

Baťovany – Partizánske: The Contemporary Re/invention of the Heritage of a Baťa Company Town

Barbora Vacková – Nina Bartošová

DOI: 10.21104/CL.2024.2.03

Abstract

The text focuses on the re/construction of identity and heritage conservation in the Slovak town of Partizánske. The town was founded as one of the industrial towns of the Baťa company at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s. Despite the efforts of experts, neither the town's urban plan nor any significant part of it (except for the modernist church) is institutionally protected to this day. In this text, we offer an alternative approach to the re/construction of historical heritage and its institutional protection. In addition to qualities deemed valuable by art historians, this approach is informed by the current collective memory on which the town's inhabitants base their relationship to historical heritage. We anticipate that focusing on the inhabitants' current relationship and understanding of the city's history and broadening the focus beyond the founding firm and its activities can support efforts to institutionalise local heritage conservation.

Key words

Baťa, collective memory, conservation, heritage, Partizánske

Acknowledgment

The text was written as part of a scientific activity at the Department of Civic Education, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic and the Department of Theory, Faculty of Architecture, Brno University of Technology, Brno, Czech Republic.

Contact

Mgr. Barbora Vacková, Ph.D., Department of Civics, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, Poříčí 31, 639 00 Brno, Czech Republic; e-mail: bvackova@mail.muni.cz

ORCID iD 0000-0001-9554-6839

doc. Ing. Arch. Nina Bartošová, Ph.D., Department of Theory, Faculty of Architecture, Brno University of Technology, Poříčí 5, 639 00 Brno, Czech Republic; e-mail: bartosova.n@vutbr.cz

ORCID iD 0000-0003-1903-1045

Jak citovat / How to cite

Vacková, Barbora – Bartošová, Nina. 2024. Baťovany – Partizánske: Contemporary Re/inventing the Heritage of a Baťa Company Town. *Český lid* 111: 199–219. <https://doi.org/10.21104/CL.2024.2.03>

1. Introduction

This text deals with reconstructing the historical heritage of Partizánske, one of the so-called Baťa's satellites. The Baťa corporation started production in a locality close to the present-day town in the 1920s.¹ Soon, it became clear that the site on the Nitra river in western Slovakia represented a profitable investment, and the building of a new factory began there in the late 1930s. Partizánske was planned according to the rules set out in the company's unpublished book *Ideal Industrial City* (Baťa 1937)² and thus fulfilled the company's ideas of an effective combination of production, residential and recreational (and consumer) functions. Due to the historical development, only a minor part of the construction was realised: a factory and a street of residential houses (Červená/Red Street) were built. The town only gradually acquired further amenities during and after the end of World War 2.

Partizánske is sometimes called the *Slovak Zlín*, especially in Slovakia. Even though the two cities are linked by the Baťa company and architects from Zlín were involved in the design of Partizánske till the end of World War 2, several aspects have contributed to the different identities of these cities. Drawing attention to the shared features of the architecture and urban planning of Partizánske and Zlín partially overlooks essential differences between the two cities. While in Zlín, where the Baťa company established its business, progressive functionalist ideas were gradually applied in the construction of the factory and residential districts from the 1920s onwards; these ideas were brought to Partizánske like a sudden import from the outside just before the start of World War 2 (Moravčíková 2003: 115). Crucially, the ideas were also introduced over a relatively short period – mostly only during the duration of the wartime Slovak state – while outside the factory complex, they were implemented on a smaller scale in the typical expression of Baťa architecture (basically only the development of houses on Červená Street, two schools and the Spoločenský dom/Community House).

The standard features of the buildings have led experts to try to apply a similar approach to cultural heritage in Partizánske and in Zlín. While in Zlín institutionalised conservation³ has proven to be quite successful, the same cannot be said of Partizánske (Vaňová – Pohaničová 2022: 28). Yet

1 The Baťa company used the tannery in Veľké Bošany from the end of the 1920s, and became its majority owner in 1931 (Jemelka – Ševeček 2016: 297).

2 Although J. A. Baťa is listed as the author of this publication, it is a collective work in which employees of the company's construction department also participated (Moravčíková 2003: 116; Novák 2008: 269).

