

Why and how to engage regional stakeholders in fisheries development

Catalogue of Lessons

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This "Catalogue of Lessons" discusses experiences, methods and procedures of participatory bottom-up activities in coastal communities, where local fishing is of relevance. We hope that this catalogue will inspire and engage actors and stakeholders at different policy levels, working with fisheries and coastal development. The report is meant to be useful for a broad group of readers and can either be read from cover to cover or you choose the parts that interest you most. The first chapter gives an introduction to the project. The second chapter is a short review of research on communities, bottom-up initiatives and fisheries management. The third chapter presents and discusses the activities and results from the project. Chapter four summarizes the findings and discusses the implementation of the activities, discrepancy between engagement and knowledge/resources and the question who is responsible for regional coastal development. The chapter is closed with some brief thoughts on future research.

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Table of Content

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT	4
CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND – THE ROLE OF COMMUNITIES IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT	6
THE FISHERIES PROBLEM IN A NUTSHELL	7
THE CASE OF SIMRISHAMN	9
CHAPTER 3. ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS	13
ADAPTING ACTIVITIES	13
COMPETENCY GROUP	14
SURVEY	15
CHOOSING REGION AND LOCATION FOR WORKSHOPS	16
FROM SIMRISHAMN TO UMEÅ/KVARKEN	17
CHAPTER 4. FINAL DISCUSSION	24
WHEN A PROJECT PLAN MEETS REALITY	25
DISCREPANCY BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE/RESOURCES	25
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURING A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL FISHERIES?	26
WHAT KNOWLEDGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES? A PROSPECTIVE RESEARCH AGENDA	28
REFERENCES	29
APPENDIX 1	32

Chapter 1. Introduction and background to this report

In the academic literature, as well as in the media and in wider public discussions, we can find growing consensus that fisheries management is deeply flawed in terms of sustainability – in all its dimensions. Regarding environmental sustainability we see a continuing downward trend with decreasing fish stocks on a global scale – as continuously reported in the biannual reports on the world fish stocks from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (cf. FAO 2022). We find this ongoing unsustainability of fisheries management also happening in Sweden and in the Baltic Sea, most dramatically with the recent decline in target species like the collapse of the cod stock and very low levels of herring (Eero et al. 2023). Besides these ecological disasters, the overexploitation of fish resources also created devastating economic losses. This resulted in unsustainable subsidies as which in turn are a key source of persisting unsustainability in fisheries (e.g. Sumaila 2012; Sumaila et al. 2021; Evans et al. 2023; Partelow et al. 2023). In response to low fish stocks, fishers need to use ever more time, efforts, and intensive techniques, at times illegal ones, to keep fishing at low yields profitable. In a report from the World Bank in 2017, entitled the “sunken billions”, the annual economic losses of revenues in marine fisheries are summed up to 83 billion USD globally (World Bank 2017). All this happens to the detriment of social and societal aspects of sustainability like rural coastal development and negatively impacts on the wellbeing of coastal communities and the small-scale fisheries on which these places depend on (Evans et al. 2023; Ounanian 2016).

In light of the ecological, economic and social/societal failures of fisheries, we need to ask more fundamental questions about the deep-rooted problems of the management approaches that govern fisheries. In our academic work, we follow an approach presented by Jon Barry, who argues that we first need to analyse and understand the underlying causes of a “politics of actually existing unsustainability” as a “precondition for, and prior to, any aim of articulating and achieving future sustainability or some future sustainable development path” (Barry 2012, 6). Applied to fisheries, this means to analyse and explore what has gone wrong with fisheries governance, what problems and challenges can be identified with existing fisheries management approaches to draw lessons and suggest revisions for transitions to sustainability. We have therefore studied existing forms of fisheries management, with a special focus on the EU’s fisheries governance system as well as on small-scale fisheries and coastal community development in Sweden (Linke & Jentoft 2013; 2014; 2016; Arias Schreiber 2020; Linke & Siegrist 2023).

The main conclusion that we can draw from this previous research is that existing forms of fisheries management, which rely on science based expert advice and centrally steered top-down regulations, are not entirely adequate to address the existing challenges with persisting unsustainability in fisheries and coastal governance (Jentoft & Chuengpagdee 2009; see chapter 2). From a governance perspective, this is because those actors who are affected by policies and decisions from the central level are not

sufficiently involved in the governance systems that steer their lifeworld, neither in the EU nor in Sweden (Linke et al 2022). What is needed is a better alignment of top-down and bottom-up modes of governance (Linke & Siegrist 2023) that attend to actual contexts and local problems of fisheries and coastal communities. This is a governance issue that has drawn increasing research attention within the field of fisheries and marine social science over the last decades (cf. Bavinck & Verrips 2020 & commentaries).

The conclusion from previous research invites us not only for a radical rethinking of the modes of fisheries governance (cf. Johnson 2014) but also to focus on the practical aspects of how to do that. *What kinds of governance arrangements are suitable for managing fish and other living marine resources successfully? How can local actors like coastal communities, citizens, small-scale fishers, and municipalities contribute to visions and policies in meaningful ways?* These questions have been the starting point for the project of which this report is an outcome. Focusing on the broad question how to democratically connect bottom-up and top-down agendas, we participated in, explored and experimented with different initiatives to collaborate in situations when goals are unclear, actual problems are controversial and the visions about the future of coastal fishing communities are diverse. Departing from previous research, in particular from the Formas funded project “Fishing for solutions: community economies and coastal sustainable development in Sweden” (FORMAS 2018-00251), we aimed to take the cumbersome research question of how to align different modes of governance like top-down and bottom-up approaches one step further. To do so, we explored and experimented, with citizens, local stakeholders and government actors from different levels, how they can engage in fisheries governance processes and how common visions can be co-produced. We therefore participated in various ongoing activities and initiatives aiming to commonly explore and discuss such visions and goals. We also established a competency group to discuss manage issues and how to involve the “right” stakeholders, conducted a survey with coastal communities in Sweden and created own fora for such discussion in form of workshops discussing local and regional development issues relating to coastal fisheries. A full list of these activities is presented in Table 1 below (see chapter 3).

Our project hence aimed to find new ways for collaborations among different types of actors in fisheries governance. We therefore explored and tested different procedures for jointly defining a problem context, discussing diverse, at times opposing goals, in processes that aim for producing strategies or visions for setting common goals and objectives that may help finding solutions for a better, i.e. more sustainable development of coastal communities in Sweden. Our focus was on the role of coastal fishing communities to explore the following question: *What roles can municipality actors, i.e. Swedish coastal fishing communities, play vis-à-vis higher-level policy-making such as county boards, government agencies, industry or private actors?*

This report describes the main lessons that we have learned from the activities conducted in this project and tries to synthesise the most relevant experiences on how to do participatory bottom-up development

in coastal communities, where local fishing is of relevance. By collecting new insights from rich experiences with a number of collaborations and practical activities described in chapter 3, it attains to the following two objectives of our project:

1. collect experiences and explore initiatives for setting common goals for sustainable transformations relating to Swedish coastal fisheries¹ and communities
2. test procedures to set goals among users and between users and government officials in “local arenas” (Ostrom 2005)

This report consists of 4 sections, after this introduction follows a background chapter providing the state of the research on the role of communities in existing fisheries management. The third section provides the activities conducted in the project and presenting the results from these. The final section discusses the outcomes of the project, synthesises what lessons can be learned and what kinds of initiatives and agendas might be worthwhile to pursue for future activities.

