

THE ROLE OF FORMAL NORMS
IN THE INTRODUCTION OF INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

IDE — International Research Group*

1. FORMAL PARTICIPATORY NORMS IN INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

1.1 Sociological Perspectives

The nature and functions of law, of formal rules and norms in society have preoccupied social philosophers from Montesquieu's "De l'Esprit des Lois" (1748) to Durkheim's "De la Division du Travail Social" (1893) to Weber's "Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft" (1922). This preoccupation prevails among philosophers and sociologists alike (IDE 1980).

At least three basic theoretical perspectives have emerged in the centenarian tradition of the sociology of law. One views law as a *vehicle of social change*, as an independent variable in a cause-and-effect chain. A second considers law as legitimizing a *response to foregone social change*, as the dependent variable and codification of a status quo of power relations reached through processes of bargaining and conflict resolution (Sumner 1906, 1940). And a third conceptualizes law as *mediator*, as an interactive variable in a continuous socio-political process of status quo defense and the facilitation of social change (Nagel 1970). Applied to political issues of industrial democracy all three approaches may claim some credence.

* The members of the international research team are: Peter Abell — Great Britain, Flemming Agersnap — Denmark, Erik Andriessen — Netherlands, Pol Coetsier — Belgium, Francesco Consoli — Italy, Pieter J. D. Drenth — Netherlands, Frank A. Heller — Great Britain, Oiva Laaksonen — Finland, Cornelis J. Lammers — Netherlands, Dominique Martin — France, Ricardo Peccei — Italy, Vesna Pušić — Yugoslavia, Thoralf U. Qvale — Norway, Jörg Rayley — Federal Republic of Germany, Eliezer Rosenstein — Israel, Veljko Rus — Yugoslavia, Marnix Ryckaert — Belgium, Thomas Sandberg — Sweden, Bengt Stymne — Sweden, Malcolm Warner — Great Britain, Bernhard Wilpert — Federal Republic of Germany.

The study was internationally coordinated by B. Wilpert from the International Institute of Management of the Science Center Berlin and Technical University Berlin.

1.2 Political Perspectives

The passing of the German co-determination law of 1951 can clearly be interpreted as the "freezing-in" point of the industrial relations status reached in the iron and steel industries during early post-war years. The present debate in practically every West European nation regarding the most appropriate model and implementation of industrial democracy reflects the underlying desire to redress the existing imbalance of influence and power distribution in work organizations, and thus it implies the basic belief that law and rule-making will serve purposes of desired social change. On an international level, the Commission of the European Community, with the assistance of the European Parliament and the European Trade Union Congress, uses its legislative proposals (Fifth Directive, Statute of the European Corporation) deliberately to induce a process of discussion and legalization among member countries to harmonize divergent national corporate legal systems and to guarantee (freeze-in) similar standards of participatory potential for employees in national and multi-national corporations (Pipkorn 1980).

1.3 Problem Focus

The purposive attempt to legislate industrial democracy — by means of law or other kinds of rule-making, e. g. collective bargaining contracts — is an attempt to structure social relationships between employees (or their representatives) and employers. It is the exercise of 'relational control' in the sense that it alters "the existing matrix of action possibilities, outcomes and orientations within which social action occurs" (Baumgartner et al. 1976, 224). The setting of normative parameters for the interaction of relevant actors must be guided by the expectation that the actors will abide by the interaction framework provided. Norms for industrial democracy in this light become the structural prerequisites for participatory behavior and its social, psychological and economic consequences: law as a vehicle of social change.

Our focus on formal norms (participative structure — PS) and their presumed impact on participation (P) broadens the assumed link between the variables P and outcomes (O; such as economic outcomes) to

$$PS \rightarrow P \rightarrow O.$$

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

In order to study the impact of formal norms on participatory behavior (P) we must conceptualize PS as variable (Black 1976) and measurable. While the variation in legalization is immediately evident in an international perspective, its metrification presents bedeviling difficulties. In consequence, we find a long tradition of legal comparativism which attempts to describe properties of legal systems in qualitative terms. This tradition is very prominent also in the area of comparing industrial democracy systems across countries as evidenced by the work

of the Geneva-based International Institute of Labor Studies. Qualitative comparisons of legal systems implies ideographic approaches in the delineation of each system's characteristics, i. e. their imbeddedness in a country's dominant value orientations, legal traditions, socio-political and institutional contexts and differentiations. From this approach follows the virtual impossibility to relate such qualitative characteristics to organizational behavior (P) in systematic, comparative, measured form.

