

Primum Non Nocere:

Before working with Indigenous data,
the ACL must confront ongoing colonialism

Lane Schwartz
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Land Acknowledgement

- The University of Alaska Fairbanks is on the ancestral lands of the **Dena** people of the lower Tanana River.
- The University of Illinois is on the lands of the **Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw** Nations. These lands were the traditional territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced removal; these lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.
- The Native languages of Alaska are vital parts of the cultural heritage of Alaska's Native Peoples, and it is my great privilege to work with Akuzipik and the **St. Lawrence Island Yupik** people.

Parthenon



Parthenon Frieze



Athens

The British
Museum

Discover two million years of human history and
culture



London

Elgin Marbles



The British
Museum

Discover two million years of human history and culture

London

“The Elgin Marbles are no longer part of the story of the Parthenon. They are now part of another story.”

Neil MacGregor, recent former Director, British Museum



Cultural strip mining

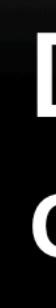
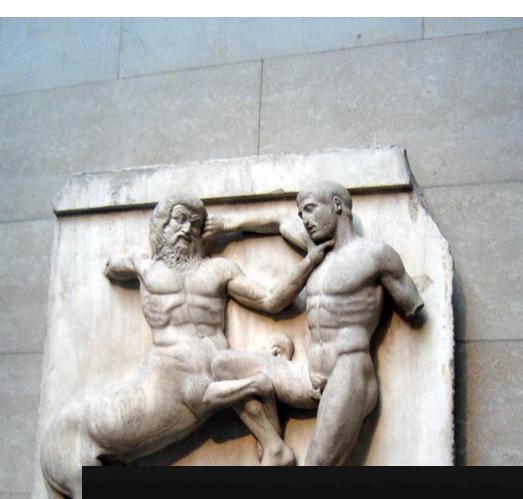


