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A REVIEW OF STABLE WATER ISOTOPE STUDIES DONE IN FINLAND

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Early stages of stable isotope hydrology in Finland

The use of stable isotopes of water in Finland begun about 30 years ago through a need to search for a safe location to store nuclear waste within the bedrock (Blomqvist et al., 1986). For this purpose samples of ¹⁸O, ²H and ³H were taken from deep boreholes across Finland. The results helped decipher the age of groundwater at a certain level in the boreholes, which further on made it possible to give trustworthy statements how likely threat the stored nuclear waste would pose for the population.

Recently the advantages in spectroscopy have succeeded in bringing the analyzer purchase and running costs down which has helped to popularize the isotope analysis as a standard tool in hydrology. However the wider use of isotopes in Finland has been dragging due to lack of analyzers and the awareness of what can be studied and achieved with the water isotopes.

First nationwide sampling campaign

The results of the first larger campaign for defining the isotopic composition of Finnish waters was published by Kortelainen and Karhu (2004). They monitored groundwater wells from 19 different locations for six years and sampled 953 wells scattered around Finland. In addition precipitation was sampled monthly for two years time period. As a conclusions of the study a national meteoric water line for Finland was defined from the groundwater data as $\delta D = 8.5 \delta^{18}O + 16.55$. $\delta^{18}O$ and the δ^2H values were found to decrease towards the northern Finland together with the mean annual surface temperature.

Recent studies

Recent and on-going studies have added detail by forming regional meteoric waterlines and local evaporation lines, which help the researchers to improve their studies of local water cycle. In recent years at University of Oulu, the water isotopes have been used in various ways for example taking spatially distributed samples across wetlands to define which the active or stagnant flow zones are (Ronkanen and Kløve, 2008) or for quantifying groundwater dependence of lakes (Isokangas et al., 2015). On-going studies also include stable isotope of water to identify groundwater dependent ecosystems and groundwater recharge/discharge areas. Also continuous sampling of precipitation has been started in Oulu to get more detailed knowledge about variation of $\delta^{18}O$ and δ^2H values in precipitation.

Future plans

The aim of this project is to build a database of isotope studies done in Finland (maybe include Sweden and Norway) in order to help future researches to use the stable isotopes of water more easily and to increase co-operation between different facilities in Finland and elsewhere. Results of data collected so far to now are plotted in Figure I, which shows the locations of isotope studies done in Finland found from peer reviewed journals and also the known study sites from which the data is not yet published.

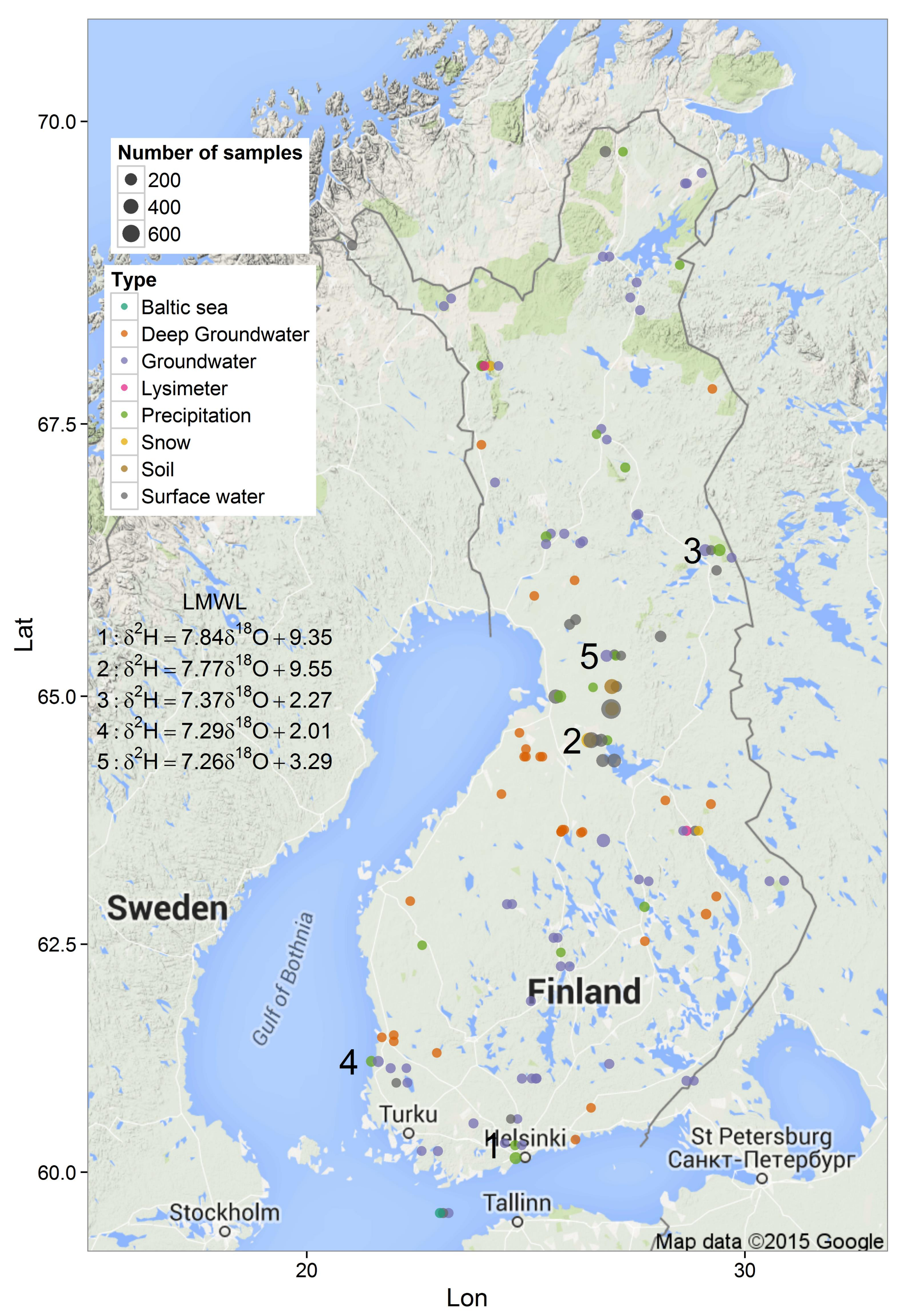


Figure I. The use of stable isotopes of water in hydrological studies in Finland.

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Acknowledgements
Maa- ja vesitekniiikan tuki (MVTI).

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