



**CHANGES IN THE
OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE
OF BELGIUM:
NEW ESTIMATES FOR THE
1846 – 1910 PERIOD**

**Erik Buyst
Centre for Economic Studies,
University of Leuven**

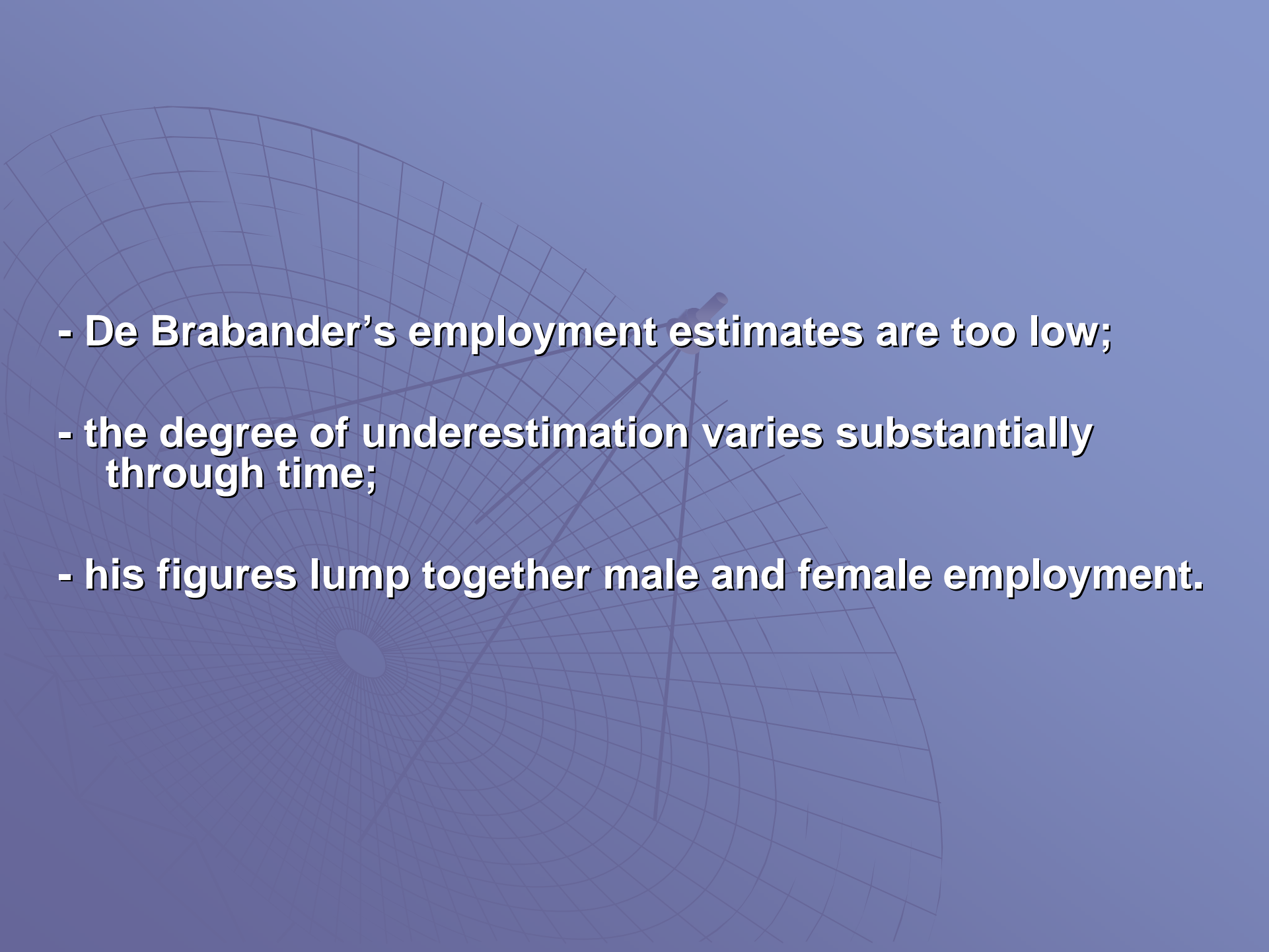
1. Introduction

- To present new estimates of the male and female labour force per sector at regular intervals.
- Belgium: second industrial nation.
- Provide an alternative for Guido De Brabander (1981), *Regional Specialization, Employment and Economic Growth in Belgium between 1846 and 1970*.

