

Unit Value Bias (Indices) Reconsidered

Price- and Unit-Value-Indices in Germany

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*This paper represents the author's personal opinion and does not necessarily reflect the view of the Deutsche Bundesbank or its staff.

- 1. Introduction and Motivation**
- 2. Unit value index (UVI) and Drobisch's Index (P^{UD})**
- 3. Price and unit value indices in German foreign trade statistics (Tests of hypotheses)**
- 4. Properties and axioms (uv , UVI, P^{UD})**
- 5. Decomposition of the Unit Value Bias (P^U/P^L L- and S-effect)**
- 6. Interpretation of the S-effect in terms of covariances (using a generalized theorem of Bortkiewicz)**
- 7. Conclusions**

■ **Export and Import Price Index Manual (XMPI Man. IMF, 2008)**

■ **Unit Value Indices (UVIs) are used in**

Prices of *trade* (export/import), *land*, *air freight* and certain *services* (consultancy, lawyers etc)

■ **Literature** (UVIs cannot replace price indices)

Balk 1994, 1995 (1998), 2005

Diewert 1995 (NBER paper), 2004 etc.

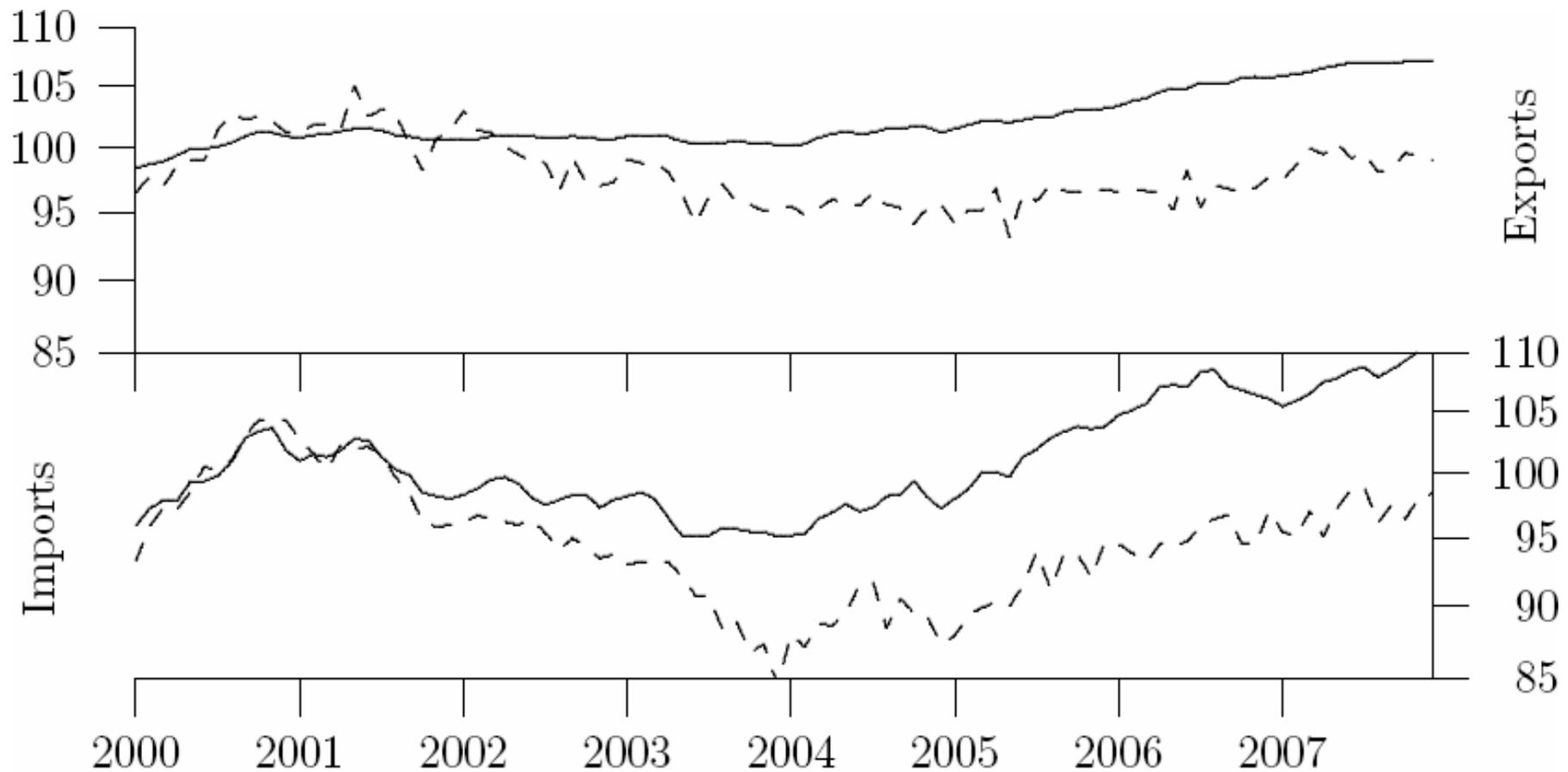
von der Lippe 2006 GER

http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/5525/1/MPRA_paper_5525.pdf