3 The term "conservation" stands for "all the processes of looking after a place to retain its cultural significance" (The Burra Charter 2013).

the problem is not so much how institutionalised conservation is enforced; it is its theoretical underpinnings themselves that are less valid in cases such as that of Partizánske. Indeed, these theoretical premises are based predominantly on art historical qualities. In the following text, we want to offer an alternative approach to the construction of historical heritage and its protection, which, in addition to art historical qualities, also works with the actual collective memory on which the town's inhabitants build their relationship to heritage.

1.1 Method

The text is based on a long-term theoretical and empirical interest in the foundations of progressive heritage conservation of 20th-century architecture in Partizánske (N. Bartošová) and Zlín (B. Vacková), on an analysis of archival materials and available regional and foreign literature, on field observations and information from a focus group with engaged locals in Partizánske.

The focus group was conducted in December 2022 and was attended by eight people aged between 20 and 70 who were born in Partizánske or are long-term town residents. Thematically, it consisted of five sections: the initial parts addressed the topics of the town's identity, the relationship with Baťa and the personal identification of the historical value of the town, other parts were mainly focused on the perception and use of the central square. It should be pointed out that participants in the research event are in some way involved with the local association *Fabrika umenia/Art Factory*,⁴ which was also the reason why they were willing to give us two hours of their time. They are members of the association or follow its activities. We did not collect other specific personal data because we were interested mainly in the participants' approach to the Baťa identity of the town. The communication partners included both former employees of the Baťa company and people who did not necessarily have any connection to the company. They were driven by an interest in the history, local identity, and the potential that the town had in their eyes, both in terms of tourism and in terms of a broader interpretation of Slovak history.

Of course, we know the limits of such a population sample. Our knowledge of how the town, its past and present, is approached by its less interested inhabitants is currently rather speculative. However, it must be acknowledged that people, like those who were part of the focus group conducted, often have the power to define shared ideas.

4 For further information, see <https://fabrikaumenia.sk/>.

2. Theoretical Context

2.1 Identity Construction and Local Memory

In his classic book *On Collective Memory*, Maurice Halbwachs (2009: 51–52)⁵ gives the example of a foreigner in London (chapter Individual and Collective Memory). Even if he explores the city alone, with only a guide in hand, his memory of the city will not be individual because his recognition is marked by his past experiences with particular people and texts that provided him with a pre-understanding of what he is seeing for the first time in his life. When we enter a new space that we are unfamiliar with, we usually follow pre-determined rules and previous experience. We can buy a guidebook in which more or less informed authors will fill us in on what to see, which way to walk, etc. thus our experience is influenced a priori by the social consensus embodied in the guidebook. We can, of course, admit that some of us make no preparations when visiting a new city. Yet, we certainly have a preconception: experienced travellers to European historic cities, for example, know that it is possible to expect a historic centre, a church district, a town hall, or residential districts; that it is possible to navigate, in a logical way, to the high street and shopping centres etc. However, even exploring a city alone is part of an experience influenced by a collectivity, a society, that, before our visit has already mediated information about what it means to be in a historic European city.

In line with Halbwachs, this socially mediated experience can be described as collective memory. In contemporary memory theory, which has become an integral part of sociological and historiographical theory since Halbwachs, collective memory is associated with the construction and continuous reformulation of identity, not only personal but especially group identity (Assmann – Czaplicka 1995). In our text, we refer primarily to local identity, which is closely linked to contexts of belonging: how we as people interpret our relationship to place is related both to our personal biography and to the understanding that is framed by the history of the place to which we want to belong.

In autumn 2023, a conference dedicated to modernist cities built by Baťa in Europe and South American Brazil⁶ was also attended by a current high-ranking Brazilian official in the Czech Republic. She did not mention the Baťa cities, but her adolescence in the capital Brasília, which may resemble

5 The Czech edition was translated from the French original *La mémoire collective. Édition critique établie par Gérard Namer* (1997).

6 Conference *Brasília x Žlín: Vision of the Modern City*, Prague, 2. 11. 2023, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Czech Technical University in Prague.

the modernist cities of the Baťa concern in its concept of greenfield construction.⁷ She spent her childhood in one of Brazil's big cities, but she and her parents soon moved to the new capital. It took her a long time to find her way around this city, but visiting her hometown and relatives was a big help. She described a situation in which she once walked with her cousins around her hometown, and they talked about their daily memories, insignificant events of teenage life. At that moment, she understood that she no longer belonged there. From that moment on, if anyone asked, she began to answer without hesitation that she is from Brasília. This is because, during the summers spent with her family in her hometown, she realised that her life, adolescence, and memories were linked to Brasília. It was only at that moment that she accepted this city as her city. Assmann and Czaplicka (1995: 125–133)⁸, in their text *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, distinguish between two dimensions that can be considered in the context of collective memory. First, they speak of communicative memory, which is part of our everyday experience and is re/constructed in personal interactions. In the interactions, “each individual composes a memory which, as Halbwachs showed, is (a) socially maintained and (b) relates to the group” (Ibid: 127). In this way, the little girl became a resident of Brasília; her personal history became part of her newfound identity as a girl from Brasília.