Chapter 2. Research background – the role of communities in fisheries management

As highlighted above, current approaches to fisheries and coastal governance are described as either structurally “flawed” (Stafford 2019) or unjust and creating “lose-lose situations” for all stakeholders and their dependent coastal communities (Evans et al. 2023, 12). As claimed in the recent article from Louisa Evans and colleagues “Putting coastal communities at the center of a sustainable blue economy”, the current “business-as-usual and blue growth trajectories” pose *severe risks* to coastal communities. Therefore, these authors postulate, in line with many other scholars, new approaches to govern fisheries and coastal communities are urgently needed. Outlining the risks associated with current business as usual practices for coastal ecosystem and their dependent communities, Evans et al. (2023) argue (emphases added):

It is crucial that the transition to a sustainable blue economy is delivered at all levels – ensuring that coastal communities are empowered to develop in ways that secure their long-term needs without negatively affecting the natural ecosystems on which they depend. They also need to be

¹ Coastal or small-scale fisheries are usually defined as using boats up to 12 m in length, which accounts to both the EU and the Swedish fleet (see e.g., Björkvik et al. 2020). Because this definition is often not sharp and problematic, coastal fisheries are also described as those fishing vessels that are catching the fish close to the landing harbor to maintain freshness and that the size of vessel is not relevant and that they invest low levels of technology. Despite country-specific aspects, many challenges of small-scale fisheries are common for Nordic Countries (see Hultman et al. 2018).

supported in their role as environmental stewards of coastal ecosystems, through free, prior and informed consent and recognition of their customary rights, territories and practices.

Our project to which this catalogue of lessons belongs starts with the observations made by these authors – that the involvement of coastal fishing communities into fisheries governance is a sine-qua-non requirement for successful governance outcomes in terms of long-term sustainability. Naturally as this may sound, we can ask *why* coastal communities are not sufficiently *empowered to be part of developing their own future*. Why are they not supported in taking a key role as agents for their own destiny – the sustainability of local fisheries and coastal ecosystems. As hinted above, in order to understand the hinders for transitions to sustainability in governing fisheries and coastal communities, we need to attend to the underlying causes of the existing political system that shapes and produces unsustainable fisheries.

The fisheries problem in a nutshell

Existing fisheries systems in western societies take a straightforward attitude to manage the natural resource fish through a techno-scientific approach based on bio-economic modelling and resulting catch quotas for regulations aiming to ensure the sustainable use of fish resources (Asdal & Huse 2023; Holm 1996; Johnsen 2014). The modernisation of fisheries management in the 20th century has followed what Bent Flyvbjerg calls the “rationalist turn” that resulted in the establishment of a management regime which distinguishes and dichotomises nature and society in form of fish and fishermen. It is based on the above-mentioned reliance that science can calculate a complex “nature” (fish as part of marine ecosystems) and state bureaucracies being able to utilise it extensively for “societal” benefit by regulating fishing activities. Petter Holm (1996: 178) has described this problematic nexus:

This management model was committed to a simplistic image of marine ecosystems, and a faith in the human capacity to predict and control them ... such notions of nature and society were built into the core of the modern fisheries management institution. In this way, the disappointing achievements of modern management can be sought in the mismatch between simplistic management models and the complexities of real life fisheries.

This quote succinctly expresses the foundational problem of today’s fisheries management – i.e. a mismatch between two different systems of representation – and therewith also of accountability and responsibility. Fishers and coastal communities must follow regulations made on the basis of abstract scientific models and expert advice that is disconnected from the actual situations that local people – coastal fisheries and their communities experience. As Jahn Petter Johnsen has described this mismatch phenomenon: “the fish that is managed is not the fish in the sea, but a model stock that is assumed to represent this fish” (Johnsen 2014, 432). The two quotes here show the underlying governance problems

that we alluded to in the Introduction: an expert-based system of policy- and decision-making paired with centrally steered top-down regulations that are not attentive to the contexts and needs of local people – in our case local fishers and coastal communities. While we could continue infinitely with reviewing the research critiquing the top-down approach of existing fisheries management systems and the search for alternative approaches, we will not extend this beyond a summary. Johnsen (2014, 441) concludes his insightful exploration whether “fisheries governance is possible” with arguments for a new form of governance – that evolves between hierarchical governance and more cooperative co-governance. Similarly concludes also Holm (1996, 184) for the latter type of approaches that: “[a] management strategy based on low-tech flexibility and co-management would no doubt be environmentally safer and less costly, and could hardly do worse. But this is not enough to make it politically viable, particularly since it is premised on the exclusion of core institutions and actors from the fisheries”

These quotes speak directly to **our proposed research agenda** (see chapter 4 below) and to the key objectives of this project, which sets out to find new ways how to align existing top-down with more experimental bottom-up approaches of fisheries governance. This agenda, which connects to both research and practice, is part of a fundamental contrariness of two mayor conceptual approaches how to govern common resources that influenced fisheries management research and policy discourses, at least since the mid 20th century. Fisheries represents a pivotal example of the challenges associated with managing (often international) natural resources and therefore poses questions of how to best govern the commons. The most well-known work on the governance of the commons stems from Elinor Ostrom, who focused on how people can cooperatively ensure that resources are not exploited to the detriment of the environment or the community (Ostrom 1990). However modern fisheries management has been dominated by a strong and problematic counter-concept, the Tragedy of the Commons, developed by Garret Hardin in his seminal article under the same title in 1968. This concept is pessimistic against the possibilities for user collaborations in a commons, most famously expressed in Hardin’s (1968, 1244) statement that “freedom in a commons brings ruin to all”. While Hardin’s tragedy of the commons received substantial critiques (e.g. Longo et al. 2015) it has been influential in shaping the dominant model of Western fisheries management systems with top-down centrally controlled regulations as a rationalist response to the problems with governing common resources.

Fisheries management, and particularly the EU’s *Common Fisheries Policy* (CFP) system, exposes a governance model that differs fundamentally from the ideas and principles described by Ostrom. The CFP is a highly centralised policy system that legally regulates fisheries across all EU member states (Penas-Lado 2020). It is inherently top-down and based on an expert advisory system that leaves little room for input from stakeholders or other knowledge systems than science (Wilson 2009). The CFP has been referred to as “the most top-down fisheries management system on the planet” (Degnbol & Wilson, 2008, p. 189) and “the most science-dependent sector in the EU” (Griffin, 2009, p. 563). Accordingly,

the CFP exemplifies a basic tension between expertise and democracy as it involves the insertion of an expert-steered, top-down and technocratic decision-making process into an area that concerns the governance of the commons (Ostrom, 1990), which is ultimately affecting the wellbeing of (fishing) people, their communities and coastal populations (Arias Schreiber et al., 2020; Linke et al., 2022). A root cause for this tension rests in the fact that fisheries management and the CFP in particular is built on the conception of a linear model of expertise, according to which - in the form of an “ideal causal chain” - scientific expertise is applied to political decision-making and administrative implementation (Gezelius, 2008). While foundational to the CFP, the model relates to a narrow and problematic conceptualisation of knowledge transfer, which appears unsuited for attaining to the myriads of complexities inherent to local, small-scale fisheries and coastal governance. As Symes et al. (2015, p. 249) almost cynically conclude about the development of small-scale fisheries and coastal communities in this system, “policy-making has become one of the most potent sources of instability” (cf. Gezelius & Raakjaer, 2008; Hegland et al., 2012; Symes, 2012).

In our research as well as in the practical experiments conducted in the project at hand, we extend beyond this apparent conceptual opposition. Instead, we aim to find ways in which bottom-up initiatives and procedures can be aligned with existing top-down processes of fisheries management that regulate local fishers and impacts on the development of coastal communities that are dependent on fisheries activities. For doing so, we affiliate with the approach of “endogenous development”, which argues to evoke innovative ideas stemming from local levels as part of a “search for the secrets of how to animate innovation in ‘disadvantaged’ rural areas” (Ray 2000, cited in Linke & Siegrist 2023). Based on Swedish case studies on how Fisheries Local Action Groups can bring forward such bottom-up perspectives, Linke and Siegrist (2023) show that this “in principle is possible”. However, these authors also highlight that “[w]hat would be needed, first and foremost, are revised institutional and organisational structures that provide SSCF [small-scale coastal fisheries] interests with the power and agency required to enable a bottom-up, place-based development approach” (ibid, 16). The current project and the report at hand interrogates how this power and agency can be activated for and by coastal fishing communities and other local actors in Sweden. From the activities conducted in the project we try to synthesize key lessons how such bottom-up initiatives can be organized by and with local/regional actors - and how they can be aligned with existing top-down structures and regulations. We are interested what kinds of hindrances and opportunities can be identified from the various initiatives and practical experimentation.

