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News Issue
March 2021

**Durham Global Challenges
Centre for Doctoral Training**



By Bruno Costelini

The Roaring Twenties

The 1920s are often hailed as a period of cultural effervescence and budding creativity in the western world. Literary movements sprung, popular and avant-garde cinema was exploding, technological innovations such as the radio completely changed how mass communications worked. And even in the often-slow-moving world of International Law, the creation of the League of Nations represented a change in pace, as it attempted to tackle some of the remaining issues left from the Great War and to establish an order based on multilateral agreements.

“The richness of the sea, in particular the richness of the Antarctic region, comprise a heritage of humankind”

José León Suárez – Argentina Jurist

One such preoccupation they had happened to be with the oceans. Evidence of the deleterious effect of overfishing had been accumulating for some time, since the creation of the first oceanographic and fisheries institutions in the late 19th century had by then gathered enough evidence to support policies and regulation. Whale hunting in particular was a major such concern, as the major whaling countries that used blubber for oil and soap (Norway and the United Kingdom) had already depleted the North Atlantic and were now moving towards the south, to Antarctic waters.

So, the League appointed a 'committee of experts' to look not only into this particular problem but to the overall 'progressive codification of International Law', the first such attempt, which ultimately failed, as we now know. The 'Law of the Sea' section of the committee was headed by Argentine jurist José León Suárez, a proponent of greater scientific and technical rigor to the treatment of those matters.^[1]

In his final report in 1927 Suárez made this interesting suggestion that I will quote in full: 'The richness of the sea, in particular the richness of the Antarctic region, comprise a heritage of humankind, and our Commission, constituted by the League of Nations, is all for proposing to the governments a course of action before it is too late'.^[2]

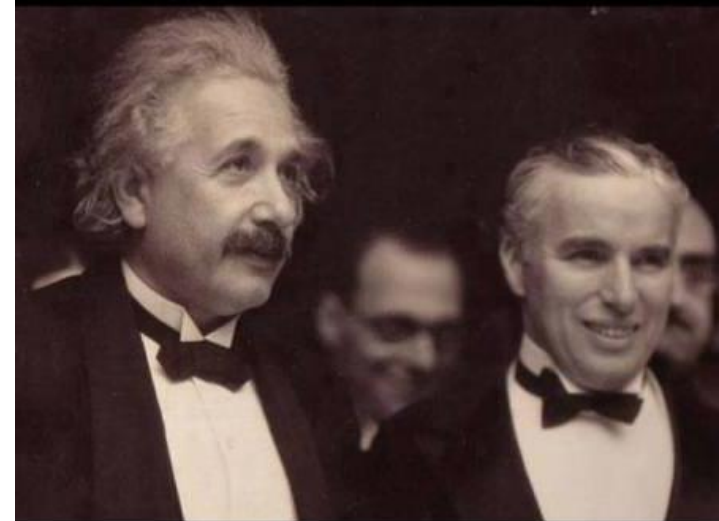
Two things that stand out there. First, this was possibly the first such direct reference to the oceans resources as 'heritage of humankind' or 'heritage of mankind' as a clear proposal for an International agreement. Though we often refer to Arvid Pardo's 1967 UN General Assembly speech as the propellant of the

institution of Common Heritage of Mankind (now applied only to seabed mineral resources, and to the Moon, in the Moon Treaty, but not to Antarctica, curiously), Suárez's proposal was actually the first to appear in a multilateral institution, which evidently did not succeed.

Second, the call for action, 'before it is too late', which seems to be a common motif in the international community, seeing as we are always chasing past errors and trying to fix situations that are on the brink of disaster. It should be noted that in that case no action was passed, and the whale problem only resolved itself when stocks reached such a low level that it was no longer profitable to travel across the whole world to hunt them. At that point, however, the invention of new techniques for soap and oil making made the use of blubber no longer essential, and the industry changed production lines to accommodate vegetable sources. (But the whale populations never fully recovered, and it did take decades of moratoriums for them to escape risk of extinction). And the rest is History, as they say.

