

UCL-Baltic Workshop

Date: 26-27 November 2025

Contact:

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Location:

Auditorium Sälskär, Ålands Parliament building (Självstyrelsegården),
37 Strandgatan, Mariehamn, Åland Islands (Finland)

Working with Underwater Cultural Landscapes

Underwater cultural landscapes represent a unique intersection of human history, natural environments, and maritime traditions. They encompass shipwrecks, submerged settlements, ancient harbours, historic sea routes, and natural features that together reflect the long-term relationship between people and the sea.

Recognizing and protecting these landscapes is vital for understanding cultural heritage, advancing scientific research, and ensuring the sustainable use of marine resources.

This two-day workshop brings together archaeologists, heritage professionals, marine scientists, policymakers, and community representatives to explore the concept of underwater cultural landscapes. Through keynote presentations, case studies, and group discussions, participants will:

- Examine international and national practices;
- Discuss values and criteria for significance;
- Consider methods for mapping, assessing, and managing these landscapes.

By the end of the workshop, participants will jointly discuss a working definition of “underwater cultural landscape”. Further points for discussion are evaluation criteria for underwater cultural landscapes, and possibilities to identify potential pilot areas or research directions. The event also aims to strengthen networks between researchers, institutions, and stakeholders, laying the groundwork for future policies and protective measures at both national and international levels.

Preliminary Programme

Wednesday, 26 November

10:00 – 12:00

- Welcome and introductions
- Why define and protect underwater cultural landscapes?
- Introductory presentations:
 - International perspectives (UNESCO, ICOMOS)
 - National practices

- Archaeological and natural contexts (seafloor development, traces of human activity)

12:00 – 13:00 LUNCH

13:00 – 15:00

- Framing the concept:
 - What is an “underwater cultural landscape”?
 - Components: wrecks, harbours, infrastructures, natural elements, sea routes
 - Discussion of values (historical, scientific, community, aesthetic, economic)

15:00 – 15:30 COFFEE

15:30 – 17:00

- Drafting consolidated definitions
- Day summary

Thursday, 27 November

09:00 – 10:45

- Case studies: Åland Islands, Latvia and Estonia

10:45 – 11:00 COFFEE

11:00 – 12:30

- Methods and criteria:
 - How to map and assess cultural landscapes?
 - How to implement UCL in national registries? Should it be done?
 - How to present benefits of underwater cultural landscapes to the planning community and users of marine areas?
 - Which criteria are suitable for determining significance (archaeological, natural, landscape values)?
 - Should regional or international standards be applied?

12:30 – 13:30 LUNCH

13:30 – 15:00

- Joint summary of results:
 - Proposed definition
 - Evaluation criteria
 - Next steps
- Final discussion and agreements