

Smarter than flying

How to organize successful virtual conferences

Ariane Wenger

Doctoral student at TdLab, D-USYS, ETH Zurich

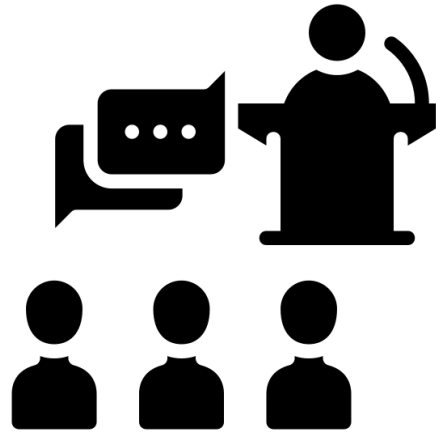
ariane.wenger@usys.ethz.ch

13. November, UZH KOL-F-104



Conferences as an integral part of an academic career

DATE	
8:00 am to 9:00 am	Opening ceremony
9:00 am to 10:00 am	Keynote talk I and II
10:00 am to 10:30 am	Coffee break
10:30 am to 12:00 am	Parallel sessions with presentations
12:00 am to 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Parallel sessions with presentations
3:00 pm to 3:30 pm	Coffee break
3:30 pm to 5:00 pm	Poster presentations
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm	Evening reception



Conference purposes

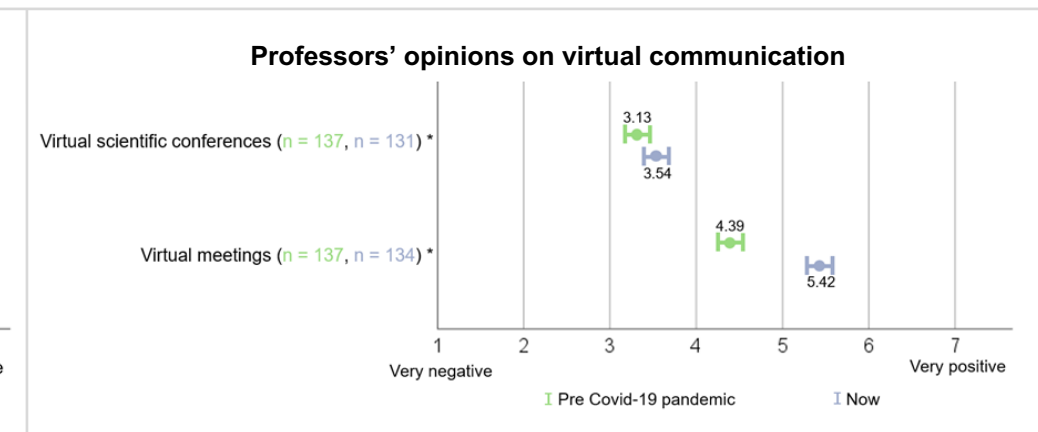
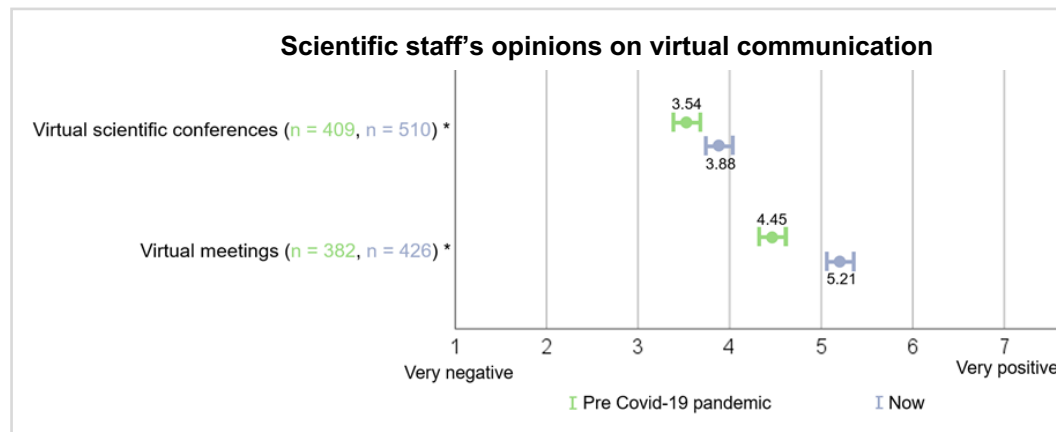
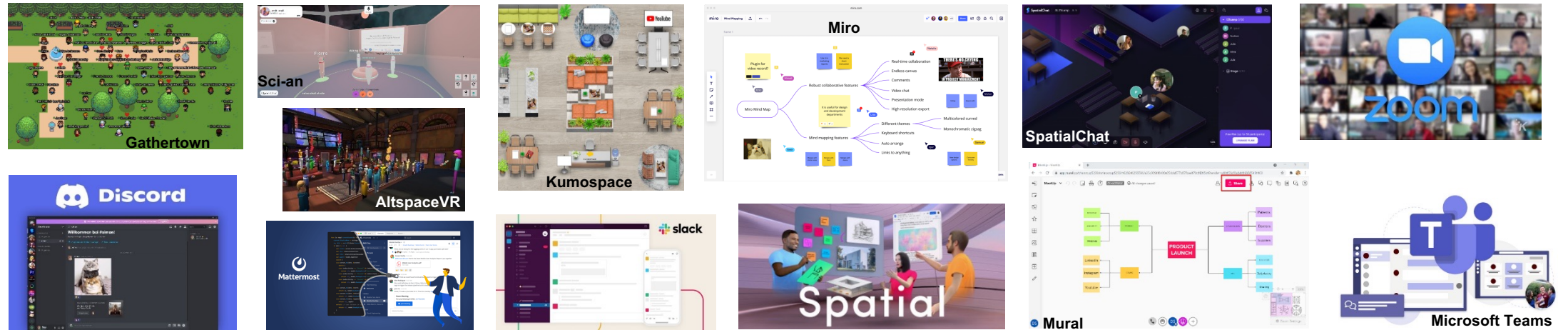
- Forming/maintaining networks
- Knowledge exchange
- Initiating collaborations
- Gaining skills
- Gaining job opportunities