The case of Simrishamn

Before we go into the activities and results of this project, we will introduce the case of Simrishamn, a municipality which during the last two decades has engaged in the development of fisheries, adopted a

fishery policy and is actively participating and influencing fisheries management processes. This is also the chief reason for why Simrishamn is partner of this project.

A closer look at Simrishamn's fishing harbour and the municipality's actions²

The fishing industry in Simrishamn – from golden age to crisis

Simrishamn, known as the “Herring Town”, has a fishing tradition that stretches far back into history. Modern fishing began to develop after World War II, with cod as the most valuable target species. During the record-breaking cod fishing in the Baltic Sea in the 1980s, most Simrishamn fishermen focused on cod, while herring and sprat fishing were largely left to colleagues from the west coast who had larger vessels better suited for this type of fishing. When the cod boom transitioned into a decline and eventually population crash, more and more fishing companies in Simrishamn and its surroundings were forced to shut down their operations. This negative trend was exacerbated in the 2010s as the growing grey seal population made passive gear fishing increasingly impossible in the region. One consequence of the decline in cod fishing was that Simrishamn lost its position as Sweden's largest fishing harbour in terms of the landed catch's economic value. The herring fishery remained, the oldest fishing tradition in the town. The good availability of herring in the 2000s and well-developed collaboration between local fishing and processing companies laid the foundation for a successful fishery, resulting in two-thirds of all herring fillets on the Swedish fresh fish market coming from Simrishamn at this time. However, the more recent years' declines in the herring stocks and quota limitations have naturally had direct negative effects on fishing and processing in Simrishamn. Reduced quotas implied decreased raw material availability for Simrishamn's processing companies, equivalent to an 82 percent reduction in six years, from 76,700 tonnes in 2018 to 13,500 tonnes in 2024. Since 2023, only one pelagic herring trawler remains, and the processing industry utilises only a third of its capacity.

The municipality becomes aware, seeks alliances, and makes its voice heard

Despite the decline in cod fishing, the fishing industry was still the municipality's second largest employer and a significant economic and social driver in the mid-2000s. At this time, local politicians in Simrishamn began contemplating the future of the fishing industry and the harbour, initiating efforts to increase the municipality's knowledge about fishing and the marine environment to influence development and preserve Simrishamn's status as a fishing community.

- The municipality's growing awareness and understanding of the developments in the Baltic Sea and the local fishing industry led to several insights:
- A poor environmental status in the Baltic Sea is likely to persist for the foreseeable future and may even worsen due to climate change.
- Increased demands on the sea are expected to have negative effects on both the Baltic Sea ecosystem and the fishing industry.
- To ensure robust food production, the quota needs of fisheries dedicated to food production must be prioritised.
- For the fishing industry to continue generating economic effects, local landings and a complete value chain around fishing need to be preserved and, in most regions, need to be re-established.
- A sustainable fishing industry requires a significant reduction in the total catch volumes of professional fishing in the Baltic Sea, which requires different international fisheries management.
- The necessary reduced catch volumes must be compensated by increased processing levels and increased value creation.
- To avoid losing more fishing harbours in Sweden, local conditions and interests need to be more guiding in fisheries management, which needs to be more regionalised.

² This section is the edited version of a text published in Swedish in the anthology “Fakta och tankar om nationell havsförvaltning” (Lundin, Tschernij, & Larsson, 2024)

According to the European *Common Fisheries Policy* (CFP), the goal is for fisheries to be ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable. The municipality realised early that it was at the local level where the generally neglected and deficient social sustainability had its greatest consequences. It also became clear that if the national level could not ensure this aspect, the local political decision-making level needed to take responsibility.

In 2015, the Simrishamn municipal council adopted a policy document to preserve and develop the municipality's fishing industry. The task of implementing the policy was given to a new municipal organisation – the Marine Centre, which began working to identify ways to influence national fisheries policy and management.

The local fishing industry initially questioned or was sceptical of the municipality's actions, in light of municipalities having no formal role or function in national fisheries management and also due to uncertainty about the municipality's intentions. Although Simrishamn's fishermen largely felt that their interests were not well represented or handled by fisheries organisations - and even felt they did not have satisfactory insight into the work of these organisations, they relied on these organisations as channels of influence, as they were the only options available (cf. Linke et al. 2022).

With the lack of support from the local industry, the municipality instead sought partners elsewhere. The County Administrative Board and Skåne fisheries management researchers possessed knowledge that the municipality needed to acquire, and together the three actors initiated a collaboration called Baltic Fisheries 2020. The aim was to broaden and strengthen the public conversation about the future of the fishing industry and to focus on socio-economic sustainability. Between 2015 and 2020, annual conferences were held in Simrishamn with a large number of participants from professional fishing, recreational fishing, the environmental movement, research, regional and national authorities, and political representatives at local, regional, and national levels. Important outcomes of the conference series were:

- A widespread and growing understanding of the need for broad representation of different interests in the dialogue and decision-making regarding the development of the fishing industry.
- Contributions to an increasing awareness that Sweden needed clearer national management of the fishing industry to achieve desired goals.
- At the end of the conference series, the Swedish Board of Agriculture took responsibility for continuing to run a platform to discuss the needs and development of professional fishing, which today continues as the National Professional Fishing Conference.

At the same time, a national process began under the direction of the Swedish Board of Agriculture to develop a strategy for Swedish professional fishing. Simrishamn municipality became involved in this work, as well as in the development of the subsequent strategy for Swedish fishing and aquaculture, developed under the leadership of the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management. While the municipality was surprised by the lack of national management of fishing up until this period, it was positive that these strategies now developed. In the processes of both strategies, the municipality found that over the years, the authorities became increasingly responsive to the interests and perspectives of local communities, particularly regarding social and ecological sustainability. What was still missing was a clear connection between the designated national strategic direction for fishing and the use of the Swedish part of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, as well as its successor, the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

Establishing knowledge exchange and building alliances with other municipalities was another significant strategy. Early dialogue was established with nearby municipalities in the Hanö Bay region, as well as with west coast municipalities with longer experience in municipal work on fishing issues. In 2017, 17 fishing municipalities gathered for a call for sustainable local fishing. The call was heeded by the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, resulting in better conditions for the concerned municipalities to influence, for example, through the authorities' consultation procedures. The call laid the foundation for an increasing dialogue between the municipalities, which after a while was ramped up into a joint

project aimed at developing and institutionalising the municipalities' cooperation into a joint cooperation organisation, which became the network Swedish Fishing Municipalities, administered by the Rural Network (in Swedish: Landsbygdsnatverket).³ This municipal network also collaborates with a fishing network coordinating ten Swedish regions on the Baltic Coast. Nearly 30 municipalities participated in the formation process of the municipal network, but at the actual formation, nine municipalities in Bohuslän chose not to join the national network and instead continued as a regional network (Fishing Municipalities). This showed how Swedish fishing communities are divided into two camps.

Parallel to this, the development and anchoring of Simrishamn municipality's own vision and ambitions for its fishing harbour continued. When the municipality adopted a new comprehensive plan in 2017, the importance of fishing and the sea to the municipality had a given place, which was further developed in the supplementary comprehensive plan for the municipality's marine area adopted in 2020. The same year, the municipal fishing policy was also incorporated into the municipality's overarching Agenda 2030 policy, and in 2021 a strategic study for the development of the harbour was conducted, resulting in a political decision not to build housing in or near the harbour but to provide the fishing harbour with the conditions to further develop for professional fishing and tourism linked to the fishing industry.

In summary, when Simrishamn municipality began its work on fishing issues, there were no well-trodden paths to follow. Except for the Fishing Municipalities in Västra Götaland [A county on the West Coast], municipalities were not active in this area, and Simrishamn had to find its own way to elevate the problems existing on the East Coast of Sweden. The lack of a strong producer organisation/fishermen's association focused on the Baltic Sea led the municipality to become an informal representative for the interests of local and regional fishing, which worked well as they proved to be in line with the municipality's interests. The municipality also partly took on the business development mandate that lies with the region, given the harbour's significance beyond the municipality's borders.

