

## **Scar(e)city: The Politics of Land in Singapore**

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Known as the “Little Red Dot,” Singapore has defied all odds and transformed itself from an island devoid of natural resources to one that is now seen as a “model” for many developing states. The narrative of the Singapore “success” story typically begins with the premise that Singapore is land-scarce; to this day, the state promulgates the notion that the availability of land is tied to the country’s survival. This paper considers how scarcity and need are defined, and asks: what might an acute thirst for land suggest about the ways in which the environment is made and made meaningful? Through a combination of ethnographic data on the state’s simultaneous reacquisition of land and eviction of residents and a reading of Singapore’s Land Acquisition Act and Master Plan (a statutory land use plan that guides the city-state’s development for the next 10 to 15 years and is reviewed every five years), I suggest that a political analysis of the state’s supposedly unlikely development cannot be disentangled from a politics of land. Land scarcity lays bare the anxieties of a city-state that has fretted about its place in the region and the world and reveals how certain landscapes are deemed productive while others are regarded as “wastelands,” and illustrates the staunch belief that through technocratic genius, scarcity can and will be overcome.