displays are usually flat.

Simplification determines the most important characteristics (dimensions)

- 3D Volumes (reality)
- 2D Areas / polygons
- 1D Lines / arcs
- 0D Points



As SCALE decreases, generalisation increases

Simplification: features lose dimensionality

This is called **collapsing**

Examples :

areas -> lines: e.g. rivers, roads

areas -> points: e.g. cities, buildings

lines -> points: ? (few examples – e.g. dams ?)

2. Selection

- maps /data can NOT retain all features/details

- Which feature types depend on the map **purpose**

  e.g. topographic map, parks map, city map

- How many features/details depends mostly on map **scale**

  e.g. more details on 1:50,000 than 1:250,000

<u>Selection</u> can be subdivided into:

a. Aggregation (merging of several elements, most common with **areas**)

b. Elimination (removal of certain elements: **points, lines and areas**)

c. Smoothing (removal of details in shape or outline: **lines and areas**)

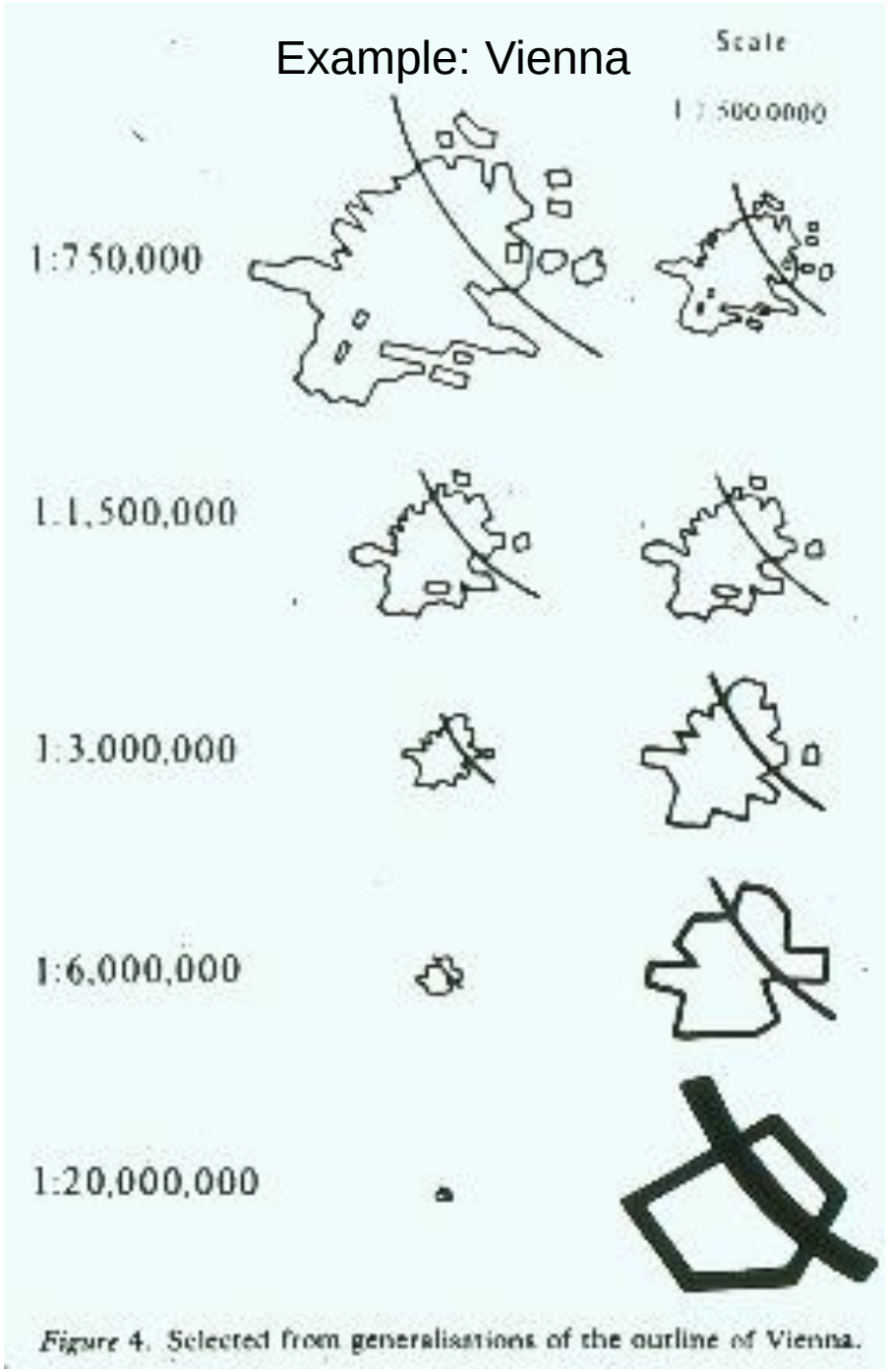
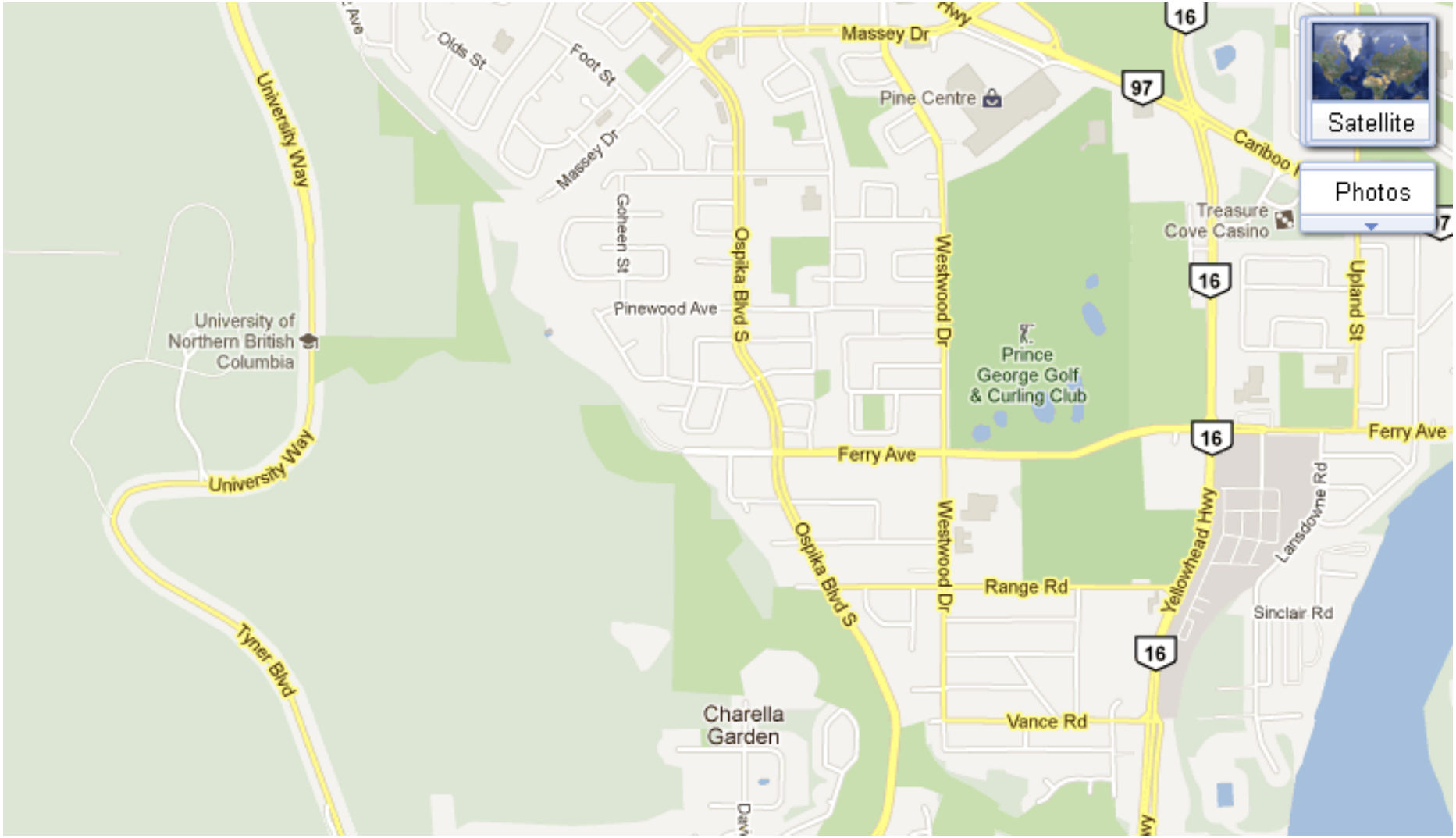
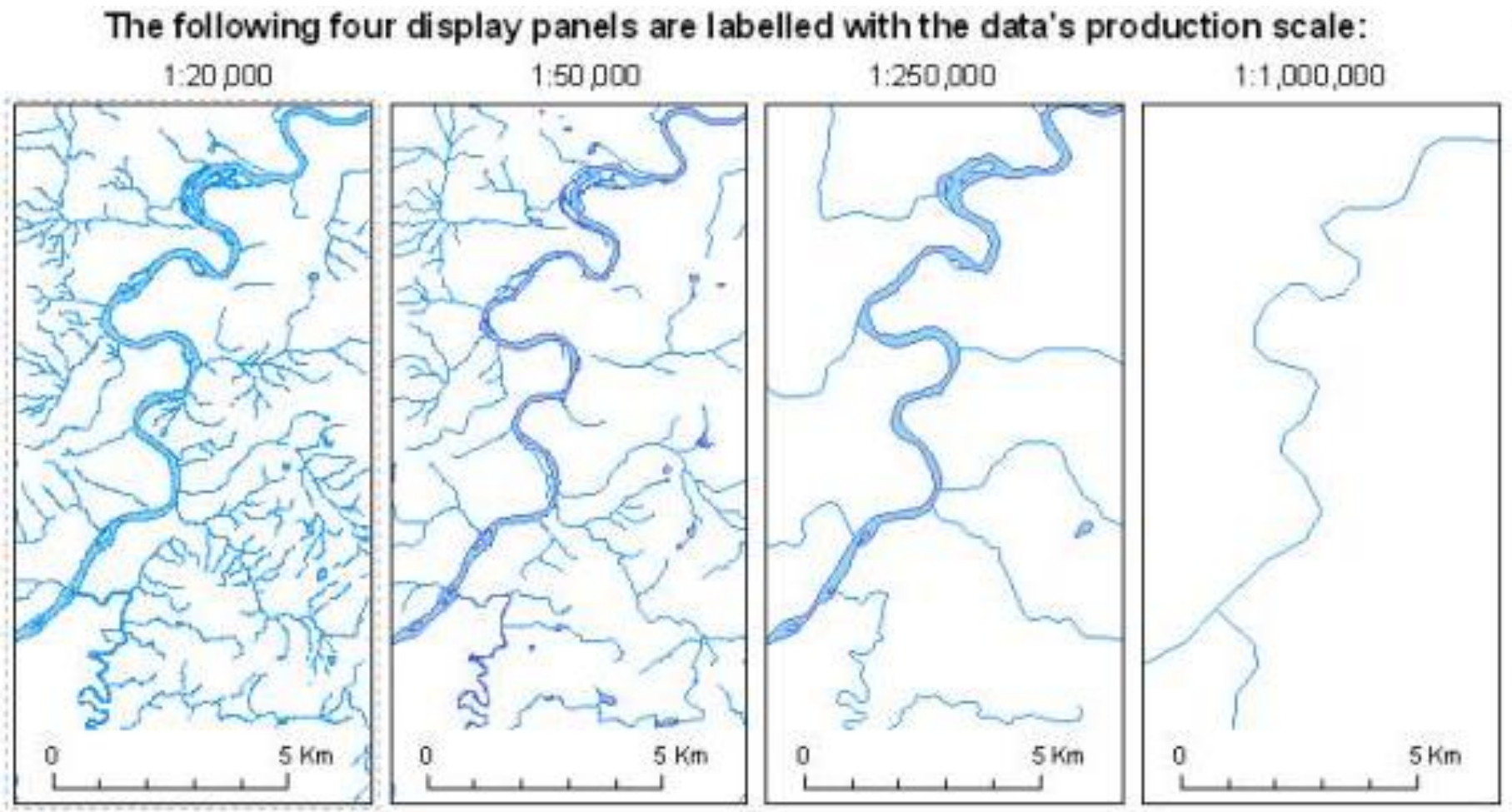


