



Ethical questions arising from efforts to collate knowledge about human fire use at the global scale

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Presentation outline

- What is ‘small-scale livelihood fire’, and what do we know about it at the global scale?
- The Livelihood Fire Database (LIFE)
- The Global Fire Use Survey
- Ethical challenges, and thoughts on ways forward

‘Small-scale livelihood fire’

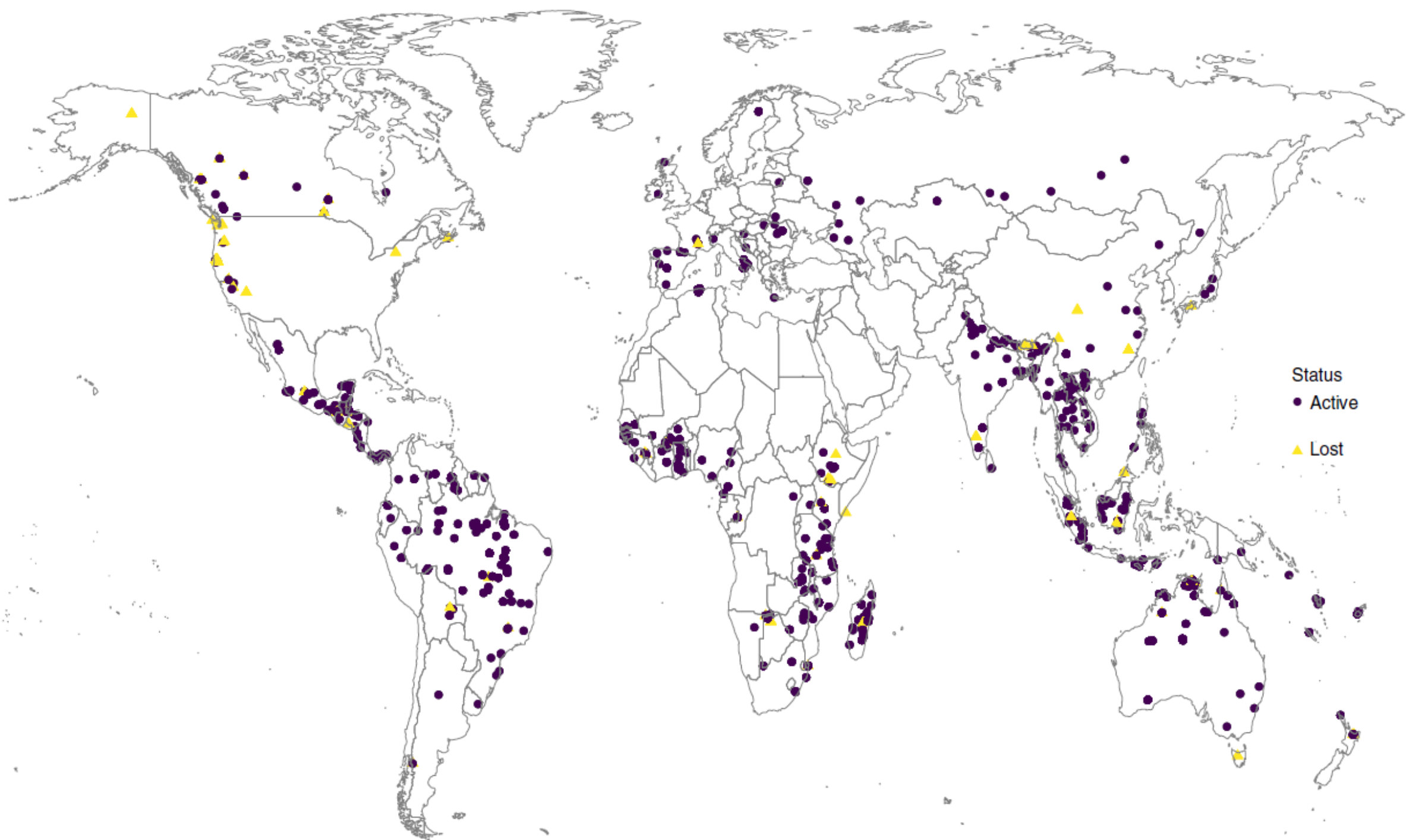
- Burning as part of livelihoods relying mostly on household labour
- Includes many smallholders, Indigenous fire users, ‘cultural’ fire users
- Knowledge of these practices limited at global scale – modelling very rudimentary, hard to isolate human signal in remote sensing data

