What makes a good conference? Analysing the preferences of labour economists

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Abstract

Conferences are an important element in the work of researchers, requiring substantial investments in fees, travel expenses and the time spent by the participants. The aim of this paper is to identify the preferences of participants with respect to conference characteristics. Based on a sample of European labour economists, preferences are measured using the vignette approach where participants are asked to choose between hypothetical EALE conferences. We find that the keynote speakers are the most important element in the preference for a conference. The location of the conference is the second most important element. Nice locations are in general preferred to easy-to-reach places. There is a substantial heterogeneity in the taste of labour economists especially with respect to location, although the link between preference parameters and measured characteristics like gender, age and seniority is limited. Factor analysis suggests that the variety in preferences can be best described by a latent variable that reflects the weights people put on content versus fun.

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\textbf{Keywords:} conference participation; economics profession; vignette-method; random-coefficient model

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1 Introduction

Attending conferences is an important aspect in the work of researchers. They provide the possibility to acquire feedback on a paper, to get informed about the work of others, and to talk with colleagues to exchange ideas. A relaxed atmosphere and being away from the office might promote creativity. Some researchers might regard conferences as an attractive part of their labour contract. Universities regulate conference participation of their researchers with rules for the reimbursement of the expenses of conferences. As a consequence, characteristics of conferences like the location, keynote speakers, and possibilities for networking will affect the attractiveness of conferences.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the preferences of researchers for specific characteristics of a conference. We analyse the preference for conference characteristics using data from a survey held among members of EALE. In order to identify preferences, we use the vignette method which has been common in marketing research and sociology for several decades and is increasingly used in various fields of economic research.\(^1\) Respondents were asked to choose six times one out of two hypothetical conferences with randomly varying conference characteristics. We find that keynote speakers are the most important factor for the preference for EALE conferences. Researchers prefer to have more keynote lectures and prefer keynote lectures by Nobel laureates. A conference with two rather than one keynote lecture increase the probability of the conference to be chosen by 10%. A Nobel

\(^1\)See e.g. Datta Gupta, Kristensen, and Pozzoli (2009) for an overview about studies in economics using the vignette method.
laureate as keynote speaker increases this change by 16%. The second most important characteristic is the location of a conference: Barcelona and Oxford are popular locations, conference locations like Uppsala and Frankfurt are not suited to attract researchers. Conference characteristics like the type of social event or the conference venue are less important in deciding for a conference. The time of the year turns out not to be relevant for the decision to choose a conference. Especially the preference for locations is rather heterogeneous.

Like in other economic and non-economic academic disciplines, there are a number of large annual conferences for labour economists, such as the meetings of the Society of Labour Economists (SOLE), the European Society for Population Economics (ESPE), or the European Association of Labour Economists (EALE). At their meetings, which are usually hold at alternating conference locations, one or two renowned economists hold keynote lectures, and often offer formal or informal meetings like conference dinners, receptions, or social activities. Researchers may value conference characteristics differently. Indeed, submission numbers vary considerably over years. A potential determinant of a conference’s possibility to attract a large number of submissions in the first place is conference location. Borghans (2003) shows that the attractiveness of a conference location affects the overall number of submissions to a meeting. Yet it is unclear how researchers value congress location relative to other characteristics.

This paper contributes to the literature on participation in academic conferences and, more general, to the literature on the labour market of (labour) economists. The studies of Borghans (2003) whose analysis is based
on information on attendance in previous EALE conferences, and Van Dijk and Maier (2006) who use data from the annual meetings of the European Regional Science Association, both analyse the effect of distance to the conference location on participation. Both find that there is a strong tendency to participate in conferences which take place in the home country. Regarding distance to the conference location, Borghans (2003) does not find a significant effect apart from the home country effect. Van Dijk and Maier (2006) suggest a negative effect of distance. They show, however, that there is a difference between frequent and less-frequent conference participants, mainly due to occasional participants from outside of Europe.