A somewhat different approach has been employed by the work of Tähnenbaum and his collaborators (1974). In concentrating on the intra-organizational distribution of influence and control in matching companies of various countries, they described the significant effects of the factor country. But no detailed attempt was made to specify which aspects of the various countries accounted for the variance. Country remained a residual factor.

Only recently can we observe theoretical developments in the field of sociology of law that might facilitate more systematic comparative measurement efforts (Black, 1976, Evan, 1978). To our knowledge only the study of King and van de Vall (1978) exists which attempts to develop a methodology providing rough metric information on the differential normative participatory potential in various industrial democracy systems. However, the authors did not relate their findings on the *de jure* differences of the British, German, and Yugoslav industrial democracy systems (PS) to empirical evidence of the *de facto* participatory behavior (P) in organizations.

Given the lack of empirical evidence about the impact of PS on P, it should not be surprising that factual information is substituted by rough guesses, claims and counterclaims in political debates about the best industrial democracy system.

3. THE INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE (IDE) STUDY

3.1 Sample

The IDE-study took as a starting point the natural variety of twelve national industrial democracy schemes (six EC-countries, all the Scandinavian countries, Israel and Yugoslavia), and set out to measure their degree of legalization and the varying intensity of prescribed (*de jure*) participation of relevant groups in companies (worker level, supervisory level, middle management, top management, level above top management, employee representative bodies, external groups). It further investigated the *de facto* participation (P) of these groups by interviewing close to 8000 randomly selected employees and about 1000 key informants from 134 companies, matched according to size (100, 100—500, 500—1500 employees), technology, and industrial sector (metal industry, service industry).¹

¹ For details about the methods employed see IDE, 1976

3.2 De Jure Participation (PS)

De jure participation was ascertained by studying all documents (laws, collective bargaining contracts, managerial policies) which prescribed some kind of involvement of a. m. groups in 16 specific decisions. The set of 16 decisions covered social, personnel and economic issues and can be classified into short-term (routine), medium-term (tactical) and long-term (strategic) decisions. The intensity (or mode) of prescribed participation of a group in each of these 16 decisions could vary along a continuum: (1) no involvement prescribed, (2) group must be informed, (3) group must be informed beforehand, (4) group must be consulted, (5) joint decision-making with the group is required (i. e. group has veto power), (6) group itself has final say.

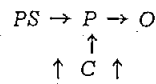
3.3 De Facto Participation (P)

De facto participation was measured with reference to the same decision set and on the basis of a comparable six-step continuum of discrete, behaviorally-defined degrees of participatory involvement. The randomly selected employees (stratified according to hierarchical levels) were asked to report how they participated in the making of each of the 16 decisions in the decision set.

3.4 Outcomes and Contingencies

Additional questionnaires referred to personal background data (sex, age, union membership, etc.), expectations from and attitudes towards participation, organizational climate and leadership style, and group satisfaction. Additional data was obtained about organizational contingencies (C) such as personnel aspects (turn-over, skill level of employees), technology (level of automation, work flow interdependence, etc.), structural variables (log size, functional differentiation, span of control, etc.), economic aspects (growth rate) and environmental aspects (formal independence, market position, etc.).

A simplified model of the research can be summarized as follows:



4. SOME FINDINGS OF THE IDE-STUDY²

4.1 Formalization of Participation

An index of the overall degree of formalization of participation can be obtained by summing up the average number of all formal

² For additional data see IDE, 1979, 1980, 1981.

participatory provisions for each group and decision in the national sample of companies. This index reflects the relative emphasis a country gives to induce participatory behavior by way of some kind of formal rules (Table 1).

