

English abstract

This dissertation thesis deals with an entrepreneur as an engaged social agent that wants to shape society, creating not only a successful business venture but also a societal vision. This research focused on the Czech example of Tomáš and Jan Antonín Baťa while utilizing case studies of American entrepreneurs Henry Ford and Milton Hershey. These business owners are examples of social agents that realized their entrepreneurial plans, while their enterprise also allowed them to create a desired societal vision.

The goal of the dissertation thesis is to discover how the studied entrepreneurs tried to influence the community of their employees and their company towns. The examination will include the ways they tried to influence wider society, through areas such as politics, philanthropy, and support of education. The goal is to identify and evaluate their motivations, goals, and ideas they used to shape society. The intent of the thesis is to present engaged Czech entrepreneurs through comparison with their American counterparts.

This thesis is focused on the first 40 years of the 20th century. It was a time that immediately followed the societal changes connected with industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. The studied entrepreneurs lived in an era of massive social changes, brought about by industrialization, modernization, and urbanization. It was an era where both entrepreneurs and employees were searching for their place in the new world. There were groundbreaking social changes and uprooting of individuals as a result of these changes. There were several political and social concepts and ideologies reacting to these conditions, from the socialist movement to concept of industrial paternalism and welfare capitalism. I see the entrepreneurial and social visions and reform attempts of Baťa brothers, Henry Ford and Milton Hershey in the context of reaction and answers to the extensive changes connected to modernization. Their social visions therefore need to be seen in the context of actions of other entrepreneurs of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, that were striving to reform employees as human beings, capable of living in an industrial and modernizing world.

Baťa brothers, Henry Ford, and Milton Hershey are typical representatives of such entrepreneurs in their respective countries, who tried to transcend the sphere of business to the social sphere. Studying these examples can demonstrate transfer of these ideas from America to Europe.

The thesis is based on a combination of research of literature, archival research, and analysis of witnesses recollections, whether recorded in interviews or in memoirs of former employees or co-workers of the entrepreneurs, and on study of writer work of these entrepreneurs.

Key words: Entrepreneur, company, business, philanthropy, social agent, company town, industrial paternalism, welfare capitalism, Tomáš Baťa, Jan Antonín Baťa, Henry Ford, Milton Hershey