



Introducing the Housing Squeeze zine

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Abstract

Jessie Speer is a geographer at the London School of Economics and a collage artist devoted to bridging the divide between art and the social sciences (jessiespeer.tumblr.com).

Her current book project—*Bulldozed: Homeless in America*—examines the demolition of homeless encampments in the United States as part of a larger attack on urban informality.

David Madden is a sociologist and housing researcher at the London School of Economics. He is co-author, with Peter Marcuse, of *In Defense of Housing*. He is currently working on a book about the politics of housing tenure.

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In cities across the globe, housing is being squeezed as families and individuals are relegated to increasingly smaller domestic spaces. The housing squeeze is far from new, but a variety of shrinking pressures have deepened in the wake of the 2008 global financial crash. In May 2025 a group of fifteen scholars researching shrinking domesticity in diverse contexts—from street shelters in India to micro-apartments in Hong Kong—came together to produce a zine called *The Housing Squeeze*. Merging data, interviews, maps, collage, and multilingual reflections, this zine proposes radical housing futures inspired by decolonial, grassroots, and transnational insights. This creative academic collaboration contributes to the broader genre of radical housing zines, which has roots in underrepresented communities and countercultural movements.

Keywords

Housing, domesticity, tiny housing, zines, arts-based research

In cities across the globe, housing is being squeezed. Families are forced to cram into single rooms. Insecure workers and undocumented migrants are relegated to illegally converted basements or renting sleep shifts in beds. Flat-sharing and group living arrangements are extending into new demographic groups. Some squeezed domestic space is occurring informally and off the books. In other cases, it is the result of formal demands by real estate advocates for states to adopt ever-smaller space standards. And in still other cases, shrinking domesticity is promoted as desirable, while new housing models such as tiny

housing, co-living, and micro-flats that minimize private space are promoted as sustainable solutions. All of this is occurring at a time when affluent households are consuming more housing than ever before.

Shrinking domesticity is far from new. Exploitative housing markets have long forced people into overcrowded and diminished domestic spaces. But these pressures have deepened in the wake of the 2008 global financial crash, and today there are multiple processes feeding into the housing squeeze.

In early May 2025, the London School of Economics hosted a workshop examining the international politics of shrinking domesticity, bringing together scholars conducting research in a diverse range of geographies, from street dwelling and night shelters in India to micro-apartments in Hong Kong to indigenous tiny house protest camps in Canada. Our aim was to share knowledge about the oft-overlooked politics underlying this global trend and to forge connections between scholar-activists and engaged scholars examining the same problem from different angles. One of the results of this workshop was “The Housing Squeeze Zine,” which we are excited to publish in the *Radical Housing Journal*.

As handmade, self-published magazines, zines offer an ideal format for creative academic collaboration, as they can combine research data and quotations with artwork, photography, poetry, and stories. Zines also offer an opportunity for academic research to be expressed in spontaneous, low-cost, and immediate ways, shifting away from the careful, perfectionist process of academic publication and bringing the potential for levity to research that is often serious and heavy. More importantly, zine-making offers us an opportunity to reach new audiences, through zine fairs, libraries, and grassroots distribution networks.

Zines have historically been associated with underrepresented voices and radical ideas. They trace their early history to small, self-published magazines produced by various literary subcultures in the first half of the twentieth century, including the Harlem Renaissance and early science fiction fanzines. Powered by mimeographs and later photocopiers, zines continued to be central to subcultures based around art, fandom, marginalized group hood and political practice, including punk movements of the 1970s onward, feminist and queer subcultures, and squatter communities. Connected to the latter, and fittingly for our purposes, zines have long been crucial tools for housing activists and cooperatives. In the past decade there has been a growing academic interest in zines that has examined their usefulness in the classroom and their role in subaltern and countercultural communities (see generally Anuar & Mun, 2024; Radway, 2016; Santos Dunn & Ansloos, 2024; and Velasco, Faria, & Walenta, 2020).

Using excerpts from our research situated in different geographies alongside found imagery and collage techniques, workshop participants collectively built the Housing Squeeze Zine to speak to our shared concerns around shrinking domestic space. We brought printed copies of our academic writing and research interviews, maps visualizing our research settings, and graphs documenting our data analysis, and combined them with a collection of housing-related materials, flyers, and ephemera.

