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Review of *Environmental City: People, Place, Politics,  
and the Meaning of Modern Austin*. By William Scott  
Swearingen, Jr.

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deep appreciation for a lifestyle that connected it with the natural environment.

I am not alone in loving Austin's quirky, exciting, and beautiful cultural landscape. But how did it get that way? Who were the players involved, and what were the major forces that made it the thriving metropolis it is? William Scott Swearingen, Jr.'s *Environmental City* is a social history of how a place like Red Bud Isle and the larger city surrounding it could come to exist.

Swearingen opens with the founding of Austin, and takes the reader through the ideals shaping its modern era: the battle between the twin paradigms of "growth" and "green." At its heart, the book tells the story of the success of Austin's green campaign: how "place" was created, fought for, and won. Not all battles were victories, but Swearingen points to key moments, and unpacks the slow process of institutionalizing broad environmental concepts into concrete municipal policies. He identifies the particular moments (e.g., protests, votes, and elections) and ideas (e.g., "The Five Minute Walk") that set this history in motion.

If there are concerns about the book, they are in its intellectual heft and contribution. Molotch's concept of the growth machine, Goffman's *Frame Analysis*, and Zukin's groundbreaking work on place-making are mentioned, but not critically applied or examined, and dropped at the conclusion of chapter 1. Lefebvre's name is given, but his "trialectics" for analyzing place (that there are mental, physical, and social components) is ignored. Because of this lack of conceptual and substantive engagement with the literature, the book isolates the case of Austin, denying important comparative touchstones for the reader: Does Austin's development differ from other, more studied cities? How does Austin's "green machine" compare with social movements elsewhere? (A few references to other urban developments are relegated to footnotes, separated from the book's main discussion.) *Environmental City* lacks a firm conclusion—a natural place for such comparisons and perhaps policy implications—leaving the reader to do the work of contextualizing the findings within a broader literature. It makes the book, unfortunately, feel parochial.

Reservations aside, students of Austin, academic or otherwise, would benefit from the book's contents, for Swearingen does the yeoman's work of identifying just how one of the key aspects of Austin's culture came to be. Although lacking in comparison, *Environmental City* is a good book for reading about how tensions play out in a city other than Los Angeles, Chicago, or New York. There is a great expanse between the coasts, and a good deal can

**Environmental City: People, Place, Politics, and the Meaning of Modern Austin.** By William Scott Swearingen, Jr. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. x + 273 pp. Photographs, appendix, notes, index. \$50.00 cloth.

Two years ago, I was with friends and their dog on Red Bud Isle, a small dogpark/island in downtown Austin. As Cleo sprinted ahead, unleashed, the bipeds enjoyed the cool evening and lush surroundings. Looking around, I gained the distinct impression that this community had a

be learned about Austin's case and applied to cities in the South, the Midwest, and the Plains by activists and urban planners. And, paired with Barry Shank's more riveting tale of the development of the city's music scene, *Dissident Identities* (1994), a broad picture of Austin can take shape. **Jonathan R. Wynn**, *Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts–Amherst*.