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**SOCIAL – CULTURAL  
SUSTAINABILITY OF A  
LOCAL COMMUNITY  
THROUGH VISUAL  
IDENTIFICATION ON  
THE EXAMPLE OF THE  
TOWN OF ZABOK**

**ABSTRACT:** In order for a local community to set up mechanisms for shaping and enforcing public politics which strengthen local communities, historical research that would lead to the identity of a local community must be conducted thus enabling the identification of the community as a tourist destination. Analytical- synthetic method will be used to define the concept of a local community, that is the sustainability of a local community as one element of sustainability in general, as

well as the concept of a tourist destination. The identity of a local community may be presented using basic means of visual communication (graphic design, typography, photography, illustration), which if defined and applied appropriately, will improve the distinguished identity of a local community.

**KEY WORDS:** tourist destination, local community, sustainability of a local community, identity, graphic design

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research is defining socio-cultural sustainability of a local community through visual identification of a town which is spatially or geographically bordered and whose members themselves stimulate development processes by using local and other resources. That is the starting point for a further analysis of an inner community development with the emphasis on visual identification, that is, a specific brand which enables the development of a local community on its way as a tourist destination. In this paper terms “local community” and “the sustainability of a local community” are defined; and the term “branding of an area” is both defined and described on an example of branding of the town of Zabok.

## LOCAL COMMUNITY

The notion of “local community” mostly used nowadays is the one which defines local community in terms of geography (valley, mountain range) or administration (town, district, region, state). *Local community* often refers to either small towns or some other parts of urban or rural centres. The word *community* derives from the word *communitas*, which means the spirit of collective belonging or unstructured community where all people are equal. Turner uses anthropological approach in describing a community as a link in liminal time and spatial process; a group of people who go together through life stages, who help individuals cope with the overwhelming moments in their lives, such as birth, puberty, marriage, parenthood, social advancement, professional specialization and finally, death (Turner, 1969).

R. Esposito uses etymological analysis of the word. He sees community neither as a property nor as a territory separated and defended against those who do not belong to it, but as our debt, or a gift which reminds us to appreciate ourselves (Esposito,

1998). Family groups are also community types, especially in societies based on strong family relations, responsibility, reciprocity and respect. Many indigenous communities are based on a complex hierarchy which is mostly lost in Western cultures. Community also means belonging to a group and sharing common values and visions through formal or informal channels. In that sense, D. W. McMillan and D. M. Chavis (1996) identify four crucial factors for community development: membership, influence, a common emotional connection and integration and satisfaction of needs.

Further emphasis has to be put on the term *sense of community*, a life environment in which people mutually cooperate as a group but always clearly state the differences among its individual members (Graves, 1992).

Most local communities are created organically even though there are attempts of artificial communities (e.g. Garden City – houses for people who lost their homes in the war; construction of Canberra, Brasorje). The development of the communities which are related solely to tourism is also something that has to be pointed out. The concept of J. Hannigan who presented “Fantasy City” will be mentioned here. “Fantasy City” is a combination of a theme park (sport, historic and amusement park) and a shopping centre. It is open day and night, aggressively branded by sponsors, that is, influential multinational companies based on a licensed sale. It is of a modular design and arranged with standardised components, such as theme restaurants, (e.g. Rainforest cafe), *megaplex* cinemas and others. It is isolated from a local community, designed as a virtual reality as well as a spectacle (Hannigan, 1998)

A key issue in community development is enforcing the community’s ability to grow. (Sofield, 2003). According to S. Beeton, there are four key ability elements of a community: organizational, technical and infrastructural element and the ability of a community to learn,

to be innovative and to gain new knowledge (Beeton, 2006). The local government has the main part in enhancing the ability of a local community. Here we can discuss various public policies as forms of state intervention in the issues of a local community. The intervention is realized as a combination of social, cultural, economical and environmental policies which create development schemes and have a major impact on the community's ability (Dredge, 2003). That intervention can be made by presidents of local communities, but also by informal social relations in any place in which the key role is held by an initiator within a community (a personage, a local entrepreneur or a farmer, a country student or a priest). Today there are a lot of local and regional governments which invest in resources for a local community development in studying, innovation and knowledge (Dredge, 2003) in an attempt to turn their community into a *learning* local community.

Moreover, a local community is an amalgam of life values and space sharing. When looking at the core premises of community, the following elements have to be taken into consideration: members' individuality, common perception, trust, connection, common goals and values, common expectations, belonging and a sense of space.

