



# ‘Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics’

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF CITY RANKING STUDIES

PREPARED BY **Zack Taylor MCIP RPP**

FOR THE **ICE Committee**

metapolis  
URBAN | RESEARCH



Prepare for opportunity. Economist Intelligence Unit The Economist

## A Summary of the Liveability Ranking and Overview

February 2011



[www.eiu.com](http://www.eiu.com)





## Herald Sun

Stories start here.

### Melbourne named world's most liveable city by the Economist Intelligence Unit

Anne Wright | [Herald Sun](#) | August 31, 2011 12:00AM

## THE AGE



Bruce Guthrie

### Get ready for the big squeeze in mega Melbourne

With the city set to double in size, action needs to be taken.

September 4, 2011  
OPINION

THE AUSTRALIAN

## BUSINESS

WITH THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Melbourne world's best city, says Economist Intelligence Unit survey

ROBB M. STEWART | Dow Jones Newswires | August 30, 2011 11:37AM



## Vancouver Reflects on Former Status as World's Most Liveable City

[URI FRIEDMAN](#) | [AUG 30, 2011](#) | [921 Views](#) | [Comment](#)

NATIONAL POST

Full Comment  
**FULL COMMENT**

There are plenty of reasons Vancouver no longer the world's most livable city

## THE VANCOUVER SUN

Livability rankings gloss over important issues

*'technocratic overreach'*

BY MEG HOLDEN AND ANDY SCERRI, VANCOUVER SUN | [SEPTEMBER 1, 2011](#)



# THE VANCOUVER SUN

## Vancouver no longer tops, apparently located on Island

BY SANDRA THOMAS, VAN

### THE GLOBE AND MAIL

INFOGRAPHIC

## Economist bumps Vancouver from first to third most livable because of traffic problems 92 kilometres away

Globe and Mail Update

Published Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2011 9:35PM EDT



THE GLOBE AND MAIL



### THE GLOBE AND MAIL

LIVABILITY

## The Economist stands by its geographically challenged Vancouver downgrade

SUNNY DHILLON

VANCOUVER— From Wednesday's Globe and Mail  
Published Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2011 10:02AM EDT





*‘There are three kinds of **LIES**:  
**Lies**,  
**Damned Lies**,  
and **Statistics**’*

Mark Twain

# The project

## Three parts

1. Survey Toronto's performance
2. Analyze and critique methods used
3. Comment on how policymakers (and journalists) should interpret city-ranking studies

# Analysis of 11 studies, 44 editions

TYPE	TITLE AND PUBLISHER	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Business cost-oriented studies</b>	<i>Prices and Earnings Survey</i> , UBS		■		■	■	■	■
	<i>Cost of Living Survey</i> , Mercer Consulting	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	<i>Competitive Alternatives</i> , KPMG		■		■		■	
<b>Livability-oriented studies</b>	<i>Livability Ranking Overview</i> , EIU				■		■	
	<i>Quality of Living Survey</i> , Mercer Consulting	■	■	■	■	■	■	
<b>Performance-oriented studies</b>	<i>Centers of Commerce Index</i> , Mastercard Worldwide			■	■			
	<i>Cities of Opportunity</i> , PriceWaterhouseCoopers			■	■	■		■
	<i>Scorecard on Prosperity</i> , Toronto Board of Trade					■	■	■
	<i>Global Metro Monitor</i> , Brookings / LSE Cities						■	
<b>Sectoral studies</b>	<i>Global Financial Centres Index</i> , Z/Yen (London)			■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■
	<i>Innovation Cities Top 100 Index</i> , 2ThinkNow						■	



# Toronto's performance

*Toronto belongs to an elite club of high-performing cities*

## Strengths

- ➡ livability
- ➡ cultural diversity
- ➡ ease and low cost of doing business
- ➡ political and economic stability
- ➡ public health and health care systems
- ➡ education
- ➡ recovery from the recession
- ➡ positive reputation



# Toronto's performance

*Toronto belongs to an elite club of high-performing cities*

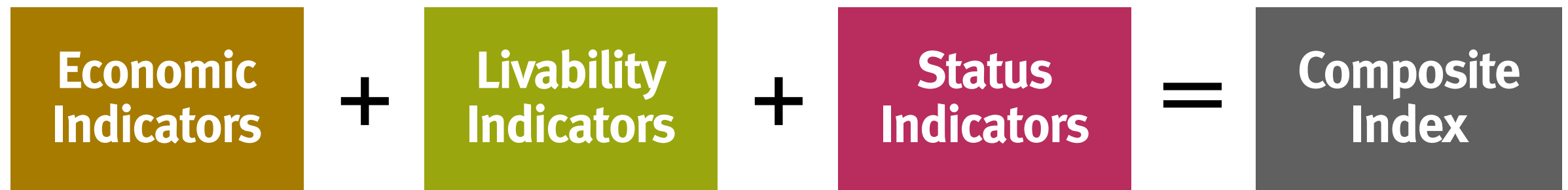
## Weaknesses

- ➡ neglected infrastructure investment
- ➡ high traffic congestion
- ➡ lagging innovation and commercialization
- ➡ low labour productivity
- ➡ city/suburb socio-economic disparity



