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Tourism - the Basis for Local Development of Rural Spaces in Maleshevo Region (Maleshevo Mountains)

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ABSTRACT

The Rural environment is a part of a space which is packed with special peculiarities especially when it comes to the local development. The Local development is more specific and has a greater specificity if it is a part of a mountainous rural area. Such mountainous rural areas are the Maleshevo Mountains, especially the space around Berovo (Maleshevo) valley, the little town of Berovo is the central settlement and there are also several rural settlements which administratively belong to the municipality of Berovo. This mountainous rural area with its natural and anthropogenic characteristics and their demographic features offer excellent opportunities for tourism development, especially development of rural tourism as a specific form of tourism. It is this kind of tourism-Rural Tourism which has a great economic and social impact on the rural areas which are developing. This influence can be directed through direct tourism consumption and indirect by encouraging and supporting the development of other economic activities, local infrastructure, etc...). If we view the development in such a way of rural tourism in the Maleshevo region it will represent serious basis for the local development with all its segments in the concrete rural space.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural development is distinguished with special features in terms of tourism demand and tourism offer. As a consequence or result of its specific nature it is a separate part of the total tourist offer, or in other words rural tourism represents only a segment of the overall tourism industry. Because of this, rural tourism can be characterized as a selective form of tourism or special form of tourism, which is contrary to the form of mass tourism. According to Hrabovski-Tomikj, E. (2008) *"If understood in this way rural tourism is competitive against other forms of tourism and tourism products."* This consideration is especially important for Macedonia as a country that has a "handicap" because it has no outlet to the sea. The lack of this kind of tourist offer can be subsidized with attractive rural landscapes, preserved nature; mountain rivers... which if combined with traditional hospitality can offer unforgettable experiences for tourists looking

for relaxation and recreation in peaceful and natural settings, outside the urban areas.

Different authors interpret and define the concept of rural tourism in a different way, hence the same form of tourism is emerging as a synonym such as: agro tourism, natural tourism, farm tourism, ecotourism, etc.. But without intending to go into details in defining the term rural tourism in the context of the object and purpose of this paper, rural tourism can be looked or defined by the definition given by the Council of Europe in 1986. According to the Council of Europe, rural tourism is defined as tourism that encompasses all the activities taking place in rural areas. This thinking is acceptable and proper, if we perceive tourism as an incentive and basis for the development of rural areas and this is the subject in the paper.

Because the underlying definition of rural tourism is the rural area, it is necessary to introduce the rural space in the Maleshevo Region, with its main

natural and anthropogenic features, which also are the main motives and incentives for tourist to visit and they also can further be seen on the effects that tourism has on the local development.

2. GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF THE MALESHEVO REGION

Knowing the natural geography of the area it is of great importance in studying all kinds of tourism, including rural tourism. Natural geographic features of the area may represent an attractive tourist motives

that initiate the tourism in the region. In this context, according to Panov, N. (1998) *"Tourist motives can be objects that appear attractive in nature and society and these represent the basic motive for visiting the particular area, and these activities satisfy the recreational and cultural needs"*. This way of understanding and defining tourist motives is acceptable according to him and tourist motivations may be: natural, anthropogenic or combined. This division of tourist motives is logical it is made on the basis of the origin and the general division.