During the session, fifteen workshop participants decided to loosely format the zine around the radical housing futures and alternatives that emerged from collective reflection during the workshop. We incorporated multiple languages—including English, Hindi, and Spanish—to reflect the international, multilingual nature of our research engagements. In total, the zine took less than two hours to make. Once our pages were complete, we examined the whole together to organize it into the themes that emerged. In addition to publishing the zine here, we aim to distribute hard copies to zine libraries and archives, grassroots groups working on housing justice, and our own research interlocutors. All workshop participants, some of whom have signed off with pseudonyms, are listed on the final page of the zine.

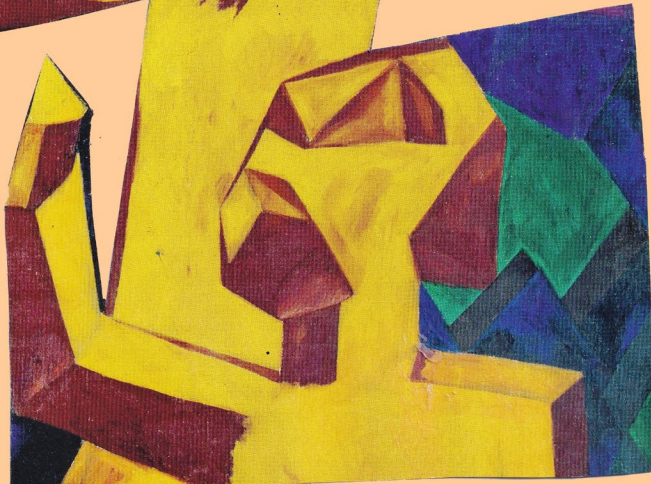
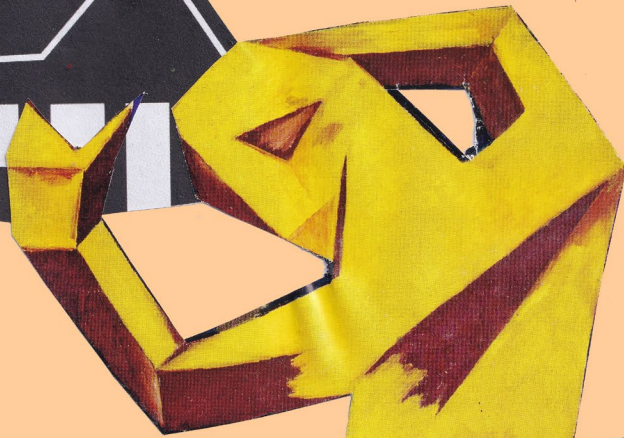
Acknowledgements