Silver (2007), Do Unit Value Export, Import, and Terms of Trade Indices Represent or Misrepresent Price Indices, IMF Working Paper WP/07/121

1. Introduction and Motivation

2000 Jan – 2007 Dec



— Price indices — — Unit value indices

1. Unit value for the k^{th} commodity number (CN)

$$\tilde{p}_{k0} = \frac{\sum p_{kj0} q_{kj0}}{\sum q_{kj0}} = \sum_j p_{kj0} \frac{q_{kj0}}{Q_{k0}} = \sum_j p_{kj0} m_{kj0}$$

$k = 1, \dots, K$ Unit values are not defined over all CNs

Examples for CNs

HS (Harmonized System)

19 05 90 Other Bakers' Wares,
Communion Wafers, Empty Capsules,
Sealing Wafers

23 09 10 Dog or Cat Food, Put up for
Retail Sale

Germany (Warenverzeichnis)

19 05 90 45 Cakes and similar
small baker's wares (**8 digits**)

23 09 10 11 to 23 09 10 90
twelve (!!) CNs for dog or cat food

2. German Unit Value Index (UVI) of exports/imports the usual Paasche index (unit values instead of prices)

$$PU_{0t}^P = \frac{\sum_k \tilde{p}_{kt} Q_{kt}}{\sum_k \tilde{p}_{k0} Q_{kt}} = \frac{\sum_k \sum_j^{n_k} p_{kjt} q_{kjt}}{\sum_k Q_{kt} \left(\sum_j^{n_k} \frac{p_{kj0} q_{kj0}}{Q_{k0}} \right)}$$

Aggregation in two stages;
 $k = 1, \dots, K$,
 $j = 1, \dots, n_k$ commodities
 in the k^{th} CN; $\sum n_k = n$ (all
 commodities)

3. The Unit value index (UVI) should be kept distinct from Drobisch's index (1871)

$$P_{0t}^{DR} = \frac{\sum_k \sum_j p_{jkt} q_{jkt} / \sum_k \sum_j q_{jkt}}{\sum_k \sum_j p_{jk0} q_{jk0} / \sum_k \sum_j q_{jk0}} = \frac{\sum_k \sum_j p_{jkt} q_{jkt} / \sum_k Q_{kt}}{\sum_k \sum_j p_{jk0} q_{jk0} / \sum_k Q_{k0}}$$

Drobisch's index

$$P_{0t}^{\text{DR}} = \frac{\tilde{P}_t}{\tilde{P}_0} = \frac{V_{0t}}{\tilde{Q}_{0t}}, \quad \tilde{Q}_{0t} = \frac{Q_t}{Q_0}$$

However, Drobisch is better known for

$$\frac{1}{2} (P_{0t}^{\text{L}} + P_{0t}^{\text{P}})$$

	no information about quantities available	information about quantities
the same commodity in different outlets	"normal" usage of the term "low level"	
different goods grouped by a classification		situation of a UVI (Σq needed for unit value)

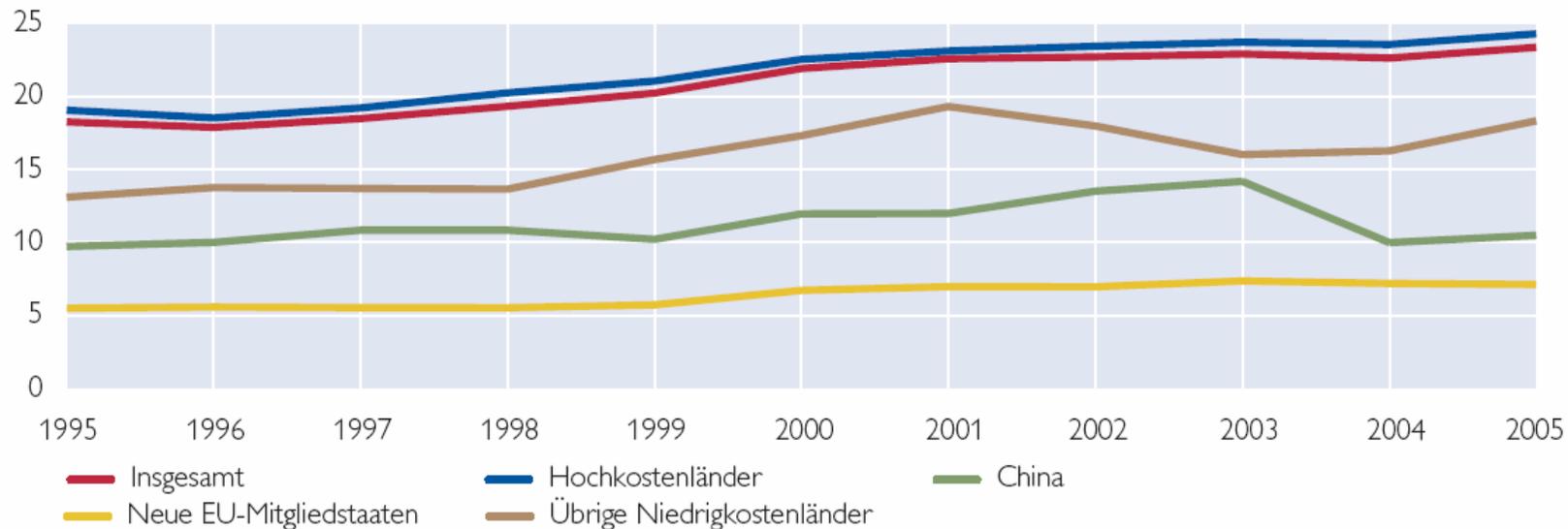
*It does not make sense to consider **absolute** unit values ("Euro per kilogram")*

