



Alibaba aims to turn Macau into a 'Smart City' by July 2021.  
(Source of image: calvinayre.com)

## A real-time traffic system

Being on the road has never been a pleasant experience for Macau drivers, nor for passengers. Having been a driver for six years, I have heard of and witnessed incidents of road rage, speed driving, and running a red light, as well as **fatal** accidents due to drivers' carelessness. As far as public transport users are concerned, bus schedules are rather unreliable while taxi drivers' irregularities are not uncommon. Another rather absurd scene during rush hours in Macau is the fact that the city's traffic flow is smoothed by the hands of hundreds of dedicated traffic officers at almost every crossroad of the city.

## ■ GOING SMART IN MACAU: Unleashing the potential of technology

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Ask any Macau resident about the concept of a Smart City; don't be surprised if he simply smiles away. Ever since the sensational introduction of the Macau government's partnership with Alibaba to launch a four-year smart city project in 2017, there has, unfortunately, been little update in the media. With the mist of Covid 19 lying beneath, coupled with the **global economic downturn**, would the city's **technological integration** planning remain a **blueprint**? This article is an attempt to uncover the bits and pieces of the use of technology in our society in search of a glimpse of hope in the realization of Macau as a Smart City.



Traffic jam is a common problem in Macau.  
(Source of image: macaunews.mo)

The solution to all these problems seems to rely on a 5G network. Imagine the **commute** from your home located on the Avenida Horta e Costa to the Hengqin campus of The University of Macau taking less than 15 minutes! This wouldn't be impossible if the endless trail of traffic lights signaled efficiently without the guard of traffic officers anymore. A 5G network that fully covers the city would allow traffic light signals to change upon processing real-time traffic information while road users could avoid traffic congestion and choose the optimal route.

Recently, there has been news about the local telecom near-monopoly's first-phase 5G commercial network testing. It is anticipated that with a reliable, **hyper-speed network** lying in store for Macau, the city's road system would increase its road mobility by making real-time traffic information accessible to traffic authorities and all road users.



## The rise of e-payment

With the growing economy in China, life has become more abundant by materialistic standards than ever, but one thing has become less frequently seen – cash. **Rumours have it that** many Mainland Chinese citizens do not bring cash anymore when shopping, and a cashless city seems realistic **in the foreseeable future**. Following in their footsteps, many new e-payment platforms have emerged in Macau in the past few years, making the payment process as convenient as a tap of your card, a touch on the screen, or a scan of a QR code.



E-payment has become more popular than ever in Macau.

*(Source of image: macaunews.mo)*

At a restaurant, it is not hard to see customers scanning the latest promotion offers when selecting their food. At the time of writing, the annual spending spree, Single's Day, is just around the corner, and many of my friends are filling up their online shopping baskets with products they choose out of the overwhelmingly limitless choices available. During the early-stage shelter in place after the Chinese New Year due to the Covid-19, many people opted for the convenience of online food delivery service, which brought them food to comfort their souls in face of a challenging pandemic.

The availability of contactless payment methods is beneficial to both consumers and businesses. On the one hand, our choices widen while our shopping experience is highly efficient; on the other, business owners can make informed decisions based on the analysis of consumer behaviour data conveniently collected through the payment system, which would have been impossible when all the orders were made and processed manually.



Teaching from home is expected to be the norm.  
(Source of image: [education.brown.edu](https://www.education.brown.edu))

## Working from home should be made an option

The world was brought to a halt, both economically and socially when 2020 arrived. But every cloud has a silver lining. The challenges brought by Covid-19 actually open up doors of opportunity. As a teacher, I had to continue teaching using e-platforms that had been encouraged by our school to be integrated into our teaching in the past few years. With a lot of existing materials already available online, I could revise and edit them to meet the needs of my students during that specific home quarantine period. As students were left with no option but self-study at home, I tried to make use of the e-platform by introducing each subject matter with multi-media material (e.g. making a video), conducting online lessons using e-conferencing apps (e.g. Zoom), and providing interactive learning tasks (e.g. Kahoot!) that could engage students even if they were not physically with me.

Not only did working from home give me the opportunity to refine and strengthen my language teaching methods and IT literacy, but I could also enjoy the luxury of spending time with my little newborn during his first few months, all thanks to the time saved from commuting, as well as a lot of unnecessary chores unrelated to teaching. This is not only true for teachers; for other professions, working from home should be routinized as e-platforms regular work schedules. For example, employers

can actually consider allowing for a fixed period of voluntary **flexible working hours** after a maternity leave, in order to help the mother re-adjust and strike a balance between work and family, which is particularly necessary in Macau, where mothers only get 70 days of paid maternity leave.

### Going smart is the right way

As the Smart City project approaches its fourth year, **it is high time the**

**government examined** how much further our city has proceeded on the path to becoming a truly Smart City. While looking forward with great anticipation that technological advances and **breakthroughs** will occur in transportation, consumption, work culture, and beyond, we must not forget that they are not without their drawbacks. **Only when** we recognize such potentially arising social problems as privacy infringement, network insecurity, road hazards, insensible buying, and pollution, will we be able to optimize the potential use of technology in an ever-increasingly unpredictable era.

## VOCABULARY

- |                              |        |                              |         |
|------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|---------|
| 1. global economic downturn  | 全球經濟下滑 | 6. hyper-speed network       | 超高速網絡   |
| 2. technological integration | 技術整合   | 7. Rumours have it that      | 有傳言說    |
| 3. blueprint                 | 藍圖     | 8. In the foreseeable future | 在可預見的將來 |
| 4. fatal                     | 致命的    | 9. flexible working hours    | 彈性工作時間  |
| 5. commute                   | 通勤     | 10. breakthroughs            | 突破      |

## GRAMMAR POINT

### 1. “It is high time the government examined”

(Line 2 ... last paragraph)

We can use the expression **it’s time + subject + past verb form** to refer to the present moment:

#### Example:-

*It is getting late. **It is time we stopped our game.***

### 2. “Only when ... will we be”

(Line 10 - 14... last paragraph)

We put the expression “**Only when**” at the beginning of the sentence to emphasize what we are saying. We use **inversion** in this situation. Inversion means putting the verb before the subject.

#### Example:-

***Only when** he had taken his bath **did** he go to bed.*