Conference goals

- Earning reputation
- Forming professional identities
- Gaining visibility
- Receiving funding
- Advancing career

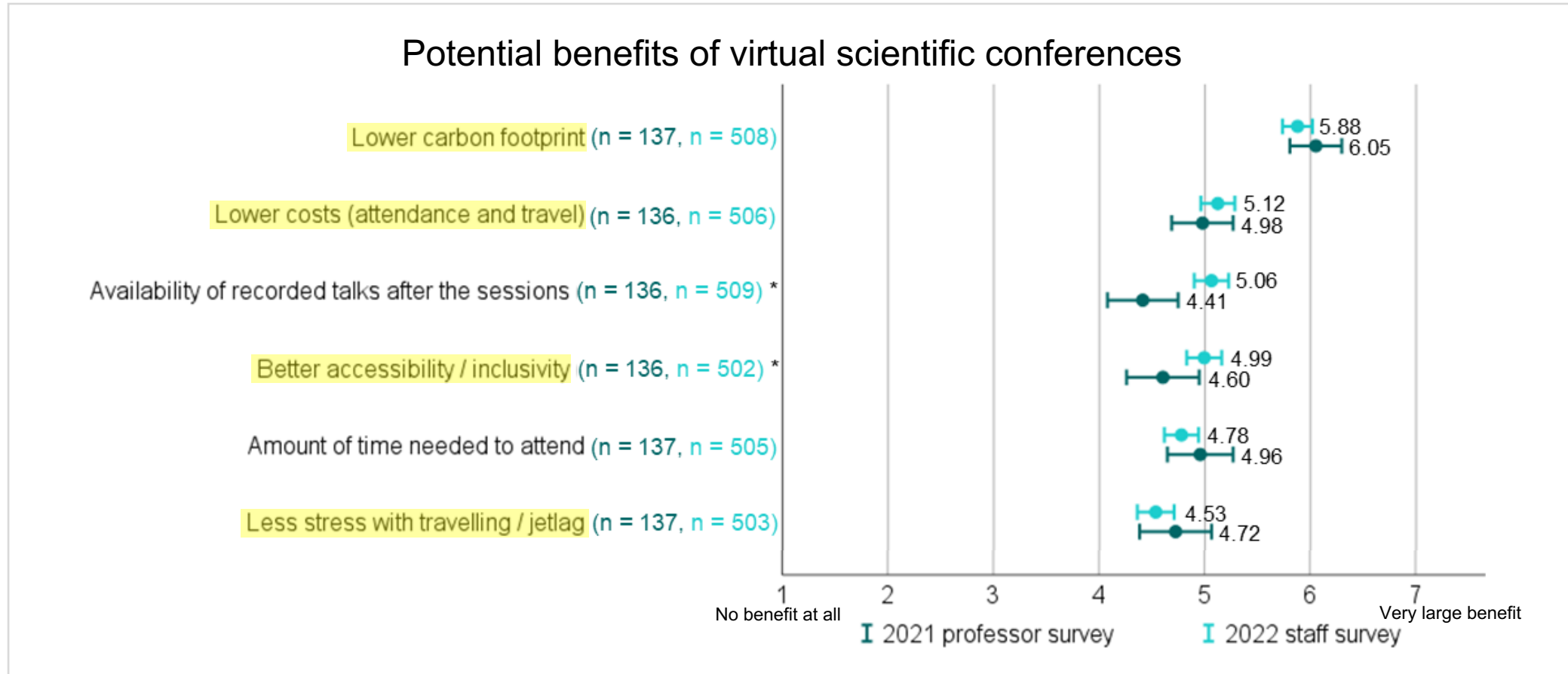
Rowe, 2018; <https://doi.org/10.21890/ijres.438394>; Edelheim et al., 2018; <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2017.1407517>; Hauss, 2021; <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvaa018>, Oester et al., 2017; <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2017.00257>; Etzion et al., 2022; <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505076211019529>

