



## **Deliverable 5.11**

### **ESRs blog entry on training activity 6: Final International Outreach Activity and Workshop**

**Grant Agreement n°:** 956623

**Project full title:** Inventive forecasting tools for adapting water quality management to a new climate

**Project acronym:** inventWater

**Type of deliverable:** websites

**Planned date of deliverable:** September 2024

**Actual submission date:** September 2024

**Target Audience:** Public

**Authors:** Ammanuel Bekele, Ricardo Marroquin, Angela Pedregal, Faluku Nakulopa

**Link to the blog post:**

<https://inventwater.eu/our-last-hugs/>

## Our last hugs?

September 16, 2024



By Ammanuel, Angela, Faluku and Ricardo

As summer was coming to an end, the inventWater team geared up for the very last group events in Sweden. Our first destination was the World Water Week (WWW) in Stockholm where we were lucky to enjoy good sunny days – this was quite unusual weather for Stockholm – probably we brought along the good weather. We not only attended the WWW conference but also had the privilege of organizing and hosting three sessions as Early Stage Researchers (ESRs). This experience was particularly different from our previous engagements at scientific conferences and workshops, offering us new insights and opportunities.





The first session, titled *Innovating for Water Justice: Tools for a Peaceful Future*, was co-hosted by Angela, Daniela, Faluku, Ilaria, Lipa and Mahtab. In this session, a panel of experts discussed how innovative tools such as models can be harnessed for addressing critical water challenges, and how such tools together with collaborative efforts can advance water justice, peace and security.



The second session, *"EcoScape: The Challenge of Sustainability"*, coordinated by Adrian, Ammanuel, Annika, Florian, Keerthana, and Sabin took a different approach. It was an interactive role-playing game. Participants assumed the roles of stakeholders in the Yala Basin, Kenya, to manage water, energy, food, and environmental resources, all within climate change. The players navigated difficult trade-offs and synergies to balance conflicting priorities and climate risks, offering a dynamic exploration of resource management under pressure.



The final session was a live studio talk show titled *"Young Minds, Global Waters."* Keerthana, Maud, and Ricardo took center stage and addressed the live and online audiences. They explained the inventWater network, its structure, goals, and the trajectory of our research. They shared examples of our ongoing work, showcasing the network's contributions to addressing global water challenges.





Beyond hosting these sessions, we had the opportunity to network and attend a wide range of other sessions coordinated by various organizations, from NGOs and government agencies to private companies and industry partners. These sessions enriched our perspectives and demonstrated the diverse approaches to addressing water-related issues across sectors.

Midway through the WWW, we prepared for our next destination: Lake Erken, where we attended the final group training event titled 'What's Next After inventWater,' which focused primarily on career guidance. The journey of career reflection, however, began earlier on the balcony of the Stockholm Waterfront Congress Center, where we had an in-depth, heart-to-heart conversation with Prof. Cayelan Carey. She shared her career path with us—the highs and lows, including a bicycle accident that initiated her collaborative work at Uppsala University, the traumatic on-campus shooting during her interview for a tenure-track position at Virginia Tech, and the unforgettable phone call when she received the 2018 Yentsch-Schindler Early Career Award from ASLO.

Cayelan spoke bluntly about the challenges and opportunities she has faced as a woman in science, offering us a deeply personal glimpse into her journey and her outlook for the future.



Later that Tuesday evening, we left for Uppsala University's Lake Erken research station, where we would spend the next two and a half days continuing our discussions on career paths after the PhD. Led by Dr. Laura Puertolas from Albireo, the sessions were both introspective and forward-looking. We explored our visions for life after inventWater by answering the classic question: 'Where do you see yourself in the next five years?' Would it be in academia, public service, industry, the private sector, or perhaps the NGO world? We carefully considered the pros and cons of each option, discussing the trade-offs and potential challenges.





It was fascinating to see the similarities and differences in how the ESRs envisioned their future career paths. While some had clear trajectories, others were still in the exploratory phase. Nevertheless, we all participated in a creative exercise where we imagined our lives five years from then, painting vivid pictures of our future selves. In these visions, many of us saw ourselves thriving as senior scientists, policymakers, innovators leading promising start-ups, etc. Beyond our professional aspirations, some even envisioned fulfilling personal lives, complete with families, healthy children, and beloved pets.



We also revisited the career development plans we had crafted three years ago at the start of inventWater. Some of us had stuck closely to those initial plans, while for others, plans slightly changed. It was interesting to discuss what had influenced these changes—or the lack thereof.

Next came the wisdom-sharing session. Senior scientists, Dr. Nuria Catalan and Dr. Hans Dürr shared their career journeys, offering insights into the opportunities, challenges, and survival strategies they had encountered along the way. Their advice could be summed up in a powerful takeaway: choose a career that brings you happiness—stress will inevitably find you in any path, so always prioritize what fulfills you.

No career workshop is complete without touching on the practicalities of job hunting, so Laura gave us a crash course on the dos and don'ts of crafting CVs and acing job interviews. We were guided through how to present ourselves on paper and how to impress in front of an interview panel. We even scanned job portals, applied for roles, and then faced mock interviews with the senior scientists. The feedback we received was invaluable, offering us a glimpse into what real-life job hunting would be like.

Throughout the sessions, we were also inspired by the stories of professionals transitioning across different sectors. Dr. Denis Trolle shared his journey from science to the private sector as an innovator, talking about the highs and lows of managing his start-up, WateriTech, which is thriving in Denmark. We also learned from Elias, who spoke about juggling his work with Malawi's government water supply company while pursuing his PhD at ICRA in Spain. Ana Ayala showed us her first step in academia after PhD and being a former Marie Curie Fellow. Then there was Daniel Mercado, our incredible inventWater project manager, who shared his love for staying in science, emphasizing how the flexibility it offers brings him immense satisfaction.

Don Pierson, in addition to sharing his career advice, treated us to a boat trip to Lake Erken's island, where he explained the monitoring system for the lake. It was a unique blend of science and nature, making the experience even more memorable.



And, of course, there was Rafa Marce, who generously shared his expertise and well-wishes, as he always does. His support and encouragement have been a constant throughout this journey.

The final part of the workshop was both fun and emotional. We all wrote special messages to each other, placing them in a "friend box." It felt bittersweet as we hugged and shared heartfelt goodbyes, knowing that this might be the last time we would all be together in one place. But despite the tears and the finality of the moment, there was an underlying sense of hope. After all, we're all in the same field, and inventWater brought us together for a reason. We believe there will be more reunions, and, of course, more hugs to come.