

REFORM WITH A PLURALITY OF DIVERGENT INTER-GENERATIONAL FREEDOMS (OPPORTUNITIES) TO ACHIEVE

Dr Halapua Sitiveni

The aim of this paper is to discuss how to (re) form rules that define the rights of rule-makers, when governing the planning, implementation and evaluation of policy that intends to accommodate a plurality of divergent intergenerational freedoms (opportunities) to achieve. Policy is primarily intended to ensure the possibility of building rule-makers' capability to direct the power to control the efficient allocation of resources. Beyond this objective, however, good policy can maximise social stability, and minimise if not avoid instability, by accommodating a plurality of divergent inter-generational freedoms (opportunities) to achieve, in different spaces through time. Regardless of times and spaces, freedoms remain the same freedoms in regard to its content, which is the opportunity to achieve what is worthy or valuable in life. In this connection, the stories that express freedoms to achieve reveal opportunities to do so, such as to achieve innovation. According to the General Secretary of the CPC, Xi Jinping:

‘Innovation is the soul driving a nation’s progress and an inexhaustible source of a country’s prosperity. It is also an essential part of the Chinese national character. This is what Confucius meant when he said, “If you can one day renovate yourself, do so from day to day. Yea, let there be daily renovation,” Life never favors those who explore the beaten track and are satisfied with the status quo, and it never waits for the unambitious and those who sit idle and enjoy the fruits of others’ work. Instead, it provides more opportunities to those who have the ability and courage to innovate.’
 (Xi Jinping, **“THE CHINESE DREAM OF THE GREAT REJUVENATION OF THE CHINESE NATION”** (Foreign Languages Press, First Edition 2014, Beijing, China, p.40)

It is difficult to imagine ‘more opportunities... to innovate’ without accommodative rule. Which raises the question: If a rule is seen, heard, and understood to be accommodative in relation to the objective observed, what is the relative position of that understanding? We can discover and evaluate this relative positioning through talanoa.

Talanoa is defined as a process of storytelling without concealment of the inside/outside distinctions of being. Given a situation (such as a situation of peace, prosperity, conflict, poverty, endemic violence, economic injustice, financial crisis, climate change etc.) we want to see, hear, and understand through storytelling the tala ('point' of a story) that distinguishes between a narrative position spoken from inside (by insiders/rule makers) and that spoken from outside (by outsiders).

Drawing on the framework of talanoa, rule-makers (who fall within the conceptual boundary of ‘insiders’) are seen, heard, and understood by ‘outsiders’ (i.e. those people who see, hear, and understand themselves outside and beyond that boundary) to be accommodative in relation to *outsiders’* freedoms (opportunities) to achieve what they value through time. From the perspective of outsiders, the objective of the efforts of rule-makers is directed toward the accommodation of their (outsider)

commitments to the freedoms (opportunities) to achieve, say, innovation – which is ‘an essential part of the national Chinese character’.

Talanoa begins in *noa*, which is a temporary, willed state pertaining to ‘zero’ responsibility and commitment. *Noa* wills true seeing, hearing and understanding. *Noa* is the necessary and biggest challenge of talanoa as participating storytellers must have the will (willingness) to temporarily enter *noa*. When examining the impact of the objective(s) of rule-governed policy talanoa participants begin in *noa* and ask practical philosophical questions that look at the opportunity for *outsiders* to achieve in relation to the idea that provides the essential point (‘*tala*’) of a rule that defines right of *insiders* to govern the implementation of policy (so as to direct the power to regulate the efficient allocation of available resources).

By engaging talanoa, outsiders aim to win rules that accommodate, or remove regulations that institutionalise constraint on, their inter-generational freedoms. By engaging talanoa, insiders are more able to confront questions about the rules that define the rights that govern the conduct, the arrangement, and the enquiry into the reality of what they are doing, relative to outsider freedoms to achieve (for example, the provision of ‘more opportunities to those who have the ability and courage to innovate’ in the intergenerational spaces of education, health, ecology, economics, technology, politics, culture, global cooperation etc.). In this connection, if rule-makers can consistently facilitate outsider stories about intergenerational freedoms, the ensuing freedom to achieve consensus, support and achieve solidarity with rule-makers will be more sustainable and stable over time.