More general, this paper is also related to the recent literature attempting to understand the significance of the way researchers in general and economists in particular organise their work for research productivity. Haufler and Rincke (2009) analyse the effect of academic quality on the probability of being accepted to the annual meeting of the German economic association, Verein für Socialpolitik. They find that position and the home institution play a role for being accepted, even after controlling for previous academic performance. They suggest, however, that it is not clear whether position and institution serve as a signal for quality or their papers are indeed of higher quality. Regarding publication success, Cardoso, Guimaraes, and Zimmermann (2008) find that recent PhD graduates from European institutions aim at publishing earlier, but in lower-ranked journals compared to their US-American counterparts.
To the best of our knowledge, there are no other papers aiming at analysing the ranking of characteristics of academic conferences.\(^2\) Since academic conferences are an central element of academic research, the results of this study have important implications for planning and organising academic conferences in general: well-designed conferences can increase the competition for available slots for presenting academic research and the quality of conferences. Besides reputational effects for the conference and its hosting association, high-quality conferences may also be better in accessing funds from sponsors.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: we present the vignette approach and our statistical model in the following section. In section (3), the sample and survey design used in this study is described. We discuss estimation results in section (4). Conclusions are presented in section (5).

2 Method

2.1 The vignette method

Vignettes are widely used in marketing research to elicit preferences for product characteristics. A product can be seen as a combination of different attributes that can have different characteristics. A consumer’s decision about buying a car may for instance depend on characteristics like the colour

\(^2\)There is, however, a related strand of literature in marketing studies which focus more on touristic characteristics, meeting place facilities, and accessibility of the conference location in attracting conference participants. See e.g. Lee and Back (2007) and the literature cited therein.
and maximum speed. The colour can for instance be blue, red or white, the maximum speed 140, 160 or 180 km/h. Each consumer attaches a value to each combination of these characteristics. In the same way, conferences can be interpreted as a bundle of different characteristics like conference location, keynote speaker, to which individuals assign different values like the attractiveness of a certain conference location.

In our study, we asked participants of previous EALE-conferences to state their preference for conferences using the vignette method. In order to analyse the valuation of a certain combination of characteristics, each respondent was shown six pairs of vignettes with randomly varying conference characteristics. Each vignette represents one hypothetical conferences. From each pair of vignettes, a respondent was asked to choose the preferred one. For each survey participant, all vignettes were generated randomly. We first randomised the order of attributes since it may affect the value attached to a conference attribute. To avoid complexity when rating the vignettes, the randomisation of the order was done at the level of the respondent. The order of attributes of the vignettes was the same throughout all vignette-questions. Furthermore, the characteristics of all hypothetical conferences were randomly generated. Each of the two conferences which were shown to survey participants always differed in all their characteristics.

Each of the two hypothetical conferences was described by five attributes: conference location, number and reputation of the keynote speaker(s), whether the conference took place in a university or in a hotel, time
of the year, and type of social activities. We assigned up to six different characteristics to each of these attributes.\(^3\)

We included these characteristics for two reasons: first, these characteristics are usually mentioned on the call for papers and may thus affect the decision to initially submit a paper to the conference. Except for the joint SOLE/EALE meetings which took place in 2000 and 2005, the annual EALE-meeting usually takes place in a major European city in September. There are two keynote speakers, one of which is holding the Adam-Smith Lecture. Table C shows the characteristics of previous EALE-meetings from 2001 to 2008. The table also shows that the share of papers accepted at an EALE meeting varied considerably across year from 44.7\% (Lisbon, 2004) to 65.1\% (Jyväskylä, 2001) suggesting that conference characteristics affect competition for available presentation slots in the conference.\(^4\)

Second, during a pre-test held at the annual meeting 2008 in Amsterdam respondents were asked in an open question to indicate what characteristics they considered to be imported. Their answers suggested that these attributes matter for the decision to submit in the first place and to participate if one is accepted for the conference.

It is worth mentioning two further attributes that were not included in the vignettes, but which may be relevant for submitting a paper to a conference in the first place: reputation of a conference and conference fees. Reputation of a conference may be relevant since attending them may either

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\(^3\)Table A shows an example of a vignette question of our survey. The possible characteristics are shown in table B.

\(^4\)It should be noted that there could also be other determinants affecting these differences, such as conference characteristics of related conferences.
result in better feedback on own research, networking with more renowned researchers, or simply a good signal when having attended them. Because our sample is drawn from participants of previous EALE-conferences, we particularly asked for deciding between two EALE-conferences in our survey. Restricting the vignettes to EALE-conferences also helped to decrease complexity of the vignettes used.

Since conference fees should also be affected by the choice of other conference characteristics, such as the venue where the conference takes place, the type of social events, or the profile of the keynote speaker(s), conference fees may be relevant in choosing conferences. For EALE-conferences, however, conferences fees are relatively stable across conferences while characteristics differ (see table C), which is partly due to the fact that the conference is co-financed by public and private sponsors. In addition, the survey showed that for 78% of the participants in the survey, conference fees are fully covered by the institution the participant works for.