Table 1
Degree of Formalization for Participation (Bases)
Average frequency of decisions (out of 16) with a PS-base

countries* group	N	S	DK	SF	GB	D	NL	B	F	I	YU	IS
Workers (A)	9.0	8.2	5.9	10.7	3.7	10.0	5.0	6.4	4.7	11.6	15.3	0
Supervisors (B)	7.6	10.1	6.9	10.7	3.4	9.0	0	9.8	4.6	9.4	12.6	0
Middle Mgt. (C)	7.5	10.1	8.8	10.7	3.3	9.0	0	10.8	4.4	10.7	14.6	0
Top Mgt. (D)	15.9	13.6	14.8	16.0	4.0	16.0	16.0	11.8	6.9	14.3	14.1	10.6
Level above establishment (E)	16.0	12.4	14.8	0	4.1	2.0	7.0	5.9	12.6	7.9	7.2	2.0
Rep. Body (F)	6.4	12.7	9.3	4.9	4.0	14.0	13.0	10.8	11.0	12.6	13.8	10.2
Outside Group (G)	8.9	1.7	2.2	1.7	1.3	1.3	3.0	4.5	3.0	7.0	8.4	0
Total	71.3	68.8	62.7	54.7	23.8	61.3	44.0	60.0	47.2	73.5	85.6	19.6
Country Rank	3	4	5	8	11	6	10	7	9	2	1	12

* For brevity's sake we are using the international abbreviations of motor car licence plates

The data shows that countries vary drastically in emphasizing legal (formal) means in the promotion of participation. Besides, we note that some countries focus on legally ensuring rights of top management to participate in decision making (e. g. Belgium, Finland, Germany) while others stress the level above top management (e. g. UK, France, Norway).

A more refined picture of a country's emphasis on prescribing participatory practices is obtained if we look at the relative frequency of different types of norms used, i. e. laws as opposed to collective bargaining contracts and management policies (Figure 1).

Law making, for most countries, is still the preferred means to prescribe participation. Only Finland and Israel³ seem to rely considerably on collective bargaining contracts, while Sweden, Belgium, and Italy emphasize managerially issued rules and regulations.⁴

³ Histadruth owned companies.

⁴ The high score of management policies in Yugoslavia refers to self-management agreements which can be considered as outcomes of intra-organizational bargaining processes.