Around 2020, the local dialogue between the fishing industry and the municipality began to deepen, primarily as a result of decreasing fishing opportunities leading to the sale of local fishing boats and reduced raw material deliveries to local processing. According to the industry itself, other contributing factors were the municipality's increased knowledge of the conditions of fishing, an understanding that the local industry's and the municipality's interests aligned, and the municipality's work to influence fisheries management starting to yield results. An example from this time was when Simrishamn municipality managed to persuade the EU Commission and the EU Council of Ministers to exempt local food-focused herring fishing in Hanö Bay from a temporary herring fishing ban by demonstrating that there were no bycatches of cod in the local fishery, which was the reason for the proposed ban. The industry's detailed knowledge of regional fishing operations combined with the municipality's acquired knowledge and network of contacts within the administrative apparatus, proved to be a winning combination.

At the same time as the development of declining fisheries and the loss of fishing boats caused considerable concern in Simrishamn an important insight began to emerge. Despite reduced fishing, turnover rose within Simrishamn's overall fishing industry thanks to an increased degree of processing. The well-known motto "increased value creation without increased catches" was not only put into practice, but surpassed, as value creation increased while withdrawal decreased. In addition, the industrial catches are mainly caught during the spawning period of the herring in the spring, while the local consumption fishing is carried out all year round, which is more gentle on the fish stocks. The business model that pervades the fishing industry in Simrishamn is based on fishing within the boundaries of the ecosystem with regular local landings all year round, which are used for food production and with a careful use of the whole fish for various purposes. This fishery has a limited fishing pressure and generates values not only for the local community but also in a wider perspective. While the outside world began to pay attention to the need for a robust Swedish food supply and

³ <https://www.landsbygdsnatverket.se/>

increased crisis preparedness, the municipality and the industry understood that Simrishamn already delivered exactly this. In 2021 and 2023, the municipality, together with partners in the fishing industry and academia, was granted project funds from Formas' national call Blue Innovation, to further develop its harbour. The target image is a fishing port based on sustainable fishing within the boundaries of the ecosystem, which creates faith in the future and opportunities for local fishermen and processing industries, with a strong value-creating processing chain where each part of the fish is processed into different products. In addition to this, the municipality runs and participates in a number of other projects, regional and international, which through concrete action and cooperation with the industry contribute to the overall target picture.

Chapter 3. Activities and results

The story of Simrishamn shows that a local initiative can make changes and influence larger processes. Today, several municipalities have contacted Simrishamn and want to benefit from their knowledge and take part in their experiences in developing local-based initiatives. However, as we will see in this chapter, each region has to adapt to its own context and a blueprint of what works in one region will not necessarily be successful in another. In this chapter we will also discuss another case, Umeå and the county of Västerbotten, with which we collaborated in the latter part of our project and which has a different starting point and context than Simrishamn. Hence, this project and the activities described below are not meant as an instructional manual, but more as a collection of experiences that can inspire other regions to develop their own initiatives for a more sustainable coastal development.

Our project is based on the idea that bringing different stakeholders together will contribute to avoid and/or handle conflicts, generate a more trusting climate and open-up for multiple possibilities of reality-testing (Irwin, 2015). In this chapter we provide an overview of the activities that we conducted to involve regional and local stakeholders in the development of sustainable coastal development with a certain focus on fisheries. We define stakeholders as “those individuals, groups, organizations and communities involved in or affected by decisions made to plan and manage coastal resources” (Rockloff & Lockie, 2004, 83). We will discuss strengths, weaknesses, challenges and positive experiences we have met in the project.

Adapting activities

Our main activities were planned to be fourfold: Establishing a **competency group** for the project, conducting **fieldwork**, conducting **three workshops** and discussing the results in this **catalogue of lessons**. Due to Covid 19 we had to cancel some of the planned fieldwork-activities. Instead, we got the opportunity to participate in a stakeholder-dialogue process arranged by Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and the Swedish Board of Agriculture aiming to have a dialogue where stakeholders can discuss together and create a common target image for future fisheries and aquaculture. This process was part of developing a new strategy for Swedish fisheries and Aquaculture [Strategi för svenskt fiske och vattenbruk 2021-2026] (SwAM & SBA, 2021b). We also participated in the focus

group for The action plan for development of Swedish commercial fisheries [Handlingsplan för utvecklingen av svenskt yrkesfiske] (SwAM & SBA, 2021a). These engagements gave us great insights in various topics, challenges and conflicts that dominate current Swedish fisheries. We participated in two academic conferences, the MARE People and the Sea conferences in 2021 and 2023 (the former digital, the latter on site in Amsterdam) to exchange experiences of similar projects and research from other countries. Additionally, we participated in various meetings with the network on Swedish fishing municipalities. The main activities of the project are compiled in Table 1.

Table 1 Activities in the project

<p>Main activities of the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a competency group (CG) • Conducted workshop 1.0 in Umeå Nov 8 2022, this workshop was synched with another project run by Marine Center in Simrishamn • Conducted a follow up workshop 2.0 in Umeå October 27 2023 • Participated in a workshop in Southeast Sweden 28-29 March 2022, arranged by representatives from Marine Center and the network for Swedish fishing municipalities on how to develop a regional vision • Conducted a survey to all Swedish coastal municipalities
<p>Other activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in an agency-led “stakeholder dialogue” for a new strategy for Swedish fisheries and aquaculture 2021-2026 • This work was further backed up with interviews of key actors who participated in this process to get a picture of their experience of both processes itself and outcomes of the processes • Participated in the focus group developing The action plan for the development of Swedish commercial fisheries • Participated in meetings with the network Swedish fishing municipalities • Presentation at "The importance of fishing for sustainable coastal development", research day at the Marine Center in Simrishamn May 20, 2022 • Participated in a panel discussion on the future of Baltic fisheries at Ystad Summit May 16th 2022 • Presenting survey results "The importance of commercial fishing for sustainable coastal development" at a conference with the Network of Swedish fishing municipalities, Apr 26th 2022 • Exchange of international experiences and knowledge and presented results from this project on two scientific conferences: MARE 2021 and MARE 2023. • Both researchers of the project are participating in SwAMs reference group (research) for ecosystem-based ocean management • Participated in the organizing committee of the Baltic Sea2020 conference at Marine Center in Simrishamn, November 19-20th 2020

Competency group

In the first phase of the project, we established a competency group. Inspired by Whatmore (2009), competency groups (CGs) are experimental methodological apparatuses with 5-6 members where different stakeholders level out knowledge hierarchies and develop new expertise derived from shared

experiences, knowledges and material evidence focused on particular problems (ibid). Within the CG we had from the beginning the following members: The two researchers that were running the project together with the representative from the municipality of Simrishamn who is also part of the project team, one representative from County Administrative Board of Skåne and one representative from a Fisheries Organization from the West Coast.

In 2021 one of the members in the CG was on leave from his position and we changed geographical focus to the East coast. We then reorganized the CG and decided to include one representative from the municipality of Simrishamn who works more broadly on coastal development. We were now 2 researchers and 2 officials in the CG.

The function of our CG was to serve as a node for the project, within which the context and the focus of the problem was defined and discussed in form of a “dialogical centre” (Irwin 2015, 28). The members of the group had different backgrounds, perspectives and participated in different networks as the project proceeded. This variation was of great value in both planning and implementing the project and helped the researchers in leading the project for practical and strategic questions. The members of the group had both academic and practical experiences, which was highly valuable and instrumental in various aspects and provided the project with relevant contacts and skills.

