

PD Dr. Christoph Bernhardt

### **The place of company towns in 20th century urban history**

The paper discusses company towns as a specific type of settlement that reflects some key processes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, like fordism and high modernity in the era of the welfare state. Even if company towns have a long history, as could be shown by the examples of textile, coal or chemical towns of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 20<sup>th</sup> century certainly was a kind of golden age of this type of settlement. Company towns obviously responded to the needs and expressed the interests and strategies of capitalistic and socialist industrial societies.

The paper starts by discussing the key strategies of fordism in the field of urbanism and stresses the European movement for urban reform as an important driving force. Along the cases of several European company towns from different periods, like Creusot (France), Siemensstadt (Germany), socialist steelwork towns and car towns it then analyzes common problems and individual pathways in the development of these towns.

Special interest is given to problems of urban design, social welfare and municipal autonomy. How were industrial and residential areas arranged? Which role did strategies of social welfare play for the civic culture of company towns? The paper claims that a certain autonomy of the urban civil society grew very slowly so that company towns eventually can be interpreted as “municipalities in delay”.