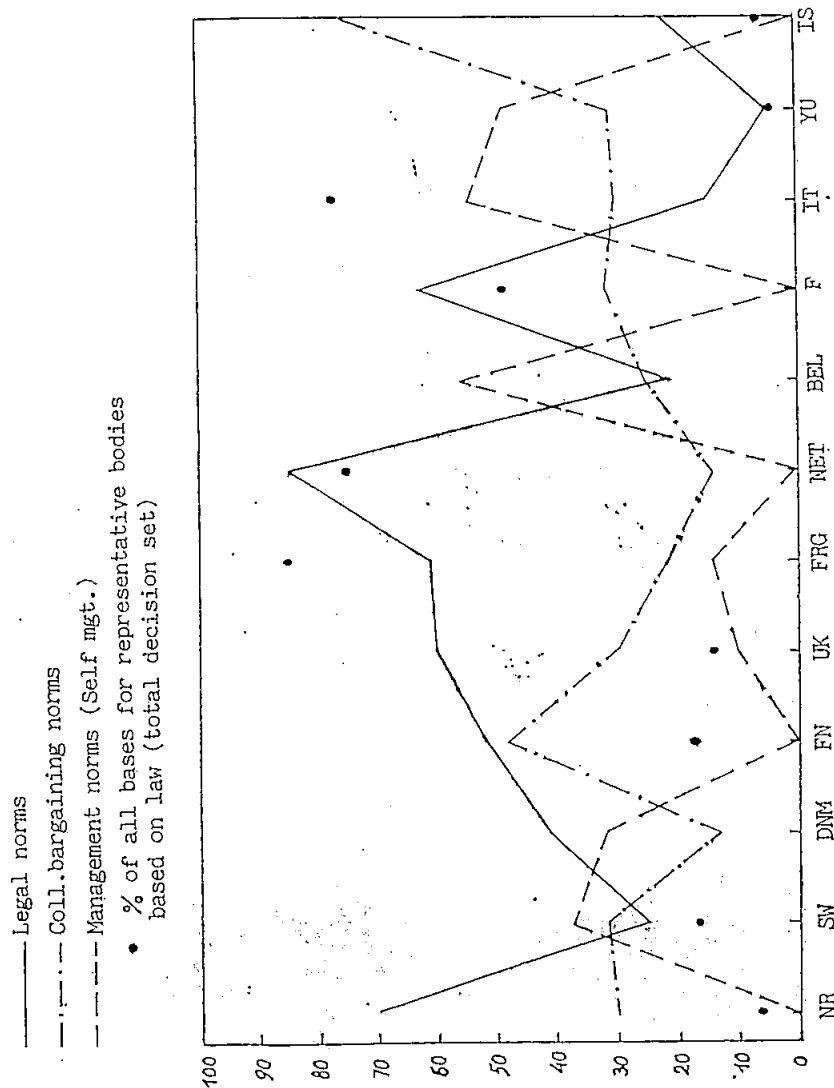


Figure 1

Differences in the relative frequency of various types of norms (Base types) used for *de jure* participation (as a percentage of all norms identified in the organizations of a country)

4.2 Intensity of *de Jure* participation (Modes)

Looking now into the average degree of participatory potential a given organizational group has on the basis of written regulations (the mode it can participate in decisions based on rules) we obtain insights into qualitative differences of PS among groups and countries (Table 2).

Table 2

Total *de Jure* Participation of All Groups in the Whole Organization

Country	All groups (total set)						
	Workers (A)	Foremen (B)	Middle managers (C)	Top management (D)	Level above plants (E)	Representative bodies (F)	External groups (G)
Norway	2.44*	1.88	1.87	4.09	5.71	1.86	1.18
Sweden	2.07	2.71	3.17	4.52	4.53	3.29	1.32
Denmark	1.74	2.22	2.65	4.75	1.93	2.55	1.32
Finland	2.43	2.49	2.68	5.39	1.57	1.92	1.41
U. K.	1.51	1.49	1.46	2.08	1.55	1.82	1.20
Germany (West)	2.25	2.16	2.13	5.43	1.63	3.95	1.18
Holland	1.62	1.00	1.00	5.60	2.00	2.97	1.75
Belgium	1.96	2.26	2.55	3.06	2.21	2.58	1.68
France	1.79	1.80	1.83	2.90	4.63	3.10	1.38
Italy	1.82	2.17	2.81	4.25	1.90	2.31	1.30
Yugoslavia	3.40	3.02	3.35	3.36	2.38	4.53	2.50
Israel	1.00	1.00	1.00	4.16	1.55	2.59	1.00

* Average mode of participation scores for groups and countries (total set) scale from 1-6 (1 = no prescribed involvement, 6 = the group has final say over decision).

Note: Correlations of average mode of participation scores of the total set of sixteen decisions for groups A-G with the respective scores of the clusters for short-term and medium-term decisions are in the ranges of .81 to .97 (only exception: short-term decision scores of group G correlate with total set only .75). Correlations with scores for long-term decisions are somewhat lower (.55 to .78) which may be due to the fact that only two decisions (investment and new product) enter this cluster.

Our countries can be divided into four classes based on their characteristic profile:

- A — Low profile countries (Belgium and UK) with low scores for all groups
- B — Hierarchical one-peak countries (France, Norway, Sweden) with a maximum in the level above top management and a relatively high score for top management as well

- C — Hierarchical two-peak countries (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Israel) with a maximum for top management, a slump for the level above top management, and another moderate peak for representative bodies
- D — Representative peak countries (Yugoslavia) where the maximum is shown for representative bodies with relatively little differences to intra- and extra-organizational groups. One might speak of an inversed hierarchical pattern.

After this short illustration of the use of PS-data (derived from documents) in metrically describing and comparing formal participation schemes (PS) we can now turn to the task of relating these legal (formal) indices of participatory potential (*de jure* participation) to behavioral indices of participation (*de facto* participation) obtained from respondents in the company.

4.3 The impact of PS on P

Omitting all descriptive data regarding the distribution of employee involvement over specific decisions³ we immediately and summarily address the question of the predictive power of formal rules (PS) for the *de facto* participation (P) of the worker level.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Results: Participation (P) Regressed by PS

DF = 21,112

PS	Involvement of workers (A)			Σ
	ST ^b	MT	LT	
Workers				
ST	.41			.33
MT		.28	.23	.25
LT				
Supervisors				—35
ST				
MT				
LT				
Middle management				
ST				
MT				
LT				
Top management				
ST				
MT	—57	—37	—51	—54

³ For more specific information see the other publications of the IDE-International Research Group.

