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## How zines can share knowledge about shrinking domesticity



*Across the globe, including in the US, there has been an increasing trend towards housing with smaller living spaces, including tiny housing, co-living, and micro-flats. During a recent conference, hosted by the LSE Phelan US Centre, on housing and homelessness in the US and other countries, participants produced the “The Housing Squeeze Zine.”* **Jessie Speer** and **David Madden** write that *zines offer an opportunity to share academic research in spontaneous, low-cost, and immediate ways and to gain a wider audience compared to traditional academic publications.*

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 a virtuous and worthy adaptation, with new housing models such as tiny housing, co-living, and micro-flats being framed 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. 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 LSE Phelan US Centre at hosted a **workshop** examining shrinking domesticity in the US in relation to other international contexts. Bringing together scholars conducting research in a diverse range of geographies, from 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 scholars working in the United States and elsewhere. One of the results of this workshop was “The Housing Squeeze Zine.”

## Bringing research to new audiences with zines

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 can 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, and marginalized 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, examining their **usefulness** in the **classroom** and their role in subaltern and **countercultural communities**.

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. The zine took less than two hours to make. We examined our pages together to organize them and identify themes that emerged. In addition to publishing the zine here and in the *Radical Housing Journal*, we aim to distribute hard copies to zine libraries and archives, grassroots groups working on housing justice, and to our own research interlocutors. All workshop participants, some of whom have signed off with pseudonyms, are listed on the final page of the zine.



[Download The Housing Squeeze Zine](#)

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The text of this blog will be published—with minor alterations—in the *Radical Housing Journal*, along with this zine. 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 US Centre, for which we are grateful.

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## About the author

### Jessie Speer

Jessie Speer is Assistant Professor of Human Geography in the Department of Geography and Environment at LSE and a Centre Affiliate of the Phelan US Centre. Her research examines struggles over urban and domestic space at the margins of housed society. She engages

political economic, feminist, and postcolonial approaches to urban displacement to examine how unhoused people contest normative domesticity and capitalist housing markets.

**David Madden**

David Madden is Associate Professor in Sociology, Director of the Cities Programme, and a Centre Affiliate of the Phelan US Centre. He works on urban studies, housing studies, political sociology, and social theory.

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