It can be concluded that a local community is a place where material, human and social resources are accumulated. Production and service processes are not related only to individuals but also to a local surrounding. Within a local community various protagonists (individuals and organizations, economic and others, private and public) build up mutual relationships, make decisions and develop strategies in the context which is both cooperative and competitive.

The definition of sustainable community development applicable to this research is:

**Local community's sustainable development is the improvement of the quality of life, that is economic prosperity and a subjectively good**

**feeling which is evoked by reduced usage of non-renewable natural resources and decreased harm to the environment with the purpose of ensuring unlimited development options of future generations.**

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF A LOCAL COMMUNITY**

The socio-cultural dimension of a local community development refers to the behaviour of community members, including their sense of identity, sense of purpose and life goals, social values and experience, integration and belonging to an entity, a homeland. Moreover, it also refers to a cultural diversity in the sense of acceptance of others.

Identity is a set of spatial footholds (natural heritage, inhabitants, economical heritage, cultural heritage,) and developments (changes in nature, society, economy, culture) which define a certain geographic area. Identity is the unity of a geographic area in terms of landscape distinctiveness and ways of living.

The identity of a local community is what makes it different based on its material and non-material qualities, that is, bio/geo/physical resources, human capital, manufacture and consumption, services and ideas.

Cultural diversity is recognition and promotion of diversity of societies and cultures on a specific area with the interrelation of common values and cultural heritage. Cultural diversity implies accepting others without losing your own identity.

The political-institutional component of a local community's sustainability refers to the enhancement of mechanisms for shaping and implementing public policies and institutional agreements (development partnership and strategies) which reinforce and improve the sustainability of a local community. That means that public policies of a local community include spatial-environmental, socio-economic and socio-cultural sustainable development. Representative

bodies have to base their activities on the postulates of sustainability.

Sustainability refers to the ability of a local community to function in a way that it itself defines the living terms on its territory. It means that it determines the questions of space management, such as regional plans; stronger position of a civic society in the community and similar issues.

The political-institutional sustainability of a local community refers to its ability to preserve and develop its cultural identity, life and work conditions of its inhabitants.

One of the pillars of local community development is a visual brand.

Branding is creating a system of characteristic symbols and giving prominence to locally significant spots aimed at achieving immediate recognition of the area in the media murmur. It is an analysis of existing potential and its formulation into simple and recognizable statements of identity as something which is worthy of further consideration. Whether it is about a tourism sector (as a destination) or attracting investment capital is irrelevant.

To have a brand means to have a property, capital. Bearing that in mind, any effort of systematic branding of an area based on a thorough analysis of identity potentials, their values, selection and synthesis, would be a waste of time and money unless the brand was actively used. That is the only way to demonstrate its effects as capital: turnover of capital and added value are the only communicative purpose of branding. Having achieved a sheer “recognition” is both useless and superficial.

## TOURIST DESTINATION

When former scientific and professional approaches to the phenomenon of tourist destination and changes related to dynamic

and multidimensional structure of tourism are synthesised, dominant types of tourist destination can be singled out.

There are twelve dominant types of tourist destinations presented:

☞ World tourism organisation explains destination as a “significant place visited during a journey” and differs:

— Remote destination (the furthest place in comparison to domicile)

— Main destination (a place where one stayed the longest)

— Motivating destination (a place seen by a visitor as the primary purpose of the visit) (UNWTO, 1995; taken from: Bieger, 2000).

☞ If a tourist destination is observed from the perspective of a tourist or a location, it can be defined as a country, region, city or other place visited by tourists. During a year, its advantages serve to local inhabitants and work population, and during several months or a whole year to temporary users – tourists (Metelka, 1990). Inskeep (1991) sees destination in a similar way, adding to it certain characteristics: the number of tourism-related capacities and services, especially those for recreation, gaining new experience and maintaining health. Other authors also regard the phenomenon of tourist destination in the same or nearly the same way as well (Gunn, 1994; Medlik, 1993 and 2003; Lumsdon, 1997; Keller, 1998; Bieger, 2000; Machiavelli, 2001).

The above examples are related to geographic criterion for the identification of destination. However, despite the various criteria for destination qualification it is certain that market criteria have the upper hand. Hitrec (1995) and Grgona (1998) speak of a tourist destination whose borders are in reality very rarely similar to the administrative ones. In other words, they discuss defining an area of a tourist destination based on the market rather than administrative-political criteria.