Austrian Import prices rose from ≈ 20 € per kilogram in 1995 to 25 € ... in 2005

Grafik 5

Österreichische Importpreisindizes in der Sachgütererzeugung

in EUR pro Kilogramm importierter Industrieerzeugnisse



Quelle: Eurostat (Comext), OeNB.

Glatzer et al "Globalisierung..." http://www.oenb.at/de/img/gewi_2006_3_tcm14-46922.pdf

"Because we use weights as units an increasing import price index could be explained by either rising prices or reduced weights due to quality improvement"

2. UVI and price indices (PI): System of possible indices

$2^4 = 16$ indices:

type of index (price vs quantity)

Prices (p) vs unit values (uv)

Laspeyres vs Paasche

Export vs import

$$V = \frac{\sum p_t q_t}{\sum p_0 q_0} = P^P Q^L = P U^P Q U^L$$

	Price-indices		Quantity-indices	
	p	uv	p	uv
Laspeyres	P^L	$P U^L$	Q^L	$Q U^L$
Paasche	P^P	$P U^P$	Q^P	$Q U^P$

	Price index	Unit value index
Data	Survey based (monthly), sample ; more demanding (weights!)	Customs based (by-product), census , Intrastat: survey
Formula	Laspeyres	Paasche
Quality adjustment	Yes	No (feasible?)
Prices, aggregates	Prices of specific goods at time of contracting	Average value of CNs; time of crossing border
New / disappearing goods	Included only when a new base period is defined; vanishing goods replaced by <i>similar</i> ones constant selection of goods *	Immediately included; price quotation of disappearing goods is simply discontinued variable universe of goods
Merits	Reflect pure price movement (ideally the same products over time)	" Representativity " inclusion of <i>all</i> products; data readily available
Published in	Fachserie 17, Reihe 11	Fachserie 7, Reihe 1

CN = commodity numbers

* All price determining characteristics kept constant

Price index (P) Unit value index (U)

Hypothesis	Argument
1. $U < P$, growing discrepancy	Laspeyres (P) > Paasche (U) Formula of L. v. Bortkiewicz
2. Volatility $U > P$	U no pure price comparison (U is reflecting changes in product mix [structural changes])
3. Seasonality $U > P$	U no adjustment for seasonally non-availability
4. U suffers from heterogeneity	Variable vs. constant selection of goods, CN less homogeneous than specific goods
5. Lead of P	Prices refer to the earlier moment of contracting (contract-delivery lag; exchange rates)
6. Smoothing (due to quality adjustment)	Quality adjustment in P results in smoother series

4. Properties and axioms: 4.1. unit values: one CN, two commodities

$$p_{10} = p_{1t} = p$$

$$p_{20} = p_{2t} = \lambda p$$

$$\mu = m_{2t}/0.5$$

$$m_{10} = m_{20} = 0.5$$

$$\Delta = \tilde{p}_{kt} - \tilde{p}_{k0} = \frac{p}{2} (1 - \lambda)(1 - \mu)$$

$\lambda < 1$	$\lambda > 1$ and $\mu < 1 \rightarrow \Delta < 0$ less of the more expensive good 2 unit value <i>declining</i>	$\lambda > 1$ and $\mu > 1 \rightarrow \Delta > 0$ more of the more expensive good 2 unit value <i>rising</i>
$\lambda > 1$	$\lambda < 1$ and $\mu < 1 \rightarrow \Delta > 0$ less of the cheaper good 2 unit value <i>rising</i>	$\lambda < 1$ and $\mu > 1 \rightarrow \Delta < 0$ more of the cheaper good 2 unit value <i>declining</i>
	$\mu < 1$	$\mu > 1$

"... 'unit value' indices ... may therefore be affected by changes in the mix of items as well as by changes in their prices. Unit value indices cannot therefore be expected to provide good measures of average price change over time" (SNA 93, § 16.13)

4. Properties and axioms: 4.2. ratios of unit values

1) UVI mean of uv-ratios

$$PU_{0t}^P = \sum_k \frac{\tilde{p}_{kt}}{\tilde{p}_{k0}} \frac{\tilde{p}_{k0} Q_{kt}}{\sum_k \tilde{p}_{k0} Q_{kt}}$$

2) Ratio of unit values \neq **mean** of price relatives

$$\frac{\tilde{p}_{kt}}{\tilde{p}_{k0}} = \sum_j \frac{p_{kjt}}{p_{kj0}} \left(\frac{p_{kj0} q_{kjt}}{\tilde{p}_{k0} Q_{kt}} \right)$$

the weights do not add up to unity, but to $\frac{Q_{k0}}{Q_{kt}} \cdot Q_{0t}^{L(k)} = \frac{Q_{0t}^{L(k)}}{\tilde{Q}_{0t}^k}$