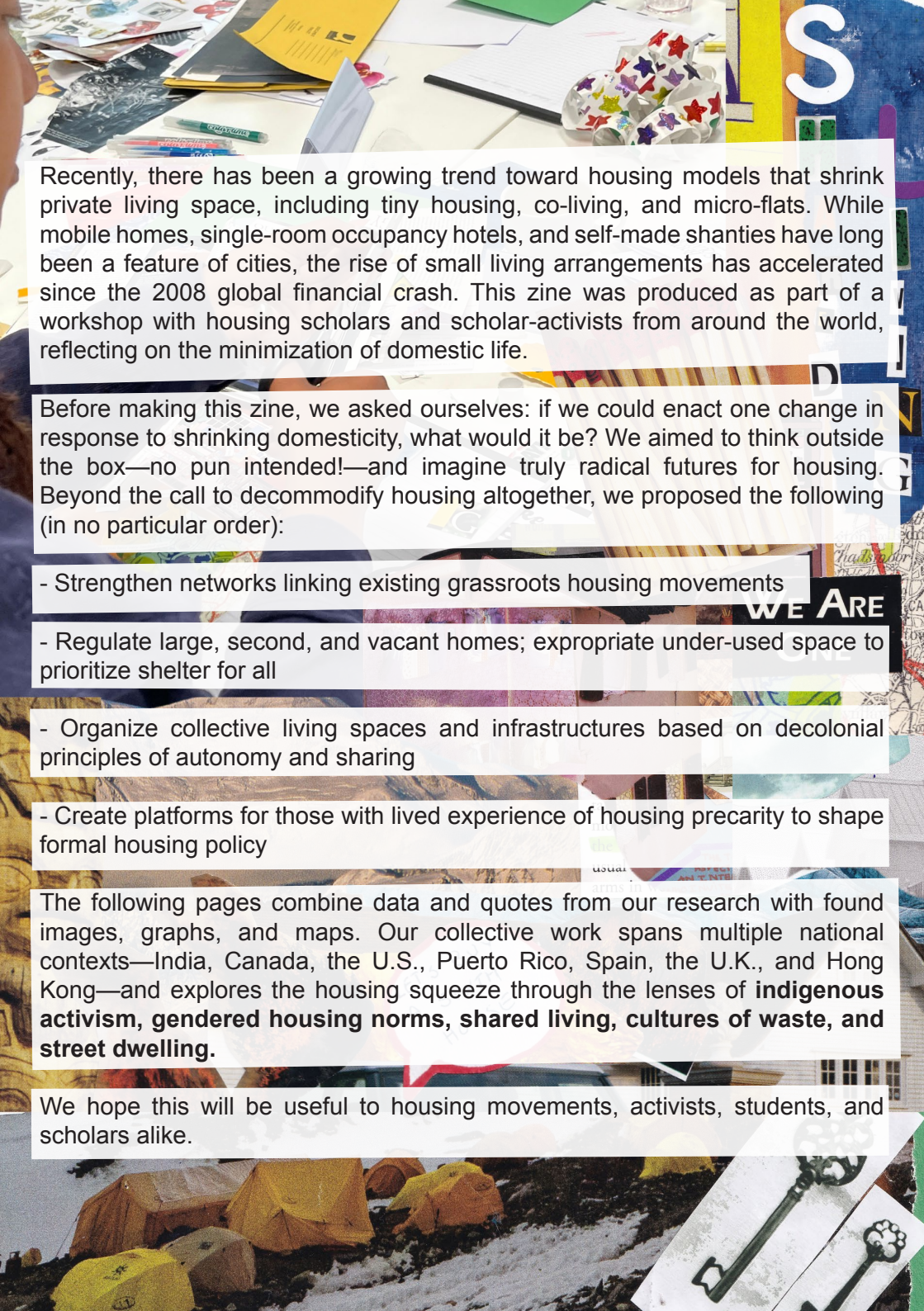
Many thanks to local artist Ioana Simione of Artizine U.K., for her excellent facilitation of our zine-making workshop. The workshop was made possible by funding from the LSE Phelan U.S. Centre, for which we are grateful.

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HOUSING SQUEEZE





Recently, there has been a growing trend toward housing models that shrink private living space, including tiny housing, co-living, and micro-flats. While mobile homes, single-room occupancy hotels, and self-made shanties have long been a feature of cities, the rise of small living arrangements has accelerated since the 2008 global financial crash. This zine was produced as part of a workshop with housing scholars and scholar-activists from around the world, reflecting on the minimization of domestic life.

Before making this zine, we asked ourselves: if we could enact one change in response to shrinking domesticity, what would it be? We aimed to think outside the box—no pun intended!—and imagine truly radical futures for housing. Beyond the call to decommodify housing altogether, we proposed the following (in no particular order):

- Strengthen networks linking existing grassroots housing movements
- Regulate large, second, and vacant homes; expropriate under-used space to prioritize shelter for all
- Organize collective living spaces and infrastructures based on decolonial principles of autonomy and sharing
- Create platforms for those with lived experience of housing precarity to shape formal housing policy

The following pages combine data and quotes from our research with found images, graphs, and maps. Our collective work spans multiple national contexts—India, Canada, the U.S., Puerto Rico, Spain, the U.K., and Hong Kong—and explores the housing squeeze through the lenses of **indigenous activism, gendered housing norms, shared living, cultures of waste, and street dwelling**.

We hope this will be useful to housing movements, activists, students, and scholars alike.






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Vision of the Future



IS IT.....?

what it extracts

what it provides

what it nourishes



what

is (the value)
of a

Home



who
decides?



WHAT DO WE
REALLY NEED

ON THE ROAD

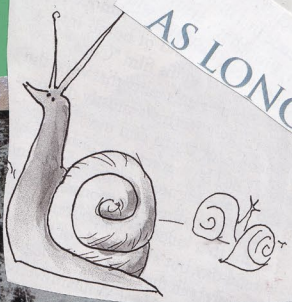
Home Stretch

when you want it.



DISCOMFORT

FOR THE FIRST TIME



AS LONG AS



to survive...

A DISMAL STORY

"We didn't have a laundry [washing machine] ...
the boss, the owner... he had a
washing machine and a cooker but he didn't let us [use them], you know. So we
suffered... for six months."



fast foods, take-away foods all the time...with five of us, it was very tough.