Survey

In 2017, 17 fishing municipalities came together to call for local sustainable fishing, their call was published in the national daily newspaper Svenska Dagbladet (SVD, 2017) and gained attention from the then Ministry of Economic Affairs, with the effect that municipalities were given better conditions for influence, for example through the authorities' referral procedures. As an extension of the municipal call, the network Swedish fishing municipalities was established. One reason for the increased engagement from municipalities is the dramatic decrease in Swedish fisheries and number of fishers. Early in the project (February the 5th 2021) we were invited to participate in a meeting with the Swedish fishing municipalities network. When listening to the participants at the meeting we experienced that there was a commitment to do something and actively work with the issues pertaining to local fisheries development but there was at the same time a huge variation in knowledge, resources and capacities to engage. This was for many participants a rather new type of engagement and many of them voiced high expectations. However, the lack of resources to do substantial work and progress in this process disabled relevant outcomes, which we think is interesting and a relevant finding of our project activities from the perspective of how to align bottom-up and top-down processes. To get a more all-encompassing picture of how municipalities act and engage in fisheries-related questions we decided to distribute a survey to all Swedish coastal municipalities. See the report attached. The survey was sent to 87 municipalities and 29 municipalities were represented among the answers.

The main findings from this survey showed that (Wingren & Linke 2024):

- The development of commercial fishing is declining at the same time as tourist fishing is increasing.
- Nevertheless, commercial fishing is seen as important for a sustainable coastal development considering, above all, cultural carriers, tradition, identity whereas the economic outcome of fisheries is seen as less important.
- 70% of the respondents answered that fisheries are included in overview-plans or other steering documents but half of the answers said that fisheries is not prioritized industry due to lack of knowledge and resources, as well as it is a marginal industry.
- More than half of the answers were positive to some form of co-management within a region and a third said that co-management might be a good solution.
- The respondents thought that the municipality would be an important actor among others in a co-management process of fisheries.

Choosing region and location for workshops

The results from the survey were a bit surprising to us. There appeared to be more engagement around fisheries than what we would have expected due to fisheries being a marginal industry in Sweden. This fact however, made it more exciting to find an interesting location for arranging workshops, which was one of the main tasks in the project: to test how people can come together and develop common goals for sustainable coastal development. The first main question was how to choose a region to work with on these issues. Complex follow up question emerged from this concern: *Should it be based on contacts, where the project team knows relevant people? Or where there are active local fisheries? Or where there have been active fisheries in the past which now vanished? Are practical issues such as the size of a region (easier to gather people) important when choosing a region? Or a place where regional cooperation already exist?*

The CG decided to start conducting a workshop in a region in South-east Sweden which has been one of the dominating Swedish fisheries regions, but has, as Simrishamn, suffered from steep decline in both landings and vessels. Within the region there is some political will to keep and develop the fisheries and there are representatives from the industry and municipalities who work actively to address how and why fisheries are important for coastal regional development. As there was another meeting planned already aiming to develop a “regional vision” (in Swedish regional målbild), we were invited to participate in this meeting. Representatives from three municipalities, the County Administrative Board, one representative from the processing industry and the CG of our project attended the meeting. The meeting also included a digital presentation from a representative from the government office. The

meeting included interesting discussions and it was clear that there was an interest in developing such a target image. However, different opinions existed on how to take the process further and also on who to invite in the process, and it turned out that the local stakeholders would make a plan for the next step themselves. We did not see it as constructive to push for another workshop in the region if the local stakeholders wanted to continue the work themselves. One challenge when arranging meetings with various stakeholders is that meetings require time and resources from participants. In this case, time and resources have stopped the process.

During fall 2022 stakeholders from the municipality of Robertsfors and a Leader⁴ project “Sustainable maritime food traditions in Kvarken” (financed by the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) contacted Simrishamn and asked for help and inspiration to increase the engagement and focus on the development of local fisheries in the region. Representatives from Simrishamn went to Umeå and arranged a workshop mainly with fishers but also with representatives from the Region Västerbotten, County administrative Board, SLU Aqua, the regional Leader organisation and municipalities of Umeå, Robertsfors and Nordmaling. Since this case involved many other actors not bound to one specific municipality, we call it Umeå/Kvarken. The results from this first workshop have been used as the “visioning workshop” of the project. The context of Umeå/Kvarken differs significantly from e.g. the context of Simrishamn.

From Simrishamn to Umeå/Kvarken

The following presentation of Umeå/Kvarken is based on stories and discussions from two workshops with local stakeholders conducted in Umeå in fall 2022 and fall 2023.

Umeå/Kvarken - an isolated fishing industry far from the headlines

Due to a significant increase in fishing efficiency since the 1960s, and particularly the rise of mobile trawling, more and more fisheries have exceeded the ecological limits of stocks. Overfishing has been a major problem in internationally managed fisheries, i.e., fisheries with large volumes and economic values, since the 1980s. This has greatly impacted the fishing industry in Simrishamn. Meanwhile, within the typical coastal fisheries in Umeå/Kvarken, which largely target so-called coastal species not managed internationally, except for salmon and herring, the development has not been affected in the same way. The severe and growing problems in international fisheries have led to increasingly stringent and robust fishing regulations that have unfortunately also unintentionally affected coastal fisheries.

Naturally, coastal fisheries have also been affected by several problems, one example being conflicts with the growing grey seal population. Due to the large, or almost total, focus on the international overfishing problems that have only grown over the years, the centralised management system has neither the capacity nor, according to the participants of the workshop, the interest to work on the seemingly smaller and certainly different problems

⁴ LEADER is a local development method used to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas. LEADER is implemented under the national and regional [Rural Development Programs](#) (RDPs) of each EU Member State, co-financed from the [European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development](#) (EAFRD) (EC, 2024)

of coastal fisheries compared to what the authorities have become accustomed to dealing with. This isolated situation has led to less contacts with both politics and the responsible authorities, which in general has contributed to limited knowledge about the challenges as well as the opportunities of coastal fisheries.

Geographically dispersed and purely organized small companies

Another determining factor for locally led development processes is the structure of the fishing industry. In Umeå/Kvarken, the industry consists of hundreds of small businesses that often fish, process, and sell their catch to a small, local, and loyal consumer group. These businesses are spread along the coast and inland waters, making the industry complex and difficult to manage for, for example, local and regional authorities. Additionally, most of these businesses have their own harbours, which is a significant difference compared to, for example, Simrishamn, where virtually all fishing businesses and most processors are concentrated in a few larger municipally managed harbours. Geographical dispersion also means that the businesses operate under vastly different conditions and therefore have very different ways of operating, complicating, for example, the municipality's ability to relate to and assist them.

Business itself takes all time – nothing left for lobbying

When, in addition to all the above, one considers the problems associated with small businesses, i.e., that the business itself (fishing, processing and sales) occupies all the time, leaving no time to run, for example, strong industry organisations, one realises the difficulties of successfully pursuing their interests. Especially in a situation where one's own interests differ completely from those managed by national policymakers and responsible authorities. Even though there are coastal fishing businesses with good profitability, the economic conditions for most businesses in this segment, even in Simrishamn, have worsened. With worse finances, there is no money left for a common fund to, for example, run a strong industry organisation. Something that in today's world is a full-time job that requires monitoring not just locally, regionally, or nationally, but also internationally, everything that concerns and affects the industry.

Workshop 1, Umeå 8-9 Nov 2022: "A meeting with a focus on the local small-scale coastal fishing"

The first workshop arranged during fall 2022 turned out to be very constructive and positive where the participants (mainly fishers) were eager to develop the fisheries, and additionally there was a strong engagement from Region Västerbotten, County administrative Board and municipalities. The workshop was part of the project "Sustainable maritime food traditions in Kvarken" and hence we had to slightly broaden the aim of this first workshop⁵. The engagement at the workshops was tangible and the stakeholders showed a strong will to engage in the questions, but as the description of the Umeå/Kvarken case from above shows, they did not have the experience, the knowledge or other resources on how to take the process further and develop it in the long-term yet in a similar way to as Simrishamn did. The workshop was conducted in two steps. The first step was to analyse the current situation and the results were compiled in a table of strengths and challenges in relation to both internal and external factors.

The outcomes of the SWOT analysis from the first workshop revealed the following aspects regarding the value of local fisheries activities:

⁵ When working with stakeholders, in this case fishers, who lose income when they are participating in meetings, we see it as important to respect their time and try to coordinate activities and meetings, even though the focus may have to change slightly. This is also a question of democracy, respecting that various actors have various time to spend on meetings.