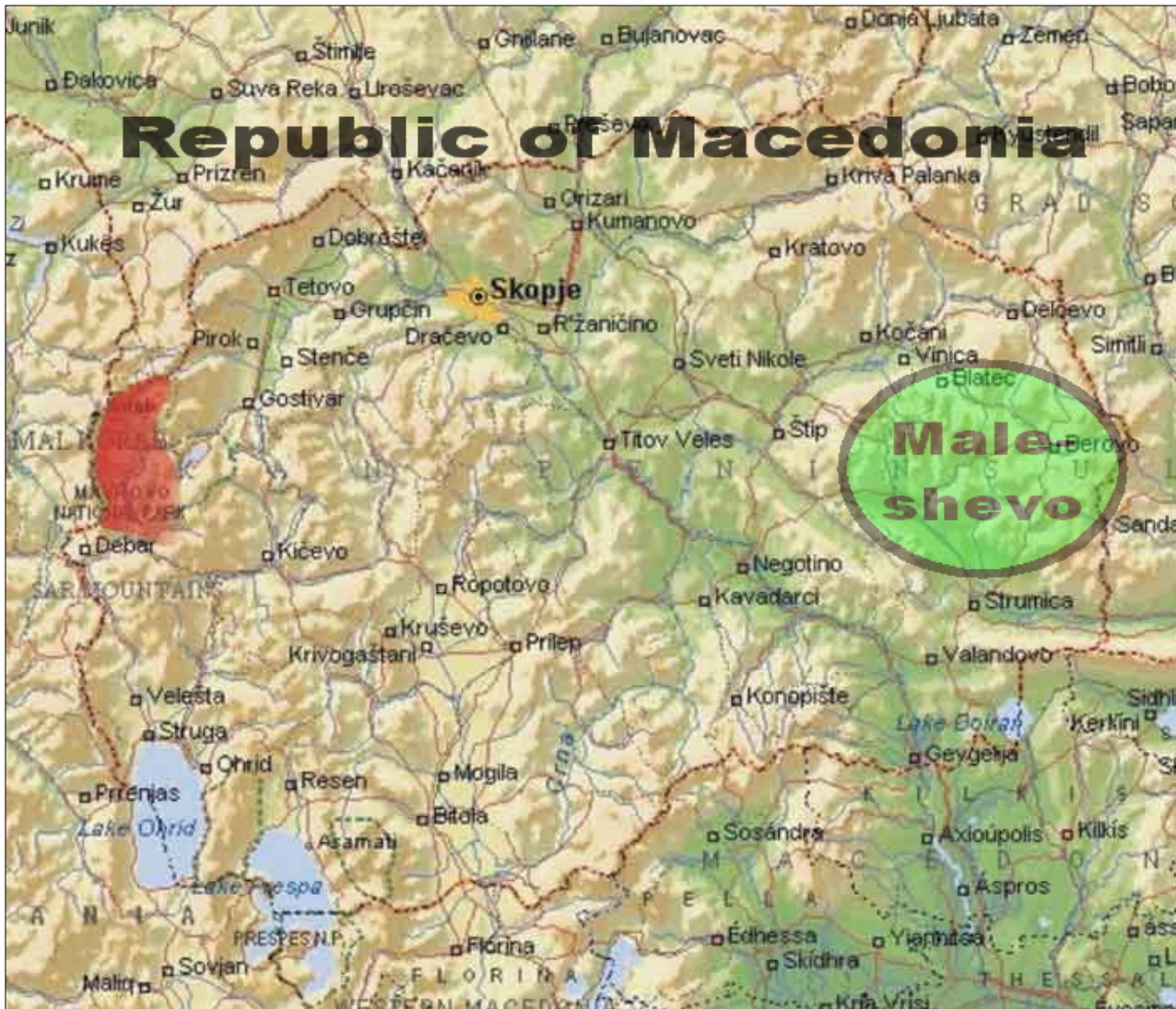


Fig. 1. Relief of Maleshevo region.

This shows the importance of natural features and geographic space in function of travel patterns and is represented by: relief, climate, hydrographic and bio-geographic features of the space. But in context with the title and purpose of this paper we will not enter into unnecessary detailed geographical description and presentation of all natural and geographical features of the Maleshevo region, but only a brief presentation of the most important features of the landscape and

attractive forms of space will be made, to show that this is a mountainous area where there are such natural tourist reasons, these being prerequisites for the development of rural tourism, which in perspective should initiate a general local development of rural areas. The Maleshevo region is located in the eastern part of Macedonia. This whole part of Eastern Macedonia is characterized by its relief features of mountain-valley area. As larger relief forms are

mountains, valleys and gorges, the relief mosaics and spaces have the appearance of a "chessboard".

The region of Eastern Macedonia and its tectonic relief belongs to the Rodopi mountains area, which is also called the area of old massive mountains and valleys. However the mountains in the region differ according to altitude and with this their impact is differentiated and the natural factors or conditions on the effects of tourism development are fulfilled. In the whole area of Eastern Macedonia the Maleshevo area is specific with its valleys and Mountains.

