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The Branco Weiss Fellowship

Press Release

Nine young scientists around the world know what science will look like tomorrow

Society in Science – The Branco Weiss Fellowship, the fellowship for outstanding postdoctoral researchers awarded by the ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology), has selected nine new fellows. Eight women and one man have received the prestigious award, giving them up to five years of complete academic freedom to do interdisciplinary research at any institution in the world. All the selected projects could potentially have great social and cultural impact as well as scientific relevance.

Zurich/Switzerland, July 9, 2013. – *Society in Science – The Branco Weiss Fellowship* has selected nine new fellows after an extended global recruitment campaign whose main tagline was "Know what science will look like tomorrow? Apply today."

The fellowship is awarded to researchers with a proven track record who have extended their scientific work to include social and cultural questions and perspectives. The new fellows come from a large variety of fields including psychology, law, neuro-imaging, clinical neurophysiology, behavioral biology, evolutionary biology, engineering, gender studies, economic geography, bioinformatics, sustainable energy and nutrition. Many of them are currently at world-renowned institutions including MIT, the University of Cambridge, and Harvard University.

"We are very happy about the results of this year's campaign with respect to both the quality and number of applications," says Professor Peter Chen, Director of Society in Science. "Altogether 567 applications had to be evaluated. The increase in applications can be attributed to the growing reputation and visibility of the fellowship. We are exceedingly satisfied with the selections, and anxious to see how the fellows proceed in their research."

These are the new Branco Weiss fellows:

Dr. Sushant Anand was born in India and today works at MIT. He aims to deepen our understanding of lubricant impregnated surfaces so that they can be employed on an industrial scale for applications such as harvesting safe and drinkable water as well as to improve the energy efficiency of condensers. His research as a Branco Weiss fellow has the potential to benefit populations facing a scarcity of water. It may also lead to energy savings during power generation in steam based power plants.

Dr. Suzanne Devkota was born in the USA and is a fellow at the Joslin Diabetes Center of the Harvard Medical School. Her work, which could have major implications for personalized health care, focuses on identifying ways diet can be used therapeutically. Specifically, she will explore how dietary components can manipulate and re-shape the composition of the human intestinal bacteria to reverse or prevent host inflammation and metabolic abnormalities.

Dr. Linda Douw was born in the Netherlands and today works at the Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging (Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts General Hospital). The aim of her research is to define new targets for diagnosis and treatment in brain tumor patients. To do this she will be investigating how molecular processes give rise to behavior via the hypothesized intermediate level of brain networks. A more thorough understanding of the relationships between cellular markers, multi-scale connectivity, and ultimately behavior, is one of the essential next steps in neuroscience.

Dr. Charlotte Giesen was born in Germany and currently works at the Institute of Molecular Life Sciences at the University of Zurich. As a Branco Weiss fellow she wants to develop a new approach to studying the cross-talk between cancer cells and the tumor microenvironment that leads from the control system to the hallmarks of the disease. Finding out how cancer cells interact to circumvent the control mechanisms in our body will help seeking new approaches to treating the disease.

Dr. Silvie Huijben was born in the Netherlands and works at the Barcelona Centre for International Health Research. As a Branco Weiss fellow she will study the forces that facilitate drug resistance in pathogens like malaria and leishmaniasis. Her work will facilitate the development of more effective alternative treatments of these major diseases by looking beyond a “one-size-fits-all” approach to slow down the spread of resistance.

Dr. Chinyere K. Okoro was born in Nigeria and currently works at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute in Cambridge. The focus of her research is to understand the genetic and evolutionary events that shape the emergence of non-typhoidal salmonella disease in sub-Saharan Africa. As a Branco Weiss fellow she will also explore the role of socio-economic factors in human movement and ultimately the spread of diseases.

Dr. Carolin Schurr works at the intersections of gender studies and economic geography. She was born in Germany and today conducts her research at the University of Zurich and the University of California, Berkeley. Her research examines how the development of new reproductive technologies like in-vitro fertilization and surrogacy has created new markets of assisted reproduction in the Global South. Specifically, she focuses on the ways bodies, gender, and technologies intersect in these markets.

Dr. Rose Thorogood was born in the United Kingdom and raised in New Zealand. She currently works at the Department of Zoology at the University of Cambridge. Her work looks at the way social interactions within species influence the evolution of whole communities and their ability to adapt to our changing world. Her aim is to understand how information structures these communities, and to use this knowledge to demonstrate similarities with our own social media.

Dr. Annelies Vredeveldt was born in the Netherlands and works at VU University Amsterdam. As a Branco Weiss fellow she will examine a new line of enquiry within investigative interviewing by looking at the potential benefits of discussion between witnesses. She will explore the hypothesis that discussions between witnesses could improve the memory of both witnesses, enabling more criminal cases to be solved.

About Society in Science

Society in Science – The Branco Weiss Fellowship was founded in 2002 to provide a platform for researchers in the natural sciences and engineering who are aiming to extend their scientific work to cover specific social and cultural questions and perspectives. The fellowship was initiated and financed by the Swiss entrepreneur Dr. Branco Weiss, who died in 2010. It belongs to ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich). Professor Peter Chen and Professor Heidi Wunderli-Allenspach direct the fellowship program, and are

supported by ETH Zurich's strategy committee, consisting of prominent international scholars from a wide array of disciplines. To qualify for the prestigious grant, candidates must hold a PhD and provide evidence of outstanding scientific achievement.

For more information on Society in Science, please visit www.society-in-science.org

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