

# Contests as an Alternative Approach to SE Empirical Studies in Industry

## The Plat\_Forms Case



# Plat\_Forms

Which characteristic properties of product or process typically emerge from using a specific web development platform that differ from those of (some) other platforms?

- A set of three exploratory quasi experiments
- Presented to the outside world as a contest



# Plat\_Forms





# Advantages of Contests

- + Easy acquisition of participating companies
- + High level of control
- + Easy data collection
- + Large number of organizations
- + Larger task



# Disadvantages of Contests

- Development detached from normal context
- Few workplace-specific effects
- Danger of false positives



# Plat\_Forms Results and Problems

- ✓ Adequate number of teams of fairly similar quality
- ✓ Uncovered some platform differences
  
- ! Two team mishaps
- ! High evaluation effort
- ! High amount of expertise required



# Conclusions

- Consider contests for data collection
  - Reduces data collection effort
  - Broadens the set of organizations that go into the data
  - But detaches the work from its normal context
- Self-selection can be useful
  - Whenever sociological aspects must be considered
    - Almost always the case in SE
  - But beware of fishing for significance
    - Correlations may be purely chance

# Thank You!