"We used a €100 a day because we didn't have any facilities to cook."

FREEDOM

So we using like



"You make it your own."

"We had our room, like I had my double bed, she had a single bed. So we had our own duvet covers or pillows... we had everything the way we wanted it...it was actually like a bedroom."

"You were allowed visitors at some stage, and when my friends used to come up they were like 'Oh my God, this looks like a bedroom. it doesn't look like a hotel room!'"

It's not how big the house
It's how happy the home

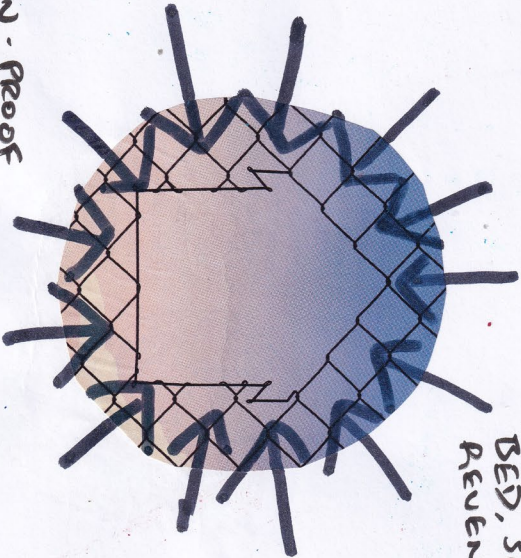


"The government now is creating the mentally ill people of the future. All them kids now that are going through homelessness... it's going to really affect them, they're going to be like 'God we lived in a hotel'"



"WE CONVERT EXTRA SPACE INTO ADDITIONAL BEDROOMS, TO MAXIMISE YOUR INCOME"

"IT'S A RECESSION - PROOF INVESTMENT... AT THE END OF THE DAY WE ALL NEED A BED"



"THIS WALL DIDN'T EXIST BEFORE. THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE LIVING ROOM. NOW WE OUTSOURCED THE LIVING ROOM AND ADDED ANOTHER BED, SO WE GET ANOTHER REVENUE STREAM."



"OUR BUSINESS MODEL ALLOWS US TO IMPROVE SPACE DENSITY, GENERATING MORE REVENUES PER SQM, THAN ANY OTHER SOLUTION"



animal besides humans

national minimum standard of 37 sq metres

WE WERE STUCK THERE, TREED AND FRAZZLED LIKE CATS

each chimp

has always been an individual, worthy of individual attention and concern—that is, in some sense a person.

'rabbit hutch' developments (Jones, 2018)

Housing market
The flats start at £285,000.
Instagram generation
it's smaller than average

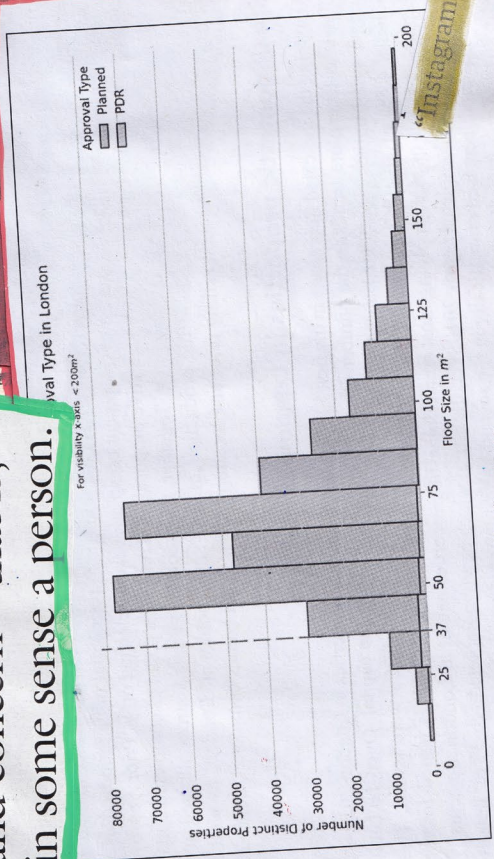
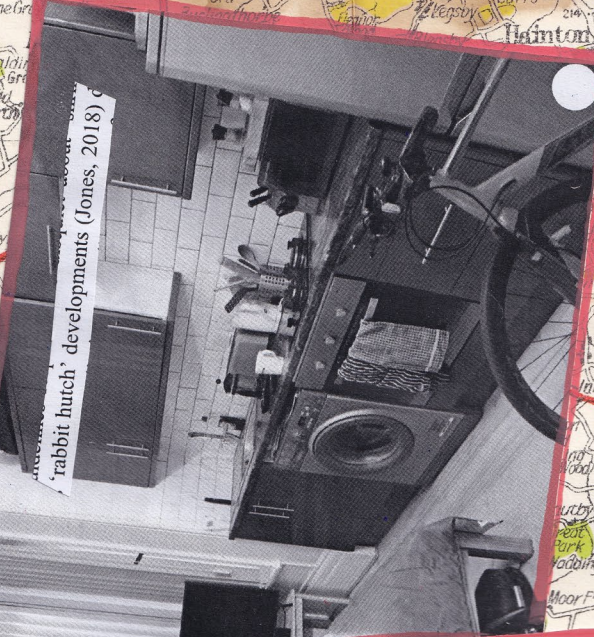


