Virginia A. Hodgkinson Research Prize

to

Christian Seelos and Johanna Mair

for

Innovation and Scaling for Impact: How Effective Social Enterprises Do It

The book explores successful social enterprises and confronts “problem spaces” that arise if an organization fails to consider important uncertainties. This is a very practical and application-focused book. Authors Seelos and Mair make a key distinction between innovation and scaling processes, and argue that organizational capacities for one does not necessarily translate into capacity for the other. They define innovation as decisions and actions aimed at creating impact that is challenged by various types of uncertainty. Uncertainty may regard how the problem is framed, the extent to which the proposed solution works or is adopted, whether the approach aligns with the organization’s stated values, the organization’s capacity to learn from and sustain the way it implements its solution, and the scope and severity of unintended consequences. The authors urge private and NGO funders to understand the distinctions between innovation and scaling and ask applicants to think through the potential problem spaces before they implement an innovation or scale to a new site. Specifically, organizations need to pay close attention to three types of knowledge: “What-knowledge” (deep understanding of problem spaces), “how-knowledge” (resources and capabilities required for effective solutions), and “why-knowledge” (clarity about their own identity, strategy, and motivations). This book will likely influence policy and practice globally.