The second dimension is cultural memory, which reflects the discourse directed at the level of expertise but also of politics and the definition of more complex types of attributions, interpretive frameworks etc. The main difference between these two levels of memory is their temporal focus: “Just as the communicative memory is characterized by its proximity to the everyday, cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday.” (Ibid: 129) While the horizon of communicative memory to which we refer when defining our current social position may change, e.g. from our hometown to the present one, the horizons of cultural memory do not change in this way. This is because cultural memory keeps its distance from the everyday.

7 Here we do not, of course, want to compare the generosity, style or goals of these cities: the main idea of Brasília as the new centre of a large state is, of course, fundamentally different from the reasons for founding industrial company towns. However, from the point of view of an individual trying to find his or her daily rhythm and life in them, as well as a relationship to a seemingly a-historical space, the experience can be similar.

8 In this text, we quote from (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995), where Czaplicka is listed as a co-author and as a translator of the text. However, it should be noted that the authors state in a footnote: “The use of the plural refers to the co-authorship of Aleida Assmann in the formulation of these ideas. See Aleida and Jan Assmann, *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* (Munich: Fink, 1987).” (Ibid: 126)

Assmann and Czaplicka characterise cultural memory as a concept explaining the interrelationships between memory, culture and group. In other words, they characterize it as a powerful tool for defining and re/constructing the past, history and thus also the contemporary identity and feelings of belonging. It is a tool institutionalised in modern institutions, for example, museums and schools, which constantly control and reconstruct the group's image on behalf of some codifications (Ibid: 130–133). Similar mechanisms are also behind cultural heritage and institutions for its protection, which form part of the cultural memory dimension of collective memory.

2.2 Current Views of Heritage Conservation

Working with memory – being aware of the nature of its narratives – can also positively influence the success of the conservation of physical artefacts, especially those related to social history, as they can be thought of as “theatres of memory” (Samuel 1994). Although more progressive-minded conservation practitioners have considered this in recent decades and sought a paradigm shift, the theoretical underpinnings of heritage conservation as it is practised today are still primarily based on art historical qualities. In a heritage discourse shaped by Western culture, the Australian conservationist Laurajane Smith introduces the term “authorised heritage discourse” (Smith 2006: 4) with the focus on things as such, not on the society to which these things are meaningful. Randall Mason, an American urban planner and conservationist, refers to this approach as *fabric-centred*, as opposed to the more holistic *value-centred* approach, which works simultaneously with the “contemporary and historical values of a place” (Mason 2006: 21).⁹ In the context of communicative and cultural memory, this means that this approach also tends to take into account the communicative parts of memory, which could be incorporated into the professionalised activities of cultural memory.

At the time of the historical formation of institutionalised conservation, the fabric-centred approach was necessitated by specific historical circumstances that date back to *the Great French Revolution*. At that time, there was a massive destruction of monuments.¹⁰ Acts of destruction provoked

9 See also *Industrial Heritage in the Eyes of Expertise/Experience. Theory & methodology of industrial heritage conservation in the context of Bratislava* (Bartošová – Haberlandová 2016: 24–26).

10 At that time, after the dethroning of king Louis XVI, there was a widespread destruction of monuments that were perceived as symbols of the monarchy, compounded by vandalism without an ideological motive (Bakoš 2004: 83; Choay 2001: 14–15).

a backlash at the time and in an effort to protect valuable artefacts of the past, *La commission des monuments historiques* (the Historical Monuments Commission) was set up, which was instrumental in changing the perception of these artefacts as symbols of feudalism to elements of national heritage, a *patrimoine*.¹¹ Although institutionalised conservation has continued to evolve and adapt to the political interests of the time – with the work of Alojz Riegl and subsequently Max Dvořák during the Austro-Hungarian period becoming pivotal in the geographic context of the future Czech and Slovak Republic – an approach that interprets the value of monuments on the basis of the physical nature of a particular artefact is still prevalent in conservation today.