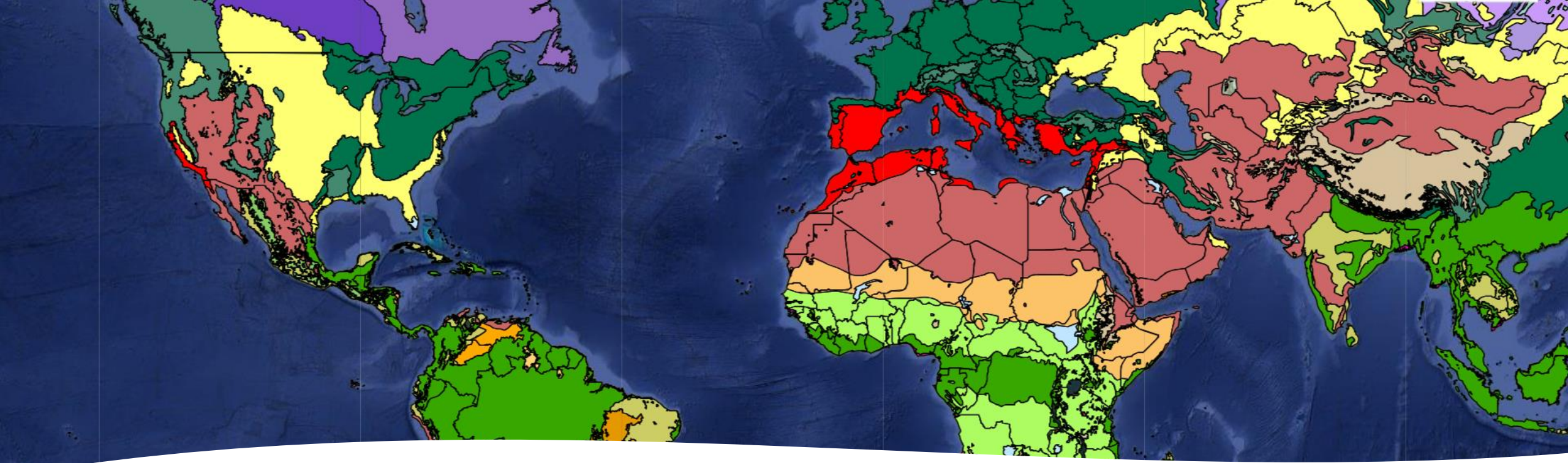


The LIFE Database

- Literature Search:
 - Publications after 1995, with fieldwork after 1990
 - Descriptions of fire use and/or retained knowledge of fire use
 - 'Small-scale livelihood fire' only.
 - Searched: Web of Science, Open Access Theses and Dissertations database, Fire Research Institute database, bibliographies of existing reviews of fire use
 - Snowball sampling
- Data recorded:
 - 37 variables, including:
 - Spatiotemporal (e.g., burned area, fire return interval, seasonality)
 - Governance
 - Cultural (e.g., cues to burn, social organisation of burning)
 - Control measures taken
 - Trends
- Research outputs so far:
 - Analysis of trends in fire use (published)
 - Spatiotemporal data analysis (in review)
 - Governance synthesis (in review)





