

Dear Ananda,

Would you be kind enough to forward this message to the GAIA and other relevant lists.

I have just concluded a very exciting "waste" trip which started on January 12, with a presentation on Zero Waste at the UN and ended in the UK on Feb 4. I have already shared my excitement about the UN meeting. This excitement continued with a trip that took me to Italy (17 presentations), Spain (4 presentations - thank you Mariko - and the UK (4 presentations). I got back last night. Each country revealed some very important developments, especially on the Zero Waste front. As people have already been told, the Mayor of Rome has been invited to go to San Francisco to share his experiences on sustainability and look at the Zero Waste program in SF. The mayor of Rome is an important figure and this could have huge significance for Rome and Italy as a whole if he is convinced that this is the way to go.

Also in Italy we had a very successful launch of the first Zero Waste Research Center in Capannori (near Lucca). Around this launch Rossano Ercolini organized a very successful conference. People came from all parts of Italy to celebrate this important moment. Speakers included the mayor of Capannori, provincial officials, myself, Enzo Favoino, Rossano, Joan Marc Simon (GAIA rep in Brussels) and several others including a spokesperson for a waste company setting up a Residual Separation and Research facility near Trapani in Sicily (which I will be visiting - hopefully opening! - later this month). So not just one dream but two dreams coming true in Italy. Throughout my trip I met with several U. professors (Italy, Spain and UK) who are interested in the concept of using Zero Waste as a stepping stone to Sustainability. Hopefully with Joan Marc's help we can get some EU money to support pilot projects in this area.

In Alba, Italy I met up with Roberto Cavallo one of the three cavaliers of Zero Waste in Italy (Favoino, Ecolini and Cavallo). Roberto is one of the best consultants on waste minimization efforts including elegant application of the pay by bag system for the residual fraction. Using this he has helped several communities exceed 80% diversion. For example Villafranco d'Asti (population 30,000) is up to 85% diversion.

In Spain I was excited to meet another effective proponent of door to door collection (the Italian method!) who informed me that the town of Ursibil in Basque country is at 86% diversion! This town is confronted with an incinerator proposal which reminds us that it is often the threat of an incinerator proposal which engenders the passion to organize an alternative. Also in Spain I spoke with a very well organized and passionate community (Moncada i Reixac) fighting the plans of a massive cement factory (La Farge) to burn waste as a fuel - euphemistically called "biomass." The Orwellian terminology extended to calling the cement product, "ecological cement"!!! Needless to say the local people are not being taken in by this nonsense. One citizen produced a 250 ml jam bottle filled with the cement dust that they had collected from their veranda in less than two months. In UK there is an equally intolerable cement facility (Cemex) running on the edge of Rugby - a short distance from the famous Rugby school (home of the sport of Rugby). They too want to use refused derived fuel to make their cement and plan to build a 400,000 tpy facility right next to the plant. Meanwhile, the citizens of Rugby are trying to recycle and compost their own waste, but are being demoralized because of the County's plan to import waste from far and wide!!

One of the exciting young professors I met in Bologna is very keen to network with Capannori and Trapani Zero Waste research centers and he is working with Joan Marc to help get funding for this. They hope to get several other communities in Europe to join in. I may have found another in Coventry. We had a very exciting meeting at an Organic Center (half way between Coventry and Rugby). People attending the meeting included Professors from both the U. Warwick and U.

Coventry; activists fighting a new incinerator proposed for Coventry (one of these -Jane Green- helped to set up this meeting), representatives of the organic center as well as an organization working on Climate change and a young engineer determined to introduce the sustainability ethic into industrial design. Their response to the notion of a residual screening and research center and linking zero waste to sustainability was very positive. They were excited to hear about the UN talk and the developments in both Italy and Spain, and the possibility of European funding. The meeting generated a lot of positive ideas and creative suggestions.

My tour ended with talks in Derby (community fighting off their second gasification proposal); Ivybridge near Plymouth, Devon (community fighting off a mass burn incinerator proposed by Viridor in an absolutely exquisite landscape - bit like taking a dagger to a Constable painting) (organizer Ian Carter) and a community near Gloucester where the county wants to build an incinerator in a equally beautiful area - the Seven vale located between the Seven River and the edge of the Cotswolds (organizers Diana and David Shirley). Total madness but prompted by another financial scam called PFI. The exciting thing from my perspective is that each of these battles is producing some very good organizers able to draw on a local resources to mount effective and creative campaigns. What we need now is for these to network among themselves more effectively by building on the invaluable information provided on the UKWIN website and the indefatigable energy provided by Ralph Ryder to strengthen what could become a very solid anti-incinerator alliance in the UK. The key I believe is for more of these organizers to meet each other in person. This is the glue for effective national alliances - key people meeting each other in person and realizing what an incredible human resource there is fighting the nonsense of incineration and more and more fighting for Zero Waste.

If I needed reminding (and I don't!) what a tremendous privilege it is working with some of the best people who walk on this planet - this trip to Italy, Spain and the UK did it. Thanks everyone for doing what you do - every day for your children, for your community and for the planet - to fight the poison and working towards a more sustainable future. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your efforts to fight the poison of incineration and working towards a more sustainable future.

Paul Connett