

Sustainable Ideas in the Post-Copenhagen Era

Valentina Barretta (April 29, 2010)



Riccardo Lattanzi, Giorgio Einaudi, Tony Volpe and Federico Casalegno, guests at Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò to discuss a few important topics: the Copenhagen conference on climate change, future scenarios and current projects. The four Italian scientists, experts on environment and new technologies, held a seminar in the building's auditorium to speak about environmental sustainability and renewable energy. Many original and interesting ideas resulted.

[Riccardo Lattanzi](#) [2], Giorgio Einaudi, Tony Volpe and Federico Casalegno. [Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò](#) [3] at NYU had the honor of hosting these four Italian scientists, who converged in the Big Apple to discuss about energy and the environment.

The seminar, introduced by Einaudi, president of [ISSNAF](#) [4] (the Italian Scientist and Scholars in North America Foundation), was part of a cycle of encounters set to explain the environmental problems linked with the Copenhagen conference and the existing projects with the objective of creating clean energy.



To achieve the goal set during the negotiations which took place in the Danish capital, the reduction of 20% of carbon dioxide emissions by 2020, a technologic adjustment is necessary which could involve very high costs. The road map laid down last December during the conference on climate change is hard to achieve and the attempt to impose a common limit on emissions in every country has already failed miserably.

The commitments made by the [European Union](#) [5], aiming for at least a 20% reduction on greenhouse gasses, possibly 30% in some countries, differ from the blander promises of the usual three outsiders, United States, India and China. While the latter two emerging economies preferred to not express themselves in regards to the first objective, the former decided on a minimum value of 17%.

“New technologies at competitive prices would certainly favor more investments in a rich country with a high propensity towards purchases like America”, declared Tony Volpe, Enel responsible for renewable resources in the United States. According to the numbers related during the conference, in spite of the missing signature to the Kyoto agreement and the reluctant attitude to compromise shown in Copenhagen, the States in 2006 invested four times more in clean energy than the European Union. Even the Obama administration seems to be moving in this direction; this is demonstrated by innovative projects by [Enel](#) [6] and [MET](#) [7], the Mobile Experience Laboratory of [MIT](#) [8], represented on this occasion by Federico Casalegno, present in at least twenty states. “The European commissioner for climate, Connie Hedegaard, quantifying expenses for the measures taken in the UE during the last two years, spoke about a total investment of 70 Billion Euros, a number largely inferior to what was spent in the US during the same period of time” underlined Casalegno.

The graphs, projected in the auditorium of Casa Italiana, clearly showed how the use of nuclear energy cannot reduce emissions by more than 6%, and for this reason connectivity, mobility and sustainability are the key words, upon which “developed” countries like Italy and the United States should focus their attention: “to increase the future generations in an eco-compatible system must become our objective”, explained the experts. For this reason the members of the research group Smart Cities are coming up with new methods to change the lifestyle in urban areas from the roots, through new sustainable technologies in the digital era. The group, specialized in the management of metropolitan development and growth, explores the sectors of transit, communication and infrastructures.

MIT and [Smart Cities Group](#) [9] are working together at the development of future scenarios, designing new instruments which will be useful and have an original design. Green Wheel, for example, is a bike with a multi-functional satellite navigator, run by the energy produced by pedaling. It will be possible to estimate the air pollution levels and, thanks to sensors connected to a server, communicate with other vehicles around town or receive any kind of notices: all with the force of your feet!

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