Figure 4. Selected from generalisations of the outline of Vienna.



http://maps.google.ca

Selection example: (elimination, smoothing) plus collapsing



Benoit Mandelbrot: "How Long Is the Coast of Britain? "

'Fractals' *Statistical Self-Similarity and Fractional Dimension (1967)*

Unit = 200 km, length = **2400 km**

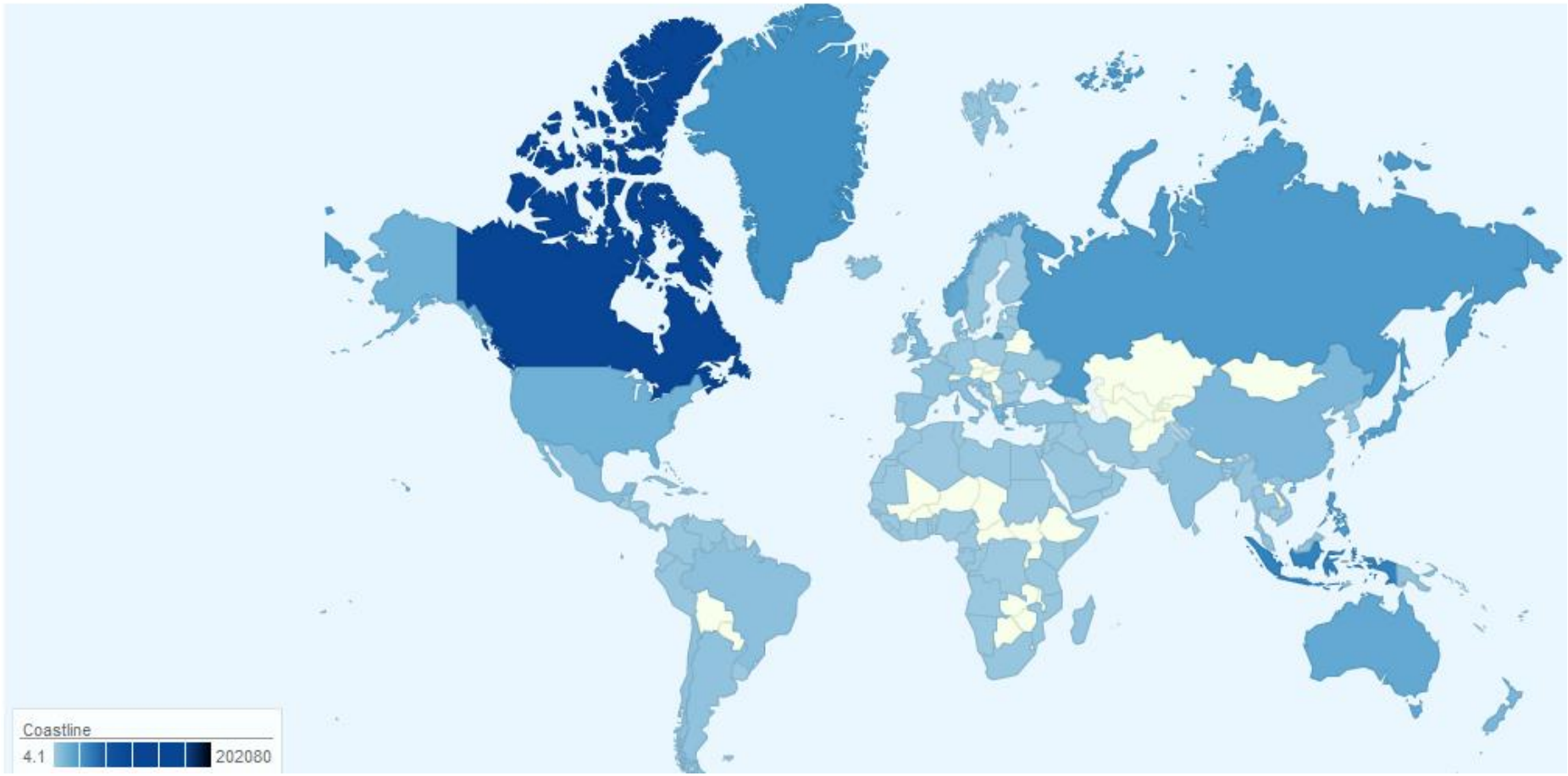
Unit = 50 km, length = **3400 km**

CIA: 12,429 km (1:100,000)

Ordnance Survey: 17,820 km (1:50,000)

Infinite? ->

Length of Coastline by Country

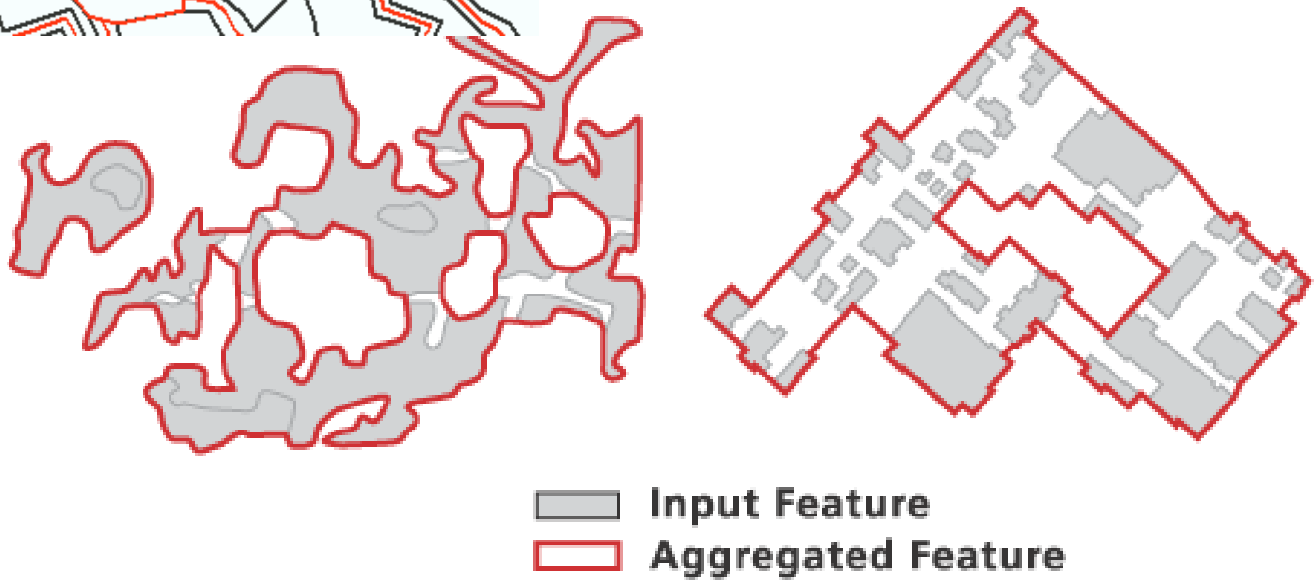


Canada – we're #1 (at any scale)

Length = 202,080 km or 265,523 km or …..