3) Proportionality (identity)

Contribution
of k to S-effect

4. Properties and axioms: 4.3. UVI and Drobisch's index

Axioms Drobisch's (price) index and the German UVI (= PU^P)

Axiom	Definition	Drobisch*	German PU ^P
Proportionality	$U(\mathbf{p}_0, \lambda \mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t) = \lambda$ (identity = 1)	no	no
Commensurability	$U(\Lambda \mathbf{p}_0, \Lambda \mathbf{p}_t, \Lambda^{-1} \mathbf{q}_0, \Lambda^{-1} \mathbf{q}_t) = U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t)$	no	no
Linear homogen.	$U(\mathbf{p}_0, \lambda \mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t) = \lambda U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t)$	yes	yes
Additivity** (in current period prices)	$U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_t^*, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t) = U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t) + U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_t^+, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t)$ for $\mathbf{p}_t^* = \mathbf{p}_t + \mathbf{p}_t^+$	yes	yes
Additivity** (in base period prices)	$[U(\mathbf{p}_0^*, \mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t)]^{-1} = [U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t)]^{-1} + [U(\mathbf{p}_0^+, \mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t)]^{-1}$ for $\mathbf{p}_0^* = \mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_0^+$	yes	yes
Product test	Implicit quantity index of P ^{UD} or PU ^P	$\Sigma \mathbf{q}_t / \Sigma \mathbf{q}_0$	QU ^L
Time re- versibility	$U(\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{q}_t, \mathbf{q}_0) = \mathbf{U}^{\leftarrow}$ $= [U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_t)]^{-1} = [\mathbf{U}^{\rightarrow}]^{-1}$	yes	$(\text{PU}^{\text{P}\leftarrow}) = 1/(\text{PU}^{\text{L}\rightarrow})$
Transitivity	$U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_2, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_2) = U(\mathbf{p}_0, \mathbf{p}_1, \mathbf{q}_0, \mathbf{q}_1) \cdot U(\mathbf{p}_1, \mathbf{p}_2, \mathbf{q}_1, \mathbf{q}_2)$	yes	no

* Balk1995, Silver 2007, IMF Manual; applies also to subindex $\tilde{p}_{kt} / \tilde{p}_{k0}$

** Inclusive of (strict) monotonicity

5. Decomposition of the discrepancy D

$$\text{Value index } V_{0t} = PU_{0t}^L QU_{0t}^P = PU_{0t}^P QU_{0t}^L$$

Bortkiewicz Formula

$$C = \sum_i \left(\frac{p_{it}}{p_{i0}} - P_{0t}^L \right) \left(\frac{q_{it}}{q_{i0}} - Q_{0t}^L \right) \frac{p_{i0} q_{i0}}{\sum p_{i0} q_{i0}}$$

$$= V_{0t} - Q_{0t}^L P_{0t}^L = Q_{0t}^L (P_{0t}^P - P_{0t}^L)$$

Discrepancy (uv-bias)

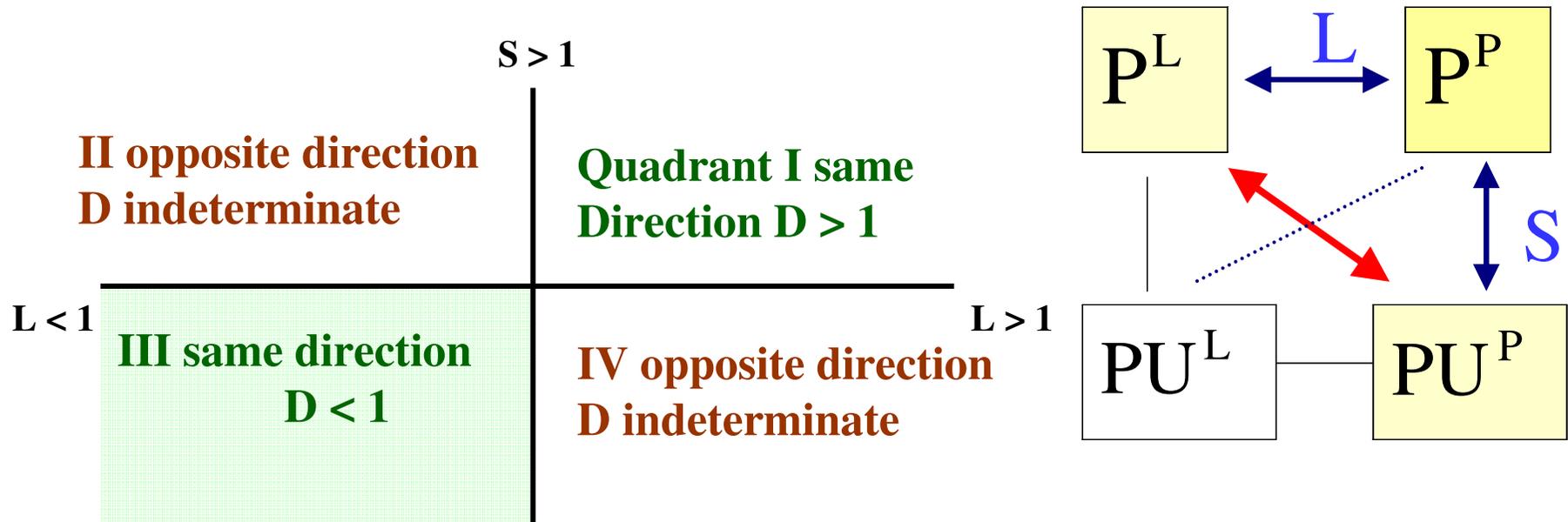
$$D = \frac{PU_{0t}^P}{P_{0t}^L} = \left(\frac{C}{Q_{0t}^L P_{0t}^L} + 1 \right) \left(\frac{Q_{0t}^L}{QU_{0t}^L} \right) = \frac{P_{0t}^P}{P_{0t}^L} \cdot \frac{PU_{0t}^P}{P_{0t}^P} = L \cdot S$$

