

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

Marilyn Strathern
2018 Balzan Prize for Social Anthropology

Balzan GPC Advisor: Nathalie Heinich

Project Director: Marilyn Strathern

Deputy Director: Tony Crook

Project Advisors: Andrew Moutu, Aparecida Vilaça

Researchers: Virgínia Amaral, Gregory Babilis, Bruno Nogueira Guimarães, Simon Kenema, Priscila Santos da Costa

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: 2019-2023

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.

Overall Report: April 2022 – March 2023

The financial duration of the Balzan Research Project has been extended to the end of 2023 in order to accommodate the final phases of work of the Balzan PhD student. However, this will be the last report to focus on the project as a whole, other project members now being involved in a variety of further enterprises [see individual profiles], in many aspects springing from this one. The remaining funds are committed to the PhD studentship and to publication costs for the project

co-authored volume *Crises in Time: Ethnographic Horizons in Amazonia and Melanesia* in both English and Portuguese.

Intellectual Trajectory

2022 saw an opportunity provided by the hospitality of the CIU (Centra Incontri Umani), Ascona, to bring together several project members to discuss past and future trajectories. It facilitated two principal events. One was a virtual workshop devoted to discussion of the now completed project volume. It was especially appreciated that Moutu (from Papua New Guinea) and Amaral (from Brazil) could join the discussions. The second was an intensive in-person interchange over two days between Crook, Guimarães, Strathern and Vilaça on future directions of work, to which were invited the Amazonianist Dr Françoise Barbira-Freedman (Cambridge) and Melanesianist Prof Christina Toren (St Andrews) as advisers and commentators.

Among diverse enterprises, the Balzan Fellows were involved in chapter revisions following the review of the collective book manuscript, accepted by Sean Kingston Publishing, UK, edited by Crook and Strathern with the title, *Crises in Time: Ethnographic Horizons in Amazonia and Melanesia*. The book will be brought out as an Open Access publication, with a Portuguese translation, also Open Access, recently contracted. The Balzan PhD student was in Papua New Guinea on fieldwork throughout the year.

Individual research profiles

Dr Maria Virgínia Ramos Amaral: Amaral was mostly dedicated to two academic works, still ongoing, to appear in 2024: as sole author, the book *Areruya and Indigenous Prophetism in Northern Amazonia*, to be published by Bloomsbury Academic, London; as co-organizer, the special issue 'Indigenous Peoples in Guiana: Contemporary Ethnographies', to be published by *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*. She has embarked on a new postdoctoral research project (National Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro), Notions of Crisis and Biodiversity among the Ingarikó, with the financial support of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development. Springing from her Balzan research, this project adds to the further investigation of time and crisis (among the Amazonian Ingarikó people), new research on conceptions and practices which safeguard what non-indigenous people would designate 'biodiversity'.

Dr Tony Crook: The project Deputy Director benefitted from an extended period of research leave in 2021-22, partly supported from Balzan project funds, and was able to devote the focus of writing on a long-term project aligned with the Ethnographic Horizons project themes of time and crises. The project analyses the cultural histories informing understandings of the atmosphere and climate crisis and traces the longer social and conceptual histories drawn into and transformed through their cosmological and theological connections. The cultural assumptions and formulations carried by European and American folk-models are traced through historical episodes and public figures and evidenced in social science theorizing. As reported at the 2021 Balzan 'InteR-La⁺ B interdisciplinary workshop, 'breath' provides one venue in which these and other concerns about atmosphere become articulated.

Dr Bruno Nogueira Guimarães: Taking forward his Balzan research on conditional cash transfer (CCT) policies among Indigenous peoples in Brazil, he not only addressed the Apanjekra ethnographic material from his own fieldwork but also considered the broader scope of Indigenous contexts in the country. Focusing on discussions between state agents and Indigenous activists on

public policies, he considered the effects that statistical production in official information systems have upon social programmes targeting Indigenous peoples, and how these peoples respond to governmental knowledge production. Concepts such as ‘crisis’ and ‘horizon’, as discussed in the Balzan Project, have proved inspirational for shaping his approach to the subject. This has resulted in further articles and presentations, including two chapters on Indigenous data production by the state. He is planning a specifically comparative research project focused on the experience of different Indigenous peoples in Brazil with CCTs.

Dr Simon Kenema: With the extension of his contract as a social development specialist with the Pacific Social Risk Management team of the World Bank Group, Kenema’s involvement in the design and monitoring of projects now reaches to the wider Melanesia region. Kenema continues with his writings on Bougainville, Papua New Guinea and mining through vernacular perspectives. As such, the insights into inside and outside understandings of relations implicated in development horizons — a central focus of the Ethnographic Horizons project — are now generating impacts through these applied contexts. Writing for publication has focused on revising his chapter for the project volume, which also provided a provocation to Kenema’s longer-term work on explicating the Bougainville crisis through an indigenous epistemological framework.

Dr Priscila Santos da Costa: She has been appointed Assistant Professor at the IT University, Copenhagen, in connection with new research under the rubric ‘Scaling IT for a Green Transition in Brazilian Agriculture’; her research participation has also been confirmed in the 5-year ERC-funded project, ‘Decoupling IT? A Global Comparative Ethnography of the Role of IT in the Mitigation of the Climate Crisis’ (PI Steffen Dalsgaard). Apart from her work on her chapter for the project volume, a substantial part of the year was spent on fieldwork in Pará-Brazil for these new ventures, towards which most of her ongoing writing has also been directed. A short piece she wrote as part of the ‘Technologies in practice lexicon’ was chosen for a collection entitled *Reclaiming Technology: A Poetic Scientific Vocabulary*.