Collapsing dual lines to a centre-line

Aggregating polygons



http://resources.esri.com/help/9.3/arcgisengine/java/gp_toolref/data_management_toolbox/an_overview_of_the_generalization_toolset.htm

ArcGIS generalization tools – 'GIS analysis'

Aggregate Points	Creates polygon features around clusters of proximate point features.
Aggregate Polygons	Combines polygons within a specified distance of each other into new polygons.
Collapse Dual Lines To Centerline	Derives centerlines from dual-line (or double-line) features, such as road casings, based on specified width tolerances.
Collapse Road Detail	Collapses small, open configurations of road segments that interrupt the general trend of a road network, such as traffic circles, for example, and replaces them with a simplified depiction.
Delineate Built-Up Areas	Creates polygons to represent built-up areas by delineating densely clustered arrangements of buildings on small-scale maps.
Create Cartographic Partitions	Creates a mesh of polygon features that cover the input feature class where each polygon encloses no more than a specified number of input features, determined by the density and distribution of the input features.
Merge Divided Roads	Generates single-line road features in place of matched pairs of divided road lanes.
Simplify Building	Simplifies the boundary or footprint of building polygons while maintaining their essential shape and size.
Simplify Line	Simplifies lines by removing extraneous bends while preserving essential shape.
Simplify Polygon	Simplifies polygons by removing extraneous bends while preserving essential shape.
Smooth Line	Smooths sharp angles in lines to improve aesthetic or cartographic quality.
Smooth Polygon	Smooths sharp angles in polygon outlines to improve aesthetic or cartographic quality.
Thin Road Network	Generates a simplified road network that retains connectivity and general character for display at a smaller scale.

http://resources.arcgis.com/en/help/main/10.1/index.html#//00700000002r000000

3. Classification (by attributes)

We can't keep all features unique – e.g. every road or building might have special characteristics, but they have to be grouped.

in one of 3 ways:

Nominal: by 'name type' - categorical

Ordinal: in sequence (hierarchy) - ranked

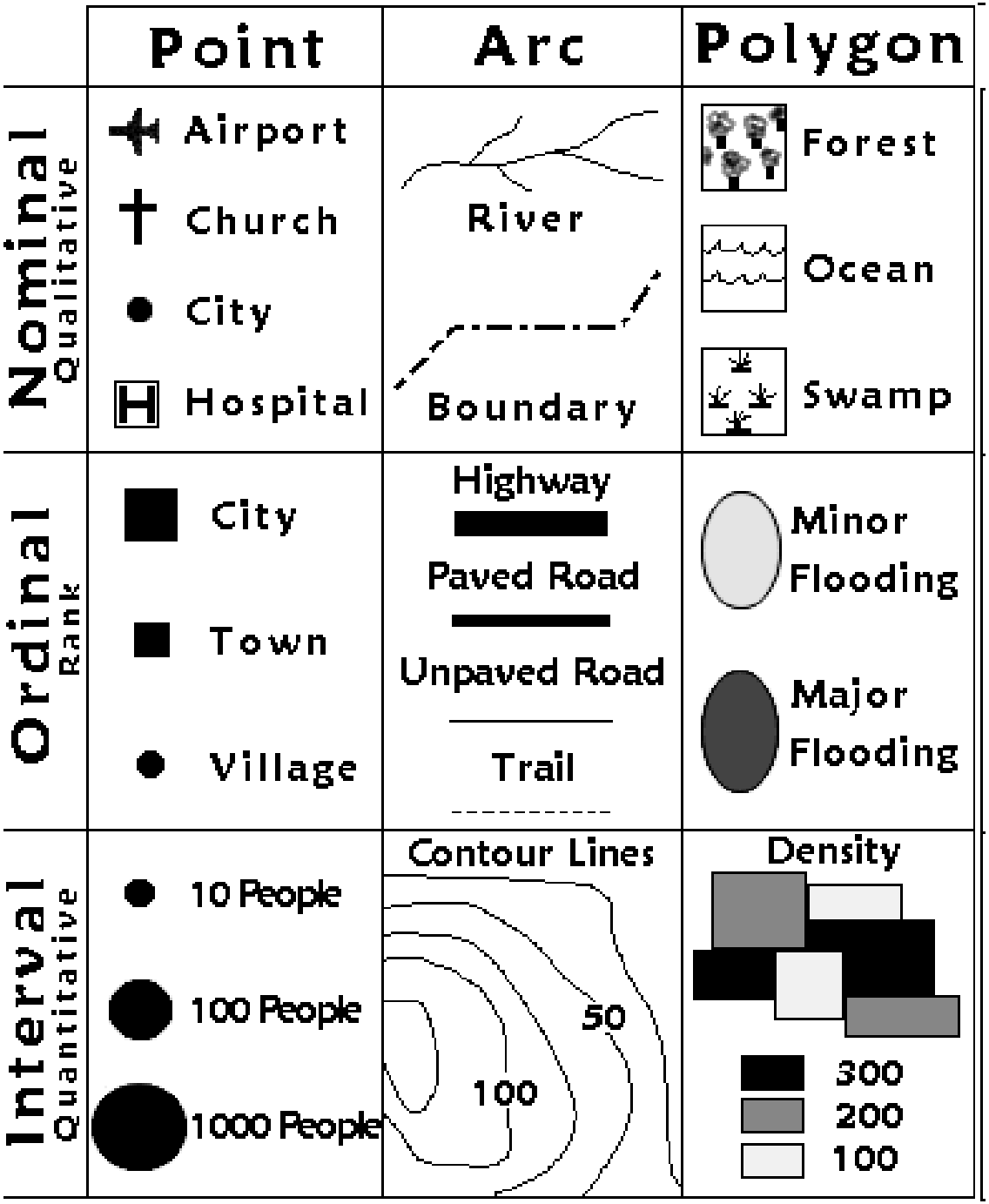
Interval: numerical (by size) - quantitative