Maleshevo or Berovo Valley is the highest elevation in eastern Macedonia, in the upper part of Bregalnica River. The valley has a meridian direction and it's stretched out for about 20km length and width of about 10km. It extends to an altitude of between 700 and 1000 above sea level, and it covers an area of 806 sq km.

Maleshevo valley is surrounded by the high cliffs of Mount Vlaina with its highest peak (Kadiica 1932 a.s.l) from the east, Mount Plachkovica (1754 a.s.l) and Obozna (1276 a.s.l) from the west and Maleshevo mountains with its peaks (Chengino Kale 1745 a.s.l and Dzhamiz Tepe 1803 a.s.l) from the south. From this brief presentation of the relief features of Maleshevo region it is more than clear that this area is an extremely mountainous. Besides the relief other natural geographic features that influence the development of rural tourism in the Maleshevo area are hydrographical, climatic and bio-geographic features.

The most important hydrographic facility in the Maleshevo valley and which serves as a function to tourism is Lake Berovo an artificial accumulation of Ratevska River in the Linakot area. The lake is at a 7km distance from the city, the accumulation is a concrete dam 53 meters high, and the lake is 2.5 km in length and with an average width of 500 meters. Berovo Lake lies at an altitude of 986 meters and covers an area of 0.57 km². Its basic purpose is to supply the population of Berovo with environmentally clean drinking water, but more and more it is used for recreation and sports and has grown into an important tourist site in the Maleshevo region.

The climatic feature in the Maleshevo valley is also suitable for tourism development, because of the altitude and its features the climate is specific to mountains. It is particularly important in terms of tourism because of the large amounts of snow in the winter period, while in the summer lower temperatures prevail and the air is fresher unlike the surrounding areas.

As a result of the relief and climate characteristics Maleshevo is rich with forests which has oak, beech and pine and they line the elevation zones. The forest areas are rich with fauna and particular attention should be given to endangered

species like: wild boar, deer, wild rabbit, partridge and owls.

These are briefly some of the basic natural-geographic features of the Maleshevo area in order to present it as a mountains area that has some natural and geographical conditions for development of rural tourism in mountains areas and in the context of the topic being treated in this paper.

3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Apart from basic natural-geographic features of the Maleshevo area, of particular importance are the demographic characteristics of the area, especially if we talk about revitalization and local development of rural areas with tourism as an instrument for carrying out or assisting in the process of revitalization.

Normally that all demographic characteristics have the same meaning and importance, so for the specific topic will be discussing and presenting only those demographic characteristics that we think are important in the context and function of the local development of rural areas through rural tourism.

Because the subject of analysis in this paper is the rural mountainous area it is important to know the basic demographics.

The central settlement in the Maleshevo area is the city of Berovo which is also the administrative center. Berovo belongs to a group of small towns in Macedonia that have fewer than 10,000 citizens. The municipality of Berovo consists of nine settlements of which eight are rural and one is an urban settlement.

The population in the Berovo municipality separately is represented for each town in the following table. From the data in the table the difference in population in rural settlements in the Maleshevo area can be seen, the number of population ranges from 206 residents in the village of Machevo to 2095 residents in the village of Rusinovo, and 7,002 residents in Berovo (SSO: 2002).

But it is very important that the demographic data in terms of population can be concluded for the Maleshevo area, therefore there are rural areas with good demographics in terms of population and they are called "living villages" where real development of rural tourism as a specific form that can be practiced.

Into consideration should be taken the relief features of the area represented above and according to the relief characteristics and altitude which all rural settlements are in the Maleshevo area and can be concluded that these are mountainous rural settlements. According to these demographic characteristics and the type of settlements, we can conclude that rural settlements in the Maleshevo area are spatial and demographically consistent and fit to be analyzed according to the objectives of the research in this paper.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF TYPES OF TOURISM IN THE MALESHEVO AREA

To be able to understand and consider tourism as the basis for local development of rural space in the Maleshevo area, it is necessary to introduce and realize the possibilities for the basic forms and types of tourism that can be developed.

The untouched and preserved nature, the good climate, the beautiful mountain landscapes, picturesque villages with their unique architecture and authenticity, anthropogenic values and motives, the hospitality of the locals are only part of the rich culture that the Maleshevo area is a function that positively affects the development of tourism and it enriches the diversity of the tourism offer.

