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### **TITLE:** Conceptualizing Robotic Agency. Social Robots in Elder Care in Contemporary Japan

**Name:** Anne Aronsson

**Affiliation:** Postdoctoral researcher at Yale University

**Country:** Sweden

**Email ID:** anne.aronsson@yale.edu

#### **ABSTRACT (up to 300 words)**

The elder population in Japan is increasing drastically, causing a number of issues that have not yet surfaced in most Western countries. Demographic data from Japan reveal that the Japanese have the longest lifespan globally, resulting in the world's highest population of older adults. Concurrently, the country has a rapidly declining birth rate. As the population ages, the workforce is shrinking and leaving a high number of elders with fewer caregivers to meet their needs. At present, the Japanese government is developing robotic care solutions to overcome the elder care labor shortage and implementing a new agenda to introduce social robots into the field. This presentation discusses professional women in Japan and their burden of caring for aging relatives and how introducing robotic care devices might reduce current anxieties regarding the provision of elder care. It analyzes the elder care strategies of 12 white-collar professional women in their forties and fifties and examines the extent to which gendered, expected at-home caregiving affects their professional commitments and associated anxieties. The findings below provide crucial insight into the most effective strategies that can be used by Japanese women to balance their careers with responsibilities to care for older relatives, particularly when it is impossible to predict the intensity of caregiving in the future.

#### **BIOGRAPHY (up to 200 words)**

Anne Aronsson is an anthropologist of Japan and obtained her PhD in socio-cultural anthropology from Yale University. She was a postdoctoral fellow with a Suslowa-Postdoc-Fellowship grant at the University of Zurich in Switzerland where she taught a seminar course "Global Processes in East Asia." At Yale she continued her work on her postdoctoral project on elder care in Japan and the use of robotic care devices, with a focus on social robots and emerging emotional technologies as well as taught four courses in the Department of Anthropology. Anne has authored several publications, including "An Anthropology of Social Robots: Ontological Indefiniteness and Subjective Experience of Robots in Elder Care" in *Anthropological Theory*, "Bio-politics and the State-Doctor Relationship in Japan after COVID-19," in the special issue "Medical Politics in East Asia" for journal *Medical Anthropology*; "Social Robots in Elderly Care: The Turn Toward Machines in Contemporary Japan," in the special issue "Relations, Entanglements, and Enmeshments of Humans and Things: A Materiality Perspective" in *Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology*; "Conceptualizing Robotic Agency: Social Robots in Elder Care in Contemporary Japan" and introductory chapter in the special issue "Finding Agency in Nonhumans" published in *Relations: Beyond Anthropocentrism*; "Multispecies Entanglements in the Virosphere: Rethinking the Anthropocene in Light of the 2019 Coronavirus Outbreak," co-authored with Fynn and published in *The Anthropocene Review*; and her monograph *Career Women in Contemporary Japan: Pursuing Identities, Fashioning Lives* published with Routledge Contemporary Japan Series.

**Presenter Name:** Anne Aronsson

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**Contact number:** +46 79-355-3379

