

## *Shorter Notice*

**Austin Williams.** *China's Urban Revolution: Understanding Chinese Eco-Cities.* London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic. 2017. 220 pages. Price US \$ 124.95 (Hardback).

China is still considered to be a polluter and its city life is deplorable with unbreathable air and contaminated drinking water. These are the thoughts of the past and China is now bidding to emerge as an environmental soft-power at an impressive rate. The main argument of this book revolves around China's rapid urbanisation and China's government-led eco-city building programme. It is an attempt to falsify the Manichean Worldview of China, which tries to provide comprehensible classifications of a country that is much advanced for that. With rapid development and wealth creation, China's fast urbanisation has outpaced that of any other country in the world, adding 458 cities in just last 4 decades—110 cities in a decade. But China is now pausing to think what it had done right and wrong in the last 40 years. William starts the book by explaining what a city is as well as the eco-city, and simplifies the definition of eco-city provided by the Chinese government i.e. a city where main drinking water sources are 'adequate' and its air quality is rated 'good' on 123 days of a year. Then he moves on how China has turned barren lands into wealth creating giants. But all this wealth and prosperity at that pace resulted in urban challenges like degraded environment. Over the course of the book, William contextualises the Chinese society and its evolution with respect to political events. Wealth creation is still the top priority of the Chinese government. To portray a soft image of the country, China is trying on multiple facets. For example, the Chinese Society for Urban Studies has created a new 28-item eco-city friendly list, which is different from other checklists such as by UNHABITAT and BREEAM. Throughout the book William uses sarcastic notes on how China is learning to experiment with spaces either by inviting rural households to newly developed cities or by reforming the older ones. From the book, it looks like there is a long way ahead for China to become eco-friendly. [*Aqeel Anwar Chaudhry*]