1) *Internal factors:*

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Challenges</i>
<p>Recognized and good products</p> <p>Fishing meets local demands</p> <p>Engaged fishermen/refiners as positive carriers of culture</p> <p>Desire for self-sufficiency</p> <p>Local knowledge and experience</p> <p>Small scale is highly valued</p> <p>Understanding and respect for traditions linked to quality</p> <p>Sustainable fishing from sea to table</p> <p>Local market (fairly strong)</p> <p>Commitment to local products and raw materials (value-adding)</p> <p>Attractiveness of the location, bearer of a cultural heritage</p> <p>Fish farmers with access to water</p> <p>Strong sport fishing rivers</p>	<p>Fear of the dioxin problem</p> <p>The ice condition shortens the fishing season</p> <p>Scarcity of fish in the sea</p> <p>High average age among professional fishermen</p> <p>Few active fishermen</p> <p>Difficult to establish yourself as a new fisherman</p> <p>Competition between sport/recreational fishing and professional fishing</p> <p>Create awareness for problems</p> <p>Fish - an underdog in the food context</p>

2) *External factors*

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Challenges</i>
<p>Possibilities for funding (e.g. via EU funds, regional funds, Leader, Swedish Board of Agriculture, EU Horizon projects etc.)</p> <p>Strategies, goals and means available</p>	<p>Low knowledge of fishing conditions among decision-makers at central levels</p> <p>Strategies, goals and means are available but not implemented democratically at local levels</p> <p>Rules, permits, laws and costs regulated by national agencies (authority contacts suboptimal)</p> <p>Municipal food handling fees</p> <p>Communication between industry and authorities</p> <p>Bureaucracy and fees</p> <p>Missing meetings with national agency</p> <p>Lack of support from authorities</p> <p>Authorities' fee models too costly</p>

In the second part of the workshop the participants discussed what kind of actions and changes they think are needed to develop the local and regional fisheries. Their suggestions were listed in a scheme in relation to the goals of the Strategy for Swedish fisheries and aquaculture 2021–2026 (SwAM & SBA,

2021b) and the actions suggested in the Action plan for the development of Swedish fisheries 2021-2026 (SwAM & SBA, 2021a). See Appendix 1.

The proposals for measures and changes submitted in connection with exercise 2 span a wide palette, which reflects that the challenges are complex and changes need to take place in different areas and at different levels. Some things need to be done concretely and operationally by local actors, while other activities relate to broader questions e.g. of influencing external factors to create change. The suggested activities fit very well within the national action plan for commercial fisheries (SwAM & SBA, 2021a) as well as with the funding opportunities within the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EHFVF) 2021-2027. Judging from the discussion, there seemed to be a broad consensus around these activities. That the region is largely united and agrees on the current situation is a good starting point for future collaborative work on developing the fishing industry in the region and beyond. For example, the representatives from Simrishamn invited the municipalities attending the workshop to become members of the network Swedish fishing municipalities.

Workshop 2, Umeå 27 Oct 2023: "Challenges and opportunities for small-scale coastal fisheries in Västerbotten"

During spring 2023 we re-established contact with two representatives from Västerbotten, one civil servant representing the Region Västerbotten and one representing the local fishing industry, to develop another workshop as part of this FORMAS-project. Starting from an initial exchange of ideas and aims between our project and the region, we realized common ground and started a collaboration. We first discussed our topics, aims and relevant actors in a number of zoom meetings in which we mapped out possible initiatives, events and possible participants for a workshop and thereupon planned and conducted a second workshop that was to be held in the city of Umeå 27th of October 2023. We decided to invite more stakeholders to this second workshop and for us, as project managers, we wanted to have a clear focus on developing a vision for the region as that was the main object of our project. Yet, the local representatives pointed out that the local stakeholders would probably be afraid and less engaged in such a workshop, because they were mentally not sufficiently prepared for this step. Instead, they argued that there was a strong need for gathering more stakeholders and educate them about the situation of the local fisheries sector, how it has looked like historically and what its' status is today in terms of possibilities, challenges, people etc. After this picture had been painted, it is easier for stakeholders to start working with a vision, they argued. We had to rethink our project and what we would get out of it, but as democratic participation, local engagement and bottom-up perspectives are the fundamental drivers for our project, we realized that we had to develop this process in accordance to what local stakeholders suggest. We therefore decided to broaden the invitation and invited stakeholders who work with business and rural development, food supply and food traditions and also cultural environmental values and tourism within municipalities, other public actors, interest organizations and research actors.

We decided to not invite politicians to this pioneering workshop but instead to consider that further down the line. The subtitle of the workshop invitation was accordingly “How can we within the region work to secure local, sustainable coastal fishing in Västerbotten?” Besides seven people acting as organizers of the workshop (including fishers), we had 14 participants from academia, the Region of Västerbotten, fisheries organizations, local fishers, municipalities, the County Administrative Board and other local entrepreneurs.

The program consisted of two parts where the first gave 4 introductions on possibilities and challenges for coastal fisheries: 1 Representative from County of Västerbotten: *“The importance of coastal fishing from a regional perspective”*. 2. Local fisher: *“Coastal fishermen's view of regional challenges and opportunities”*. 3. Representative from the municipality of Simrishamn and the network Swedish fisheries municipalities: *“National overview: Where does fisheries policy and management stand today? The national action plan”*. 4. Researchers in the project: *“The role of regional and local actors in fisheries management. Why is there a need for include local and regional actors in fisheries management?”*

We opened for some questions and discussion after these presentations and then we used the digital tool mentimeter asking: *What thoughts do you have after this morning's presentations? Think big or small. Formulate your thoughts as reflections, musings, questions, etc.*

- Good start, now it's time to move on!
- Political evaluation and decision decisive for sustainable fishing
- Good lecture to gain an understanding of the challenges that exist for local coastal fishing
- The tragic situation with the environmental station has not been discussed. Not all fish are healthy, at least not for everyone.
- Overfishing and weak stocks are overall problems, but then local conditions should also be arranged
- Difficult to build something long-term when you have no control over how to manage the resource
- Complicated regulations for starting up new businesses
- Fulfilment of the national environmental goal “Sea in balance and a living coast and archipelago” would be needed
- Profitability must be subordinated to the environmental goals
- A new Marine Environment Act can benefit sustainable fishing and vibrant coastal communities
- High added value that ends up in the region/country must be communicated forcefully
- Interesting with the different angles, the complexity of the subject is palpable but after the morning you get the feeling that there is something that can be done for the future
- The national economic calculations for large-scale trawling must not be based on fishing levels that are not sustainable
- A collaboration area is needed for further meetings

- Good presentation before the workshop, especially about how fishing is managed.
- That it feels good that there are more people who are concerned and working with our questions!

After lunch we used three main themes to guide the discussions.

1. *What significance does fisheries have for regional development, economically, ecologically, socially, culturally*
2. *The role of the region and the municipalities in contributing to the development of the fishing industry. What roles do we have today, and which could we take in the future?*
3. *How do we continue to work? Do we want to take a next step?*

We decided to conduct all discussions in plenum. We planned to divide into smaller groups if necessary but as the discussion went on, we experienced that it was of great value to have all stakeholders gathered at the same times as the engagement was high and the atmosphere inclusive. We, the organizers, were taking notes during the workshop.

The first theme for discussion was quickly completed. All participants agreed upon that fishing is important from all the above-mentioned perspectives. On the second theme, various stakeholders described how they were working with the fisheries, but also how they would like to work or engage in its development. We cannot give a complete summary of everything that was said from these discussion outcomes in this catalogue, but will give some examples of what happened when that many different stakeholders came together.

Region Västerbotten described that they would need more knowledge and resources to include a more fisheries-related focus in their work. They could do it in relation to advocacy work and more specifically e.g. in relation to their work on food supply. A researcher from SLU argued that a developed regional cooperation platform would be helpful when local actors want to argue for and apply for funding for activities like e.g. more regionalized fish stock estimation. Such estimations could also be used when fishers from the region apply for fishing licenses. A representative from the county administrative board, who is continuously in contact with the fishers, explained how he finds the contact with agencies more difficult today than earlier as the work now is divided between two agencies, the Swedish Agency for Water and Marine Management and the Swedish Board of Agriculture. He is also involved in the process of fishers' license applications, a process which he experiences as cumbersome but hopes that it will change. He thinks that there would be positive effects of a more established regional "management organization". One example would be how regional stock assessment (as suggested by the SLU researcher) could be of great value in the process of getting licenses.

