



Documenting the “undocumented” by institutionalizing local coastal knowledge

*Multispecies Cultural Niche Construction for
Biodiversity Recovery*

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Aim for the study



- To focus on the **role of water owners as part of broader conservation strategies for 2030 and beyond**
- Water-ownership and protected areas on the Åland Islands



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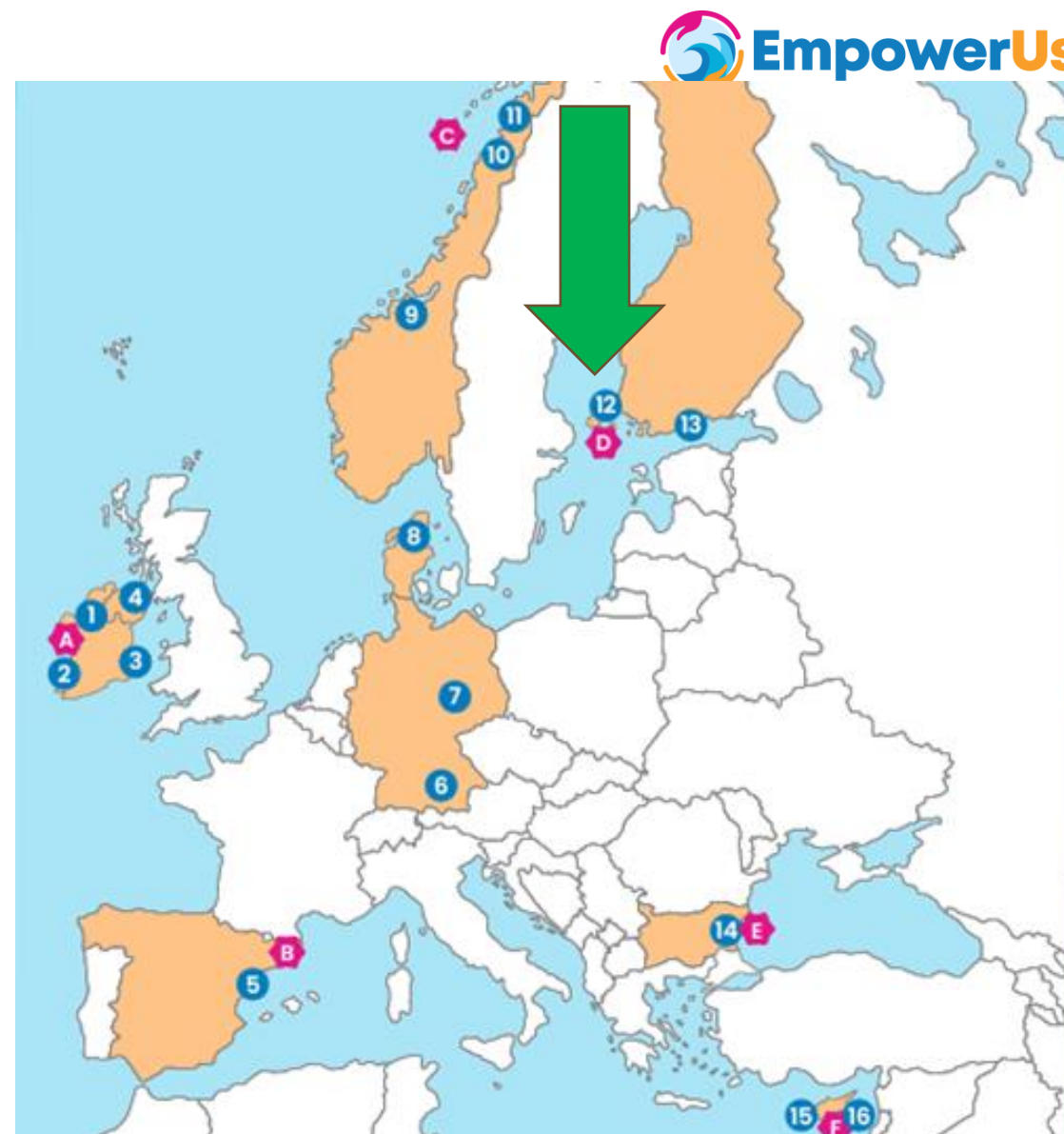
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Åland in a nutshell

- Åland is a **demilitarized** (1856), **self-governed** (1921), **Swedish-speaking** region of Finland
- Population of 30,344 (2021)
- The archipelago consists of 6,700 islands, around 60 of which are inhabited
- Fisheries sector
 - Economy and culture



Finland's compliance 2030 puts pressure on Åland due to its vast marine territory => Åland must strengthen marine protection



Regulation	Goal
EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030	Protect 30% of land and sea (10% strictly) by 2030
Nature Restoration Law	Restore 20% of degraded nature by 2030 and all ecosystems needing restoration by 2050

Åland hosts unique ecosystems and currently protects **2.4% of land and 3.4% of its marine areas under various regimes**, including Natura 2000, IBAs, RAMSAR sites, HELCOM MPAs, seal protection zones, and private conservation initiatives.