Classification

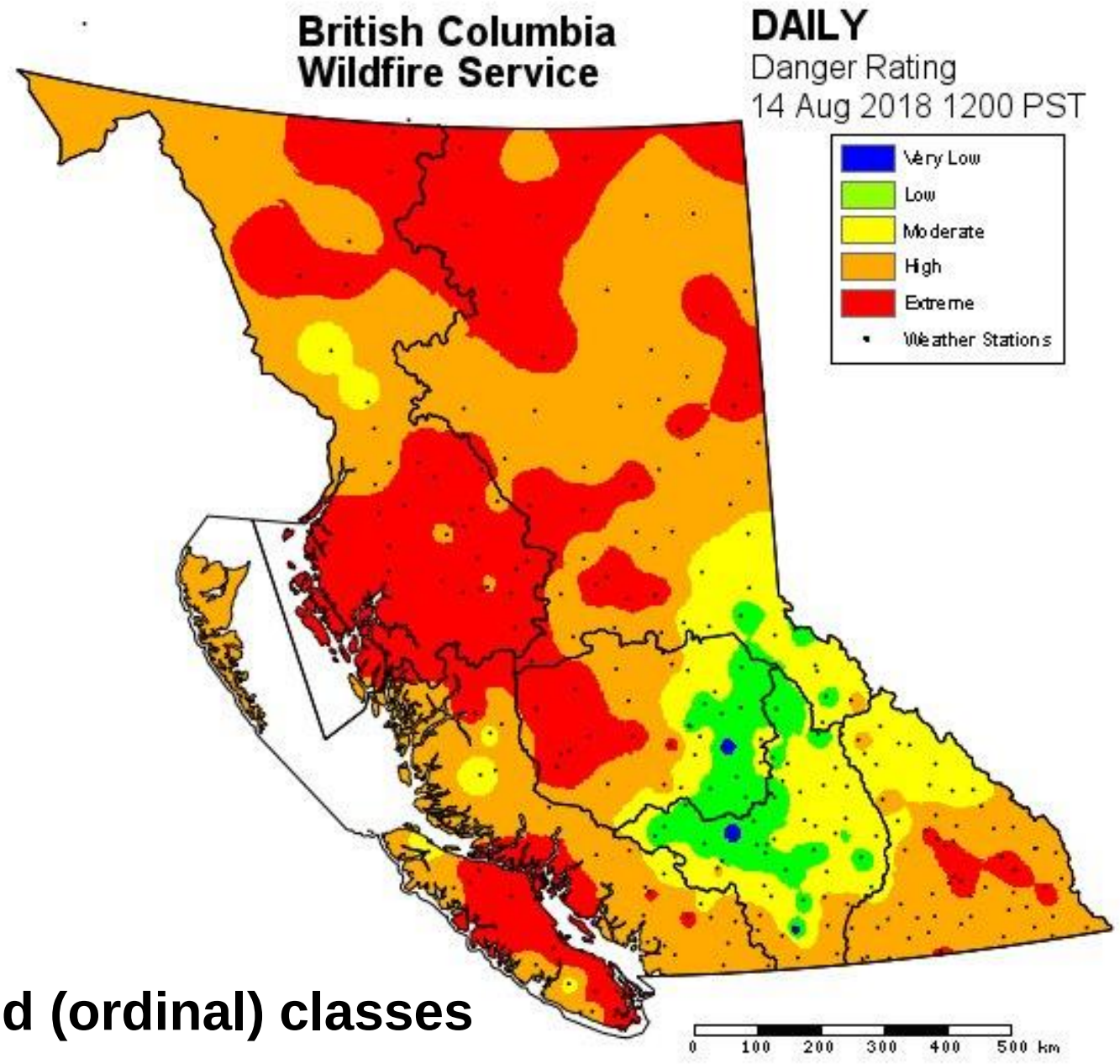
generalisation into groups

Note:

with classification, we are generalising feature attributes, while simplification and selection are more often applied to spatial elements

