

Questionnaire

1. In literature, several terms (see table below) have been used to classify wildfires. Please, give your agreement about each definition using the Likert scale (*insert a check symbol ✓ in the pertinent column for each definition, line by line*).

Term	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Nor agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Bio-hazard					
Climate sensitive hazard					
Mixed hazard					
Natural hazard					
Quasi natural bio-hazard					
Semi natural hazard					
Social ecological hazard					
Socio-ecological hazard					
Aggression					
Disturbance					
Ecological catastrophe					
Natural disaster					
Social aggression					
Socio ecological disturbance					

If you want to suggest another term, please write here: _____

2. Put in decreasing order of agreement the three most pertinent terms (classified in the previous table as *strongly agreed*; in case of no response in this category use *agreed*)

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

3. Could you please explain in a few words the term you put in the first place in the previous question?

4. Can you please identify your scientific field? *(insert a check symbol ✓)*

Anthropology

Biology and Nature sciences

Engineering

Forestry

Geography

Psychology

Sociology

OTHER (identify here, please):

Thank you for your collaboration.

Table S1. Summary of the experts' explanation

Term	Explanation
Ecological catastrophe	A wildfire of different origin (natural, accidental, negligent, voluntary) with direct impact on the environment, the species population and distribution, and biodiversity of the affected area and on the societies living nearby. It disrupts the ecological balance of the region, destroys all the ecosystem, in some cases with irreversible consequences.
Natural disaster	Large-scale wildfire event, causing disruption to the current state of an ecosystem with lasting impacts and disastrous effects on ecosystems, loss of properties and lives. Wildfires as natural events can have positive effects on ecosystems. Wildfires mainly result from natural processes that often allow reconstruction of the environment.
Natural hazard	Wildfires are a natural phenomenon and a key process in numerous ecosystems. Their occurrence and behaviour strongly depend on climate and weather conditions, as well as on the type of vegetation. Natural hazard covers natural and man-made occurrences but humans also influence this hazard by introducing, mitigating, or suppressing fire. Thus, natural hazard is the best and the broadest umbrella term that captures wildfires from a wide range of causes, and perhaps the most familiar term to the wider public. Although hazard is a term with negative connotation, it is preferred to disaster because not all fires result in significant or destructive impact, but have that potential.
Climate sensitive hazard	Event of natural origin, dependent on climatic, ecological and social aspects. Fires firstly depend on weather conditions (droughts, heat, lightning) and, secondly, on anthropogenic ignitions and fighting strategies. Ignition and burned area are under the influence of the interannual climatic variability. Interactions between climatic conditions and anthropogenic activities influence fire regime. Wildfire activity is a marker of climate change, temperature anomalies and geospatial distribution of precipitation. Drought and temperature influence wildfires severity. A contribution to greenhouse effect is due to release of black carbon during combustion.
Socio-ecological hazard	Worldwide wildfires are a hazard and a threat to the bio-physical, social and economic environment, as cause of economic and environmental damage. They are usually human-caused and strongly related with the socio economical aspects of the regions where they occur. Wildfire occurrence is influenced by fuel availability, ignition probability, and fire weather. Human actions and the influence on land use and land cover strongly determine the landscape features.
Social-ecological hazard	Wildfires are an environmental hazard mainly due to anthropogenic factors, and favoured by environmental factors. They can be defined as a social and ecological hazard for both the increase in their frequency and amplitude, and because they create environmental impacts to ecosystems, and often are the expression of social and economic problems of a territory. Most fires have a human caused origin and become hazards when they interact with people and what people value. This interaction occurs when people decide to develop and utilise forests for personal, economic, livelihood, and recreational use.
Mixed hazard	An agent of socio-economic and environmental risk, which can be attributed to various natural or anthropogenic conditions and actions, whose combination affect both human and ecological resources. Hazard is mixed because most of the cost (economic and human) is associated with human activity: land management, land use, housing development, need for water catchments and storage.
Semi-natural hazard	Not completely caused by natural features, influenced, caused or modified by human activities (malice or accident), directly (e.g. starting a fire) or indirectly (e.g. global warming, that increases frequency and intensity of droughts). Recognized the dual role of fire, beneficial and detrimental.
Biohazard	Wildfires (from both natural and anthropogenic sources) affecting forms of biological and natural resources in various scales of socio-ecological hazards and disturbances. Wildfire is a biohazard because it damages the biological organisms (forest, rangelands and farmlands) and the production as well. It is climate sensitive. Some man-made fire outbreaks can be aggression for land grabbing or converting forests to farmlands or pastures. Wildfire is also an ecological catastrophe while the productive potential of natural or artificial lands will be degraded to less productive and without productivity. Mostly, a biohazard occurs if natural fuels are available.