Figure 1. Newly-built London homes by floorspace.

THE END OF CHEAP

'I have to move my bike to get to the fridge' - the UK boom in microflats

Every year, between 1,000 and 2,000 new micro apartments come on the market in London, 3% of all new homes.

Number of new builds under 37 sq metres

Shrinking homes?

439 New builds under 37 sq metres
Tokington, Wembley
Brent

252 Shoreditch
Hackney

242 Blackwall & Leamouth
Tower Hamlets

boom in small homes

1,208 Total for all of Tower Hamlets

soaring property prices, chronic housing shortage

301 Elephant & Castle
Southwark

Between 2011 and 2021 as many as one in 15 flats in London fell below the national minimum standard of 37 sq metres

micro apartments cost up to 30% more

RAW MEAT

YOU COULD JUST GO LIVE IN
A BOX, SLEEP ON A BOXSPRING
IN A SMALLER BOX... DRIVE
ROUND IN CIRCLES IN A BOX
ON WHEELS...

ME, I'D RATHER
SIT UNDER THE
BRIDGE AND WAIT
FOR A TRAIN TO
STOP AND CORDIALLY
OFFER ME A RIDE.
GO. WIND RUSHING
MY FACE. WATCH CREATION
AS IT ROLLS BY MY OPEN
BOXCAR "DOOR."

-BROOKE WILLETT, HOW TO
BE A HOBO

PEOPLE OUT HERE CONSIDER THEIR
TENTS OR THEIR WOODEN BUILDINGS
THEIR HOME. THIS IS SOMETHING
THAT PEOPLE ARE DOING FOR YEARS



THAT'S THEIR SHELTER. DON'T
JUST ASSUME THAT THEIR HOME
IS GARBAGE JUST BECAUSE IT'S
NOT LIKE YOUR HOME.

BRANDY, CALIFORNIA
HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT RESIDENT

'Home is where your heart is, wherever you get familiar'

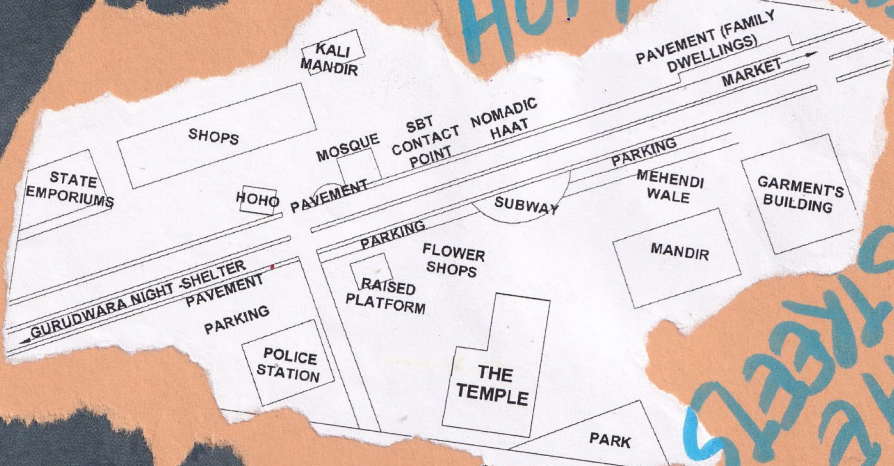
– Neeru, 60 years, Gurudwara night-shelter for women

"I have made my own bathing place here. I do not go to the public convenience for bathing now. I have tied a rope around and we cover it with a cloth while bathing. We bring water from the small temple. The priest asks for money. We pay him Rs 10 and can fetch whatever amount of water thereafter. He then asks for money only after a week or so again."