# Interpreting city-ranking studies

1. What is the study's intended audience and purpose?
2. Does the study combine too much information?





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**Economic  
Indicators**

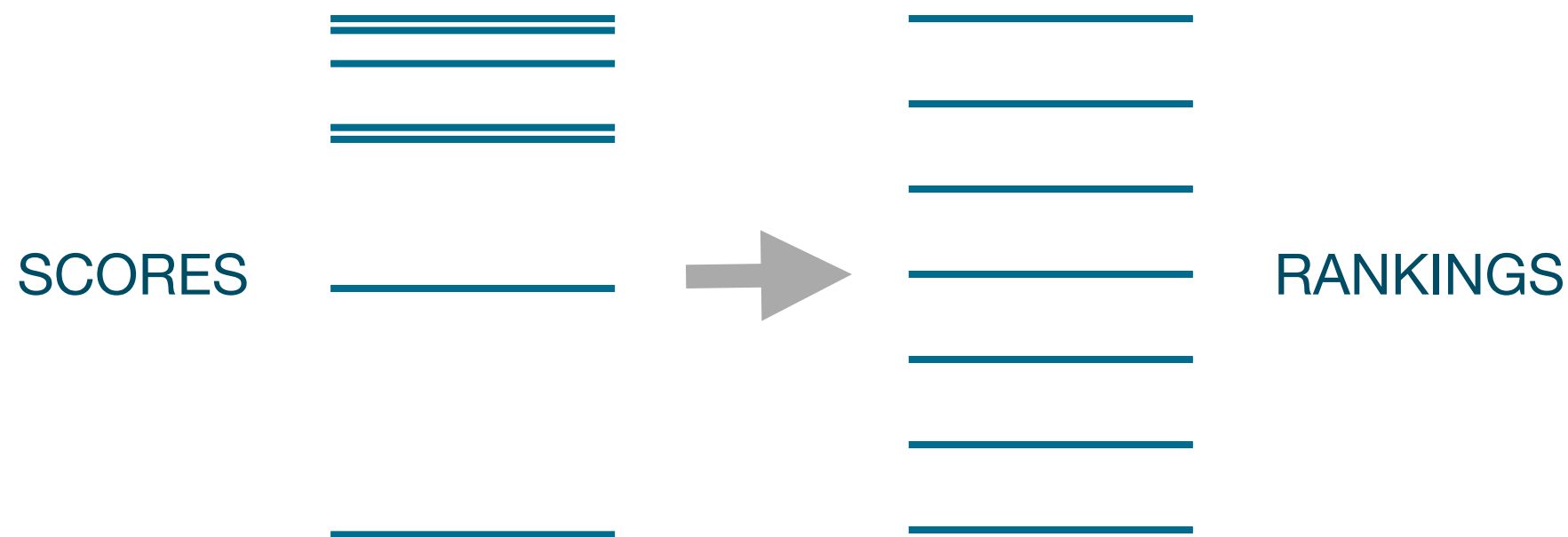
**Livability  
Indicators**

**Status  
Indicators**



# Interpreting city-ranking studies

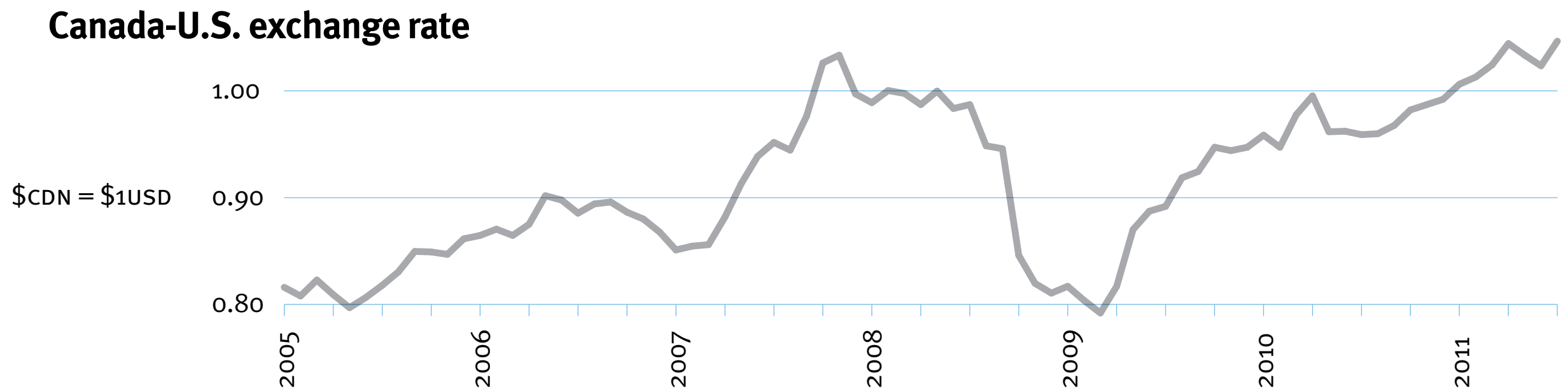
3. Are scores presented in addition to rankings?



