



What Happened to Society 5.0

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When looking at Japan's progression to what they like to call 'The Super Smart Society,' you would think that as a first world country, it rapidly succeeds in its Robotics, AI, and Distributed ledger. With the humanoid robots, 'pepper' conveniently in almost every public building, and BBC's riveting shows, exposing all the new technologies and the captivating robot hotels, it gives a sense of futurity compared to other countries. However, as of many things in Japan, these settling sanguine hopes for the future can be thought of as a facade, a solid fabrication to cover up their society's dilatory state.

After successfully running the first term, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe advocated a new economic policy in 2012. This economic policy, known as the Abenomics, has "three arrows": the aggressive monetary policy, the fiscal consolidation, and the growth strategy. All "arrows" are designed to jump-start the aftermath of Japan's decades-long deflationary spiral. In December of 2012, Shinzo Abe became the first Prime Minister ever in Japan to serve two terms, having Abenomics as one of the several reasons he got reelected. But what is to come after Abenomics can not be more obvious to the Japanese people: Society 5.0. So far, since 2016, the approach of Society 5.0, which first appeared in the '*Fifth Science and Technology Basic Plan*' by the Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (CSTI), has been the reoccurring notion that the Government of Japan refers to when discoursing of the future.

The Cabinet Office (Government of Japan) repeatedly states that Society 5.0 highly encourages centralizing humans first, balancing economic advancement to resolve social



problems. The restriction of the previous stages of Societies—Society 1.0; Hunting and Gathering, Society 2.0; Agriculture, Society 3.0; Industrial, Society 4.0; Information—was the herculean task to cooperate. Society 4.0, for example, has an overflow of information and knowledge, making it hard for the Japanese people to share information promptly. That is the dilatory state Japan is currently in. It is no mystery that this country's Ageing Society is one of the central occluments to Japan's advancement to Society 5.0. Stated in the article, 'The economic challenge of Japan's aging crisis' in the Japan Times, "By 2030, one in every three people will be 65 or older, and one in five people 75-plus years old." With the Aging Society growing at a constant rate, it seems like it is inconceivable for many elderlies to think far ahead into the future. Explaining Digital transformation may help understand, at minimum, the very outer layer of how to speed up the progression to Society 5.0.

Caring for the elderly, Japan's medical, social security expenses, and demands increased. Rather than having medical information sparse and in inconvenient locations, those who visit the hospital often can use remote medical check-ups—using AI and robots—to check their heart rates at home and share information online. This logic applies to Mobility, Infrastructure, and Fintech. It is an achievable blueprint, but as any action plan, especially one that holds sizable expectations, there will be a hindrance to the Digital Transformation.

Mayumi Fukuyama, the General Manager and CIO of Hitachi, explains in the article from the Hitachi website, 'Society 5.0: Aiming for a New Human-centered Society' that companies, universities, and other amplified corporations that are responsible for strengthening their coopetition should "break(ing) down organizational walls and promote(ing) open innovation." The walls she mentions refer to the "Five Walls,"; the wall of ministries and agencies, the legal system, technologies, human resources, and social acceptance. Because large companies and universities are the pacesetters for the upcoming society, all five walls are



purposefully targeted towards what corporations will face during the progression. These walls will plant seeds in each company and universities that effectively practice innovations through diverse goals when otherwise would have had homogeneous ideas, which is a classic Society 4.0 standard.

How all of this applies to the unpredictable reality that is the coronavirus pandemic can be seen from a revolutionary angle, unlike what most media in Japan suggests. Pre-pandemic times, when Japan reached a new high in its economy and social interactions were not out of the ordinary, the country struggled with the overflow of information, and people lacked the skills of integrating cyberspace and physical space. Time feels stopped, and more change seems like the last thing anyone would want, but it is as though during the pandemic, quarantine and social distancing was handed over to the Japanese as a sort of first trial, a chance to begin the progression of society 5.0.

So, even at a time like 2020, does the 'Super-smart society,' Society 5.0 still seem like an anachronism? What coronavirus is doing for Japan highlights precisely how far behind the country is; Schools have unorganized systems, and difficulties emerge in workspaces from lack of communications. It turns out that most robots are Japanese engineers fulfilling some childhood dreams from their favorite Manga, and all this invested money is nothing solid that the country can benefit from. This concept of Society 5.0 is not far fetched at all and maybe the most appropriate time, if not ever, to begin the transition. Japan must highlight their flaws, realize the transition is needed, and usher in Society 5.0.