2.2 Statistical model

The choice for conferences made by survey respondents is analysed using a utility maximisation framework. An individual \( i \) maximises his utility \( U_i \) by choosing a conference which is described by attributes \( j = 1, \ldots, J \). Each attribute can have \( N_j \) different characteristics \( c_{j1}, \ldots, c_{jN_j} \). An individual’s utility of conference \( k \) depends on the set of characteristics per attribute:

\[
U_{ik} = U_i(c_{k1}, \ldots, c_{kJ}) + \varepsilon_{ik}
\]
\( \varepsilon_{ik} \) represents the random part of the valuation that is not accounted for by the observed characteristics. We assume this function to be linear:

\[
U_{ik} = \sum_{j=1}^{J} \sum_{c=1}^{N_j} \alpha_{ijc} d_{kijc} + \varepsilon_{ik}
\]

Difference in utility between two conferences (sets of attributes) \( k = A, B \) can be written as

\[
U_{iA} - U_{iB} = \sum_{j=1}^{J} \sum_{c=1}^{N_j} \alpha_{ijc} (d_{Aijc} - d_{Bijc}) + \varepsilon_{iA} - \varepsilon_{iB} \tag{1}
\]

An individual will choose conference \( A \) when the utility of \( A \) exceeds the utility of \( B \) \( (U_{iA} - U_{iB} > 0) \), and vice versa. Equation (1) thus describes a probit model with the difference in utility as a latent variable. The difference \( d_{Aijc} - d_{Bijc} \) equals 1 if attribute \( j \) on vignette \( A \) has characteristic \( c \), -1 when this characteristic is on \( B \) and 0 if it is neither on \( A \) nor on \( B \).

We apply different estimation techniques to estimate the preference parameters \( \alpha_{ijc} \). First, assuming that all conference participants share the same preference parameters \( (\alpha_{ijc} = \alpha_{jic}) \), we estimate equation (1) non-linearly applying a probit-model. Second, equation (1) is estimated in a random-coefficients framework which allows for heterogeneity of the parameters \( \alpha_{ijc} \) (cf. Greene, 2008, p. 728). In the random-coefficients framework, which is usually applied to panel data, parameters are allowed to vary between individuals. We assume the preference coefficients to be normally distributed. In a third step, we investigate whether these random coefficient depend on personal characteristics such as gender, age and seniority. In a fourth step

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we apply factor analyses to the random coefficients to investigate whether there is a common structure in the random coefficients.

Estimation of the random coefficient model is numerically burdensome. We therefore estimated this model using a linear specification rather than the probit specification and estimated the models using a structural equation technique, using MPlus (Muthén and Muthén, 1998-2008).

3 Data

The survey used in this study was carried out among individuals who participated in at least one of the EALE-meetings in between 2001 and 2008, who could still be contacted by their email-address. In November 2008, 1310 former participants were invited to take part in an online survey. In total, 440 participants filled in the questions on conference participation which corresponds to a response rate of 36.8%.

The average age of respondents is 39 years, 36% are women (see table D). 49% of the respondents are in senior positions, such as individuals with a position as (associate) professor, or senior researcher. Junior positions such as PhD-students, post-docs, or assistant professors are held by 41%. 9% hold “other” positions. Due to a lack of data, however, it remains difficult to assess whether these numbers are comparable to numbers from other (labour) economics association, and whether they are representative for “active” labour economists in general.\footnote{Haufler and Rincke (2009) report 19% of all researchers submitting a paper to the annual meeting of the German economic association are full professors, compared to 17% in our sample. They report a share of 23% women, which is substantially lower compared}
The majority of survey participants (91%) works for an institution in an European country. The largest share of participants in the survey comes from Germany (16%), followed by participants from the United Kingdom (11%) and The Netherlands (9%). Only 9% are working for a non-European institution. In total, the data covers survey participants from 25 European countries, and 10 countries outside of Europe.

On average, survey participants stated that they participated in three conferences within the 12 months prior to the survey. 59% of participants attended more than two conferences during this period. After matching survey data to actual participation in EALE-conferences from 2001 to 2008, survey participants turn out to have participated in two EALE-conferences on average. Only 24% participated in more than two conferences.