☞ Similar approach in defining the term *tourist destination* uses the criterion of area size. Kotler, Bowen and Makens (1996) mention macro category

as the biggest area destination, typifying Europe or the USA as examples of macro destinations consisting of many micro destinations, including regions, cities, towns, even parts of towns.

☞ A size criterion, a tourist motive and the distance from home are also criteria of destination categorization (Bieger, 2000). Derivation of a structure of tourism resource and the distance from a domicile distinguishes homogeneous and remote destinations, homogeneous and close destinations, heterogeneous and remote destinations and heterogeneous and close destinations.

☞ The next criterion of categorization of a tourist destination is attractiveness of a destination, which is, together with the accessibility of a destination, emphasised by the group of authors (Gunn, 1994; Medlik, 1993 and 2003; Lumsdon, 1997; Keller, 1998). Keller (1998) categorizes natural and man-made attractions of a tourist destination which exist prior to creation of a tourist offer or are created for a tourist offer and/or services.

☞ One of the criteria for the categorization of a tourist destination is attraction of its location. A destination can thus be classified as urban destination, sea destination, Alpine destination, rural destination, authentic destination, unique – exotic destination, exclusive destination (Buhalis, 2000). Each type of destination is actually unique and offers specific experience to its visitors.

☞ A tourist destination can be designed in terms of the criterion of different tourist perception. Sinclair and Stabler speak of a complementary destination as one type, and the compensation destination as the other type of destination (Sinclair and Stabler, 1997). When tourists experience two places as places of common interest and the money they spend is approximately the same in each of them, then those two places can be regarded as complementary. For example, for American tourists those places would be Florence and Siena. When tourists choose one place (Prague) over the other (Budapest) then those places are categorized as compensation places.

☞ If the chosen criterion is the one of the structure of tourism resource, a destination can be homogeneous or heterogeneous (Vukonić, 2000). In the structure of a homogeneous destination its fundamental components are related to only one element, whereas a heterogeneous destination has various characteristics which are complementary to its basic elements.

☞ Gunn (1988) refers to a tourist destination as a *travel market area* seeing it as an area which can independently meet the international tourist demand and use its attractions to create a tourist product. However, it is possibly too narrow explanation of the term tourist destination. Namely, due to globalization process, which has a great influence on trend in tourism and new methods of planning, a destination cannot be perceived just as a travel market area, but as a much wider area.

☞ The following criterion defines tourist destination as an integrated tourism product and a traditional destination based as a location. Keller (1998) speaks of specifically integrated product whose main characteristics are those of a destination as a product. In that way, a tourist destination and product are the same. Examples of such destination types are round trips and amusement parks (D’Hauteserre, 2001). The reverse approach is a traditional location approach to destination which offers a range of tourism products. The number of integrated products offered by a destination is the main characteristic of such destination.

☞ Davidson and Maitland (1997) and Buhalis (2000) see a tourist destination as a multidimensional active location with the main emphasis on sustainability. The principles of sustainability describe the ability of a destination to manage interrelations of physical, social, cultural and environmental resources that are crucial for the existence of a destination on a tourism market but taking into account its competitiveness (Ritchie and Crouch, 2000; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003).

**TABLE 1. TOURIST DESTINATION TYPES**

AUTHOR	CRITERION	DESTINATION TYPE
UNWTO	Location criterion	Remote destination, main destination, motivating destination
Metelka, 1990; Inskeep, 1991; Gunn, 1994; Medlik, 1993 and 2003; Lumsdon, 1997; Machiavelli, 2001	Geographic criterion	Destination as a country, region city or some other place
Kotler, Bowen, Makens, 1999	Size of an area	Macro destination Micro destination
Bieger, 2000	Structure of a tourism resource and distance from a domicile	Homogeneous remote destination Homogeneous close destination Heterogeneous remote destination Heterogeneous close destination
Gunn, 1994; Medlik, 1993 and 2003; Lumsdon, 1997; Keller Peter, 1998	Level of attractiveness	Destination based on natural attractions Destination based on man-made attractions Destination based on a primary tourism resource Destination based on secondary tourism resource
Buhalis, 2000	Attractiveness principle associated with location	Urban destination, sea destination, Alpine destination, rural destination, authentic destination, unique-exotic destination, exclusive destination
Sinclair and Stabler (1997)	Tourist perception of a destination	Complementary destination Compensation destination
Vukonić, 2000	Structure of a tourism resource	Homogeneous tourist destination Heterogeneous tourist destination
Gunn, 1998	<i>Travel market area</i>	Based on structural patterns: urban zone, radial zone and expanded zone
Keller Peter, 1998 D’Hautesserre, 2001	Number of integrated tourism products	Traditional location-destination, destination based on a tourism product
Davidson and Maitland, 1997; Buhalis, 2000; Ritchie and Crouch, 2000; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003	Multidimensional location phenomenon	Sustainable tourist destination as an open system and as a competitive position
Bieger, 2000	Strategic business unit	Destination as a network and a system

Source: own presentation

Sustainability therefore has to be closely related to competitiveness because a tourist destination cannot maintain a high level of competitiveness without environmental, social, cultural and ethnical dimensions of sustainability (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999).

