

**Aneta Dybska**

**"American Urban Utopias"**

**ABSTRACT**

In her talk "American Urban Utopias" Aneta Dybska will survey urban planning ideas that have captivated the imagination of Americans. Urban planning and utopian visions for America, as they evolved since William Penn's late 17th -century plan for Philadelphia, reveal a tension between the city and the space without - the Frontier, the wilderness, or the romantic suburbs. This overview will focus on the 19th century attempts to inscribe the ideals of the new republic in built space, and on the 20th-century visions of a better city. The planning and design of industrial-era cities and company towns reveals the utopian character of those projects: preoccupation with justice and equality, moral uplift of im/migrants and industrial workers by a paternalistic brand of capitalism, as well as a strong belief in the recuperative forces of nature. By the mid 20th -century, the idealism of urban planning found its full expression in the anti-urban automobile-centered visions of regional growth that imagined the U.S. as Jeffersonian "yeoman democracy" and anticipated the sprawling metropolis of today. Reaction against sprawl, in turn, has led to the New Urbanists' idealization of "walkable cities" and "urban villages."

**BIO**

Aneta Dybska is an assistant professor at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland, where she teaches courses in American culture. Her most recent work deals with the politics of revitalizing and gentrifying American cities in the 1980s and 1990s. She is the author of *Black Masculinities in American Social Science and Self-Narratives of the 1960s and 1970s* (Peter Lang 2010), as well as articles on such issues as urban gardening and black nationalism.