It is noteworthy mentioning more about the reasons for attending conferences in general, and EALE-conferences in particular: 89% of survey participants agreed or fully agreed\(^6\) with the statement to participate in conferences in general to get international feedback on their research. The same share attends conferences for networking purposes. At the same time, “only” 33% state that they attend conferences for fun. Corresponding numbers for EALE-conferences in particular are slightly lower compared to the numbers for conferences in general.

\(^6\)This and the following variables were measured on a five point-Likert scale with the values fully disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, fully agree.

to participants in our survey (36%). Using data from a survey held among members of the German economic association in 2006, Frey, Humbert, and Schneider (2007) report that 31% are younger than 35 (our sample: 29%), 54% (45%) are older than 34 and younger than 55, and 16% (9%) are older than 34.
In general, survey participants prefer attractive conference locations (61%) and easy-to-reach places (80%). Travel costs play a minor role for conferences: 57% agree with the statement that travel costs should be low. At the same time, travel expenses are mostly fully covered by the institution a researcher works for if the participant is accepted for presenting a paper (78% of all respondents).

4 Estimation results

4.1 Homogenous preferences

An individual’s decision for a conference A or B is analysed by estimating equation (1). Columns (1) and (2) of table F show the results of a probit model estimating parameters \( \alpha_{jc} \) which are assumed to be constant across individuals. For each attribute the characteristic that is preferred least is used as reference category.

Regarding the importance of conference characteristics to choose one of the two conferences, keynote speakers turn out to be the most important determinant. Researchers prefer two compared to one keynote speakers. At the same time, quality of the keynote speakers matters as well: renowned keynote speakers, which are approximated by stating that one of the keynote speakers is a Nobel laureate, increase the probability to choose this conference. This can mean that researchers value the quality of the keynote speech, or that they assume that a conference with more renowned keynote speakers attract conference attendees of a higher quality.
The second most important attribute for choosing a conference is the location. Compared to the reference category, a conference in Uppsala, the most popular conference location is Barcelona, closely followed by Oxford. Budapest and Malta are still popular locations, though to a lower extent. Frankfurt is not significantly different from the least popular conference, Uppsala, which is the reference category. While attractiveness of a conference location is highly subjective, these results suggest that attractiveness of conference locations increase the probability that researchers plan to attend this conference.

Conference location and type of keynote speakers are by far the most important attributes of a preferred conference. Other conference attributes are relevant for decisions, but to a smaller extent: Researchers prefer an informal garden barbecue instead of more formal events like formal dinners or a reception in the city hall. This result suggests that researchers use social events for networking purposes and is in line with the statement of survey participants that conference are visited for networking purposes.

Regarding time of the year, researchers prefer September. Similarly important is the venue of the conference: researchers prefer a conference in a university, rather than in a hotel. These two results could result from habit formation, since all EALE-conferences since 2001, with exception of the joint SOLE/EALE-conference, took place in a university in September.
4.2 Varying preference parameters

In a second step, equation (1) is estimated in a random-coefficients framework. The random-coefficients model allows to analyse heterogeneity in estimated parameters. This model is estimated linearly for computational reasons. The coefficient mean (columns (6)) and its standard error (7) of table F shows that the main results about importance of conference attributes and its characteristics are the same as in the probit model with non-varying estimated parameters. Columns (8), which shows the standard deviation of the estimated parameter $\hat{\alpha}_{ijc}$, and (9) of table F, however, provide evidence that there is substantial heterogeneity in estimated parameters between individuals.\footnote{For comparison, columns (3) and (4) of table F show OLS-estimates of $\alpha_{jce}$.}

Among the cities especially the standard deviations of Budapest, Frankfurt and Malta are large in comparison with the mean. This suggests that although on average participation prefer these locations to Uppsala, there is also a group of participants who rank these cities in a different order. While only 2.1\% of the sample disagrees with Barcelona, only 0.5\% of the sample disagree with Oxford. This result suggests that there are conference characteristics with are preferred to others if they are evaluated at the mean. When looking at the distribution of estimated parameters $\hat{\alpha}_{ijc}$, however, less-preferred characteristics, such as Oxford, may be the best option to reach consensus among potential conference participants.

The same holds for conferences with two keynote speakers. On average people prefer two keynotes above one, but a substantial fraction of the
participants prefers one keynote. When a Nobel laureate is included, either when there are one or two keynote lectures, this is preferred by most participants to one keynote who is not a Nobel laureate. For social events, venue and time of year the heterogeneity also suggest that not all participants share the same preferences.

