

STS Talks – Interview with Dikmen Bezmez Edge

Duygu Kaşdoğan

Associate Professor Dikmen Bezmez Edge from Koç University gave a talk –“Medical Technology and the Reproduction of Bodily Normality” - as part of the STS Talks event series in December 2018.¹ For the exhibit “[Innovating STS in Turkey](#),” Duygu Kaşdoğan asked a couple of questions to Bezmez Edge to learn more about her experiences in engaging with STS during this event.*

*This talk focuses on the use and impact of medical technology in physical rehabilitation for disabled people. Major developments in medical technology following the 1970s highlighted the potential of technological advancement to progressively understand the human body and compensate for its ‘flaws’. In relation to disability, the argument has been that technology would ‘cure’ disability. In line with other disability studies scholars this talk criticizes such technological determinism and argues that the use of technology is shaped by the relevant sociocultural background.

DK: Would you talk a bit about your experience in giving a talk in an STS event? Before this event, did you have any engagement with STS? Whether and how did this talk overlap your own research interests?

DBE: I am a sociologist, whose main research interests lie in the Sociology of Health and Illness with a particular focus on disability, rehabilitation and care. Thus, although I am not an STS scholar, some of my work, on rehabilitation particularly, overlapped with STS because it focused on the use and impact of technology in in-patient rehabilitation for disabled people. This talk was a great opportunity for me to engage in a dialogue with both STS scholars and an astonishingly interested public beyond the university.

Was there anything new, inspiring, or innovating for you in giving this talk?

The experience of giving this talk has been inspiring for me especially in two respects: First, the engagement with an audience beyond the university has been greatly nourishing and refreshing. The audience’s deep interest, knowledge and energy to share and to enter into a dialogue has been extremely rewarding. As university scholars sometimes we enclose

¹ <https://stsistanbul.org/events/muhabbet2018/>

ourselves inside campus walls. This often happens outside of our awareness due to the demands of our work. Yet this can feel very unstimulating in the long run. Meeting such an engaged audience beyond the university helped me demolish some of these walls and feel inspired. Second, as a scholar who has been interested in the social experience of technology use in rehabilitation, I learned a lot from the STS scholars in the audience. I could make a better sense of the ways in which my interest in technology could be situated into the context of STS.

Overall, how would you evaluate this event series organized by IstanbulLab with the aim to engage with audience beyond the university while spreading STS topics, concepts and discussions in Turkey?

I find it important in several respects: First, in my view STS is still quite a recent field in Turkey in both academic circles and beyond the university. Thus, IstanbulLab's event series will help STS become better known and I can easily imagine a new generation of young people, both scholars and non-scholars, developing an interest in the field. Second, with this event series IstanbulLab is giving interested people an opportunity to express themselves, their interests, their excitement and to reach out to others, who can share these. As such these events open up a breathing space for all of us, which will keep us motivated and inspired. I hope that in time IstanbulLab will reach an even broader audience.