LT				
Level above				
ST	—40			.37
MT				
LT	.30			
Representative bodies				
ST	—70			—46
MT	.54	.30	.32	.58
LT	.29			.25
Outside groups				
ST		.19	.20	
MT			.20	
LT				.16
Multiple R	.604	.763	.808	.76C
Adjusted ^a R ²	.24	.56	.58	.49
F	3.0	7.4	10.0	7.3
P	.000	.000	.000	.000

^a Values in the table are adjusted beta coefficients with $p \leq .07$.

^b ST = short-term decisions; MT = medium-term decisions; LT = long-term decisions; Σ = all decisions.

The regression analysis (Table 3) registers a differential impact of PS on P depending on the type of decision. The predictive power of PS tends to be greater for medium- and long-term than for short-term decisions. Furthermore, the data illustrates the dynamic interdependence of various organizational groups in the organizations' influence and power games. The degree of worker level participation in organizational decision-making is not only influenced by institutional norms that relate directly to workers but also by rules and regulations that aim at the participation of other groups. Rules enhancing top management involvement in medium-term decisions have a negative impact on worker participation, while rules enhancing representative body involvement in medium- and long-term decisions also strengthen worker level participation. Additional regression analysis evidence (IDE, 1979) shows that the impact of organizational contingencies (technology, structure etc.) is virtually negligible in its predictive value for worker participation (with the exception of leadership style for short-term decisions). From this one may conclude that democratic leadership patterns together with institutional normative support systems affect most strongly the level of worker participation.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Research Implications

The findings of the IDE-study show that the methodology employed captures significant national differences in the differentiation of formal industrial democracy systems. Three factors may limit the significance of this statement: First, the methodological approach concentrates only

on "command-type norms", leaving out "facilitating norms" (Feeley, 1976); secondly, the universe of organizational decisions occurring in reality has been reduced to 16 decisions selected on *a priori* grounds; thirdly, the seven groups chosen as relevant in organizational decision-making may obscure more dynamic coalition formation processes which may cut across the more or less hierarchical selection criteria (IDE, 1979). In spite of these potential limitations, we feel encouraged to recommend the basic approach which definitely transcends the traditional qualitative legal comparativism and offers a metric measure to enable systematic comparisons of legal (formal) participatory systems.

5.2. Test of the Legal Impact Hypothesis

The data shows that all countries studied utilize formalization procedures (however, to different degrees) in their efforts to promote participative practices. They do this in spite of their differing legal traditions and institutions in the, hitherto, blind hope that norms will affect behavior. The IDE-findings, to our knowledge for the first time, demonstrate that this hope is not totally unfounded. Given the additional insight that organizational and contextual parameters are not terribly decisive in decreasing or increasing *de facto* participation, the research results further identify the industrial democracy to be far more a socio-political problem than to be constrained or enhanced by material or technological imperatives and opportunities. This leads to a third point:

5.3 Policy Implications

The introduction of some formal rules that prescribe and legitimize higher levels of employee participation increases the chances that higher levels of employee involvement will result. The present political debate, in our opinion, stresses too much the presumed functions or dysfunctions of participation in terms of its motivational or economic outcomes, because it views participation too much in terms of its instrumental value (Dachler and Wilpert, 1978) and not enough by virtue of its being a value in itself which, if maximized, must be seen as an expression of equality rights of producers (Horvat, 1980). But even if we remain on a level of argumentation that focusses on the instrumental value of participation, at a time when empirical evidence of the positive effect of P on O accumulates (Cable and FitzRoy, 1980, Rosenstein and Rosenberg, 1980), the argument to increase PS for the sake of P and O acquires added attraction and support from our findings.

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ULOGA FORMALNIH NORMI PRI UVOĐENJU INDUSTRIJSKE DEMOKRATIJE

IDE — Međunarodna istraživačka grupa

Rezime

U skoro svakoj industrijskoj zemlji primećujemo postojanje trenda ka višim nivoima formalizacije normi za industrijsku demokraciju. Takve norme određuju parametre za participaciju radnika u upravljanju njihovim preduzećima. Otuda one mogu biti posmatrane kao strukturalni preduslovi za participatorno ponašanje i njegove ekonomske i društvene posledice.