The Temple

Hum jali par rehte hain (we live around the metal frame)

HOME MAKING ON THE STREETS



Agar bhagwan ka ghar nahi hota toh hamara ghar kaise chalta? Bhagwan ke ghar ki wajah se hi toh hamara ghar chal raha hai – If there were no home for God, how would we have run our home? It is only because of God's home that our homes are running

– Madhuri, Hijra, 48 years, at the Temple

The Market

THE RAILWAY STATION

"My daughtner Kavita feels bad I live here (on the streets) and beg. My son-in-law Varun offers that I stay at their place. But I don't stay with them. I have only suffered all my life. I tell them that while living at the Temple, I get to spend time with people, share conversations and laughter. And therefore I am better off here."

TIME

S

H

L

A

R

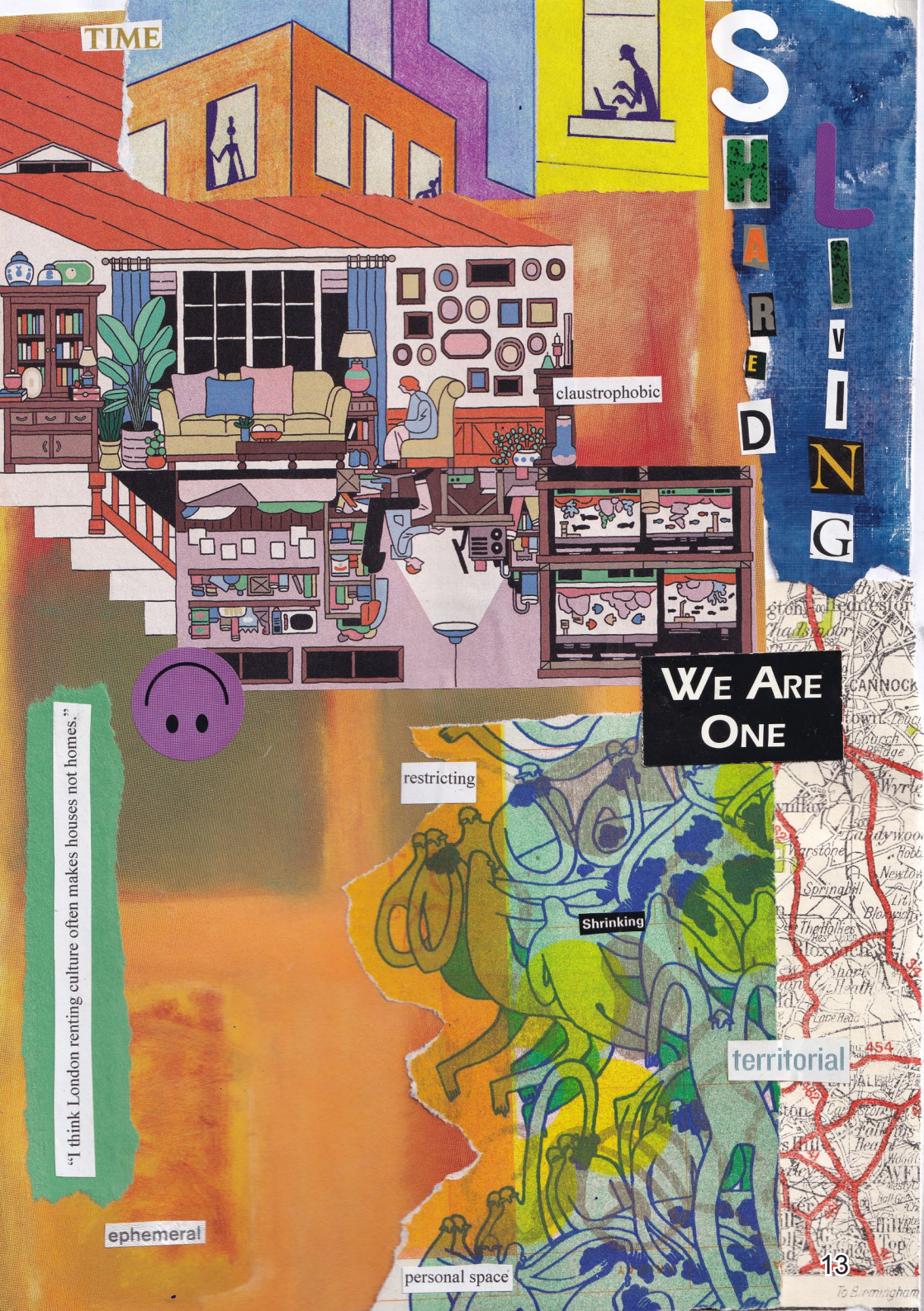
E

D

V

N

G



"I think London renting culture often makes houses not homes."