Cut to a hundred years later, and we are now entering the 'UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development', a new roaring twenties perhaps, but with the same old problems, and the same old recipes. This has been hailed as a unique opportunity to gather scientific resources, focus on the great issues (marine pollution, ocean acidification, sea-level rise, pick your battle!) and finally try and solve them with experts and data, and all that the best scientific evidence has to offer, for we seem to be, as usual on the brink of disaster(s).

[1], [2] article link [IBDMAR The Roaring Twenties - IBDMAR](#)

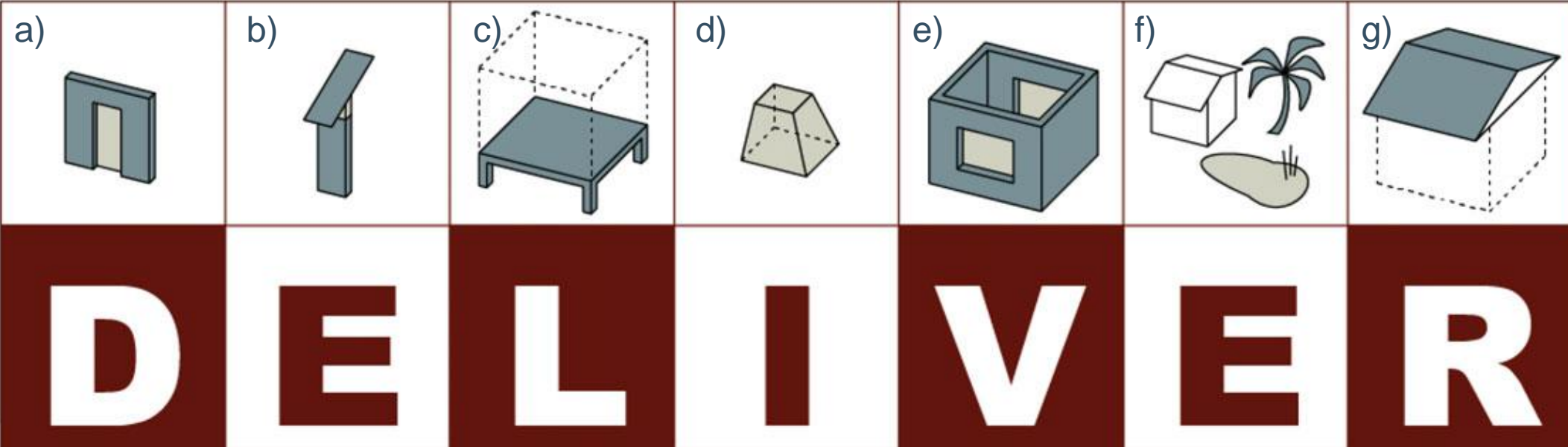


"What I admire the most in your art, says Albert Einstein, is the universality. You don't say a word but the whole world understands you"

"True" answers Chaplin "but your glory is even bigger: the whole world admires you when nobody understands you"

Action?

Will we finally take action before it is too late? Only time will tell. But let us keep our hopes up. If the 1920s brought us the talent of Hemingway, Chaplin, Charleston dancing, and all those wonderful *modernists*, perhaps our roaring 2020s will makes us dance to the rhythm of science and reason. Why not?



DELIVER

Recommends the following best practices:

(a) Doors should be screened, self-closing and without surrounding gaps; (b) Eaves, the space between the wall and roof, should be closed or screened; (c) houses should be Lifted above the ground; (d) Insecticide-treated nets should be used when sleeping in houses at night; (e) houses should be Ventilated, with at least two large-screened windows to facilitate airflow; (f) Environmental management should be conducted regularly inside and around the home; and (g) Roofs should be solid, rather than thatch.

The DELIVER Mnemonic

Majo Carrasco-Tenezaca has been working with a team of researchers, lead by Prof Steven Lindsay on recommendations for building out mosquito-transmitted diseases in sub-Saharan Africa using the DELIVER mnemonic.

