Mark James Studentship (Geography Department, Birkbeck)

Project Title: Making home at the End of the World: survival modalities within home-making practices

Principal Supervisor: Dr Kezia BAker (k.barker@bbk.ac.uk)

Co-Supervisors: Dr Ella Harris and Professor Rosie Cox

Project rationale:

This exciting project responds to the urgent need to understand how the anticipation of environmental catastrophe and resulting survival modalities are impacting everyday practices and meanings of home.

Visions of catastrophic futures that undermine the very basis of survival saturate the public sphere. While institutional ‘anticipatory governance techniques’ (e.g. emergency management, preparedness, adaptation, resilience) exist to prepare for impacts on vital infrastructural systems, lay imaginations and expert worst-case scenarios describe environmental and social collapse; futures without functioning infrastructure, governance or reliable provisioning networks for essential goods (Barker, 2020). This is leading to increasing experiments around ‘shadow’ infrastructural autonomy in the home (Vine, 2018), the development of accommodation forms for survival scenarios, and the reimagining of what home might be in futures of, or beyond, catastrophic environmental collapse.

The project will interrogate practices of making and maintaining home in contexts where environmental crisis is anticipated and approached through survival modalities. The precise empirical focus will be determined in conversation with the research interests of the selected candidate, allowing you to bring in your own interests, expertise and concerns to the project design. It may include (but is not limited to) cross-cutting attention to:

- off-grid homes and eco-communities;
- prepping and survivalist practices of stockpiling and equipping the home;
- home making in the discourses and practices of environmental catastrophe campaign groups (e.g. Deep Adaptation, Extinction Rebellion, Dark Mountain, voluntary extinction).

The research has its theoretical base in the growing area of ‘anticipatory geographies’, focusing on preparation for anticipated/impending crisis scenarios (Anderson, 2010). While the research will not address home making in present crisis and survival situations, it speaks to this by examining how narratives, materials and practices developed in and for existing survival scenarios are circulated into preparations for anticipated environmental crisis.
futures. This includes through the design of humanitarian survival kits and pre-fab survival shelters to reproduce home during/post disaster; the reproduction of home in temporary accommodation in survival contexts (Harris et al, 2020); and reproducing home in extreme survival experiments (e.g. desert geodomes, Antarctic research centres, under the sea, space travel). The research also bridges to fictional depictions of home in survival literature and speculative environmental catastrophe literature and film (e.g. cli-fi), considering how these dystopian imaginaries influence ‘real’ world home making.

You will work with an engaged supervisory team with established expertise in survival discourses and practices, contemporary housing logics and home-making in a range of precarious and crisis-accentuated situations.

Aims:
1. Develop a critical understanding of how concerns about survival amidst environmental catastrophe are reconfiguring the imaginative and material practices entailed in making home.
2. Advance research in the sub-field of ‘survival geographies’, specializing in notions of survival homes, through publications and events that forge a collaborative network of scholars.

Objectives:

1. Develop and disseminate novel multi-methodological approaches to capture the production and circulation of survival home practices, knowledges and materialities across communities of practice.
2. Produce and analyse a qualitative dataset drawing on creative methods, online and offline ethnography, detailing survival home practices in a specific sub-national context.
3. Publish and disseminate research results through a thesis, academic publications and stakeholder engagement.

The studentship is for three years.

Candidate Requirements:

We invite applications from outstanding and highly motivated candidates who have a Master’s degree in Geography, Sociology, Anthropology or other relevant discipline at merit or distinction level (with a minimum grade of 65% for their dissertation).

Subject areas/keywords:

Anticipatory geographies, survival, home making meanings and practices, Anthropocene, environmental catastrophe.
Key References:


Further information:

Further information about PhDs at Birkbeck is available from the [research section of the Birkbeck website](http://www.birkbeck.ac.uk/research/). Application forms and instructions on how to apply are available from the [Geography, Environment and Development Studies programme page](http://www.birkbeck.ac.uk/graduate-studies/programmes/geography-environment-development-studies/).

The application will prompt you to confirm details of any scholarships or grants (for your proposed study at Birkbeck).

**Please ensure that you respond with: ‘Mark James Scholarship’.** (Failing to do so means that your application may not be considered for the scholarship.)

**Please also ensure that, in the section where you identify your potential supervisor, you add the name of the supervisors and the title of the project you are applying for.**

1. Check that you meet the [entry requirements](http://www.birkbeck.ac.uk/graduate-studies/programmes/geography-environment-development-studies/), including English language requirements, as below:

   If English is not your first language or you have not previously studied in English, our usual requirement is the equivalent of an International English Language Testing System (IELTS Academic Test) score of 7.0, with not less than 6.5 in each of the sub-tests.

   Visit the International section of our website to find out more about our [English language entry requirements and relevant requirements by country](http://www.birkbeck.ac.uk/graduate-studies/programmes/geography-environment-development-studies/).
2. We request the following documents from each applicant:

- A recent CV
- Transcripts of relevant studies and – where appropriate – a letter from your course coordinator predicting the expected degree result (for those who are currently enrolled in a Master’s-level programme or equivalent);
- A sample of writing such as your MA dissertation, or similar.
- A supporting statement. In the case of a Mark James scholarship, you will be applying for a specific project, which means you are not expected to submit your own research proposal. Instead, please state clearly in your application which project you are applying for, and use the Supporting Statement in the application to explain what attracted you to the project and why you are a suitable candidate for this research.

3. References

Referees will be automatically prompted to upload their references when you submit your application.

Please note that all references must be uploaded by 7 March 2022. We strongly encourage you to contact your referees in advance to ensure they are prepared to upload their reference following submission of your application.

Closing date for applications is: 28 February 2022.

If you have any questions, please contact the respective supervisor(s) of the project you wish to apply for.