**Common NLP
practices perpetuate
colonialism**

Cultural **data** mining

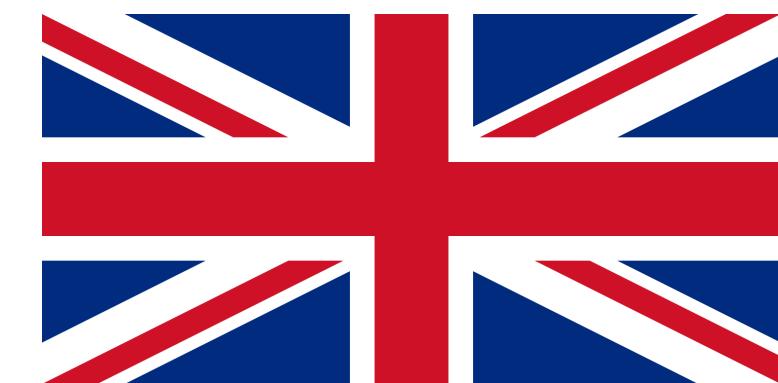


How not to be an NLP Colonist



Discover two million years of human history and culture

The British
Museum

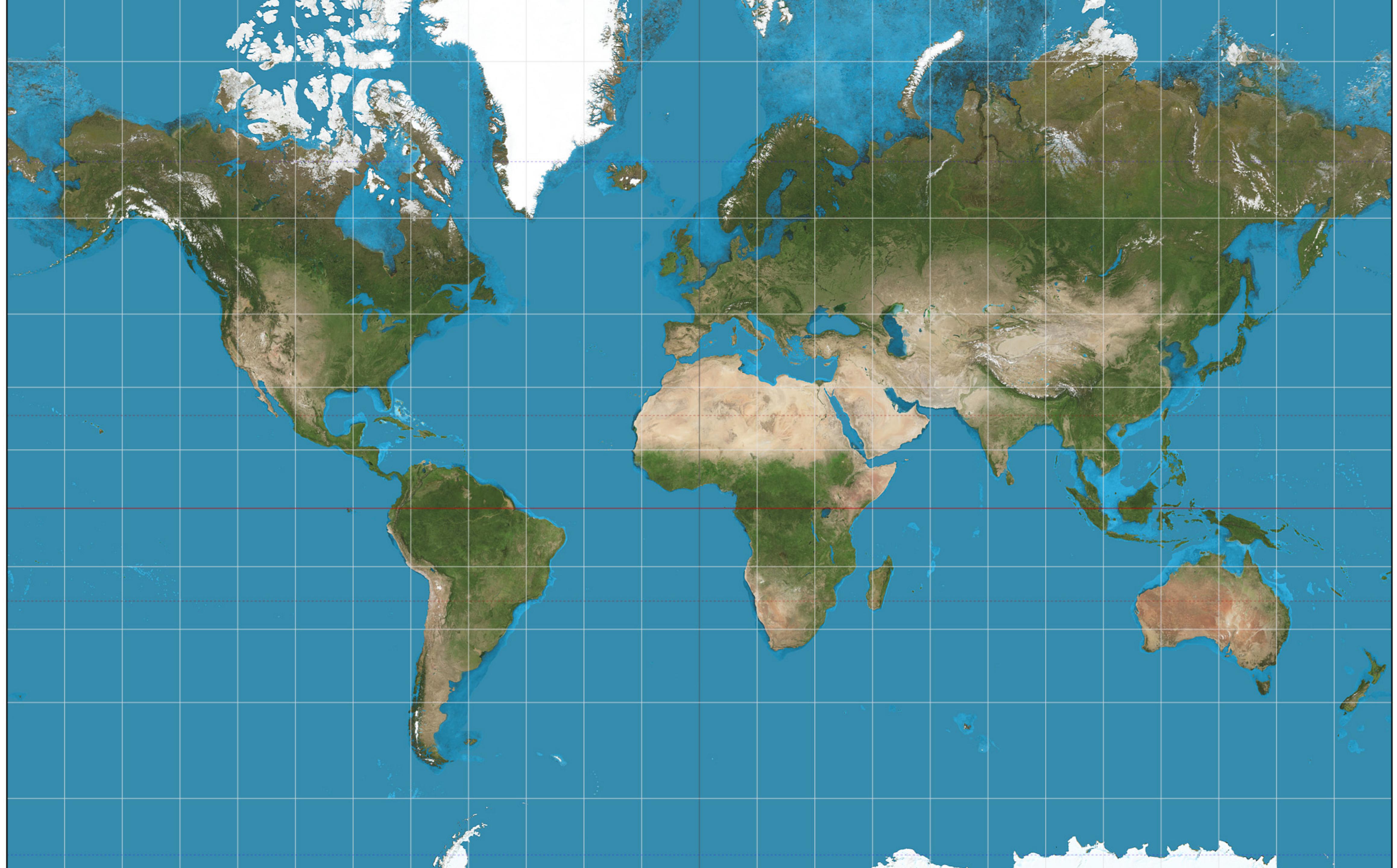


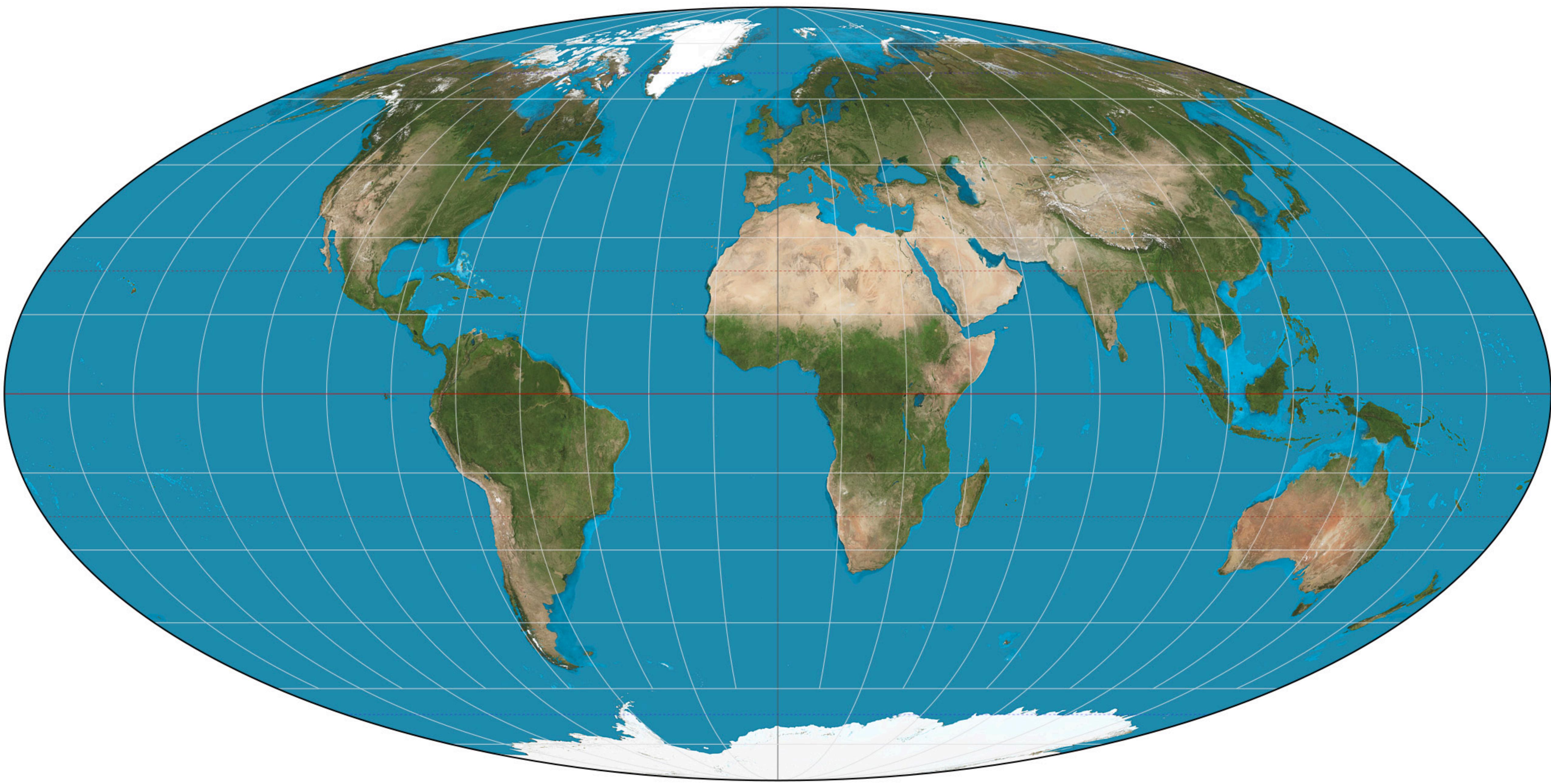
*Primum non
nocere*

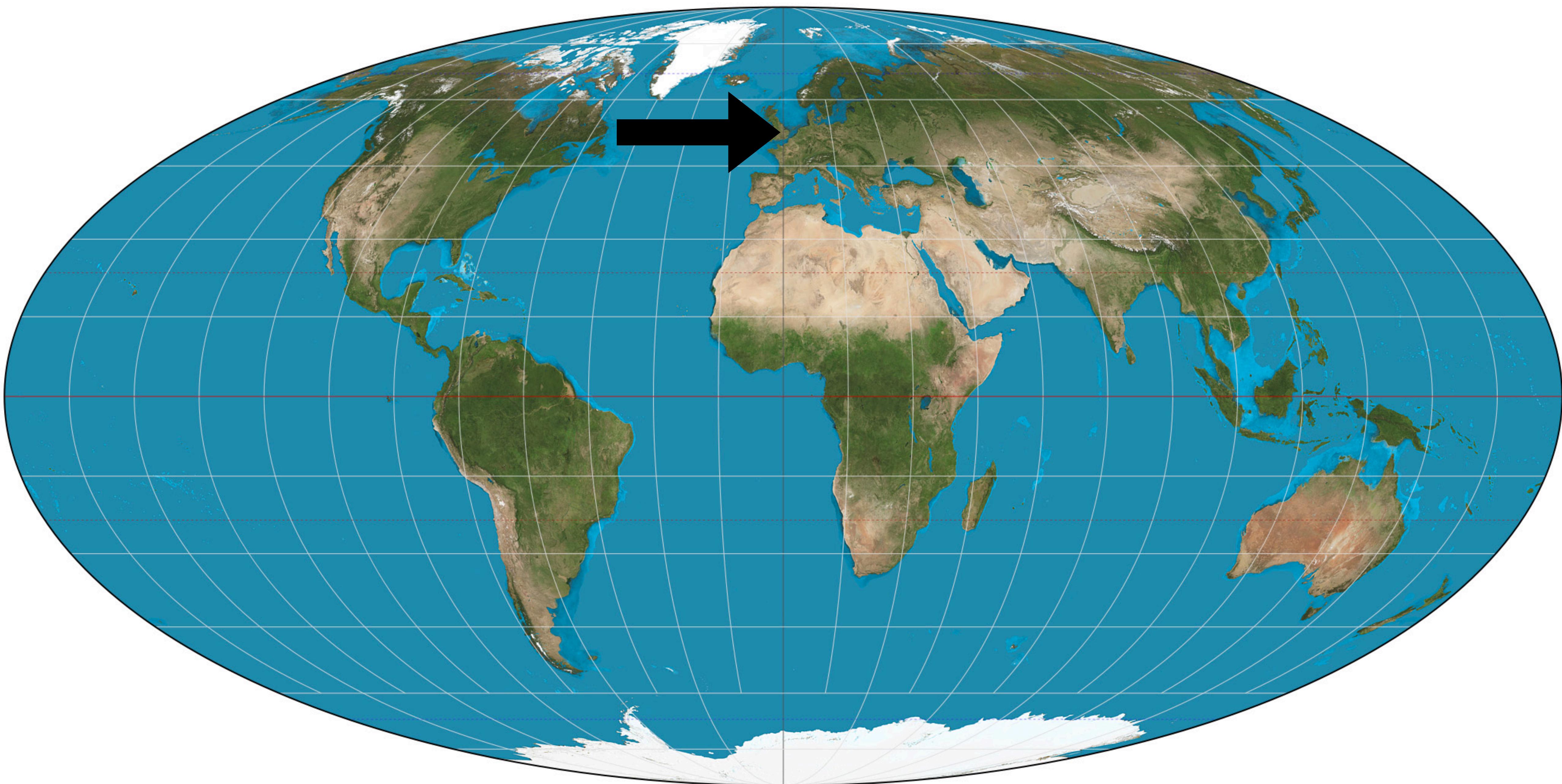
Above all,
do no harm

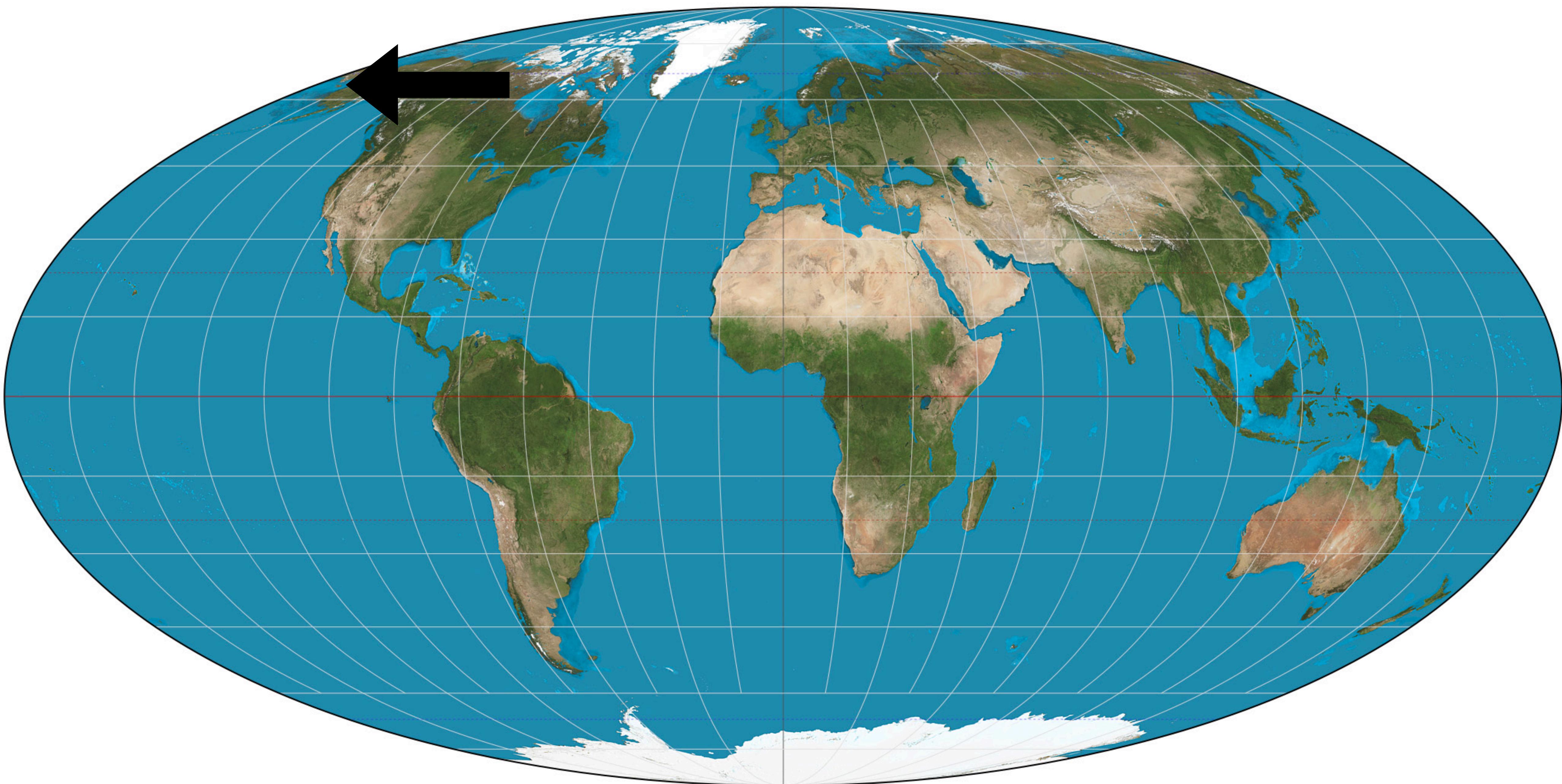
Accountability
Beneficence
Cognizance
Do no harm