In addition to these findings, the results of table F show that there are significant differences between individuals, as indicated by the constants.

In a third step of our analysis, the random-coefficient model was estimated allowing the individual coefficients to be a function of observable characteristics, such as gender, the position an individual holds, and age. Only a few estimates for the covariates, however, are significant. Only seniority plays a minor role when it is about preference for keynote speakers.\(^8\) Though there is substantial variation in the taste of labour economists, observable individual characteristics seem hardly to play a role when choosing for conferences.

### 4.3 Factor-analysis

Though individual characteristics play a minor role for estimated parameters, the standard deviations of the random parameters reveal that there is a large heterogeneity in the preference for conference characteristics. In order to analyse this heterogeneity of researchers more detailed, we applied factor analysis to the random coefficients. Results of the factor analysis are shown in table G. The resulting factor seems to create a scale of much people

\(^8\)The results of the random-coefficient model with covariates are not shown, but are available upon request.
choose the conference based on the location, versus people who are looking for content. Location contributes most to the variation in this latent factor. Barcelona, Budapest, Malta and conferences in June are positive related to this latent factor. Two keynotes is negatively related to the factor. We investigated whether this factor is related to information on personal characteristics. Again there is no significant relationship between this factor and demographic variables as age and gender. There appears to be a strong relationship between the latent factor and the answer in the survey on the question that researchers rather attend conferences to relax from work, instead of just having fun. The effect is stronger for EALE-conferences than for conferences in general.

Having these findings in mind, the question is whether there is an “optimal” conference a conference organiser should design in order to attract a large number of potential researchers. Based on the individual estimated coefficients, we calculated the most popular conferences for our sample varying the latent factor $F$. The most popular conference has the following characteristics: Barcelona, 2 keynote speakers (incl. one Nobel laureate), informal garden barbecue, June, university. This conference is followed in terms of popularity by the same conference taking place in September. The third most popular conference takes place in Oxford in September. The distribution of the latent factor $F$ for the three most popular conferences are shown in figure 1.

Alternatively, conference organisers could also be interested in offering two conferences, in order to maximise overall participation. In this case, organisers should offer one conference taking place in Barcelona with the
following characteristics: 2 keynote speakers (incl. one Nobel laureate), informal garden barbecue, June, university. The second conference should take place in Oxford with the same characteristics. The fact that two conferences that maximize the utility of the participants only would differ in location, shows again that location is the largest source of heterogeneity.

4.4 Robustness of the results

There are two major concerns about using the vignette method: first, preferences estimated using the vignette method are stated, but do not necessarily correspond to the choice people make in practice. Second, answers may be sensitive regarding the design of the vignettes used in the survey.

In order to test the validity of preferences we estimated, data on actual participation in previous EALE-conferences was matched to the survey data. We estimated separate probit-models for each of the previous EALE-conferences since 2001. We only included conference attributes which were indeed varying over the years, thus excluding the conference venue and month of the year (cf. table C).\footnote{Due to a lack of significance, we did not include other covariates such as gender, age, or position of an individual.} Further, we limited the sample to survey participants who were 25 or younger at the date of the conference since it is less likely these researchers did not participate because of the conference characteristics, but because of their age. In addition, we excluded individuals who attended in more than two EALE-conferences since 2001. This is done in order to differentiate between individuals who regularly attend EALE-conferences. Though they have a preference for certain conference
characteristics, they may not decide whether or not to submit a paper and eventually attend based on the conference characteristics, but rather always submit their paper to EALE.

As can be seen from table H, most of the estimated coefficients are not significant. There is, however, some evidence that individuals scoring high on the random-coefficient for Barcelona preferred to go to Prague in 2006, but not to the EALE-conference in Amsterdam in 2008. Furthermore, individuals with a preference for two keynote speakers where one is a Nobel laureate, were more likely to attend the conferences in San Francisco (2005) and Prague, but not to attend the conference in Amsterdam.

It should be noted, though, that survey participants rather took part in the most recent conferences. Especially the results regarding early conferences should thus be treated with caution.