Although Alois Riegl (1858–1905), in his important work *Der moderne Denkmalkultus* (The Modern Cult of Monuments) from 1903, which was written as a tool to enforce legislation for the protection of monuments, was aware of the relative nature of heritage values as well as their dependence on particular social interests (Choay 2001: 113–114), this aspect gradually disappeared in the work of his pupil and successor, Max Dvořák. Indeed, Dvořák emphasized the scientific nature of heritage values and insisted on immutable values, thus siding with Riegl’s critic Georg Dehio (1850–1932), the great German authority on monument conservation, as Ján Bakoš explains (2004: 135–138). With Dvořák’s work *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* (Catechism of monument conservation) from 1918, which is a “compendium of inviolable truths”, the act of protecting monuments became a kind of “moral obligation” (Bakoš 2004: 135; Petrů 1989: 577). This development reinforced the fabric-centred approach of the dominant heritage discourse represented by institutionalised conservation,¹² but also by many established heritage institutions and organisations.

On the other hand, Riegl’s ability to perceive the dynamic nature of heritage values, their dependence on the society that determines them, as well as their potentially conflicting nature, is what motivates forward-thinking conservation and heritage professionals today to revisit his writings. Riegl was aware that the appropriate form of protection for a particular monument has to be sought through a compromise or hierarchy of values embedded in historical development, whereby the values “attributed to monuments are a projection of social interests” (Bakoš 2004: 125). Therefore, it is not Riegl’s term *Alterswert* (the age-value) that is often emphasized

11 Bakoš explains that in French the term national – in contrast to the German conception – initially did not mean national or ethnic, but social (Bakoš 2004: 88–89).

12 The dominant heritage discourse is usually understood as something given; therefore, society does not question it.

in his work that is so important, but his understanding of the importance of the beholder, and how the values are identified “according to the effect they generated upon the subject” (Arrhenius 2012: 92).

It should be noted that a significant impetus for the current interest in rethinking the dominant heritage discourse is linked to marginalized cultural groups seeking recognition of the legitimacy of their view of history and their cultural heritage.¹³ The problem with the dominant (authorised) heritage discourse is that it ignores the fact that heritage values need to be reframed in relation to contemporary society; they are not something immutable. L. Smith sees heritage more as a “process, practice or performative activity” (Smith 2021: 19). However, these attempts to formulate alternative discourses are applicable across a range of cases where institutionalised conservation fails for one reason or another. The cultural – architectural and urban – heritage of the town of Partizánske, where legislative monument protection with the exception of the Roman Catholic church building has so far failed to be enforced – despite the long-standing efforts of experts, both from the academic environment and the state heritage institution (The Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic) itself – can be considered as such a case.

3. Searching for the Historical Heritage of Partizánske: Heritage as Part of Collective Memory

Even at the level of cultural memory, collective memory is built over and over again. And this, in the broadest sense of the word, occurs in the light of contemporary social needs. An example of this redefinition of the contents of memory can be found in the work with names (naming), in our case, directly with the names of entire cities. In the Czech Republic, a notorious example is the renaming of Zlín after the first workers’ president, Klement Gottwald. From 1 January 1949, a town with a historical tradition of more than half a millennium which underwent such a fundamental transformation in the first half of the 20th century that its oldest history was essentially suppressed and rewritten by the modernist vision of the company town, was renamed Gottwaldov. In contemporary collective memory,¹⁴ this moment is described as the vision of the Zlín communists, who could fully

13 For example, postcolonial areas; for more see e.g. Giblin 2015.

14 This interpretation is based on long-term research experience gained while working in Zlín during research carried out at the Institute for Social Reproduction and Integration (IVRIS; later Institute of Population Studies, ÚPS) at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, especially in cooperation with Lucie Galčanová.

express themselves in the town after the coup d'état in February 1948, after a period of suppression of Communist party activities. Another explanation may be that in the interwar period, Zlín became so synonymous with the name Baťa that the new local elites felt the need to rewrite its name (Vacková – Waschková Čísařová 2023: 422–457). For the next forty years, “Zlín” remained a central district in Gottwaldov. Immediately after the revolution in 1989, the town returned to its historical name.¹⁵

Today's Partizánske was not founded as Partizánske. Like many other towns founded by the Baťa concern, its original name had a built-in reference to the founder, the Baťa company. The newly built settlement on the territory of the village Šimonovany was named Baťovany. The new name – Partizánske – was also acquired in 1949 for essentially the same – in this case even more obvious – reasons as in the case of Zlín. However, unlike with Zlín, the town did not return to its original name after 1989. In the 1990s, a similar proposal was made, and there was even a semi-official poll asking about the possibility of renaming the town Baťovany. But it fizzled out without much interest, and its results were not convincing. The town is still called Partizánske.

