GLOBE Regional Learning Expedition 2022

## The effect of Käsmu harbour on water characteristics

Kristýna Vaňková Iris Sepping Birgit Pilve Anabel Mattisen Merili Habicht Zala Jenko Maša Šijanec

> Supervisor: Agne Jõgis Support: Pavel Smirnov

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#### ABSTRACT

We wanted to know what effect Käsmu harbour has on water characteristics. According to those questions we picked three places: Käsmu pier, Käsmu harbour and Käsmu stone beach. We measured all those places in one day. The whole expedition was about five hours long. The Käsmu pier and the stone beach have been untouched; only the Käsmu harbour had been dredged about two weeks ago and also new floating water bridges were added there.

Our hypothesis was: Harbour area water characteristics are affected by the harbour.

Our main goal is to investigate if the harbour has an effect on water characteristics.

The characteristics of water that we measured and GLOBE protocols used were air temperature, transparency with transparency tube, water temperature, dissolved oxygen level, conductivity, pH, alkalinity, nitrates. We proved that our hypothesis was right and that water in the harbour has slightly different characteristics.

If the project continues in the future, we would like to measure for a longer time and during other seasons. And also to study the difference in the harbour with hindsight from its dredging.

In the future, it would be nice to go back, take the same measurements and see if the results change. We would also like to know how the results change seasonally or even at nighttime. This way we would have a more exact picture of the effect Käsmu harbour has on water characteristics.

Key words: hydrology, water characteristics, Käsmu harbour

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Baltic Sea (Figure 1) is the youngest sea on the planet, almost enclosed, experiencing near-arctic conditions and is one of the world's largest brackish waters. It is surrounded by 9 countries - Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Germany (European Commission).

The Baltic Sea supports unique ecosystems but is severely affected by general threats like biodiversity loss and climate change, and by specific local pressures such as eutrophication, overfishing, elevated levels of contaminants such as pharmaceuticals, and litter, in particular plastic waste (European Commission).

The Baltic Sea is a brackish water body, where rivers and precipitation bring most of the fresh water. The Baltic Sea gets its salinity from the Atlantic Ocean through the Danish Straits. The salinity of the Baltic Sea depends on the distance from the Danish straits (Jaspers *et al*, 2021).

Our research location is located on the coast of Northern Estonia at Käsmu peninsula and Käsmu bay which is part of the Gulf of Finland (and Baltic Sea respectively). The bay is open to winds and the shoreline dynamics has been found to affect the water characteristics (Grudzinska *et al*, 2013).

# **RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS**

Studying the water characteristics is very important. It tells us a lot about how human activity affects the water quality.

The purpose of our research was to analyse the water characteristics in Käsmu. We wanted to know if the water characteristics in Käsmu harbour are different from the surrounding areas. Because the harbour had been dredged about a week before our arrival, we had reason to believe that the water characteristics would be different from areas near the harbour.

Based on that we formulated our hypothesis:

- Harbour area water characteristics are affected by the harbour.

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

We did fieldwork at the research locations and analysed the water samples on 3 August 2022 from 2:00 PM to 6:30 PM. We measured in Käsmu, Estonia (Figure 1 and 2) at three locations - Käsmu pier, Käsmu harbour and Käsmu stone beach. The locations were all 300 metres from each other.



Figure 1. Location of Käsmu in Estonia. Source: Google Maps.

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Figure 2. Map of research and measuring locations. First is Käsmu pier, second is Käsmu harbour and the third is Käsmu stone beach. Source: Estonian Land Board

The first location was Käsmu pier (Figure 3). The air temperature at the pier was  $22^{\circ}$ C, the water temperature was  $19^{\circ}$ C and there was a strong wind. The shore was rocky and there was sand on the beach. The vegetation on the shore was mainly reed and other plants. The seabed was sand and mixed sediments.

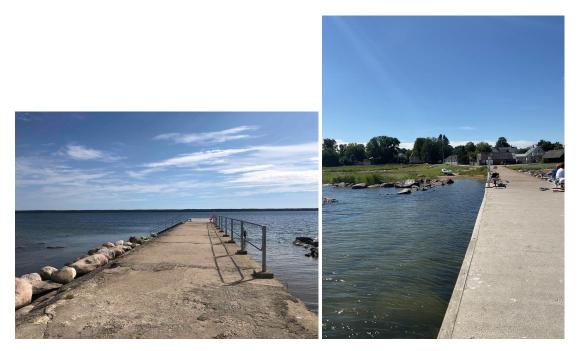


Figure 3. The first research site: Käsmu pier

The second location was Käsmu harbour (Figure 4). The air temperature at the harbour was  $23^{\circ}$ C, the water temperature was  $20^{\circ}$ C and there was a breeze. There was no rain and the water transparency was more than 120 cm. The shore was sandy, the harbour was surrounded by boulder fences. The vegetation at the shore was mainly birch and pine. The seabed was a mix of sand and sediments.

