

## Nurturing Strength of Extended Family: Toward longtermism as good ancestors<sup>1</sup>

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November 1, 2022

### 1 . Introduction

Every 5 years there has been a reunion meeting for worldwide Uchinanchu at Naha, Okinawa at October 30th called ‘World Uchinanchu Day.’ The day is considered as quite significant in that Uchinanchu looks back at one’s past for the future. For immigrants and their descendants on one hand, it is a day when they imagine the Okinawan future, in view point of ‘good ancestors<sup>3</sup>.’ On the other hand, the day is when the Okinawans track back the past experience of their precedents as immigrants, connecting the past and their present. On this occasion, the Uchinanchu confirms strength of nurturing ties with each other, through activities organized by WUB (Worldwide Uchinanchu Business Network) contributing to forming an ‘extended

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1 This is an English transcript of my keynote speech delivered at the 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary meeting of WUB (Worldwide Uchinanchu Business Network) held on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 at Naha, Okinawa, Japan. I am so honoured to join such a celebrated reunion for Uchinanchu community gathering from worldwide regions. I am also amazed with seeing Mr. Nolan Higa as a participant here, a son of Mr. Thomas Taro Higa who was a hero in a real story “Pigs from the Sea” mentioned below. I own financial support to *the Science Research Promotion Fund, Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan*.

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3 The term ‘good ancestor’ is quoted from Roman Krznaric, *The Good Ancestor-How to Think Long Term in a Short-Term World*. Ebury Publishing, 2020.

family.’ I would like to celebrate WUB for the 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary meeting today.

## 2. Take a Long-Term View!

Today, I present a keynote with the bottom line “take a long-term view!” at bottom line. As a science aiming toward long-term socio-economic prosperity, economics has analysed some ‘role models’ of long-term prosperity, concerning those aspects of institutions including property rights or democracy; social norms which attain cooperation with sanctions against free-riders; and organizations which efficiently function with social or corporate identities. Those role models have been thoroughly analysed in economics.

Among what economics achieved, I would emphasize what Frank Ramsey did, a British economist known as the pioneer of economic growth theory. He considered a role of ‘discounting’ in economic growth, saying

*“it is assumed that we do not discount later enjoyments in comparison with earlier ones, a practice which is ethically indefensible and arises merely from the weakness of the imagination” (“A Mathematical Theory of Saving,” *The Economic Journal*, 38(152), pp. 543-559, 1928).*

In recent years, the behavioural economics has developed to incorporate some insights from psychology or cognitive sciences<sup>4</sup>, different from a premise of the conventional economics that we are rational ‘homo economicus.’ Our humans have a tendency to behave themselves in some irrational fashions. The most typical case of the

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4 A representative manifestation of the behavioural economics is Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Penguin, 2012.

irrationality is subject to ‘present bias,’ which means we have not only ‘acorn brain’ requiring our self-command, but also ‘marshmallow brain’ leading to presentism. One of the critical examples of marshmallow brain is the phenomenon of global warming which results from both excessive emissions of carbon dioxides from fossil fuel and deforestation in myopic and mass production uses.

We live our lives in the critical era when we search for the new capitalism instead of the mass production and consumption taken for granted since the 18th century Industrial Revolution<sup>5</sup>. The older version of capitalism which has increased such social complexities as the global warming, is now going to be replaced with the new one which will require a long-term view immune to present bias, a clue of the change which is currently visible, for instance in a popularity of ESG (environmental, social and governance) investing in the financial markets.

### 3. Culture Does Matter for Longtermism

How can we transform our society into the new capitalism? Will the transformation even if possible, leave any problems associated with intra- and inter-generational conflicts or violence in societies? How could be the violence avoided toward cooperation among social members?

My answer is a role of culture in the new capitalism where the longtermism could lead to socio-economic prosperity in societies as a whole. Opposite to ‘algorithm,’ culture is a ‘heuristic’ in the economics literature<sup>6</sup>, meaning a collection of wisdoms

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5 In this sense, I agree with Rebecca Henderson, *Reimagining Capitalism in a World on Fire*. Public Affairs, 2020.

6 I draw on Nathan Nunn, “On the Causes and Consequences of Cross-Cultural Differences: An Economic Perspective,” in Gelfand M, Chiu C-Yue, Hong Y-Yi eds. *Advances in Culture and*

acquired from gradual try-and-error changes for better states in a similar way to genealogical evolutionary processes. Culture is also intergenerational inheritance for a safeguard against such cognitive biases as present bias. A biological representation of culture is visible in ‘narratives’ as human’s niche construction<sup>7</sup>.

Such an interpretation of culture reminds us of a role of tacit knowledge in organizational development, a concept of philosopher Michael Polanyi<sup>8</sup>. For instance, in a case of business succession, a reason for long-term business operations is an intergenerational transmission of tacit knowledge called ‘dinner table human capital’<sup>9</sup> in some cases. Imitating unwritten principles even without scientific knowledge, another economic agent like entrepreneurs than concerned ones can also achieve better outcomes than otherwise, ultimately leading to social contagion of beneficiary outcomes.