☞ Bieger upgrades a previous explanation of a tourist destination by putting it in a competitive and changing environment. He sees a destination as a strategic business unit in an environment that changes under the influences of market trends. It can be modelled as an open system with

attractions and strategic development as well as competitive edge of a destination as a system as a whole. This approach regards multiple groups of protagonists and their network that is, the connection within work processes as an asset to a tourist destination (Bieger, 2000).

Table 1 synthetically presents tourist destination types according to different criteria.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL IDENTIFICATION

Visual identification, i.e. branding, is a system of mutually supporting symbols and signs which stimulate and accelerate identification to achieve a desired communication. It is an investment, a dynamic process, an action which, if successful, produces the effect of recognition and separation in experts, foreigners and all people in between.

The brand of a town, an area or a community has to be made in order to participate in modern communication. A brand is a systematic essence of all potentials – in the case of the town of Zabok – town resources, local economy, workers in cultural and educational institutions and all the inhabitants and social climate of the place – joined into a modern and recognizable expression. Characteristics of a brand present extremely reduced information for a person who “has a difficulty to remember, but easily forgets”. If nothing else, after hearing so much about a town, it is a good thing if a foreigner remembers just the town’s characteristics. On the other hand, our brain has a highly developed ability to dynamically connect information or associations. Because of that, the associations that evoke brand features have a more significant role than bare slogan, logo and *sig.*

### A coat of arms and a flag

The current bearers of the identity of Zabok, the coat of arms and the flag of Zabok, are a type of a legitimate portfolio of the past because

of their origin and the formal rules of their usage, but also because of their communication potential, that is, the lack of it. If we discuss just the communication potential of the flag and the coat of arms, it is clear that it is exposed to difficulties in modern communication due to its constitutional conservatism and its semantic obscurity. The main issue is that the connection between the coat of arms and the flag has to be “taught”. Modern communication, on the other hand, requires instant recognition.

For a better understanding of this problem (and its solution) one needs to take a look at the elements that currently create Croatian identity; spontaneous and unsystematic, yet functional elements: red and white squares applied in various ways. Of course, the symbols of Croatia are its coat of arms, its flag and its anthem (Sivački, Đurek, 2016).

When comparing these two sets of symbols, it is clear which one is globally more functional (squares) and which less (the coat of arms and the flag in their appearance as stated in the Constitution).

### Zabok

The branding product of the town of Zabok is one box which contains two books. The box is named Red Carpet and it is also a tool box which presents Zabok to the ones who do not know it and also its equity that has to be generated. One book is a lexicon called *Z-A Book* – a survey of extracted heritage of Zabok from the historic and present point of view, in which the components of Zabok’s past and present are reversed alphabetically organized in the form of a lexicon. The other book is titled *Tkanje branda* (*Weaving of the brand*) and is a synthetic key to interpretation of the material with the main purpose to provide the tools for branding of the town of Zabok and strategic elements of its usage but it also provides an active motivational level for the citizens of Zabok and for those who run the town or its economic and cultural subjects.

PICTURE 1. LOGOTYPE ZABOK



### Logo

Zabok is a town without any special historic attractions, national relics or spectacular nature but it is situated in an area where all of the above can be found. Despite that, or just because of that, it is a town with accumulated mental strength and motivation. *Constant change* describes Zabok the best. Its development is based on the industrial and production heritage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now improved with the consistency of steady and articulated branding (Sivački, Đurek, 2016).

Unlike many toponyms, the name Zabok is short enough and typographically compact to create a logo from the name of the town alone. As it consists of only five letters it can create visually and semantically interesting combination by itself without any added graphisms or “abridgments” typographically, as a visual form, the name of the town is alluring to be used in uppercase letters. Well created logo ZABOK has all predispositions to be self-sufficient slogan-logo since there is great potential for effective touché with the related system of slogans (Picture 1).