It is not possible empirically to isolate present generation commitments to freedoms to achieve from narrative meanings given to the historical realities of their existence. The telling of stories associated with beliefs about the construction and reconstruction of meanings (i.e. culture) given to the historical constellations of events that shape the conditions of existence stretch indefinitely from the past into commitments of the present generations. Here we can think of the great historical events associated with the People’s Republic of China ‘*protracted struggle more than 60 years ago and in starting to carry out our reform and opening up more than 30 years ago*’ in building a dignity free from colonialism, endemic violence, abject poverty, war, economic injustice etc.

These past and present commitments subsequently project onto commitments of the future generations. Commitment to the freedom to achieve makes no sense if it applied only to present generations, with no one caring about the future. What would it mean for a narrative agent to say that, while she values the meaning of the achievement ascribed to her favoured historical events, she really does not want it to be part of her commitment in the present, let alone her future? Such a story can only mean a lack of commitment to the achievement in the first place. Present generations involved want future generations to be in a position to achieve what they now themselves choose to be committed to achieving.

Through storytelling, the commitment to a vision of a freedom to achieve is multiplied by the meaning given to significant events of the past. In the context of talanoa, inter-generational freedom is more precisely defined as the present generation’s real opportunity to achieve what they value, multiplied by the meaning

they ascribe to significant historical events, projected as the impact on the future generation's potential opportunity to achieve what *they* decide to value in life. To take an obvious example, our present day need to reverse climate change is multiplied by the significant historical events that give meaning to our experience of global warming. Taken together we can see that global warming is a global threat to the shared dignity of a happy life. How past events and present opportunities impact on our future is part and parcel of how we can potentially decide to act to preserve and enhance our future.

The tala of stories about historical events can have complementary or conflictive (but not identical) meanings for insiders and outsiders. Rule-makers know that their ideas and policies can, for good or ill, affect commitments to a plurality of divergent intergenerational freedoms. They have an idea of moral responsibility toward people outside of, and beyond their, individual self-conscious situation of concern. However, rule-makers are primarily concerned with controlling the efficient allocation of resources for the purpose of attaining their strategic objectives. This means that, when examining the real and potential experience of how accommodative a rule may or may not be, we look beyond the rule-makers' strategic objectives to the narrative meanings *outsiders* ascribe to favoured historical events, in order to find the historical grounds for expressing the different spaces in which outsiders identify themselves at different times. As we begin to understand and measure the experience of how a rule is, or is not, accommodative, historical grounds give us the *narrative ratio* of the intergenerational freedoms (opportunities) to achieve in different spaces.

The narrative ratio of potential commitments of future generations relative to the actual commitments of present generations reveals whether the potential commitments of future generations are equal to, greater than, or less than the actual commitments of present generations. It also reveals a convergence or divergence between that of desired, and that of realized, intergenerational opportunities.

Because intergenerational freedoms inevitably overlap rules and intersect the power to control, narrative ratios also provide the common ground for three possibilities with regard to direction, in reforming accommodative rules:

- (1) When the narrative ratio is equal to one, the potential commitments of the future generations to the freedoms to achieve will remain the same as the actual commitments of the generations before them;
- (2) When it is less than one, the potential commitments of the future generations to the freedoms to achieve will fall below the actual commitments of the generations before them; and,
- (3) When it is greater than one, the potential commitments of the future generations to the freedoms to achieve will surpass the actual commitments of the generations before them.

That said, we turn to discuss the answer for this central question. Do rule-makers have policies that accommodate a plurality of divergent intergenerational opportunities (i.e. possibilities (2) and (3) stated above) and if so what are they?

The principal reason for this policy question is that the magnitudes of narrative ratios overlap the point of the rules set by rule-makers. They overlap at the point ('tala') of the rules that govern what rule-makers are doing, when planning, implementing and evaluating policy (for the purpose of ensuring the possibility of building their capability to direct power towards the efficient allocation of resources and attaining their strategic objectives in different spaces, and at different times). Consequently, these magnitudes intersect the spaces that describe where rule-makers are going to stand on the issues of importance for them.

For example, in an economic space, X, the meanings ascribed to the lessons learned from the economic injustice associated with the historical events of the global financial crisis are seen, heard, understood, and multiplied through storytelling by the actual present commitments of 'consumers' (as the narrative agents of present generations) in order to project the potential freedoms (*potential economic opportunities*) 'investors' (the narrative economic agents of future generations) might decide on committing to, in their efforts to achieve the planned target of what they value in a happy life.

