

Corporate Narratives of Care: Exploring Sociotechnical Imaginaries of AI in Swedish Eldercare

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Abstract

This extended abstract outlines a study which is part of my ongoing PhD project *Sociotechnical Imaginaries of AI, Ageing and Care*, conducted at KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, during 2023-2027.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is often framed across policy and commercial discourse as an innovative solution to critical challenges in eldercare (Arnelid 2025). Recent advancements in large language models (LLMs) have introduced new AI-enabled applications tailored to eldercare contexts. These technologies are framed as tools that can support “ageing in place”, and optimise strained welfare systems. At the same time, scholars have raised concerns about how AI systems may reshape care relations, labour conditions, and responsibilities within public welfare systems (Neves et al. 2023).

This paper critically examines how AI companies in Sweden’s eldercare sector construct sociotechnical imaginaries of AI-driven care through public-facing narratives, and how these narratives intersect with broader transformations in the political economy of ageing and AI. Specifically, I ask:

1. How do AI companies represent problems in eldercare and position AI as a solution?
2. How are older adults, caregivers, and care labour constructed within these narratives?
3. How are these narratives entangled with neoliberal logics that privatise care and shift responsibility from public institutions to market actors and individuals?

The paper contributes to debates within AI ethics and society by connecting AI discourse in eldercare to questions of labour, automation, collective responsibility, and the privatisation of welfare provision.

Background and Theoretical Framework

Existing research demonstrates how AI systems are increasingly positioned as interventions for addressing demographic pressures and staffing shortages in long-term care

systems (Gallistl et al. 2025). Critical scholars have highlighted how these developments emerge within broader processes of welfare restructuring and marketisation (Tucker 2023). In the Swedish context, eldercare has undergone significant neoliberal transformation, including privatisation, financialisation, and the expansion of for-profit care provision (Hoppania et al. 2024). AI technologies therefore emerge not simply as technical innovations, but as part of broader political and economic shifts that redistribute care responsibilities between public institutions, private corporations, families, and older adults themselves.

The paper draws on feminist political economy approaches to care (Fraser 2023), which conceptualise care as relational, situated, and socially reproductive labour rather than merely a service or commodity. Drawing on these critiques, I frame AI eldercare as a site where relational labour is reconfigured through commodification and linguistic scaling. The analysis also engages with the concept of sociotechnical imaginaries (Jasanoff and Kim 2015) to analyse how desirable futures of AI-enabled eldercare are collectively envisioned and normalised through corporate discourse.

Methodology

To explore the research questions, I adopt a qualitative, multi-method research design combining Bacchi’s discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews with company stakeholders. I have purposively selected a sample of companies operating in Sweden that market AI-enabled products or services for eldercare.

The empirical material includes company websites, mission statements, product descriptions, promotional brochures, investor-oriented strategy documents, and stakeholder interviews. These materials are analysed using Bacchi’s “What’s the Problem Represented to Be?” (WPR) approach, which examines how policy and institutional actors construct social problems through proposed solutions (Bacchi 2025).

In addition to the company material, semi-structured interviews are being conducted with company stakeholders, including founders, developers, and organisational representatives involved in AI-enabled eldercare initiatives. These interviews aim to explore how stakeholders themselves understand the role of AI in eldercare, how they frame social and

institutional challenges, and how they justify the implementation of AI systems within welfare contexts.

Current Findings

AI as a Solution to the Eldercare “Crisis”

Preliminary findings suggest that corporate narratives construct eldercare as a sector characterised by crisis, inefficiency, demographic pressure, and emotional scarcity. Within these narratives, AI is positioned as a scalable and innovative solution capable of optimising care delivery, enhancing personalisation, and enabling older adults to maintain autonomy while remaining at home for longer periods. Care is often framed as a logistical and informational challenge that can be addressed through data-driven systems and automation, downplaying the relational and emotional dimensions of care work. However, this framing sits in tension with some participants’ accounts, which instead emphasise AI as a means of “freeing up” human caregivers to focus on precisely those relational and emotionally complex aspects of care.

Reconfiguring Care Labour

The early stages of analysis further indicate that care workers are commonly represented as overstretched actors whose labour can be streamlined, optimised, supported, or partially delegated to AI systems. Stakeholder interviews reveal some internal tensions in how companies articulate the role of AI in care labour. While AI is often framed as enhancing human-centered care, participants also acknowledge challenges related to the limits of automation in emotionally sensitive contexts. These concerns are generally resolved through positioning AI as a “supportive layer” within existing care infrastructures rather than a replacement for human care.

This framing can generate additional invisible work for caregivers, as they may need to monitor AI outputs and coordinate care alongside automated systems in ways that are not formally recognised — an aspect of labour that remains largely absent from the discourse.

Ongoing and Future Work

The project is ongoing, and I am currently engaged in the analysis of the empirical material, including both corporate documents and stakeholder interview data. In parallel, semi-structured interviews with company stakeholders are being conducted.

A key focus of the remaining analysis is to fully address Research Question 3, by investigating how corporate narratives are entangled with neoliberal logics that privatise care and redistribute responsibility from public institutions to market actors and individuals.

This paper forms part of a broader PhD project, and future publications will additionally incorporate perspectives from care organisations and caregivers through interviews and workshops, enabling a more comprehensive insight into how AI-driven transformations in care are experienced and imagined across different contexts.

Significance and Contributions

This research contributes to several debates central to the conference themes:

- It adds to discussions on organisational and institutional responsibility for AI systems by demonstrating how AI-driven eldercare technologies participate in broader processes of welfare privatisation and commodification.
- By focusing on eldercare as a central domain for AI deployment in welfare provision, the study highlights the societal implications of AI for care practices, particularly in contexts shaped by uneven access to resources and structured dependencies.
- It sheds light on labour relations arising from AI integration, contributing to the discourse around automation and the future of work in care sectors.
- It enables critique and resistance to dominant technological imaginaries, emphasising the importance of embedding AI within broader ethical and political commitments to relational care and collective responsibility.

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