German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Social Science Study Group

December 8, 2022, 6.30pm (JST)/10.30am (CET)
'Caring Machines'
Giulia De Togni, The University of Edinburgh Medical School

Robotics is a growing field in the delivery of care. It is expected to flourish in the face of the need for higher precision, shortages of healthcare personnel, and an increase in the number of older and frailer people. "Socially Assistive Robots" (SARs) have the potential to 'care' for humans through social interaction, physical assistance, and therapy delivery. However, the emergence of 'caring machines' raises ethical, social, and technological questions. Through this research I aim to understand in what ways our identities and care relationships may be affected by the use of SARs and how this may vary in different cultural contexts. I do this through carrying out interviews with those who are developing robots, health and social care practitioners, and those receiving care; and observations in robotics laboratories and care facilities in two rapidly ageing, highly industrialized countries which are leading in AI and robotics innovation, namely the UK and Japan. This study lies at the intersection between medical sociology, social anthropology and Science and Technology Studies (STS) and will create knowledge of how SARs may shape and be shaped by different understandings of the role and the value of human care.

Dr Giulia De Togni is a social anthropologist specialized in Japanese Studies and Science and Technology Studies (STS). Her research focuses on risk, technology and health. She has been the Research Fellow on the Wellcome Trust funded project 'AI and Health' since May 2019 at The University of Edinburgh Medical School, her first postdoctoral appointment. She was then awarded a 3-year-long Wellcome Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Humanities and Social Science and in January 2022 she started a new project (as Principal Investigator) focusing on the uses of Socially Assistive Robots (SARs) in Japan and the UK and how these affect practices of care. This project involves twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork in robotics laboratories in Japan (6 months) and the UK (6 months). Giulia is currently a visiting researcher at The University of Tokyo.

About:
The DIJ Social Science Study Group is a forum for scholars from all disciplines of the social sciences conducting research on contemporary Japan. The event is open to all.
Venue:
DIJ Tokyo: https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/

Hybrid Event:
On-site participation: Registration is required via email to *spoden@dijtokyo.org* until December 7, 2022.
Due to safety reasons the number of participants is limited to 20; masks are obligatory.
Online participation: Please register via the webpage. Log-in data will be provided after registration.