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WGS 2017: Humanization Another Path to Sustainability

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In a breakout session on the opening day of the fifth World Government Summit (WGS 2017), Morinosuke Kawaguchi, Japanese futurist and innovation expert, addressed the notion of humanization – a widely accepted concept in Japanese culture.



In his talk entitled 'Japanimation, Japonism and Japanese society', he also discussed the attitude to sports in Japan and how other cultures could benefit from it.

He said: "Sumo wrestling in Japan has a unique feature – the small guy can win against the big guy, the skill is greater than the talent. No victory poses or facial expressions are allowed, wrestlers are forbidden to show emotion. What is important is how they have won – the winning technique."

Furthermore, Kawaguchi spoke about the importance of Japanese heroes in animation, who shout the name of their final weapon at the end of their story, reiterating the importance of how the character won and how beautifully he won, not who won.

Emphasizing how the Japanese show their appreciation for material things, he said: "Cherish products as partners. Take good care of them to ensure they live longer. Humanization is not immature. It's another path to sustainability."

He added: "In Japan, we hold memorial services for everything. Even KFC organizes an annual service for chickens. There are also dedicated memorial services for broken dolls before they are sent to heaven as well as services for tools such as needles that are placed in tofu to experience softness before going to heaven."

Trains are honored with a 'final run ceremony' before they retire, where commuters come to say their last goodbyes and thank the train for its hard work.

Kawaguchi added that there are many 'street heroes' who are important in Japanese culture and well-known across the country. Uncle Bow is a famous character who warns of the dangers at construction sites, but, even more importantly, he apologizes for any inconvenience. Other characters apologize for inconveniences during cleaning or at the ATM.

According to Kawaguchi, this practice that teaches people to be nice to their neighbors, not to be selfish and not to be afraid to apologize is common in Japanese culture. He believes this approach is far more effective than 'scary' signposts seen around the world that alert the public to potential danger.

Kawaguchi is a renowned strategy expert in management of technology (MOT), intellectual property management, and technology and innovation management (TIM) in various industries, such as telecommunications, electronics and the automotive industry. He is the founder of Morinoske Company Ltd., a Tokyo-based management and design consultancy.