This leads us to two questions we will now try to answer: Why did this return to the original name not happen in Partizánske? And what does this tell us about the possibilities of re/construction of this town's historical heritage? A more or less speculative answer to the first question will lead us to the starting point of the answer to the second question. We believe that the answer to the first question may be the fact that the perception of Baťa's past was not anchored sufficiently in the collective memory of the local population in the 1990s when the question of a return to the “original” name was raised. Nevertheless, the *Baťa town* image seems to be alive in the public space. The town claims the legacy of its founder, *Baťa*; relatively near the centre, there is a statue of Tomáš Baťa with the inscription *Founder of Baťa company*. The actual founder of the town, i.e. the director of the company at the time of its foundation and construction, Jan Antonín Baťa, has had a memorial plaque in the town since 2008 with information about his contribution to the founding of the town.

In recent years, a group of educated intellectuals has chosen Baťa himself and *Baťa times*, i.e. the founding period, as a point in the past that needs to be “illuminated” (Hroch 2014). This is the aforementioned non-profit organisation *Art Factory* which profiles itself as an artistic group and seeks to revive the town's cultural life. It also operates the *Batovany.sk*¹⁶ website

15 For details on the historical development of Zlín in the 20th century, see (Valůšek – Ševeček – Sommer 2023).

16 See website <https://www.batovany.sk/>

and *Baťa Point*¹⁷. The Baťa Point is located in one of the semi-detached Baťa houses on Červená Street. The inspiration for its existence is the Infopoint of the Baťa Housing in Zlín, which *Art Factory* members visited while looking for a way to present the town's architectural heritage. The project's website characterises Partizánske with the words: *People, Beauty, Ideal*.

Art Factory basically adopted Baťa's company rhetoric from the period before 1939, when the company was implementing its plans to construct new factory settlements, which were referred to as *Little Zlín*s. These so-called satellites were planned with a clear referencing to the *mother-town* of Zlín (and the company's headquarters) as its imprint on the carefully chosen landscape. Two publications signed by J. A. Baťa were published in 1937: *Let's build a State for 40,000,000 Inhabitants* and *The Ideal Industrial City*. Both books describe quite accurately the ideology of the company and its vision. The motto chosen by the Partizánske activists that serves as the header of their website refers to the company's core values which are also described in the contemporary literature. For the company, or rather its founder and successors, people were the fundamental component of their business; without them, neither factories nor cities could be built. The company towns were subject to the period's ideal of function preceding aesthetics, as well as to the building of (and searching for) an ideal industrial city in which these three values – people, beauty and the ideal – converged.

3.1 Baťa as a Universal Value?

But this phrase, *People, Beauty, Ideal*, also refers to the idealised image of the company's activities as they became established in the public discourse after 1989. In the 1990s, the uncritical acceptance of the company as an example of a First Republic business in Czechoslovakia became (unsurprisingly) widespread. Baťa, as a director, was portrayed as a man of the people who had achieved unprecedented success by his diligence and modesty when compared to Czechoslovak standards at the time. He became an ideal of the Czechoslovak "American dream" and an icon of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia.¹⁸ We can conclude that it was the adoption of the discourse promoted by the factory itself before World War 2, which was and is manifested, among other things, in the reprinting of contemporary books

17 It is one of the oldest semi-detached houses on Červená Street, where the association carries out part of its activities and offers information about the history of Baťa to those interested. (See <https://1url.cz/Yud0n>)

18 No other successful interwar companies did enjoy a similar re-adoption in the Czech Republic.

about T. Baťa, the publication of his speeches, etc.¹⁹ A critical analysis of the firm's activities shows that the real picture was much more problematic: the firm was (and is)²⁰ primarily a capitalist business entity, and although we do not wish to question the role and importance of the firm's social policy in its pre-War period, there are nevertheless valid criticisms to be made in the academic debate (e.g. Marek – Strobach 2010; Mareš 2013). However, for this moment, the aim is not to provide a critical analysis of the company's activities; we only want to stress that a positive *Baťa* myth was established in the Czechoslovak environment in the 1990s. In many ways a complicated family history is hidden behind the *Baťa* brand, which does not distinguish whether it refers to Tomáš, Jan Antonín or some of their descendants. It is an unambiguous "brand" that today not only serves the company but is also taken up by some cities that want to associate their history with the company and its good reputation.