Font Zabok is a typical typeface for display uses, such as posters and hoardings. When used in such manner it gives a tone to a whole document regardless of which typeface is used for the secondary information. The characteristic of the Zabok font, especially in robust prints in black, is that it evokes an image of a strong and hard timber (Picture 2).

Two sets of joint letters in the name *Zabok* have extremely big affirmative semantic potential:

1) ZA, (for) as a positive frame of reference, acceptance and consent, and 2) OK as a positive confirmation of the previously said, verification with the internationally recognizable word of confirmation, “OK”.

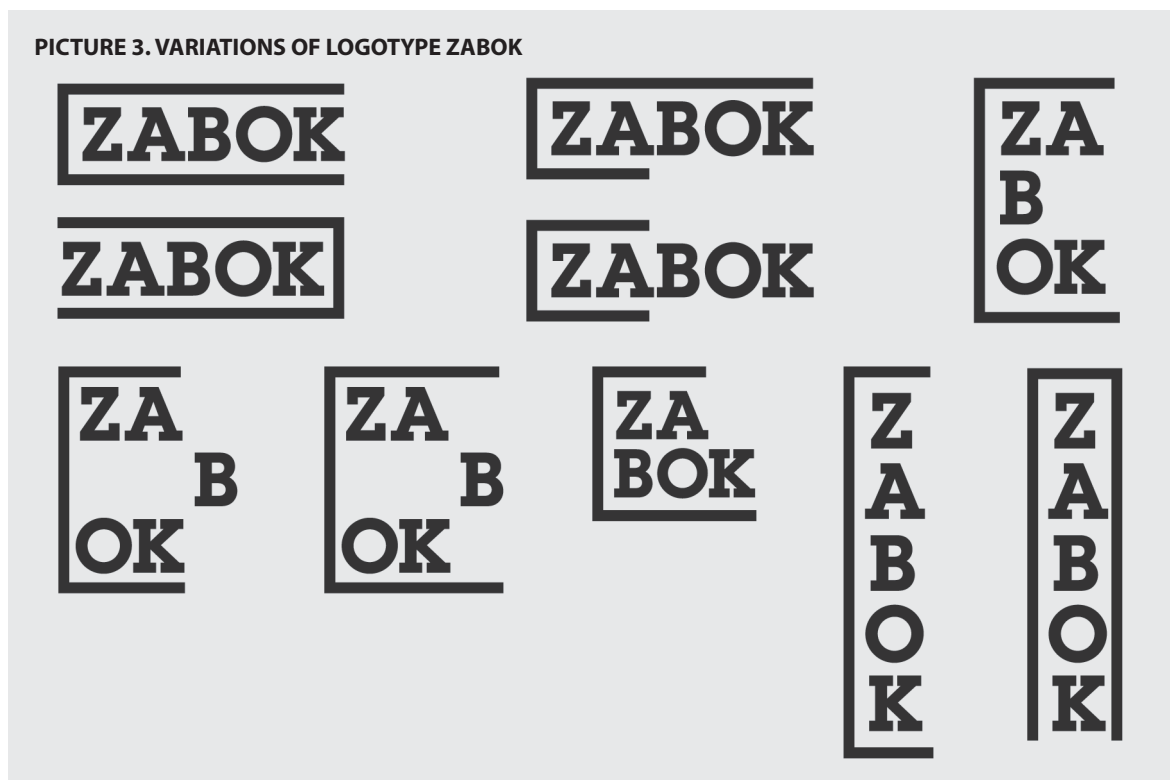
“Za” as a prefix has exclusively positive and familiar connotation, especially in Zagorje as its geographical area: (Za)bok, (Za)gorje, (Za)čretje, (Za)greb, (Za)greb County, (Za)druga. That semantic fact is the starting point of an enormous potential for appropriate slogans with positive elements. Together with the established visual recognition of ZABOK logo, the first two letters of the logo provide countless variations

PICTURE 2. FONT ZABOK





PICTURE 3. VARIATIONS OF LOGOTYPE ZABOK



for different needs and occasions, which will then clearly indicate the locality itself (Picture 3).

The underlying typographic slogan would be: ZA (for) + message + OK, so semantic equation is: affirmation ZA (for) + term + confirmation (OK).

*Examples:*

- ZA business OK (For business OK)
- ZA Stari krovovi OK (For Stari krovovi OK)
- ZA Carnival OK (For Carnival OK)...

This slogan mechanism, as a secondary choice, has to be kept for intensive and numerous variations but with the note that they will only be effective after the main logo ZABOK is verified by and settled in the public. In that case, the middle term, the one which is changeable, can be depicted as a pictogram rather than as word.