As another example, in an ecological space, Y, the concept of sustainable development may be defined through talanoa as the narrated parental commitment to the actual freedoms to meet present needs multiplied by the meaning ascribed to the historical realities of existence (such as the evidenced historical events of global warming) in order to create the possibility of the commitments of the 'children' as the narrative agents of the future generations to the potential freedoms to meet their own needs.

The narrative ratio X of the intergenerational freedoms of 'investors'/'consumers' in an economic space can be treated as the common ground for Y if $X=1$ i.e. when the meanings of the lessons learned from the historical impacts of the global financial crisis on the national and international economies are projected into potential opportunities to achieve a stable, happy life.

Possibility (1) above represents the unity (unitary balance) between the accommodative rules that outsiders demand and the convergent intergenerational freedoms to achieve accommodated by rule-makers. It unifies the rule-makers' ideas of moral responsibility with the commitments of future and present generations to the freedoms to achieve.

The convergent intergenerational freedoms (opportunities) to achieve, multiplied by the meanings ascribed to the favoured historical events, constitute the common ground for the rule-makers and outsiders. Without the common ground, it is impossible to know the points of convergence between policy of the rule-makers and development of the people outside of the boundary of rule-makers. This becomes the narrative focus for policy reform. Regarding reform, the principal tenets of talanoa compose following states of being as follows:

- A. *Rules without intergenerational freedoms to achieve have no narrative common ground. They are driven by either (i) the insider state of being*

optimistic in life or (ii) the insider state of being pessimistic (nihilistic) in life; and,

- B. *Intergenerational freedoms without rules have no narrative moral responsibility. They are driven by either (iii) the outsider state of being peaceful in life or (iv) the outsider state of being conflictive in life.*

It follows that the meanings ascribed by outsiders to the favoured historical events that shape the historical conditions of their existence constitute the narrative common ground. Narrative common ground allows for the identification of tala that disclose the convergence or divergence between the insider state of being optimistic and the outsider state of being peaceful, in a-shared happy life. From the relative position of outsiders, narrative common ground is evidence of moral equivalence. Outsiders accordingly hold rule-makers morally responsible in order to prevent insiders from changing the “rules of the game” or shifting the goal posts at will, without proper and genuine efforts being made to see, listen to and understand their (outsider) narrative positions.

Unless they are optimistic and living a shared happy life, it is difficult for rule-makers to make the necessary moves to be accommodative of outsider demands for change, if there is no narrative common ground. Similarly, unless they are enjoying and looking forward to a state of peace and a shared happy life, generation after generation of outsiders cannot be expected to make the necessary move to build consensus in support of, and in solidarity with, rule-makers who have no idea of, and no belief in, their own moral responsibility to outsiders.

A plurality of divergent narrative ratios not only represents the divergent inter-generational freedoms to achieve but also different demands for change in different spaces and at different times. It represents outsiders’ expectations that the rule-makers involved be willing to respond to their different demands for change. It also represents how the present generations expect the following generations to do more than what they themselves have actually committed to do now.

In these conditions, both the rule-makers and the outsiders would stand no chance of success in terms of reducing the divergence (possibilities (2) and (3)) and moving toward convergence (possibility (1)) of the demands for change and the commitments to the intergenerational freedoms to achieve unless the following strategic moves occur simultaneously through storytelling.

First, the participating storytellers must acknowledge that they are in a situation where principally there are *insiders* who see, hear, and understand themselves as either optimistic or pessimistic rule-makers, and *outsiders* who see, hear, and understand themselves as either peaceful or conflictive people outside of, and beyond, the boundary of rule-makers.

Second, and perhaps most important of all, if the rule-makers see, hear, and understand that moral equivalency on the basis of narrative common ground exists for the outsider, and that the outsider holds them accountable, it follows that rule-makers have a moral responsibility to set accommodative rules that overlap with, and intersect, outsider commitments to the freedom to achieve development. ‘In our

framework [of talanoa], development is defined as the process of guided change directed toward preferred goals. Today the preferred goals of development vary from country to country depending on the historical, social, economic, and political circumstances in each country' (Halapua, S., "Harmonising resources for sustainable development in the Pacific Islands context," in Burt, B., and Christian Cleark, editors, Environment and Development in the Pacific Islands, The Australian National University Canberra and University of Papua New Guinea Press, Port Moresby, 1997, p.22).