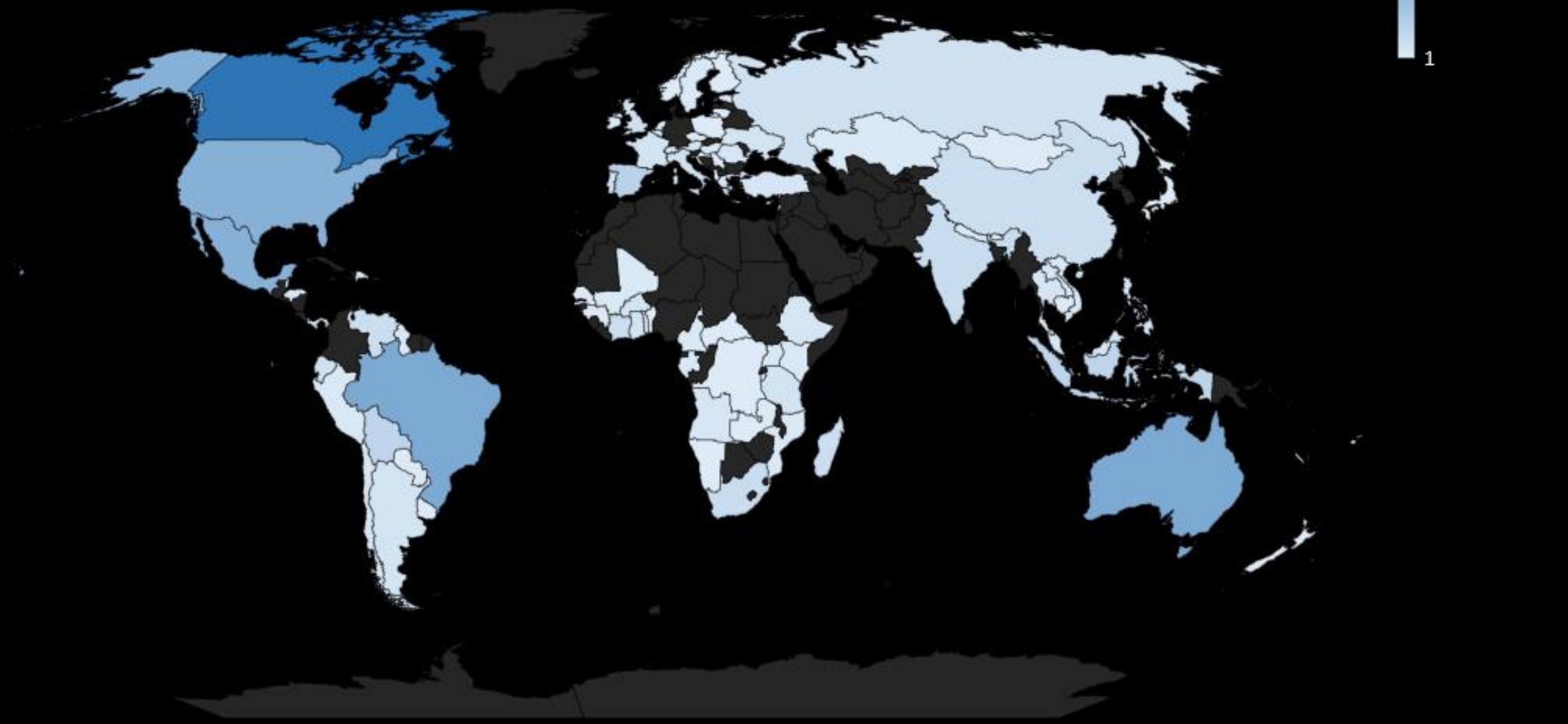


The Global Fire Use Survey

- Questionnaire distributed online to fire experts, including researchers and practitioners
- Respondents answered for a region (defined by state boundaries and WWF biomes, with a few modifications)
- Questions covered:
 - Types of stakeholders using fire (small-scale livelihood fire users, companies, employees of agencies)
 - Reasons for burning
 - Seasonality of burning
 - Governance of burning
- Survey took approx. 30 minutes to answer
- Participation voluntary, with entry into prize draw and potential for invitation to a workshop to build on results

312 responses covering approx. 50 % of ice-free land mass

survey responses





Ethical challenges

- Extractivism
- Representation
- Uses of the data, who benefits?



Possible ways forward

- Involving other researchers, fire stakeholders and advocacy groups in data analysis / narrative building
- Making data publicly available
- Outputs beyond scientific publications?
- Compensation for time given to this kind of research?

Thanks for listening!



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