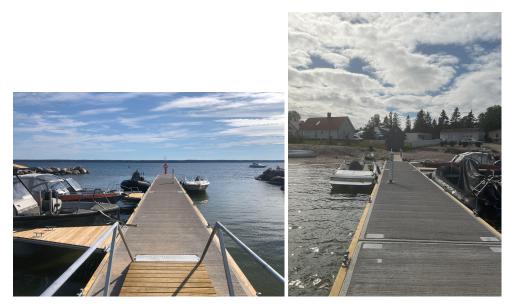


Figure 4. The second research site: Käsmu harbour

The third location was a beach covered in stones (Figure 5). Since it doesn't have an official name, we named the location as Stone beach. The air temperature in the stone beach was 21°C, the water temperature was 21°C and there was a small breeze. The shore was a mix of pebbles and sand. There were boulders on the shore and in the sea. The seabed was a mix of sand and sediments.



Figure 5. The third research site: Käsmu stone beach

For our research we used GLOBE hydrology protocols: temperature, transparency (with the transparency tube), dissolved oxygen, conductivity, pH, alkalinity, and nitrates. The equipment we used for alkalinity, nitrates and dissolved oxygen can be seen in Figure 6. Measuring process can be seen on Figure 7.



Figure 6. Kits for measuring alkalinity, nitrates and dissolved oxygen



Figure 7. Measuring process

#### DISCUSSIONS

Our research showed that the water characteristics in Käsmu harbour are different from the surrounding area. We analysed the most important factors and differences found from the experiments. Results are shown in Table 1.

Water characteristics	<ol> <li>location:</li> <li>Käsmu pier</li> </ol>		3. location: Käsmu stone beach
air temperature (°C)	22	23	21
transparency (cm)	>120	>120	>120
water temperature (°C)	19	20	21
dissolved oxygen (mg/l)	7.3	6.8	9.6
conductivity (µS/cm)	10672	10849	11032
рН	8.65	8.44	8.99
alkalinity (mg/l)	79	82	79.3
$NO_3^-$ (mg/l)	0.5	1	0.5

Table 1. The conditions at measuring locations.

The dissolved oxygen levels were the highest in Käsmu stone beach (9.6 mg/L) and the lowest in Käsmu harbour (6.8 mg/L). The low dissolved oxygen levels could be because of the excessive algae growth caused by phosphorus (MPCA, 2009).

All investigated locations were quite transparent. The transparency was more than 120 cm in all three locations.

The warmest water temperature was in Käsmu stone beach (21°C), the coldest location was Käsmu pier (19°C). The water temperature in Käsmu harbour was 20°C.

The nitrate levels in Käsmu harbour were higher (1 mg/L) than in Käsmu pier and in Käsmu stone beach (0.5 mg/L). Our working hypothesis is that there were no plants in Käsmu harbour that could consume the nitrates.

Alkalinity levels were the highest in Käsmu harbour (82 mg/L). We think the high alkalinity could be because the harbour was recently dredged and the pier was rebuilt, the seabed and the sediments got mixed. Since the bedrock is limestone, which is alkaline, the alkalinity levels rose.

### CONCLUSIONS

We discovered that the water characteristics in Käsmu harbour are different from the surrounding area.

The alkalinity and nitrate levels were higher than at the pier and at the stone beach. We think the alkalinity levels were higher because of the calcium carbonate also known as limestone, which is the bedrock. Since the harbour was recently dredged, the seabed and the sediments got mixed. We think that the nitrate levels were higher because we didn't see any plants that could consume the nitrates.

We also discovered that the dissolved oxygen levels were lower than the surrounding area. It could be because of the higher air and water temperature. The pH levels were lower than at the pier and at the stone beach. When carbon dioxide is taken up by ocean water, it reacts with water to form carbonic acid. This is leading to a gradual fall in the oceans' pH.

If we could do the research all over again, we would plan our activities more ahead. We think our research would be even more useful, if we had measurements from before the dredging and building activities in Käsmu harbour. Then we could make more conclusions and analyse the effect of the dredging more thoroughly. We would have also measured the air humidity and salinity in all three locations.

In the future, it would be nice to go back, take the same measurements and see if the results change. We would also like to know how the results change seasonally or even by nighttime. This way we would have a more exact picture of the effect Käsmu harbour has on water characteristics.

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