Third, for rule-makers to see, hear, understand, construct and re construct, the meanings given to favoured historical events via outsider narratives, is to change the narrative ratios of intergenerational commitments to freedoms to achieve, in different spaces and at different times. Such changes in a plurality of narrative ratios have the effects of triggering a series of movements toward the points that intersect the boundary of accommodative rule. Such construction of meaning stimulates change in the narrative ratio by triggering a movement to alter commitments to intergenerational freedoms to achieve.

Once again, the success of this strategic move is predicated on the belief that any level of commitment held by present generations is equal to or less than what is expected of the future generations i.e. the narrative ratio ≥ 1 . Such a belief can only suggest a multiplication of the commitment of the present generations by the worth or weight of the meanings ascribed to the great historical events (e.g. the People's Republic of China '*protracted struggle more than 60 year ago and in starting to carry out our reform and opening up more than 30 years ago*' (XI JINPING, 2014,p.12)) that share the historical conditions of their existence today and in the future.

Freedom (real opportunity) here, as elsewhere, in different spaces and at different times, means to achieve choice of what the people value in a better life.-People value better education, better jobs, better income, better medical and health services, better social security benefits, better ecological environment, better food security etc. Without acknowledging such choice, outsiders cannot be seen, heard, and understood through storytelling to exercise freedom to achieve what they value in the same way as being rule-makers. It is precisely for this reason that being a rule-maker is seen, heard, and understood to have a moral responsibility to direct the efficient allocation of resources toward issues of importance, such as '*promoting sustained, healthy economic development; safeguarding China's sovereignty, security, and development interests; and finishing building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and then achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation*' (Xi Jinping, 2014 p.10)

In that connection, when we move to the sphere of future generations, more difficult questions may be raised with regard to the commitments of children to the freedoms to achieve. Parents not only see themselves as 'head of a family', they also see their sons and daughters as the narrative agents of future generations. Suppose parents know the specific needs of their children and want them to become healthy, ambitious, indomitable and innovative adults in the future. The commitments that parents now choose to value for themselves and their children are multiplied through storytelling by the meaning given to the historical realities of their existence. It follows from this that the commitments of 'children' to achieve what they value "so

that they can embrace the idea of doing hard, honest and creative work from an early age (Xi Jinping, 2014, p.98)”, are equal to or greater than those of their ‘parents’.

However, when the narrative ratio < 1 , i.e. when stories have not projected into a positive future, children as narrative agents of the future are unlikely to have commitments to achieve their choice of what they value to the same degree as their ‘parents’ do in the present.

It is precisely because of this narrative ratio variation that rule-makers should include the narrative ratio of the commitments of ‘parents’ along with those of their ‘children’ as agents of the future generations, when listing the plurality of divergent intergenerational freedoms their rules should accommodate as a matter of moral responsibility. The stories of the rule-makers, the ‘parents’, and the ‘children’ must all be seen, listened to, and understood through storytelling before rules accommodative of intergenerational freedoms (opportunities) in a variety of intergenerational spaces—such as the variety of intergenerational spaces in the 56 ethnic groups of China’s 1.3 billion—are negotiated and decided.

Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that the narrative ratio Y, describing the intergenerational freedoms of ‘children’/‘parents’ as understood in an ecological space is the same as Z, describing the intergenerational freedoms of ‘children’/‘parents’ as seen in an educational space. Just as there is no reason to assume that the rule that accommodates Y is the same rule that facilitates Z. These two different narrative ratios (i.e. Y and Z) will overlap and intersect the boundary of rule-makers at two different points (‘tala’) of the stories that correspond to the rules that define rights to govern policies that accommodate Y and Z in their respective spaces. It follows that both Y and Z would reveal a plurality of divergent intergenerational freedoms to achieve development in the ecological and educational spaces.

Thus, through storytelling, the meanings given to building the dignity of a stable, moderately prosperous happy life free from neo-colonialism and the long-term impact of the historical global financial crisis (which are important to the economic space of development) are multiplied and incorporated into the meanings given to the historical events of climate change (important to the ecological space of sustainable development), as well as into the meanings ascribed to the historical events of learning to bring forth new ideas and innovation through hard work ‘with Chinese characteristics in line with China’s reality’ (which are important to the educational space of study and research).

Ultimately the common ground consists in the combined narrative meanings ascribed to the different historical events pertaining to the different spaces identified as a whole and at different times.