4. How have the data been processed?

# Interpreting city-ranking studies

## 5. What is the impact of currency exchange rates?





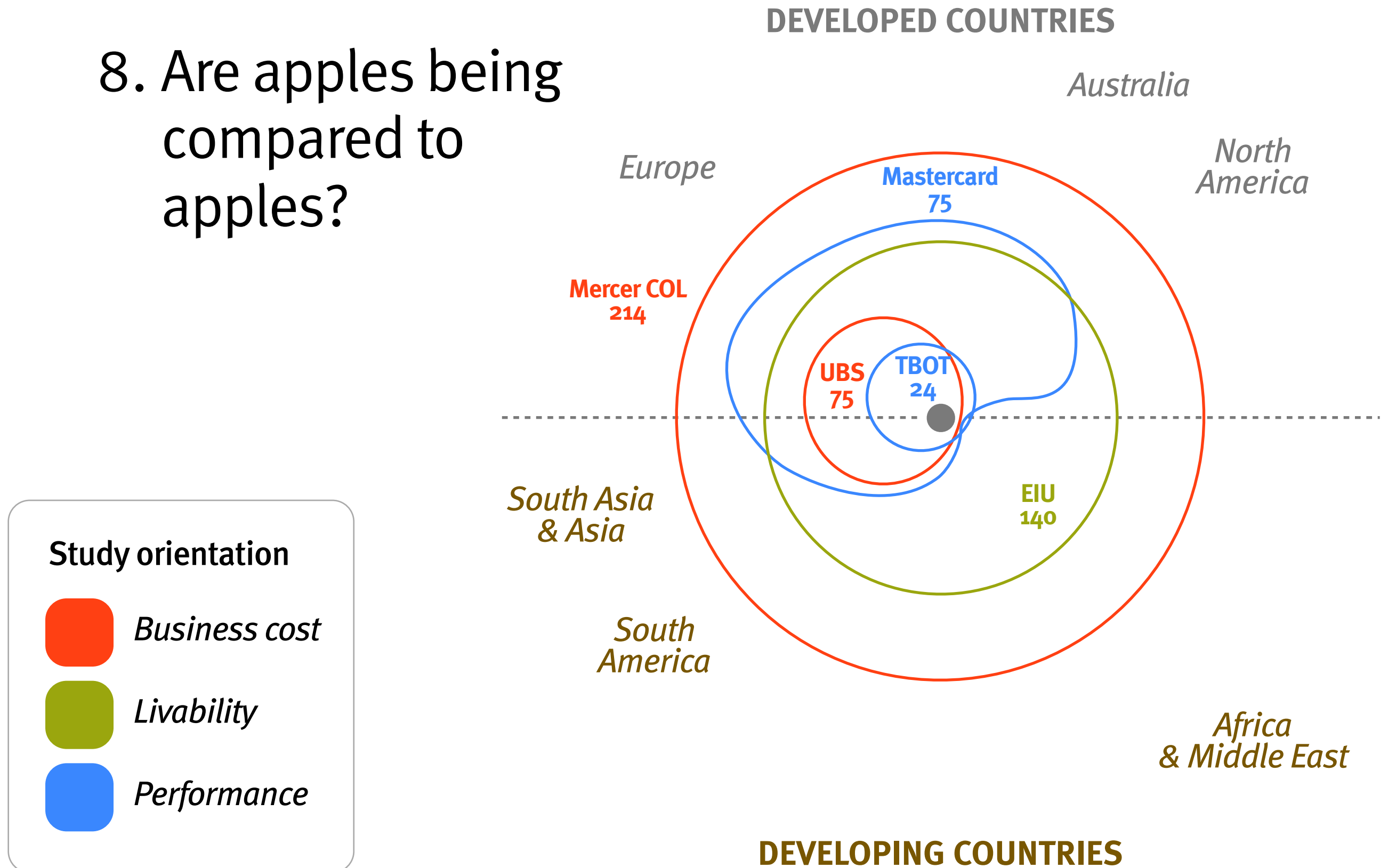
# Interpreting city-ranking studies

6. Do ongoing studies change the rules as they go?

7. How old is the underlying information?