From the focus group interview and the analysis of the materials produced by the *Art Factory*, it is clear, that this positive myth prevails in the group of local actors who are trying to promote the Baťa vision of the town's past. To our surprise, when describing the town, the participants identified the existence of the factory and the Baťa origins of the town as essential; later in the interview they no longer thematised these views. It was as if the workers' past and experience had been "set aside" as less important. However, the figure of Baťa himself was present in the conversation, characterised in an almost paternalistic way – looking after the welfare of his employees. Although, as it later emerged, the participants did not mean specifically J. A. Baťa. The term *Baťa* was a placeholder for anyone from the local factory management. The image of the benevolent "father" of the company was complemented by a simplistic notion that everything positive in the town was "from Baťa" and the uncritical characterisation of the Baťa company as interested in "building something for people, not just for itself".²¹

To understand the identity construction in Partizánske, it is important to see that despite the partially distorted view of the past, Baťa's history is something that the locals take pride in. This was reflected in the fact that the locals were aware of their values despite inappropriate interventions on

19 We are thinking, for example, of the contemporary and younger writings of the company's employees Josef Vaňhara (e.g. 2020) and Antonín Cekota (e.g. 2016), which were published after 1989; in recent years, the T. Baťa Foundation in Zlín has been taking care of the reprints of these Baťa books.

20 On the company's contemporary business, see e.g. Nedbálková 2021.

21 As expressed by a woman participant (about 50 years old), a native of Partizánske, during a focus group.

several buildings. They considered the church and the Community House important as well; in the case of the Community House, they felt the need to return to its original appearance “as in Zlín”. The interest in returning the town to its original appearance resonated in the whole interview. This also confirmed the fact that everyone welcomed the demolition of the recent high-rise building, which will be discussed later in the text. Its removal opened up the view of the church again, which emphasised the original “Baťa-style” appearance.²²

Despite this coherent vision of what *Baťa* means, in terms of historical change, it is problematic to speak of a kind of uniform *Baťa world*. In their large overview publication, Ševeček and Jemelka write: “It can be stated that the locally operating Baťa companies (one of them also operated within the Slovak state during World War 2 – author’s note) respected the political status quo and served the economic interests of those groups that militarily and politically dominated the area in which they operated.” (Jemelka – Ševeček 2016: 723). The fact that J. A. Baťa did not hesitate and favoured the company’s interests is also evidenced by the information from the same publication about the million-dollar monetary donation to the Slovak government and his personal participation in the first meeting of the *Slovak Lands Assembly* (Ibid: 307). In other words, Baťa company acted as a rational capitalist enterprise and used all markets to strengthen its position.

However, this relationship to the regime of the Slovak state is not thematised in any way in commemorating the town’s Baťa past. From today’s point of view, it would be problematic, of course. The whole construction of Partizánske as a pure Baťa town thus remains based first on a rather vague idea of Baťa as a good boss and a founding father; and second on an attempt to highlight what remains original in the town’s substance.

3.2 Searching for Baťa Vestiges in the Town Centre

Aside from the factory complex, where the presence of Baťa heritage is unquestionable – although some buildings were demolished or painted in an inappropriate yellow-blue colour after the fall of communism – it is more difficult for an uninformed visitor today to read the Baťa context in the town centre. This does not change the fact that a significant part of the town still bears the signs of the original urban concept of an ideal industrial city, as designed by the architect Voženílek for what was called Baťovany at the time.

²² It is remarkable that everything evaluated as positive was also labelled as Baťa-like, even though it was not necessarily so.

Along the town centre – originally called *Námestie práce*/the Square of Labour, together with the park area – there are no buildings whose present appearance would clearly refer to the town's Baťa history, although the former hotel *Spoločenský dom*/Community House, a pair of buildings facing each other that housed Baťa's schools of labour (for young women and young men), were constructed on the principle of a characteristic reinforced concrete skeleton measuring 6.15 x 6.15 m, with round columns protruding onto the facade. The hotel with commercial premises on the ground floor had lost its original appearance through alterations during the second half of the 20th century, and the infill masonry of the school facades was – unlike in Zlín – plastered from the start. The town hall and the *Dom kultúry*/House of Culture, which were added to the square after the War, abandoned the architectural style of Baťa architecture.