In such a developed system and an interlude of the logo and the slogan only the basic visuals are fixated, while a dynamic system of messages can be worked with. In that process, it is irrelevant for the message to be “fixated” in its content or its features because the system leaves the possibility of a flexible usage and numerous variations, depending on occasions and needs. When used continually, the system gains a legitimate inner logic and stability.

Basic variations of the slogan in Croatian language, depending on the application, would be: Ja sam ZA / Jeste li ZA (I am FOR / Are you FOR). The basic rule for slogan placement could be that “ZA” (for) is typographically identical to logotype. For example: Ja sam ZA aktivni odmor (OK) – I am FOR active leisure (OK).

**PICTURE 4. SLOGAN VARIATIONS**

*Ja sam ZA aktivni odmor (OK)*

*Ja sam ZA aktivni odmor (OK)*

*Ja sam ZA aktivni odmor (OK)*

*Ja sam ZA aktivni odmor (OK)*

The slogan in foreign languages, due to an entirely different audience, works with the different meaning of the text. These variations are in the form of a question (but without the question mark), and using the same typography used for the logotype: Do you know ZA. Of course, also with the same sublime message that points directly to Zabok (Picture 4).

So, the equation is: question + ZA + OK. For example: Do You Know ZA (OK), Wissen Sie ZA (OK)... And in expanded form with the default *theme*: Do You Know ZA Business (OK), Wissen Sie ZA Geschäft (OK), Do You Know ZA Potentials (OK), Wissen Sie ZA Gastronomie (OK).

It is apparent that in all of the variations, with the logo that clearly indicates the name ZABOK, all the while repeating and varying ZA + OK define memorability of the name. The possibilities of such effective modular combinations are endless.

**Red Carpet**

The main slogan for Zabok is: Red Carpet. A factual reference is well-known: Regeneracija, the company that manufactures carpets. Red colour is a direct connotation of industrial tradition and working environment. However, the most important element is a general metaphor which evokes contrasts of Zabok as well as its controversies. The English language itself has words with various meanings which excite such images.

Red Carpet is at the same time a spot and a counterpoint. A confusing amalgam of glamour and irony. The mud at motto-cross track (as one of the main symbols of Zabok) in the contrast with the cleanliness of the red carpet (Sivački, Đurek, 2016).

*Sig* RC derives from the slogan (Picture 5).

The *sig* is firstly an urban sub-cultural phenomenon. It fits perfectly in the whole branding process of Zabok as “a different Zagorje”, prominently industrial and urban. *Sig* “RC” is thus an appropriate teaser. In a perception of a passer-by, it is confusing, even unsettling, characteristic symbol of Zabok. Of course, its real meaning is “This is Zabok, this is red carpet”. The intention is to get all Zabok’s subcultures, like EFZ members (Erotic Front Zabok – local sport fans) either consciously or spontaneously and unconsciously accept *sig* and spread it gradually and “provocatively” outside Zabok, “usurping” “other territories” by attending concerts, sports events and other gatherings.

The box containing two books, with the monogram RC blazed on it, is a tool box for a communicational representation of Zabok to general public. This has been stated several times so far for a good reason. All its elements combine a unit which enables practical logic to be applied and used on a daily basis. There is also data on how certain solutions were reached, on how relevant topics were chosen and synthesized and there is a description of the communication system of expression.

**PICTURE 5. SIG RC (RED CARPET)**



## CONCLUSION

**Local community's sustainable development is the improvement of the quality of life, in the sense of economic prosperity and a subjectively good feeling.** Socio-cultural dimension of local community development refers to the behaviour of community members, including their sense of identity, sense of purpose and life goals, social values and experience, integration and belonging to an entity, a homeland. Identity is a set of spatial footholds (natural heritage, inhabitants, economical heritage, cultural heritage,) and developments (changes in nature, society, economy, culture) which define a certain geographic area. The identity of a local community is what makes it different; based on its material and non-material

qualities, that is, bio/geo/physical resources, human capital, manufacture and consumption, services and ideas. Visual identification, that is branding, is a system of mutually supporting symbols and signs which stimulate and accelerate identification to achieve a desired communication. The brand of a town, an area or a community has to be made in order to participate in modern communication. A brand is a systematic essence of all potentials – in the case of the town of Zabok – town resources, local economy, workers in cultural and educational institutions and all the inhabitants and social climate of the place – joined into a modern and recognizable expression.

As previously said, visual identity of a community should be a prerequisite for its tourism and sustainable development.

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