The fishers explained that they are currently organized in a small local organization called Västerbotten's coastfishers [Västerbottens kustfiskare]. This is not an organization big enough for giving

them access to and/or influence the processes and decisions made by politicians or agencies, they argue. Earlier they had their own regional organization “EastcoastFishers Central Organization” [Ostkustfiskarnas centralorganisation], which worked quite well they thought. But when this organization was replaced by the national centralized fisher’s organization SFR [Sveriges Fiskares Riksförbund] they decided to leave the organization as SFR had a totally different attitude and also, the membership was too expensive they explained.

When the fishers were asked what kind of help they need they answered help to raise the questions that had been discussed today like *how to affect/influence processes to keep access to the resource and develop the local based fisheries*. This was partly a follow-up to a dominating topic during the workshop’s discussions, namely how the local-based fisheries were threatened by the industrial fisheries. The fishers also wanted help on how to achieve new recruitment to the fisheries and help to build local value chains in terms of developing the process industry and serving local species in local institutional kitchens etc.

The workshop was concluded with a discussion on the third theme, *if and how the work on developing sustainable fisheries in the region should proceed*. At this stage, some stakeholders suggested that it might be good to develop a policy that is politically anchored. Such a policy could be used for guidance with legitimacy in various processes. Because right now, the local politicians do not know much about local fisheries or the challenges it is facing. It was pointed out that it is important to work with both policy and practices at the same time. According to the fishers it would for example be desirable if both, Region Västerbotten and other stakeholders, support the importance of local value chains and serving local fish in kitchens run by the municipality or region such as schools, rest-homes, hospitals and so forth. Discussions focused also on possibilities for developing various projects, e.g. on recruitment to fisheries and maybe learn from similar experiences in the agricultural sector. The fishers furthermore suggested that it might be a good idea to develop a trainee-program in order to improve the recruitment to fisheries. Another point for discussion was the importance of “strengthening the ties” between the participants at the workshop and to make it easier to take a phone call. In general, there was a strong will to proceed and develop what this workshop seeded, i.e. to further develop an arena or meeting place for various local and regional actors that can work with developing the local and regional fisheries sector. Exactly how this should be done and by whom was not answered. As project owners, we explained that we do not have resources to take this process further (which has been transparent from the beginning of the project) but that we hoped that the stakeholders themselves could find ways to acquire funding and resources to proceed the work. This process is still ongoing, and we are in contact with local actors to keep up the momentum for possible future collaborations, e.g. a succeeding project of the same kind we had under the Formas project call “from research to practice”.

At the end of the workshop, we asked the audience to answer the following mentimeter-question: “*Any thoughts you want to share after the workshop? Ideas, reflections, questions for us organizers etc*”. At that point many of the participants were already engaged in active discussions with other participants and we did not get that many answers on this question.

- Important initiative for a living coastal environment. Thanks!
- It is important that you also get action and practical measures in parallel with the long-term work
- You should also look to other industries on the coast, such as fishing guides who will share the resources
- There is a common national lake target already established: Sea in balance... Develop indicators and work towards target fulfilment.
- RISE would like to be involved in the process moving forward.
- Good arrangements. One feeling is that the professional fishermen need help with dialogue with the authorities, a not entirely uncomplicated process. Good if a strategy is developed, please include the economy in it.

In the next chapter we discuss the experiences and challenges of getting in contact, setting up and conducting workshops on topics that include a marginal but nevertheless important sector for many regions. In addition, we will also raise questions about the challenges of continuing the work after a workshop or a project has closed down.

Chapter 4. Final discussion

This chapter synthesizes the main lessons learned about the two objectives of the project as mentioned in the introduction. From the experiences of collaborating with different types of actors in the discussions and practical experiments described in chapter 3, this section brings together our experiences with different methods for discussing different viewpoints, trying to agree on and/or setting common goals for sustainable transformations in Swedish coastal fishing communities. We find four aspects of outstanding relevance here: First, we discuss the challenges we met when a project plan is to be implemented in reality. Second, we find a problematic discrepancy between a will for engagement and available knowledge and resources. Third, we find the question lingering, who is, or should be responsible for securing a sustainable development of regional fisheries. Fourthly, we ask what type of knowledge is missing for underscoring local development of coastal fishing community and briefly fetch out a research agenda responding to this question.

When a project plan meets reality

When planning this project, we were inspired by developing and testing various participatory methods and different forms of citizen involvements such as “consensus conferences” to develop a common vision for a region. During the course of the project focusing on various processes of sustainable coastal development with a relation to local fisheries, some of these ideas became extraneous. We experienced that when people that have never met before and suddenly do so by engaging in discussions on a topic, they find very important and relevant but know rather little about, it became obvious that this situation is premature to develop a concrete vision. We realized that developing a vision or policy needs to be a second or third step in such processes working with local or regional development and planning. Instead, we focused on the consensus-building part. What is it actually that these actors can agree upon? This issue was easier to work with by bringing local people together, letting them educate and inform each other on various aspects of the challenges and possibilities with the local or regional fisheries sector. By doing so, we are confident that we managed to plant seeds for developing new and promising arenas for discussing sustainable development of the coastal community in collaboration with our partners. Whatmore (2009, 596) explains the value of conducting such workshop collecting relevant public opinions and perspectives as follows “...using research funds, skills and energies to generate opportunities and invent apparatuses in which those whose experience makes them sensible and knowledgeable collaborate in interrogating environmental expertise, ‘slowing down’ reasoning and making a difference to the framing of environmental problems.”

Discrepancy between engagement and knowledge/resources

In different parts of this project, such as the survey with all Swedish coastal municipalities (Wingren & Linke 2024), as well as in meetings with various municipalities and through the workshops conducted, we found a strong will for engagement regarding the future of fisheries and sustainable coastal development. At the same time, it appears difficult to define and develop some goals or visions when local actors do not know enough on the current situation of fisheries and the various aspects related to its management. The fishermen of course have knowledge about local conditions, but other local stakeholders lack knowledge about stocks, rules, quota distribution etc. However, in order to be able to work with developing common visions, one must have an overall picture about these aspects to start out with. This project and especially the workshops conducted in Umeå in Västerbotten show that it is important to gather people and let them share their knowledge and experiences in a first instance, in order to educate each other and include as many perspectives as possible. Our survey confirmed that there is a great interest from local and regional actors to be involved in and have more insights into processes that affect fisheries/coastal development, and that cooperation between stakeholders is important in this respect.

Yet, there is a huge uncertainty among these local and regional actors about how to become more involved, how to get educated and how to start a process for bottom-up local development for coastal communities, where fishing is of relevance. This lack of knowledge on complex issues where local participants can get to "hear different things from different actors" is an enormous challenge for many regional/local actors because they do not know enough to set different scenarios against each other or to be able to deal with conflicts of interest. This lack of knowledge translates into and is caused by a lack of resources to address the problem. Coastal communities or regions would need more funding for employing people and conduct activities addressing the problems jointly with local stakeholders and build up capacity to "take the questions further", as some of our participants put it. While there are some funding opportunities available (e.g. EU funding mainly channelled through the Swedish Board of Agriculture), local and regional actors need more support in order to be able to acquire such funding and work from a local perspective to build capacity in terms of knowledge and collaborations to move the issues forward. Collaborations with academia, as practiced in this Formas-funded project, were perceived as immensely helpful for the local and regional actors we worked with for several purposes, like knowledge exchange, state of research and evidence etc. However, while such "projectization" of local development issues are creating benefits e.g. in terms of funding, planning and management opportunities and capacities etc., we also see that the project format is not necessarily a sustainable approach over the long term since it is dependent on new or follow-up projects and there is no guarantee for continuation, no matter how promising, urgent or important the collaborations are. We therefore conclude, in line with arguments made by the national agencies, that there is a need to establish more local and regional collaborations, like community-based and other locally anchored forms of (co)-management to provide for long-term development that includes bottom-up approaches, as fetched out in the following section.