A not insignificant factor weakening the current Baťa character of the town is the fact that typical Baťa houses with red brick façades, of which there are dozens in Zlín, form only one street (*Červená Street*) in Partizánske. Another development of detached houses built in 1941–1947, already under the influence of the Nazi Slovak state, acquired a more traditional expression thanks to the pitched roof and white plaster, although the urban design still adhered to Voženílek's proposal (Vaňová – Pohaničová 2022: 27). Equally, the 6- and 8-family houses designed by the architect Drofa that line the central zone along the north-eastern line of the park are plastered and with a sloped roof. The architectural historian Henrieta Moravčíková considers this to be one of the important aspects that challenge the original Baťa model (Moravčíková 2015: 23–27).

The Roman Catholic church at the end of the park, i.e. on the south-eastern side of the centre, has acquired a specific social and cultural significance. It was built according to a modified project by architect Vladimír Karfík originally intended for Otrokovice, near Zlín, and is – as already mentioned – currently the only listed monument of the Baťa era in the town. This building, despite the fact that it was completed only after the War and was not initiated by the Baťa company but by the local religious community, became an important symbol of the Baťa period for many inhabitants during the second half of the 20th century.²³ This symbolism was reinforced by the fact that from 1963 the view of the church from the square was obscured by a high-rise dormitory built in the middle of the centre, which is seen as a way for the former regime to deal with the uncomfortable legacy of both

23 This is interesting because the church's foundation stone was laid only in 1943, in the presence of the Slovak President Jozef Tiso. Thus, from a certain point of view, the church may symbolise the interconnection of the interests of the company, the state and the church.



Figures 1 and 2 View of the dormitory built across the centre (originally the Square of Labour, today the SNP Square with the adjacent J. A. Baťa Park), at the end of which stands the Karfík Church. Photo: Dominika Húdoková.

the Baťa company and the church building.²⁴ This interpretation can be confirmed by the fact that in the publication *Partizánske v bojoch a budovaní* (Partizánske in battles and building by Kapusta, 1964), this undoubted landmark of the town was omitted in almost all the depictions. However, the decision to remove the dormitory building, which occurred in 2020, was not entirely unequivocally accepted, although the opening up of the view of the church after almost 60 years was welcomed by many as a desirable link to the Baťa history (see Figures 1 and 2).

3.3 Partizánske

In the preceding text, we argued that local collective memory is rather ambivalent regarding Baťa's legacy. There has never been any serious effort

²⁴ The community symbolism of the church is mentioned in (Kubová 2005: 8). The focus group participants interpreted the meaning of the dormitory similarly.

to revive the original name in the town, and except for the church, it has not been possible to push for the preservation of other parts of the town. On the contrary, a glance at the town's map reveals where the town's memory remains: the city centre – an elongated boulevard, originally the Square of Labour – points both to the connection with the *Slovak National Uprising* (henceforth SNP) – the SNP Square in the north-eastern part adjacent to the factory – and to the Baťa company, as the park that was originally part of the square was named the J. A. Baťa Park on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the town (1 September 2013) (Bartošová: 2020).

The SNP,²⁵ unlike the uncertainly described Baťa past, is a crucial moment to which the inhabitants, the town's leaders and the "town" as such relate. The name Partizánske refers to the town's inhabitants' important role during the uprising. An article printed in the periodical *Průmyslový průkopník* (Industrial Pioneer) in 1946 refers in its introduction to the "youngest industrial town" as "Slovak Zlín". On the other hand, it also reminds us that almost the entire town was involved in the SNP (Kopečný 1946: 7–10). Immediately after the War, therefore, a double representation of the town appears: as a small Zlín but also as a place of fundamental resistance against the fascist government of the Slovak state.

This history, which affects many inhabitants of Baťovany and their descendants to this day, led in 1949 to its renaming as the only "ideal industrial town" in Slovakia (Janíčková 2017: 37). Unlike in Zlín, where the local new elites renamed the town in honour of the first workers' president, the town's leadership in Partizánske took advantage of a very vivid recent past and renamed the town in honour of the SNP and its participants. The local factory was renamed the *Works of August 29th* (the day referred to as the 1st Day of the SNP). The gradual strengthening of the town's image as a resistance centre is illustrated in Figures 3–6 (Kapusta: 1964). It can be seen here that the partisan history was inscribed into the broader layers of Slovak culture in general.