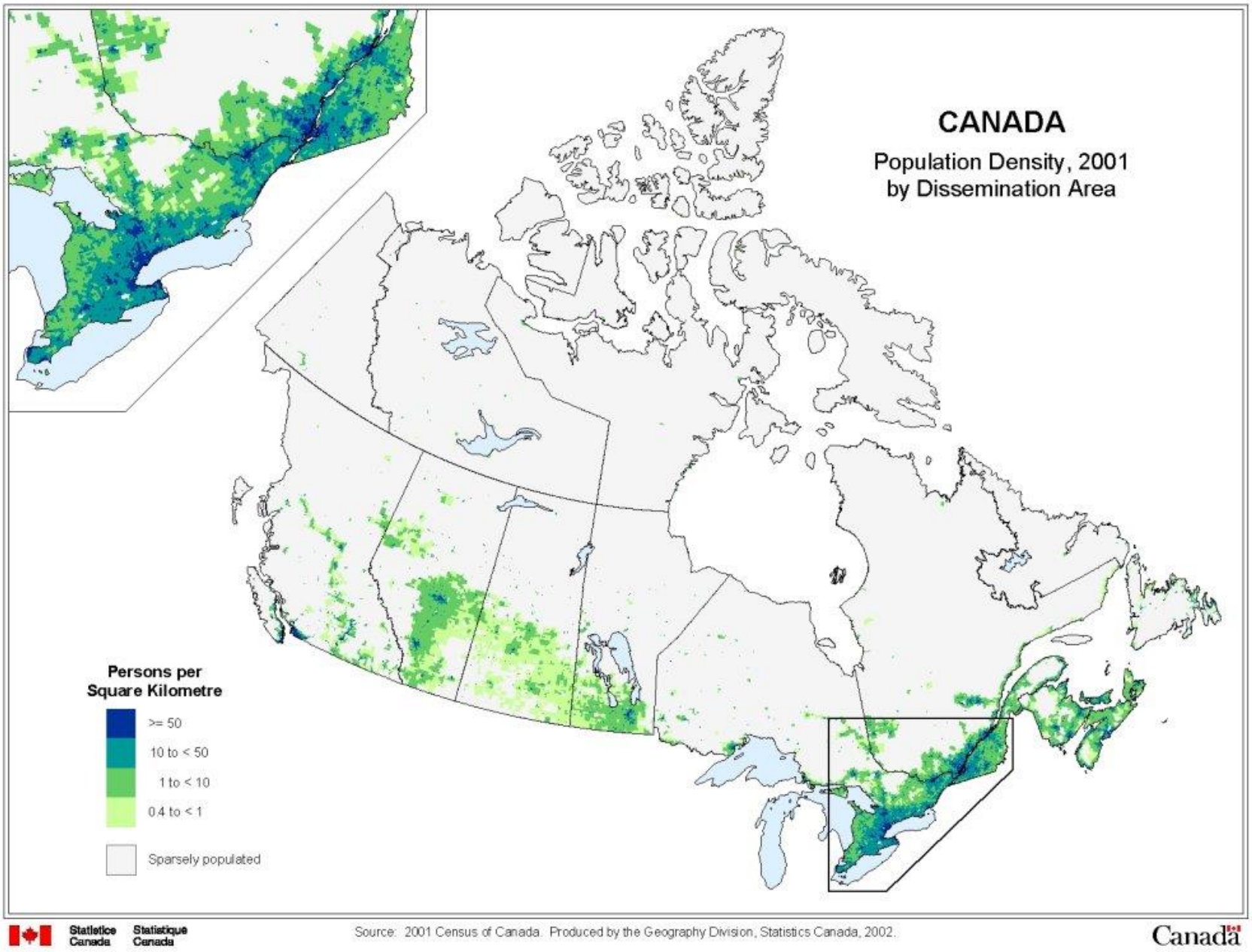


Categorical (nominal) classes



Ranked (ordinal) classes

Quantitative (interval) classes



Summary of scale and generalization

Scale is the prime control on generalization

Data captured at one scale are <u>not</u> transferable to all scales:

- **data from a larger scale are too detailed for smaller scales,**
- **data from a small scale are too generalised for larger scales.**

Scale and Resolution

As scale decreases, both spatial and attribute details decrease

There is a practical level of detail associated with any scale

One could identify a visual 'minimal resolvable unit' (MRU) of ~ 0.5 mm.