claustrophobic

WE ARE ONE

restricting

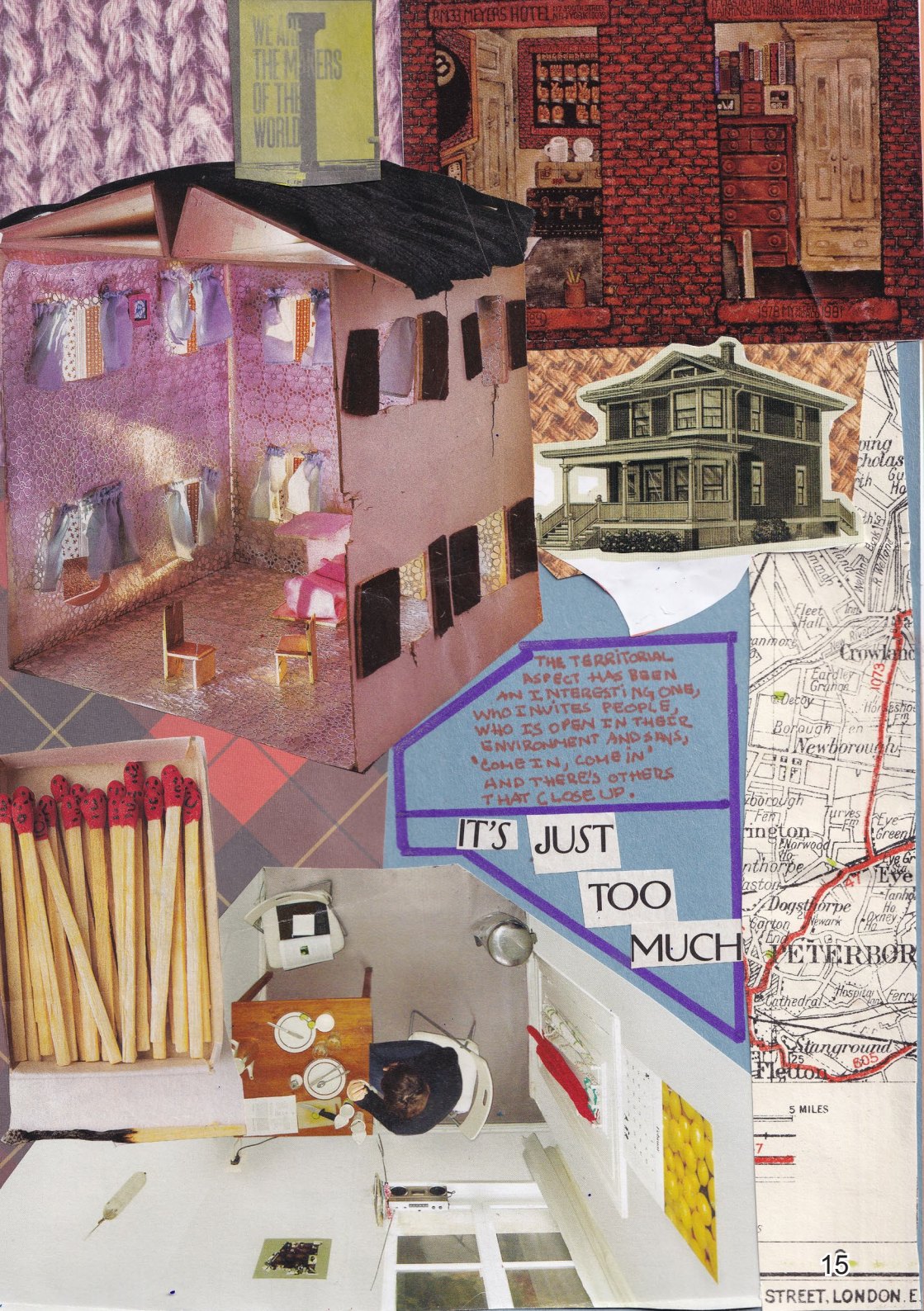
shrinking

territorial

ephemeral

personal space





WE ARE THE MASTERS OF THE WORLD

1733 MAYORS HOTEL

1733 MAYORS HOTEL

1733 MAYORS HOTEL

1733 MAYORS HOTEL



THE TERRITORIAL ASPECT HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING ONE, WHO INVITES PEOPLE, WHO IS OPEN IN THEIR ENVIRONMENT AND SAYS, 'COME IN, COME IN' AND THERE'S OTHERS THAT CLOSE UP.

IT'S JUST TOO MUCH

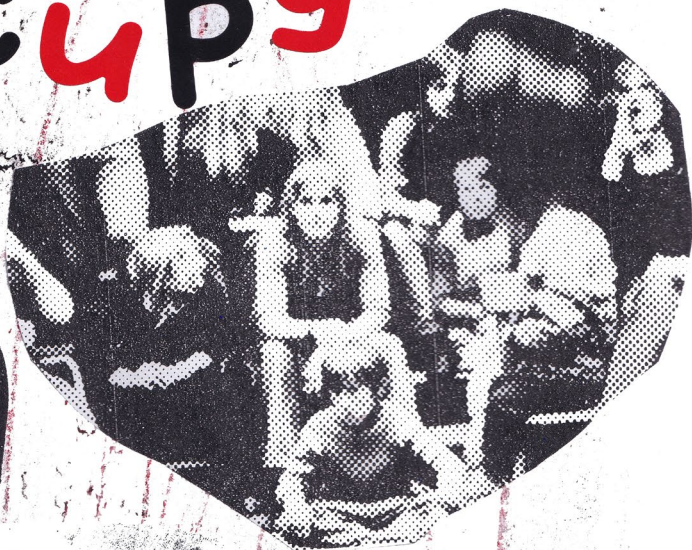


5 MILES

El hecho de afrontar eso en COLECTIVO es
súper sanador y súper saludable, también,
porque cuando uno vive ~~solo~~ esto sólo, se
siente súper culpable, inevitablemente, porque es
como que el éxito que se supone que tienes que
tener en la sociedad, no lo tienes. Si se vive en
colectivo y el colectivo te dice que es más digno
luchar que quedarse ahí deprimido, eso es como el
apoyo que te saca, mucha gente va al psicólogo para eso,
dicen que al final los psicólogos cumplen la función que
cumpliría una comunidad o colectivo. Mujer, 36-45 años

