

[SUBSCRIBE](#)[GIVE A GIFT](#)[LOG IN](#) TO ACCESS
THE DIGITAL ISSUE[SIGN UP](#)
FOR AQ UPDATES[RSS FEED](#)

- [Subscribe](#)
- [About](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [News](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Archive](#)
- [Partners](#)

■ AQ FEATURE

Rethinking Buildings

by

[Bruce Schlein](#)



Downtown Philadelphia in June 2006, submerged under the flooded Delaware River. Photo: Chris Hondros/Getty

A different way to look at resource and waste management.

Read sidebars on [public space](#), [governance](#) and [energy efficiency](#).

Cities are concentrations of people, buildings and activity. Infrastructure helps knit all of the pieces together and delivers essential services. The traditional infrastructure that supplies many of these services consists of a centralized, fixed-point service facility and a delivery network. Think energy (power plant and transmission wires), water (reservoir and pipes) and sewers (wastewater treatment plant and more pipes). Buildings and their occupants have largely been passive service recipients and end users at the ends of these spokes.

The rising need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare cities to manage the challenges of extreme weather is beginning to turn this historical construct on its head. Technological developments, such as advances in photovoltaics and big data, offer a way to address environmental concerns by thinking of buildings as energy producers or stormwater managers. When applied in the aggregate across the urban landscape, they are potentially not only a more environmentally friendly substitute for some modes of traditional infrastructure, but a more economical one as well.

A case in point is Philadelphia. The city's storm- water system, like many systems around the U.S., is conjoined with sewage. In other words, rainfall and sewage are collected together and the resulting mix is channeled to a sewage treatment plant. More intense rainfalls mean more water entering the system, potentially overwhelming the capacity of the sewage treatment plant...



One person likes this. Be the first of your friends.

To read more, [subscribe and receive an instant digital copy of the latest issue](#).
Already a digital subscriber? [Log in](#)

Tweet

0

3

[now.](#)[Comment on this post](#)

0 Comments

Americas Quarterly

 Login ▾

Sort by Best ▾

Share  Favorite ★

Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON AMERICAS QUARTERLY

WHAT'S THIS?

Can Venezuela's Economic Strategy Keep Protests From ...

1 comment • a month ago

**El Bostonian** — The Russians and Chinese will never see this loan paid back**Head of Mexico National Security Commission Resigns**

1 comment • 2 months ago

**Matthews Bark Criminal Defense** — Manuel Mondragón y Kalb, thanks for all the effort you gived to ...**The West and the Ukraine Test**

1 comment • 2 months ago

**cliffordblais** — John, I am one of the stunned of the West on how quickly the street revolution impeach ...**Walking Home Alone at Night in Buenos Aires**

1 comment • 2 months ago

**Adrian Dickson** — The problem with crime in Buenos Aires is simply that there is more of it than there was ...

Subscribe



Add Disqus to your site



**SUBSCRIBE
TO AQ**
1-Year Print,
Digital, and
New App
Subscription
for only
\$20.95
Save 30%!

Connect with AQ



Venezuela in Depth

View AQ Online's special in-depth page for updates on the crisis in Venezuela.

» **Read more.**

Sustainable Cities



Auckland Walkland @WalklandAkl

5 Apr

Vulcan Lane has good scale, great character of most of all lots of people. Unlike shared spaces, there are no cars.
pic.twitter.com/f6EveifELC

Retweeted by Brent Toderian



Expand

WEB EXCLUSIVES

- [AQ Slideshow: Venezuela's Colectivos](#)

April 14, 2014

by [Ramón Campos Iriarte](#)



View an exclusive slideshow of Venezuela's colectivos, who say they are the government's last line of defense.

- [The Ukrainian Crisis and Latin America](#)

April 3, 2014

by [V́ctor M. Mijares](#)



Dynamics surrounding the Ukraine crisis are redefining international influences. How is Latin America being affected by this power struggle?

[MORE WEB EXCLUSIVES »](#)



[Read our new series of first-person articles.](#)

Most Popular

MOST POPULAR ON AQ ONLINE

Most Viewed

Past: **1 day** [1 week](#) [1 month](#) [1 year](#)

[Walking Home Alone at Night in Buenos Aires](#) (7 times)

[The Ukrainian Crisis and Latin America](#) (7 times)

[AQ Slideshow: Venezuela's Colectivos](#) (7 times)

[Will Mexico's Telecom Reform Hurt Internet Freedom?](#) (7 times)

[The Future of Québec Independence](#) (6 times)

[AQ Course Packets: Now Available for Your Classroom!](#)



[Browse our catalogue.](#)

NOW ON AS/COA ONLINE

[The Artistic Influence of an Overlooked Explorer](#)

by Allison Meier - May 02, 2014

Prussian explorer Alexander von Humboldt has his name immortalized on a bay in California, a mountain range in New Zealand, ...

[Weekly Roundup: Latin American Must Reads This Week – Panama's Election, Mexico's Military Justice](#)

May 02, 2014

Panama to pick its next president. On May 4, Panamanians head to the polls to elect their next president for a five-year term. ...

[How to Support Cuba's New Entrepreneurs](#)

by Susan Segal - May 02, 2014

Changes in Cuba in recent years show the time is ripe for supporting entrepreneurship on the island. Over the past 17 years, I ...



AQ MEDIA PARTNER

FINANCIAL TIMES

World

[Rentokil eyes Americas expansion](#)

May 02, 2014

Group looks to increase its presence in North America and buy more pest control companies in Latin America, where it hopes to ...

Companies

[Panama's first lady sets sights on power](#)

May 01, 2014

Candidacy of Ricardo Martinelli's wife as vice-president is seen by many as a naked attempt by him to maintain his position