



# Politics of Urban Runoff: Nature, Technology, and the Sustainable City (Urban and Industrial Environments)

*Andrew Karvonen*

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When rain falls on the city, it creates urban runoff that cause flooding, erosion, and water pollution. Municipal engineers manage a complex network of technical and natural systems to treat and remove these temporary water flows from cities as quickly as possible. Urban runoff is frequently discussed in terms of technical expertise and environmental management, but it encompasses a multitude of such nontechnical issues as land use, quality of life, governance, aesthetics, and community identity, and is central to the larger debates on creating more sustainable and livable cities. In this book, Andrew Karvonen uses urban runoff as a lens to view the relationships among nature, technology, and society. Offering theoretical insights from urban environmental history, human geography, landscape and ecological planning, and science and technology studies as well as empirical evidence from case studies, Karvonen proposes a new relational politics of urban nature.

After describing the evolution of urban runoff practices, Karvonen analyzes the urban runoff activities in Austin and Seattle -- two cities known for their highly contested public debates over runoff issues and exemplary storm water management practices. The Austin case study highlights the tensions among urban development, property rights, land use planning, and citizen activism; the Seattle case study explores the city's long-standing reputation for being in harmony with nature. Drawing on these accounts, Karvonen suggests a new relational politics of urban nature that is situated, inclusive, and action-oriented to address the tensions among nature, technology, and society.

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