$$L = \frac{Q_{0t}^P}{Q_{0t}^L} = \frac{Q_{0t}^P}{S \cdot QU_{0t}^L} = \frac{PU_{0t}^P}{S \cdot P_{0t}^L} \quad S = \frac{Q_{0t}^L}{QU_{0t}^L} = \frac{Q_{0t}^P}{L \cdot QU_{0t}^L} = \frac{PU_{0t}^P}{L \cdot P_{0t}^L}$$



Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz (1923)

5. The two effects L and S - 1 -



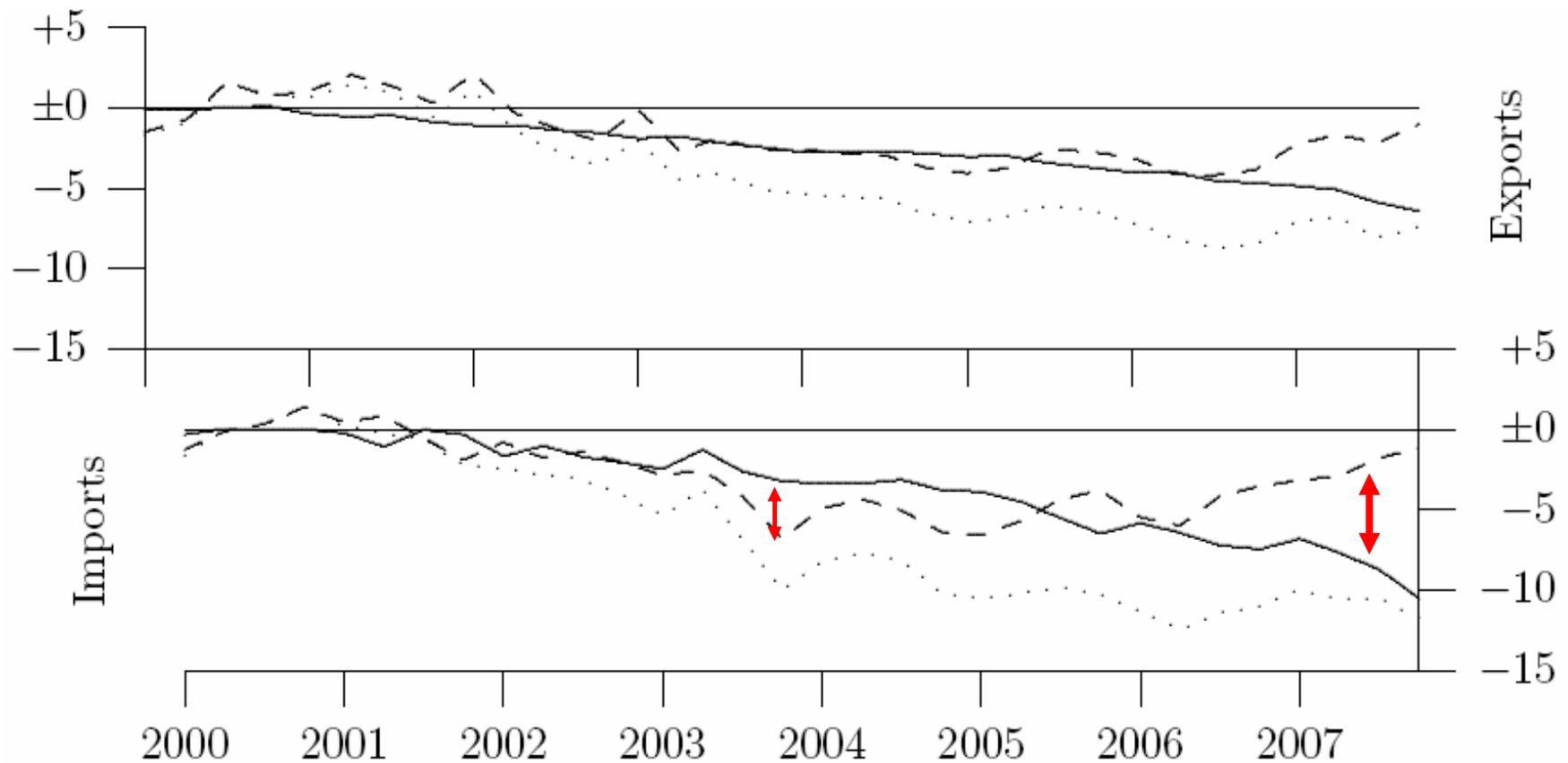
In I and III we can combine two inequalities

