

***Ethnographic Horizons:
Time and the Ethnographic Horizon
in Moments of Crisis***

Marilyn Strathern
2018 Balzan Prize for Social Anthropology

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Project Advisors: Andrew Moutu, Aparecida Vilaça

Researchers: Virgínia Amaral, Gregory Bablis, Bruno Nogueira Guimarães, Simon Kenema, Priscila Santos da Costa. (Hélena Regius on leave.)

Participating Institutions: Centre for Pacific Studies, with Centre for Amerindian, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, both of the Department of Anthropology, University of St Andrews; Centro Incontri Umani, Ascona.

Period: 2019-2022

Website: <https://cps.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/ethnographic-horizons/>

Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology and Life Fellow of Girton College, University of Cambridge, Dame Marilyn Strathern is also Honorary Life President of the Association of Social Anthropologists of UK and Commonwealth (ASA).

Strathern's Balzan Research Project explores a conundrum at the heart of the practice of social anthropology. First-hand research is central to the fashioning of ethnography through fieldwork, yet always brings with it a specific temporal horizon. The ethnographer's present is not always the best vantage point from which to apprehend the nature of contemporary issues, notably with respect to perceptions of life in crisis. Capitalizing on current anthropological debate over notions of time and the future, the project will turn this conundrum into a set of research questions about the diverse relationships among the temporal frameworks being deployed at moments of perceived crisis – the ethnographer's time horizon included – thus creating space for young anthropologists to advance their discipline's contribution to current concerns. The questions may be explored with respect to gender (old and new inequalities), embodiment (agents of transformation), environment (including climate change/horticultural futures) or governance (the future of the social contract/legal innovation), with the stipulation that in the first instance the investigators address materials from either Melanesia or Amazonia. The project envisions enabling promising scholars from the Pacific or from Brazil to undertake first-hand research on these issues.

Third Year Report: April 2021 – March 2022

The activities of project members have divided into two. The Balzan PhD student has continued his training, focused this year on firsthand fieldwork in Papua New Guinea as planned. This has been relatively unaffected, to date, by the kinds of disruptions, personal and institutional, that Covid-19 brought in its wake, and that led to a re-alignment of the second research arena, which undertaken by the post-doctoral researchers (the Balzan Fellows). It was decided to focus on Fellows' writings and their contributions to a joint volume. A book prospectus was submitted to and has been accepted by Sean Kingston Publishing, UK, with the provisional title, *Crises in*

Time: Ethnographic Horizons in Amazonia and Melanesia; contributions will come from the entire team.

Intellectual Trajectory

The year has been one of consolidation and refinement of the project's interests concerning perceptions of time at moments of crises and has proceeded in a dual mode. One mode was prompted by the invitation to present to the 9th/10th edition of the International Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory (IinteR-La+B) on *Pandemics*, in Milan. This was attended by Strathern, Crook, and Guimarães in person and by Amaral, Kenema, and Santos da Costa remotely; among other things, a comparative presentation drew on two double presentations on Amazonia and Melanesia. The other mode has been through an analytical focus on the concept of 'horizon' as a temporal phenomenon, one of the routes towards formulating the Balzan project's joint book proposal.

Individual Research Profiles

Dr Maria Virgínia Ramos Amaral: Amaral has been pressing ahead with writing, including contributions to three collaborative ventures. These comprised a presentation at the Balzan IinteR-La+B in Milan, with co-Balzan Fellow Guimarães; an Afterword to a new edition of a famous literary work, written with Project Advisor Aparecida Vilaça, dealing with continuities and transformations between 'Macunaíma' and the mythology of the Kapon / Pemon indigenous peoples with whom she worked; the co-organization of a SALSA [Lowlands South America] conference panel. All three drew on her central project work on the temporalities implied in institutional (religious) re-formation and forgetting.

Dr Bruno Nogueira Guimarães: Opportunities to advance his work on crisis, change and transformation among the Canela Apanjekra in Central Brazil have included questions following the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Attention to bodily production reveals ways in which concepts of health are instrumental to understanding how different people react to what Euro-Americans consider a universal event. They also included the opportunity of a month's study residency at the Centra Incontri Umani, Ascona, which was spent analyzing the temporal horizons of different agents involved in cash transfer policies, an original locus for a major area of his research.

Dr Simon Kenema: Over the first part of the year, Kenema continued with his writing on concepts of responsibility in the Papua New Guinean state, which takes up an unusual perspective on the secessionist Bougainville 'Crisis': people's perceptions of relationships during the crisis had a profound effect on the course of the conflict there. Kenema was also teaching in Anthropology and Sociology at UPNG for part of this period. He has since been appointed as a social development specialist with the Pacific Social Risk Management team of the World Bank Group on projects supported by them in PNG.

Dr Priscila Santos da Costa: Her continuing work on reformist politics in the Papua New Guinea parliament is reflected in publications on bureaucracy and on the role of Christianity. She co-organized a panel on 'Failure in/of indigenous politics in Amazonia and Melanesia', for the biennial conference of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America [SALSA] at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, materializing some of the Balzan project's comparative possibilities. She now has an appointment at the IT University, Copenhagen in connection with new research under the rubric 'Scaling IT for a Green transition in Brazilian agriculture'.

