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## STS and Disability -- A special section of Science, Technology, & Human Values

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By Aaron Seaman

The journal [Science, Technology, & Human Values](#) has a special section in its most recent issue (January 2014) on STS and disability. Its contents include:

### [Introduction: STS and Disability](#)

*Stuart Blume, Vasilis Galis, and Andrés Valderrama Pineda*

What is the “conventional sense” of disability, and how do the questions addressed in this special issue of Science, Technology, & Human Values (STHV) differ from those inspired by Donna Haraway and the cyborg? In industrialized societies, the medical profession has authority over the determination of who should count as disabled while “assistive technologies” enable specific kinds of subject positions (in terms of personhood and competencies as well as limits). In this special issue of STHV, the focus of the essays as a whole is on the different enactments of disability, as complexity that simultaneously implicates bodies, gender, sexuality, technology, and politics. The study of disability offers scope for refinement and further articulation of many issues of long-standing concern to science, technology, and society (STS). In addition, we hope they will encourage further reflection on our field’s normative engagement.

### [Impaired Encoding: Calculating, Ordering, and the “Disability Percentages” Classification System](#)

*Gaby Admon-Rick*

Work injury compensation and pensions are often determined according to medical disability rating scales attributing a percentage to each impaired body part or function. Incorporated into central medical–administrative networks of committees and examinations, these produce disability as a calculable space. This article examines the specific case of the Israeli National Insurance regulations regarding work injuries of 1956 and analyzes the shifted order they set. Looking at this system in the specific

historical context of transition from the British Mandate workmen's compensation system to the "disability percentages" system, provides insight into the process of structuring and stabilizing durable numerical forms and the production of centralized government. Drawing on conceptualizations regarding the sociotechnical role of classification systems, I contend that through encoding and calculating classifications of disability, heterogeneity is eliminated and an ordering based on physiology is "black boxed," illustrating the importance of technoscientific formations in structuring the "medical model of disability."

### [Precarious Plasticity: Neuropolitics, Cochlear Implants, and the Redefinition of Deafness](#)

*Laura Mauldin*

This article provides an ethnographic account of pediatric cochlear implantation, revealing an important shift in the definition of deafness from a sensory loss to a neurological processing problem. In clinical and long-term therapeutic practices involved in pediatric implantation, the cochlear implant (CI) is recast as a device that merely provides access to the brain. The "real" treatment emerges as long-term therapeutic endeavors focused on neurological training. This redefinition then ushers in an ensuing responsibility to "train the brain," subsequently displacing failure from the device onto the individual's ability to train his or her brain (in pediatric implantation, this most often falls onto the mother). New caregiving techniques that accompany implantation are understood through neuropolitics, showing how parents are encouraged to engage in neuro-self-governance, and how the concept of neuroplasticity is used to cultural ends.

### [A Sociology of Treason: The Construction of Weakness](#)

*Vasilis Galis and Francis Lee*

The process of translation has both an excluding and including character. The analysis of actor networks, the process of mobilizing alliances, and constructing networks is a common and worthwhile focus. However, the simultaneous betrayals, dissidences, and controversies are often only implied in network construction stories. We aim to nuance the construction aspect of actor-network theory (ANT) by shining the analytical searchlight elsewhere, where the theoretical tools of ANT have not yet systematically ventured. We argue that we need to understand every process of translation in relation to its simultaneous process

of treason, and to add antonyms for Callon's problematization, intressement, enrollment, and mobilization. This enables us to describe powerlessness not as a state but as a process. Our case focuses on the network building around measures for disabled people in the construction of the Athens Metro, during the period 1991-1993. The discussion highlights the efforts of disability organizations to intervene in the initial construction works of the metro project and the simultaneous actions of the Greek government to exclude disability organizations from the design process and to disrupt the accessibility-metro actor network.

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