	$S < 1$	$S = 1$	$S > 1$
$L > 1$	II. indefinite	$PU^P > P^L$	I. $PU^P > P^P > P^L$
$L = 1$	$PU^P < P^L = P^P$	$PU^P = P^P = P^L$	$PU^P > P^L = P^P$
$L < 1$	III. $PU^P < P^P < P^L$	$PU^P < P^L$	IV. indefinite

5. The two effects L and S - 2 -

Deflator X and M respectively taken for P^P

S and L independent ?

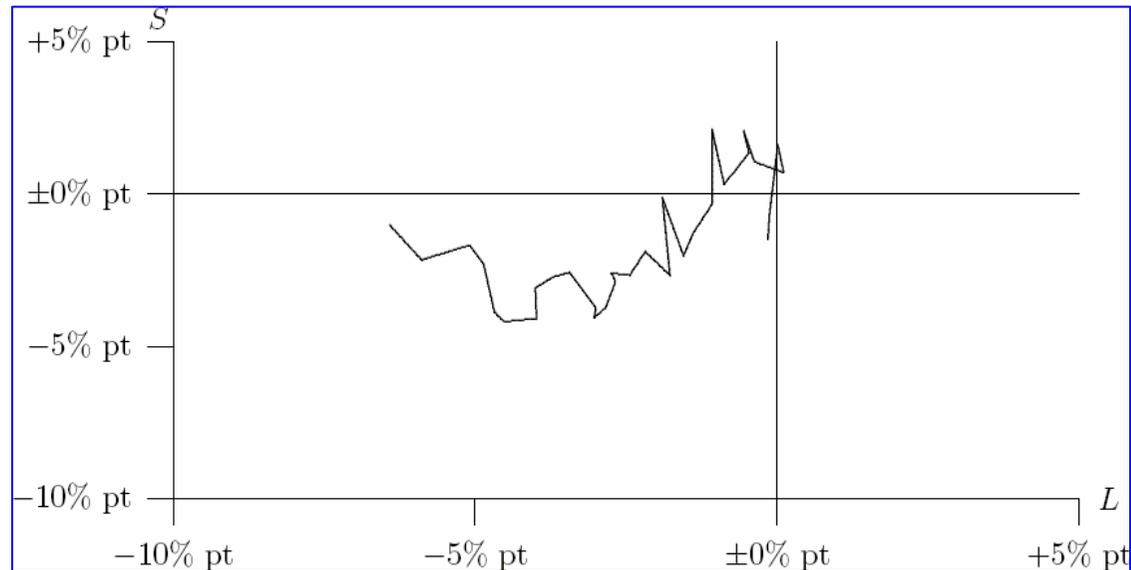


— Laspeyres effect (% pt) — Structural component (% pt) ··· Discrepancy (%)

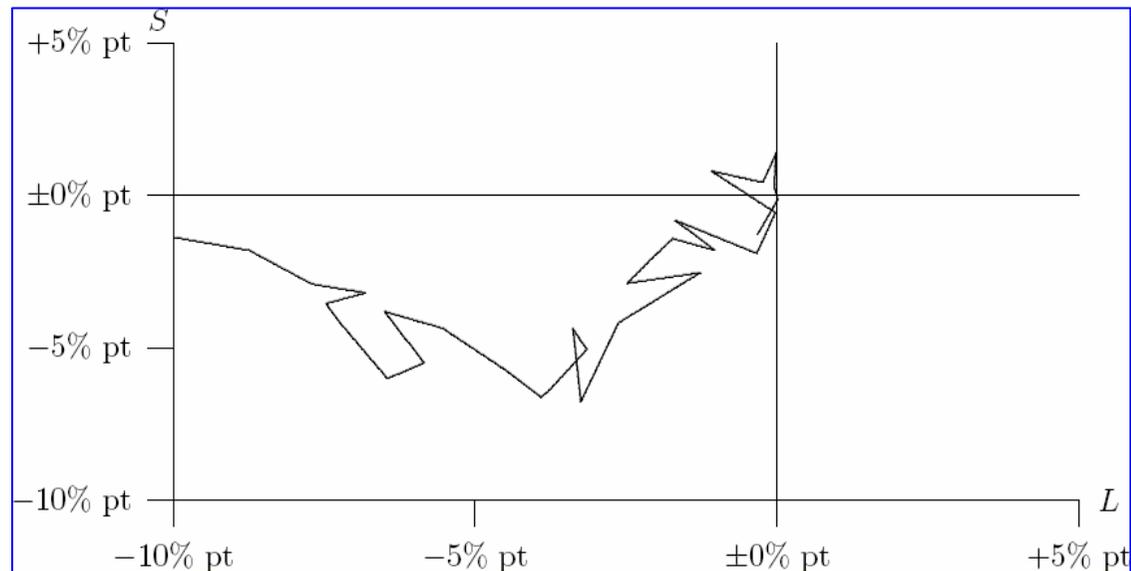
5. The two effects L and S - 3 - Time path of S-L- pairs (left → right)