Gregory Waula Babilis: Having completed over a year of fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, Babilis has been exploring responses to battlefields sites and perceptions of foreign dead [Japanese

and Australian] in local cosmologies along with their relationship to various Christian cosmologies. This has involved work with spirit mediums in diverse communities, with resident schoolteachers charged with educating children about the Second World War, and with local churches and historians. Field reports to date demonstrate impressive work, maturing reflections on his findings, and an endorsement of the quality of relations he has managed to establish with various interlocutors.

Project Meetings 2021-22.

A Virtual Workshop was held together with the two Advisors in May 2021; three project members (Crook, Guimarães and Strathern) took advantage of study facilities at CIU (Centra Incontri Umani), Ascona, in September 2021.

Publications

Amaral, Virgínia and Aparecida Vilaça, 2022. De Roraima a São Paulo: as transformações de um mito [Afterword], in Mário de Andrade, *Macunaíma, um Herói sem Caráter* ('Macunaíma, a hero without a character'), Rio de Janeiro: Antofágica. (pp 327-337)

Santos da Costa, Priscila, 2021. Bureaucracy, *TIP (Technologies in Practice) Lexicon*. <https://tip.itu.dk/2021/01/27/bureaucracy/>

Santos da Costa, Priscila, and Anthony Pickles, 2021. It is Christ or corruption in Papua New Guinea: Bring in the witness! *Oceania* 91 (3): 349-366.

Strathern, Marilyn 2021. Counting generation(s), *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 46 (3): 286-303. Reprinted in G E R Lloyd and A Vilaça (eds), *Science in the Forest, Science in the Past: Further Interdisciplinary Explorations*, London: Routledge, 2022.

Strathern, Marilyn 2021. More than: an Afterword, to 'Aesthetic satisfaction and the art of gardens', eds L Bolton and J Mitchell, spec. iss. *Anthropological Forum*, 31 (4): 450-454.

Strathern, Marilyn 2021. Regeneração vegetativa: um ensaio sobre relações de gênero [Vegetative regeneration: An essay on gender relations], Translated into Portuguese by Bruno Nogueira Guimarães, *Mana* 27 (1): 1-31.

Presentations (in addition to papers presented at project meetings)

Amaral, Virgínia, 2021. Co-organizer of panel, *Indigenous peoples in Guiana: contemporary ethnographies*, SALSA XIII conference, University of Virginia, June-July, online.

Amaral, Virgínia, 2021. 'Time and Crisis in Areruya religion', for panel on *Indigenous peoples in Guiana: contemporary ethnographies*, SALSA XIII conference, University of Virginia, June-July, online.

Amaral, Virgínia and Bruno Guimarães, 2021. 'Crisis and ontological discontinuities: The Covid-19 pandemic in Central Brazil and Northern Amazonia', Balzan InteR-La+B, *Pandemics*, Milan, September.

Crook, Tony, 2021. 'Pandemics and the Balzan research project on time and the ethnographic horizon in moments of crisis', Balzan InteR-La+B, *Pandemics*, Milan, September.

Guimarães, Bruno Nogueira and Virginia Amaral, 2021. 'Crisis and ontological discontinuities: The Covid-19 pandemic in Central Brazil and Northern Amazonia', Balzan IinteR-La+B, *Pandemics*, Milan, September.

Kenema, Simon and Priscila Santos da Costa, 2021. 'Precarity and the state: The arrival of Covid-19 in Papua New Guinea', Balzan IinteR-La+B, *Pandemics*, Milan, September.

Moutu, Andrew, 2020. Four seminars delivered to the Dept. Philosophy, UPNG, on ideas of crises, temporality and the law, under the Balzan project rubric, Port Moresby.

Santos da Costa, Priscila, 2021. Co-organizer of panel, *Failure in/of indigenous politics in Amazonia and Melanesia* SALSA XIII conference, University of Virginia, June-July, online.

Santos da Costa, Priscila, 2021. 'Institutional failure beyond negation: A view from Parliament', to panel on *Failure in/of indigenous politics in Amazonia and Melanesia*, SALSA XIII conference, University of Virginia, June-July, online.

Santos da Costa, Priscila and Simon Kenema, 2021. 'Precarity and the state: The arrival of Covid-19 in Papua New Guinea', Balzan IinteR-La+B, *Pandemics*, Milan, September.

Strathern, Marilyn, 2021. 'Regeneration and its hazards: A commentary on our times'. New version, as seminar paper, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology (School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography), University of Oxford, May, online.

Strathern, Marilyn, 2021. 'An anthropological overview' (Global Debates), IinteR-La+B, 9th/10th edition of International Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory, on *Pandemics*, Milan, September.

Strathern, Marilyn, 2021. 'Regeneration and its hazards: A commentary on our times'. Adapted from Oxford version, for the Co-Learning Circles of Self and Mutual Studies, Vishwanedam Center for Asian Blossoming, Chennai, November, online.

Strathern, Marilyn, 2021. 'Productive breaks and energising gaps in the worlds of anthropology', Keynote for research conference, 'Dis/connectivity, imaginaries, media technologies, politics', Leuphana University Lüneburg's Centre for Digital Culture, convenors Timon Beyes and Urs Stäheli, December, online.

Strathern, Marilyn, 2021. 'What falls on people', for symposium on Planetary *responsibility*, convenors Stephen Humphreys, Alain Pottage, London School of Economics. December, online.