Pandemic emergency – Shift to virtual conferences



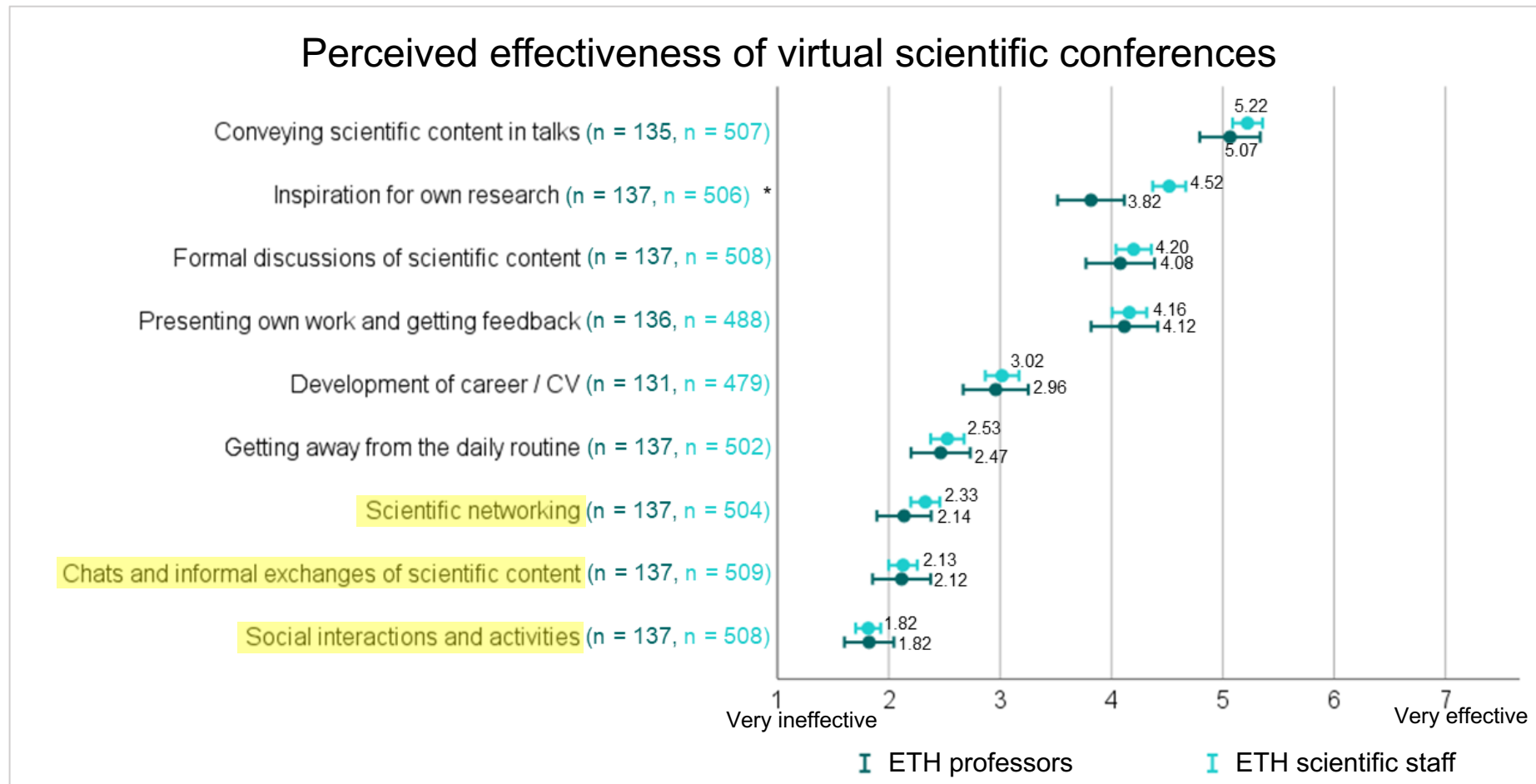
Results from two surveys conducted among researchers at ETH Zurich (Wenger, 2022; <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000553239>)