25 SNP, The Slovak National Uprising, broke out on 29 August 1944. It was a reaction of the domestic resistance movement to the entry of German occupation troops into the territory of the Slovak Republic. However, members of other nations also fought in it – it was one of the largest anti-Hitler resistance actions. Its political aim was to eliminate the regime of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party and to incorporate Slovakia into the restored Czechoslovak Republic. Already during the preparations for the Uprising, numerous partisan groups were active, but their activities were not coordinated with the plans of the Uprising and often provoked German intervention (Kováč 2007: 234–235).



Figure 3 The photo shows workers of the Baťa factory joining the partisans fighting during the SNP. Later, this connection between the Baťa factory and the resistance disappeared, leaving only the line of the anti-fascist uprising. Source: Kapusta 1964: between 48 and 49, image no. 4: “Last moments before the departure for the first fight.”



Figure 4 Memorial to the heroic death of Albín Grznár, a local partisan, unveiled on August 27, 1959. Source: Kapusta 1964: between 48 and 49, image no. 7: “On the place where Albín Grznár was killed in action a memorial to this hero was unveiled on 27th August, 1959.”



Figure 5 Painting inspired by the death of Albín Grznár: *Death of Albín Grznár* by G. Salaj. Source: Kapusta 1964: between 72 and 73.



Figure 6 Another painting by G. Salaj *Distribution of weapons in Šimonovany*; inspired by a real situation. Source: Kapusta 1964: between 64 and 65.

In other words, the choice of a key event in 20th-century Slovak history, which is generally understood as resistance to fascist domination and as such had and has no major opponents in the public discourse, has proven to be extremely prescient: an identity built around a heroic narrative is accepted even today.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this text is not to criticise the local active residents who decided to grasp a part of local history and use it to build and strengthen the local identity associated with the founding company, one of the first large multinational Czechoslovak companies. Incidentally, Laurajane Smith and her collaborators (Smith – Morgan – van der Meer 2003), mentioned above, show that involving the local community in defining and caring for heritage is also a way of strengthening not only locals' interest but also their sense of control over what happens in their town or locality.²⁶ This text aimed to offer an alternative perspective on the construction of historical heritage and its conservation, which, in addition to artistic qualities, also incorporates the current shared collective memory on which the town's inhabitants build their relationship to it. We have gathered arguments supporting an approach to constructing the town's historical heritage that is sensitive to the current state of the town's image in shared collective memory, one that moves towards a "values-centred" approach in heritage conservation (Mason 2006). There is a relevant and legitimate desire in Partizánske to subscribe to the tradition of the Slovak "Zlín", yet the stability of the town's name and the SNP's commemoration in the town's public space shows that a privileged clinging to this past is not necessarily a functional path. On the contrary, it can be a combination of both. It is possible to recall Baťa's legacy but frame it in a relevant historical context. There is relatively little Baťa architecture in the town itself, and in most cases, it is either covered in layers added in the second half of the 20th century, or the outcome does not correspond to the original Baťa concepts. Thus, Partizánske is not a small Slovak Zlín. However, it can be seen as an example of how the idea of satellite company towns in Zlín was affected by historical events unpredicted by the company: war, a different political regime, new needs of the inhabitants etc. Nevertheless, the company's relationship with the government of the Slovak state established in March 1939, the manifestation of which may have been the laying of the church's foundation stone, is not

²⁶ The authors focus mainly on the context of Australian indigenous peoples' heritage.

reflected in this history. Yet, the events of the same period, associated with active resistance to the regime of the time, seem to be part of the everyday reality of the town and of remembering the past. It should, therefore, not be neglected in the present; on the contrary, it should become an intrinsic part of the narrative about the historical and cultural values of the town, so that it can be accepted as relevant to the present. The failure to enforce institutionalised heritage conservation in Partizánske highlights the need to expand the fabric-centred “authorised heritage discourse” into a values-centred approach, which – consciously working with the specific history of this place – can consequently contribute to a more complex perception of the preserved physical structures and thus foster an interest in preserving and conserving them in an optimal form for the future.

February 2024

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