In sub-Saharan Africa, most transmission of mosquito-transmitted diseases, such as malaria or dengue, occurs within or around houses. Preventing mosquito house entry and reducing mosquito production around the home would help reduce the transmission of these diseases. Based on recent research, the team make key recommendations for reducing the threat of mosquito-transmitted diseases through changes to the built environment. The mnemonic, DELIVER, which recommends a set of best practices (as shown in above figure) to be used in combination for maximum impact. Simple changes to the built environment will reduce exposure to mosquito-transmitted diseases and help keep regions free from these diseases after elimination. One of these factors that Majo has been working on, is 'lifting

Experimental houses in The Gambia

houses from the ground’.

Between 450 and 420 BC, Herodotus described Egyptian fishermen living near marshes sleeping on raised platforms to escape the bites of mosquitoes [37]. And, at the turn of the nineteenth century, it was recommended that houses near Rome should be raised off the ground, and two-storey buildings built with the bedroom on the top floor to avoid mosquito bites [38].

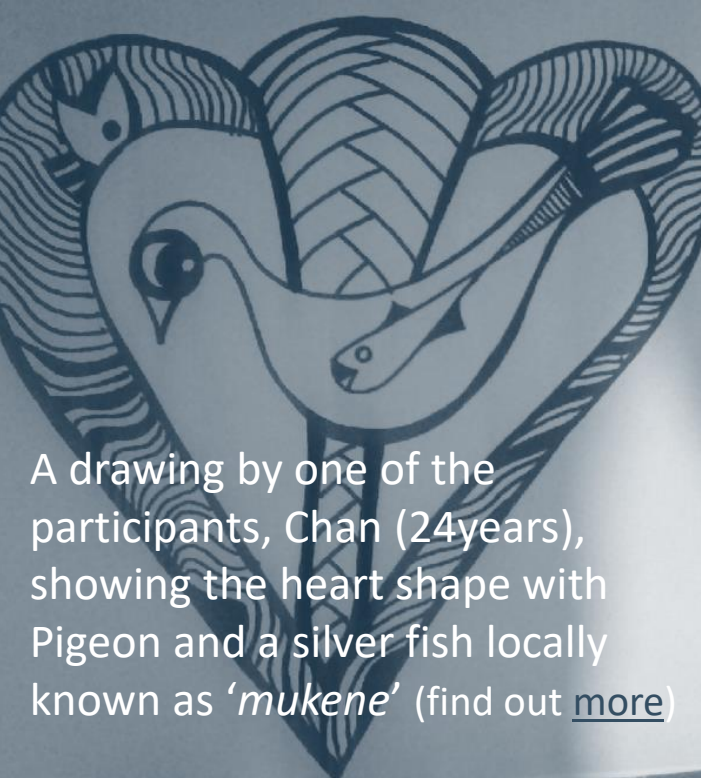
Studies of mosquito behaviour over the past 50 years suggest that both historical anecdotes describe adaptations to avoid mosquito bites. In the 1970s, a series of pioneering studies exploring the height at which mosquitoes fly above the ground were carried out using suction traps placed at different heights on scaffolding towers placed over different terrain in The Gambia [39–41]. Although some culicine mosquitoes are frequently found at all flight levels up to 8 m, most mosquito species fly close to the ground, with 80% of the flying population found below 1 m in height [40]. This work suggested to Gillies and Wilkes that placing circular mosquito-proof fences around people alone or inhabited buildings might be protective [42]. Their findings, however, showed that mosquitoes flew over the 6 m high fences and provided little, if any protection.

Recent studies in The Gambia, used experimental houses that can be lifted from the ground at different heights. The studies showed that if there is no fencing guiding the mosquitoes upwards, raising houses above the ground would reduce mosquito house entry and hence disease transmission (M. Carrasco-Tenezaca 2019, unpublished data). The team recommends that homes should be raised for African housing, especially rural housing which is currently built at the ground level.

[37-42] please read the full Opinion Piece through the [link](#)



Majo Carrasco-Tenezaca
Contribution to Opinion Piece



A drawing by one of the participants, Chan (24 years), showing the heart shape with Pigeon and a silver fish locally known as 'mukene' (find out [more](#))

HIV Ward

In this body of work, I collaborated with a group of young artisans in Ndeeba, Kampala to produce a series that interrogate the subject of death by Aids patients. This artwork further exposes the structural inadequacies like unprofessional conduct by health workers, lack of medicine and poor sanitation in many health facilities across the country that lead to many deaths. This has always been the case in most government hospitals in Uganda as the health ministry grapples with the ever surging numbers of adolescent HIV/AIDS patients with huge funding gaps as is the case in South Africa ([Subedar et al., 2018](#)).