Centering

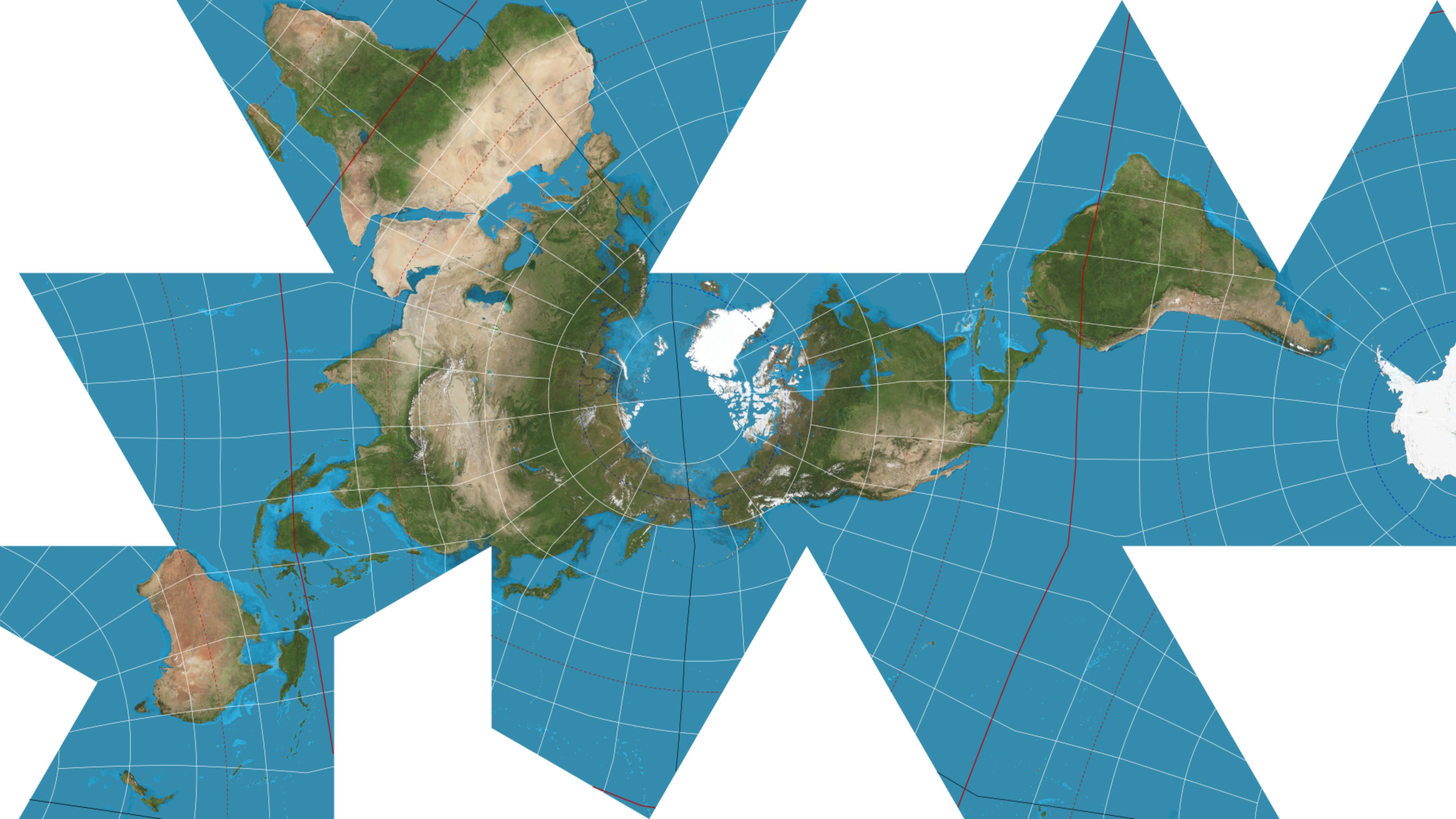


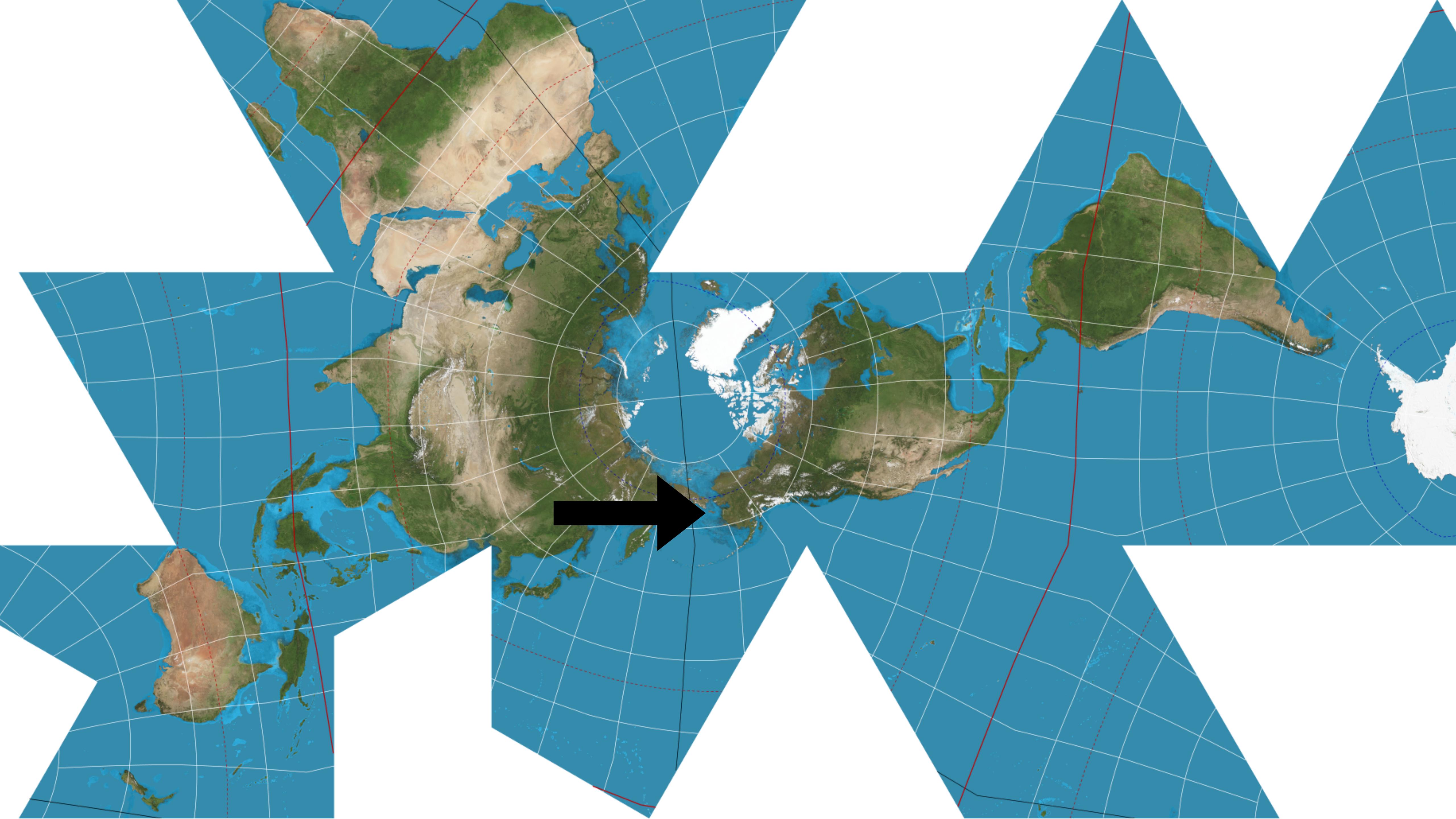






Centering





**“Always name
the languages
you work with”**

Emily Bender

ACL abstracts

- TACL (2013-2021)
- ACL, NAACL, EMNLP,
EACL, AACL, JCL (2017-2021)