Gregory Waula Babilis: He has returned to St Andrews from Papua New Guinea, after a productive PhD year in the field. He concluded investigations first at his field site, in Tol, East New Britain, and then at Gorari, Kokoda, Oro Province, an area familiar from previous museum projects. Both locations are important battlefield sites from World War Two, and so directly feed into Babilis’s broader lines of inquiry about present day relationships to the dead and living in the context and memory of war. He also found the opportunity to assist the local communities with activities related to tourism and environmental protection. He has completed four out of five field reports, which are ethnographically rich and full of interesting questions and materials pertaining to his project. He reports that the chance to do this kind of work has been life-changing. A positive endorsement has been received from his supervisor.

Project Meetings 2022-23.

As noted, a virtual workshop was held together with the two Advisors in September 2022; four project members spent varying periods of time at CIU, Ascona, including in September 2022 presenting at a two-day symposium with invited discussants.

Publications

Amaral, V. 2022. ‘Entre a distração e os esquecimento: a colonização da fronteira Brasil-Guiana segundo leituras históricas e míticas’. *MANA*: 28 (2): 1-34.

Amaral, V. and B.N. Guimarães. 2022. 'Crisis and Ontological Discontinuities: The Covid-19 Pandemic in Central Brazil and Northern Amazonia', Balzan 'InteR-La⁺ B, Pandemics, International Balzan Foundation, *Balzan Papers* 5: 127-33.

Bablis, G. 2022. 'The Evolution of Pacific Island Societies'. In P. D'Arcy (ed), *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, Cambridge University Press, vol 1 (3): 296-322. (Online.)

Crook, T. 2022. 'Ethnographic Horizons: Pandemics, Amazonia, Melanesia, and the Breath', Balzan 'InteR-La⁺ B, Pandemics, International Balzan Foundation, *Balzan Papers*, 5: 117-126.

Guimarães, B. N. 2022. 'Perspectivas Populacionais: os Povos Indígenas nos Censos Demográficos Nacionais'. In Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, Sônia Barbosa Magalhães, Cristina Adams (eds), *Povos Tradicionais e Biodiversidade no Brasil: contribuições dos povos indígenas, quilombolas e comunidades tradicionais para a biodiversidade, políticas e ameaças*. São Paulo: SBPC 1: 33-49. Available at: <http://portal.sbpcnet.org.br/livro/povostradicionais1.pdf>

Guimarães, B. N. 2022. 'A Demografia dos Povos Indígenas no Brasil: um Panorama'. In Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, Sônia Barbosa Magalhães, Cristina Adams (eds), *Povos tradicionais e biodiversidade no Brasil: contribuições dos povos indígenas, quilombolas e comunidades tradicionais para a biodiversidade, políticas e ameaças*. São Paulo: SBPC 1: 51-78. Available at: <http://portal.sbpcnet.org.br/livro/povostradicionais1.pdf>

Santos, R., Guimarães, B. N., Simoni, A. T. 2023. The quest for visibility and legibility: Quantifying the indigenous population in Brazil in the late twentieth century. *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, online 1-22. DOI: [10.1080/13260219.2023.2191976](https://doi.org/10.1080/13260219.2023.2191976)

Santos, R., Guimarães, B. N., Simoni, A. T. In press. "“Cor ou Raça: Indígena”? Contextos e recepções da inclusão de uma categoria no recenseamento nacional do Brasil dos anos 1990 (Censo de 1991)". *Brésil(s) - Sciences Humaines et Sociales*.

Kenema, S. and P. Santos da Costa. 2022. 'Precarity and the state: The arrival of Covid-19 in Papua New Guinea', Balzan InteR-La+B, Pandemics, International Balzan Foundation, *Balzan Papers*, 5: 135-142.

Strathern, M. 2022. 'Pandemic narratives: An anthropological overview', Balzan InteR-La+B, Pandemics, International Balzan Foundation, *Balzan Papers*, 5: 103-115.

Presentations (in addition to papers presented at project meetings)

Guimarães, B. N. 2022. "“More than I can see”: Money and commodities in an Indigenous context", III Indigenous Innovation Seminar, Rio de Janeiro. (Seminar paper.)

Guimarães, B. N. 2022. 'Demographic Dynamics of Indigenous peoples: contemporary perspectives' (*Dinâmicas Demográficas dos povos indígenas: perspectivas contemporâneas*), XXII National Encounter of the Brazilian Association for Populational Studies. (Participant, roundtable debate.)

Santos da Costa, P. 2022. 'O que podem as Conexões entre Antropologia e Tecnologia.' State University of Pará, Brazil. (Guest Lecture)

Dalsgaard, S. and P. Santos da Costa. 2022. 'Salvage Biology? A Commentary on the Sociotechnical Imaginaries of Bioeconomy, Tech 4.0 and Markets in the Amazon', conference The Forest Multiple: Composing and Digitalizing Wooded Worlds, University of Cambridge. (Workshop Presentation.)

Dalsgaard, S. & P. Santos da Costa. (2022). 'Carbon Value and the Salvaging of the Amazon', conference The Forest Multiple: Composing and Digitalizing Wooded Worlds, University of Cambridge. (Conference Presentation.)

Strathern, M. 2022. "'A question of life and death': imagining tropical tubers", conference Tuberous collectivities: Interdisciplinary explorations into human-tuber companionship across histories, convenors David Nally and Olivia Angé, Jesus College, Cambridge. (Keynote.)

Strathern, M. 2022. 'Life with and without its antithesis', symposium Science in the Forest, Science in the Past III, convenors Geoffrey Lloyd, Willard McCarty, Aparecida Vilaça, Cambridge. (Symposium presentation.)

Strathern, M. 2023. 'Non-relations and disconnections', Finnish Anthropological Society Biennial Conference, Relations and beyond, Convenor, Florian Stammler, Rovaniemi. (Keynote.)