HIV Awareness and 'Youth' Empowerment Exhibition

On the 4th January 2021 an event dubbed as a "Research Dissemination Exhibition", was launched at the Makerere University Art gallery. The Makerere Institute of heritage, conservation and restoration (MIHCR) organised the exhibition on my behalf and it was sponsored through our GCRF-CDT. Retired Major Rubaramira Ruranga, CEO of the National Guidance Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NGEN+) officially opened the exhibition. It was put up to provide an interactive platform for engaging, sharing and disseminating research findings with local communities, research participants, HIV advocates, activists, academicians, Ministries and other stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Uganda.

You can find more details about the exhibition on our [webpages](#) and the [Ugandan Independent News](#)



By Robert Ssewanyana



HIV Benches

Wooden benches are common objects in every open space in Uganda. In urban centres where the youth largely inhabit, the benches are frequently used as seats in markets, food kiosks, bars and gaming spaces where popular games like ludo and sporting betting are played. The bench is an affordable seating tool and therefore is used by large groups of people in the community. With the technique of inscribing them with activism statements like “Stop The Spread of HIV/AIDS” or “Genda Wekebeze” (go and test) and familiar drawings connoting the spread and fight of the disease, this immediately will spark conversation on the virus. It is important to inspire conversations on the disease in social spaces because particular individuals often grapple with the challenge of stigma leading to discrimination and eventually depression. Through opening up, such barriers are shuttered and deaths gradually reduced.

Covid Bikes

A bicycle is a common means of transport both in urban and rural settings across Uganda. Bicycles are relied on as a cheap form of transport to markets, hospitals and other respective work places. During the total lockdown imposed by government to curtail the spread of Covid-19, the bicycle became the most effective means of transport because it is cheap to maintain and easily accessible. The notion of produce bicycles for the research exercise on HIV/AIDS among the youth in informal spaces, was largely influenced by the series of conversations the participants had on how the local people had to deal with disease during



the nation wide total lockdown. It therefore, emerged that HIV/AIDS patients had to rely on the bicycle to transport them to distant health facilities to acquire their routine medication (**Louise, 2020**). However, the use of bicycles (Shaughnessy, n.d.) didn't only facilitate the saving of lives, but inspired a more critical aspect in the fight against the disease by breaking down social stigma and discrimination. Probably, for the first time during my research, HIV positive participants freely talked about their personal experiences with the diseases with each other and those in immediate surroundings as they sought to get help to reach the hospitals. The technique of adding Covid spikes on the wheels, is intended to give the artwork the context within which it was created for.

2020 The Year of Covid-19

There is some small consolation in knowing that the Covid-19 global pandemic is a once-in-a-century event. Reading about the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918 is a much less intensive experience compared with having lived through a global pandemic over the last year. Comparisons with historical events provide insights. Dealing with events in the here and now requires more than insight; it requires support, empathy, commitment, innovation and resilience. Notwithstanding the challenges of the last year, the times of frustration, the times of concern, the difficult moments, my lasting memory of 2020 will be as a year of challenges met, expectations surpassed and the discovery of a reservoir of hope and adaptation we didn't know that we had.

As I write this, citizens in England are permitted the first tentative steps out of lockdown today, allowed to meet outdoors in groups of six from two households. Over the last year the GCRF-CDT cohort has continued to meet weekly online providing valuable support, ongoing encouragement, engagement and training. We have had a series of presentations from all our doctoral candidates describing their projects, presenting their work and discussion preliminary findings. I can say with confidence that their research work has continued during this last year. The breadth, scope and originality of the doctoral research being undertaken by our cohort is hugely impressive and promises that our centre will fully meet our objectives when our candidates complete their projects over the next two years. Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read about: approaches to preserving our oceans, tackling mosquito-borne malaria, and working with young people to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Africa. These three snapshots give a sense of the range of impacts our centre will have in the longer term. These three articles confirm the continued progress of research projects in difficult and demanding circumstances.