A second concern about the vignette method is the design of the vignettes in the survey. First, decisions about attending conferences may depend on the ordering of the attributes in the vignettes. For analysing this, we randomised the order of attributes at the level of the individual. All vignettes for one individual were thus shown in the same order. Including the order of attributes into our regression analysis, however, did not turn out to significantly affect our results. Second, respondents may answer the first pairs of vignettes different than the last pairs of vignettes, for instance due to fatigue. Again, our robustness analysis did not show any effects of the position of a specific vignette in the survey completed by participants.

\[\text{10} \text{The last column of table C shows the share of survey participants among conference participants in the respective year.}\]
5 Conclusion

Conferences are an important element in the work of researchers, requiring substantial investments in fees, travel expenses and the time spent by the participants. The aim of this paper was to identify the preferences of participants with respect to the characteristics of a conference. Using information from a survey among EALE-members, we measured preferences using the vignette approach with hypothetical conferences that were randomly generated.

Conference location and the keynote speakers are the most important attributes to choose for a conference, while the remaining attributes social event, time of the year, and conference venue are less important for the decision. As with regard to values of attributes, researchers prefer more than two keynote lectures and keynote-lectures with renowned speakers. Location choice showed that nice locations are in general preferred to easy to reach places.

The results of the random-coefficient model showed that there is substantial variation in the taste of labour economists: while some conference characteristics are preferred to others when evaluated at the coefficient mean, it is also important to look at the share of individuals who disagree with a specific conference characteristic. Despite the substantial variation in estimated preference parameters, the link between preferences parameters and measured characteristics like gender, age and seniority is limited.

Factor analysis suggests that there is variety in the preference for “content versus fun”. Location is responsible for most of the variation of this
latent factor. For that reason, if two rather than one conference would be organized simultaneously, the utility maximizing set would only differ in location.

Comparing the estimated preference parameters with actual participation over the last years, the results suggest that the estimated preferences for EALE-conferences also matter for actual participation. Though, support is relatively low, most probably due to lower response of participants in previous EALE-conferences.

For conference organisers, there are two important implications: first, conference characteristics matter for the decision. Conference characteristics should be carefully selected. Since keynote speakers are the most important conference characteristic, it is suggested to announce early to increase quality and quantity of submissions.
References


Table A: Hypothetical vignette-question

Suppose you could choose one of these two EALE conferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>Uppsala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynote speaker(s)</td>
<td>One keynote speaker</td>
<td>Two keynote speakers (where one is Nobel laureate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>Barbecue</td>
<td>Formal dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of year</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress location</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

which one would you choose?

Table B: Vignettes-values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Barcelona; Budapest; Uppsala; Oxford; Frankfurt; Malta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynote speaker(s)</td>
<td>One keynote speaker; two keynote speakers; one keynote speaker (Nobel laureate); two keynote speakers (where one is Nobel laureate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>Formal dinner; Informal Garden barbecue; Reception City Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of year</td>
<td>May; June; September; October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress location</td>
<td>Hotel; University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table C: Previous EALE conferences (2001-2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>keynotes</th>
<th>social events</th>
<th>period</th>
<th>venue</th>
<th>fee (in Euro)</th>
<th>submitted papers</th>
<th>share of survey participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001 Jyväskylä, FI</td>
<td>Rebecca Blank (AS) Daron Acemoglu (AS) Raquel Fernandez</td>
<td>Formal dinner Boat Trip</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>367 (65.1%)</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 Paris, FR</td>
<td>Alan Manning (AS) George Borjas Gilles Saint-Paul</td>
<td>Tour and Banquet Louvre</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>482 (57.5%)</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 Seville, ES</td>
<td>Edward Lazear (AS) Juan Dolado Caroline Hoxby</td>
<td>Formal Dinner Cocktail</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>511 (52.1%)</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 Lisbon, PT</td>
<td>Shelly Lundberg (AS) Daron Acemoglu Costas Meghir</td>
<td>Formal Dinner Cocktail</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>571 (44.7%)</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 San Francisco, US</td>
<td>Richard Blundell (AS) John Pencavel (PA) Janet Currie (AR)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>854 (49.9%)</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Prague, CZ</td>
<td>David Card (AS) Jan Svejnar</td>
<td>Formal Dinner Cocktail</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>654 (44.8%)</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Oslo, NO</td>
<td>Melvyn Coles (AS) Karl Moene</td>
<td>Formal Dinner Reception City Hall</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>539 (56.6%)</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Amsterdam, NL</td>
<td>Kathryn Shaw (AS) Gerard van den Berg Alison Booth (PA)</td>
<td>Informal Banquet Boat trip</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>547 (56.1%)</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AS: Adam Smith Lecture, PA: Presidential Address, AR: Albert Rees Lecture

