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“MY WORK WILL CHANGE IDEAS ABOUT WHAT MAKES A GOOD INVESTMENT”

Katherine Ruff Wins the Stone Soup Award on Research in Social Innovation with the Research “Materiality in Charity Reporting”

July 3rd, 2015. “My work challenges the idea that there is something inherent in ‘the social’ that makes it incompatible with other reporting regimes. Together with the work of many others, I believe the research will steer accounting in a direction that helps to create a better world. It will change ideas about what makes a good investment”, explains Katherine Ruff, winner of the second edition of the Stone Soup Award on Research in Social Innovation.

Stone Soup Consulting recognises with this award the social innovation in charity reporting presented by Katherine Ruff, Phd in Accounting at York University (Canada). “Katherine’s rigorous research methodology, the fact that it is based on field work and intellectual analysis and that it looks at the issue of materiality which is normally neglected, thus innovative made her the winner of the award”, explains Cláudia Pedra, Stone Soup Consulting’s Managing Partner.

On her side, Ruff emphasized “the huge honour to be the second-ever recipient of the award” and stressed the need of the social innovation space for an award like this: “Stone Soup’s Award on Research in Social Innovation is drawing attention to the innovation that is happening, creating an audience for the work that transcends function-silos, and bridging the gulf that sometimes divides researches from practitioners”.

The selection of ‘what matters’ isn’t obvious

Katherine Ruff’s research project “Materiality in Charity Reporting” demonstrates that the selection of the performance information that could go into a report isn’t obvious. According to Ruff “depending on what information is selected, a charity can appear effective or ineffective. What matters to charity reporting is a non-obvious decision that can be improved with some codification and guidance.”

Cláudia Pedra explains that the research “showcases how some important material issues are neglected in reporting, because of conflicting views between the concepts of maintenance and impact, and that different concepts of performance will lead to different assessments. This will then reflect on the management cycle of the organisation and how it incorporates assessment results in their service provision”.

Two novelties of this research’s approach regarding reporting charity performance:

- The research studies charity reporting by using theories and vocabularies borrowed from financial accounting. Prior studies have looked at reporting through the lens of accountability or transparency, whereas this research uses materiality. “It studies not only what matters, but also the practices by which we decide what matters”, explains Ruff.
- The research works with an interpretive study in a semi-controlled context. Six groups of impact analysts received the same information of a real charity and wrote very different reports. The study combines qualitative research with intervening observation.

Margarida Gonçalves Moreira and Ana Luísa Rego Melro also made it to the final. Margarida Gonçalves Moreira, Phd candidate at the Université Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne, presented the research “Evaluation of the social impacts of the cultural sector” in partnership with Casa da Imagem and the Fundação Manuel Leão. On her side, Ana Luísa Rego Melro, Doctor by the University of Aveiro, presented the research “The importance of communication in triggering communities of practice – The case of social entrepreneurship projects” carried out with the IES Social Business School.

Open webinar in September

Stone Soup Consulting will host an open webinar in September in which Katherine Ruff will present her research “Materiality in Charity Reporting”. For more details please contact stone-soup@stone-soup.net

Stone Soup Award on Research in Social Innovation – 2nd edition

The Stone Soup Award on Research in Social Innovation, which recognises a research project that identifies strategies and actions linked to social innovation, is part of Stone Soup’s ethics and social responsibility policy. The award encourages students and professionals to work in the field of entrepreneurship and social innovation and contribute to fostering systemic improvements in innovation theory and practice.

For more information read Katherine Ruff’s interview and contact stone-soup@stone-soup.net.

Interview - <http://www.stone-soup.net/index.php/en/news/270-my-work-will-change-ideas-about-what-makes-a-good-investment>

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