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## **Mobility data brings new insights to local cultural tourism management: Case of Setomaa in South Estonia**

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### **Abstract:**

The Setomaa region of South Estonia is bustling with tourism businesses that are passionate about showcasing their unique culture and captivating nature. For effective tourism management, reliable data is vital. However, in rural tourism communities such as Setomaa, the available statistics might not be as granular or might be misleading decision-makers in the area.

The traditional way of analysing tourism is with accommodation statistics, which is not suitable for cultural tourism. The factors to consider are, among others seasonality, small businesses not having to report statistics, and domestic tourists staying with friends and family in the area. What is more, tourists can visit by camping vehicles. These kinds of tourists are not represented in accommodation statistics which has caused problems for local tourism organisations as they do not have good data to rely on and have to make decisions based on gut feeling. Mobile positioning data helps to understand what places are visited and who are these visitors, regardless of where they sleep.

In 2019, Estonian Tourism Board and Positium ran a project to better measure tourism stays and flows in Estonia, which had very relevant results for Setomaa. The results showed that Setomaa has a high proportion of overnight stays – about 50% of domestic tourists who visit the area. In fact, if a tourist stays in the area for more than two hours, it is very likely that they will stay the night.

Only around 1% of Finnish and German tourists reach Setomaa. But those that do are very valuable to Setomaa tourism as they are interested in the submersive cultural experience of the area. Knowing this data from mobile positioning has helped local tourism organisations plan their activities and especially marketing better.

The peaks of the COVID-19 pandemic fell into the low season of tourism. The summer of 2020, however, was phenomenally successful due to sudden high levels of domestic tourism for a region that was not prepared for mass tourism. Analysis of mobile data is required to assess the scale of tourism in 2020 and 2021 to improve preparedness of the industry for mass tourism, domestic or international. Regular granular statistics could provide local tourism businesses with valuable information to plan better for the next peak seasons and invest in the right places to thrive and sustain the unique cultural tourism offering.

### **Keywords:**

Big data; mobile phone data; mobile positioning data; tourism; sustainable tourism

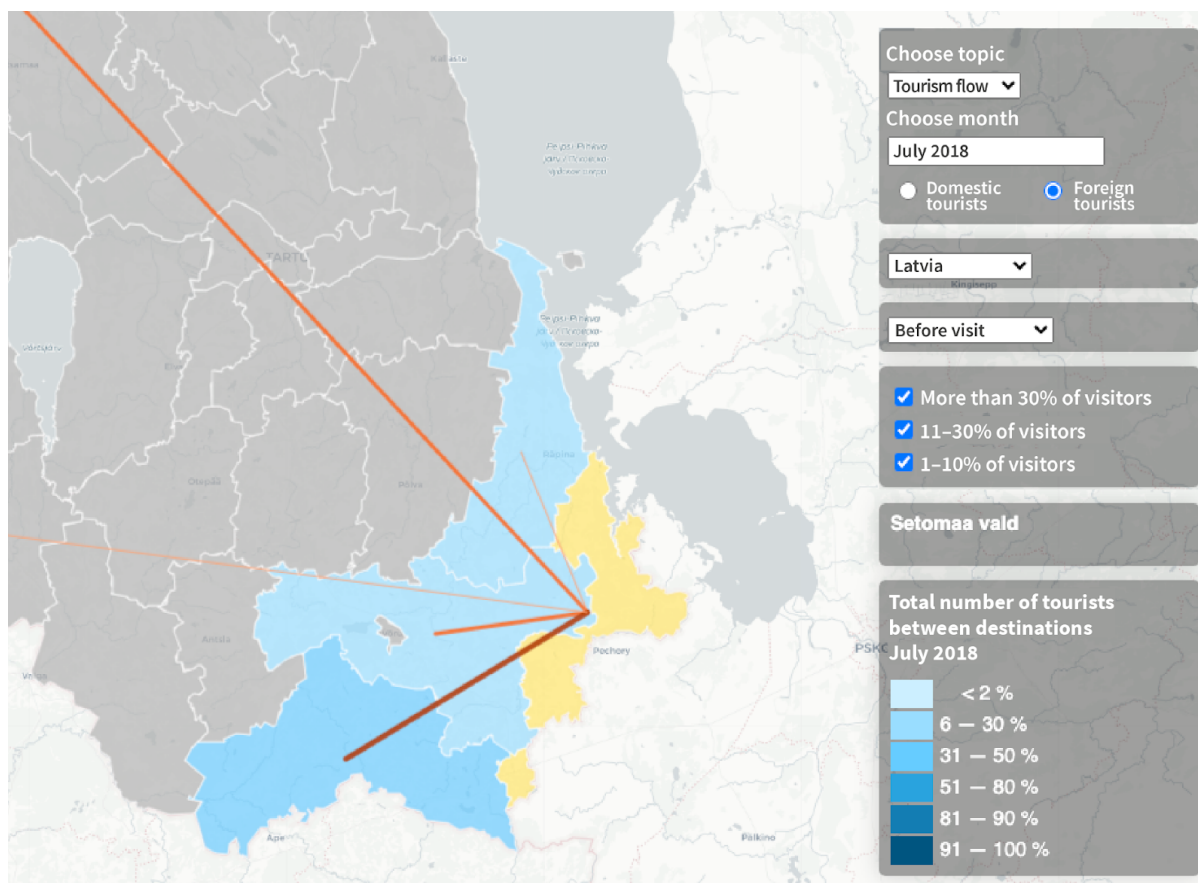


Figure: Country-by-country tourism flows provide information that cultural tourism operators in the region did not have access to before and enables new decisions for planning, marketing and attracting investment to protect cultural tourism

#### References:

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