Taking into account these potential tourist and travel resources available in the Maleshevo area, more alternative forms of tourism can be developed. The most specific and most interesting kind of tourism that can be developed in the Maleshevo area is rural tourism. For the development of this kind of tourism there are excellent conditions if we take into account the rural settlements which are characterized by: favorable demographic characteristics, good road links and road infrastructure connecting the city of Berovo, typical architecture of the Maleshevo village, diverse and rich gastronomic offers with healthy and ecological foods, numerous old crafts, handicrafts and so on.

This indicates excellent tourist offer for rural tourism, which will satisfy the needs and demands of

tourists who are interested in this kind of tourism. Apart from the rural tourism, relief and climate characteristics, the Maleshevo area offers opportunities for development of mountain tourism or health mountain tourism. This type of tourism takes place through the entire year in numerous resorts, weekend settlements and tourist sites which have attractive natural geographic features. Popular places for this kind of realized tourism are: Suvi Laki which is about 30km from Berovo on the road that leads to Strumica, Ablanica site which is 2km from Berovo along the road that leads to Lake Berovo and also some other localities. These sites, especially the Ablanica site has the necessary resources in terms of accommodation (weekend settlement with a number of holiday homes), at Ablanica there are conditions for developing weekend tourism or picnicking, and it is visited by the locals on weekends and holidays.

Other types of alternative tourism that we can mention are: hunting and fishing tourism, religious tourism, manifestation tourism, eco-tourism, etc... Taking into account the natural geographic and anthropogenic values and resources of space, we believe that there are solid conditions for the development of all the previously mentioned forms of tourism.

We have only listed and represented the types of tourism that can be developed and that are being developed in the Maleshevo area without more detailed analysis; in the continuation of the paper we will analyze the role that tourism has on the local development in the rural Maleshevo area.

Table 1. Number of population, households and dwellings in Berovo populated areas. Source: Government statistics office, 2002.

No.	Settlements	Total population / residents	Number of households	Number of dwelling
1	Berovo	7002	2375	3190
2	Budinarci	682	238	341
3	Vladimirovo	861	318	625
4	Dvorishte	757	208	391
5	Machevo	206	76	109
6	Mitrashinci	729	228	350
7	Ratevo	844	307	438
8	Rusinovo	2095	710	982
9	Smoimirovo	765	255	316
10	Total	13941	4715	6742

5. THE IMPACT OF TOURISM AS A DRIVER FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL MALESHEVO AREA

The development of rural regions, especially promoting the development of mountainous areas or rural areas is a challenge and commitment of all countries, including Macedonia. Local development of rural mountainous areas is a very complex and complicated process, the basis is improving the living

conditions, enhancing the opportunities for management of the population in rural areas, promoting the complete infrastructure in all its segments, improving the quality of health services education, culture, commerce, etc. In other words, local development of rural mountainous areas is achievable by raising the quality of life and improving the living standard of the population in the local community.

Local development of rural mountainous area is a segmented process and may refer to: economic

development, socio-cultural development and the development and improvement of the environment. Given the previous conclusion about the complexity and the complexity of local development as a process, it is very important to bear in mind the following: if local development is based solely on economic activity, it will undoubtedly cause disruption of balance and imbalance, which can to hindering the process of local development that will have the opposite effect.

One of the economic activities which possess all the necessary attributes and qualities that imply on the local development of rural mountainous area as is our subject of analysis the Maleshevo area, and also to encourage development of other economic activities is undoubtedly tourism as a form for local growth. We have shown that in the Maleshevo area there are natural geographical and anthropogenic values for the development of several types of alternative forms of tourism.

All these forms, according to its principles and guidelines have some bearing on local development of rural areas. In many countries of the European Union tourism is considered a strategy for developing rural areas and it also helps to keep the population in rural areas, creates new jobs, and ultimately contribute to the socio-economic advancement of rural areas.

Because of this, tourism development must be in harmony with other activities and must be part of an integrated model for development of rural mountainous areas.

Tourism has a heterogeneous effect on the development of rural space in which it takes place, i.e. the tourist destination, and in this case the tourist destination is the Maleshevo area.