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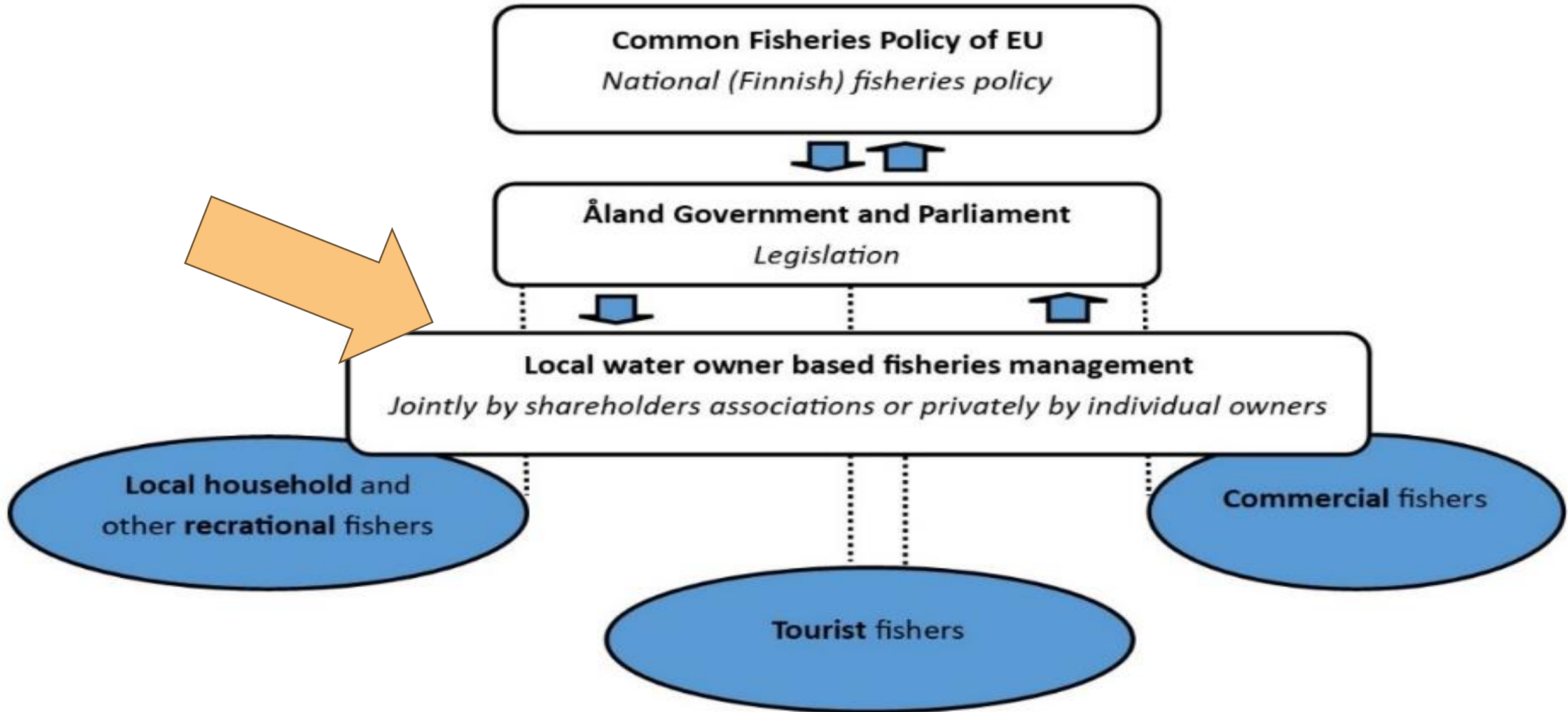
The challenge for conservation activities of spawning areas



- The current monitoring system shows a **gap in mapping existing protected zones.**
- Are these areas included in officially protected areas? – **No**
- What would take to make them 'official'? – **Legal act by registration or 'other' protection measure e.g. OECM**
- What knowledge do we have today about these areas? – **Little collected and analysed data on water ownership and fisheries mgmt**



Fisheries governance on Åland



Water ownership on Åland



- Structural types of owner-based water/fisheries management:
 1. **private** waters owned by individuals, associations, or companies
 2. **common** waters shared by villages or multiple owners and managed collectively by a **statutory shareholders' association** – 1.200
 3. **public** waters managed by authorities

Rights and responsibilities

- Sustainable use and conservation of fish stock and ecosystems
 - **implementing fishing regulations** (e.g., seasonal closures, gear restrictions), **protecting spawning areas**, taking part in **habitat restoration** efforts



