

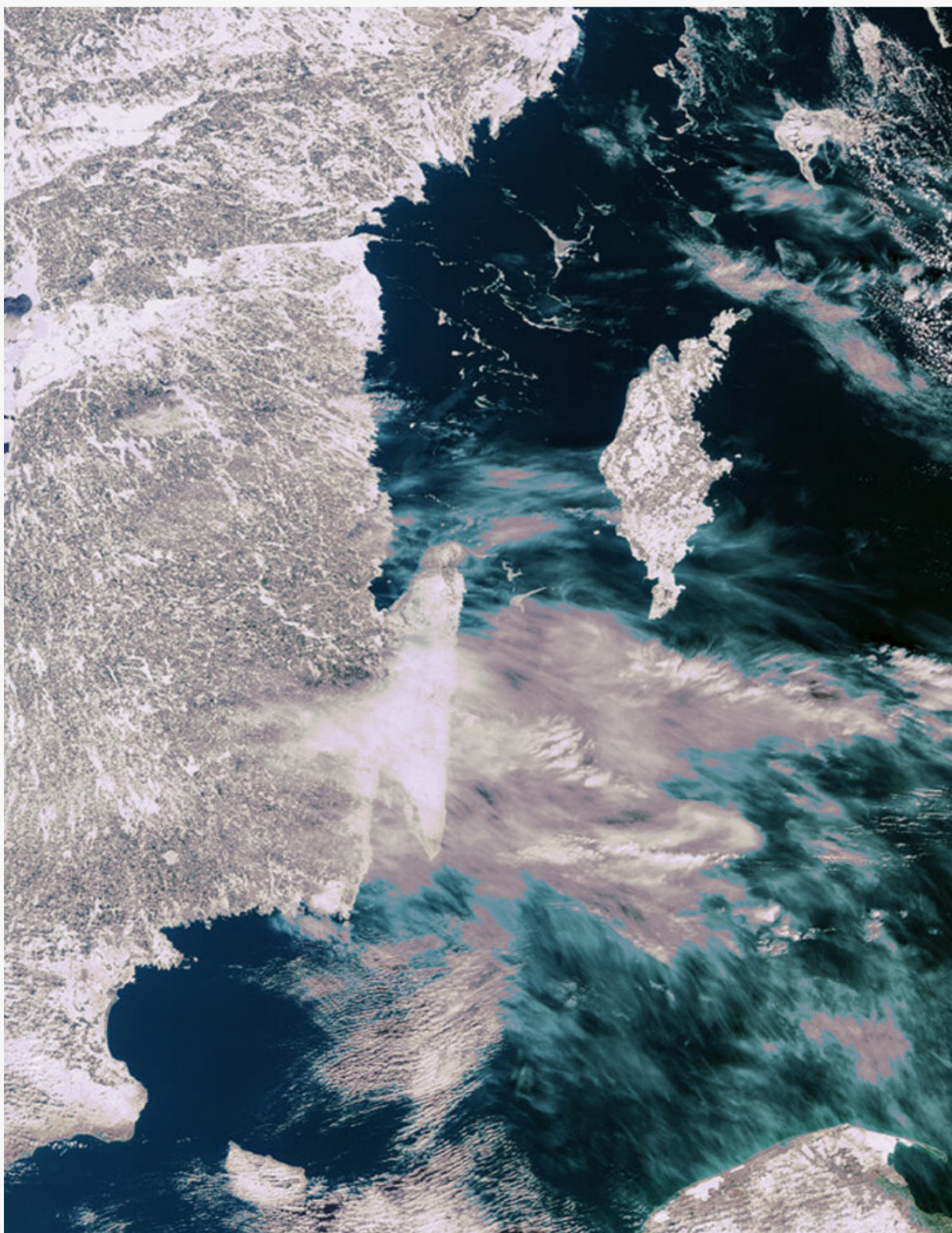


Baltic Ti(d)es

Seminar Week Spring 2024



Cost: Frame C, Contact: garner@arch.ethz.ch



Rural Lithuania

Subject: Seminar Week in Rural Lithuania
Date: 31 January 2024

Dear Reader,

Up North, towards the East, the earth's crust is thin. Flat is the land, wide is the horizon. The Baltic plains are covered with never ending dark melancholic forests, punctured by lakes, drenched with swamps and haunted by pagan beliefs. This vastness allows for grace.

Especially at shaktarp, the fifth season, a time when life comes to rest, the time of "roadlessness" between winter and spring, when floes of ice rumble their way to the Baltic Sea. The Memel territory and neighboring lowlands become neither passable, nor navigable. Its inhabitants waiting in between. The state of "in between" is familiar to this land. Once the largest European country, Lithuania has become a gateway under geopolitical pressure. While it can not move, its territory tells stories of movement - of shifting sands, expanding waters and human (e)migration.

We will embark on our journey in Kiel and board a ship towards the port of Klaipėda. For one day, we will see open water. We will cross the Baltic Sea, pass its neighbors and arrive in a former East Prussia, then German, then Lithuanian, then Soviet, now Lithuanian port town by the Nemunas delta. It marks the tip of the Curonian Spit, a 98 kilometer long, 0.4 - 4 kilometer wide, moving sand dune formation, with the deep Baltic Sea to the West and the shallow Curonian Lagoon to the East. The peninsula is half Lithuanian, half Russian territory - all sand, wind and endless sky. On this fragile land, we will meet the forests who are dutifully doing the Sisyphean task of holding down the sand and the dunes who are experienced wanderers. We will be close to the Russian exclave Kaliningrad, once Königsberg and hear voices of lost identities. Shorebound, we will follow the water inland, through the lagoon and into the marshes. The swamps, too hostile to inhabit, have become peat mines where ancient carbon is dug to heat and feed garden dreams elsewhere.

We will pass through cargo ferries, amber mines, summer homes, soviet remnants, simple towns and growing graveyards. Amongst these layers of sediment and culture, the wandering dune becomes a metaphor in negotiating shifts and frontiers in geopolitics, ecology and identities, their entanglement, and the quest of why we endure the effort to keep it up.

We are looking forward to travel together,
Eglė Bazaraitė, Sophia Garner, Ina Valkanova, Freek Persyn

16-23 March 2024
Cost: Frame C (including travel)
Participants: Max. 21