9602 *ACL abstracts

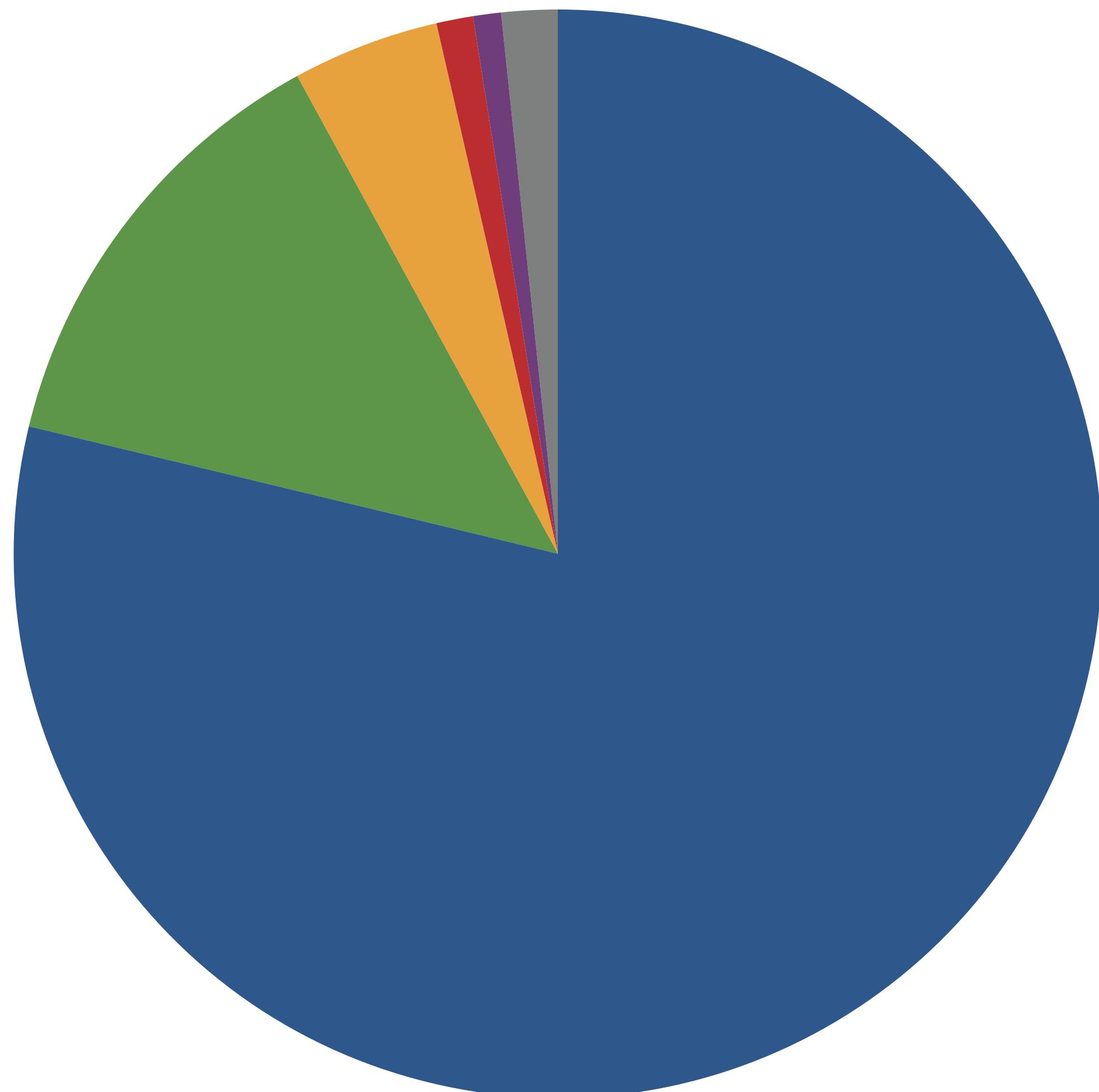
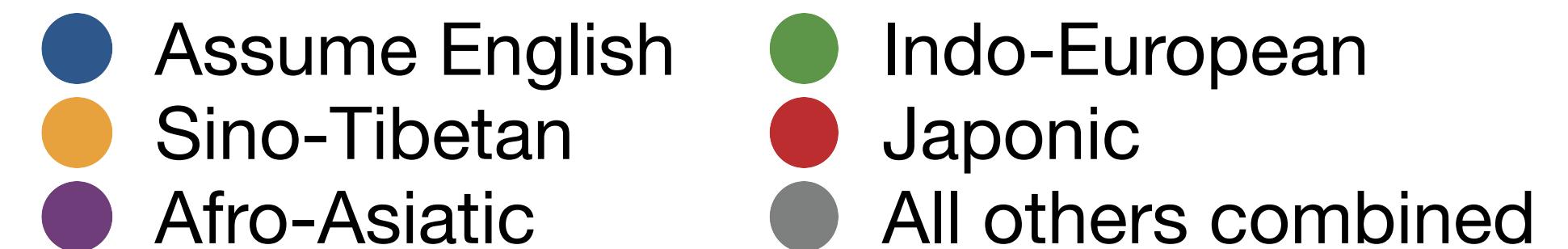
ACL abstracts

- TACL (2013-2021)
- ACL, NAACL, EMNLP,
EACL, AACL, JCL (2017-2021)

18 language families represented!

ACL abstracts

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- ACL, NAACL, EMNLP,
EACL, AACL, JCL (2017-2021)