U članku se razmatraju osnovne pretpostavke ovog trenda i daje konceptualni okvir sa odgovarajućim metodološkim instrumentima pomoću kojih bi trebalo testirati ispravnost ovih pretpostavki. U članku su dati rezultati dobijeni iz međunarodne uporedne studije efekata različitih pristupa industrijskoj demokratiji u dvanaest evropskih zemalja. Ovi rezultati pokazuju da su norme zaista među najboljim prediktorima participatornog ponašanja.

U studiji su sadržana istraživanja sprovedena u 134 preduzeća u 12 zemalja (Belgija, Danska, Finska, Francuska, SR Nemačka, Italija, Izrael, Holandija, Norveška, Švedska, Velika Britanija i Jugoslavija). Preduzeća su bila odabrana prema veličini (manje od 100, 100 do 500, i 500 do 1500 zaposlenih) i prema privrednom sektoru (metaloprerađivački i bankarski sektor, zajedno sa osiguravajućim društvima). Skoro 8000 slučajno odabranih radnika i 1000 ključnih informatora bili su ispitivani sa ciljem da se utvrdi njihovo učešće i uticaj pri donošenju 16 različitih specifičnih odluka (koje su bile grupisane prema svom kratkoročnom, srednjoročnom i dugoročnom efektu).

Pokušaj da se izmere različiti stepeni formalizacije u učešću radnika u upravljanju u ovih 12 zemalja pokazali su postojanje različitih oblika u normativnom određivanju radničkog učešća. Regresiona analiza pokazuje da je intenzitet određene (dopuštene) participacije jedan od najboljih prediktora stvarne participacije, dok su organizaciona rešenja skoro potpuno nebitna. Ovakav rezultat u saglasnosti je sa tezom da je participacija (učesće radnika u upravljanju) više socio-politički problem, a da je manje uslovljeno fizičkim ili tehnološkim imperativima.

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INTEGRACIJSKI PROCESI V NAŠEM GOSPODARSTVU: MODELI IN METODE ZA UGOTAVLJANJE SMISELNOSTI IN UČINKOVITOSTI TAKIH POVEZOVANJ

Nada PERTOT*

1. UVOD

Sodobno gospodarstvo zahteva veliko in ustrezno organizirano proizvodno in poslovanje. V zadnjih desetletjih so tehnika in tehnologija, pa tudi znanost, dosegle nagel, skokovit razvoj, ki vpliva na celoten način življenja in seveda tudi na gospodarstvo. Moderna tehnika in tehnologija zahtevata masovno proizvodnjo, komplicirano in precizno organizacijo ter specializacijo, obenem pa tudi širino znanja; zahtevata torej poslovanje, ki temelji na eksaktnih, znanstveno utemeljenih metodah. Vse bolj se kaže potreba po prodoru na tuja tržišča. Razvitejša gospodarstva v svetu so že spoznala, da je za sodoben način gospodarjenja nujno, da se gospodarske celice na en ali drug način združujejo oziroma povezujejo med seboj za skupno poslovanje in proizvodnjo; spoznala so prednosti, ki jih imajo proizvodno-poslovne asocijacije pred malimi gospodarskimi entotami.

To velja tudi za naše gospodarstvo. Vse bolj se kaže važnost povezovanja osnovnih celic — temeljnih organizacij združenega dela — v višje, sestavljene formacije ter nujnost tesnega sodelovanja v vseh fazah družbene reprodukcije. Zakon o združenem delu taka povezovanja in združevanja ne samo priporoča, ampak celo zahteva.

"Med organizacijami združenega dela mora priti do takega povezovanja, sodelovanja, dogovarjanja in združevanja, ki bo zagotovilo dolgoročno proizvodno usmeritev, stalno poviševanje produktivnosti dela, predvsem na podlagi neprekinjenega uvajanja dosežkov raziskovalnega dela in sodobne tehnologije, obenem pa zagotovilo čim višjo stopnjo varnosti delovnih ljudi." Zato je treba utrjevati spoznanja o nujnosti povezovalnih in združevalnih, zagotoviti razvoj na znanstveni osnovi, omogočiti izračune in analize na podlagi matematičnih in statističnih znanstvenih metod ob uporabi moderne računalniške tehnike.

* Višji sodelavec Ekonomske fakultete B. Kidriča Raziskovalni center, Ljubljana.

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