Benefits of virtual conferences



Results from two surveys conducted among researchers at ETH Zurich (Wenger, 2022; <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000553239>)

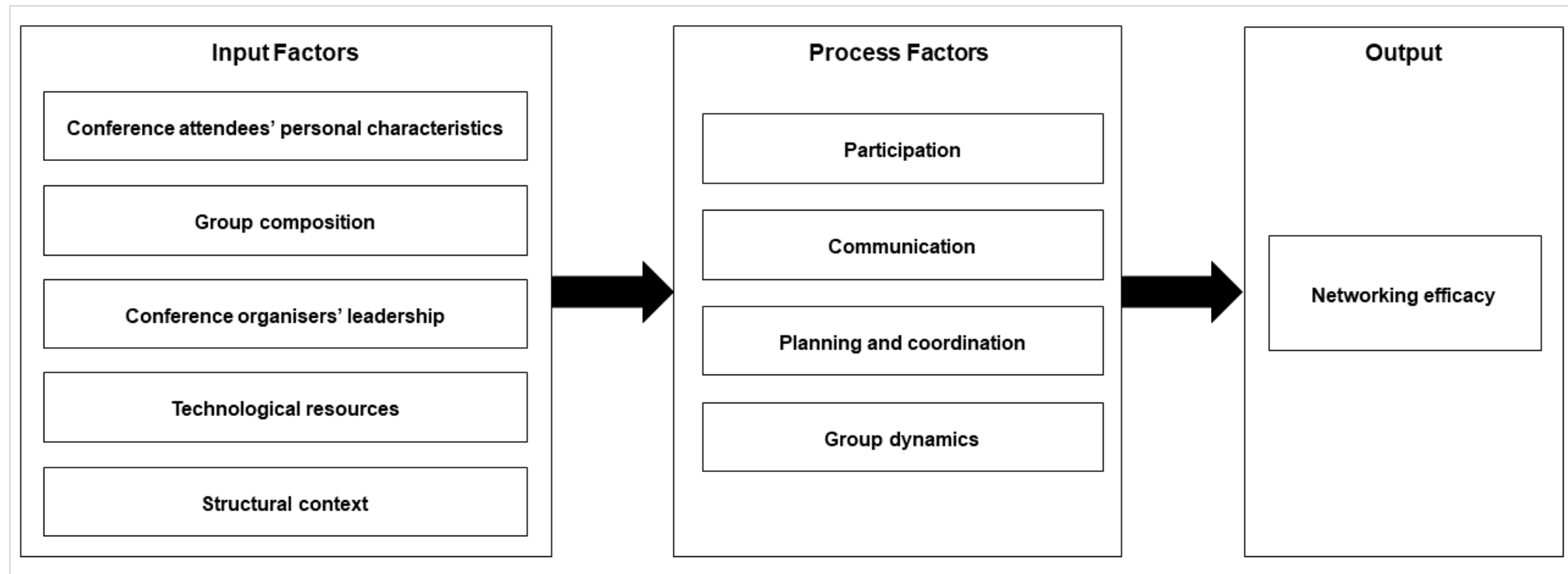
Challenges of virtual conferences



Results from two surveys conducted among researchers at ETH Zurich (Wenger, 2022; <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-b-000553239>)