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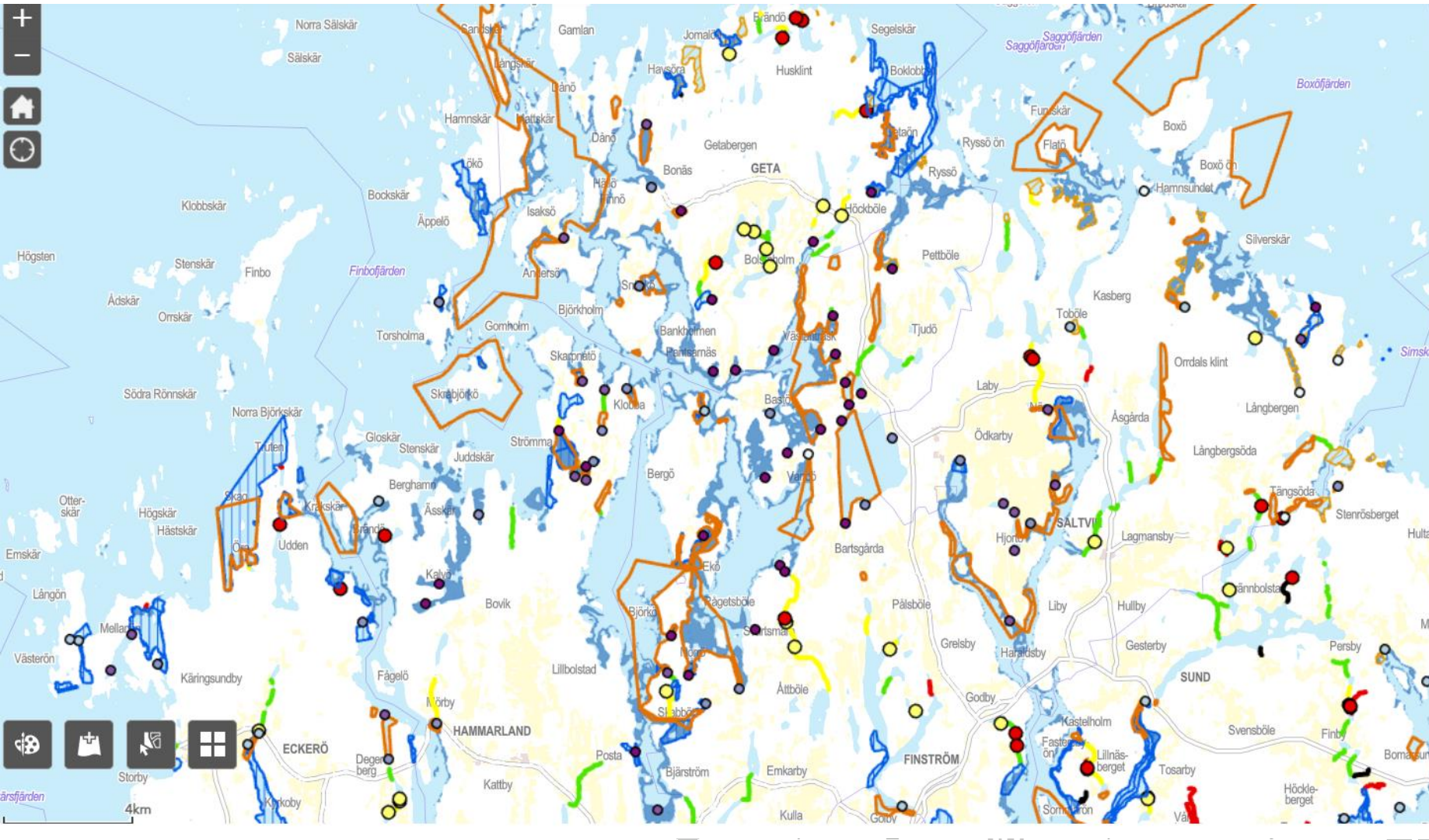
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Spawning areas layered on local and expert knowledge



- Recreational fisheries licenses = Status of spawning areas, 2018, Ål government
- Status of coastal habitats by Husö Biological Station
- Migration routes and status by Husö Biological Station, 2010 and 2018
- Spawning areas, Neumann 2004-2007
- Potential areas for pike spawning, Bergström U, Sandström A, Sundblad G 2007



Protected water areas = more than 3,4 %

- Protected fisheries and spawning areas
- Natural reserves
- Helcom protected areas
- Ramsar protected areas
- Natura2000 areas
- Bird protection areas



Other affective area-based conservation measure

OECM



- Conservation area that is **not officially designated as a protected area but still contributes to the long-term conservation of biodiversity.**
- **Managed in a way that supports conservation goals**, even if they don't fall under formal protected area categories.
- In **Finland** the greatest potential for areas to be designated as OECMs lies on **state-owned forest/mire land**, predominantly in northern Finland
- Some of these areas include or affect also **marine environments**
 - fishing restriction areas
 - sites under Finnish Water Act
 - water bodies subject to the Rapids Protection Act
 - inland waters with good or excellent status classification according to EU Water Framework Directive guidelines.



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Åland's challenges with OECM classification



- Environmental agency resources for the OECM process
- Politically imposed activities
- How to monitor and plan OECMs?
 - Which methods to use for monitoring?
 - Citizen-science? (fiskarna, lokalbefolkningen, nyttjarna)
 - eDNA analysis on fish population
 - Responsibility for monitoring
 - Water owners?
 - NGOs?
 - Government?



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Thanks for listening!

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