Disturbance	A neutral event from an ecological and human perspective, not necessarily implying positive or negative judgement, whose causes are rather equally considered natural or anthropogenic, both depending on climate conditions. It disrupts the ongoing ecological and social processes, influencing the environmental and social conditions of concerned social-ecological system. It is recognized that fire presence can have both beneficial and negative consequences. Disturbance affects ecological values, ecosystem dynamics and stand succession, inducing a relatively discrete, instantaneous or near-instantaneous disruption to the current composition, biological interactions, state and functions of an ecosystem, community, or population structure. It changes resources, substrate availability, and the physical environment, temporarily destroying, partly or totally, the stand above ground biomass and vegetation structure, rearranging biophysical substances. It shifts the current energy fluxes and biomass distribution, creating new dominance relationships in the system. It changes the system homeostasis. Wildfires are disturbances but not necessarily a hazard, a disaster, or a catastrophe. Hazard or disaster can occur: i) when people and settlements are or can be affected by wildfire occurrence, ii) where valued resources are damaged or destroyed, or iii) when people decide to live in a harm's way", either by choice or fate and sometimes human loss there occurs. Depending on the ecosystem, wildfire occurrence can be a disaster (if the ecosystem is not adapted to fire) or just a disturbance (if the ecosystem is adapted to fire). The scale and setting of the disturbance, that directly depends on fire intensity, defines whether or not it constitutes a socio-economic or ecological hazard or catastrophe.
Natural disturbance	Fire is a natural disturbance with positive or negative impacts on the ecosystems and on human systems. In some cases, it is necessary for the existence of some plant species.
Socio-ecological/Social ecological disturbance	Of natural origin, or originated by human activity, wildfire is an element of the ecosystem evolution connected to people living in the area. The physical process and the social environment, result in a natural (or unnatural due to or suppression activities) disturbance (or perturbation) to a coupled, socio-ecological system. Anthropogenic activities are very diversified and act directly or indirectly as a socio-ecological disturbance, capable of rapidly changing structure and function in socioecological systems. Even when causes are mostly natural, the consequences, prevention and mitigation have a strong social component. The term disturbance has less negative connotation. Anthropogenic factors (ignitions, land use, land fragmentation, firefighting forces and strategies) in fires are key drivers of the phenomenon in most parts of the world as much as weather /climate and, fuel types and load and topography.
Ecosystem disturbance	Wildfires as natural or human-induced events represent a relevant disturbance for ecosystems, causing a disruption to their current state, with short or long-term effects. Ecosystems affected by a wildfire can often bounce back to the pre-fire conditions, after a given time-span.
Social aggression/Aggression	The majority of wildfires have artificial causes. When intentionally caused, wildfires represent an aggression to nature whose reasons stay in social issues (competition for territorial uses, disagreement with policies, fights for boundaries) with diversified effects ranging from disturbance to ecological catastrophe. Although not always intentional, wildfires anyhow reveal lack of understanding of common good.
Natural perturbation	Wildfires are a natural perturbation, necessary for the maintenance of the natural ecological equilibrium of ecosystems. Problem with them is the distortion of their natural regimes.
Vegetation fire	A vegetation fire started by either a natural process or by accident.
Natural event	Wildfires can be natural, and human caused. Man is the deciding factor if a wildfire is good or a disaster. Natural wildfires provide nature the ability to produce new plants and vegetation.