* Regular conference fee

* This column shows the share of survey participants relative to conference participants in the respective conference

* Cancelled due to 9/11 attacks

* Joint SOLE/EALE meeting
Table D: Summary statistics (N = 437)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>39.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (1 = female)</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (1 = yes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior position</td>
<td>0.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior position</td>
<td>0.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of EALE conferences (2001–2008)</td>
<td>1.69</td>
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<td>Number of conferences last year</td>
<td>3.15</td>
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Table E: Working country of survey participants (N = 437)

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European countries</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-European countries</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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</table>
Table F: OLS, probit and random coefficient estimates

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Probit</th>
<th>OLS</th>
<th>Random coefficients model (linear)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>est. S.E.</td>
<td>est. S.E.</td>
<td>coef. mean S.E. coef. SD S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conference location</strong> (reference: Uppsala)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>0.513*** (0.063)</td>
<td>0.178*** (0.021)</td>
<td>.175*** (0.021) .114** (0.430)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>0.196*** (0.065)</td>
<td>0.068*** (0.023)</td>
<td>.068*** (0.022) .1517*** (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankfurt</td>
<td>0.018 (0.061)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.021)</td>
<td>.006 (0.021) .1612*** (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>0.180*** (0.061)</td>
<td>0.061*** (0.021)</td>
<td>.066*** (0.021) .1449*** (0.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>0.382*** (0.062)</td>
<td>0.132*** (0.021)</td>
<td>.131*** (0.021) .1183** (0.363)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keynotes</strong> (reference: 1 speaker)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 speaker (Nobel laureate)</td>
<td>0.464*** (0.050)</td>
<td>0.165*** (0.017)</td>
<td>.162*** (0.017) .114** (0.096)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 speakers</td>
<td>0.291*** (0.046)</td>
<td>0.102*** (0.016)</td>
<td>.099*** (0.016) .1095** (0.119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 speakers (incl. 1 Nobel laureate)</td>
<td>0.788*** (0.051)</td>
<td>0.280*** (0.016)</td>
<td>.279*** (0.016) .0775 (3.266)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social event</strong> (reference: formal dinner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Garden barbecue</td>
<td>0.152*** (0.038)</td>
<td>0.053*** (0.013)</td>
<td>.052*** (0.013) .0632 (6.056)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception City Hall</td>
<td>0.063 (0.039)</td>
<td>0.022* (0.013)</td>
<td>.020 (0.013) .0775 (1.472)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Month</strong> (reference: October)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>0.042 (0.045)</td>
<td>0.014 (0.016)</td>
<td>.014 (0.016) .0707 (3.073)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>0.030 (0.045)</td>
<td>0.010 (0.016)</td>
<td>.012 (0.015) .0775 (3.606)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>0.134*** (0.048)</td>
<td>0.045*** (0.017)</td>
<td>.052*** (0.016) .1095** (0.192)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Venue</strong> (reference: hotel)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>0.150*** (0.027)</td>
<td>0.053*** (0.009)</td>
<td>.050*** (0.009) .0548 (4.820)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.027 (0.027)</td>
<td>0.490*** (0.009)</td>
<td>.493*** (0.009) .374 (0.024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$-test (14)</td>
<td></td>
<td>398.7***</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2519</td>
<td>2519</td>
<td>2519</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Table G: Factor analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>factor loadings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conference location</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>0.153***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>0.123**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankfurt</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>0.118***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keynotes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 speaker (Nobel laureate)</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 speakers</td>
<td>-0.087***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 speakers (incl. 1 Nobel laureate)</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social event</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Garden barbecue</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception City Hall</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Month</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>0.050**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Venue</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.494***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2519</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Figure 1: The three most popular conferences