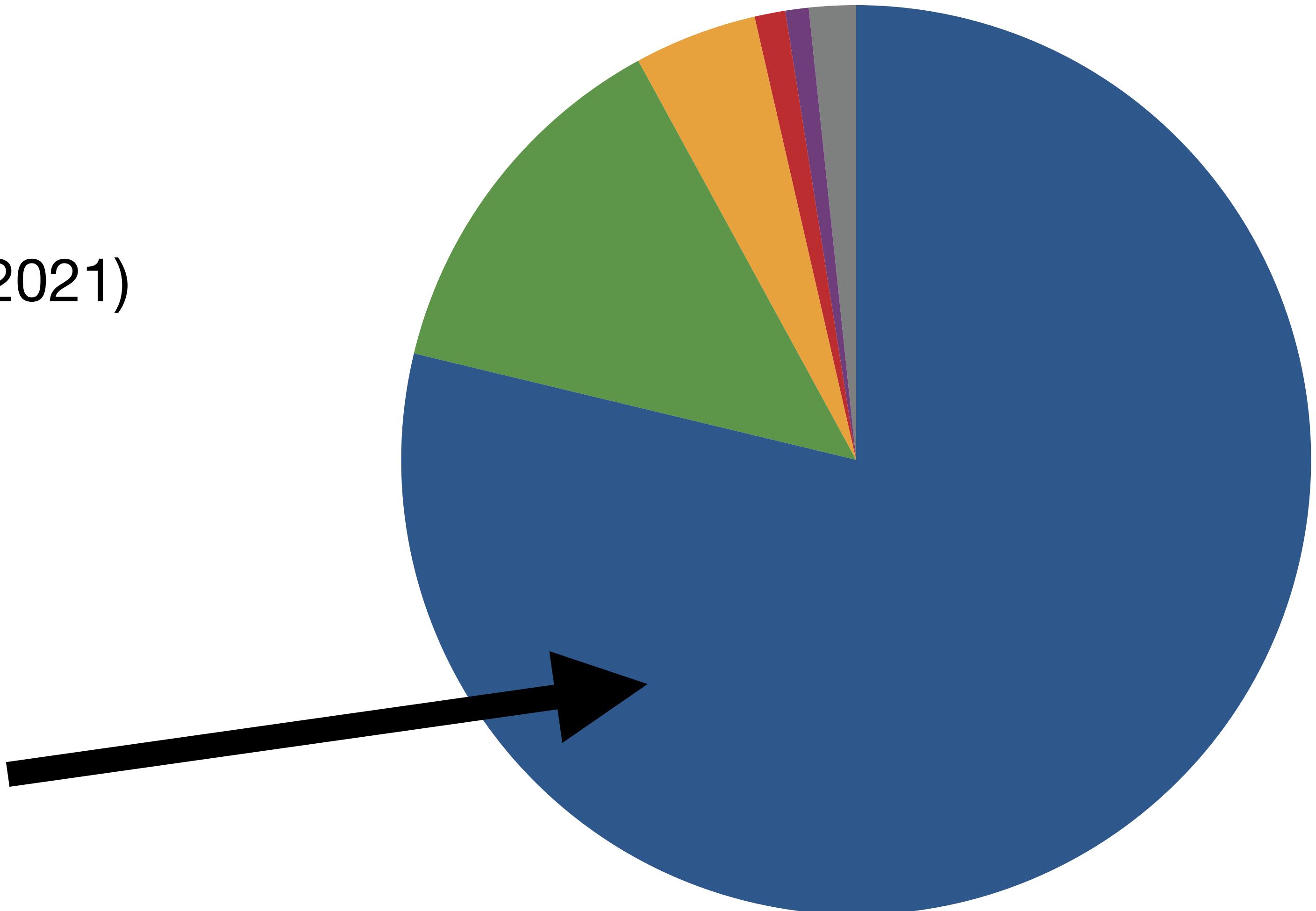


9602 *ACL abstracts

ACL abstracts



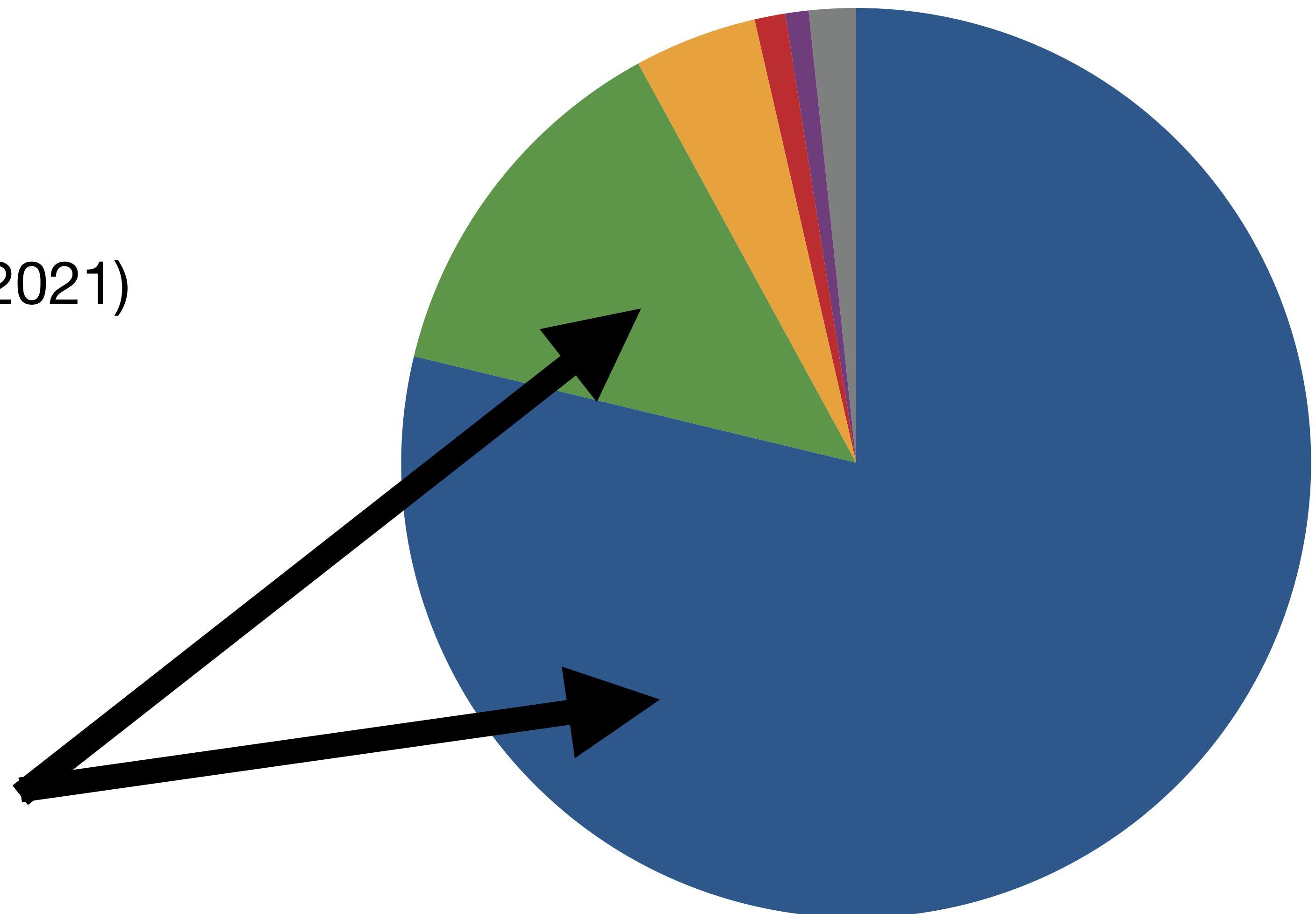
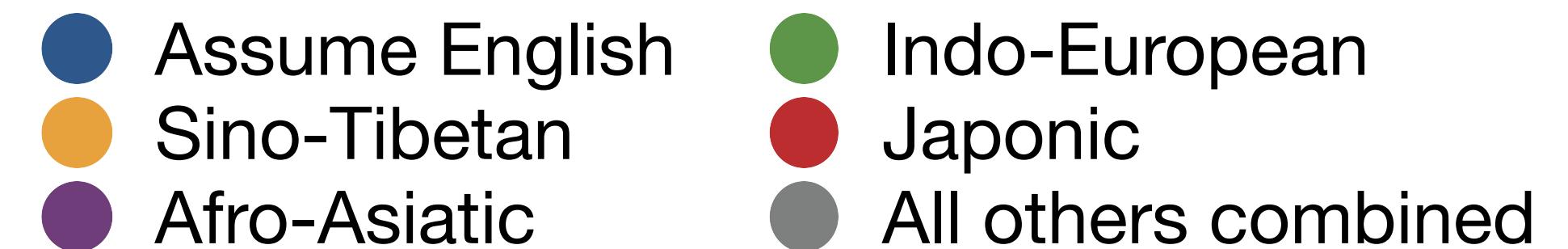