2. A critical appraisal of De Brabander's employment data, 1846 - 1910

Table 1: The labour force participation rate in Belgium and England/Wales, 1896-1911 (in %)

Belgium		
	1896	1910
Labour force participation rate	68 %	59 %
England and Wales		
	1901	1911
Labour force participation rate	79 %	79 %

- 
- **De Brabander's employment estimates are too low;**
 - **the degree of underestimation varies substantially through time;**
 - **his figures lump together male and female employment.**

3. De Brabander's method: the industrial censuses as benchmark

- in an industrial census all business people in the manufacturing sector are asked to declare the number of blue- and white-collar workers in their enterprise;**
- fear of the tax authorities;**
- 1910 IC organized on 31 December;**
- De Brabander excludes domestic industry;**
- employment in agriculture and tertiary sector according to PCs is revised downwards.**

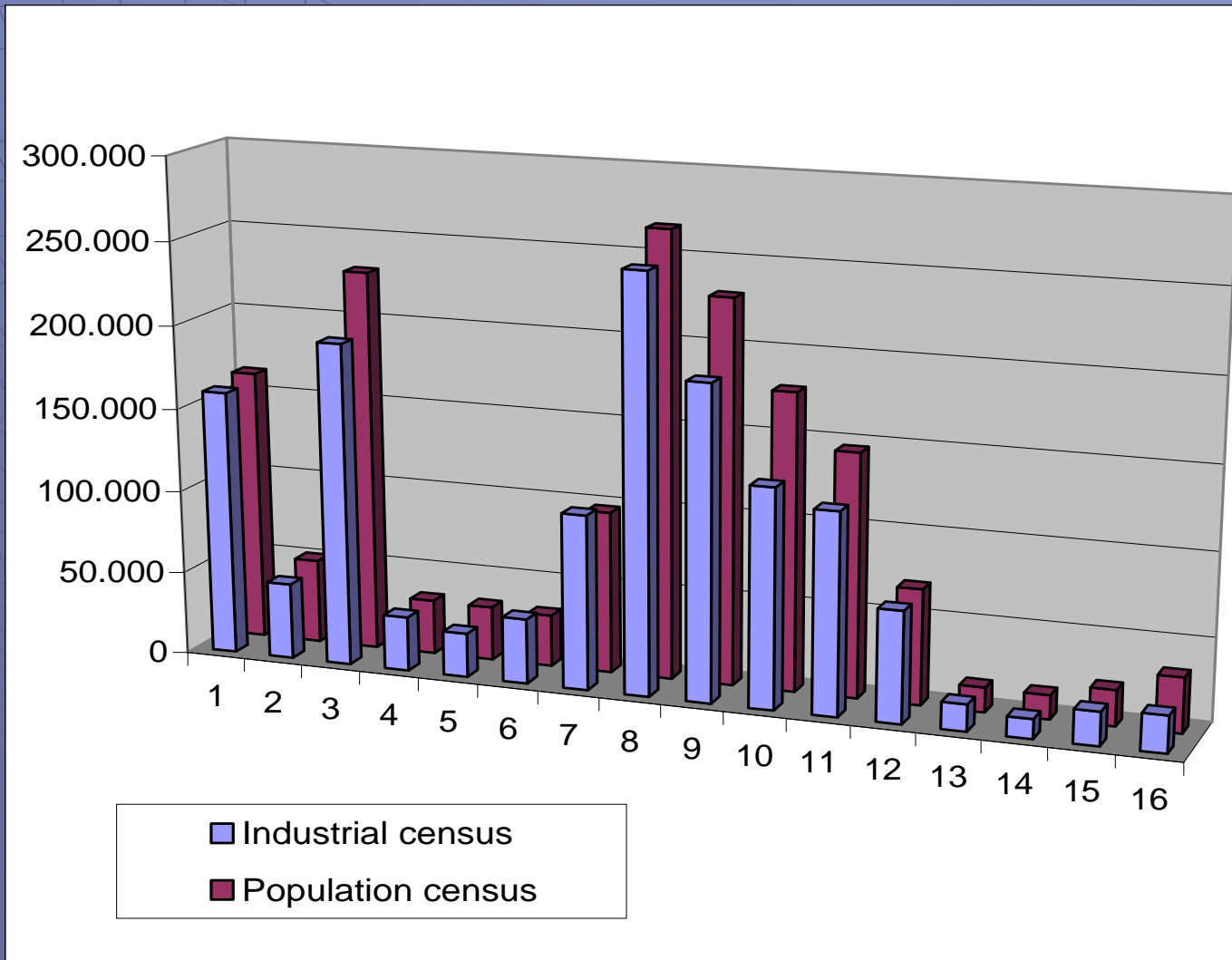
4. An alternative estimation method

Population censuses back to the forefront.