This translates for common display scales in metres:

1:20,000	10m
1:50,000	25
1:250,000	125
1:1,000,000	500

This is also synonymous with **precision**

This is fixed with printed maps, variable with digital display

Digital data scales for mapping

Digital data correspond directly to their analogue maps, and data are available at these common scales:

Global:	1:1,000,000	largest scale for whole world ?
Federal:	1:250,000	largest scale for all Canada before 2012
Federal:	1: 50,000	largest scale for all Canada (since 2012)
Provincial:	1: 20,000	largest scale for all BC (+ some provinces)
Municipal:	1: 1,000 to 5,000	scale for most cities / municipalities

These are most often the data layers we see on online map viewers ….
New Zealand: http://www.topomap.co.nz/
Norway: http://www.norgeskart.no
Canada: http://atlas.gc.ca/toporama/en/index.html

Other Controls on Generalization (apart from scale)

Map / output purpose: how much detail, and what types of features

Graphic production limits: how much detail can the display convey

Data quality: survey methods may limit the details possible

Perceptual limits: the human eye / brain likes <= 7 classes

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Magical_Number_Seven,_Plus_or_Minus_Two

Data quality: Spatial generalization, accuracy and precision: GPS and GIS

Trans Allegheny Trails

GPS Coordinates for Our Trailheads

6 to 10 Trail

2 trailheads

Allegheny Portage Railroad NHS: 40.458654,-78.54909

Foot of Ten Trailhead: 40.408106,-78.460739

6 decimal places ….

1° =111km; .1 = 11km, .01 = 1km .001 = 100m,
.0001 = 10m, .00001 =1m, .000001=10cm

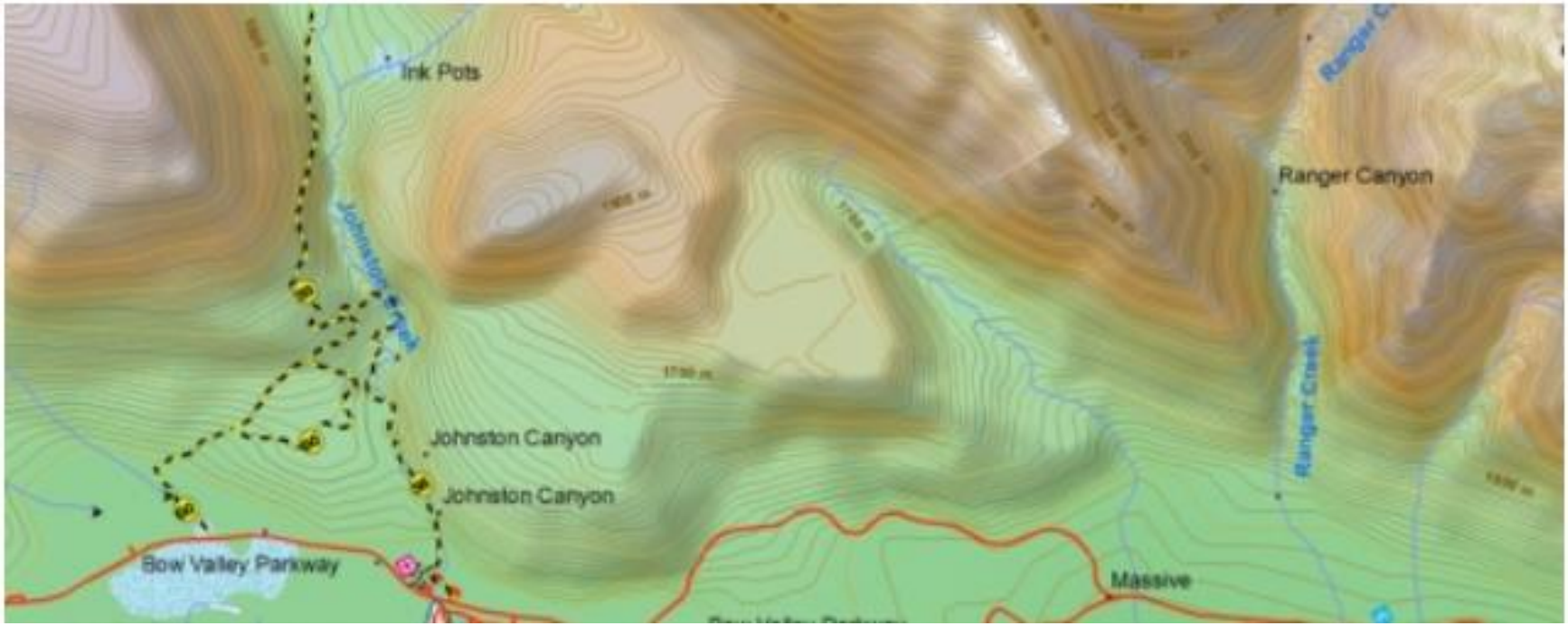
1’ = ` 2km; 1” = 30m

Data quality: Spatial generalization, accuracy and precision: GPS and GIS

Trailhead	Johnston Canyon Resort, 17.5 km (11 mi) northwest along the Bow Valley Parkway from the Trans-Canada Hwy.
GPS Coordinates	**Latitude:** 51.24542307241623 **Longitude:** -115.83992958068848

14 decimal places !
-too precise; NOT accurate
-not enough **generalization**
Last digit = millionths of a mm

Detailed Map Don't just repeat decimal places from GPS / GIS software !



Summary review questions

- Why is generalisation necessary ?
- How is it related to map scale ?
- What happens to points, lines, areas as scale decreases ?
- What is meant by aggregation, elimination and smoothing ?
- What are the three types of data classification ?