# Interpreting city-ranking studies

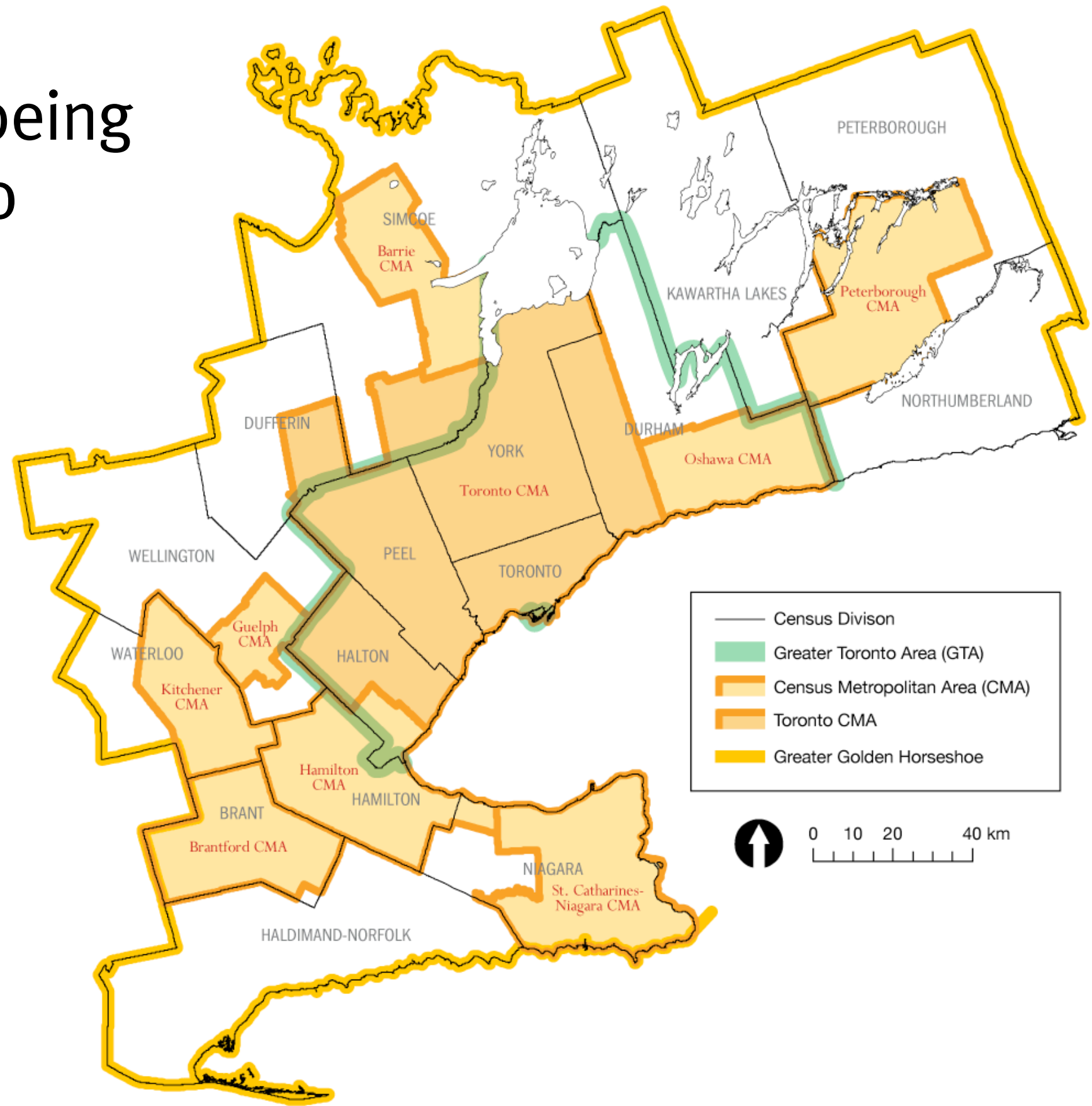
8. Are apples being compared to apples?





# Interpreting city-ranking studies

8. Are apples being compared to apples?





# ***FACTOIDS***

*‘facts which have no  
existence before appearing  
in a magazine or newspaper’*

Norman Mailer