Organizing
expropriate
claim

Оссуры

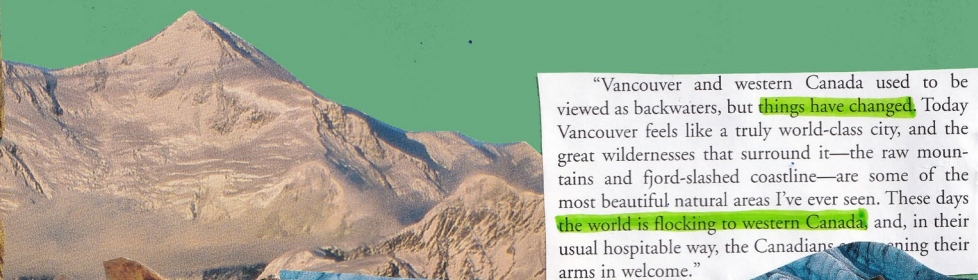


/maGiNE



Land Back

"Vancouver and western Canada used to be viewed as backwaters, but things have changed. Today Vancouver feels like a truly world-class city, and the great wildernesses that surround it—the raw mountains and fjord-slashed coastline—are some of the most beautiful natural areas I've ever seen. These days the world is flocking to western Canada, and, in their usual hospitable way, the Canadians are opening their arms in welcome."





home?

The tension
between the
bonds of tradition
and the blan-
dishments of the
American dream

Vision of the Future

Suddenly I was jet-propelled

ENOUGH
IT IS
ENOUGH



city?

Naïveté is a delicate,
perishable state of being



The zine-making workshop was facilitated by community artist and educator Ioana Simion, who works under the artistic identity Artizine UK.

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"femimeli"

ADAM
BARKER

ALIA

FLIP - FLOP

Mel
García-Lamarca

Shanae Dyer.

DJM