The effects of tourism are manifested in the rural area and this creates and develops, refines, and enriches the space containing the range of positive changes, such as: landscaping the mountainous rural areas, building new and improving the existing transport infrastructure needs for the tourists such as expansion of roads, bridges, pedestrian trails, bicycle paths, parking space etc., improvement of other infrastructure segments, organizing protective zones for preservation and protection of biodiversity, adapting family houses for acceptance and accommodation of tourists, according to their needs, building new and renovating existing housing units, horticultural and urban arrangement of farmyard etc.

All these changes aim to adapt the space for the needs of the tourists, and to also contribute to the development and improvement of the local community. The effects of tourism are also manifested on the socio-cultural development of the local community as expressed through direct contacts between local, i.e. domicile population as hosts in the tourist destinations and the tourists as guests in the rural area.

Through these direct contacts cultural values are exchanged, sharing experiences and traditional habits and attitudes, meeting with different lifestyles and so on.

In this way the locals accepted part of the socio-cultural values of the tourists (who may be from different sides of the world with different values), but they also we'll exchange part of their local socio-cultural values on tourists, thus enhancing the socio-cultural development of the local community. But the biggest impact that tourism has on the local development of rural mountainous area is through the effects on economic development of the area.

The economic effects of tourism on the local community occur directly and indirectly buy spending. The direct economic impact through direct tourist revenue is derived from tourists, while indirect effects are due to the ability of tourism to initiate and encourage the development of other economic activities not related to tourism, but are put into operation for development.

The best examples of how tourism is the basis for local development of rural mountainous area are:

- additional income for the local population from the accommodation of tourists;
- additional earnings from the gastronomic offer;
- additional employment and earnings for the local population as tour guides;
- increase in the financial turnover in local restaurants and shopping facilities;
- promoting and preserving some traditional crafts, which can provide additional income;
- sale of handicrafts and souvenirs, which are produced by the local population;
- adopting and specializing production of agricultural products for the needs of the tourists;
- support and encouragement of the entrepreneurial activities of the local population;
- educating local people about alternative forms of tourism, sustainable development, hospitality and satisfaction of tourists;
- education to raise awareness of the need to protect natural and cultural heritage and so on.

From these examples can be shown that tourism is the basis for development and it also encourages the development of other economic activities such as: agriculture, processing of agricultural products, food, catering, trade, construction, some industrial sectors, education, investment activities etc.

In reviewing the economic effects that tourism has on the local development of the Maleshevo area we have to consider the basic benchmarks or parameters for tourism development in the area in terms of accommodation, number of beds in the Maleshevo area as a tourist destination as a alternative form of tourism.

For this purpose, a table will be presented with data from state statistical office for the period from 2008, according to the official "Census of catering facilities in the Republic of Macedonia in

2008" in terms of accommodation, number of rooms and number of beds in the eastern region and the city Berovo.

Table 2. Number of accommodation facilities, rooms and beds in the eastern region and Berovo.

The region	Accommodation facilities		Number of rooms	Number of beds
	Total	Hotels		
East region	23	9	588	1729
Berovo	5	2	97	238

Source: SSO, 2008.

In these accommodation facilities is the specified number of beds and it does not include the private accommodation facilities and beds in the weekend settlements; according to these data from 2008 shows that the state of accommodation, both for quantity and quality is not satisfactory.

However despite the development of tourism in the Maleshevo area, in recent years the situation significantly has changed in terms of these parameters. The following table will present accommodation facilities with their characteristics in 2012.

Table 3. Accommodation facilities, rooms and beds – Berovo 2012.

Place/Location	Accommodation facilities	Number of rooms	Number of beds
Berovo	20	93	245
Ablanica	130 -weekend houses-	/	/
Lake Berovo	21	97	268
Total:	171	200	513

From the data in the table above is shown that in the analyzed Maleshevo area, there are over 171 accommodation facilities.

If the number of beds and rooms in Ablanica are added, then the total number of rooms in the area is more than 460, while the total number of beds is more than 900 beds.

If the data in 2012 is compared with the situation in 2008, it is notable that for a short period of only 4 years, the number of accommodation facilities, rooms and beds are increased by more than 3, 5 times.