Normal reaction:
L and S negative
more likely in the case
of imports

exports



imports



6. Interpretation of S component (contributions to L as the model)

Interpretation L-Effect: **contributions to the covariance** (Szulc)

$$R = \frac{P_P - P_L}{P_L} = \sum_i \left[\left(\frac{p_i^1/p_i^0 - P_L}{P_L} \right) \cdot \left(\frac{q_i^1/q_i^0 - Q_L}{Q_L} \right) \cdot \left(\frac{p_i^0 q_i^0}{\sum p_i^0 q_i^0} \right) \right]$$

R a "centred" covariance $\frac{s_{XY}}{\bar{X} \cdot \bar{Y}}$ $L = R + 1$

A. Chaffe, M. Lequain, G. O'Donnell, Assessing the Reliability of the CPI Basket Update in Canada Using the Bortkiewicz Decomposition, Statistics Canada, September 2007

No L-effect ($L = 1$) if

1. all p^1/p^0 equal (P_L)
or = 1
2. all $q^1/q^0 = Q_L$ or = 1
3. covariance = 0

No S-effect ($S = Q^L/QU^L = 1$) if

1. no CNs, only individual goods
(or: each $n_k = 1$, perfectly homogeneous CNs)
 2. all q^1/q^0 equal (or = 1)
 3. all $m_{kjt} = m_{kj0}$
 $\forall j, k$
 4. all prices
 5. all quantities in 0 are equal
- prices in t are irrelevant**

6. Contribution of a CN (k) to S as ratio of two linear indices

$$1. \quad S = \frac{Q_{0t}^L}{QU_{0t}^L} = \sum_k \frac{Q_{0t}^{L(k)}}{\tilde{Q}_{0t}^k} \cdot \frac{\tilde{p}_{k0} Q_{kt}}{\sum_k \tilde{p}_{k0} Q_{kt}}$$

2. Generalized theorem of Bortkiewicz
for two **linear** indices X_t and X_0

$$X_t = \frac{\sum x_t y_t}{\sum x_0 y_t}$$

$$X_0 = \frac{\sum x_t y_0}{\sum x_0 y_0}$$

$$\frac{X_t}{X_0} = 1 + \frac{S_{xy}}{\bar{X} \cdot \bar{Y}}$$

$$w_0 = x_0 y_0 / \sum x_0 y_0$$

$$\sum \frac{x_t}{x_0} w_0 = \bar{X} = X_0$$

$$S_{xy} = \sum \left(\frac{x_t}{x_0} - \bar{X} \right) \left(\frac{y_t}{y_0} - \bar{Y} \right) w_0 = \frac{\sum x_t y_t}{\sum x_0 y_0} - \bar{X} \cdot \bar{Y}$$

The "usual" theorem (slide 15) is a special case →

6. Generalized Theorem of Bortkiewicz

Theorem for the L-effect

$$\frac{X_t}{X_0} = 1 + \frac{S_{xy}}{\bar{X} \cdot \bar{Y}}$$

$x_0 = p_0$	$y_0 = q_0$	$X_t = P^P$	$C = \sum_i \left(\frac{p_{it}}{p_{i0}} - P_{0t}^L \right) \left(\frac{q_{it}}{q_{i0}} - Q_{0t}^L \right) \frac{p_{i0}q_{i0}}{\sum p_{i0}q_{i0}}$
$x_t = p_t$	$y_t = q_t$	$X_0 = P^L$	

1. for S

$$S = Q_{0t}^L / QU_{0t}^L$$

$x_0 = q_0$	$y_0 = 1$	$X_t = Q_{0t}^{L(k)}$	$\sum \left(\frac{q_{kjt}}{q_{kj0}} - \tilde{Q}_{0t}^k \right) \left(p_{kj0} - \tilde{p}_{k0} \right) \frac{q_{kj0}}{\sum q_{kj0}}$
$x_t = q_t$	$y_t = p_0$	$X_0 = \tilde{Q}_{0t}^k$	

2. for 1/S

$x_0 = q_0$	$y_0 = p_0$	$X_t = \tilde{Q}_{0t}^k$	$\sum \left(\frac{q_{kjt}}{q_{kj0}} - Q_{0t}^{L(k)} \right) \left(\frac{1}{p_{kj0}} - \frac{1}{\tilde{p}_{k0}} \right) \frac{p_{kj0}q_{kj0}}{\sum p_{kj0}q_{kj0}}$
$x_t = q_t$	$y_t = 1$	$X_0 = Q_{0t}^{L(k)}$	