Graphs by Popularity of conferences

Most popular conference

2nd most popular conference

3rd most popular conference

Density

F

Graphs by Popularity of conferences
Table H: Probit estimation of conference participation in previous EALE conferences (2001-2008) on estimated preference parameters $\alpha_{ijc}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jyväskylä, FI</td>
<td>Paris, FR</td>
<td>Seville, ES</td>
<td>Lisbon, PT</td>
<td>San Francisco, US</td>
<td>Prague, CZ</td>
<td>Oslo, NO</td>
<td>Amsterdam, NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Barcelona)</td>
<td>2.673</td>
<td>6.891</td>
<td>7.176</td>
<td>8.424*</td>
<td>2.452</td>
<td>7.656*</td>
<td>-3.861</td>
<td>-7.497**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.45)</td>
<td>(1.39)</td>
<td>(1.38)</td>
<td>(1.78)</td>
<td>(0.40)</td>
<td>(1.84)</td>
<td>(-1.12)</td>
<td>(-2.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>-1.817</td>
<td>-1.127</td>
<td>-1.343</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>3.876</td>
<td>-4.521**</td>
<td>2.603</td>
<td>0.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Budapest)</td>
<td>(-0.65)</td>
<td>(-0.48)</td>
<td>(-0.54)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(1.28)</td>
<td>(-2.28)</td>
<td>(1.61)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>1.357</td>
<td>-1.077</td>
<td>5.828</td>
<td>2.935</td>
<td>-3.220</td>
<td>-3.552</td>
<td>3.523</td>
<td>-6.021**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Frankfurt)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(-0.25)</td>
<td>(1.31)</td>
<td>(0.72)</td>
<td>(-0.60)</td>
<td>(-0.99)</td>
<td>(1.24)</td>
<td>(-2.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>-2.123</td>
<td>-2.060</td>
<td>1.892</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td>3.754</td>
<td>2.935</td>
<td>-0.923</td>
<td>-0.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Malta)</td>
<td>(-0.79)</td>
<td>(-0.97)</td>
<td>(0.82)</td>
<td>(0.39)</td>
<td>(1.25)</td>
<td>(1.50)</td>
<td>(-0.58)</td>
<td>(-0.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>5.348</td>
<td>3.887</td>
<td>-0.358</td>
<td>1.463</td>
<td>2.483</td>
<td>-0.260</td>
<td>1.355</td>
<td>-3.726*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Oxford)</td>
<td>(1.45)</td>
<td>(1.25)</td>
<td>(-0.11)</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
<td>(0.57)</td>
<td>(-0.09)</td>
<td>(0.63)</td>
<td>(-1.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td>6.129*</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>9.694**</td>
<td>-3.919</td>
<td>-3.079</td>
<td>-1.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1 speaker (Nobel laureate))</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(1.64)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(1.97)</td>
<td>(-1.32)</td>
<td>(-1.30)</td>
<td>(-0.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>-0.397</td>
<td>2.310</td>
<td>4.934</td>
<td>6.806</td>
<td>5.786</td>
<td>6.708*</td>
<td>-2.295</td>
<td>-2.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2 speakers)</td>
<td>(-0.07)</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
<td>(1.56)</td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
<td>(1.83)</td>
<td>(-0.74)</td>
<td>(-0.92)</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>-1.720</td>
<td>6.911</td>
<td>5.792</td>
<td>11.340*</td>
<td>20.536**</td>
<td>11.653**</td>
<td>-6.634</td>
<td>-10.336**</td>
</tr>
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<td>(2 speakers (incl. 1 Nobel laureate))</td>
<td>(-0.21)</td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>(0.86)</td>
<td>(1.71)</td>
<td>(2.11)</td>
<td>(2.11)</td>
<td>(-1.40)</td>
<td>(-2.31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>11.290</td>
<td>11.222</td>
<td>-0.618</td>
<td>13.189</td>
<td>16.467</td>
<td>-12.405</td>
<td>-8.464</td>
<td>4.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Informal garden barbecue)</td>
<td>(0.73)</td>
<td>(0.96)</td>
<td>(-0.05)</td>
<td>(1.21)</td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
<td>(-1.24)</td>
<td>(-1.02)</td>
<td>(0.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
<td>10.206</td>
<td>1.153</td>
<td>-7.273</td>
<td>12.003**</td>
<td>13.597*</td>
<td>-1.570</td>
<td>-0.804</td>
<td>-2.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reception City Hall)</td>
<td>(1.55)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
<td>(1.30)</td>
<td>(2.16)</td>
<td>(1.86)</td>
<td>(-0.32)</td>
<td>(-0.20)</td>
<td>(0.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.63)</td>
<td>(-1.76)</td>
<td>(-1.30)</td>
<td>(-2.18)</td>
<td>(-2.33)</td>
<td>(-1.66)</td>
<td>(1.15)</td>
<td>(2.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\alpha_{ic}$</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-$R^2$</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
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<td>167</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Joint SOLE/EALE meeting