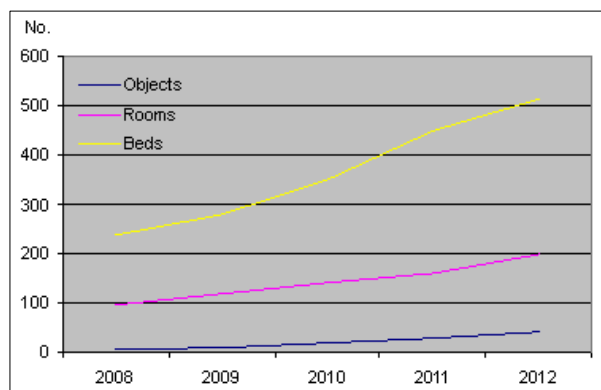


Fig. 1. Dynamics of the number of accommodation facilities, rooms and beds in the period 2008-2012.

Although most of the accommodation facilities such as the private-individual accommodation and weekend houses there is no data in both periods of analysis, there are visible and significant changes in terms of quantity and quality of accommodation facilities. In this area there are two major hotels "Monastery" and "Aurora" (which are open and fully operational from 2011), offering high quality of service and together they have more than 200 beds.

The significant increase in the number and the quality of the accommodation has a positive effect by increasing the number of tourists and the increased tourist spending.

This is quite important because these tourist destinations offer alternative forms of tourism, spending outside the accommodation, or the money that the tourists spend on other services has risen two to three times compared to the money that are spent for accommodations.

Furthermore the increasing of the number of facilities is directly affecting the employment of local population, because tourism is primarily a service and work-intensive activity, which has a large and active role in recruitment of local people, not only directly but

also indirectly in other activities that are similar and which are interdependent.

All of the above indicates that the development of tourism in the Maleshevo area is booming and moving forward. If we take into account the previously analyzed effects and impacts of tourism on local development of rural mountainous areas, then it is more than clear that tourism in Maleshevo as an economic activity it does not only have the capacity, but it is also a real mover of the local economic, social, spatial and sustainable development.

6. CONCLUSION

Tourism is a specific, intricate and complex economic activity, which is present in all areas, directly and indirectly involves the largest number of workers compared to other economic activities, like no other activity has a profound impact on the area ... therefore we say that tourism is "invisible industry", and often is said that "everything is tourism."

Tourism has a huge impact on the local development of the tourist destinations, as a consequential impact very small and unknown places that were outside the economic and commercial developments now have grown into attractive and world famous tourist destinations.

The question is whether tourism can be the basis for local development of rural space in the Maleshevo area? We saw that the Maleshevo area with its relief features is an extremely mountainous area, with its picturesque and natural geographic values that possess an attractive tourist destination.

These tourist destinations coupled with the demographic characteristics, above all, the rural settlements "living villages" and the anthropogenic values that they offer with the unique and unforgettable experience to the visitors through most alternative forms of tourism we can say that there are realistic conditions in the analyzed area for development of this form of tourism.

The local population of the rural settlements in Berovo including Berovo, have recognized the value of its space, and has observed the possibilities before the economic opportunities offered by the development of tourism in the area, which can be seen by the dynamics of the development with which alternative forms of tourism are moving in the Maleshevo area, especially with emphasis on the past few years.

The evidence for this is the increased number of direct investments in the tourism infrastructure, the increased number of accommodation facilities, the increased number of beds, raising the quality of service and enriching the tourist offer, the increased number of realized overnight stay, increased tourist spending, increased population and households that receive basic or additional income from tourism, the active participation of local communities in tourism planning

and support for its development. These short conclusions respond to previous question: whether tourism can be or is already the basis for local development of rural space in Maleshevo? ...

We believe that tourism in all its forms can be practiced in this area, because tourism is such an economic activity with its complexity and size in every sense, a real mover and initiator of local development in all spheres (economic, social, cultural, spatial, education, infrastructure).

The development of tourism in the Maleshevo with this momentum has perspective which with no doubt will contribute to the raise of living standard of the local population, and will initiate the development of many other economic activities, with emphasis on tertiary and quaternary economic activities.

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