6. Two commodities example with both, S and L effect (example of slide 12)

$$p_{10} = p_{1t} = p$$

$$p_{20} = p_{2t} = \lambda p$$

$$\mu = m_{2t}/0.5$$

$$m_{10} = m_{20} = 0.5$$

$$\pi = p_{1t} / p_{10}$$

$$p_{2t} / p_{20} = \eta \pi$$

$\lambda > 1$	$\Delta < 0 \rightarrow S < 1$	$\Delta > 0 \rightarrow S > 1$
$\lambda < 1$	$\Delta > 0 \rightarrow S > 1$	$\Delta < 0 \rightarrow S < 1$
	$\mu < 1$	$\mu > 1$

S-effect	L-effect	$\pi = \eta = 1$
$S = \frac{Q_{0t}^L}{\tilde{Q}_{0t}} = 1 + \frac{(1-\lambda)(1-\mu)}{1+\lambda} = 1 + \frac{\Delta}{\tilde{p}_0}$	$P_{0t}^L = \frac{\pi(1+\eta\lambda)}{1+\lambda}$	$= 1$
$S_{xy}^{(1)} = \sum_j \left(\frac{q_{jt}}{q_{j0}} - \tilde{Q}_{0t} \right) (p_{j0} - \tilde{p}_0) \frac{q_{j0}}{\sum q_{j0}} = \tilde{Q}_{0t} \Delta$	$P_{0t}^P = \frac{\pi(2-\mu+\eta\lambda\mu)}{2-\mu+\lambda\mu}$	$= 1$
$S_{xy}^{(2)} = \frac{2\tilde{Q}_{0t}(\lambda-1)(1-\mu)}{p(1+\lambda)^2} = -\frac{\Delta}{(\tilde{p}_0)^2}$	$L = \frac{P_{0t}^P}{P_{0t}^L} = \frac{2-\mu+\eta\lambda\mu}{1+\eta\lambda} \cdot \frac{1+\lambda}{2-\mu+\lambda\mu}$	

7. Conclusions

	if $\pi = \eta = 1$
$\Delta^* = \tilde{p}_t - \tilde{p}_0 = \frac{p}{2} [\pi(2 - \mu(1 - \eta\lambda)) - (1 + \lambda)]$	$\Delta^* = \Delta$
$C = s_{xy}^{(L)} = \frac{2\tilde{Q}_{0t}\lambda(1 - \eta)(1 - \mu)}{(1 + \lambda)^2}$	$C = 0$
$\Delta^* = \tilde{p}_t - \tilde{p}_0 = \pi \frac{s_{xy}^1}{\tilde{Q}_{0t}} + \frac{s_{xy}^L (1 + \lambda)^2}{2\tilde{Q}_{0t}} + \pi(1 - \lambda\eta) - (1 - \lambda)$	

7. Future work

- Analysis of the time series of UVIs and PIs on various levels of disaggregation, cointegration and Granger-Causality
- Microeconomic interpretation of S-effect (in terms of utility maximizing behaviour)

No structural change **between** CNs (that is $Q_{k0} = Q_{kt}$) yields

$$V_{0t} = PU_{0t}^P = PU_{0t}^L \quad \text{and} \quad QU_{0t}^L = QU_{0t}^P = 1$$

This is, however, not sufficient for the S-effect to vanish

$$S = Q_{0t}^L \neq 1$$

No mean value property of PU^P

$$PU^P = \sum_k \sum_j \frac{p_{kjt}}{p_{kj0}} \left(\frac{p_{kj0} q_{kjt}^*}{\sum \sum p_{kj0} q_{kjt}^*} \right)$$

$$P^P = \sum_k \sum_j \frac{p_{kjt}}{p_{kj0}} \left(\frac{p_{kj0} q_{kjt}}{\sum \sum p_{kj0} q_{kjt}} \right)$$

$$q_{kjt}^* = q_{kj0} \frac{Q_{kt}}{Q_{k0}}$$

a fictitious quantity in t

The same applies to Laspeyres

$$PU^L = \sum_k \sum_j \frac{p_{kjt}}{p_{kj0}} \frac{p_{kj0} \left(q_{kjt} \frac{Q_{k0}}{Q_{kt}} \right)}{\sum \sum p_{kj0} q_{kj0}}$$

Discussion 2

The relation $S = PU^P/P^P$ instead of $S = Q^L/QU^L$ is not interesting

$$PU^P = \frac{\sum_k \tilde{p}_{kt} Q_{kt}}{\sum_k \tilde{p}_{k0} Q_{kt}} = \sum_k P^{(k)} \frac{Q_{kt} \sum_j p_{kj0} m_{kjt}}{\sum_k Q_{kt} \sum_j p_{kj0} m_{kj0}}$$

$$P^P = \frac{\sum_k \sum_j p_{kjt} q_{kjt}}{\sum_k \sum_j p_{kj0} q_{kjt}} = \sum_k P^{(k)} \frac{Q_{kt} \sum_j p_{kj0} m_{kjt}}{\sum_k Q_{kt} \sum_j p_{kj0} m_{kjt}}$$

↑
Sum of weights!

UVI in XMPI Manual

§ 2.14

Drobisch's formula

$$P_U = \left(\frac{\sum_m p_m^1 q_m^1}{\sum_m q_m^1} \right) / \left(\frac{\sum_n p_n^0 q_n^0}{\sum_n q_n^0} \right)$$