Table 4: Total labour force in the manufacturing sector, including mining, quarrying and building (1910, original figures in numbers)

	Industrial Census	Population Census
Employed	1 347 198	
Unemployed	82 857	
Cross-border workers	47 000	
Total	1 477 055	1 609 889

Figure 1: The labour force by sector in manufacturing (1910, original figures in numbers)

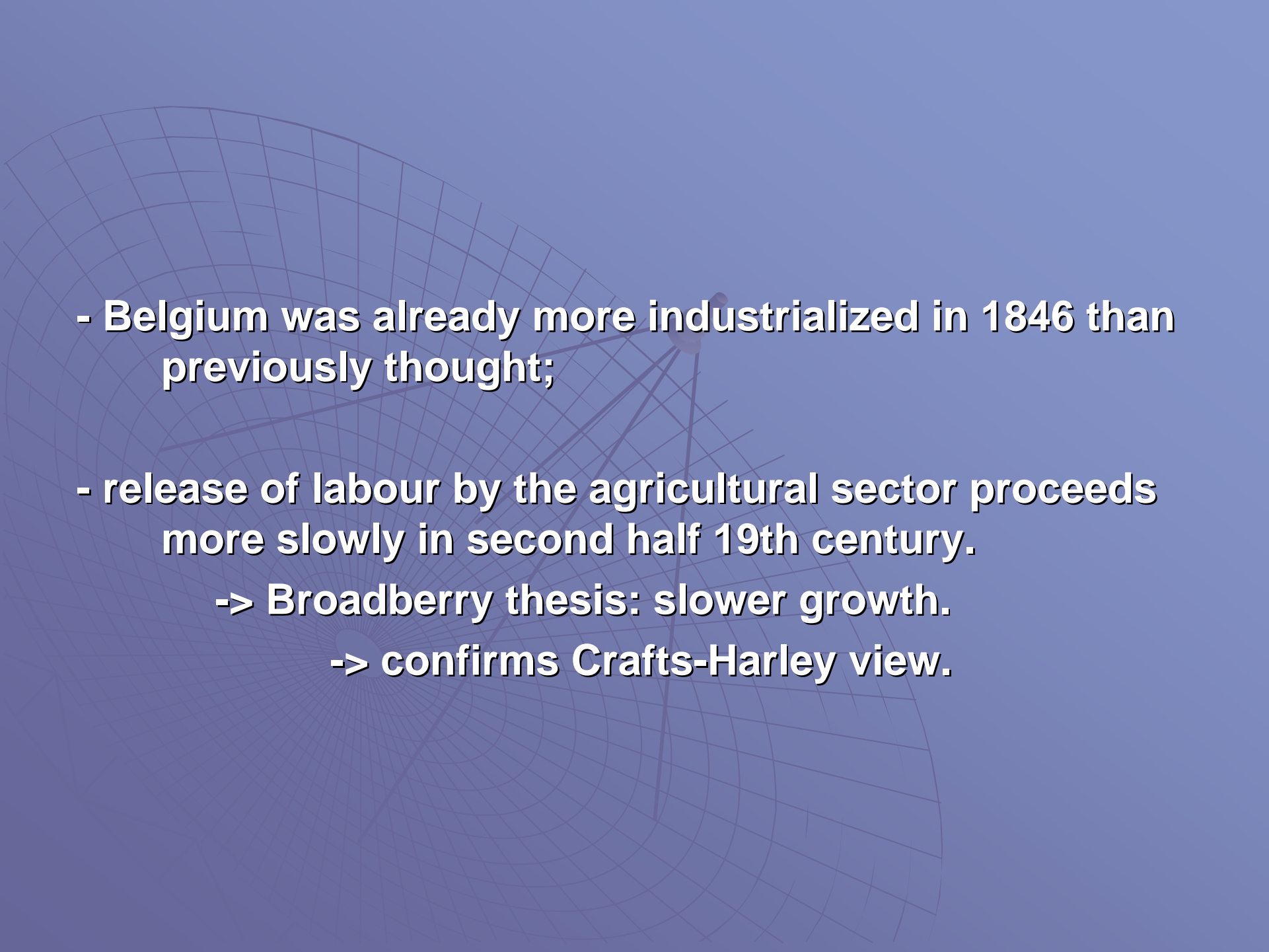


5. A short interpretation

- consistent picture of the changes in the occupational structure (ISIC classification);
- figures for some sub sectors of the tertiary sector less robust;
- same holds for the female labour force;
- the new figures are much higher.

Table 8: The structure of employment/labour force in Belgium (in %)

	De Brabander			New Estimates		
	1846	1896	1910	1846	1900	1910
Agriculture	55.2	31.4	21.9	42.6	26.3	22.7
Manufacturing	31.6	38.0	46.9	35.9	43.1	46.9
Services	17.2	30.6	31.2	21.5	30.6	30.4

- 
- **Belgium was already more industrialized in 1846 than previously thought;**
 - **release of labour by the agricultural sector proceeds more slowly in second half 19th century.**
 - > **Broadberry thesis: slower growth.**
 - > **confirms Crafts-Harley view.**