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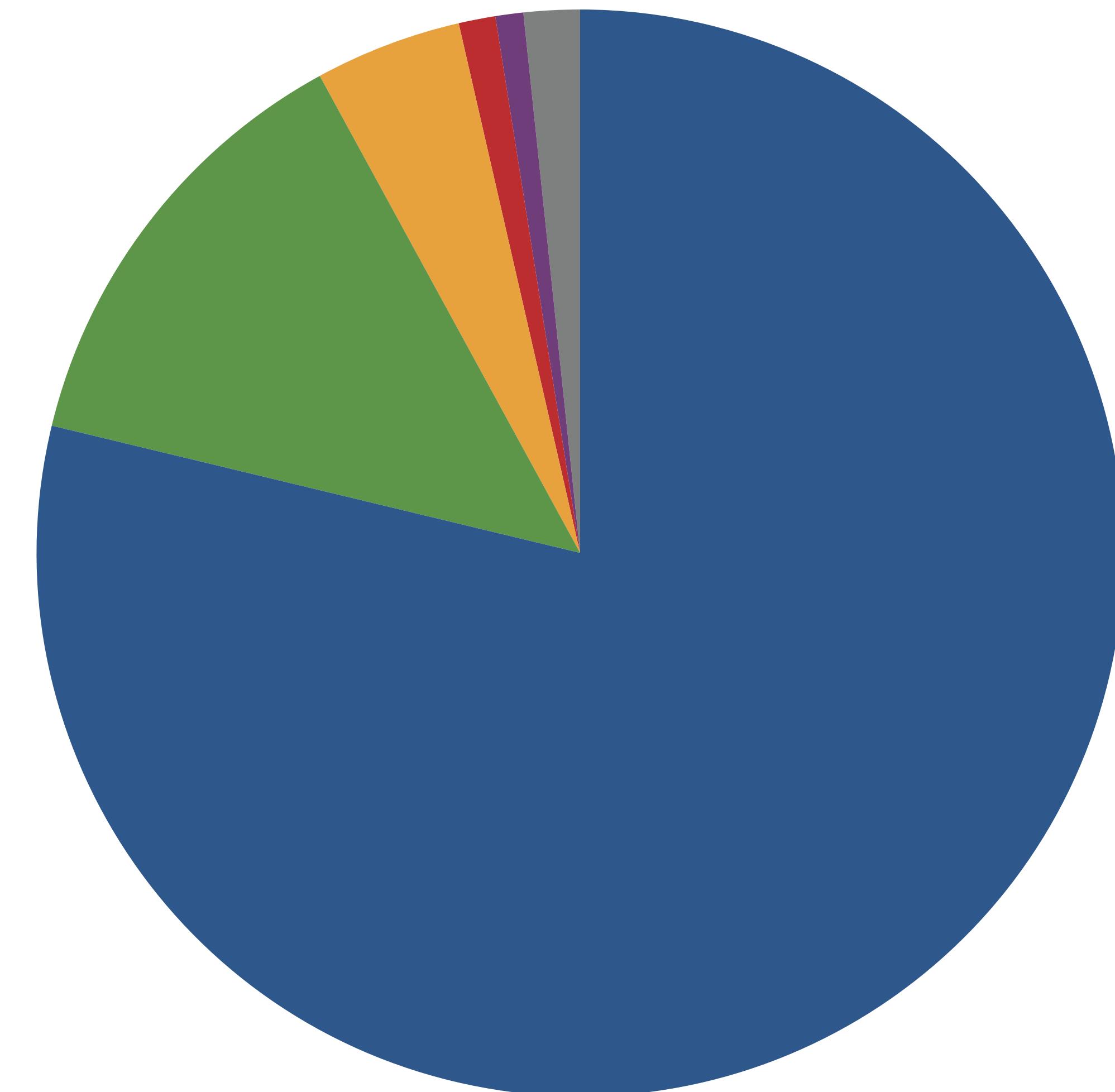
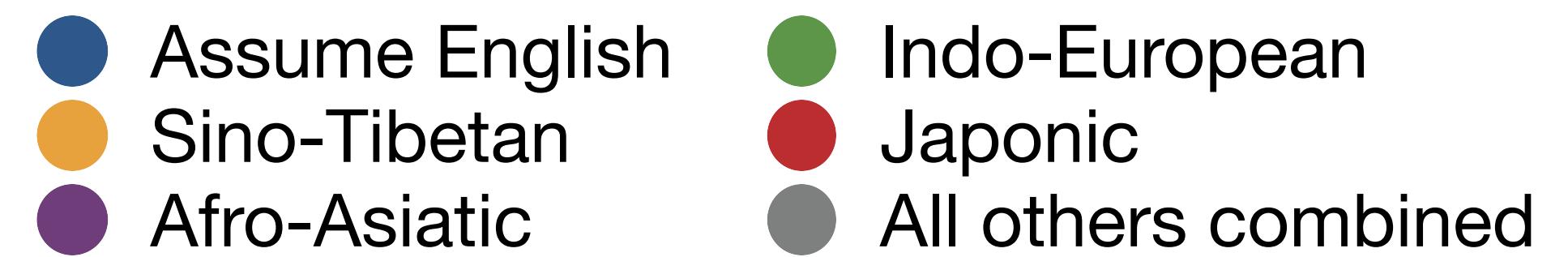
83% of *ACL papers
fail the #BenderRule