In addition to presentations from our cohort, our online programme has offered wide-ranging training opportunities exploring academic writing and Durham's first online writing retreat. Feedback from this was so positive that another is planned. Our students have also participated in training on Resilience in Change, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Leadership Development, Creative Thinking, Doctoral Examination Process, and several presentations from experts in a range of Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to undertaking high quality research, our vision is to develop a future generation of leaders who will return to their home nations and continue their work to see the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals realised for the future benefit of all. The GCRF CDT team has worked diligently to provide support and training. In a survey of our cohort, 100% of those responding agreed, or strongly agreed, that the GCRF CDT has provided support to help the continuation of research, and that supervisory teams had provided support to continue research. In the same survey 87% reported some delay to their research; in response we are working with candidates to support appropriate changes to projects. We ran a "Plan B" workshop last year to enable candidates to discuss and plan the rescoping of their research. It was also positive to note from the survey that 61% reported new research opportunities and directions opening up as a result of the pandemic, with 61% also reporting improved online support and effectiveness. We recognise that there has been a substantial and lasting impact on research projects as originally planned. However, we are also now seeing adaptations and adjustments to research approaches and methodologies enabling work to continue. Successful PhD candidates are expected to have planned and executed a coherent and original research project. Our cohort will have substantial additional skills developed through having to respond effectively to the pandemic. I was surprised to hear of the decision of the UK Government to reduce the UK Aid Budget, notwithstanding a statutory commitment and legal duty to keep it at 0.7% of gross national income. Although the funding for our GCRF CDT students is secure and not impacted by this reduction, it is deeply disappointing that this reduction has been implemented. It has significantly reduced GCRF funding resulting in the reduction and termination of global challenge research activities. Sharing the frustrations of colleagues make us more determined than ever to ensure the ongoing and lasting success of our small beacon of innovation at Durham.

We have continued to promote our centre outside the university as a showcase of excellence in doctoral education, and in global challenge research training. The global challenges embodied by the Sustainable

Development Goals are complex challenges, and as such, require complex solutions which are developed by skilled, insightful researchers with a long-term vision and the commitment to achieve this. We were delighted to be asked to present a case study of our centre at the EAUC Sustainability Alliance Global Conference in November 2020, attended by 355 delegates from 18 countries. Our work on supporting our diverse cohort is to be presented at the UK Council for Graduate Education International Conference on Mental Health and Wellbeing of Postgraduate Researchers. We were one of ten universities globally to be awarded an Early Career Researcher Training Grant from the Association of Commonwealth Universities. We have been recognised as an official partner on the UN SDG Helpdesk. These positive achievements are testament to the hard work of the GCRF CDT team and our commitment to continue to innovate to achieve our long-term vision.

What are the lessons that can be learned from the last year, the year of Covid-19? Being a researcher and undertaking research cannot easily be separated from personal circumstances. Becoming a researcher through the formation of skills, ideas, growing confidence, undertaking research and a growing identity is inextricably linked to wellbeing and personal circumstances. Challenging personal circumstances detract from the ability to focus and innovate. We have spent a significant amount of time this year supporting our candidates, ensuring clear communication, undertaking two series of one-to-one interviews, and following up with personalised support where needed. Although not without significant challenges, the long-term individual stories of success which will emerge from our centre will be the result of the determination and commitment of our cohort of researchers. Whilst I would not have wished for this pandemic, and the associated disruptions to research, I can say that lessons learned from having to deal with this in the midst of a PhD project will be of great value in future.

The last year has placed significant demands on all of us. Dealing with these has required substantial commitment, effort and dedication from many. The success of a venture such as our GCRF CDT will always be the result of a team effort. I am immensely grateful to Abir van-Hunen the CDT Coordinator, the members of the PhD supervisory teams, the GCRF CDT Management Board, and to the candidates themselves. I hope that they would agree that they should have pride and satisfaction when looking back on the challenges overcome in 2020, the year of Covid-19.



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