Another challenge is that even if a municipality has dedicated people with knowledge about the fisheries-situation (such as Simrishamn as described in chapter 2), they often experience problems to gather a broader momentum e.g. through bringing together and gaining support from a broader mass of municipal officials and politicians. The reason for this is that issues related to fisheries have in most municipalities moved from being a naturally given part of coastal community's daily life and organisation to being a problematic issue on the periphery of the local discussions and actions. Many, especially smaller municipalities cannot and do not afford to prioritize questions relating to local fisheries. From this insight, the question emerges who could and needs to take responsibility for these local development problems and challenges.

Who is responsible for securing a sustainable development of regional fisheries?

The fundamental question that emerged from our project's activities is who should be responsible for the development of local fisheries in coastal communities? Some decades ago, the fisheries sector

organized itself in various regionalized organizations with one central umbrella organization (SFR, see above). After a reorganization and a steep decline in the number of member fishers, the organization looks very different today. As we heard in our workshops, several fishers do not feel that they are represented in the new organization, and they have not found or developed new ways to influence various processes as they did before. They explicitly say that they need help to do this kind of influential work. At the same time several stakeholders from the workshop in Umeå argued that they see the development of sustainable fisheries as crucial for a sustainable coastal development and also for securing food supply to the region. Hence the fisheries are seen as relevant for the County, for municipalities, and for County Administration Board. The awareness of this relevance is also the reason why the municipality of Simrishamn decided to develop a local fishing policy and engage in national fisheries-related processes. The question of so called “co-management” [samråd och samförvaltning] has become increasingly highlighted e.g. in national action plans for fisheries (SwAM & SBA, 2021a) as well in a pilot project for ecosystem based marine management initiated and led by the Swedish Agency for Water and Marine Management (cf. Bankel et al. 2024). If some forms of co-management between the central national level and local actors like coastal fishers and communities will be implemented in the agencies’ management of fisheries in one way or another, it will open for new opportunities with more regional participation and cooperation. The positive aspects of co-management are well documented in the scholarly literature (e.g. Linke & Bruckmeier 2015; Nogue-Alguero 2023; Young et al. 2018).

However, the willingness to engage or co-manage is not enough. Such processes also take time and require resources. Not all municipalities or regions can afford this, which is a constraint that needs to be taken seriously. Likewise, our survey showed that within co-management settings it is important to have clear and stated mandates with clear transparency and an agreed and workable division of labour between various tasks. How such needs for co-management or co-organising can be implemented and work on the ground varies from context to context. In other countries where there still is a critical mass of local fisher and local circumstances enabling collaborations, the benefits of co-management have been clearly documented (e.g. Nogue-Alguero 2023; Orach & Schlüter 2021; for overviews see Puley & Charles 2022; Linke & Bruckmeier 2015).

The research insights and our practical experiences reveal several important questions that need to be addressed for the local organization of co-management or other forms of community-based fisheries management. What for example is considered at risk if no locals, neither municipal/regional stakeholders or fishers, engage in fisheries questions? There appears to be a fear of losing access to the resource fish as policies and management systems relating to how quotas are divided are continuously changing. This was also the main reason for why the municipality of Simrishamn decided to engage in

the development of fisheries, to secure that the region will have access to the resource now and in the future (see Chapter 2).

Based on experiences from the cases of Simrishamn and Umeå/Kvarken we can see that bottom-up initiatives matter. Yet, to what degree such initiatives become long-term established arrangements depend on resources in terms of people, time and knowledge. In both cases above the actors taking the initiative have been very dedicated in their work for local-based fisheries and sustainable coastal development.

What knowledge for sustainability transitions in coastal communities? A prospective research agenda

From our project experiences we can pose some ideas for future research on how to facilitate the potential of coastal communities and other bottom-up approaches to govern transitions to sustainability for fisheries and marine environments. As we attempted in this “research to practice” project, such research needs to focus on the role, the capacities and eventually the agency that local and regional actors can or should have for addressing the complex problems relating to fisheries and coastal governance (cf. Jentoft & Chuenpagdee 2009). Such a research agenda also needs to attend more closely to and better understand the concrete circumstances of local contexts and, from such in-depth understanding of localities and local people’s “life modes” (Højrup quoted in Salmi 2005), formulate lessons for improvement that eventually can inform alternative pathways for transitions to sustainability than those currently practiced. To follow this agenda, we suggest a two-step approach: In a first step, which mirrors the objectives of the project reported on here, we draw on examples and insights from the existing scholarly literature and gather experiences from case studies in different countries and sectors to uncover underlying structural challenges with unsustainable resource use management and unjust practices of fisheries and coastal governance. A second step will draw lessons from these insights and experiences and show emergent activities that provide different opportunities for transitions to sustainability. This will include exploring the agency of different governance actors at different levels, including the institutional and organizational capacities of small-scale fishers and coastal communities to contribute to transformative change of marine and fisheries governance. This search for **alternative pathways to sustainability** can include a focus on an array of governance challenges related to for example collective action problems of local and regional actors, external vs. self-governance mechanisms, community- and/or co-management practices and other bottom-up approaches highlighting the potentials of local participation and community involvement in fisheries and coastal governance. In our future research as well as in our practical work related to small-scale fisheries and coastal community developments, we will follow this approach which ultimately aims to develop an alternative governance model that attends to and includes the socio-economic value creation of coastal fisheries and their communities

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Appendix 1. Results from workshop in Umeå 2022-11-08



Mål i strategin	Åtgärd i handlingsplanen för fiske	Lokal åtgärd/förslag	
Val förvaldade och fungerande ekosystem	1	Vetenskapliga underlag för ekosystembaserad fiskförvaltning	Bjuda in och samverka med akademin, studenter vid UmeU och SLU
	2	Stärka rekryterings- och uppdragsområden	Anerkänn fiskrens till havet - ändra regelverk
	3	Översyn bestämmelser för pelagiskt trälfiske	Förbud storskaligt trälfiske i Bottnhavet i minst 5 år
	4	Fiskereglering i marina skyddade områden	
	5	Säl och skary	Reglerna säl och skary, inför skottpeng, tillåt handel med sälprodukter
	6	Regelverk gällande fiske för humankonsumtion	Fisk från Bottnhavet ska till största del gå till humankonsumtion
	7	Fördelningsystem för demersalt fiske	
	8	Ökad regelbundenhet inom yrkesfiske	Se över (särka) avgifter för tillstånd, kontroll m.m.
	9	Ökad arbetsmiljösäkerhet för yrkesverksamma inom svenskt fiske	Personlig läskvot
Konkurrenskraft, lönsamhet och sociala värden	10	Nyrekrytering av yngre till yrkesfisket	Måste till enklare medel att söka för uppstart av företag inom fiske
	11	Cirkulär blå bioekonomi - Diversifiering, förädling, produktutveckling.	
	a	märkning och marknadsföring av svensk sjömat	Fisk från Bottnhavet ska till största del gå till humankonsumtion
	11c	Cirkulär blå bioekonomi - Ökad kunskap och information om dövsäker sjömat	
Kunskap och kommunikation	12	Harmoniserad handläggning	Tiğta till kommunikationen mellan bransch och myndigheter
	13	En modell för samhällsnytta - Strukturerad insamling av kunskap kring samhällsnytta	Bjuda in och samverka med akademin, studenter vid UmeU och SLU
	13	En modell för samhällsnytta - Socioekonomiska modeller för fiskeriförvaltning kring samhällsnytta	Organisera sig, söka medel för projekttansätt för samt företagare inte hinner med
	14	Redskapsutveckling	Utveckla för selektivt fiske
	15	Samråd	
	16	Utbildning och kompetensutveckling	Utbildning och kompetensutveckling för berörda myndighetspersoner (studiebesök i verktyghuset)
	17	Informations- och kommunikationsinsatser	Stärka traditionellt småskaligt fiske i opinionen genom besöksring

OBS! För kursom på numret av åtgärden för att få fram listor på exempel av åtgärder