In reality, however we observe unfortunate clashes from cultural diversities in ethnicity or religion. The history of violence has been the case with our humanity instead of continuing cooperation. How can we overcome the lapse of time in cultural clashes?

## 4 . Nurturing Social Capital

Social science has considered the problem of cooperation in human society for a

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*Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

7 The description is quoted from Paul Collier, “The Cultural Foundations of Economic Failure: A Conceptual Toolkit.” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 2016, 126, pp. 5-24.

8 Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*. the book title in italics Peter Smith, 1966.

9 Hvide, H K and P Oyer (2018), "Dinner Table Human Capital and Entrepreneurship", NBER Working Paper 24198.

long period. Sociology as the forerunner, addressed trust as social capital which is defined as a mechanism of reducing social complexity (Niklas Luhmann, *Trust and Power*. Wiley, Chichester, 1979). In economics as another strand of social science, a concept of empathy, a role of which Adam Smith emphasized in a well-functioning of market mechanism in 1759 *The Theory of Moral Sentiment*, has been reinterpreted as social capital which has conflicts with incentives.

Let me mention in brief two examples of the conflicts between empathy (intrinsic motivation) vs. incentives. One is an example in Israel where a problem of delays in parents' picking up children were once raised at day-care centres<sup>10</sup>. The authorities were then concerned about teachers' complaints about their extra hours for meeting coming parents. A decision of fine was made up to incentivize parents against a delay in their picking up the children. After the fine scheme was implemented, the day-care centres turned out to observe more frequent delays than before, since the fine scheme resulted in legitimating a right 'price' for parents to come back late. The other example is concerning NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) problems<sup>11</sup>. Two repositories to store nuclear waste would be planned to locate at a region in Swiss. The government asked residents to agree on whether they hold a briefing for explanation. Residents who understood social significance of nuclear waste repository first agreed. However, in face with pecuniary negotiations after the briefing, most of residents turned down their empathy in favour of social significance of the energy source, against their economic incentives for pecuniary compensations.

Those examples of the conflicts between empathy and incentives imply that we

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10 Uri Gneezy and Aldo Rustichini, "A Fine is a Price." *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 29(1), 2000, pp. 1-17.

11 Bruno S. Frey and Felix Oberholzer-Gee, "The Cost of Price Incentives: An Empirical Analysis of Motivation Crowding-Out." *American Economic Review*, 87(4), 1997, pp. 746-755.

should face with a problem of where social prosperity lies between markets for self-help and government interventions for public help. However, we have an alternative to the polar institutions: markets vs. government, that is civil society for mutual assistance. As a sociologist Mark Granovetter showed in a case of job searching in unemployment<sup>12</sup>, the strength of ‘weak ties’ would contribute to mutual assistance in a civil society where ‘fairness’ must be put more emphasis on than on efficiency.

## 5. Remembering a Narrative “Pigs from the Sea”

Before closing this keynote speech, a narrative “Pigs from the Sea” on past experience of the Okinawans is mentioned for learning ‘longtermism’ I have addressed for nurturing strength of social prosperity in Okinawan future. The narratives are a real story on pigs imported from former immigrants in Hawaii, US to Okinawa just after the end of the WWII<sup>13</sup>. Hawaii was where numerous former-Okinawan immigrants engaged a pork raising industry, while Okinawa was then heavily ruined by the US military force in a food crisis for the Okinawans who held pigs with the heads 120,000 in the pre-war period but merely 2,000 heads in the post-war period.

Guided by voice of an Uchinan journalist Thomas Taro Higa, 7 Hawaiian immigrants managed to send 550 pigs delivered from the US, taking into account pedigree information based on their own pig farming. They raised a fund of \$47,196 during a half year with an aid of the Hawaii United Okinawan Association. The pedigree was not Okinawan indigenous Agu pigs, but Chester White which was full of fatty

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12 Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1973, pp. 1360-1380.

13 The source of the narrative is Noriko Shimada, “The Emergence of Okinawan Ethnic Identity in Hawai’i: Wartime and Postwar Experiences.” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, No. 23 (2012).

ingredient that the Okinawan then ran short of. They purchased 550 pigs at Portland, US, sent them on board Vessel Robert Owen, and remaining 536 pigs arrived at White Beach at Uruma, Okinawa on shore September 27, 1948. The day is now the Pigs-from-the-Sea Day at Uruma City, Okinawa.

The imported pigs were equitably apportioned to regions per capita. The use was neither specified for direct food nor breeding. The number of pig heads in Okinawa was more than 100,000 in 1950, and 140,000 in 1956.

What a great success the gift was in nurturing longtermism in Okinawa! I would like to visit any monuments and concerned figures in Hawaii soon.

## 6. Concluding Remark

Learning how the Uchinanchu has embodied longtermism on a basis of the cultural tradition, we are able to construct a narrative on the new capitalism, where a long-term prosperous society could be achieved with rationality as a safeguard against human's cognitive biases.

Thank you for inviting me and listening to my presentation.

