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ESRs blog entry on training activity 5: Entrepreneurship, pitching, and media interactions

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Nurturing Entrepreneurship at The Kitchen

February 5, 2024



By Annika, Adrian and Sabin

In the midst of a brisk January, the community of inventWater Early-Stage Researchers (ESRs) converged at Aarhus University in Denmark for our fifth training week. Despite the low temperatures, spirits were high as we reunited face-to-face for the fourth time. Nestled in northeastern Denmark, the picturesque city of Aarhus served as the backdrop, offering a warm and inviting atmosphere for us to gather, share meals, and exchange ideas in anticipation of this training week that would be quite unlike the others.

Over the next two days, the agenda would take us on a journey exploring the dynamic intersection of entrepreneurship and scientific inquiry. It was an opportunity for us to navigate the delicate balance between the world of academia and entrepreneurship. The aim? To cultivate a nuanced understanding of how to effectively straddle both realms, leveraging scientific rigour to drive innovation and entrepreneurship forward.



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Upon arrival at 'The Kitchen,' a venue with a nod to its historical roots as a former hospital kitchen, we quickly delved into a practical session on pitching. The transition continued with a brief exploration of some theoretical aspects of entrepreneurship, followed by a hands-on experience with resource mapping.

Acknowledging the importance of understanding available resources, we confronted the reality that no startup thrives without a demand for its services. The challenge became clear – finding the right fit between resources, problems, solutions, and target groups. In contemplating who would benefit most from our research, the day concluded with a lecture on the practical use of AI in optimising the alignment between resources, problems, solutions, and target groups. The day concluded with a lively group dinner at the local restaurant Slap Af, which included delicious food and singing 'happy birthday' in Danish.



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When the worlds of academia and entrepreneurship collide, the results can be unexpectedly transformative. Our second day at the workshop in Aarhus, Denmark, stands as a testament to this synergistic fusion.

The day kicked off with a practical exercise that every budding entrepreneur must master – pitching. Presenting our project ideas to our peers and mentors from The Kitchen, Aarhus' largest startup hub, we dove headfirst into the art of persuasion and clarity. The feedback was constructive, piercing through the usual academic jargon to reveal the core value of our ideas. This exercise was more than just about communication; it was about envisioning our projects through the lens of real-world impact and viability.

Post-pitching, we had the privilege of listening to Maria Lund Paulsen, a former PhD student turned entrepreneur. Her venture, [LakeAid](#), is a beacon of how academic research can transition into a successful business. Specialising in innovative water purification methods, LakeAid's journey from theory to application was not just inspiring, but also deeply relatable. Maria's emphasis on leveraging her academic skills and network in her entrepreneurial journey resonated with us, highlighting the hidden entrepreneurial potential within our own research endeavours.



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A recurring theme throughout the day was the necessity of acquiring skills beyond our scientific training. While our research background lays a strong foundation, the realms of software engineering, business strategy, and client relations are territories we need to explore and master. This realisation was both humbling and motivating, underscoring the importance of collaboration and continuous learning in our entrepreneurial journey.



Moreover, beyond the knowledge acquisition during the week, the event also underscored the importance of the ESR community in fostering collaboration, and highlighted the value of forging meaningful connections and embracing diverse perspectives in addressing challenges within the realm of research and entrepreneurship. The ripple effects from this training will undoubtedly not just shape future work, but also influence how we communicate our ideas and contribute to broader discussions surrounding water management.