ACL abstracts

- TACL (2013-2021)
- ACL, NAACL, EMNLP,
EACL, AACL, JCL (2017-2021)



83.26%	7995	Implicitly assume English
13.70%	1315	Indo-European (incl. English)
4.50%	432	Sino-Tibetan
1.12%	108	Japonic
0.85%	82	Afro-Asiatic
0.41%	39	Turkic
0.26%	25	Koreanic
0.25%	24	Austroasiatic
0.24%	23	Dravidian
0.22%	21	Uralic
0.21%	20	Austronesian
0.09%	9	Basque
0.09%	9	Atlantic-Congo
0.07%	7	Na-Dene
0.05%	5	Kra-Dai
0.02%	2	Arnhem
0.02%	2	Iroquoian
0.02%	2	Inuit-Yupik-Unangan
0.01%	1	Sumerian



Homogeneity makes for bad science



**Unquestioned
assumptions
make for unethical science**



Accountability
Beneficence
Cognizance
Do no harm

The ethical foundation

Do no harm

Duty to educate yourself

Cognizance

Your work must benefit the community

Beneficence

Meaningful reporting and respect of sovereignty

Accountability

Accountability
Beneficence
Cognizance
Do no harm

Respect

Responsibilities



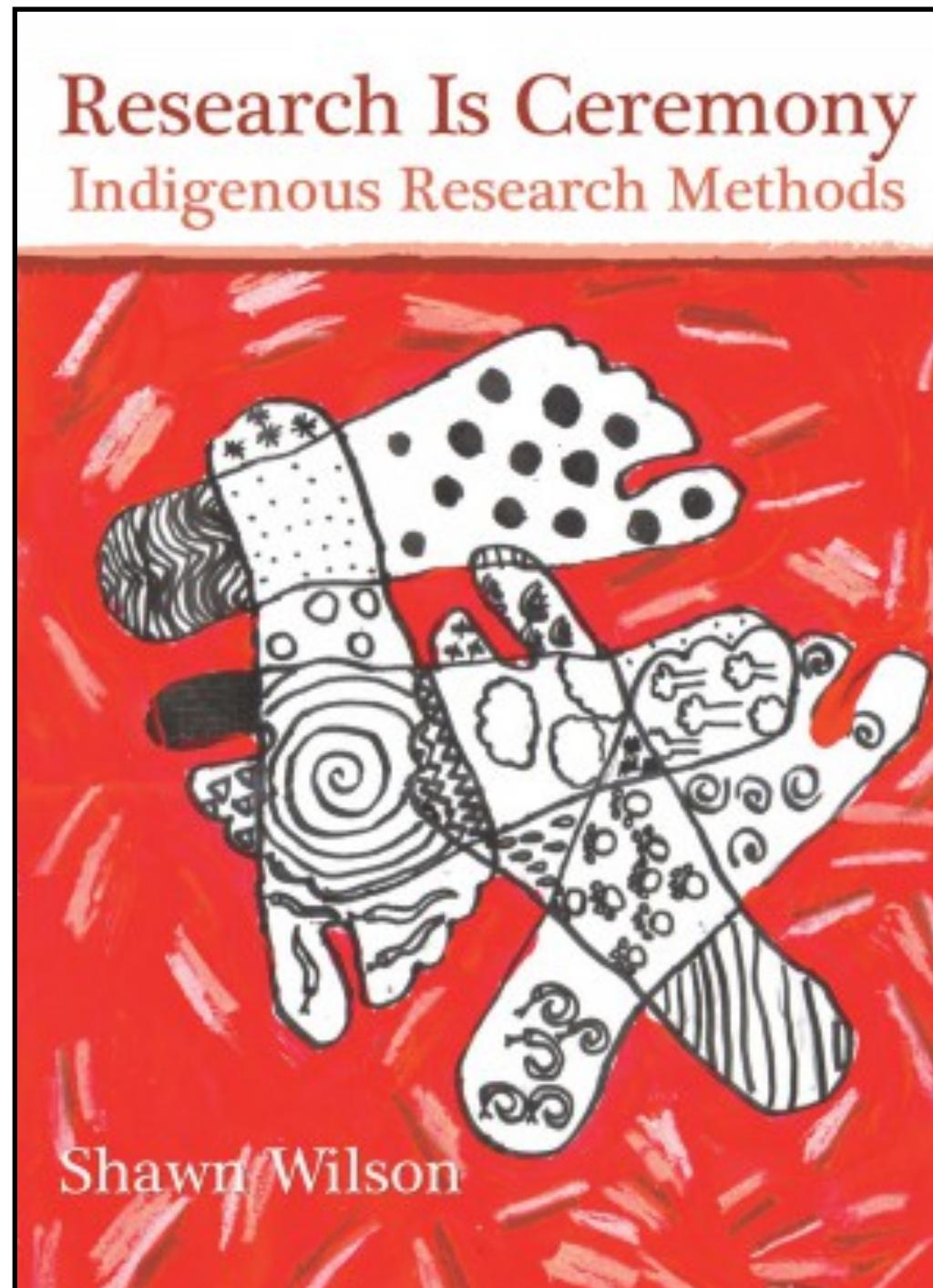
Relationships



Reciprocity



Recommended readings



Decolonising Speech and Language Technology

Steven Bird
Northern Institute
Charles Darwin University

A close-up photograph of a wet, textured surface, possibly a window pane with raindrops, used as a background for a social media post.

The #BenderRule:
On Naming the
Languages We Study
and Why It Matters
14.SEP.2019

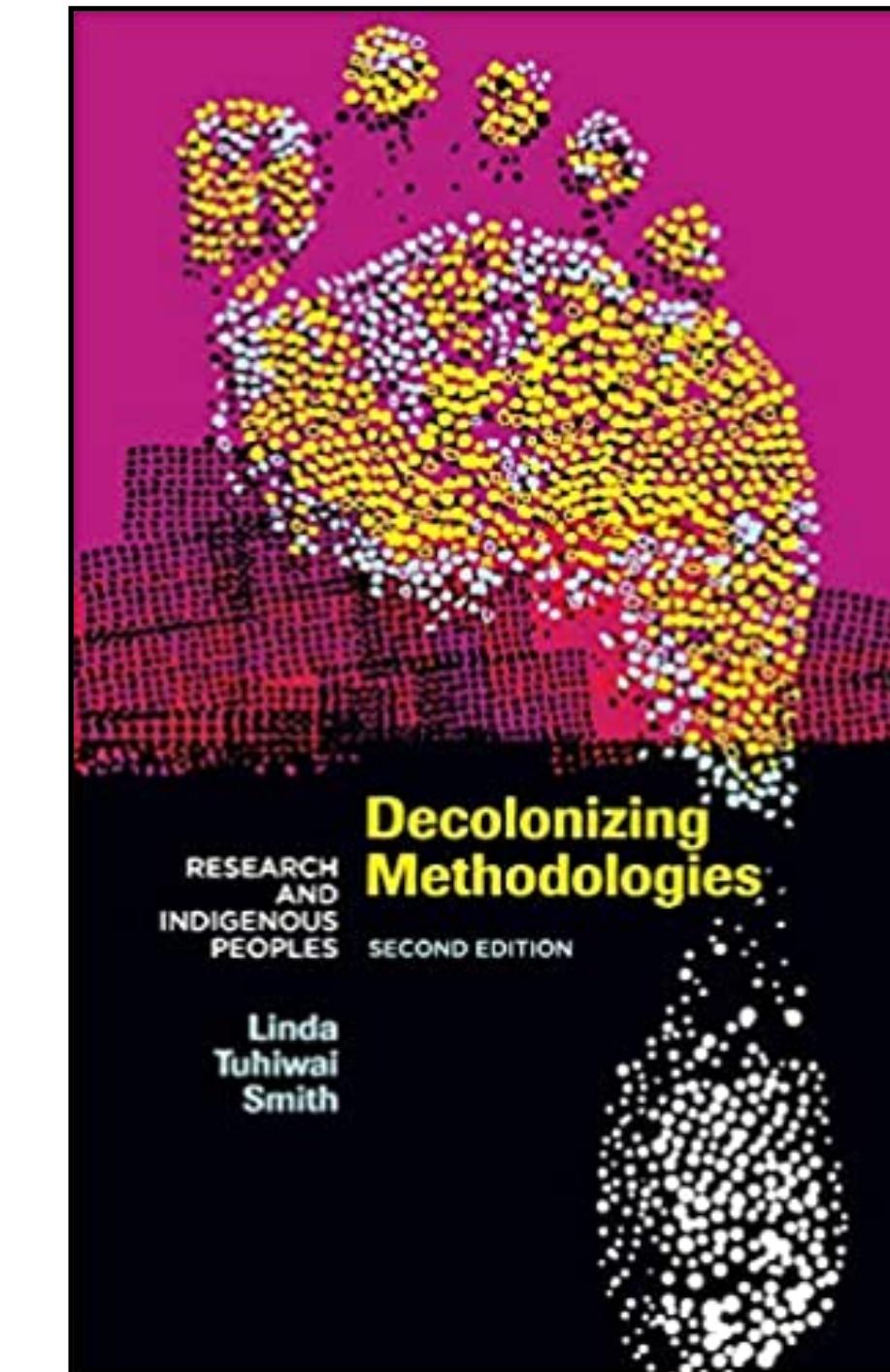


Image credits

- Frame of traditional Yupik skin boat above the west beach of Gambell, Alaska by Lane Schwartz
- Strip mining near Globe, Arizona, 1990 by Phillip Capper
- UK - London - Bloomsbury: British Museum - Elgin Marbles - Southeast metope by Wally Gobetz
- The Parthenon in Athens by Steve Swayne
- Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion map by Justin Kunimune
- Mercator and Tobler hyperelliptical map projections by Daniel R. Strebe

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