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Society 5.0 - Japan's visions and ambitions for the digital age

Abstract

Society 5.0 is Japan's answer to Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things. First introduced by the 5th Science and Technology Plan in 2016, it quickly became the framework of reference for public discourses related to the digital transformation. The country's goal is to be a world-leader in the creation of a "super smart society". Society 5.0 describes an almost utopian state of a perfectly connected, highly efficient and inclusive society, where the cyber and the physical world are fully integrated. The concept of Society 5.0 plays a central role in the economic policies of PM Abe and in policies devised by various ministries. In my talk, I will describe the main elements and policy initiatives under Society 5.0. I will then critically assess the concept and also ask to what extent Japan will be able to realize its highly ambitious goals. To do so requires a closer look at Japan's information and communication infrastructure, IT related technological capabilities, legal frameworks, human resources and management. Success also requires the ability to exploit scope and scale through cross-organizational and cross-national modes of organization. The conclusion will combine the strengths and weaknesses of Japan in brief summary statements.