Networking during virtual conferences

Virtual networking is possible, but its efficacy is influenced by the following factors



Twenty-one interviews with virtual conference organisers/attendees from different countries, scientific fields, and career positions
(Wenger, 2023; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2023.137577>)

Where are we now – The rise of hybrid conferences

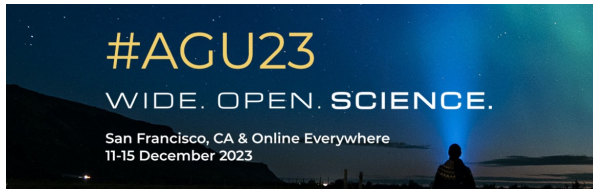


4S 2023 HONOLULU

Sea • Sky • Land • Endangered Ecologies • Solidarities

NOVEMBER 8-11

A face-to-face conference with robust options for online participation. Panels can be streamed on Zoom.



[Annual Meeting of the American Geophysical Union](#)

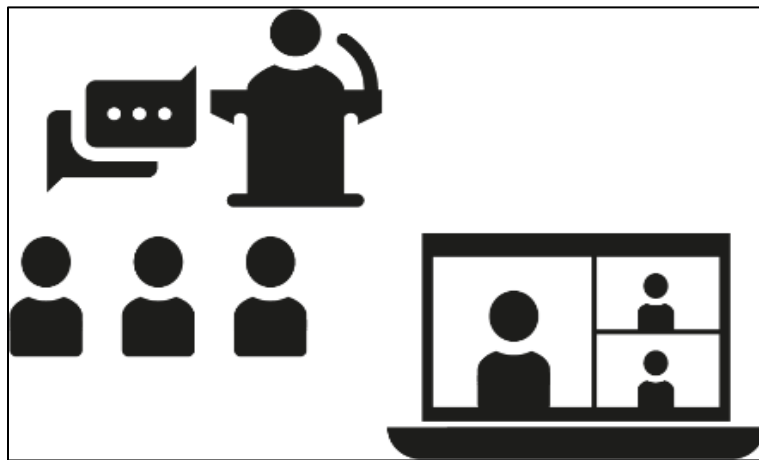
AGU is looking to foster collaboration in a hybrid model aimed at capitalizing on both in-person and virtual participation.

ICML

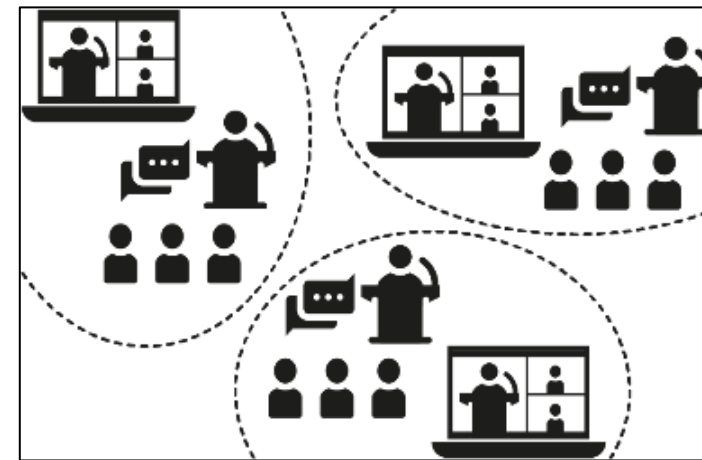
International Conference
 On Machine Learning

A physical conference in Honolulu, Hawaii (July 23rd – July 29th) with some streaming elements.

Central location format



Multi hub format



A combination of the best of both worlds (virtual and in-person) or a two-class system?

Outlook – Where should we be heading?

- Virtual conferences provide a more sustainable and inclusive substitute for in-person conferences
- Best practice examples of effective networking during virtual conferences exist
- Longstanding norms for attending in-person conferences need to be changed and new virtual norms need to be established
- There seems to be a post-pandemic bounce back to mainly in-person conferences + new hybrid conference formats
- A push including the commitment of conference organizers, attendees, and the wider academic community is needed to find a suitable mix of academic air travel and virtual conferences

